



THOMAS KENEALLY

AUSTRALIANS

A Short History

**'The story of Australia and the Australians
could be in no better hands than Keneally's.'**

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A Short History

<https://vk.com/readinglecture>

To Gus, Clementine, Alex and Rory. Advance Australians Fair!



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PART I
ORIGINS TO
EUREKA



1

THE FIRST COMERS



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GENESIS

Once there was the All-Sea. Its brew of water and minerals and biology covered the planet. Then the first stones, sediments and bacteria of the great landmass Pangaea broke the surface of the encompassing ocean. They can still be found, these first gestures of ground, the original Mother Earth, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

At Taronga Zoo in Sydney there is a globe, at child height, showing Pangaea, the great agglomerated landmass, which remained one huge slab of earth for so long and began to break apart only about 140 million years ago. Pangaea is shown at the zoo in cut sections. A child can move the solid shapes which once made up the enormous single earth-mass on grooves, to create Laurasia in the north and Gondwana, the great southern super-continent. Then, further grooves on the surface enable the child to separate Gondwana into India, Africa, South America, Antarctica and Australia, and slide them to their present locations on the globe. The separation of Australia from the rest of Gondwana began 45 million years ago.

It was not all quite as clean as the zoo game indicates. The exotic separating fragment included a version of Australia, New Guinea and Tasmania in the one gigantic landmass, named Sahul by paleontologists. It was all far to the south of where it is now. Over the next fifteen million years,

Sahul edged northwards, striving, but not fully managing till three million years ago, to separate itself broadly from the Antarctic and assume a position in the primeval Pacific.

To add to the complicated picture, at various stages Sahul shrank and then expanded again. It was fifteen million years ago, for instance, that Tasmania first became an island, but then, dependent on sea levels, Sahul would regularly take it back into its mass again. The last time Tasmania separated was only 11 000 years ago, when *Homo sapiens* was already occupying the region, at the end of the Great Ice Age.

Modern dating methods show that the arrival of the first Australians occurred at least 60 000 years Before the Present (BP). These people first crossed from the prehistoric south-east Asian district named Wallacea between 60 000 to 18 000 BP, when the Arafura Sea was an extensive plain, when sea levels were 30 metres below where they are now, and there was a solid land bridge some 1600 kilometres wide between Australia and New Guinea, then joined within Sahul. Sahul's north-western coast received only small numbers from the islands of Wallacea, possibly as few as fifty to one hundred people over a decade. They may have come by log or canoe; they may even have waded to Sahul at low tide.

Descendants of these first comers still live by the hundreds of thousands in Australia, and the picture of how they lived and what they did with the continent has been revised again and again in recent times. In the early 1960s the proposal that Aboriginal people had lived in Australia for 13 000 years was thought fanciful. But carbon dating showed campfires and tools to be at least 30 000 years old, and these days experts use luminescence dating to claim that campfires and firestick burning date from more than 100 000 years ago. Almost at once as this claim was made, in 1996, at Jinmium in the Northern Territory, Australian scientists dated stone tools as 130 000 years old. If they are right, the original Australians are the oldest race on the planet.

We must try to imagine the earth as it was then, a country of flamingos and dangerous giant carnivorous kangaroos now known as *Propelopus*, of *Palorchestes*, the bull-sized mammal whose long snout, giraffe-like tongue and massive claws may have inspired Aboriginal tales of a swamp-dwelling, man-eating monster often called the Bunyip. The marsupial lion called *Thylacoleo carnifex* ranged the savannahs, and *Megalanina prisca*, a giant lizard, made excellent eating at feasts.

These early Australians believed their ancestral beings had made the visible earth and its resources, and expected the cleaning up and fertilisation done by the firestick. A number of Australian species of tree welcomed fire—the banksia, the melaleuca, the casuarina, eucalyptus—and fire fertilised various food plants: bracken, cycads, daisy yams and grasses. The firestick, in itself and as a hunting device, may have speeded the extinction of the giant marsupial kangaroo, the marsupial lion, the giant sloth, and other species now vanished.

DINNER AT CUDDIE SPRINGS

At Cuddie Springs, a lake bed near the north-western New South Wales town of Brewarrina, scientists have found the remains of a meal eaten over 30 000 years ago, when a spring-fed lake brimmed there and was a centre of human and animal existence. Here, in a layer of soil dated between 30 000 and 35 000 years in age, bones of Australian extinct mega-beasts have been found amongst blood-stained stone tools, charcoal and other remains of campfires. The analysis of the tools showed blood similar to that of the giant wombat-like *Diprotodon*. Also at the site were found wet-milled grass and grindstones or querns, the oldest examples of such implements found anywhere. Aboriginal women thirty millennia past had a milling method which was previously thought to have begun in the Middle East only 5000 years ago. Thus the triumph of the hunters lies over the bones of this long dead bump-nosed giant, as the triumph of the female millers of seed is evoked by the sandstone grinding basin.

For tens of millennia before the name Australia was applied to it, there was a clan-by-clan, ceremonial-group by ceremonial-group map of the country. In Central Australia's desert, the Walpiri people used the term *jukurrpa*, Dreaming, to represent the spiritual and visible earth as left by the ancestors, and other language groups used similar terms. The Dreaming is seen as something eternal by many, but as one commentator says, it is a fulcrum by which the changing universe can be interpreted—the falling or rise of water levels, flood or drought, glacial steppes or deserts, the ascent or decline of species, the characteristics of animals. Another scholar is particularly worth quoting: The Dreaming 'binds people, flora, fauna and natural phenomena into one enormous inter-functioning world'.

For the individual native, the knowledge, ritual and mystery attached to maintaining the local earth were enlarged at initiation. In the oldest culture on earth, native people practised what would be called ‘maintenance ceremonies’, that is, ceremonies to ensure that a particular area, plentiful in water or plant or animal life, would remain as it was, as the hero ancestor had created it, until the next time the people visited. The limitations of food and water sources made it so.

Further secrets were acquired through life and through dreams. A network of Dreaming tracks existed, criss-crossing the continent, connecting one well of water or place of protein or shelter with another. The eastern coastline of New South Wales, built up of great platforms of Hawkesbury sandstone, easily eroded to make caves, was full of such holy sites. As a visible symbol of that, there exists a huge number of pecked and abraded engravings of humans, ancestors, sharks and kangaroos on rock surfaces around Sydney.

Natives at particular ceremonial sites re-enacted the journey and acts of creation of a particular ancestor hero or heroine, and by doing that they sustained the earth. These people would ultimately be called by early European settlers *ab origines*—people who had been here since the beginning of the earth—and though they had not been on Sahul or Australia *ab origine*, they had been in place long enough to make that issue a quibble.

2

OTHER VISITORS

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THE MAKASSAR WELCOME

For perhaps a hundred years before the arrival of Captain Cook's *Endeavour* on the east coast of Australia, a fleet of fifty or more Indonesian *prahus* left the old port city of Makassar (now Ujung Pandang) for the coastline of Australia to seek trepang, a leathery sea cucumber consumed as a health food and aphrodisiac throughout Asia. For the next two hundred years the Yolngu Aborigines of the tropics knew to expect the Makassar men when they saw the first lightning of the rainy season. The *prahus*, with their tripod masts and lateen sails, made landfall mainly in the land they called Marege, Arnhem Land, or else a long way to the west on the Kimberley coast, known to the Makassans as Kayu Jawa. Each *prahu* carried about thirty crew members, and they dived for the trepang in groups of two to six vessels. Beach encampments of Makassans the Yolngu welcomed on their coast might have a population of two hundred men at a time. These men gathered trepang by hand or spear but the most common method of collection was diving.

The Yolngu and the Makassans went about their annual time together in a peaceful way. It was not in the interests of the Makassans to alienate the Aboriginal elders, nor the young Yolngu men they attracted to work with them, nor the young women from whom they sought sexual favours.

The Makassans spent most of the day at sea, and every few weeks they moved on to a new camp.

These Makassan visits became known to British mariners, who sometimes encountered the *prahus*. In 1803 Flinders discovered six *prahus* off the Arnhem Land coast, and greeted their 'Malay commanders' to his ship: 'The six Malay commanders shortly afterwards came on board in a canoe. It happened fortunately that my cook was Malay, and through this means I was able to communicate with them.'

That year, as for years before and after, as many as one thousand men, all from the Gulf of Bone in the Celebes (now Sulawesi), were working the Arnhem Land coast. They interbred with the Yolngu people, who traded turtle shells and buffalo horns with the Makassans for steel knives and fabric.

Sometimes Aboriginals sailed on returning *prahus* to Makassar and beyond. A small number of Yolngu settled there, in the Celebes. Those who came back told tales of the city, and the surprise of seeing policemen and soldiers is preserved in dances and song. Young men who visited Makassar came back with enhanced reputations and their knowledge of the Makassar language made them leaders in future dealing between Yolngu and the trepangers.

Because of the Makassans the Yolngu people were the earliest Aboriginals exposed to smallpox, yaws and venereal disease, and also to firearms, tobacco and alcohol. Despite these inheritances, the Yolngu to this day will say about Makassans, 'We are one people.'

THE COY COASTS

Known to the trepangers but merely guessed by the Europeans, in 1598 a Dutch geographer, Cornelius Wyfliet, wrote: 'The Australis Terra is the most southern of all lands, and is separated from New Guinea by a narrow strait. Its shores are hitherto but little known, since after one voyage or another that route has been deserted, and seldom is the country visited unless sailors are driven there by storms. The Australis Terra begins at 2 or 3 degrees from the Equator, and is maintained by some to be of so great an extent that if it were thoroughly explored it would be regarded as a fifth part of the world.'

This was a reflection of an ancient belief in the Antipodes—a continent in the southern hemisphere to balance the size of Europe and Asia combined.

Hence geographers presumed that the Australis Terra must stretch away far south towards the Antarctic ice.

One could say that for purposes of discovery the Australian continent took up a coy position on the globe. It was hidden beneath a screen of islands stretching from the Solomons to Java and Sumatra, wearing New Guinea as its north-eastern cap. It was cunningly lodged west of Cape Horn and east of the Cape of Good Hope, and best approached only by that screaming band of westerly winds, the Roaring Forties, far, far to the south. It was huge but not as huge as the expected mass, and did not lie where that mass was surmised to be.

There were a number of notable Spanish near-misses at encountering Australia. In 1568 a Spanish commander, Alvaro de Mendana, crossing the Pacific from Peru, discovered the Solomon Islands. Nearly forty years later, a master of one of Mendana's vessels, Pedro de Quiros, petitioned King Philip III to allow him to take three ships to search for the southern continent which de Quiros believed must be south-west of the Solomons. At the island of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu, de Quiros's flagship seems to have been taken over by its crew. His young second-in-command, Luis de Torres, continued the reconnaissance with his two remaining ships, and searched west, but not far enough to encounter the Barrier Reef and the coast of Australia. Turning north he reached the coast of New Guinea, where he found himself confronted with reefs and islands in a complicated and perilous strait which still carries his name and is a byword for navigational perils.

At least it was proof that New Guinea was not, as de Quiros had thought, part of the Great South Land. De Torres saw the mountains of the mainland of Australia, at Cape York, but believed them to be merely further islands. From the quarterdeck of his vessel, *San Pedrico*, he was only a handful of miles distant.

Nonetheless, de Quiros had already named the continent he was sure existed south of where he was bullied by his crew into returning to Peru and which he would even claim to have discovered. *Austrialia del Espiritu Santo* was his choice; 'Austrialia' intended as a compliment to Philip III of Spain, who was by blood an Austrian Hapsburg.

In another near-miss, a little Dutch ship named the *Duyfken* had entered Torres Strait from the west in March 1606, a few weeks before de Torres sailed through it. But when nine of the crew were murdered by natives,

the Melanesian people who occupied the islands of Torres Strait, the skipper Willem Jansz turned about, and Australia was again left uninterrupted.

Where had Willem Jansz come from? When Philip III achieved hegemony over the Portuguese, he closed Lisbon to the Dutch ships that sailed there to collect spice produce which had come from the Moluccas and elsewhere. Consequently, at the end of the sixteenth century, a group of Amsterdam merchants sent out their own fleet to the Moluccas, the Spice Islands, via the Cape of Good Hope. Suddenly there were many Dutch ships on their way to and from the archipelago which is now named Indonesia. Their preferred route made no sense in an as-the-crow-flies reading of the globe. Initially, once they got around South Africa, the Dutch tried to get to Indonesia by sailing north-east across the Indian Ocean. But they often became becalmed and so much in need of supplies that six out of ten of their crew would die.

The passage that worked best, the Dutch discovered, was to sail round the Cape of Good Hope, but to then reach south to catch the Roaring Forties across the lower quarter of the globe, run east before these gales, and then turn to port and reach north for Indonesia. Given that equation, a number of Dutch ships encountered the Western Australian coast. They named it, without affection, New Holland. Some of them collided with or put in to it.

A master named Dirk Hartog, in the *Eendragt* (Concord), met the deeply indented Shark Bay, one of the westernmost points of the Australian continent, and landing on an island which bears his name, left there a tin plate marked 25 October 1616. Through further such contacts, the west coast of what would prove to be the Australian continent acquired a number of Dutch names, such as Cape Leeuwin, named for a 1623 ship (*Leeuwin*/Lioness) which met with it. Like the south-west coast of Africa, the west coast of New Holland acquired a reputation as a desert of no economic potential.

As a young sailor Hartog had enjoyed a rapid promotion within the Dutch East India Company, a sturdily commercial operation not interested in exploration for exploration's sake. But by 1642, Viceroy Van Diemen—his master, the governor at Batavia—gave the captain, Abel Tasman, two ships for exploratory purposes. Tasman's wife and a daughter from his first marriage lived with him in Batavia, and he had led a number of well-managed voyages.

At the best, Tasman was to find a route south of New Holland to South America, where the Dutch hoped to erode the Spanish monopoly.

‘Slight misdemeanours on the part of such natives [you encounter],’ Van Diemen wrote to Tasman before his protégé set sail, ‘such as petty thefts and the like, you will pass unnoticed, that by doing so you may draw them unto you, and not inspire them with aversion to our nation.’ However, if gold or silver were found, ‘appear as if you were not greedy for them, and if gold and silver is offered in any barter, you must feign that you do not value these metals, showing them copper, zinc and lead, as if those metals were of more value to us.’

Leaving Batavia in August 1642, Tasman’s two ships, the *Heemskerck* and the *Zeehaen*, took a zig-zag route through the Indian Ocean to Mauritius and then southwards. Once they had found the westerly gales, for most of their journey they were hurled along at 42 degrees south latitude. At last they came up against the wind-buffed coast which Tasman called Van Diemen’s Land, but which now carries his own name. An attempt to land was made but the weather was too rough. A carpenter swam through the surf with a Dutch flag and took formal possession of the land on 3 December 1642.

A later navigator, the Englishman Matthew Flinders, would name two dominating mountains behind the coast in honour of Tasman’s two ships.

Sailing to the south of Van Diemen’s Land, after nine turbulent days Tasman encountered the wild west coast of the south island of New Zealand, where three of his Dutchmen were killed and a fourth mortally wounded by Maoris at the site still named Massacre Bay. He returned to Batavia by way of the islands north of New Guinea. Two years later he would explore Australia from North West Cape in Western Australia to Cape York, extending the known map of New Holland.

Back at home in Batavia, he would within two years become a member of the Council of Justice. He and Van Diemen, however, must have been angrily resigned at the letter that came from the Dutch East India Company’s managers when they received the news of Tasman’s voyage of 1644. ‘We do not expect great things of the continuance of such explorations,’ wrote the company, ‘which more and more burden the company’s resources, since they require increase of ships and sailors . . . the gold and silver mines that will best serve the company’s turn have already been found, which we deem to be our trade over the whole of India.’ By the time Tasman died in Batavia in 1659, New Holland still held no allure for the Dutch.

PIRATING WORDS

Nearly thirty years later, in 1688, a Somerset-born sailor-cum-pirate-cum-journalist named William Dampier—sober, fascinated by nature, and in his late thirties—first visited Australia as a member of the crew of the buccaneering ship *Cygnets*, whose Captain Swan had been abandoned, as the result of mutiny, in Mindanao. The *Cygnets* was a captured Spanish prize ship, and after visiting the Celebes accompanied by another prize ship, the crews decided to sail for New Holland, ‘to see what that country would afford us’. The *Cygnets* anchored on the mainland near Melville Island, off northern Australia, and the crew camped ashore for some weeks, eating the local delicacies, dugong, turtle and barramundi.

These British pirates were amongst the very first Europeans to encounter the Australian indigines. William Dampier found the natives of Melville Island, whose descendants still live there, resistant to the trinkets he offered, and made uncomplimentary comments on their appearance and terms of existence. Though the native men threatened the buccaneers with spears, and the women, crying lustily, removed their children from reach, his opinion was that they were ‘the miserablest people in the world’. When he wrote thus of the natives, he was talking from his own less than favoured position of their material culture. The important question of what had held them together as a society for tens of millennia went unenquired into.

Back in England, after a time in Hanoi where he was racked by fever, Dampier published an account of his travels: *A New Voyage Around the World*. It was a great success and made him a celebrity. In 1699 he was commissioned master of the ship *Roebuck* to make a journey into the regions of New Holland he had already made famous. He again described the natives as the most displeasing human beings he had ever encountered, ‘though I have seen a great variety of savages’.

Dampier spent four months in the west and north-west of Australia, and explored some 1600 kilometres of the unrelentingly dry coast. His men suffered from the hot weather and began to display symptoms of ‘the scorbutic’, scurvy. The ship was rotting around him, the garbage in the bilges fermenting riotously in the tropic air. *Roebuck* thus became the stinking, worm-impregnated wreck he had to abandon at Ascension Island on the way home.

Later, because the *Roebuck* had been supplied by government, he faced a court martial which declared him unfit to command any more of His Majesty's ships. It was his literary work which would last beyond his death in 1715.

THE GRAND INTRUSION

In the late 1760s, the Navy Board of Great Britain went looking for 'a proper vessel' that could voyage to Tahiti in the South Seas and observe the transit of the heavenly body Venus across the face of the sun. If experts observed the transit of Venus in a number of locations, calculations could be made which would help yield the accurate distance of Earth to Venus and Earth to the sun. Thus the handmaiden to the European discovery of Australia, or at least its enormous east coast, was the planet Venus. The transit would occur on 3 June 1769, and there would be no reappearance until 1874.

A number of ships were inspected but the one chosen lay at Shadwell Docks: a Whitby (or Yorkshire-built) square stern-backed, single-bottomed vessel named the *Earl of Pembroke*, later to be renamed *Endeavour*. It had been a collier. Its dimensions scarcely do honour to its ultimate and diverse impact—it was only 106 feet (c 32 metres) long overall, only 97 feet 7 inches (c 30 metres) long on her lower deck, where the crew were to live, and a mere 29 feet 3 inches (8.8 metres) broad. She would challenge all her sailors, many of them American colonials, to find space on her decks.

The Navy Board paid £2800 for her. To get her ready, they had her towed to Deptford, where workmen applied a lining of thick felt on her hull and then fixed further but thinner boards to protect her against the *Teredo navalis*, the ravenous shipworm of the tropics.

The captain of the *Endeavour*, James Cook, had a background no more startling than that of his little cat. On 25 May 1768 he was appointed first lieutenant, a rank less than notable for a 40-year-old. He had been born in the winter of 1728 in a two-roomed, clay-built thatched cottage in Marton, Yorkshire, a freezing and hilly region. He came from a lowland Scots father and a Yorkshire mother, a combination not unknown to produce a particular form of sturdiness. Cook had sailed on cats like the *Endeavour* since childhood, in the Whitby to Newcastle trade along the east coast of England. Years later, between journeys into North American waters, he had succumbed to Venus in the form of Elizabeth Batts of Barking, whom, on a cold day before Christmas 1762, he had married in her parish church

of Little Wakering, Essex. The groom was tall, with a small head and a pronounced nose. James Cook was a man utterly without patrons within or outside the British navy, and a man needed such connections to achieve notable rank. Whereas to find a continent, he needed only his native genius, his apparently indestructible soul and his phlegmatic self-confidence.

Early in 1763, soon after the marriage, Cook was appointed a naval surveyor and was absent on the Newfoundland station for five successive summers, until his appointment to *Endeavour*.

Who was this fellow, this apparently two-dimensional naval cipher who greeted the east coast of New South Wales one morning in April 1770? Did he miss a wife, weep for a child? Only Elizabeth Cook, nee Batts, who would live to be ninety-five and die in 1835, who disapproved of his most famous portrait, by Webber, because it made him seem severe, could tell us of the human, sobbing, panting Cook—and did not do so. Other than that, we can surmise he was like the astronauts two centuries later, impermeable to disabling doubt, immutable of faith, unapologetic of skill. He observed all human weakness but was not himself a player in it.

A moral man who does not seem to have availed himself of any of Tahiti's carnal pleasures before or after the transit, he abhorred the impact of venereal disease, carried by his sailors in an age when the afflictions of Venus were borne by a large proportion of the male and female population of Europe, on the Tahitians. His own rigorous moral standards were apparently all that his beloved Elizabeth at home in Yorkshire could have asked for.

It could seem that Cook's 'coolness and conciseness' dominated, but he could also be carried away by temper—on a later voyage, an irreverent young midshipman named Trevenen, who had been careless about observations, said that Captain Cook did 'a heiva', a Polynesian dance 'of violent motions and stampings', to vent his displeasure.

As in all Royal Naval vessels, floggings for disobedience and worse were a periodic necessity, and Cook saw such punishment as a regulating device in a ship's population crammed into a tiny space. One young marine stole a piece of sealskin from a comrade, made a tobacco pouch of it, and then hurled himself into the Pacific rather than face Cook and the lash.

There is good humour, though, in the way Cook related the anger caused by his rejection of the offer of a native girl in the Tongan islands for use as sexual recreation. An elderly woman 'began first to argue with me and when

that failed she abused me . . . sneering in my face and saying, what sort of a man are you thus to refuse the embraces of so fine a young woman, for the girl certainly did not [want] beauty, which I could however withstand, but the abuse of the old woman I could not, and therefore hastened into the boat’.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN

By contrast with aloof Cook, the young gentleman Mr Joseph Banks glimmered with charm. Descended from a family of lawyers who had acquired acreage, Banks was heir to a huge estate at Revesby Park in Lincolnshire, yet was willing for the sake of his mistress, Nature, to confine himself to the narrow, low-ceilinged dimensions of His Majesty’s barque *Endeavour* for the best years of his young manhood. He would exchange three years of drawing rooms and country houses and splendid English women to collect exotic plants in far places; clearly his avocation, or botanical hobby, was no small thing to him.

Yet Banks had another reason to escape England. He had an understanding with a young daughter of the gentry named Harriet Blosset, but secretly he hoped it would go nowhere. The *Endeavour*’s extended absence would probably take care of Harriet’s irksome expectations of him.

At a dinner, Banks began to talk the accomplished Swedish naturalist Dr Daniel Solander, one of the great Linnaeus’s disciples, into joining the *Endeavour*. First he seems to have induced in Solander a state of excitement, and the next day talked the Admiralty into agreement. Banks chose to take two artists, a secretary, four servants and two dogs on the minute vessel. Tall, personable and exuberant, Banks tended to think that his professional interests should take precedence over the maritime priorities of a narrow Yorkshire salt like James Cook.

Cook’s secret orders referred not just to the observation of the transit of Venus. They also required of him that since the discovery of countries hitherto unknown would redound greatly to the honour of the British nation, he was to proceed to the south in order to make discovery of the southern continent, ‘until you arrive in the latitude of 40 degrees, unless you sooner fall in with it’. If he did not find any signs of the Great South Land (imagined as far more enormous than the ultimate reality of the Australian continent), he was to proceed to 35 degrees east, very close to what would turn out to be

the latitude of a large part of the shelving east coast of Australia. He was to persevere until he fell in with the coast or met New Zealand.

Cook's further orders were, 'with the consent of the natives', to take possession of various places in the southern continent in the name of the King of Great Britain. The official orders also compelled the crew, upon their return to Britain, not to divulge where they had been until they had permission to do so, and the logs and journals of officers and petty officers were to be confiscated.

In sentiments which would frequently be denied in the later history of the continent, Dr Charles Morton, President of the Royal Society and a much admired, fatherly figure who would die before Cook's return, asked him in a document named *Hints* to exercise 'the utmost patience and forbearance with respect to the natives of the several lands where the ship may touch. To have it still in view that shedding one drop of the blood of those people is a crime of the highest nature . . . they are the natural, and in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several regions they inhabit . . . they may naturally and justly attempt to repel invaders.'

VENUS

The *Endeavour* crossed the Atlantic and reached Rio de Janeiro, but the viceroy there simply did not believe that this ship, with its scientific gentlemen aboard, was a Royal Naval vessel. Suspecting Cook of either espionage or smuggling, he banned the crew from landing, though some did disembark in disguise. At least, in a nearby bay, Banks and Dr Solander were able to land and collect samples.

Further south, in Tierra del Fuego, Cook managed to find a bay where he anchored and, looking for a watering place, encountered the natives: 'perhaps as miserable a set of people as are this day upon Earth'. Two of Banks's black servants died of exposure on this jaunt from the ship, though Banks's greyhounds, which had been with their master and may have saved him from hypothermia, survived. At sea again, Cook carefully and definitively charted perilous Cape Horn, saying 'that the charts hitherto published had been found incorrect'.

Endeavour reached Tahiti more than seven weeks ahead of the transit, and barring some deaths and one suicide at sea, none of the men had scurvy. Of all the diseases to which sailors were prone, scurvy frightened them most.

It brought on a terrible lassitude, profound depression, acute joint pain, ulcers, tooth loss, appalling breath bespeaking an advancing internal death, and an ultimate closing down of organ function. On trans-Atlantic, let alone trans-global, voyages scurvy could send men permanently to their bunks and leave ships undermanned or unmanageable. Banks had earlier been worried that he was exhibiting early signs of scurvy and had dosed himself with lemon juice. Cook attributed the defeat of scurvy on *Endeavour* not only to the care and vigilance of his surgeon, but to the serving of sauerkraut ('sourgrout' to the sailors) and portable soup (compacted pea soup), and to dosing anyone who showed symptoms of scurvy with wort or malt.

Ashore, the enthusiastic Banks impressed the Tahitians by bringing down three ducks with one shot, and began to study the Tahitian language. He possessed the Enlightenment thirst to try out, without prejudice, new cultural habits—he had tattoos done on his arm in Tahiti, in part to see how it was to inhabit a decorated skin. (It hurt a great deal, he found.) Meanwhile, 'The women,' wrote Molyneux, the master navigator, 'begin to have a share in our friendship which is by no means Platonic.'

Within a fortnight of *Endeavour's* arrival in Tahiti, a fort had been finished, redoubts of casks with four-pounder cannon mounted on them and six swivel guns sited. The area was named by Cook Point Venus.

In one end of a large tent erected there, an astronomical clock with a gridiron pendulum was rigged in a double frame of wood, fixed firm. 'The pendulum was adjusted to exactly the same length as it had been at Greenwich,' noted Charles Green, the astronomer, a Yorkshireman in his mid thirties. Towards the end of the tent facing the clock and 4 metres from it stood the observatory, consisting of one of the ship's clocks, the astronomical quadrant and the reflecting telescopes set up on a steady cask of wet sand. Throughout Friday 2 June, the entire crew was anxious about weather conditions for the transit the next day, but the dawn of the transit was clear, and the day grew witheringly hot.

'We had every advantage we could desire in observing the whole of the passage of the planet Venus over the Sun's disc,' wrote Banks. Cook was on one telescope, Mr Green on another, and both let Doctor Solander take turns. 'We very distinctly saw an atmosphere or dusky shade around the body of the planet.' All three observers listed a different time for the various stages of the transit, and so did Lieutenants Hicks and Clarke who had set up their

own telescopes to the east, and another party to the west. It was a matter of averaging results of the three observation parties, and calculations were collated in the following days.

After the observations, which he would take back to England for comparison with northern hemisphere measurements and to create a firmer set of longitudinal readings, Cook remained to study the Tahitians with the same keen interest that the Tahitians were studying him and Banks. On 13 July 1769, when the *Endeavour* left Matavai Bay, Banks had persuaded Cook to bring along Tupaia, a priest, and Tupaia's servant, a boy named Taiarapa. 'Thank heaven I have a sufficiency,' wrote Banks, 'and I do not know why I may not keep him as a curiosity, as . . . some of [my] neighbours do lions and tigers at a larger expense than he would probably ever put me to.' Banks was also convinced of 'the amusement' of future conversations with Tupaia and 'the benefit he will be of to this ship', given his navigational capacity and his knowledge of the islands of the South Pacific. Tupaia proved his worth through his encyclopaedic knowledge of the reef depths around the islands Cook chose to visit.

At last they left the archipelago on 9 August, Banks putting it thus: 'Launched out into the Ocean in search of what chance and Tupaia might direct us to.'

Some of Cook's men were showing signs of 'venereal distemper'—probably gonorrhoea—from their own private transits of Venus. The natives insisted to Cook that his men had not brought it to the islands; it had come on an earlier British ship named the HMS *Dolphin*.

THE TRANSIT OF MERCURY

Sailing south with his lovesick, afflicted crew, by September 1769 Cook had reached the point mentioned in his instructions as the first zone of search for a southern continent: 145 degrees west longitude and more than 40 degrees south latitude. The wind blasts of this region hurled the *Endeavour* about; the men at their mess tables on the crew deck complained all the more because of the lost ease and glories of Tahiti as Cook turned to the north-west. Banks kept working, and in periods of calm weather was rowed about to net jellyfish or shoot seabirds.

When the boy at the masthead, Nick Young, shouted 'Land!' he earned himself a pint of rum, and as the east coast of New Zealand's North Island

presented itself more clearly, a headland was named in his honour—Young Nick's Head. Not that they were certain where they were. 'All hands seem to agree that this is certainly the continent we are in search of,' wrote Banks, expecting that this might be a northern coast of a huge southern landmass. But Cook himself was more phlegmatic and estimated that this was New Zealand.

Here Cook had his first crisis with native peoples, and it is sad to behold how far his standards had departed from those urged by Lord Morton in his *Hints*. The Maori were Polynesians who had occupied New Zealand, which they called *Aotearoa*, the Land of the Long White Cloud, for about eight hundred years. They lived in fortified villages named *pahs*, identifiable to Europeans as symbols of existing ownership, but there was no *pah* here—the Maori encountered by Cook were probably seasonal visitors.

This landing, Cook in the yawl, probably with Banks and Dr Solander, ended ingloriously in a chase back to the beach pursued by four aggressive Maori men. The crew of *Endeavour* thus began a pattern of treating natives as potential thieves rather than actual owners.

Later in the day, the *Endeavour* intercepted a canoe full of young men and Tupaia invited them aboard. Instead, the Maori hurled every spear they had at the *Endeavour*. Another volley of musketry killed two or three Maori and another three were taken aboard the ship. 'I am aware that most humane men who have not experienced things of this nature will censure my conduct,' wrote Cook. To give him credit, he acknowledged that 'the people in this boat . . . had given me no just provocation and were totally ignorant of my design.' He was heartsick, but, in an age before anthropology, he was devoted to the idea that his little barque was a travelling tabernacle of European grace and dignity, and that its authority must not be challenged. Throughout the entire circumnavigation of both islands, Cook and his crew found the Maori did not understand barter and were likely 'to plunder'. But Cook and his men did not grasp the Maori tradition of gift exchange, and did not understand it when the Maori activated it unilaterally. Tupaia would in any case assure the crew that the New Zealanders were all liars.

Long after, the Polynesian race would exact its punishment on Cook.

Further north, in a bay in which he hoped to observe the transit of Mercury, his relations with the Maori began better. The telescopes and chronometers were again set up on shore to observe the transit on 9 November, and thereby help determine the longitude of the place. The observations were successful, but soon after a Lieutenant Gore on board became aware a piece of his cloth was missing, and the native who had taken it was back in a canoe, whose rowers brandished their oars in defiance. Gore grabbed a musket and shot the culprit dead. A four-pounder was fired to deter the canoe crew.

During the last month of the year 1769, Cook mapped the coast of the North Island of New Zealand. He would then sail through the passage between the North and the South Islands, proving them separate bodies of land. With two flag-raising ceremonies, he would assume both islands into the mystical body of George III.

Cook had by now fulfilled his orders. He had observed the transit of Venus, hunted for the southern continent where it was presumed to exist and would soon complete the charting of New Zealand. He was free in all honour to go home, either by the Cape of Good Hope or by Cape Horn, in whichever direction he thought most advantageous. In a great New Zealand fiord surrounded by cloud-concealed walls of near-vertical rock, he called his officers to the cabin for a conference. To honour their uncertainty, he named the place Doubtful Sound. To go home east round the Horn was attractive, not only because that was the fast way, but because he believed it might be a last chance to encounter the Great Southern Continent, the one Dutch New Holland might be part of, but which—should it exist—would soon be encountered to the east and would run far south towards the pole. But he would be in sub-Antarctic ocean, in howling weather and with a leaky ship he would have to careen once more to repair it from the damage the Horn might do it. The other relatively safe option was to head north to New Guinea and Batavia. It was decided instead to steer westward until they fell in with the east coast of New Holland, and if they found it, to follow it northwards.

On 31 March 1770, Cook left New Zealand behind and turned westwards, crossing the full-blooded currents of the Tasman Ocean in search of eastern Australia.

A chart Cook owned depicted 'Nouvelle Holland' standing rather in the posture of a huge cat leaning forward on its front paws. Van Diemen's Land was shown on it as those front paws, part of an unmarked straight line running north towards what is known today as Cape York, Australia's northernmost point. A few broad-stroke waves in it were left to suggest the possibility of a complex coast.

On the night of 19 April, Cook brought the *Endeavour* to in case the land was near, and at five in the morning he set close reefed sails and merely edged along. And then at six o'clock, Lieutenant Zachary Hicks saw the land. It was extending from the north-east to the south westwards, and was 'long'. Cook named the southernmost point he could see Point Hicks, though it is now known as Cape Everard, very close to the present New South Wales–Victoria border. Further south, he could see nothing where Van Diemen's Land should have been. So Cook turned north and began charting the coast or, to quote his famous biographer, J. C. Beaglehole, 'brought it out of the shades'.

This was virgin coast for Europeans. The Dutch had not been here, and as far as anyone knew, neither had the Chinese, Makassans, Spanish, Portuguese or anyone else except whatever natives were to be found beyond the string of bold capes and glistening beaches and handsome blue and green hills. Cook would often have to bring the *Endeavour* to at night, because of the vigorous surf off the beaches.

On the afternoon of 27 April, Cook attempted a first footing on the coast by putting off in a yawl with Banks, Solander and Tupaia and the boat crew. But the surf was too strenuous. The next morning, though, a bay presented itself. He entered it around a low headland, and anchored off the south shore of the place that afternoon. He was watched by a few natives, some of them painted with white stripes. From a boat offshore, Tupaia tried to talk to these people, but their language owed nothing to Polynesian. They belonged to the Eora language group, one of at least 250 languages then spoken by people in the continent known as New Holland. To the gifts Cook had ordered thrown from the boat onto the shore the natives showed hostility. Cook said of them: 'All they seem'd to want was for us to be gone.' They knew these visiting spirits on their floating island (*turaga*) were a sign of cosmic disorder, possibly the dangerous dead returned and rampant. Nonetheless, Cook put in for a landing.

From the few empty bark huts that were found, Cook had no inhibitions about removing fizz-gigs, that is, fishing spears. In one shelter they found small children hiding behind a bark shield, and gave them strings of beads. Like many later, these traumatised children of the Gweagal clan thought the wigged and long-haired men to be women spirits fallen from the sky.

Cook could not know what great influence his writings about this place would have in times to come. He said it was 'capacious, safe and commodious'. The land was low and level, unlike so much of the country they had passed on the way up the coast, and its soil was sandy. Much of the inland was lagoon country, where mangrove shrubs and palm trees predominated. Stingrays sheltered in the shallows in front of a land from which rose, when disturbed, pelicans and dazzling parrots and cockatoos.

Here, just south of the present-day city of Sydney, a young seaman from the Orkney Islands, Thorby Sutherland, died of tuberculosis, and death amongst his crew was still rare enough to enable Cook to name the inner south point of the bay in his memory. By now he had carved on a tree, as he had already done at Mercury Bay in New Zealand, his ship's name and date of arrival. The great quantity of stingrays found in the bay led to his first calling it Sting Ray's Harbour. Then Banks and Dr Solander came aboard from their excursions ashore, delirious with the range of new plants they had discovered. Moved by their exhilaration, Cook decided he had better call the place Botanist Harbour, and the heads at the entrance Point Solander and Cape Banks. Botanist Harbour soon transmuted to Botany Bay. The most famous location of Georgian botany would thus bear the name of Banks's passion and true love, rather than the names of admirals, sailors and bureaucrats (as, for example, Cape Howe and Batemans Bay), or names based on natural appearance (Point Upright, Long Nose, Red Point). Cook also left guidance for future navigators in some of his names: Point Danger, Mount Warning, Point Lookout.

Banks would end up giving his name in particular to a genus of plant that would be an iconic plant of the Australian bush, one of those definite markers which said this place is not an imitation of England, nor even of the rest of known creation. The *Banksia serrata*, for example, is gnarled and knobbly, has long leaves with serrated edges, and large, thick flowering fronds, yellow-green and rich in nectar. When the flower dies, the old cone resembles a many-mouthed black villain, and one wonders if it was used as a

toy for millennia by Aboriginal children as it would be by the coming generations of white settler children. The *Banksia serrata* would have seventy-six related species all carrying Banks's name.

On the morning of 6 May, helped by a wind change to the south, *Endeavour* left Botany Bay and had a pleasant coastal run. Back on land, the various Eora-speaking clans who occupied the shore and immediate hinterland considered the departure a deliverance, a successful and happy exorcism of alien spirits. Cook passed the sandstone heads of an apparently shallow bay or harbour which he named Port Jackson, but did not explore.

As they made their way northwards, Banks and Solander remained industrious, and so did the expeditionary artist Sydney Parkinson, with so much coastline to sketch and so many novel specimens to draw. Cook's days too must have been extremely busy, as he made his readings on triangulations and added lines to the chart, the very first chart of this coastline. His work was exacting, and he did not fumble his calculations or jump to easy conclusions. Unlike his opinion of Botany Bay, which would later confuse people, his chart of this huge coastline, 2000 kilometres long, was nearly impeccable.

Off Hervey Bay, in what is now Queensland, Richard Orton, the captain's clerk, was so drunk that 'some malicious person or persons in the ship' were able to steal all his clothes and dock part of both his ear lobes. Cook suspected that the culprit was the American midshipman, Mr Magra. Investigations could not prove it, even though Magra had once or twice before 'in their drunken frolics' cut off Orton's clothing.

Cook considered the cutting of Orton 'the greatest insult [that] could be offered to my authority in this ship'. Some relationships aboard might have been turning rancid, but the travelling was now rendered particularly complicated by the Barrier Reef and the great number of islands all around. One night Cook had to anchor in only 4 metres of water, a mere two and two-third fathoms, and a bare half metre more than the ship's draught. The fact that the natives in this region, influenced by the Melanesians to the north, had outrigger canoes—more formidable than the simple craft of the Eora speakers—made him nervous as well. Far north from the point where *Endeavour* had encountered the Australian east coast lay a tropic cape Cook named Tribulation, 'because here began all our troubles'.

The Barrier Reef is not a continuous line of reef but many such lines, and it does not always lie parallel to the coast. To the south it lies further offshore. But by Cape Tribulation the reef cramped Cook in.

It was a splendid night, 12 June, and a man was continuously throwing lead from the bows. The ship now crept on and a little after ten o'clock the man in the bows roared 'Seventeen fathoms!' and before he could swing again, the ship suddenly struck reef. Everything heavy that could be thrown overboard was—the yards and the topmasts were taken down and anchors taken out of the ship with the hope that they could be used for heaving her off. Just a ship's length from the starboard side there was twelve fathoms (21.6 metres) and even more astern.

The ship would not budge. The fixed guns and their carriages were thrown overboard, iron and stone ballast, all manner of stores that had rotted and unnecessary casks. But at high water she still would not move. At least there was a flat calm, so that the sound of the ship's bottom grinding on the coral ceased. But as the tide went out again, *Endeavour* heeled to starboard and began to take water. Even the gentlemen took to the pumps. Cook hoped that the night tide would be higher. But there was also the horrible chance, given the amount of water that was flooding into the hold, that the ship, its charts and all its news would go straight down. At last, after a day's desperation, the night tide lifted *Endeavour* and she floated and was hauled off by her boats. Banks believed that when hauled off she must surely sink and that the gentlemen and crew would be left in a land where they had no hope for subsistence. But the coral which had holed her had stuck in the hole, and thus plugged *Endeavour*.

The anchors were brought on board and the forward topmast set up, and she edged in towards the land. While she sailed the crew fothered her—that is, passed a bandage of sailcloth entirely round her keel, and tightened it in place. Cook was delighted with Midshipman Monkhouse for undertaking the operation and fulfilling it so well. Though Banks had feared that the men might in panic and desperation run berserk on the ship, the crew had behaved well.

On 16 June, a time of temperate tropic warmth on this coast, Cook was able to run through a narrow channel into a harbour, intending to careen

his ship—that is, run it up on the shore at high tide so that its hull could be repaired and de-barnacled. As the tide receded, the damage could be looked at. A large hole had been torn in the starboard side, but the coral that had come away from the reef had partly plugged the hole and the fother had then sealed it in place. While the ship lay on the sand, propped up by logs, and while the carpenters went to work on its hull, a hospital tent was set up ashore for Tupaia and Mr Green, who were both ill. A diet of fresh fish rapidly but temporarily cured Tupaia and improved Mr Green.

The high land here was barren and stony, and the banks of a river, inevitably named the Endeavour, and its backwaters were covered with jungle and mangrove swamp. ‘A very indifferent prospect,’ as Cook said. The people with whom Cook made tentative contact were the Guugu Yimidhirr. There was an argument over ownership of turtles Cook captured. And on 23 June, a previously unsighted animal was seen. It resembled a wild dog but jumped and ran like a hare or deer. The Europeans did not get a good look at one again until 7 July, when on a long walk they saw four of the animals. They outran Banks’s greyhounds, who were caught in the dense grass over which the kangaroos leaped. At least that’s what the Guugu Yimidhirr people told them they called the beast—*Gangurru*. On 14 July, Lieutenant Gore shot one. ‘To compare it to any European animal would be impossible as it has not the least resemblance to any one I have seen,’ wrote Banks. ‘Its forelegs are extremely short and of no use to it in walking, its hind again are as disproportionately long; with these it hops seven or eight feet at each hop.’ Rather like a gerbil, he thought, except this kangaroo weighed 38 pounds (17 kilos) and a gerbil was no bigger than a rat.

The native people remained wary until at last Cook was able to tow the repaired hulk of *Endeavour* off the beach, rig it and sail north. He found himself in a puzzle of reefs and shoals, afraid that strong seas would cast the *Endeavour* once more on the coral. ‘A reef such as is here spoke of is scarcely known in Europe, it is a wall of coral rock rising almost perpendicular out of the unfathomable ocean . . . the large waves of the vast ocean meeting with so sudden a resistance make a most terrible surf breaking mountains high.’

At nightfall the *Endeavour* was only eighty to one hundred metres from the breaking water, the breadth of one wave away from destruction. In its struggle not to be wrecked, it was pushed out through a hole in the reef with the outgoing tide, but the rising tide again pushed it back into danger.

Getting away from the interior of the reef and then escaping the outside of it became a recurrent theme.

It all became much simpler when the reef broadened out into islands around Cape York. Once the northern promontory was rounded, Cook was fairly confident that he could find a passage into 'the Indian seas' and thus home. Cape York was the limit for him—he believed that explorations to the west of it were the business of the Dutch, so just to make the point that he considered his east coast run had turned hinterland British, he once more landed and hoisted the colours and 'took possession of the whole eastern coast . . . by the name of New South Wales, together with all the bays, harbours, rivers and islands situated upon the said coast, after which we fired three volleys of small arms which were answered by the like number from the ship'. For a ship that was barely 30 metres long, the claim its captain made was prodigious.

There were no quibbles about the rights of the sundry tribes of coastal or inland New South Wales, even when their virtues were considered. 'From what I have said of the natives of New Holland, they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far more happy than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition: the earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not magnificent houses, household stuff, etc.' Banks had written in like terms: 'From them appear how small are the real wants of human nature, which we Europeans have increased to an excess which would certainly appear incredible to these people could they be told it.'

On 17 August 1770, the *Endeavour* turned towards home. By Batavia everyone seemed ill; Tupaia died before Christmas; and the ship needed long repair. Sydney Parkinson, who had done beautiful paintings of specimens taken by Mr Banks, and Dr Spöring, assistant naturalist, both died, as did a corporal of marines, and then Mr Green the astronomer. Banks, too, caught fever, but recovered. The master Robert Molyneaux died in Cape Town.

When England was reached, it was at first a series of accounts written by crewmen on the delicious nature of their contact with Tahitian women which gripped the popular imagination. 'The women are extremely lascivious,' wrote a crew member. '... a virgin is to be purchased here, with the unanimous consent of the parents, for three nails and a knife. I own I was a buyer of such commodities ...'

In the meantime, Banks had the immediate problem of avoiding marriage with Miss Blosset, and he and Solander were introduced twice to the King, had dinner with James Boswell and Dr Samuel Johnson, another with Benjamin Franklin at the house of the President of the Royal Society, and received honorary doctorates from Oxford. Gradually news of the scope of Cook's southern hemisphere visitations penetrated European minds, more as a gradual awakening than in a thunderclap.

It was Banks in particular who had stepped into glory, the discovery of plants and animals counting for more than the charting of the eastern coast of New Holland and its naming as New South Wales. The pre-eminent Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus wrote that New South Wales should instead be named Banksia. Cook returned to console Mrs Cook, since their four-year-old girl, Elizabeth, had died three months past. The Admiralty eventually acknowledged that their Lordships extremely well approved of the whole of his proceedings, and the several journals and charts he had presented them with. Cook was introduced to the King at St James on 14 August 1771. He was given command of the *Scorpion*, a sloop, and sent to correct the charts of the English coast. His desire was that he would be sent on another expedition to the South Seas, and that he would command it. He would have his hope.

3*

TRANSPORTATION



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THE ENGLAND COOK RETURNED TO

The Britain to which Banks and Cook had brought back news of New South Wales and Botany Bay and the *gangurru* was one suffering from a range of stresses and rages which it tried to treat by imposing severe penalties on acts of discontent, these ranging from sedition to theft.

The British did not possess the great white spaces of a Siberia to serve as a distant outdoor prison for their criminals, but until the late 1770s they had their American colonies, and had habitually used them. From about 1650 to the outbreak of hostilities between the Americans and British in 1775 foolish young men and minor criminals arrived in Virginia or Maryland or the Carolinas, where American settlers would bid for their labour—generally for seven years—at the auction block. The administrative beauty of this was that the master took over the prisoner, and troubled the authorities only in the case of escape or major unruliness. The convict engaged in field labour was likely to find an early grave in American soil and never bother the British domestic authorities again.

* Some of the material relating to British society, crime and punishment and to the administration of Arthur Phillip has also been covered in this author's earlier work *The Commonwealth of Thieves*.

But in embracing the concept of transportation, the British government sought to solve a domestic issue and barely thought of the impact it had on the colony that received the felons. During the eighteenth century, one North American colonist was left to complain, 'America has been made the very common sewer and dung yard to Britain.' But not once the shots rang out at Concord Bridge, and the Minutemen marched on Boston, signalling the commencement of the American Revolutionary War.

A new Transportation Act of 1780, passed during Britain's very loss of the American colonies, sought to make transportation more obligatory. The reality was that prisoners sentenced to transportation were doing their time not in British colonies but in chaotic, overcrowded prisons while the government waited for the American rebellion to end. The offences for which an individual Briton could be transported under the accumulated Transportation Acts made up a long list with a heavy emphasis on the sanctity of two institutions: property and the Crown. Notorious thieves and takers of spoil in the borderlands of Northumberland and Cumberland, commonly called 'moss-troopers' or 'reivers', were subject to penalties of transportation; similarly, persons found guilty of embezzling His Majesty's stores to the value of twenty shillings; persons convicted of wilfully burning ricks of corn, hay, etc or barns etc in the night time (a common crime associated with peasant protest against landlords); persons convicted of larceny; persons imprisoned for smuggling wool to France and the Low Countries and not paying the excise on it; persons convicted of entering into any park and killing or wounding any deer without the consent of the owner; persons convicted of perjury and forgery; persons convicted of assaulting others with offensive weapons with the design to rob; vagrants escaping from a house of correction or from service in the army or navy; persons convicted of stealing any linen laid to be printed or bleached; persons returning from transportation without licence; persons convicted of entering mines with intent to steal; persons convicted of assaulting any magistrate or officer engaged in the salvage of ships or goods from wrecks; persons convicted of stealing fish in any water within a park, paddock, orchard or yard. Besides legislation imposing the penalty of transportation, between 1660 and 1819 almost two hundred capital, mandatory death sentence statutes were passed, along similar principles, to add to the nearly fifty already in existence.

The lack of a British police force meant that legislators felt they needed to impress the people with the terror of the law. In theory, frequent public

executions should have cut down on crowding in gaols. But even the lawmakers, members of the Commons, might mercifully take up the special cause of this or that prisoner. In a given courtroom, at the bi-yearly Assizes or during the Quarter Sessions, a jury might deliberately undervalue the goods stolen to prevent a prisoner being 'stretched'. Their gratuitous compassion speaks to us still in the court records' description of a prisoner as 'too young' for the full force of the law to operate, or else as 'a poor unfortunate girl' or 'an unfortunate girl of good family'. But if they didn't like a prisoner, juries could just as easily indulge feelings of gratuitous outrage.

As for the individual prisoner, often young, generally, they appeared without legal counsel. The magistrates they faced at the Quarter Sessions believed one crime unpunished begot another, and questions about the accused's level of want or disadvantage did not delay them for a second. Nor did the idea the accused was innocent till proved guilty influence them. The prisoner had to prove the 'prosecutor'—that is, the victim—had made a mistake in identifying them or was acting from malice.

The Georgian version of a day in court was less than a quarter of an hour. Major cases all ended with acquittal, transportation or the death penalty—what Londoners called the 'hearty choke with caper sauce' and 'dancing the Paddington frisk'. Yet capital punishment still took forms other than hanging. Women counterfeiters were subject to death by burning, and the heads of Jacobites (Scottish supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie) were stuck and exposed on spikes at Temple Bar. About one in eight of those committed for trial was sentenced to death, but (based on figures concentrated between 1761 and 1765), fewer than half of those so sentenced were executed. For many decades there had been eight hanging days at Tyburn Hill every year, a frightful public but ceremonious spectacle.

CAMPBELL'S HULKS

An Act of Parliament passed in 1783 allowed the removal of convicts from the overcrowded gaols on land to the dismasted hulks of old men-of-war moored in the Thames, and at Portsmouth and Plymouth, where they could serve their time labouring on harbour works pending transportation. The British government was thus temporarily restricted to transporting its fallen souls not across the Atlantic but a few miles ashore by rowboat. The hulks, an eyesore detested by respectable London, condemned by progressives as academies of

criminality, and unpopular with convicts, were both a phenomenon and an enterprise. Duncan Campbell, a reputable man and a good Presbyterian Scot, was the hulk-master. He had begun in the convict-transporting business in 1758, carrying felons to Virginia and Maryland. The British thought of the hulks as a temporary expedient, but they would not be able to get rid of their floating prisons in the Thames and elsewhere until 1853.

Reacting to complaints from their constituents, London's members of parliament and city aldermen kept telling government the prisoners on the hulks should be transported anywhere convenient—to the East or West Indies, Canada or Nova Scotia, Florida or the Falklands. For by the end of the American war it was obvious British prisons and hulks could not handle the 'rapid and alarming accumulation of convicts within the kingdom'. Each prisoner on the hulks cost government £38 a year, and his labour was not worth that. The question was not whether transportation would occur but where.

The most significant witness to appear before the Commons Committee on Colonies, in 1779, set up while government was trying to relieve gaol pressure all over Britain, was Sir Joseph Banks, the great naturalist, commentator and society figure.

Even though in the journal of his voyage as a young scientist with Cook, Banks described Botany Bay on the New South Wales coast as barren, he urged the committee to consider that it might be suitable for transportation, and that there was sufficient fertile soil to sustain a European settlement. From there, too, escape would be difficult, he said. The climate was mild, as in the south of France. There were no savage animals or hostile natives. The 'Indians' around Botany Bay he estimated at hardly more than fifty.

Sir Joseph Banks was asked whether he thought land for settlement might be acquired from the Aborigines 'by Cession or Purchase'. Banks said he thought not, that there was nothing you could give the Aborigines in return for their soil. He told the committee that the blacks were blithely nomadic and would 'speedily abandon' whatever land was needed. The concept of New South Wales as *terra nullius*, no man's land, was born.

In the end, the Commons Committee left the question of transportation destinations open, but recommended the building of two penitentiaries, where prisoners would be kept in solitary confinement with hard labour. By

1786, however, no progress had been made on building the penitentiaries and the government had definitely decided to begin transportation again.

Botany Bay in immensely remote New South Wales, on a coast *Endeavour* had visited in 1770, also had an eloquent proponent in a former midshipman of Cook's, the miscreant James Maria Magra (or Matra) who allegedly had cut Orton's ears one drunken night. But he did not see Botany Bay chiefly as a destination for transportees. At the time he sailed with Cook, he had been financially secure due to his New York colonial family's wealth, but having remained loyal to the Crown in the American war, he had lost all that. He had returned to London from New York in 1781, where he found a great number of fellow American Empire Loyalist refugees living in squalor. Britain was doing little for them, and Magra drafted a 1783 pamphlet addressed to the British government, *A Proposal for Establishing a Settlement in New South Wales to Atone for the Loss of our American Colonies*. American Empire Loyalists should be sent as free settlers to New South Wales, and wives should be supplied to them if necessary from amongst the natives of New Caledonia or Tahiti. 'Settlement could be a centre for trade with East Asia or a wartime base for attack on the Dutch colonies of Malaya . . . And thus two objects of the most desirable and beautiful union will be permanently blended: economy to the public, and humanity to the individual.' Without mentioning convicts, Magra nonetheless brought attention to New South Wales/Botany Bay as a potential destination for awkward people.

At the end of 1785, Prime Minister Pitt and Lord Sydney were still looking for a plausible scheme of transportation. They considered Africa, specifically a tract of country on the west coast near the mouth of the Das Voltas (Orange) River where there were copper deposits. Convicts could be shipped out in slaving vessels which would then proceed up the coast to pick up their more accustomed cargo of African slaves to take to America and the West Indies. The many American families who were still anxious to live under British rule could also be sent to Das Voltas and serve as the discipliners and employers of the convicts. In preparation, the government sloop *Nautilus* was sent to survey the southern Atlantic coast of Africa, but its ultimate report was that the country was barren, waterless, hopeless.

In March 1786, Londoners and their aldermen yet again petitioned against the unsatisfactory solution represented by the hulks. The aldermen

reminded the government that demobilised and unemployed soldiers and sailors could make a mob, and imbued with the fancy American ideas of the rights of man would set convicts free and burn the hulks. The hulks had brought the risk of mayhem and uprising, as well as shipboard epidemics, to within a longboat's reach of shore.

At last, in August 1786, Cabinet plumped for New South Wales, the preposterously distant coast Cook had charted sixteen years past. Londoners rejoiced that a decision had been made to resume transportation, believing it would mean an end to the river hulks.

A DISCREET OFFICER

The man the government chose to 'take upon him the command of this rabble' of convicts was a 49-year-old Royal Navy post-captain named Arthur Phillip, an old shipmate of the Home Office Undersecretary, Evan Nepean. The fact that Phillip had been a sailor since the age of thirteen and had no experience at all of the British penal system did not worry the Home Office. Lord Sydney wanted any robust and adaptable fellow to mount the flotilla and empty the hulks and prisons for him. Phillip does not seem to have hesitated in accepting the appointment. Many officers might have thought it potentially dangerous and unrewarding.

Lord Howe at the Admiralty had written to Lord Sydney of the Home Office on 3 September 1786: 'I cannot say the little knowledge I have of Captain Phillip would have led me to select him for a service of this complicated nature.' But Sydney liked and admired professional officers like Phillip, whom he rightly considered the journeymen of Empire. Yet he was demanding of Phillip a remarkable spectrum of gifts. The man had to undertake a huge navigation and command a number of ships packed with criminals, and on arrival at Botany Bay in New South Wales was required to implement for the Crown an unprecedented penal and society-making experiment. This blended mission of being commodore not of two or three but eleven ships, as well as captain-general of huge and unvisited territories, and gaoler-in-chief in the netherworld was something for which normal naval service could only dimly prepare anyone. Due to the vulgar urgings of domestic politics, Prime Minister Pitt and Lord Sydney were sending to the ends of the earth a reputable but not glittering fellow, in command of many vessels stocked not with naturalists and artists but with Britain's sinners.

The founding document of this enterprise for Lord Sydney and for Captain Phillip was called, unremarkably, *The Heads of a Plan*, and was devised in Sydney's office by Phillip's friend Evan Nepean, Sydney's Undersecretary and a former naval purser. It called for the appointment of 'a discreet officer', and that had been achieved. One wonders if the term 'discreet' included the idea that Phillip was to keep watch for French incursions into the south-west Pacific, as well as be prison-master. For Phillip, in the past, had been a spy against the French. The *Heads* then concentrated on the business of transportation to New South Wales, rather than on any commercial benefit arising from the new place. The document declares itself at its opening sentence: 'Heads of a plan for effectually disposing of convicts.' New South Wales was a country which, by the temperateness of the climate, 'connected with the remoteness of its situation (from whence it is hardly possible for persons to return without permission)', seemed 'peculiarly adapted' to deal with the increase of felons in the kingdom, and especially in London. The *Heads* covered the process of transportation, the taking on board of two companies of marines to form a military establishment, the provision of rations, and the collection of supplies and livestock on the way at Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope.

It seemed that His Majesty's government desired New South Wales far more as a prison than as a great port, or as an opening for British trade. Phillip was thus, in the strictest penal sense, to be a governor, and not an apostle of British commerce.

THE MYSTERIES OF PHILLIP

To his convicts, Arthur Phillip would later convey the very breath of civil magisterium, even though his early childhood might not have been much more socially elevated than some of theirs. His mother, Elizabeth Breech, had first been married to a sailor named Herbert, who died while still in his twenties of a fever caught during his duty on the Jamaica station. Elizabeth then married Jacob Phillip, a German 'native of Frankfurt' and a teacher of languages. Arthur Phillip was born in October 1738, in the family house in Bread Street in the City of London, not necessarily an address of privilege. He was admitted to the charity orphan school at the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, apparently as Herbert's son rather than Phillip's, in 1751. The school was for the sons of poor seamen, 'training them up to a seafaring life'.

Arthur Phillip's apprenticeship had begun in 1753 in the squalid, profane atmosphere of a whaler built for the Greenland whale fishery. Just after his seventeenth birthday, war—later to be called the Seven Years War—was declared between France and Britain and he entered the Royal Navy as a captain's servant. He experienced the violence of cannonry in an inconclusive battle to save the British-garrisoned island of Minorca. Then, having passed his lieutenant's exam, as a junior officer off Havana in 1761 he survived both Spanish artillery and a wet season in which malaria, yellow fever, cholera, typhus and dysentery killed off seven thousand sailors and soldiers engaged in the campaign.

This prepared Phillip for elevation, even though he lacked the powerful connections so important to young officers. His character in his early twenties combined a dry humour with reserve, efficiency and intellectual hunger. To temper his authoritarian streak he had common sense and was not fast to anger.

On 19 July 1763, the Seven Years War having been fought, Lieutenant Phillip married Margaret Denison, the wealthy widow of a glove and wine merchant, and fifteen to sixteen years older than he was. He does not seem to have been a young man aflame with passion. With the war over he was on half-pay, and the couple lived in Hampton Court for two years, but then went to rusticate in Dorset, on Margaret's estate of 22 acres (8.9 hectares), named Vernals. Phillip ran their property as a dairy farm, kept their horses and grew fruit and vegetables. But 'some circumstances occurred' which led to a formal indenture of separation signed by the couple in April 1769. It stated that they had 'lately lived separate and apart'.

Now Phillip applied himself to his alternate vocation. He began to spend time in France as a spy for the Home Office or Admiralty. With a gift for languages and his German coloration he was good at it, but it was an ungrateful business, and Phillip felt he needed to accelerate his naval career. The Portuguese government approached the Admiralty and asked them to second some good officers to help in their fight with Spain over a disputed area, a region known as the Debatable Lands, which ran northward from the estuary of the River Plate on the south-eastern coast of South America. As a token of their claim, the Portuguese had created a colony at the Plate, across the estuary from Buenos Aires, and named it Colonia do Sacramento. The Admiralty recommended Lieutenant Phillip to its Portuguese friends.

Collecting his new ship, *Nossa Senhora de Belém*, on the banks of Lisbon's Tagus River, he quickly added Portuguese to the French and German he could already speak.

Phillip got on well with the Portuguese viceroy in Rio de Janeiro, Marquis de Lavradio, who found him a committed combatant against the Spanish coastguard and naval vessels. But in 1776, the Portuguese started to negotiate with the Spanish.

In 1777, the Treaty of San Ildefonso made the Debatable Lands largely Spanish. Phillip resigned his now futile Portuguese commission to seek fresh employment in the Royal Navy and the war against the Americans and their European allies. He had an undistinguished time of it. In the River Elbe, when escorting transports full of Hanoverian recruits for the British army, the onset of river ice forced him ingloriously to run his frigate into the mud at the Hamburg harbourside. During the frustrating months his command *Ariadne* was stuck there, Phillip came to place great reliance in Lieutenant Philip Gidley King, a sturdy young man of undistinguished background like himself, a draper's son.

When in 1782 the Admiralty appointed Phillip captain of the *Europe*, a 64-gun, 600-man battleship, he became at last commander of a ship of the British battle line. He took Lieutenant Philip Gidley King aboard with him, and his clerk, a most eccentric and remarkably placed man named Harry Brewer. Both these men would ultimately accompany him to New South Wales.

Phillip's old friend Evan Nepean at the Home Office was now responsible, as well as for prisons, for espionage in France and Spain. It was as one of Nepean's spies in the 1780s that Arthur Phillip, after his return from Madras on *Europe*, became known to Lord Sydney. Though Britain was not at war with France, something like a cold war was maintained between the two nations. Late in 1784 Nepean called on Phillip to journey to Toulon and other French ports 'for the purpose of ascertaining the naval force, and stores in the arsenals'.

So when the argument about what to do with prisoners condemned to transportation was at its height, Phillip was largely absent from the country.

WHO WERE THE CONVICTS?

The petty crimes of those convicts condemned to transportation reveal much about the upheaval and dislocation suffered by British society following the process known as Enclosure. For in that era there were changes across Britain which drove many rural poor to the cities and towards crime.

Beginning in the 1760s, the revolutionary and disruptive process of Enclosure would transform the landscape of Britain over the next seventy years. Villages had till then been organised under the old system of scattered strips of open land variously owned by peasants and landlord, as well as shared common ground. Under a series of Enclosure Acts, villages were reorganised by Enclosure Commissioners according to new agricultural efficiencies, so that the ground of the chief landlord, of prosperous farmers and various smallholders was consolidated and fenced. In reality, Enclosure drove small farmers and agricultural workers off land their families had worked for centuries. Many smallholders found the expense of fencing their land with barriers of hawthorn and blackthorn beyond them and gave it up. They also discovered that the common land traditionally shared by the community, upon which they and the peasants depended to run their livestock, was fenced off from them too.

Before Enclosure, smallholders and agricultural labourers' families had the right not only to graze livestock on the common land, but to take from it undergrowth, loppings, peat, fish from lakes and streams, sand and gravel, and acorns to feed pigs. Enclosure put an end to those practices, and was occurring in many districts at a time when the great loom factories were coming into being and cloth spun in cottages was less sought after. Traditional village, church and family controls on the way men and women behaved broke down as families sought parish poor relief or became itinerant and set off for cities. For, says an historian of the period, 'Everyone below the plateau of skilled craftsmen was undernourished.'

Rather than become scarecrow people of the countryside, many of the rural dispossessed made their way to already crowded cities to become a dangerous under-class who saw crime as a better option than working an 80-hour week as a servant, or toiling for the unregulated and dangerous gods of machine capital.

Esther Abrahams, for example, a young Jewish milliner of about fifteen years who would one day grow old in New South Wales, was indicted for feloniously stealing black silk lace, value 50 shillings, from a London shop while the assistant had her back turned. She was remanded to Newgate. At her trial in July 1786, though she called three witnesses who all gave her a very good character, she was found guilty of stealing and sentenced to seven years transportation.

In the public wards of Newgate, she became pregnant and at the end of the following winter gave birth to a daughter, Roseanna. Whether the child came from a prison romance or even a rape, we cannot say, except that all three of these were common in Newgate. A petition for royal mercy had been lodged in February 1787 on Esther's behalf, probably by her parents, but it failed, and soon after the birth mother and infant were sent aboard the *Lady Penrhyn*.

Thomas Barrett was one of a number of First Fleet prisoners who were referred to as 'Mercuries'. In 1782, barely twelve, he was found guilty of stealing one silver watch worth £3 and various other items, when a spinster was showing Barrett and two others the house of a London gentleman available for letting. Barrett made an attempt to escape but was caught and searched by a beadle of Marylebone. He was first sentenced to death in September 1782, then the sentence was commuted. Next he would escape from *Mercury*, a convict vessel bound for Nova Scotia and taken over by the convicts while it was still in British waters. He was recaptured, sentenced to death again, and again received the royal mercy, so finding himself on board the *Charlotte*, where he would prove intractable. In time, while still less than twenty years of age, Thomas Barrett would be the first man to hang in New South Wales.

And so it went. Isabella Rawson (Rosson) was a laundress, mantua-lace maker and former schoolteacher, tried in January 1787 for stealing three quantities of goods from the gentleman for whom she was laundress. Her loot included a waistcoat and bed curtains taken from her master, Stewart Kydd, a barrister of Gray's Inn. She would go down to the cellar to fetch coals and other things, said Kydd, and stole things from a trunk deposited there. When he returned from the country just before Christmas in 1786, he found that his wife had put Rawson in the custody of a constable. The girl fell down on her knees and begged for mercy. 'I told her she had behaved ungrateful.' Rawson handed over the pawnbroker's tickets she had received when selling the goods and left herself to the mercy of the court. She was found guilty and transported for seven years, giving birth to a prison child aboard the *Lady Penrhyn* which died in infancy.

William Richardson, who would one day be Rawson's husband, had also been a 'Mercury', and was originally tried in December 1783 for an attack with an accomplice on a servant who was walking home to James Street

from Chelsea. A handkerchief, a guinea, a crown piece, a silver sixpence and six copper halfpence were taken. Both accused were found guilty and sentenced to death, but both were humbly recommended to mercy by the jury.

Another 'Mercury' was Robert Sideway, indicted in September 1782 for stealing a deal luggage box containing various goods including a cloth coat, a linen waistcoat, one pair of silk stockings and one pair of shoes. He had climbed on a coach at the Cross Keys in Wood Street between two and three in the morning and taken the goods. A porter and a watchman intercepted the fleeing man. Later, shipped off on the *Mercury*, he returned to shore and incurred a death sentence, now commuted.

The destination of these people was not to be a home for the chosen, a chosen home, but instead was a place imposed by authority and devised specifically with its remoteness in mind.

THE STATE OF THE PRISONS

The gaols of Britain as experienced by Sideway and the others already condemned to transportation in such numbers in the 1780s had been neglected by government. Crucially, they were run under licence as private enterprises. To be a prison warder was not to be a servant of society but a franchisee, entitled to charge inmates a scale of fees and run a taproom, where liquor could be bought, for profit. John Howard, a prison reformer, discovered in one London prison that the tap, frequented both by prisoners and visitors, was sub-hired out to one of the prisoners.

In 1777 the first painstaking survey of conditions in English prisons, Howard's *The State of the Prisons*, was published, and gaol reform became a popular issue. Howard, a Bedfordshire squire, was shocked profoundly by his visits to prisons and became the most famous of prison reformers. In his tract, Howard depicted a cell, 17 feet by 6 (c 5 × 1.8 metres), crowded with more than two dozen inmates and receiving light and air only through a few holes in the door. The 'clink' of a Devon prison had only 5 feet 6 inches (167 cm) of headroom, and light and air entered by one hole just 7 inches long and 5 broad (17 × 13 cm). In Clerkenwell prison, those who could not pay for beds lay on the floor, and in many other prisons inmates paid even for the privilege of not being chained.

The most infamous of prisons, old Newgate, was burned down by a mob in 1780. Prisoners were admitted to the rebuilt prison by 1782.

New Newgate prison was divided into two halves—the master’s side where the inmates could rent lodging and services, and where those who had committed criminal libel, sedition or embezzlement were kept, and then the more impoverished section called the common side. Earlier in the century, the writer Daniel Defoe, who himself had been thrown into Newgate for theft, described it through the eyes of his character Moll Flanders, in terms which seemed to be just as true of the new Newgate: ‘It is impossible to describe the terror of my mind when I was first brought in, and when I looked around upon all the horrors of that dismal place . . . The roaring, the swearing and clamour, the stench and nastiness, and all the dreadful, afflicting things that I saw there, joined to make the place seem an emblem of hell itself.’

Though prisoners and visitors had access to the taphouse, and there were several communal rooms, a chapel, a separate infirmary for men and women, and exercise yards, only the most basic medicines were dispensed in the two infirmaries. And every day, sightseers came to view the spectacle, as we might now visit a zoo, while prostitutes worked their way around to service visitors and prisoners who had cash, and the turnkeys received a pay-off from this traffic as well. Meanwhile, unless the men and women in the common wards had relatives or friends to bring them food, they lived off a three-halfpenny loaf a week, supplemented by donations and a share of the cook’s weekly meat supply. One of the motivations for joining a gang, or criminal ‘canting crew’, was that if imprisoned, the individual criminal was not left to the bare mercies of the gaol authorities.

PHILLIP TAKING PAINS

The Home Office had asked for a discreet officer, and got one. Arthur Phillip could smell disaster in the rushed agenda of his masters and he proved tenacious in his demands for a well-supplied fleet. He wanted the convicts to arrive at the nominated shore in good health. In his little office at the Admiralty, Phillip worked with his clerk, the unkempt Harry Brewer, and wrote a document (on many sheets of paper of unequal size) which represented his philosophy of convict transportation and penal settlement. Not as a visionary, but merely as someone acknowledging the state of British law, he noted: ‘The laws of this country will, of course, be introduced in New South Wales, and there is one that I would wish to take place from the

moment His Majesty's forces take possession of the country—that there can be no slavery in a free land and consequently no slaves.'

His determination that convicts not be seen as a slave caste would have important results for many of the felons marked down for his convict transports. He had respect for their right to as safe and healthy a journey as he could provide. But he did not see their ultimate status as fully equal to that of the free. 'As I would not wish convicts to lay the foundation of an Empire, I think they should ever remain separated from the garrison and other settlers that may come from Europe.'

Through secret caresses between free men and convict women, and other alliances forged on his ships, this would become a proposition already in doubt before the ships even sailed.

The successful tenderer for the overall contract for the fleet was a man named William Richards Jr, a prominent ship-broker of South London. The story goes that contractors dumped their worst produce on Phillip, knowing he could not very conveniently complain. But two reliable young officers of marines, Watkin Tench and David Collins, no strangers to salt rations, would independently agree that the provisions on the First Fleet provided by Richards were 'of a much superior quality to those usually supplied by contract'.

Under Richards' contract with the Navy Board, he had gone on the river and inspected and chartered five merchant vessels as transports—the *Alexander*, *Charlotte*, *Friendship*, the newly built *Lady Penrhyn* and *Scarborough*—and three store ships: *Borrowdale*, *Fishburn* and *Golden Grove*. The contracts with the shipowners were called charter-parties and were specific about the duties of the shipowners and captains, the number of crew per tonnage, and the form of accommodation, rations, cooking equipment, bedding, fetters, ventilation equipment and so on supplied for the convicts, and the medicines to be taken aboard. Ultimately, as the number of convicts loaded on the ships grew, Richards would need to contract a sixth convict transport, the *Prince of Wales*. The transports were all relatively young vessels, but not purpose-built prison ships, so they required special fitting out by carpenters at the Deptford dock-yard in order to be able to receive prisoners on their cargo decks. All were three-masted and over 300 tons (306 tonnes), except the *Friendship*, a 278-ton (284 tonne), two-masted vessel generally described as a brig or a snow.

For Richards and the individual shipowners the cream from this expedition would come after the ships finished off the business of taking the convicts into the void. Some of them looked to receive further charter from the East India Company, authorising them to go to China to load tea. That was if they reached Botany Bay in the first place.

The convict prison on each of the ships was fitted out on the lowest cargo deck, where cradles—narrow sleeping bunks in sets of four or six—ran the length of the ship on either side of an aisle. Young Lieutenant Philip Gidley King, Phillip's protégé from *Europe*, was down at Deptford attached to *Sirius*, and described the sort of security being put in place on the transports. He saw that the carpenters were barricading an area on deck with a wooden barrier about 5 feet (1.5 metres) high, and topping it with pointed iron prongs, 'to prevent any connection between the marines and ship's company, with the convicts'. Below, to contain the prison deck, thick bulkheads were positioned, 'fitted with nails and run across from side to side [port to starboard] in the between decks above the mainmast, with loop holes to fire . . . in case of irregularities'. Forward of the prison space was the prison hospital, and the equally dark areas aft of the prison were often reserved for marine privates and noncommissioned officers and their families. The hatches which gave onto the deck were 'well secured down by cross bars, bolts and locks and are likewise nailed down from deck to deck with oak stanchions'.

Already, in Whitehall in dismal winter, nameless clerks were attaching the lists of convicts' names to the orders-in-council that authorised transportation. There were no selection criteria for transportees based on health, suitability, trade or sturdiness. A convict of any age, strength and skills could go to Botany Bay.

These orders and lists were sent to the keeper of Newgate, to the Clerk of Arraign at the Old Bailey, and the hulk overseer Duncan Campbell. The fitting out of the transports finished, the ships moored at Woolwich, and the first convicts, men and women from the hulks and Newgate, and from some county prisons, were rowed down the wintry river to the *Alexander* and *Lady Penrhyn* on 6 January 1787. Many of them were sick and clothed in rags when received on deck in their prison irons. These were struck off their wrists by a crew member and then the ship's chains were put on, and the transportees descended to the cold and damp of the prison decks.

Down in the chill dimness the convicts were often secured in place by chains which ran through an ankle shackle on each convict. The allotted space per felon, when fully loaded, was 18 inches width by 6 feet in length (46 cm × 1.8 metres). The waste arrangements were a series of buckets aft, topped by a plank with holes cut in it.

Even on *Lady Penrhyn*, reserved for women, the master kept the prisoners handcuffed and chained and below decks in those first days, purely out of fear. A poor country girl, Sarah Bellamy from Worcestershire, barely sixteen and sentenced for stealing, would have found the poor ventilation, cramped headroom and narrow sleeping space claustrophobic. Add to that the noise of timbers and tide, and the raucousness of worldly, rebellious Newgate girls, their voices bouncing off the low headroom. For Bellamy, the convict deck must have been a perfect hell, and when Joe Downey, a young sweet-talking sailor soon to be appointed quartermaster, offered his attentions and protection, how grateful she must have been for what he could do to relieve the situation.

Indeed love and lust would penetrate all the clever barricading of the ships. Despite the guarded companionways and gates to the prison decks, and the lack of privacy, prostitution would become a reality on *Lady Penrhyn*, *Friendship* and *Prince of Wales*.

Meanwhile, Phillip's assigned flagship, the part-victualler, part-frigate *Sirius*, of 540 tons (551 tonnes), named after 'the bright star in the Southern constellation of the Great Dog', and with a crew of one hundred and sixty men, was at the Deptford dockyard, being fitted out. The year had turned and still the fleet had not left.

Phillip came aboard his ships on 11 January to see the recently loaded men and women, and was appalled by their marginal health and their need of clothing and blankets. Phillip complained to Undersecretary Evan Nepean that the clothes the women were sent down to the ships in 'stamp the magistrates with infamy'. He ordered that they be supplied with clothing from the naval stores of *Sirius*. He asked the authorities that the ships be moved out of the Thames and down the English coast to Spithead off Portsmouth, where, in the lee of the Isle of Wight, they could anchor on the broad sheet of shoalwater known as the Motherbank. Here, because of distance from shore, the inmates could be unchained and allowed fresh air. Indeed, the fleet would begin assembling there from mid March onwards.

AT STATION, PLYMOUTH AND PORTSMOUTH

In February 1787, *Charlotte* and *Friendship* headed for Plymouth to collect prisoners from the hulks and gaols there. The two little vessels boarded between them 164 males and 41 females. One of the prisoners loaded from the hulk *Dunkirk* onto *Friendship* was a young, strong, red-headed Norfolk man named Henry Kable. At the time of his sentencing to death in 1783 for burglary, he had been a lad of sixteen, athletically built. Like his father and an accomplice, he was meant to be hanged on a gibbet outside Norwich Castle, but after he climbed the scaffold, he was pardoned on condition of transportation. He saw his father and his accomplice executed.

In Norwich Castle prison after his transmutation of sentence, he had fallen in love with a slightly older woman, Susannah Holmes, guilty of burglary. Their prison child, Henry, had not been allowed to accompany his parents down to the dismal *Dunkirk*, and was being cared for by the Norwich gaoler, John Simpson. Now that Henry was on *Friendship* and Susannah aboard *Charlotte*, the efforts of Simpson to get Lord Sydney to let the baby be reunited with his mother would capture the public's imagination. Indeed, during their wait at Norwich Castle, Henry and Susannah had requested they be married but had been refused permission. Soon, Simpson came down to Plymouth by coach with the infant, he was presented to Susannah, and she and Henry were both on *Friendship* with their baby, and the family would not be broken up again until late in the voyage.

On 9 March 1787, Lieutenant Ralph Clark, a rather prim, neurotic officer who had volunteered in the hope of promotion, recorded, 'March with the detachment from the barracks to the dockyard and embark on board the *Friendship* transport with Captain Lieutenant Meredith and Second Lieutenant Faddy, two sergeants, three corporals, one drummer, thirty-six privates, nine women and children.'

At the same time the *Sirius*, its tender the *Supply* and the remainder of the ships were anchored on the robust tide of the Motherbank off Portsmouth. Here further convicts and marines were rowed out to the transports. *Scarborough* would receive over two hundred male convicts, and cramped little *Prince of Wales* (318 tons/324 tonnes) some 49 females and one male. A marine garrison of 89 men came from the Portsmouth division.

Though officers of marines were not permitted to bring their families to Botany Bay, some wives of private soldiers, about ten per company,

were allowed to travel. A total of 246 marine personnel have been positively identified as having sailed in the First Fleet, with 32 wives and 15 children. Ten further children would be born to the families of marines at sea.

Movement of convicts from London to Portsmouth continued. A report by a gentleman visiting Newgate depicted convicts delighted to be slated for the fleet. One party left Newgate on the morning of 27 February in six heavily guarded wagons from a Woolwich hulk via Guildford. As this large body of convicts moved through Portsmouth, the windows and doors of houses and shops were closed, and the streets lined with troops. By the end of the loading process, some fifteen hundred people were spread amongst the eleven vessels.

In April, a Portsmouth newspaper complained that the longer the sailing was delayed the more the port was thronged with thieves and robbers, those who had come down to see their old hulk- and prison-mates and fellow gang members ('rum culls') away. One Londoner complained: 'Botany Bay has made the shoplifters and pickpockets more daring than ever. To be rewarded with settlement in so fertile a country cannot fail of inducing every idle person to commit some depredation that may amount to a crime sufficient to send him there at the expense of the public.'

By early May, the prison decks were filled up and the cargo decks of Phillip's fleet were crowded with water casks and shacks and pens for animals. Phillip would bring his pet greyhounds aboard *Sirius* to add to the noise and clutter. But there was other and more sophisticated freight. At the Board of Longitude's meeting in February 1787, the Astronomer Royal, Dr Maskelyne, had proposed adaptations for three telescopes and the acquisition of a 10-inch Ramsden sextant to serve the marine lieutenant William Dawes, surveyor and astronomer, in making nautical and astronomical observations on the voyage to Botany Bay 'and on shore at that place'. Dawes, on the *Sirius*, was one of the Portsmouth division of marines, a very spiritual young man, who had been wounded in a sea battle with the French in Chesapeake Bay during the war in America, and had volunteered for New South Wales out of scientific rather than military fervour.

When on 7 May Arthur Phillip at last was able to reach Portsmouth from London, with his servants and his clerk, Harry Brewer, he brought with him the Kendall timekeeper which would be used on board *Sirius* to calculate longitude.

Phillip had a final inspection of his fleet. On board *Sirius*, greeted by the Scots master, John Hunter, Phillip met a marine officer who would become his staunch friend, Captain David Collins, a stalwart fellow of not much more than thirty who was assigned to be Botany Bay's judge-advocate. Collins had been a fifteen-year-old officer in command of the marines aboard HMS *Southampton* when in 1772 it was sent to rescue Queen Caroline Matilda from Denmark. He had served on land, climbing the slope against defended American positions at the fierce battle at Bunker Hill, at which American sharpshooters caused great casualties amongst British officers.

Collins's military superior, the leader of all the fleet's marines and Arthur Phillip's lieutenant-governor, was Major Robert Ross, a Scot whom some found hard to get on with. John Hunter of the Royal Navy, captain of *Sirius*, was more a companion spirit to Phillip; the sea had ultimate affection over his competing passions for music, the classics and the Church of Scotland. Hunter's first shipwreck had been on a howling Norwegian coast at the age of eight. Just over fifty, he was the sort of officer others might describe as the navy's backbone, though, like Phillip, his career was rendered uncertain by lack of family connections. His fortitude, rigour, energy and tenacity would prove valuable commodities during the voyage of Phillip's improbable fleet, and also once it had reached its staggeringly distant destination.

4

THE FIRST FLEET MEETS EORA



THE PASSAGE

The First Fleet's prodigious journey began in darkness at 3 a.m. on Sunday 3 May 1787. Phillip's instructions were to punctuate the voyage with calls at the Canary Islands, at Rio de Janeiro, his old home base, and then at Cape Town. The run down the English Channel took three days, with great suffering amongst the women on the convict deck of the *Lady Penrhyn*, the new-built ship whose timbers were still howling and settling and whose master, William Sever, was unfamiliar with her. Uncontrollable seasickness filled the prison's low-roofed deck with its acid, gut-unsettling stench. And, of course, no one could stand up, as the roof hung low, even between the beams.

Phillip quickly discovered that there was a range of speed and performance between the various ships. Apart from *Lady Penrhyn*, the transports *Charlotte* and *Prince of Wales* were slowed by heavy seas, and their convicts suffered the worst discomfort and seasickness. The handiest sailer was the little snub-nosed tender *Supply*, which could nonetheless safely carry very little sail in really big seas. The *Alexander*, *Scarborough* and *Friendship* were the three fastest convict transports.

By 3 June, the eleven ships reached Tenerife in the Canary Islands, after a journey in which the irons of the convicts, except those under punishment, had been removed, and a routine for allowing the transportees on deck in

fine weather had been established. *Alexander*, the unhealthiest ship in the fleet, recorded twenty-one convicts suffering fever, scurvy, pneumonia and the bloody flux in the few weeks since sailing.

South of Tenerife, in the calms, amidst the cram of bodies, the air below decks reached fierce temperatures, and a skirt of stinking waste and garbage surrounded each ship. Wind sails were rigged like great fans, and swung across the deck to blow air below, and while the convicts exercised or slept on deck, gunpowder was again exploded in their prison to disperse evil vapours. The marine officers on *Friendship* found the ship infested with rats, cockroaches and lice, but the women convicts still needed to be battened down on their ill-ventilated deck at night, to prevent 'a promiscuous intercourse taking place with the marines'. Despite the ban on fraternising and prostitution, there were so many alliances between convicts, male and female, and between marines and sailors and sundry women aboard, that one begins to suspect that Phillip and the Home Office were not gravely disturbed that such associations should occur. Lieutenant Clark on *Friendship* hated the disorderly women and ordered four of them to be put in irons for fighting. 'They are a disgrace to their whole sex, bitches that they are.'

When the north-east trades blew, ships were capable of making good time, as on 17 June, when *Friendship* logged a refreshing 174 nautical miles to the *Sirius*'s 163. Phillip was already contemplating splitting the flotilla into fast and slow divisions.

Phillip knew from the stories of *Mercury* how endemic the dream of mutiny was amongst the convicts. But he seems to have accepted the presence of former escapees and mutineers on his ships with sang froid.

More cheeringly, a group baptism took place on the *Lady Penrhyn*, the Reverend Johnson, the evangelical chaplain, officiating. It was an event of 'great glee' with 'an additional allowance of grog being distributed to the crews of those ships where births took place'.

On 5 July Phillip felt it necessary to reduce the water ration to three pints per person per day, all of it going to consumption, leaving everyone to have recourse to salt water for washing clothes and bathing. Sometimes garments were washed by being dragged on a rope overboard, and one sailor lost a pair of breeches to a shark this way. A convict was washed overboard and lost when he went on deck to bring in the washing during the sudden onset of a storm.

On matters of general health, Chief Surgeon John White and his three assistants were rowed around the fleet when weather permitted to consult with resident surgeons such as Bowes Smyth of the *Penrhyn*, and to inspect health arrangements or undertake care of the convicts.

The run was good to Rio, and on 5 August the fleet stood in the estuary off that city. Private Easty on *Scarborough* had been impressed with the thirteen-gun salute from the fort. The total deaths since embarkation were 29 male and three female prisoners, which was considered an excellent result. The ships of the convoy had been able to keep in contact with each other, although the journals of the gentlemen indicate that *Lady Penrhyn* was continually lagging.

The Portuguese filled the first boat to return to the *Sirius* with fruit and vegetables 'sent as presents to the Commodore from some of his old friends and acquaintances'. On the second morning, Phillip and his officers were greeted ceremoniously by the viceroy, and that night the town was illuminated in his honour. The English officers could go where they wanted within the city, without escorts.

Collins tells us that while in harbour in Rio, every convict was regularly issued one and a half pounds (680 grams) of fresh meat, a pound (450 grams) of rice, a suitable proportion of vegetables and several oranges. Sailors returning from jaunts even pelted the convicts with oranges. The viceroy set aside an island to allow the expedition to set up tents for the sick and to use as a shore base. Lieutenant Dawes of the marines set up a temporary observatory there. The chief astronomical need was to check the Kendall chronometer of the *Sirius*.

When the fleet departed after a fortnight, the viceroy saluted Phillip with twenty-one guns, and could be forgiven for wondering whether such a varied and implausible expedition would be heard from again.



On the long stretch between Rio and Dutch-controlled Cape Town, rancour, ill-temper, cabin fever and paranoia seemed to overtake many of the officers, not least on *Friendship*, and similar rancour and grievances must have filled the convict prison decks. Discomfort, too, was surely felt by all. In late September, a sea broke which washed all parties out of their bunks. Fortunately, the trip was relatively brisk. On one day *Friendship*

logged 188 knots. Cape Town, the Dutch headquarters in Africa, was reached on 11 November.

There, a convict tambour-maker or embroiderer named Eve Langley, sailing on the *Lady Penrhyn* with her small son, Phillip, gave birth to a daughter on a bed of clean straw in one of the shacks on deck. A foremast hand was listed as the father. By now the country girl Sarah Bellamy was showing her pregnancy.

Above decks was a babble of complaint from animals whose numbers now swelled with the addition of livestock purchased in Cape Town for the benefit of the new settlement. In the fleet, said one surgeon, George Worgan, 'each ship is like another Noah's Ark'. There were Captain Phillip's greyhounds and horses on *Sirius*, Reverend Johnson's kittens on the store ship *Golden Grove*, as well as on every ship a number of sheep, pigs, cattle, goats, turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, rabbits and pigeons penned in various structures. Rural convicts and children took comfort from tending animals as they had learned to do from an early age. Even pet dogs roamed the decks.

After leaving Cape Town, Phillip divided the flotilla into two divisions, the first to be led by the little *Supply*, to which Phillip now transferred. This leading group included the *Alexander*, the *Friendship* and the *Scarborough*, which were now able to travel as fast as they liked. On the convict decks it must have been miserable, with the setting in of the sub-Antarctic cold and the heaving seas of the Roaring Forties. Hail and snow came down, and officers like Clark were forced to wear a flannel waistcoat, two pairs of stockings and to keep their greatcoats on continuously. The convicts generally had only their light clothing and their one blanket, and welcomed what crowded warmth they could generate.

The first division led by *Supply* sighted Van Diemen's Land's southwestern shores on 5 January. It was summer in the southern hemisphere, but it did not feel like it, and on the high ground that could be glimpsed lay patches of snow. Then, less than two days after the first division worked its way around South East Cape, *Sirius* led the second division round and headed north. It was much closer behind than Arthur Phillip would have expected. The fleet was now on the last leg towards fabled Botany Bay, using the charts made by Cook as their guarantee of safe arrival.

MEETING EORA

The convicts, soldiers and wives on *Supply*, *Scarborough*, *Friendship* and *Alexander*, the faster vessels, knew they were close to the promised bay on 16 January in the new year, 1788. All was proceeding normally, yet was tinged with the edginess of near-arrival in a landscape up to then viewed and weighed by a mere handful of Europeans. The many beaches and bays they sailed past were marked by bold headlands and backed by blue mountain ranges with which, as it happened, the infant son of the watching would as an adult become familiar. To what extent did convict Susannah Holmes, holding the baby begotten by her convict paramour Henry Kable, hope for or dread the place? To what extent did Robert Sideway, who had stolen boxes from a coach, a 'Mercury' who might have lived the rest of his life in Nova Scotia, discern this coast as liveable?

Though Prime Minister Pitt and Lord Sydney had authorised Phillip to look at this target coast as a vacancy, the people who had lived here since the last ice age had created their known earth, and whose ancestors had been in the interior regions for millennia longer still, had seen the scatter of ships and were sending reports overland, clan to clan, of the astounding phenomenon.

Eighteen thousand years ago, the coast Phillip was approaching had been a region of cold steppes and sub-alpine woodland. Peaks higher than 1900 metres had glaciers descending them. The coastline had stabilised in its present form about 7000 years Before the Present, when the glaciers melted. Innumerable camping places, stone quarries, burial grounds and sacred sites had been flooded. But in compensation, the coast had begun to mature and develop, providing sandstone plateaux, mangrove swamps and lagoons, caves and beaches, all known, all named. Bushland and forest covered most of the hinterland. This, their home, was the south-eastern coast of what would prove to be a southern continent, of which the Aboriginal population, in that last undisrupted week in January, stood at perhaps 750 000 to one million.

For the people who now saw the phantasms of the fleet pass by, this coast was the centre of the real world. They would have been astounded that there were, somewhere else, in remote, unholy mists, members of their own species who considered this country a netherworld, a legislated form of hell.

Until now, they had not had any reason to think their horizons were about to collapse in upon them.

Captain Cook, who had come this way only once, had reduced the land's geographic features to size with European tags. So there were comforting reference points for Phillip and his officers to look for. King wrote, 'An eminence on the land . . . bore at this time W $\frac{1}{2}$ S 4 leagues which we take for a mountain resembling a hat which Captain Cook takes notice of.' The feature was Hatt Hill. Red Point was nine miles (14.5 kilometres) north of this, and then the southern point of Cook's Botany Bay, Cape Solander, named in honour of Sir Joseph Banks's Swedish colleague, came into view.

The *Supply* hauled in for the harbour at a quarter past two in the afternoon of 19 January and anchored in the northern arm of the bay, so that the three closest convict transports following, *Alexander*, *Scarborough* and the little *Friendship*, would be able to see them from the entrance and thus be guided in.

How could the place not fail to disappoint the travellers' long-sustained expectation? No one on the *Supply* made exuberant statements about it. It lay there in its sultry afternoon light, not much elevation to it, despite all the great sandstone cliffs and headlands they had passed further south. It was in part a landscape of shallow hills, eucalypt trees and grass-trees, cabbage-tree palms spread as in a park. Otherwise, it was a country of low, indiscriminate earth, open ground in many places, with rank grass: the sort of country that promised there would be lagoons and swamps just behind the shore. Its sand beaches shone with ambiguous welcome in the afternoon sun.

As the *Supply* watched the earth, the inheritors of the earth watched the *Supply*. The Gweagal (Fire clan) of the Eora language group occupied the south shore of the bay and wondered why the sky had ruptured again and the phenomenon of a craft as large as an island had returned. The Bediagal on the north side of Botany Bay were galvanised by the same question. Both clans called the newcomers *Beeriwangal*, People of the Clouds. Old men and women began to sing songs of expulsion, and the young repaired spears and tested throwing sticks for solidity. A young Bediagal *carradhy*, a man of high degree and preternatural physical courage, Pemulwuy, was sent a message that the manifestation was back. Mothers and aunts counselled children to be wary. The last time one of these phantasms had appeared, it had taken a month to expel the dead-white ghosts who had come ashore.

Arthur Phillip knew that Cook had not received an open welcome in Botany Bay eighteen years before. Phillip's task was harder—he was meant to make a penal town somewhere in this bay, and continue to live with the 'Indians'. The instructions from the Crown read: 'You are to endeavour by every means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them.' Murders, assault and theft committed on and against the natives were to be punished.

At three o'clock the boats were hoisted out from the *Supply* and Arthur Phillip, Lieutenant King, Lieutenant Johnston and the young astronomer William Dawes headed towards the north side of the bay to search the shores for fresh water. A reliable young convict, James Ruse, who had stolen two watches and stood trial on the edge of his native Cornish moors at Bodmin, had been moved to the *Supply* and would always claim he was the first ashore, wading in with Lieutenant Johnston riding, scarlet and glittering, on his back.

For the Eora speakers watching the landing ghosts—red was a colour of peril and war and struggling with spirits. The natives immediately called to the newcomers 'in a menacing tone and at the same time brandishing their spears or lances'. Phillip showed them some beads, then walked towards the natives alone and unarmed. A male native advanced and made signs that he should lay the gifts on the ground. The native, understandably edgy and trembling to be addressing the dead, came forward and took them, and then he and others came near enough to be given looking glasses and other wonders.

Then and in days to come the Eora tried to satisfy these ghosts and cloud-creatures by directing them to water in the hope that, their thirst satisfied, they would leave. Phillip himself was thinking of going. This bay, with its shallow anchorages, unpredictable winds and its doubtful capacity to support an ill-supplied penal settlement, worried him.

It was early the next morning that the *Alexander*, *Scarborough* and *Friendship* came round Point Solander. On *Friendship*, the marine lieutenant Ralph Clark noted a great many natives on the point and wrote, 'I cannot say from the appearance of the shore that I will like it.'

The Gweagal and Bediagal clans of the Eora language group were disturbed to see the pallid ghosts were abounding. One day: one ship,

one floating island, one population of ghosts with mysterious outer skins. The next morning: four islands and four populations of strangers. And on the following morning of 20 January, when Captain Hunter on the *Sirius* led the second group of transports around Point Solander, there were eleven of these floating phenomena with their huge and inhuman wings. Some Gweagal and Bediagal, related by marriage, assembled on the southern point of the bay and yelled, 'Werre! Werre!' across the water. This was their first, undeniable message to the people of the fleet. 'Get out! Begone! Clear away.'

But the officers did not imagine themselves trespassers, and the private marines and, especially, the convicts would have found such a self-description ridiculous.

A more poetic European vision had entered Botany Bay on the just-arrived transport *Charlotte*, in the person of the pleasant young captain of marines, Watkin Tench. Captain Tench was in his late twenties, the son of a successful and well-connected Chester boarding-school proprietor. During the American war he had been a prisoner in Maryland for three months. Like Collins and other officers, he had volunteered for service on this fleet to get off half-pay. In his striving, often elegant and curious-minded journal, Tench wrote of the arrival of this second division of ships. 'To us it was "a great, an important day". Though I hope the foundation, not the fall, of an empire will be dated from it.'

This sanguine and charming young Englishman celebrated the fact that an extraordinary number of people had survived the voyage of what had been, for the second division of ships, exactly thirty-six weeks since leaving Portsmouth. 'The wind was now fair,' young Watkin wrote, 'and the temperature of the air delightfully pleasant: joy sparkled in every countenance and congratulations issued from every mouth. Ithaca itself was scarcely more longed for by Ulysses, than Botany Bay.'

The boisterousness of the convict women and most of the men still kept aboard their vessels, looking out at the land soon echoed around the bay. To some of the felons the country seemed enormous enough to offer room for escape. Wild elation, dread, acceptance and depression competed for voice amongst them.

The next day, after a landing party began clearing brush from a run of water on the south side of the bay, altering a location where for ritual and

ceremonial reasons ferns and grass-trees had been permitted to proliferate, the natives became 'displeased and wanted them to be gone'. On 22 January, when a seine net was hauled in and the natives saw the quantity of fish the sailors were dragging onshore with it, they 'were much astonished which they expressed by a loud and long shout'. They took some of the fish away, as a matter of right in their eyes, but as a form of primitive pilferage as far as the British were concerned. The next day the natives struck the thieving fishers with spear shafts, took fish 'and ran off with them sensible that what they had done was wrong', wrote Lieutenant Bradley. In fact Lieutenant King had earlier discharged a musket loaded merely with powder, and perhaps they melted away to avoid that thunder. Phillip noted that 'What they wanted most was the greatcoats and clothing, but hats was more particularised by them, their admiration of which they expressed in very loud shouts whenever one of us pulled our hat off.'

One day the Eora people indicated by very plain signs that they wanted to know the gender of the men rowing towards them. (No women had yet come ashore.) King wrote, 'I ordered one of the people to undeceive them in this particular when they gave a great shout of admiration.' The Eora had wondered whether beneath their carapaces of cloth the cloud-people were male or female. And as they showed themselves male, they might leave, the Eora surmised, if their desires were sated. 'Pointing to the shore, which was but ten yards from us, we saw a great number of women and girls with infant children on their shoulders make their appearance on the beach, all in *puris naturalibus*, *pas même la feuille de figeur* [that is, totally naked].' The natives made it clear by their urgings that the men in the longboats could make free with the women onshore. 'I declined this mark of their hospitality,' said King.

So the inducements so far offered by the Eora—water, threat, the offer of sex—had not worked, and the ghosts remained in distressing proximity.

BOTANY BAY BLUES

Even Watkin Tench soon shared the general discontent about the fleet's long-anticipated landfall. 'Of the natural meadows which Mr Cook mentions near Botany Bay, we can give no account.' Surgeon White's final judgment would be: 'Botany Bay I own does not, in my opinion, by any means merit the commendations bestowed on it by the much lamented Cook.'

It took Phillip just three days to decide that he would renounce Botany Bay, the most famous inlet in the outer world. He determined to explore the inlets north along the coast, named in turn by Cook as Port Jackson (after the then Judge-Advocate of the Admiralty) and Broken Bay. By 22 January, three longboats were prepared for scouting up the coast. Arthur Phillip, Captain Hunter, David Collins, Lieutenant Bradley and a small party of marines put out of the bay by dark on Monday morning, and found there was only a gentle swell as light came up on the open, aquamarine Tasman Sea. Sandstone cliffs interspersed with beaches and headlands marked the way north. On the cliffs, several parties of Aborigines cried out to the three open boats as they proceeded along the coast, '*Werre! Werre! Werre!*' That afternoon, Phillip entered the heads of Port Jackson. The great sandstone cliffs near the entrance decreased in size to become the weathered south head, whereas the north side displayed perpendicular heights.

Phillip's boats ran around the southern head, up the middle of the tide rushing in from the Pacific. They found themselves in a wide, bright blue bowl of sparkling water. It stretched away on the north and west but particularly on the south side. The foreshores were heights of sandstone thickly covered with dun green forest, interspersed with yellow beaches. Phillip was already enthused, and the general sobriety of his prose would be swept aside when he later told Lord Sydney, 'We got into Port Jackson early in the afternoon, and had the satisfaction of finding the finest harbour in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride in the most perfect security.' This exuberant sentiment underpinned his decisiveness in declaring this, and not the great Cook's Botany Bay, as the destined place.

The expedition circled to one of the northside bays of this huge, unexpected harbour, which Phillip then or later named Manly Cove, as a tribute to the demeanour of natives who appeared on the beaches that afternoon. Then, in the evening, they headed southwards down the harbour and landed at a place within the southern headland, naming it Camp Cove, since they pitched tents there. They were the very first people from the northern world to take their rest in Port Jackson.

At four o'clock in the morning, that keen taskmaster Arthur Phillip had them on their oars again, with one boat in the lead sounding the way from one bay of Port Jackson to another.

They found that the broad sweep of Port Jackson ran away pleasingly southwards, with much better soundings than Botany Bay. By late afternoon they reached a cove some eleven kilometres inside the harbour of Port Jackson. This place gave excellent soundings close to shore—its good anchorages had been gouged out by a vanished glacier. The party landed on the west side of this inlet, under bushy platforms of rock. They walked around to the head of the cove where the ground was level. Again, there were scattered large eucalypts, cabbage-tree palms and low undergrowth, but more elevation and an utterly less swampy air than at Botany Bay. A good stream flowed down the centre of the land and disgorged in the cove. It ran pristinely and plentifully even then, at the height of summer. The ridge on the eastern side struck Phillip and others as a potential site for a public farm. And there were no natives screaming, '*Werre*'. An American, Nagle, a boat-master, a captured former Yankee privateer, remained aboard fishing while the gentlemen made their reconnaissance, and pulled up a good bream. Returning, the governor and his party were in good form; Phillip was very pleased with this cove. He saw the bream and told Nagle to remember that he was the first white man to catch a fish 'in Sydney Cove'.

Perhaps the decision to name the cove to honour the Home Secretary was really as instantaneous as that. Sydney was an English corruption of the French St Denis, but there was no piety in Phillip's choice. A politician was perhaps less likely to forget a place named to honour him, a place whose deterioration might become a reflection on him. Indeed, Phillip had at first intended to name the township he envisaged building in the cove Albion, an ancient name for England, imbued with a certain holiness. But highfaluting Albion would never quite stick, and the convicts and soldiers would quickly come to use the name Sydney Cove, or Sydney Town, or simply Sydney, for their penal municipality.

It already had a long-established Eora name—Warrane. It belonged to a group of Eora speakers named the Cadigal (the Grass-tree clan), and their absence on the day Phillip landed indicated that it was chiefly a place to be visited for ceremonial purposes. Indeed, this whole region of vivid blue skies and water, sandstone headlands and ridges covered in vegetation, sandy bays and ocean beaches backed by marshland, tidal lagoons and mangrove swamps made all the Eora a people united by salt water and a bounty of protein from the sea, from Port Jackson to Kamay (Botany Bay), and to the hinterland bush.

But their good fortune had passed. For longer than any other population of *Homo sapiens*, and excepting the Makassan contacts in the far north, the ancestors of the Aborigines had been genetically and culturally cocooned from the rest of the species. Phillip's sailors, soldiers and convicts, already preparing to depart Botany Bay for the more promising Port Jackson, were walking incubators for viruses and bacteria barely before seen on this coast. These micro-organisms too were looking for new landfalls.

WARRANE-BOUND

At first light the next morning, 24 January, when on *Supply* the stock was being watered, and everyone was exhilarated at news of the coming move, the watches on the ships saw two ships just off the coast, trying to work their way into Botany Bay. Amongst the officers were a number of wild surmises. Were they ships from England with a general pardon for all prisoners? Supply ships? A white pennant soon confirmed that they comprised the expedition of the Comte de la Pérouse, who had set out from France nearly three years earlier to explore the Pacific, and who had preposterously turned up just as the British were ending their brief dalliance with Botany Bay.

By the time he appeared off Botany Bay, the comte's two ships, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*, had doubled Cape Horn, discovered a number of previously uncharted islands, surveyed the coast of Korea, and proved Sakhalin (off the east coast of Russia) to be an island. Heading south again into the Pacific La Pérouse lost a shore party in Samoa when natives killed his second-in-command and eleven others.

A ferocious north-easter would keep La Pérouse waiting two days to enter the port safely, and tested the seamanship of John Hunter on *Supply* and the other ships' masters as they tacked out from beneath La Pérouse's shadow. Did he too want to make a claim on this enormous coastline? On the convict decks, the hope had already formed that perhaps these two French ships a little way down the coast offered a means of escape.

As La Pérouse finally entered Botany Bay, the *Sirius*, with Phillip once more aboard, was departing. 'The two commanders had barely time to exchange civilities; and it must naturally have created some surprise in M. de la Pérouse to find our fleet abandoning the harbour at the very time he was preparing to anchor in it,' wrote Tench.

Before leaving Botany Bay, a number of marines and reliable convicts had been transferred to the *Supply*, so that as soon as it came to anchor in Sydney Cove, work parties could be sent ashore. Others spent the first night in the ships, but the next day, 26 January, there were scenes of unprecedented activity in bright sunlight in the little inlet. In one place, said Tench, was a party cutting down the woods, while elsewhere a group set up a blacksmith's forge. Soldiers pitched officers' marquees on the west side of the stream, while a detachment of troops paraded, and cooks lit fires on the western side of the cove. Sydney Cove faced north, and the general delineation of the future town was created by its geography. The officers and military were stationed around the banks of the stream. Some ground to the west was to be allotted to officers to grow corn for their animals.

Major Robbie Ross, commander of marines and lieutenant-governor, looked on Sydney Cove and its environs with a far more jaundiced eye than other officers. He hated the place on sight. It looked to him an unyielding place, and he wondered if it were un-redeemed, a place which showed by its heathen strangeness that the Saviour's sacrificial blood, which had certainly rescued his native Scotland, had not washed this far south.

On the very point of the west side of Sydney Cove, Lieutenant William Dawes intended to set up his astronomical instruments for an unprecedented long-term study of the southern sky. He called the place Point Maskelyne (though it now bears his own name), to honour the Astronomer Royal. On that west side too, on level ground beneath the sandstone rock ledges, Surgeon White's marquee-hospital was to be set up, near what Phillip had already assigned as the convict women's camp, the men's camp being closer to the military. The good stream which divided the cove would come to be known before any great passage of time as the Tank Stream, since reservoir tanks would be sunk along its banks to preserve its waters against drought.

On the eastern side of the cove the ground was more open and suited for a public farm and the residences of the governor and his officials. Arthur Phillip's portable canvas house was accordingly erected there, about fifty metres from the water, and a number of tents for trustworthy convicts and those considered not terminally corrupted were put up there too.

In a matter of mere days Sydney Cove would be altered, in Phillip's mind, and to an extent on the ground, from a garden of nomads to a municipality. To celebrate that shift, in the afternoon of 26 January most of the crew of the

Supply assembled at the point where they had first landed in the morning, on the western side of Sydney Cove. The first flagstaff had been fashioned from a sappy pole of eucalyptus and, the British flag being run up, the governor and the officers drank the health of His Majesty and the royal family, then drank success to the new colony while the marines broke the bright sky with several volleys.

If the Gweagal and Bediagal of Botany Bay had been delighted to see the ships depart, they must have been equally confused when they were replaced by the French vessels; and via the well-trodden overland track between Warrane and Botany Bay came news from visiting members of the Cadigal clan to the north that the original ships had merely gone on to infest Warrane, that choice inlet in the great harbour only 11 kilometres to the north.

On that first day, 26 January, the governor found the time to sign a warrant giving his old friend, that ancient midshipman Harry Brewer, a new identity as provost-marshal of the colony. So New South Wales began its long career as a place where men of no description could achieve a label, a post, a self-definition.

5

ARTHUR PHILLIP AND THE RADICAL PLAN



ENQUIRIES ASHORE

The disembarkation of the troops and convicts began on 27 January. How strange to leave the convict deck on which most of them, not having landed at Botany Bay, had been for so long, their narrow bed space, their penal womb, and to be reborn ashore. The talkers of cant, and the country fellows ('Johnny Raws') as well, had the urgent business of clearing ground and building themselves shelters, for there were no tenements or even tents for them. Whitehall had decided that it would be good exercise for the men to construct their own habitations. Under instruction from country felons like James Ruse, they began putting together structures of wattle and daub—plaited panels of branches providing the walls, the cracks being filled in with daubed clay, of which there was a plentiful supply on the foreshore of Sydney Cove. Longboats were regularly sent to the north side of Port Jackson in quest of tall straight trunks of cabbage tree (*Livistona australis*) which were used for the corner poles of huts. Roofs were of thatch of cabbage-tree fronds or rushes or bark plastered over with clay, which all made, said Collins, 'a very good hovel'. There were many economic but flimsy structures standing within a few days.

Meanwhile, on the basis of a few days tentative exploration in the bush around Sydney Cove, a cultivated young midshipman, Daniel Southwell,

declared that there was nothing deserving of the name of fruit. But he was also resourceful enough to discover that there were many ‘salutary shrubs’, that balm could be milked from trees, and that a native spinach, parsley and sort of broad bean grew. Many of the productions of the country, he said, were aromatic, and had medicinal properties, and could be used as *fomenta*, poultices on sores. A young surgeon, an Irishman named Denis Conisden, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, also found various gums and leaves suitable for brewing a form of native tea.

Something else momentous but without ceremony occurred: public stock, largely acquired in Cape Town, was landed on the east side of the cove—including one bull, four cows, one bull-calf, one stallion, three mares and three colts. A range of Western Europe’s useful beasts was herded for the first time on this shore. For the first time, cattle kicked up the dust of an inadequately super-soiled continent.

On 29 January 1788, when Phillip landed at Spring Cove just inside North Head, twelve natives crowded round the boats, anxious to inspect the newcomers, these owners of fabulous beasts and floating islands. It was the first contact between the races within Port Jackson. The sailors mixed with the native men, who were ‘quite sociable, dancing, and otherwise amusing them’, but the native women were kept well away by their menfolk. John Hunter found these Port Jackson inhabitants a ‘very lively and inquisitive race’, straight, thin, small-limbed and well-made.

ADAM DELVES

In the ideal settlement as envisaged by Phillip, the convict male was to work for the government from seven in the morning until three in the afternoon, with a half-day on Saturdays, and then have time to grow vegetables or pursue some other useful task in his spare time thereafter. By 30 January, the first work party of convicts was put to breaking ground for a government garden and farm on the slope of the east side of the cove and just over the hill, in what became known as Farm Cove. As tools were handed out by the conscientious storekeeper, Andrew Miller, the male convicts, directed amongst others by Phillip’s manservant, Henry Dodd, showed very little enthusiasm. The London convicts immediately proved themselves to be the worst workers. A freed slave, John Cesor or Black Caesar, born in Madagascar, hugely built, was considered one of the few good labourers.

In that first attempt at making a garden, the earth proved rocky, full of lumps of sandstone. Some, however, thought that the yellowish sandstone was comparable to Portland stone and very suitable for working. But in the bush around no one could find limestone deposits for cement.

The lime trees, the lemons, the oranges, the figs and grapes which had been picked up in the Cape were slowly planted in the government farm, but marsupial rats devoured them eagerly during Phillip's uneasy nights. He also ran into resistance from the officers in a matter amazing for not having been sorted out in England. 'The officers who composed the detachment are not only few in number,' Phillip would write to Lord Sydney, 'but most of them have declined any interference with the convicts, except when they are employed for their own particular service.' So increasingly Phillip was obliged to put some of the more trustworthy convicts in supervisory roles; young, good-looking, well-liked Henry Kable, for example, became a superintendent for the women prisoners, who were still to be landed.

In the tents placed for the sick on the west side of the cove, beneath the rocky, bush-embowered sandstone ledges, Surgeon White admitted with some concern that, after the preventive medical success of the fleet, the numbers of sick were increasing. Scurvy, dormant on the ships, suddenly seemed to manifest itself in some of the convicts, and dysentery as well. In that late January heat Surgeon complained that 'not a comfort or convenience could be got' for the sick.

Lest the Royal Navy sailors on the *Sirius* (who would be returning to Britain soon enough) begin to eat into public stores, Phillip appointed for their use an island not far from the public farm—Garden Island, as it came to be known—on which to grow vegetables for the crew's consumption. Soon Ralph Clark would start using another island in Port Jackson as a vegetable garden, and despite its relative distance down-harbour from Sydney Cove, it would sometimes be plundered by boat crews, and by hungry convicts who could swim long distances.

Phillip gave no priority to building a prison stockade in Sydney Cove. It had always been the plan that the environs would serve as walls to a great outdoor prison. The First Fleet convicts were in the ultimate panopticon, a prison in which all inmates could be readily observed and monitored from a central point, where strangeness hemmed them in, and the sky aimed its huge blank blue eye at them.

Lieutenant Bradley, a teacher from the naval academy at Portsmouth, had been out surveying the shoreline of Port Jackson, and found on the north side twelve miles (19 kilometres) of snug coves, and—as in Sydney Cove—good depths of water and freshwater streams entering many of the harbour's inlets. At his task, he became aware that the northern shore of Port Jackson, and the southern shore too, carried a considerable population of Eora, 'Indians . . . painted very whimsically with pipe clay and red ochre'. He came to notice that all the women they met had two joints at the little finger on the left hand missing. 'It was supposed by some to be the pledge of the marriage ceremony, or of their having children.' Most of the men had lost a front incisor tooth and were highly scarred on the chest. Their spears were twelve to sixteen feet (3.7 to 4.9 metres) in length, and they walked very upright.

HONOURING BACCHUS AND GEORGE

Now society in New South Wales really began. The convict women came up from the prison decks to be landed on 6 February. On *Lady Penrhyn*, young Surgeon Bowes Smyth was happy to see them taken off in the ship's long-boats, beginning at five o'clock in the morning. Those with goods or duffel bags full of clothing, which had been carried in the hold, were handed their property and toted or wore it ashore. 'Some few among them,' said Bowes Smyth, 'might be said to be well-dressed.'

The women were landed on the western side of Sydney Cove where bedraggled canvas and huts of wattle and bark delineated their camp. The last of them landed at six o'clock on what would prove to be a typical summer evening, still and hot, but promising a southerly squall. 'The men convicts got to them very soon after they landed,' said Bowes Smyth. And no sooner had the last of the women disembarked than a number of suddenly lonely sailors from the transports also came ashore, bringing grog with them, and the marines were unable or unwilling to keep the women separate from them. The *Lady Penrhyn's* crew in particular joined in one mass outdoor party, Sydney's first fête of hedonism.

'It is beyond my abilities to give a just description of the scene of debauchery and riot which continued through the night,' wrote Bowes Smyth, whose reliability as a witness is sometimes criticised for his jumping to conclusions about what he claimed to witness from the deck of *Penrhyn*. The evening had

turned humid and thunderous, and once the rain began it made an assessment of events ashore a little more dubious still.

The great Sydney bacchanal went on despite the thunderstorm. Fists were raised to God's lightning, and in the name of the Tawny Prince and in defiance of British justice; the downpour was cursed and challenged, and survival and utter displacement were celebrated in lunges and caresses.

There were certainly grounds for a riotous, desperate party of some sort. The women had been on their ships a deranging nine months. They had arrived inextricably in this outlandish and humid summer place; this was the unfamiliar and inscrutable region that would contain their bones. Their frenzy was that of people ejected from the known world and making a rough if brutal bed in the unknown one. Antipodean licentiousness had its beginning.

The orgy prevailed until the dripping, thundery small hours of 7 February, but by noon that same day civic formalities took hold. All the marine officers took post before their companies, which marched off to ground cleared for the occasion, 'whereon the convicts were assembled to hear His Majesty's commission read'.

Phillip, having dressed in full uniform of post-captain and wearing his British and Portuguese awards on his breast, emerged from his palazzo of canvas and proceeded to the ceremonial ground at the head of the cove. Upon arrival, the marines lowered their colours to him and paid him respect as governor. The marines then formed a circle around all the men and women convicts, who were ordered to sit down like so many schoolchildren on the ground. A camp table had been set up with two red leather cases laid on it—the commissions and letters-patent, ready to be unsealed and intoned by Judge-Advocate Captain Collins.

As Phillip stood by, Captain Collins read aloud the documents signed by King George and his Cabinet members. Arthur Phillip was to be Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief over New South Wales, which was an area declared to run from the northern extremity of the coast, Cape York, to the southern extremity of South East Cape; that is, from 10° south to 43° south. The claim also extended to all the country inland westward as far as 135° east. Whatever was out there, 2400 kilometres or more west of Sydney Cove, a distance greater than London to Moscow, the Crown claimed it.

The claim, however, did not run all the way to what would prove to be the west coast of Australia. Phillip knew well enough that the fact it did not go further than 135° east made room for the claims of other nations, especially the Dutch, who had made many landings in what is now called Western Australia. Even though the Dutch despised it as a desert coast and had not yet claimed it, their sensitivities had to be respected. And, to the north, the Portuguese had a long-standing claim on Timor, with which George III and his ministers saw no reason to quarrel, particularly given England's friendly relationships with Portugal. Just the same, it was a massive claim as it stood, close to three-fifths of what would later prove to be a continent of almost 8 million square kilometres, and it was uttered in front of humble, debased and ragtag company, amidst canvas, wattle-and-daub and eucalypts.

The name 'Australia'—Southland—was not mentioned. In 1569 and 1570 respectively, Mercator and Ortellius had used the terms *continens australis* and *australia continens*. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the terms *Australia* and *Australis* appeared on maps as an ill-defined given. Cook, finding this eastern coast in 1770, thought of it as part of New Holland but did not know if it was a continent or an archipelago stretching away to the west. So he named this east coast New Wales and New South Wales. As a result, in Phillip's commission, the name New South Wales was used, not Australia—the latter name would not then have had international meaning. But the terms New Holland, Botany Bay and New South Wales soon became interchangeable in the mind of the British public.

Arthur Phillip was, by the commissions and letters-patent, to have the power to appoint officials and administer oaths—he would administer one to Collins before that gentleman began his work as judge-advocate. As governor, he had power to pardon and reprieve, punish offenders and to make land grants to civilians. He was empowered also to create a criminal court, a civil court, an admiralty court and so on.

The commission read, the marines fired three volleys to seal this extraordinary advent of authority. Phillip then spoke to his charges—Bowes Smyth used the word 'harangued'. There was no exhilaration to what he said. He was not in the mood for eloquence, and perhaps suffered from a certain post-landing depression and the onset of the gritty task. He spoke more like a new captain appointed to cut an unruly crew down to size. He told them he had observed that many amongst them were incorrigible

and he said that he was persuaded that nothing but severity would have any effect on them. He had also observed that they had been very idle—not more than two hundred out of six hundred of them were at work. Phillip told his people that labour in Sydney Cove would not be as severe as that of a husbandman in England who had a wife and family to provide for. They would never be worked beyond their abilities, but every individual should contribute his share ‘to render himself and community at large happy and comfortable as soon as the nature of the settlement will admit of’. In England stealing poultry was not punished with death, he said; but here that sort of loss could not be borne and it was of extreme consequence to the settlement that chickens and livestock be preserved for breeding. Stealing the most trifling item of stock or provisions therefore would be punished with death. This severity, he said, was contrary to his humanity and feelings for his fellow creatures, but justice demanded such rigid execution of the laws.

ISLAND OF INNOCENCE

On 12 February Lieutenant King came to Phillip’s tented mansion to take the oath as superintendent and commanding officer of Norfolk Island. The coming settlement on that island was designed for the moment to be a haven for relative innocents. King was ‘immediately to proceed with the cultivation of the flax plant, which you will find growing spontaneously on the island’. He was also to secure the island ‘and prevent it being occupied by the subjects of any other European power’.

King had gone aboard the *Lady Penrhyn* in the earliest days of February to ask Surgeon Bowes Smyth about suitable women to take to Norfolk Island. Amongst those whose attitude Bowes Smyth praised to King was Ann Innett, a mature Worcestershire woman, a former mantua-maker. In the future she would become King’s housekeeper and lover.

Two weeks of storms kept *Supply* off the Norfolk Island coast. But when he landed, King was enthusiastic about what he saw while exploring the central valley and the pine-clad hills with his surgeon, Thomas Jamison. No natives inhabited the lovely island—its later record for drowning and shipwrecks might explain why even the Polynesians had avoided it. King’s charges, once ashore, pitched tents on open ground on the south side of the island where there was a gap in the reef in the area he named Sydney Bay and, soon, Kings-town. He settled down to manage the community along the lines determined

by Phillip as if it were a large farm and the convicts his farmhands. They split sawed pines to build store-rooms and shelters. They sowed the ground. And it all seemed to go better here. Could this become the penal utopia?

Thomas Jamison, an Englishman who had attended Trinity College Dublin and whom Lieutenant Clark called 'a cunning villain', formed an association with Elizabeth Colley of *Lady Penrhyn*, and produced two illegitimate sons for whom he would provide. But there was also the idyll: one of the young women, Olivia Gascoigne, would soon marry Nathaniel Lucas, a carpenter and cloth thief, by whom she would have thirteen colonial children.

In late March, King recorded that he had found '... that the flax plant which Captain Cook takes notice ... in no manner resembles the flax of Europe'. The finished product was useless.

What exchanges occurred between King and his housekeeper, the convict Ann Innett, in his primitive cottage of pine-wood go unrecorded, but it became a connection of some moment, and he would be willing to raise and educate its fruits, which would turn out to be two sons.

THE FOOD QUESTION

On landing, Phillip had implemented his radical plan to provide full rations from the two years of supplies the ships had brought. Convicts were to receive an equal share to men and officers—7 pounds (3.2 kilos) of salt beef or 4 pounds (1.8 kilos) of pork, 3 pints (1.7 litres) of dried peas, 7 pounds of flour, 6 ounces (170 grams) of butter, half a pound (227 grams) of rice or, if it were not available, an extra pound (454 grams) of flour. Females received two-thirds of the male ration. Phillip had no doubt at all that those rations needed to be protected from bullies and thieves by the sanction of death.

Talkative Major Robbie Ross, and many in the military, thought it appalling to give a lazy convict the same ration as an industrious one, or as one of His Majesty's marines or, for that matter, as the governor himself. He complained that the convicts were unduly 'sustained by the humanity (I might have said folly)' of the government. His vision was that, within bounds, personal industriousness should be encouraged by imposed hunger, and application rewarded with extra rations.

But Phillip knew that chaos and a wild unofficial market in food would result from an inequity in rations. Phillip also knew that rations would soon

need to be reduced unless the hinterland and the harbour proved unexpectedly to be bountiful sources of food. Indeed, the first reduction of meat would be ordered within seven weeks.

Punishment meted out that February had much to do with food. One Thomas Hill had forcibly taken a quantity of bread from a weaker convict. It must have been a mere morsel for him to have been spared the gallows, but the crime shows that for many in Sydney Cove hunger was already biting. Hill was sentenced to be kept in irons for one week and fed on bread and water on the little sandstone knob of an island off the eastern end of Sydney Cove. He became the first man to occupy that rock which would acquire the name Pinchgut.

A West Country fisherman-cum-smuggler named William Bryant was put in charge of fishing in the harbour, and a black market in fish seems to have begun early in Sydney Cove. The fishing, together with hunting undertaken by Phillip's official convict-huntsman, the Irishman John McEntire, began early to impact upon the food supply of the native people and generate resentment.

In Sydney Cove that February, four young men with robust appetites were caught with stolen butter, pease and pork from the tented storehouse. Thomas Barrett, the young man first condemned to death at thirteen and who had managed to counterfeit coins aboard the *Charlotte*, now faced the death penalty for a third time under the terms laid down by Arthur Phillip. Henry Lovell, a London ivory-turner in his mid twenties, and Joseph Hall, another graduate of the ship *Mercury*, also appeared before Judge-Advocate Collins and his bench of officers. The judicial panel condemned them all to hang.

Sydney Cove was now to achieve its first executions '*in terrorem*, testimony to the Majesty of the Law, a Dreadful and Awful Example to Others'. At five in the afternoon of a late February day, with the summer sun falling down the sky behind them, the marine garrison marched to the place of punishment, probably a Port Jackson fig-tree like the one beneath which the Reverend Johnson had given his first sermons, between the men's and women's camp on the western side of Sydney Cove. All the convict population was compulsorily gathered to see this demonstration. Barrett mounted his ladder under the tree, as did Lovell and Hall, the nooses hanging level with their necks. But as all three men stood there, Major Ross was approached by a sentry who

came running from the governor's tent with a 24-hour stay of execution for Lovell and Hall. They came down their ladders and it was time for the final rites for Barrett. 'The Reverend Mr Johnson prayed very fervently with the culprit before he was turned off, and performed every office appertaining to his function with great decorum.' Barrett was 'turned off' by the convict James Freeman, the public executioner. The First Fleet children saw Barrett asphyxiate and piss his pants and were thereby educated in the broad power of authority.

Phillip found himself presented the next morning with a written appeal from the mass of the felons begging that the sentences of Lovell and Hall be commuted. But Phillip let the preparatory rites go ahead. Prim Ralph Clark, leading a guard, collected the two men from Harry Brewer's keeping and marched them to the execution site. Johnson prayed with them as they mounted the ladder and Freeman prepared the nooses. But then the judge-advocate, David Collins, arrived with a commutation of sentence. Lovell was to go to Norfolk Island for life, and Hall to be stuck indefinitely on Pinchgut.



With the beginning of ration reductions, a level of hunger and a great yearning for the lost delicacies of Britain became the lot of all the settlement. Despite the best efforts of William Bryant and John McEntire, fresh meat from marsupials like the kangaroo and wallaby and fresh fish from Port Jackson were in inadequate supply, and much of what was caught went to the hospital. Men and women began to remember with passionate fondness the food peddlars of the English towns, the sellers of watercress, asparagus and chestnuts, cakes, mutton and pork pies and steaming sausages, oysters, fish and fruits in season. How richly they must have talked about the horse-drawn breakfast stalls which would sell scalding tea and coffee and hot, fresh bread soaked in butter, all for a halfpenny. The people of Sydney Cove had wronged the cities which had presented them with such delights, and now they were being punished in a shire where the salt of their meat was outweighed only by that of their tears.

A SOLDIER'S TRIAL, AND MARRIAGES

On the colony's second Sunday, everyone but the sailors was ashore. The Reverend Johnson held service before the mustered convicts and marines on the east side of the cove 'under a great tree'.

That Sunday is momentous in so far as Reverend Johnson, son of a wealthy Yorkshire farmer, was what came to be called 'Low Church'. He brought Low Church sentiments to Australia, and they remained. He was a member of the Eclectic Society, a movement of evangelical priests and laymen who were influenced by John Wesley, but not to the extent that they abandoned the Established Church and became openly Methodist. Their social program, however, included a desire to reform prisons and to end slavery, and Johnson stood in reaction to a system in which vicars received 'livings', including land, and were often known for the quality of their 'hospitable tables' rather than their hours of prayer.

Now, after Johnson read service according to the rite of the Anglican Church, children were christened, fruits of the penal experiment and the nine-month voyage. The daughter of Private Bacon and his wife, Jane, was christened alongside the infants of bondage: John Matthew, son of Catherine Prior, West Country highway robber; and Joseph Downey, child of the adolescent felon Sarah Bellamy. Both latter children would die that month, Sarah's little Joe Downey first, on 29 February—as far as we know the first European child to be received into Sydney's soil.

After the baptisms, five convict couples were edifyingly married by the Reverend Johnson. Ralph Clark said that he was sure some of the people getting married that day had spouses in England. But had Phillip known some of them were married elsewhere, he would probably not have stood in the way of these new alliances. For the betrothed were in a new earth under a new heaven. Their British marriages were of no help in moderating their behaviour here. As Tench had observed, 'Marriage was recommended.'

One of the couples married that day was the young Norwich Castle pair whose destiny had so affected the English public: Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes. This union, between two marginal people in a place forgotten by God, would be an abiding tree, the sort of alliance both Johnson and Phillip required—marriage as a moral rudder.

A further couple to bespeak Parson Johnson that day already had a child between them. Or at least Mary Braund or Broad, a handsome Cornish girl in her early twenties, had given birth to a daughter whom she named Charlotte, the same name as the transport she and her new husband, Will Bryant, had travelled on, and it was presumed Charlotte was Will's child.

Mary had been guilty, along with two other girls, of ambushing a Plymouth spinster and robbing her of a silk bonnet and goods to the value of £11 11 shillings.

On the dreadful *Dunkirk* hulk, Mary had met Will Bryant, the Cornish fisherman about 27 years of age, convicted exactly two years earlier than Mary for 'resisting the revenue officers who attempted to seize some smuggled property he had'. He was sentenced to seven years transportation as well, so that he had served over four years in the *Dunkirk* at the time he was put aboard the convict transport *Charlotte*. Smuggling, Will's crime, was considered respectable and valid, particularly in Cornwall. Anyone there who had anything to do with the sea was involved in illegal import. Fishermen down-loaded tax-free wine, brandy and tea from French ships, or from British ones nearing port whose captains wanted to avoid paying tax, and brought the goods ashore, where the distribution networks ran deep inland. Good tables of squires and bishops could not be supplied without men like Bryant.

The Bryant who married on 10 February in Sydney Cove was a man in whom a native independence and a dark sense of having been used hard were at work. They created in him a determination to return to the known world, and he was very frank, even with Mary, that he did not see a New South Wales marriage as binding should he escape. Yet, uttering her vows before Johnson on the very edge of things, Mary would come to pay a phenomenal price of loyalty to her spouse.

The sailors felt they were being cut out of the nuptial equation. None of them was permitted to marry his convict maid. They were banned in the women's camp. The male convicts were happy to see the rule enforced against those sailors who had lorded over them at sea and who had been able to attract or buy sea-wives with promises of rations and protection.



As soon as the British ships left Botany Bay, the French built on its north side a palisade fortification to enable new longboats to be constructed in safety. 'This precaution was necessary,' wrote La Pérouse, 'against the Indians of New Holland, who tho' very weak and few in number, like all savages are extremely mischievous . . . for they even threw darts at us immediately after receiving our presents and our caresses.'

Whatever native mischief la Pérouse experienced, it was notable that the new settlers in Warrane—Sydney Cove—seemed to require no fortification, nor was the judicious Phillip tempted to erect any. Some wisdom told him that a new society could not be created from within a state of siege. Not that the people in Sydney Cove had been pestered by natives, who seemed to stay away from the area in the early weeks.

FINDING AN AMBASSADOR

On the second Saturday of February, two natives came down to the Sydney Cove camp, to within a small distance of the governor's canvas house. They were 'both men pretty much advanced in life' and bore long spears. The governor, determined to be courteous, put on his coat and went out to meet them with a number of officers, and gave one of them a hatchet 'and bound some red bunting about their heads with some yellow tinfoil'. The two visitors sat beneath a tree but refused to go any further into the new town.

Whatever their purpose, one could be sure it was worthy of a better response than bunting and tinfoil. In fact Phillip would soon hear rumours that some of his people had been involved in the rape and plunder of natives, and ultimately in murder, though there was no direct evidence of any of this. Almost certainly the two elders had come, amongst other motives, to observe the people who were so casual in violating the world set up by the hero ancestors, the beings who created the local environment of each clan and language group in the great period of generation known as the Dreaming.

Other contacts made early in that remarkable month of February 1788 seemed to confirm the idea that the natives were very interested in the new people, but were distressed by their unauthorised taking of fish and game. A pernicious trade in native souvenirs had also started between the convicts on land, and even some of the marines, and the sailors of the transports. The sailors knew they would soon be departing and were willing to buy stolen spears, throwing sticks and native nets as mementos.

The women's hand fishing lines, if stolen, were particularly difficult for the natives to replace, being arduously spun from the inner bark of the curra-jong tree. They also used bark fibre to make two-ply fishing nets—*carrahjun maugromaa*, a net to catch fish in—and net bags, in which they carried their fishing lines and other possessions, and hung from their necks or foreheads.

Burra, fish hooks, made either of hardwood or of the spiral vortex of shells, were also stolen. The Eora forebears had fished with hooks and hand-lines and the multi-point spears the Europeans called fizz-gigs—from the Spanish *fisga*, harpoon—for at least two millennia. The men used canoes chiefly to cross from one bay to another, but always fished in the shallows. One European declared that a native had been seen to catch more than twenty fish in an afternoon by standing up in his canoe and striking at fish with his fizz-gig. These were made of the flowering stem of the grass-tree, or of wattle acacia, the four barbs fastened in place by gum. The wooden prongs were sharpened with fire and headed with animal-bone points, sharp fishbones or teeth, or viciously sharp stingray spurs.

Collins says that at convict musters and morning military parades, every person in the colony had been forbidden by Phillip's order from depriving the natives of their spears, adhesive yellow gum, or other articles. But there were obvious violations, and the bad conduct of a particular boat crew led to a landing party in one of the coves in the lower part of the harbour being driven off with spears.

Tit-for-tat, a game the natives played with the same vigour as the Europeans, was now established. A party of Aboriginal men, perhaps sixteen or eighteen, landed on the garden island of the *Sirius* and carried off a shovel, spade and pick-axe. One of the sailors there picked up a musket and got a shot away. A wounded native dropped the pick-axe. Was the attempt to take this item away straight theft, was it the unknowing and accustomed picking up of whatever lay in nature, or was it an attempt at an adjustment of the books? It was, in any case, interpreted on the newcomers' side only as predictable native thievery. Captain Collins lamented, 'To such circumstances as these must be attributed the termination of that good understanding that had hitherto subsisted between us and them, and which Governor Phillip laboured to improve wherever he had the opportunity.' By the end of February 1788, the indigenous people began to shun the settlement.

As the Antipodean spring came on and the harvest proved bad, Phillip decided that his principal city should be developed some distance inland from Sydney Cove, because of the better farming land away from the coast, and because Rose Hill, as the new settlement would be called, 'was beyond the reach of enemy naval bombardment'. Phillip thus sent part of the garrison,

under Ross, and a number of male and female convicts up the Parramatta River to begin a new settlement at Rose Hill (or Parramatta).

Phillip was also determined to end 'this state of petty warfare and endless uncertainty' between the races. He intended to kidnap one or more natives and retain them as hostages-cum-language teachers-cum-diplomats in Sydney Cove. He explained the reasons for such an abduction to Lord Sydney: 'It was absolutely necessary that we should attain their language, or teach them ours, that the means of redress might be pointed out to them, if they are injured, and to reconcile them by showing the many advantages they would enjoy by mixing with us.'

On 30 December 1788, Phillip sent two boats down the harbour under the command of Lieutenant Ball of the *Supply* and Lieutenant George Johnston of the marines with orders to seize some of the natives. At Manly Cove 'several Indians' were seen standing on the beach, 'who were enticed by courteous behaviour and a few presents to enter into conversation'. Two men who waded out to the boats to talk were seized in the shallows, and the rest fled, but the yells of the two who had been taken quickly brought them back with many others, some of whom were armed with their long spears. One of the captured natives got away. The other captive, a slighter young man, was tumbled into one of the boats.

There was an immediate counter-attack on the boats—the natives 'threw spears, stones, firebrands, and whatever else presented itself, at the boats, nor did they retreat . . . until many muskets were fired over them'.

The male native they had fastened by ropes to the boat 'set up the most piercing and lamentable cries of distress'. His arrival at Sydney Cove was a sensation, women and children and off-duty marines milling about him. Most people in the Cove had not seen a native at close quarters for many months. Like everyone else, Tench rushed down from his hut to assess the hostage. He appeared to be about thirty years old, not tall but robustly made, 'and of a countenance which, under happier circumstances, I thought would display manliness and sensibility'. Every attempt was made to reassure him as he was escorted to the governor's newly a-building brick house, where someone touched the small bell above the vice-regal door and the man started with horror. In a soft, musical voice, the native wondered at all he saw, not least at people hanging out the first-floor window, which he attributed to some men walking on others' shoulders.

That lunchtime, calmer now, intensely observed by Arthur Phillip, he dined at a side table at the governor's, 'and ate heartily of fish and ducks, which he first cooled'. He drank nothing but water, and on being shown that he should not wipe his hands on the chair he sat on, he used a towel 'with great cleanliness and decency'. The gentlemen observed that his front incisor tooth had been removed at initiation. They would note later that, like his fellows, he was able to rest one-legged and motionless, especially during journeys and hunting, with his other leg bent and the foot notched comfortably above the standing knee. As part of the potential peace-making between Phillip and the young man, his hair was close cut and combed and his beard shaved. He seemed pleased with his shorn hair, full of vermin as it had been, which he proceeded to eat, and only the 'disgusted abhorrence of the Europeans made him leave off'. He was now immersed in a tub of water and soap and Watkin Tench had the honour to perform part of the scrub.

Despite the young man's accommodating nature, he resisted telling people his name. To prevent his escape, a handcuff with a rope attached to it was fastened round his left wrist, and at first it seemed to delight him, since he called it *ben-gad-ee* (ornament). A convict was selected to sleep in the same hut with him and to be his companion, or as Tench inevitably wrote, 'his keeper', wherever he went.

The next morning he was led to the observatory and introduced to Dawes, the young astronomer, who like Collins had a scholarly interest in the natives and would soon start putting together a dictionary of the Eora language.

This young man of soulful features fascinated Phillip. He ordered that he be taken back to Manly for a visit, so that his people could see he had not been hurt. A longboat carrying armed marines conveyed him close to shore so that he could speak to natives on the beach. He chatted to his people with a good humour which even survived the return to Sydney. Some of his kinsmen obviously urged him to escape, but he pointed to an iron fetter on his leg. He was taken back to Manly again two days later, but no natives came near the beach this time. Either his clan considered him vitiated by his contact with the Europeans, or else they were frightened that he was placed on the shore as a bait to attract them, and that they would end up in his position.

He would never be an intimate of his people again, and now he released his real name, or at least one of his names, to his captors. It was Arabanoo. The fleet's children, still impressed by his novelty, would flock around him, and he treated them with great sensitivity—'if he was eating, [he] offered them the choicest morsels', said Tench. Since everyone, including Phillip, was enchanted by him, his continued presence at Government House almost became its own point. For he did not learn English quickly, at least not to the point where he could make Phillip any wiser on the grievances of the natives. And though he was an honoured courtier and ambassador during the day, every night Arabanoo was locked in with his convict.



At this time, the ration had been reduced to 4 pounds (1.8 kilos) of flour, 2½ pounds of pork and 1½ pounds of rice. Phillip had needed, too, to reduce the convicts' working hours: from sunrise to one o'clock now comprised their working day. As in so many other areas, Watkin Tench gives us a telling example of how people lived then. 'The pork and rice were brought with us from England: the pork had been salted between three and four years, and every grain of rice was a moving body, from the inhabitants lodged in it. We soon left off boiling the pork, as it had become so old and dry that it shrank one-half in its dimensions when so dressed. Our usual method of cooking it was to cut off the daily morsel and toast it on a fork before the fire, catching the drops which fell on a slice of bread or in a saucer of rice.'

A shortage of pease, compacted pea porridge, deprived the inhabitants of both Sydney and Rose Hill of their chief source of vitamin B, increasing their vulnerability to infection and showing up in a hollowed-out appearance and leg ulcers. Arabanoo, however, seemed exempted from these rations. In the event he escaped back to his people, Phillip did not want the natives to know that the newcomers' hold on New South Wales was so tenuous, so threatened by hunger.

Phillip had in desperation already sent the *Sirius* to the Cape of Good Hope, stripping the ship of its cannons to allow all the more food to be stowed aboard. But Hunter's vessel was not in the height of repair and there was no guarantee it would be back.

WHO GAVE THE EORA THE SMALLPOX?

The Eora were threatened in a new way too. Sergeant Scott noted on 15 April 1789 that when he went with a party to cut grass-trees for thatching he found three natives lying near a beach, a man and two boys, one of the latter dead from what looked like smallpox, and the other two very ill. To a seaman like Arthur Phillip, scurvy was of far greater concern than would be a smallpox outbreak. Though it could be lethal, smallpox was a disease the British were used to. Many Sydney Cove and Rose Hill people of all classes carried the pitted faces of survivors of the illness. By the standards of the eighteenth century it was eminently survivable, and on top of that, it seems that from early in the century many Englishmen and women had already been inoculated against it.

The up-to-date Surgeon White had carried with him on Phillip's fleet a flask of 'variolous material', *variola* being the Latin name of smallpox, just in case he needed to inoculate the young against an outbreak in the penal colony. Phillip would soon check with White whether that tissue had somehow escaped its flask at the hospital and thus spread itself to the natives.

Visiting the beach in Port Jackson where the sufferers had been seen, Phillip and his boat party found an old man stretched out on the ground while a boy of nine or ten was pouring water on his head from a shell. The boy had the lesions on his skin too. Near them lay a female child, dead, and her mother. 'The body of the woman showed that famine, super-added to disease, had occasioned her death.' Here was an acknowledgment that Eora were going hungry from the pressure the settlement was putting on their food supplies.

The man and boy were taken back to Surgeon White's hospital in Sydney Cove and placed in a special quarantine hut.

Boat crews began to see dead natives everywhere, the bodies abandoned by streams and on beaches, or littering caves. The disease disqualified the victim from receiving the normal funeral rituals, it seemed. Perhaps because the natives were too sick themselves, the binding up of a body with various talismanic possessions in a sort of death canoe of paperbark, or the burial in shallow earth, or ceremonial cremation—all of which were previously practised in the Sydney area—no longer occurred.

In Surgeon White's quarantine hut, the older native suffering from the disease kept looking into his son's cot, 'patted him gently on the bosom; and

with dying eyes seemed to recommend him to our humanity and protection. The boy's name was Nanbaree, for his father, shivering, called to him out of a swollen throat. When Nanbaree's father died, the boy is said to have surveyed the corpse without emotion and simply exclaimed, '*Bo-ee* [dead]'. It was the gracious Arabanoo who placed the old man's body in its grave. His behaviour that day, his tenderness and generosity towards the ill, persuaded Phillip to release him from his leg bracelet for good.

Nanbaree, the boy, slowly recovered. Many of the children of the fleet had visited Nanbaree and another native child in hospital, and none of them caught smallpox. A native girl and boy, both about fourteen, had been brought in by the governor's boat. The boy died after three days, but the girl recovered. The names by which she would become commonly known were Abaroo and Boorong.

As smallpox continued to rage among the Aborigines, Arabanoo became Phillip's liaison to the dying. Phillip was anxious that the Eora, who were in utter terror of the plague, should know the frightful disease was not some weapon of malice or magic on his part. But the Eora had fled. Arabanoo was taken round the different coves of the harbour to try to make contact with his fellows, but the beaches were deserted. 'Excavations and hollows and caves . . . were clogged with the putrid bodies of dead natives. It seemed as if, flying from the contagion, they had left the dead to bury the dead.' Tench watched Arabanoo lift up his hands and eyes 'in silent agony' and then cry, 'All dead! All dead!', and hang his head in grief.

Since it was known that Makassan people regularly visited far northern Australia to collect trepang, Phillip, and ultimately historians, would wonder whether smallpox could have been transmitted from the natives of the north through inter-tribal contact over a huge distance down to the south-east coast of New South Wales.

Phillip asked the question in genuine puzzlement. The port authorities in both Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town had checked for signs of smallpox on board the fleet, and Phillip had been able to say there were none. Nor had there been any sign since. White assured him that the disease had not arisen from his flask of material, which was unbroken and secure on a shelf. Convicts did not covet it, and Aborigines had not entered White's storehouse and taken the flask. Perhaps there had been a sufferer on the French ships, now gone? Though the disease reached out and struck the Eora fifteen or sixteen months

after the arrival of the ships, some two years after they had departed England, the Eora themselves never doubted it to be a deliberate attack.

Arabanoo's nursing of the girl Abaroo and the boy Nanbaree had been the cause of great admiration, and even when he grew ill, Tench and Phillip hoped that the symptoms came from a different cause. 'But at length the disease burst forth with irresistible fury.' Everything possible was done for him. He allowed himself to be bled by the surgeons and took everything they had to offer. When he died on 18 May, the governor, 'who particularly regarded him', had him buried in the garden of the brick and stone Government House, and attended the funeral.

Along with Arabanoo, an estimated two thousand Eora perished from the smallpox virus in Port Jackson.

FOOD AND MEN'S MINDS

Amongst the white community with their resistance to the smallpox infestation, hunger remained the issue. By 1789 the stores were held in two buildings of brick and stone designed and built behind Government House. Of Mr Commissary Andrew Miller, who managed the supplies, Phillip would say that he fulfilled the task appointed him 'with the strictest honour and no profit'. One morning in March 1789, Miller became aware that a long-running theft of food had taken place amongst the marine sentries, who had made copies of the official keys. One soldier turned King's evidence, and named seven marines from various companies who were in the plot to loot the stores during their rotating sentry duties.

A court martial found them all guilty of plundering the stores. Their execution was an agony for the corps of marines. And yet in a strange way the corps accepted the inevitability of this public hanging.

Then, not long before Arabanoo was buried in Phillip's garden, *Sirius* relieved the hysteria over food by reappearing on the broad sweep of Port Jackson. It had had the sort of voyage which makes one question why any man would be a sailor. During the journey the ship's company was afflicted with scurvy so badly that at one stage there were only thirteen sailors available to man the watch, along with the carpenter's crew. Lieutenant Maxwell went mad off Cape Horn and ordered all sail be put on during a gale. Captain Hunter and the surgeon set to work in Cape Town to address the scurvy amongst the crew.

They had left Cape Town with twelve months supplies for the ship's company, and about four to six months of flour at full ration for the entire settlement, as well as various other stores and medical items ordered by Surgeon White. They had good weather until they got off the South East Cape of Van Diemen's Land. In the darkness of a storm they found the luminescence of surf breaking higher than their mastheads on huge rocks ahead. They found themselves with barely enough steerage room, with a heavy sea rolling in upon them and nothing but high cliffs under their lee and the gale to windward blowing them towards the rocks. Nagle heard Hunter, after giving orders for a combination of sail to be set, cry out. 'He said she must carry it, or capsize, or carry away the masts, or go on the rocks . . . I don't suppose there was a living soul on board that expected to see daylight.'

On arrival through the heads of Port Jackson and then, to the great joy of all, at Sydney Cove, the *Sirius* looked beaten about, was missing the upper sections of her masts (the fore-topgallant masts), had split the upper part of her stem and lost the figurehead of the Duke of Berwick. Lieutenant Maxwell was brought ashore raving to the hospital, and would never recover his sanity.

How sincerely must Phillip have nonetheless wrung Hunter's hand. There were no newspaper columns or levees to greet Hunter, and yet he had made a remarkable journey without hope of great notice or publicity. What in the northern hemisphere would have gained him renown gained him here an invitation to the governor's dinner table, with the proviso that applied to all officers so honoured, that they bring with them their own bread roll.

6

THE FIRST YEARS

THE WEIGHT OF PRISONERS

By August 1787, three months after Phillip's fleet had sailed, the Sheriff of London and Middlesex wrote to Lord Sydney about the problem of overcrowding in Newgate Gaol. Most of the 700 Newgate prisoners were living in crowded wards designed for two-dozen people and crammed with twice as many. The sheriff worried about the coming winter, and the prospect of death from congestive disease and gaol fever (typhus) amongst his charges. Throughout Britain, gaolers wrote to complain that they had been promised that they would be able to move some of their prisoners down to the hulks once the convict fleet had left in May 1787, and this promise had not been kept.

When Lord Sydney was asked about future plans, he told the Treasury he wanted to send at least two hundred women from Newgate and the county gaols to New South Wales, but only when favourable reports of the new colony's progress arrived. Just in case the women could be transported, William Richards (who had fitted out the First Fleet) was given a contract to take up a suitable ship, and in November 1788 officials looked over a 401-ton (409-tonne) ship named *Lady Juliana* at the Royal Navy's Deptford dockyard, and found it to be fit to transport convicts.

Richards appointed George Aitken as *Lady Juliana*'s master. Aitken was conscientious in fitting the ship out, and very willing also to co-operate with

the naval agent put aboard, Lieutenant Edgar. Edgar had been Captain James Cook's master, that is, navigator, on HMS *Discovery* during Cook's last voyage in 1776–79. Little Bassey, as his nickname went, was middle-aged, shocked by nothing and determined to look after the women prisoners' physical and nutritional well-being. A younger man, Dr Alley, was surgeon.

It was not until March 1789 that *Prince of Wales* arrived in England with the first news of the colony. Phillip's dispatches, though hopeful, and telling of a struggling yet healthily located place, were counter-balanced by the utterly negative voices of Ross and his ally, Captain Campbell. Under-secretary Nepean put more reliance on Phillip than he did on Ross. There was enough basis to order that *Lady Juliana* could conscientiously be filled up for her journey.

The *Lady Juliana* had been moved from Deptford to Galleon's Reach miles downriver from Newgate. One hundred and sixteen women from the prison were embarked during March and April 1789.



In journeying to New South Wales on the *Lady Juliana* and devoting a chapter of his journal to it, the ship's steward, John Nicol, a young Scot, gives us a rare view of the transactions between convict women and seamen. He had a positive nature, believing that aboard one found not 'a great many very bad characters' amongst the women.

It was Nicol's job to go ashore and buy supplies for the ship, but he also shopped for convict women who had brought money with them aboard, particularly for a Mrs Barnsley, 'a noted sharper and shoplifter'. This potent woman became *Lady Juliana*'s centre of authority and dispenser of favours amongst the other prisoners. They in return were all pleased to serve her and were rewarded with the groceries Steward Nicol bought for her ashore. To add to her other gifts of personality, she became the ship's midwife, one whom Surgeon Alley very much trusted and thus took advice from.

Nicol had been working aboard *Lady Juliana* for three months when the great love of his life came aboard. Seventeen women from Lincoln Castle, riveted irons around their wrists, had come down to Greenwich, travelling for thirty-six hours roped to the outside seats of a coach. Their condition was pitiable; they were tattered, pale, muddled and chilblained. Nicol, as ship's steward and trained blacksmith, had the task of striking the riveted

county prison irons off the women's wrists on his anvil. In a smithy shack on the windswept deck women bent low to have the work done, and Nicol fell in love with one of them, despite her bedragglement, in the space of performing his task. 'I had fixed my fancy upon her from the moment I knocked the rivet out of her irons upon my anvil, and as firmly resolved to bring her back to England when her time was out, my lawful wife, as ever I did intend anything in my life.'

Sarah Whitelam, the object of this fervour, was a Lincolnshire country girl, perhaps another victim of Enclosure. During their courtship she told him that she had borrowed a cloak from an acquaintance, who had maliciously prosecuted her for stealing it, and she was transported for seven years for unjust cause. Sarah's true crime, to whose record the love-stricken Nicol had no access, was that at Tealby in Lincolnshire she had stolen material and clothing that amounted to an entire small shop-load.

To allow the sort of courtship which Nicol describes, the *Lady Juliana* must have been a relatively relaxed ship, where for their own good the women were allowed on deck for exercise a considerable amount, and some were permitted access to the sailors' quarters to an extent not openly countenanced on most of the First Fleet. In a wooden ship of 400 or so tons, there was not a lot of room for private courting, but the poor of the time were used to cramped quarters, to cohabiting in one-room hutches, to copulating by stealth and with minimal privacy. Sarah Whitelam would be pregnant with Nicol's child by the time the ship left England. Thus, as in the First Fleet, the fallen young of Britain were busy at their associations, generating on whatever terms an enlargement of the convict nation towards which they headed.

The last load of women was brought on in Plymouth, and it was July 1789 when the *Lady Juliana* sailed with 245 women aboard. Nichol says, 'When we were fairly out to sea, every man on board took a wife from among the convicts, they nothing loath.' The *Lady Juliana* was the first ship of an as yet not fully planned Second Fleet to get away. It carried on board a letter Home Office Undersecretary Evan Nepean had written to his friend Arthur Phillip in Sydney Cove, informing him that 'in the course of the autumn I expect that about 1000 more convicts of both sexes will be embarked from the several Gaols and despatched to Port Jackson'.

EXPIREES

By the time *Lady Juliana* left England, Phillip was faced with the continuing problem of convicts saying their time had expired. Phillip's reply, that he regretted he had no records to verify these matters, was 'truly distressing' to many convicts. Several men told the governor that when the records did arrive, they would want to be paid for their labour as free men.

Privately, Judge-Advocate Collins was not unsympathetic to such people, who were 'most peculiarly and unpleasantly situated'. But the reality was that Phillip could not afford to advance any person two years of rations. Despite the supplies *Sirius* had brought back from South Africa, in November 1789 the ration was reduced to two-thirds again, since there were only five months of *Sirius*'s flour left. Nonetheless, said Collins, 'The governor, whose humanity was at all times conspicuous, directed that no alteration should be made in the ration to be issued to the women.'

Despite abiding hunger, by the end of the Antipodean winter of 1789 the camp of Sydney Cove had taken on the look of a permanent town. Two barracks were finished, two storehouses, and the large brick house the governor occupied. Many male and female convicts had brick huts. But because of ongoing turbulent behaviour at night and a conviction in the camp that the brickfield convicts, who were camped a little way west of town, came down to the men's and women's area to steal property, a Jewish Cockney convict named John Harris, a *Mercury* returnee, came to Captain Collins and asked whether a night guard might be established, a patrol of reputable convicts.

This was an early example of the New South Wales conundrum, the overthrow of Phillip's early intention that the positions of the free and the condemned should not become blurred. The convicts began to take on an official importance in the great open air experiment of Sydney that they could not have achieved in Newgate or on the hulks. So, without a free police force to keep order, a night watch of eight convicts was initiated at Harris's suggestion. Collins wrote about this paradox. 'It was to have been wished, that a watch established for the preservation of public and private property had been formed of free people, and that necessity had not compelled us . . . to appoint them from a body of men in whose eyes, it could not be denied, the property of individuals had never before been sacred. But there was not any choice.'

For the purpose of night watch patrols, the settlement was divided into four districts, and three men patrolled each. The night watch was soon guarding the chief settlement not only from the nocturnal evil of convicts, but from marines also. When one of the night watch stopped a marine in the convicts' compound, Ross viewed it as an insult, and Phillip was forced, wearily, to ensure it did not happen again.

John Harris's night guard would ensure, Collins recorded, that by comparison with Sydney Cove, 'many streets in London were not so well guarded'.

A SECOND FLEET

In 1789 aging Viscount Sydney had resigned from the Home Office. His replacement, and Nepean's new superior, was the 29-year-old William Grenville, soon to be Lord Grenville. A future prime minister, he was subject to the same political pressures as Sydney had been, and wrote to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury in early July 1789, telling them, 'His Majesty has therefore been pleased to signify to me his Royal Commands that 1000 of the said convicts should forthwith be sent to New South Wales.' The dispatch of this thousand was exclusive of the women already on *Lady Juliana*.

The Navy Board immediately called for tenders from merchants to supply ships and stores. William Richards, who had so competently and thoughtfully outfitted the First Fleet and the *Lady Juliana*, bid again, but the successful contractor was this time the largest slave transportation company in Britain—Camden, Calvert and King.

Camden, Calvert and King were to be paid a sum of £17 7 shillings and sixpence for each convict embarked, somewhat less than Richards had quoted. Five pounds would be paid once the cabins and bulkheads had been fitted, and £10 when the stores had been loaded and the ships were ready to receive convicts. The remainder was to be paid when a certificate was received in London from the commissary in New South Wales confirming that the stores had been delivered. There was no money held back pending the delivery in good condition in Sydney Cove of the convicts themselves.

The Australian legend that the British dumped convicts in Australia was enhanced and very nearly justified by the horrors which would characterise this core section of the second flotilla—just as the *Lady Juliana* helped generate the concept that women's ships were floating brothels.

The War Ministry had been thinking about New South Wales too and decided that the marines who had travelled on the First Fleet would be gradually replaced. During the summer of 1789, from England, Scotland and Ireland, three hundred men were recruited for a new corps, and the first hundred privates and NCOs, along with two captains, three lieutenants, an ensign and a surgeon's mate would travel on the transports of the Second Fleet. The new unit, the 102nd Regiment of Foot, would be more commonly called the New South Wales Corps, but they were also referred to as the Botany Bay Rangers.

Three transports, *Neptune*, *Scarborough* and *Surprise*, were readied at Deptford for the journey. In the meantime a store ship had been sent from Spithead, bound for Sydney Cove, six weeks after the female convicts in the *Lady Juliana*. The ship in question was a naval frigate of 879 tons (897 tonnes), the HMS *Guardian*, and it left Britain richly burdened with the supplies for which Phillip had asked, and with twenty-five 'artificers', convicts with trades, for whom Phillip had also pleaded. In the crew was fourteen-year-old Thomas Pitt, a cousin of the prime minister. With all it carried, and with its small corps of talented convicts, the *Guardian* represented a secure future for the people of New South Wales. Sadly, it would collide with an iceberg south-east of Africa.

ANTIPODEAN ADAM

Salvation could not indefinitely come from outside New South Wales. One of the iconic figures of redemption from within would be the young Cornish convict, James Ruse. Ruse, who had been sentenced to seven years transportation to Africa in 1782 for burglariously entering a house in Launceston, had spent five years on the brutal hulk *Dunkirk*, moored off Plymouth, before being loaded on the *Scarborough*. Without verification that Ruse's sentence had expired (it had), Phillip nonetheless knew enough about him from his supervisory work at the government farm in Sydney Cove to decide to embark on an experiment with him. In 1789, Phillip gave him a conditional grant of thirty acres and convict help to clear it in the promising area known as the Crescent on the riverbank near Parramatta/Rose Hill. Phillip also authorised the issue to Ruse of necessary tools and seed for planting. Full title to the land was withheld until Ruse proved himself the first viable farmer.

Phillip, surrounded by men who regularly told him New South Wales could not serve as a place for settled agriculture, wanted to test whether it was possible for a skilled farmer to live off the land. Above all, he needed to rebut the nihilist voices, such as that of Major Ross, who hated New South Wales with an almost theological passion. 'I do not scruple to pronounce that in the whole world there is not a worse country than what we have seen of this . . . here nature is reversed.'

In the face of Ross's negativity, Ruse would symbolise the resourceful agriculturalist and become a living validation of the idea that the Australian earth was, after all, compliantly fruitful. In truth, not even all Ruse's industry could fully prevail over the recalcitrant, leached-down and grudging earth along the Parramatta River, and he would later move to the more remote floodplain areas along the Hawkesbury north-west of Sydney. At the time he got his land grant, there were others Phillip was willing to free and put to the task of sustaining New South Wales, until he saw what befell this young Cornishman.

A NEW ARABANOO

The other experiment which had been in abeyance was the Aboriginal diplomatic experiment which had ended with Arabanoo's death. Tench says that in making a further capture of natives, Phillip needed, amongst other things, to know 'whether or not the country possessed any resources, by which life might be prolonged'.

Reliable Lieutenant Bradley of the *Sirius* was sent out with two boats to capture natives, a task he found distasteful. Northwards, at Manly Cove, he found a number of natives on the beach, and in the prow of one of the cutters, a seaman held up fish, tempting two robust men, a mature fellow and a young man, into the shallows. 'They eagerly took the fish,' wrote Lieutenant Bradley. 'They were dancing together when the signal was given by me, and the two poor devils were seized and handed into the boat in an instant.' The two captured happened not to be local natives but two formidable visitors from the south side of Port Jackson. Both of them fought ferociously to get away from the melee of soldiers, sailors and convicts, but they were up against numbers, and soon shackles were on them. The other natives rushed from the bush and gathered on both headlands of the cove, shaking their spears and clubs.

Bradley wrote, 'The noise of the men, crying and screaming of the women and children, together with the situation of the two miserable wretches in our possession was really a most distressing scene.' It was a bad day's business, Bradley thought, 'by far the most unpleasant service I was ever ordered to execute'.

At the governor's wharf at Sydney Cove, a crowd gathered to see the natives brought ashore, just as they had gathered to see Arabanoo. The boy Nanbaree, who had survived the smallpox and who now lived at the hospital, shouted 'Colby' to the older of the two men and 'Bennelong' to the younger. Both men still bristled with resistance.

Woolawarre Bennelong (this being just one of many alternative spellings of the name) was judged by Tench to be about twenty-six years old, 'with a bold intrepid countenance, which bespoke defiance and revenge'. He was a man of lively, passionate, sociable, humorous character, and well advanced in ritual knowledge, ritual being the fuel and physics of his world. He was well-liked around the harbour, and southwards too, where people lived who were related to him by marriage, language and the great rituals of corroboree dance and other secret, communal ceremonies. Sometimes, it would be discovered, he fornicated with their women and bravely stood up under a rain of ritual punishment spears, took his scars and was proud of them. He had an ambiguous relationship with his least favourite relatives, the Cameraigal of the north shore of Port Jackson, whose women he nonetheless had a passion for and whose country he was at various times permitted to hunt in, fish in, socialise in, and join in corroboree—those dances which sustained and continued the earth made by hero ancestors. Bennelong had a range of names in a society where people carried many names, and some of his others were Boinda, Bundebunda, Wogetrowey.

Colby was perhaps thirty, more intractable, somewhat shorter but athletic looking, and 'better fitted for purposes of activity', observed Tench. They had both survived the smallpox—'indeed Colby's face was very thickly imprinted with the marks of it'. Hunter would claim Colby was 'a chief of the Cadigal', and his fuller name was Gringerry Kibba Colby.

Both natives were taken up to the governor's residence. It was the first time Bennelong and Arthur Phillip saw each other eye to eye, a meeting as fateful and defining as that between Cortez and Montezuma, or Pizarro and Atuahalpa. Bennelong and Phillip in particular were mutually enchanted,

and both Bennelong and Colby could see through the deference other white people offered him that Phillip was the supreme elder—*Be-anna*, Father, as Arabanoo had called him.

A convict was assigned to each of the men until they should become reconciled to their capture. They were tied at night to their keepers by both ankle chain and rope, and slept with them in a locked hut. At this treatment, Colby yielded no gesture of reconciliation. He planned escape. Genial Bennelong, 'though haughty', not only got on well with the Europeans but enjoyed the experience of doing so, and was his people's first enthusiastic anthropologist. Beneath his conviviality was a desire to work out what these people meant and, perhaps, how to appease them and even make them go away.

After attempting escape many times, Colby managed it on the night of 12 December 1789, while eating supper with Bennelong and their two minders.

Phillip took him with Nanbaree to the look-out post on the south head of the harbour. Bennelong still wore his leg shackle and despite it was able to put on a display of strength and accuracy by throwing a spear nearly 90 metres against a strong wind 'with great force and exactness'. On the way back the boat stopped near Rose Bay, and Bennelong called to a native woman ashore he was very fond of—one of the Cameraigal, named Barangaroo. Barangaroo and other women waded out and talked, were offered jackets, and told Bennelong that Colby was fishing on the other side of the hill, but had been unable to remove the shackle from his leg.

A captive by night, Bennelong had the freedom of the governor's house by day. At Phillip's table, wrote Watkin Tench, Bennelong became immediately fond of 'our viands' and would drink spirits without reluctance, which Colby and Arabanoo had not done. 'He acquired knowledge, both of our manners and language, faster than his predecessor had done.' He would sing and dance, and talked about all the customs of his country in a mixture of rudimentary English and Eora on his side, and rudimentary Eora and English on Tench's and Phillip's. 'Love and war seemed his favourite pursuits,' wrote Tench, 'in both of which he had suffered severely. His head was disfigured by several scars; a spear had passed through his arm and another through his leg; half of one of his thumbs was carried away, and the mark of a wound appeared on the back of his hand.' But they

served as a map of his adventures, and as well as telling the stories of his exploits, an exercise he loved greatly, he was also explaining a concept of blood justice, and preparing the European mind for the idea that they too might need graciously to receive similar wounds for crimes. The plunders and even the occupation of earth by the Europeans violated the land. Bennelong hoped they could be taught that fact. It might have been one of the reasons he stayed so long in Sydney Cove, and risked his soul amongst the cloud-people.

As for the governor, Bennelong exchanged his own honorific, Woolawarre, with him, calling him by that name, and thus being entitled to call himself Governor. The exchange of names was meant to do both parties great honour and convey closeness of soul. Phillip told former Home Secretary Lord Sydney in a letter that he hoped Bennelong 'will soon be able to inform us of their customs and manners'.

There were perhaps two dozen or more clans which participated with Bennelong in the common language of the Sydney area. From the south head of Port Jackson to Sydney Cove, and southwards towards Botany Bay, the people were called Cadi and the tribe were Cadigal, and Colby was an important man amongst that group. (The ending *gal* meant country.) On the south side of the harbour from Sydney Cove westwards, the tribe were the Wangal, of whom Bennelong was a member. On the opposite, northern, shore of the Parramatta River from the Wangal was the tribe called the Wallumettagal. Then, on the broader reaches of northern Port Jackson were the Cameraigal, and at Manly the Gayimai. These neat divisions merely scratch the surface of the complexity of clans and families and geography. At particular times they all visited each others' territory, and were connected by favours, gestures, swapped names, marriage, ceremonies and ritual knowledge of how to sustain their shared earth.

He spoke much of the Cameraigal women, especially the woman named Barangaroo, who had him under a spell. This glamour of the foreign and the owned might have led to behaviour appalling in European eyes, but marrying out of their family group was one of the mechanisms by which ancient societies avoided incest.

As part of his British training, Bennelong was required to appear at the governor's table in trousers and a red kersey jacket. Tench observed that he was not the least awkward in eating or in performing actions of bowing and

returning thanks. He would raise his glass and drink a toast to 'the King', a term which Bennelong associated ever after with a glass of wine.

By April 1790, the shackle was removed from Bennelong's ankle. Arthur Phillip demonstrated his trust, as he could never do with a convict, by letting Bennelong wear a short sword and belt, Bennelong being 'not a little pleased at this mark of confidence'. Indeed, Phillip seems to have been endlessly indulgent to the fellow. Bennelong's allowance was received each week from the commissary stores by the governor's steward, the Frenchman Bernard de Maliez, 'but the ration of a week was insufficient to have kept him for a day'. The deficiency was made up with fish and Indian corn. For if he were hungry, Bennelong became furious or melancholy.

He was also in love and always had a woman to pursue. On 3 May, he pretended illness, and awakening the servant who lay in the room with him, 'very artfully' begged to be taken downstairs. Bennelong 'no sooner found himself in a back-yard, than he nimbly leaped over a slight paling, and bid us adieu'. Collins was a little affronted that the governor's every indulgence had not prevented Bennelong's decamping. But Bennelong had agendas beyond Collins's imagining, including the necessity of performing ceremonials that were pending, of reporting his experiences of the Europeans, and of moving upon Barangaroo, whom Colby was courting.

FAMINE

In March 1790 Phillip consigned Ross from Parramatta to the command of Norfolk Island, since Lieutenant King had been pleading a need to return to England, and Phillip thought of him as the most reliable man to send to Whitehall with a true account of the poverty of the penal colony.

For the inhabitants of Sydney Cove, the ration at the time Ross was sent to Norfolk provided daily about 1800 calories (7.54 kilojoules) and 56 grams of protein, a minimum for survival. Both soldiers and convicts found they were not able to fulfil tasks. The clothing store was near empty and some convicts lived in tatters and rags. Many a guard was mounted in which the majority of soldiers lacked shoes. Intense hunger and depression bred a thousand desperate little thefts.

In this emergency, Phillip 'from a motive that did him immortal honour', released to the general stores the 3 hundredweight (152 kilos) of flour which

was his personal store, 'wishing that if a convict complained, he might see that want was not unfelt even at Government House'.

Things were better at Norfolk, and Phillip decided to dispatch around 350 convicts on the *Sirius* and *Supply* to the island with Major Ross and Lieutenant Clark.

John Hunter and *Sirius* had never been to Norfolk Island, and at a second attempt to land supplies at treacherous Sydney Bay on the south side of the island, despite Hunter's best efforts, *Sirius* was blown stern-first onto the reef, where the surf began to batter her to pieces. Sailors began cutting away the masts and rigging and throwing them over the side in the hope that the loss of weight might refloat her: 'Provisions were brought up from the hold and stacked on the gun deck. If necessary, some of them could be floated ashore. Sailors were tied to ropes and hauled ashore through the surf. Male convicts already landed volunteered to swim to the wreck as the sea subsided, and liberate the livestock. *Sirius*'s crew would be stuck on Norfolk Island for ten months.

Little *Supply* survived and left with Lieutenant King, the outgoing commandant, also carrying to Sydney his convict mistress, Ann Innett, and their two small sons, Norfolk and Sydney, whom King intended to rear as his own.

In April 1790, a cheerful phenomenon occurred which Hunter considered an act of divine intervention. Thousands of birds of a species of ground-nesting petrel arrived on the hills of the island, and continued to land each night for four months. They were mutton birds, and nested in particular on Mount Pitt, where they dug their nests like rabbit warrens. Parties of settlers would arrive soon after dusk, light small fires to attract the attention of the birds, 'and they drop down out of the air as fast as the people can take them up and kill them'. Unfortunately for the species, the mutton bird did not easily rise from flat ground. Its eggs in their burrows were also easily plundered.

Throughout mid 1790, 170 000 birds were slaughtered. 'They had a strong, fishy taste,' said Hunter. 'But our keen appetites relished them very well; the eggs were excellent.' As on the mainland, people also boiled and ate the head of the cabbage-tree palm. The phenomenon of the birds coincided, however, with a plague of caterpillars and grubs that damaged the crops.

Ross tried a new way to encourage convicts to overcome food shortages, setting up on Norfolk Island his own kind of 'agrarian commonwealth'.

He gave allocations of land to groups of convicts, perhaps six at a time, who were jointly responsible for growing what they needed. Thus the convicts would become their own motivators and regulators, and gang up on those who shirked their duties. Ross offered monetary and other prizes to those who put up for sale the most pork, fowls and corn. Felons were thus exposed to the reforming impact of land of their own.



On the mainland, Phillip did not know that the store ship the British government had sent, the *Guardian*, had some months past met icebergs. Had the *Guardian* been able to continue to Sydney, it would have arrived in March 1790 and saved Phillip from the further reductions to the rations made in April 1790. By that time, weekly, 2½ pounds (1.2 kilos) of flour, 2 pounds (900 grams) of pork and 2 of rice were the limit for each British soul in New South Wales. Because of the energy needed to fish and hunt, an extra measure of rations was set aside for gamekeepers and fishermen. In late April it became apparent that the pork in the storehouse would last only until 26 August at the current low rate of consumption, and the beef similarly.

JULIANA: THE FACE OF SHAME

In the same December *Guardian* hit its iceberg, the leisurely women's convict ship *Lady Juliana* was lying in Rio, and Mrs Barnsley was accompanied ashore by officers to do her shopping. Neither Lieutenant Edgar nor Captain Aitken seemed to have cramped her entrepreneurialism. Nor did they prevent those convict girls who accommodated Spanish gentlemen aboard. The former London madam, Elizabeth Sully, who had run a lodging house at 45 Cable Street, East London, and three of her girls had been sentenced for robbing clients, and now were involved with other former prostitutes in building up funds for their time in New South Wales.

Naturally, not all convict women were involved in the prostitution—for one thing, Sarah Whitlam, rural beloved of the steward, John Nicol, was by then heavily pregnant. It may have been that Nicol, Surgeon Alley, Captain Aitken and Lieutenant Edgar were in some way facilitators and profiteers of the flesh trade on *Juliana*, and it is hard to see how they could have been opposed to it.



Back in the Thames, in the squally autumn and cold early winter of 1789, following the departure of the *Lady Juliana* and the *Guardian*, a great crime was in the making. Prisoners from Newgate were being gradually accommodated aboard the newly contracted vessels at Deptford—*Surprise*, *Scarborough* and *Neptune*. *Neptune* was the largest of the three, 809 tons (825 tonnes) with a crew of 83. The *Scarborough* was half the size of the *Neptune*. The 400-ton (408-tonne) *Surprise* was the smallest of the three and a very poor sailer, and commanded by Donald Trail, a former master to Bligh. Trail had recently commanded one of the Camden, Calvert and King slave ships.

On 15 October 1789 the ships were ordered to embark soldiers of the New South Wales Corps and convicts. The soldiers were accommodated in the gun rooms, forecastles and steerage areas of the ships, around the convict decks. The rumour was that some of these fellows were less than prime soldiery, ruffians recruited from the Savoy military prison. Many of this new regiment tolerated the inconvenience of being sent so far abroad because they hoped for power, influence and riches from New South Wales. Some, like a scapegrace lieutenant, Anthony Fenn Kemp, who had wasted a fortune of £2 million, were escaping creditors.

Almost all the convicts taken aboard had been confined for some years. Some came directly from Newgate, but the *Neptune* prisoners came as well from the *Justitia* and *Censor* hulks in the Thames. They were a sullen and angry cargo, but well-cowed and already weakened or weakening.

The idea was to remove the convicts who had been in the hulks the longest time. But that meant they were prisoners who in many cases had served years of their sentences. In committing them to the eighteenth-century equivalent of deep space, those prisoners serving seven- or fourteen-year sentences were unlikely to return from New South Wales. Thus officials must have added names to the lists with the eugenic purpose of locating bad blood permanently in New South Wales without asking too closely what the implications might be for society there.



On *Neptune*, even between Plymouth and Portsmouth, where the men were racked by catarrh and congestive disorders, a number of the convicts had already died, but there was general agreement that it was due to the

physical condition in which they had arrived from the hulks and prisons. There were other signs of indifference to convict welfare, however, early on. Either Trail or Shapcote, the naval agent, ordered many of the convicts' chests thrown overboard with their possessions in them. Men and women who had thought to dress more warmly while at sea were reduced to the basic ration of convict dress—striped jacket and petticoat, navy shoes, inadequate blankets.

By early December 1789, Undersecretary Evan Nepean had become anxious about reports of the conditions on board the Second Fleet, and told the naval agent that he was to 'examine minutely into the manner of confining the convicts, as it has been represented that they are ironed in such a manner as must ultimately tend to their destruction'.

Further convicts were collected from the *Lion* and *Fortune* hulks in Portsmouth, as well as from the notorious *Dunkirk* at Plymouth. Male convicts were suddenly told that they could bring their wives on the voyage, if they chose, but only three women and three children had turned up in Portsmouth by 21 December. Three or four other free women embarked in the following days, interesting volunteers, lovers of various convicts willing to take the step, on the eve of Christmas, into the void.

NEPTUNE'S MEN

There were two young men aboard the *Neptune* who would have a large place in the story of New South Wales.

John Macarthur was a little over twenty years of age, and a lieutenant in the 102nd Regiment, the newly created New South Wales Corps, a man of handsome features that must have satisfied the broad streak of narcissism in him. He was a devout duellist, because he was a man of edgy honour—his father was a Scots draper who lived at the back of his business in Plymouth in an era when trade was thought vulgar. His father had been able to 'obtain'—that is, buy—an ensign's commission for John for a regiment intended to be sent to fight the American colonists. In June 1789, when the formation of the New South Wales Corps was announced, John saw the chance of promotion and his father helped him buy a lieutenancy.

He had married the previous year a robust-spirited and handsome girl named Elizabeth Veal, a Cornish woman who considered her ambitious and volatile husband 'too proud and haughty for our humble fortune'.

The other fascinating passenger on board *Neptune* was a young Irishman, D'Arcy Wentworth, aged about 27, a highwayman-cum-surgeon: a voluntary passenger in one sense; a virtual convict in others. He was tall and good-looking and had acquired notoriety in Britain throughout the 1780s as 'a gentleman of the road', whom the public distinguished from 'the lower and more depraved part of the fraternity of thieves'.

Wentworth was the son of an Ulster innkeeper, a relative of the noble Fitzwilliam clan of Portadown. Earl Fitzwilliam, though progressive and wealthy, had no interest in supporting the youngest son of a kinsman, so D'Arcy was left both with a sense of his own worth, confirmed by seven doting sisters, and no wealth to affirm it. In the mid-to-late 1780s he came to London, where the Court of Examiners of the Company of Surgeons certified him an assistant surgeon. However, the impoverished Irish medical student did not have the temperament to live quietly and carefully. In criminal society at the Dog and Duck Tavern in St George's Field south of the river, he could pass as a real toff, live fairly cheaply, and attract women with his tall frame and vigorous Irish banter. By November 1787 Wentworth had been arrested for holding up a man on Hounslow Heath. The victim described the perpetrator as a large, lusty man who wore a black silk mask and a drab-coloured greatcoat. The charges were dismissed. But four days later, a gentleman, his wife and a female friend were held up on Hounslow Heath by a solitary highwayman on a chestnut horse with a white blaze. Two Bow Street runners intercepted Wentworth as he returned to the city and brought him before a magistrate. Wentworth stood trial in the Old Bailey in December 1787. Though he inveighed against the press for swinging the jury against him, his victims seemed reluctant to identify him and he was acquitted. By now he was to some a glamorous figure, but one wonders what coercion was used by some of his Dog and Duck associates to prevent a definite identification.

In January 1788, Wentworth was the so-called masked gentleman highwayman who rode out of Blackheath and held up two travellers. In the same month on Shooters Hill, three highwaymen, one of them apparently Wentworth, held up Alderman William Curtis (who owned ships in the First Fleet), and two other gentlemen. These two hold-ups netted goods valued at over £50. One of D'Arcy's accomplices was captured in Lewisham, and an address in his pocketbook led Bow Street runners to Wentworth's London lodgings, where they arrested him again.

Before the magistrates and later in Newgate, Wentworth pleaded his family's good name. This time, his trial was moved to Maidstone, in the hope of finding a jury who would convict without fear or favour.

That was the month the eleven ships of the First Fleet had gathered on the Motherbank, preparatory for departure, and there was a rumour Wentworth had been sent away on it. Acquitted in Maidstone, again because of uncertainty of identification, Wentworth met Earl Fitzwilliam, his rich young kinsman, in London for a solemn talk. But by the end of November 1788, D'Arcy had been arrested again for holding up a post-chaise carrying two barristers of Lincoln's Inn across Finchley Common north of Hampstead Heath. One lawyer said to his companion, 'If I was not sure that D'Arcy Wentworth was out of the kingdom, I should be sure it was him.'

The following year, 1789, someone identified as Wentworth asked a surgeon to come and operate on a friend of his, 'Jack Day', suffering from a pistol wound. Wentworth's associate had to be taken to hospital, was grilled by Bow Street officers, and the result was Wentworth's own interrogation and arrest in November.

This time his trial at the Old Bailey was such a *cause célèbre* that it was attended by members of the royal family. On 9 December, Wentworth appeared before a lenient judge and his lawyer victims did not prosecute, having known him socially. The jury was pleased to come back with a verdict of Not Guilty, and the prosecuting parties were also pleased to announce that Mr Wentworth 'has taken a passage to go in the fleet to Botany Bay; and has obtained an appointment in it, as Assistant Surgeon, and desires to be discharged immediately'. Earl Fitzwilliam had agreed to fit his kinsman out and pay his fare to New South Wales on the *Neptune*.

In fact, D'Arcy Wentworth had no official position aboard the ship. The quality of Great Britain often got rid of their wild relatives by de facto, above-decks transportation, and Wentworth would be an early well-documented instance of what would become a habitual recourse for embarrassed British families.

NEPTUNE: THE SECOND FACE OF SHAME

The *Neptune* now held over five hundred—428 male and 78 female—of the thousand convicts to be shipped. Most of them were housed on the orlop deck, the third deck down, 75 feet by 35 (c 23 × 11 metres), with standing

room below the beams of the ceiling only 5 feet 7 inches (1.7 metres). The convicts slept in four rows of sleeping trays, one row on either side of the ship and two down the middle. In port, and for much of the journey, each convict was chained by the wrist or by the ankles, in many cases on *Neptune* two and two together, and indefinitely so. *Neptune*'s Captain Trail, a 44-year-old Orkney Island Scot, must have known the impact this would have on individual cleanliness and health.

The sanitary arrangements were very primitive—on the orlop deck large tubs were provided to 'ease nature'. These would be knocked over by accident or carelessness or rough seas. Below decks was thus a damp, under-aired, over-crowded misery.

The three ships now gathered in Portsmouth were joined by a store ship named the *Justinian*, loaded with flour, pork, beef, pease, oatmeal, vinegar, spirits, oil and sugar. There were also 162 bales of clothing and a quantity of coverlets, blankets and cloth, and a portable military hospital, prefabricated for assembly in New South Wales. *Justinian* left Falmouth the same day as the other three ships left the Motherbank.

Some of the awesome smells from the convict deck reached the Macarthurs in their little cabin by the women's prison area on a higher deck. Mrs Macarthur found the malodour hard to bear: 'together with the stench arising from the breath of such a number of persons confined in so small a spot, the smell of their provisions and other unwholesome things, made it almost unbearable'. But Elizabeth Macarthur did bear it. In British colonial history she would be recorded as a kindly, loyal and enduring woman. Her as yet callow husband would be harder to admire so unconditionally.

The seventy-eight female convicts of *Neptune* were housed in a section of the upper deck and were not chained. Sailors got to these women, and vice versa through a break in the bulkhead between the carpenters' shop and the women's prison.

As for D'Arcy Wentworth, he seems to have fallen quite passionately in love with a pretty Irish convict of seventeen years named Catherine Crowley. She had been sentenced in Staffordshire for stealing a considerable amount of clothing. With Captain Donald Trail's at least tacit consent, D'Arcy made her his mistress soon after he joined the ship.

So in close quarters on *Neptune* could be found two furiously ambitious young men: one a reclusive, prickly officer, John Macarthur, with

his wife, Elizabeth, pregnant; the other the founding social outcast of penal New South Wales, D'Arcy Wentworth, with Catherine Crowley, pregnant. Catherine Crowley would have been as surprised as the politer Macarthurs to find out that the child she carried on *Neptune* would one day become Australia's first great constitutional statesman. But all that future was mired in shipboard squalor, stink and dimness, and they sailed towards a place whose survival was unguaranteed in any case.

Captain William Hill, a cultivated and sympathetic young member of the New South Wales Corps, was sailing on *Surprise*, where he did himself great honour by being a critic of the second fleet's contractors from the start. Even when disease struck, there were no extra comforts offered, he noted. 'The slave trade is merciful, compared with what I have seen in this fleet; in that it is the interest of the [slaver] master to preserve the healths and lives of their captives, they having a joint benefit, with the owners. In this [fleet], the more they can withhold from the unhappy wretches, the more provisions they have to dispose of in a foreign market; and the earlier in the voyage they die, the longer they [the masters] can draw the deceased's allowance for themselves . . .' The beached captain of the *Guardian* had seen the condition of the fleet in Cape Town and bluntly wrote to Evan Nepean: 'If ever the navy make another contract like that of the last three ships, they ought to be shot, and as for their agent Mr Shapcote, he behaved here just as foolishly as a man could well do.'

All four surgeons employed aboard the fleet had already written to Shapcote about the potential seriousness of the convicts' conditions. They urged him to get fresh supplies of beef and vegetables aboard. But Shapcote was strangely unconcerned, and may himself have been suffering from the famous lethargy of scurvy. He died suddenly in mid May, after dining with Captain Trail and his wife.

7

AN INVADING CULTURE

CONFIRMATION OF EXISTENCE

In the dispirited colony of New South Wales, June 1790 had opened rainy and hungry, and men and women wondered whether they existed at all any more in the minds of those who had posted them to the ends of the earth. Then, on the evening of 3 June, there was a cry throughout Sydney Cove of ‘The flag’s up!’ Tench raced to the hill on which Government House stood and trained his pocket telescope on the look-out station. He left a passionate account of what this meant to him and others. ‘My next door neighbour, a brother-officer, was with me; but we could not speak; we wrung each other by the hand, with eyes and hearts overflowing.’

Watkin begged to join the governor in his boat which was going down-harbour to meet the ship. But a lusty wind, of the kind Sydney folk quickly came to call southerly busters, seemed to be blowing her onto the rocks at the base of the cliffs of North Head. ‘The tumultuous state of our minds represented her in danger; and we were in agony.’ She survived, however, and the governor sent out a boat to hail *Lady Juliana*. The seamen in the governor’s cutter ‘pushed through wind and rain . . . At last we read the word “London” on her stern. “Pull away, my lads! She is from old England; a few strokes more and we shall be aboard! Hurrah for a belly-full and news from our friends!”—Such were our exhortations to the boat’s crew.’

When the *Juliana* came down-harbour and the women finally got ashore on 11 June 1790, they were better dressed than most of barefoot New South Wales, and made their way as strange paragons of health through mud to the huts of the women's camp on the west side of the town. Sarah Whitelam left John Nicol, her sea-husband, aboard. The captain intended a brisk turn-around for the *Juliana*, so Nicol knew a sad parting was imminent.

But the presence of *Juliana* was at least a sign that the settlement had not been forgotten by Whitehall. Above all, so was the appearance of the store ship *Justinian*, a few weeks later. 'Our rapture,' wrote Watkin Tench, 'was doubled on finding she was laden entirely with provisions for our use. Full allowance, and general congratulation, immediately took place.' The ship carried the bulk of the stores Phillip needed, including nearly 500 000 pounds (227 000 kilos) of flour and 50 000 pounds (22 700 kilos) of beef and pork, as well as sugar, oil, oatmeal, pease, spirits and vinegar. Here was the end of famine, and the return to full and varied rations! And from what the *Justinian* told them, the settlement knew to look out for three more convict ships.

The first of the new ships, the *Surprize*, under jury masts from damage in a Southern Ocean storm, was seen from the look-out on South Head on 25 June. By the next day it was anchored in Sydney Cove. The officers from Sydney Cove who boarded it might have expected the degree of health found in the *Lady Juliana*. In fact, the peculiar disorders of the Camden, Calvert and King ships could be smelled a hundred metres off. Phillip found the ill health of the New South Wales Corps soldiers in stark contrast to the women of *Lady Juliana*, and the contrast with the convicts even more marked, for many of them were dying. Upwards of one hundred were now on the sick list on board, and forty-two had been buried at sea during the journey.

The portable hospital which had arrived by the *Justinian* was assembled to take some of the spillage from White's timber-and-shingle hospital building, for two days later the signal was flying at South Head for the other transports, 'and we were led to expect them in as unhealthy a state as that which had just arrived'.

On *Neptune*, Lieutenant John Macarthur's fever caught at the Cape had spread throughout the ship. In the mad southern seas men and women had expired amongst the jolting swell, and beneath the scream of canvas and wind. Aboard *Neptune* in particular, according to later witnesses, a black

market had broken out for lack of proper supplies. It might cost one shilling and sixpence for an additional pint (about half a litre) of water, a pair of new shoes for a quart (around one litre) of tea or three biscuits, a new shirt for four biscuits, two pairs of trousers for six. Crew members would later sign a statement swearing that they sold food and drink to convicts on board at these elevated prices.

Entering the heads, Trail swung *Neptune* into the northern wing of the harbour, and had his men fetch up the dead from the prison deck and throw them into the water. A visit by White and others to *Neptune* showed them that the condition of the people aboard was much worse even than those on *Surprise*. Phillip looked with outraged judgment at masters like Captain Trail but got back the unembarrassed stare of self-justified men with goods for sale. With all Phillip's power, he lacked the capacity to try them before his Admiralty court, so he was reduced to condemning them in dispatches.

No sooner were the convicts unloaded than the masters of the transports, including Trail, opened tent stores on shore and offered goods for sale which 'though at the most extortionate prices, were eagerly bought up'. Since cash was broadly lacking, the goods were in part sold to those amongst the population who had money orders and bills of credit, and even to the commissary for bills drawn on the Admiralty.

Extra tents had to be pitched on the west side of the cove by the hospital to take in the two hundred sick of *Neptune*, carried ashore in their own waste, seriously ill with scurvy, dysentery or infectious fever. Several died in the boats as they were being rowed ashore, or on the wharf as they were lifted out of the boats, 'both the living and the dead exhibiting more horrid spectacles than had ever been witnessed in this country'.

Much of it was attributed, said Collins, to severe confinement, such as had not occurred on the First Fleet. In many cases, convicts had been ironed together for the duration of the voyage. Reverend Johnson, who had entered the below-decks of the first of the three scandalous ships to arrive, the *Surprise*, was galvanised by what he saw. 'A great number of them lying, some half, others nearly quite naked, without either bed nor bedding, unable to turn or help themselves. I spoke to them as I passed along, but the smell was so offensive that I could scarcely bear it . . . Some crept upon their hands and knees, and some were carried upon the backs of others.'

So many burials took place that people would afterwards remember the dingoes howling and fighting over the bodies in a sandy pit over the hills above the Tank Stream.

All the healthy male convicts from the Second Fleet were sent to the farming settlement at Rose Hill/Parramatta. Women convicts were put to work making clothes out of the slops, the raw cloth brought out on sundry ships. Allowing for deaths, the population had by now quadrupled to nearly 3000, and so when on 1 August the *Surprise* left for China, Phillip leased it to drop off 157 female and 37 male convicts at Norfolk Island on the way. D'Arcy Wentworth had been working on a voluntary arrangement with Surgeon White, but was now sent to Norfolk Island with his convict paramour, Catherine Crowley, with the provisional post of Assistant Surgeon, based on the help he had given in the grounds of the Sydney hospital. He would be appointed surgeon to the little hamlet of Queensborough, in the interior of the island.

When the store ship *Justinian* turned up at Norfolk on 7 August, the ration on the island was down to 2 pounds (c 1 kilo) of flour and 1 pint (c ½ litre) of tea per person weekly, and only fish, cabbage-tree palms, mutton birds and their eggs had saved the population. The *Surprise* joined *Justinian* late that afternoon. But when the ship had to back off again and go to Cascade Bay on the north side of the island to shelter from a gale, Catherine Crowley gave premature shipboard birth to a son who was to be named William Charles Wentworth. D'Arcy Wentworth helped his son from his mother's womb, cut the cord and washed him, noticed an in-turned eye, but wrapped, warmed and caressed the baby. It took some weeks of tenderness and care to ensure his survival.

SELF-SUFFICIENT ADAM

Back on the mainland, something promising was happening. James Ruse, the governor's agricultural Adam, would produce a token 17 bushels of wheat from one and a half acres (0.6 hectares), and by February 1791, Ruse would draw his last ration from the government store, an event of great psychological potency for Phillip, Ruse and all the critics. By then Ruse had met and married a convict woman from the *Lady Juliana* named Elizabeth Perry,

convicted of stealing. Elizabeth claimed innocence, and argued that the clothes she was arrested in were her own, and given the shaky nature of the criminal justice system, she might indeed have been right.

The Ruse–Perry marriage rounded out the idyll. Phillip’s provisional land grant to Ruse was confirmed in April 1791, the first grant issued in New South Wales. Ruse’s place near the Parramatta River would become known appropriately as Experiment Farm.

In late July, another association was about to end. *Lady Juliana* was due to sail for China and home via Norfolk Island, and ship’s steward Nicol faced being immediately separated from Sarah Whitlam, his convict woman, and the child they shared. ‘The days flew on eagles’ wings, for we dreaded the hour of separation which at length arrived.’ Marines and soldiers were sent around Sydney Cove to bring the love-struck crew of the *Lady Juliana* back on board. ‘I offered to lose my wages, but we were short of hands,’ said Nicol. ‘The captain could not spare a man . . . I thus was forced to leave Sarah, but we exchanged faith. She promised to remain true, and I promised to return when her time expired and bring her to England.’

Sarah quickly recovered from the disappointment by marrying a First Fleet convict, John Walsh, the day after Nicol’s departure, and then being settled on Norfolk Island with him. Nicol remained a seaman, never finding a ship that brought him back to Sydney.

THE WHALE AND THE SPEAR

In July 1790, as *Juliana* made ready to leave, a huge sperm whale entered Port Jackson. Some boat crews went trying to hunt it, and threw harpoons its way without success.

By late August, however, the whale, still trapped in the harbour, ran itself aground at Manly. The beaching of a whale was a significant event for all Eora people, who gathered together from various clan areas to participate in a great meat and blubber feast.

In the middle of the Eora celebration an expeditionary party from Sydney Cove landed, intending to travel overland to Pittwater. Bennelong, feasting with the other Aboriginals, enquired after Phillip, and expressed a desire to see the governor.

Surgeon White observed that Bennelong bore two new wounds, one in the arm from a spear and the other a large scar over his left eye. But he

insisted on putting into a boat a specially large piece of whale meat as a gift to Phillip. The gift was not ironic—far from it. It was intended to get Phillip to Manly, to the great festival of the whale.

After the message and the blubber arrived back in Sydney, his Excellency gathered the weaponry immediately available, and set out in his boat to meet Bennelong. He was accompanied by Captain Collins and Lieutenant Waterhouse of the navy, newly promoted to replace the insane Mr Maxwell from the *Sirius*.

On landing at Manly, Phillip found the Eora people ‘still busily employed around the whale’. He advanced alone, with just one unarmed seaman for support, and called for Bennelong, who was mysteriously slow in coming forward. Collins and Waterhouse also landed, and Bennelong now showed himself. So did Colby.

Bennelong seemed delighted to see his old acquaintances ‘and asked after every person he’d known in Sydney’. But when the governor pointed to Bennelong’s new wounds, the native became more sombre. He had received them down in the southern bay, Botany Bay, he announced, and he solemnly pointed out their contours to Phillip.

During this conference, ‘the Indians filing off to right and left, so as in some measure to surround them’, Phillip remained calm. Bennelong introduced the governor to a number of people on the beach, including a ‘stout, corpulent native’, Willemerring. On the ground before Bennelong was a very fine barbed spear ‘of uncommon size’. The governor asked if he could have it. But Bennelong picked it up and took it away and dropped it near a place where Willemerring stood rather separate from the rest.

Willemerring was a wise man, a *carradhy*, amongst other things a ritual punishment man invited in from another place, in fact the Broken Bay/Pittwater area. He struck the watching Europeans as a frightened man, but he may have been, rather, a tense and intent man, coiled for his task. This was the time, in Bennelong’s mind, for the governor, who had had the grace to present himself, to be punished for all of it: the fish and game stolen; the presumption of the Britons in camping permanently without permission; the stolen weaponry and nets; the stove-in canoes; the random shooting of natives; the curse of smallpox; the mysterious genital infections of women and then of their men—death, in the view of the Eora, particularly unpredictable death, being always attributable to malign magic. There was no

malice on anyone's part in this punishment, but the scales needed to be adjusted by august blood, and the most august of all was Phillip's.

Thinking Willemerring nervous, Phillip gamely advanced towards him, as if begging the spear. Captain Collins and Lieutenant Waterhouse followed close by. Phillip removed his own single weapon, a dirk in his belt, and threw it on the ground. Willemerring reacted by lifting the spear upright from the grass with his toes and fitting it in one movement into his throwing stick, and 'in an instant darted it at the governor'.

Given the force with which the spear was projected, Phillip would later describe the shock of the wound to Tench as similar to a violent blow. The barb went into the governor's right shoulder, just above the collar bone, and ran downwards through his body, coming out his back. Willemerring looked at his handiwork long enough to ensure the spear had penetrated, and then he dashed into the woods.

There was instant confusion on both sides. Bennelong and Colby both disappeared, but Phillip's retreat was hindered by the fact that he carried in his body, pointing skyward when he was upright, a lance almost 4 metres long, the butt of it frequently striking the ground as he reeled and further lacerating the wound. 'For God's sake, haul out the spear,' Phillip begged Waterhouse, who struggled but at last managed to break off the spear shaft. Another thrown spear from an enthusiastic native struck Waterhouse in the hand as he worked on the shaft. Now spears were flying thickly, as happened at such exchanges of blood, as the ordinary folk joined in the ritual event.

Phillip was lifted, with the point of the spear protruding from his back, into his boat and brought back across the harbour, bleeding a considerable amount on the way. Since Surgeon White was still away from Sydney on the expedition to Pittwater, the Scots assistant, William Balmain, a quarrelsome man in his mid twenties, took on the task of extracting the spearhead from Phillip. There, at Government House, on a cot, his blue coat sodden with blood, lay the settlement's pole of stability and awesome reasonableness, without whom all might be lost. But the young surgeon earned the joy of Phillip's disciples by declaring the wound non-mortal and by safely extracting the barbed point of the spear.

This result would not have surprised the blubber-feasting natives of Manly Cove. They knew it was not intended to be a fatal wound, they knew the barb was meant to be extractable, and they knew Willemerring was an

expert at placement. Phillip, though no doubt given laudanum for the pain, had time to order that no natives were to be fired on, unless they first were 'the aggressors, by throwing spears'. White's returning party was fetched back by marines with the news of Governor Phillip's wounding. The boat crew sent to retrieve them told White and the others that Colby and Bennelong had been talking to them and had 'pretended highly to disapprove the conduct of the man who had thrown the spear, vowing to execute vengeance upon him'. Was this a token offered to the wounded Phillip? Were the two natives striking attitudes just to please him?

In general, no one blamed Bennelong for Willemerring's gesture. It was accepted that Willemerring acted out of personal panic. But if the accounts of witnesses, including Lieutenant Waterhouse, are looked at, one sees that, in refusing to give Phillip the spear he asked for, and taking it away and putting it within reach of Willemerring's foot, Bennelong had shown it possessed another ordained purpose. The forming-up of warriors in a half-circle creates an impression of a conclave of witnesses to a ritual penalty.

Phillip's wound took six weeks to get better, and throughout that time, hoping to use Abaroo and Nanbaree as intermediaries, he had men out looking for Bennelong, hoping there would be reconciliation. Surgeon White was the one to track him down and saw that a momentous change had come about. Bennelong had been joined by his beloved Barangaroo, the spirited woman who had left or been divorced by Colby. Barangaroo already knew that she needed to watch Bennelong very closely, and did so. She did not seem as noticeably pleased as Bennelong to know that the governor was well. Bennelong claimed, through the interpretation of the two children, Abaroo and Nanbaree, to have beaten Willemerring as a punishment. It might have been the truth, another adjustment of universal order.

Now that the wounding of Arthur Phillip had established the principles of responsibility, Bennelong complained to Tench that his countrymen had lately been plundered of fizz-gigs, spears, the gift of a sword, and many other articles by some of the convicts and others, and said he would hand back the dirk the governor had dropped during the attack by Willemerring. The next day, after a search of the settlement, a party of officers, sailors and soldiers went down-harbour again with the collected stolen property.

At the exchange, Tench saw an old man come forward and claim one of the fizz-gigs, 'singling it from the bundle and taking only his own ...

and this honesty, within the circle of their society, seemed to characterise them all'. Bennelong was grateful for the return of the materials—he did not return the governor's dirk, however, and pretended not to know much about it. Perhaps it was kept for some chant to be sung into it, something to bring wisdom to Phillip, to end the calamity.

When the governor was well, he travelled by boat down-harbour to visit Bennelong, opening his wound-inhibited arms. His apparent willingness to forgive created not always approving comment among the Europeans. But Bennelong was not ready to reciprocate and visit Sydney Cove yet. It was arranged that the natives would light a fire on the north shore of the harbour as a signal for the Europeans to visit them further.

Again Phillip accepted these terms and asked to be notified as soon as look-outs saw the signal fire. When it was seen, Phillip and the others set off in their cutters. 'We found assembled, Baneelon [Bennelong], Barangaroo, and another young woman, and six men, all of whom received us with welcome. They had equipment with them—spears, fish gigs and lines, which they were willing to barter.' Bennelong and his party thus attempted to create the principle on which they would make friends with the settlement. Implements and items in general should be bartered, not plundered. 'I had brought with me an old blunted spear, which wanted repair,' wrote Tench. A native took it, carried it to the fire, tore a piece of bone with his teeth from a fizz-gig and attached it to the spear to be repaired with yellow eucalyptus gum, which had been 'rendered flexible by heat'.

Another day, Barangaroo, more suspicious than the impetuous Bennelong, did not want her husband to go to Sydney with Tench and White. In the end, the Reverend Johnson, Abaroo and a young convict, Stockdale, remained with Barangaroo as hostages against a safe return of Bennelong and some other men. The boats and the native canoe tied up on the east side of Sydney Cove at the governor's wharf, and then everyone set off for Phillip's residence. He showed his friends around Government House, explaining what various implements were for. It was now that Bennelong amused Tench by pointing to a candle-snuffer and saying, 'Nuffer for candle', thus avoiding the unpronounceable letter 's'. At last, he departed and was rowed back to Barangaroo, whom they found sitting by a fire with the Reverend Johnson, making fish hooks.

‘From this time our intercourse with the natives,’ wrote Tench, ‘though partially interrupted, was never broken off. We gradually continued, henceforth, to gain knowledge of their customs and policy; the only knowledge that can lead to a just estimate of national character.’ But that Bennelong might have been involved in a study of *him* was something not even generous Watkin mentioned.

These gestures of equal trade and of forbearance on the part of Phillip are worth detailing because they would become less and less the spirit of future transactions between the races.



One day in October that year, a sergeant and three soldiers were out beating the bush for an escaped convict when they met up with Bennelong and Colby and a party of other natives. Bennelong asked the sergeant to come south with him and kill a particular man, ‘well-known for having lost an eye’, the Botany Bay warrior named Pemulwuy. Down on the shores of Botany Bay he had fought a ritual battle with the father of a desirable girl, and although he claimed to have won the contest, his passions ran high against Pemulwuy, the girl’s kinsman. The Bediagal girl, named Karubarabulu, was forthright and not submissive, and Bennelong desired to take her as a second wife.

Bennelong had a temperament which participated passionately in all these inter-clan squabbles, but the difference between himself and Pemulwuy ran deeper than mere scars. Pemulwuy stayed remote from the Europeans. He would never investigate the whites or try to work them out. He wished to exorcise them and restore the normal world. While Bennelong was conciliatory in however puzzling a way, Pemulwuy was a hard-liner. Both would suffer unutterably for the positions they took. Pemulwuy’s was the harsher penalty, however. Outlawed by Governor King, he was shot dead by the sailor and explorer Henry Hacking in 1802. On 5 June that year King wrote to Sir Joseph Banks and told him that Pemulwuy’s head had been placed in spirits and sent to England via the *Speedy*. Its whereabouts are still unknown.



It seemed that a sort of compact now existed between the Eora, in the person of Bennelong, and Phillip’s invading culture. As demanded, a brick house was being built for Bennelong on Tubowgulle, the eastern point of

Sydney Cove. Bennelong had chosen the place himself, according to Tench. 'Rather to please him, a brick house of twelve feet [c4 metres] square was built for his use, and for that of his countrymen as might choose to reside in it, on a point of land fixed upon by himself.' He had got his shield too—it was double cased with tin and represented an exponential leap for Eora weaponry. Of his new stature with both whites and Eora, Tench observed, 'He had lately become a man of so much dignity and consequence, that it was not always easy to obtain his company.' The point chosen by him for his residence had significance—given its position at the head of the cove (where the Sydney Opera House now stands), it could be seen as a symbol of Eora title to the place.

BENNELONG'S MARRIAGES

The standing of Bennelong, at least in Captain Tench's view, suffered damage from his behaviour towards his second, new and younger wife, Karubarabulu, the young woman from the north side of Botany Bay who, despite the earlier battles over her, had come to live at Tubowgulle, in Bennelong's brick house. One day in November 1790, Bennelong came to the governor's residence and presented himself to Phillip—he seemed to be able to get an interview any time he liked. Holding a hatchet, and trying out the sharpness of it, he told Phillip that he intended to put Karubarabulu to death immediately. Bennelong believed she had committed adultery, and that this gave him the right to bludgeon her to death, and his visit to Government House beforehand was a warning to Phillip not to interfere in laws that were none of his business. Phillip was alarmed enough to set off for Tubowgulle with Bennelong, and to take his secretary, Captain Collins and Sergeant Scott the orderly with him. On the road, Bennelong spoke wildly and 'manifested such extravagant marks of fury and revenge' that his hatchet was taken away from him.

Karubarabulu was seated at the communal fire outside the hut with some other natives. Bennelong, snatching a sword from one of the soldiers, ran at her and gave her two severe wounds on the head, and one on the shoulder. The Europeans rushed in and grabbed him, but the other natives remained quiet witnesses, as if they considered Bennelong entitled to his vengeance.

Fortunately the *Supply* was in the intimate cove—on Phillip's orders, it was immediately hailed and a boat with armed sailors was sent ashore, and Karubarabulu was hustled away on this across the cove to the hospital.

A young native came up and begged to be taken into the boat also. He claimed to be her lawful husband, which she declared he was, and begged that he might be allowed on board the ship's boat so that he would be away from Bennelong's rage. Bennelong told the governor and others that he would follow Karubarabulu to the hospital and kill her. Phillip told him that if he did, he would be shot at once, but he treated this threat 'with disdain'.

After an absence of two days, Bennelong—cooling off and perhaps concerned for his relationship with Phillip—came back to Phillip's house and told him he would not beat the girl any further. He himself had a new husbandly shoulder wound from an argument with Barangaroo. His wife and he should go to Surgeon White's hospital and have their wounds dressed, Phillip suggested. Once this was done Bennelong visited Karubarabulu, and to Barangaroo's outrage took Karubarabulu by the hand and spoke softly to her.

Thus Bennelong's *ménage à trois* remained turbulent. It is remarkable the way Phillip entertained it. Karubarabulu was at last taken to the governor's house so that she could be safe. From the Government House yard, Barangaroo stood hurling curses up at the girl's room, and she grabbed some of Bennelong's spears to launch at the window and had to be disarmed of them by the marine guards at the gate. But in the evening, when Bennelong was leaving to go back to his hut, the girl Karubarabulu, on whom the governor had lavished such care, demanded that she go too, for a messenger had come saying that Barangaroo would not beat her any more and was now 'very good'.

McENTIRE'S ENCHANTED SPEAR

What brought a new line from Phillip in his dealings with the Aborigines was the murder of his chief huntsman, John McEntire. McEntire, sentenced in Durham, having crossed from Ireland as deck cargo to work on the British harvest, was hated by the Eora but much liked by the gentlemen, including Surgeon White, whom he often accompanied on excursions into the bush to shoot down bird specimens which would ultimately be rendered by a convict artist and appear in White's applauded journal. There was a long list of infringements of which he was guilty in Eora eyes.

Preparations were made amongst the Eora for his punishment. Phillip was amazed at this stage to observe that Bennelong entertained at his hut

for some nights the man named Pemulwuy, whom he had previously told Phillip was his enemy in terms of love. Pemulwuy was a *carradhy*, or as one scholar puts it, a man of high degree, selected in childhood for his piercing, flecked eyes and precocious air of authority. Throughout eastern Australia there were many initiations, processes and tests for the making of a *carradhy*. The candidate was often thrown on a fire while in a state of trance, or hurled into a sacred waterhole. Prayers were recited by the initiate and the elders to the most important clan heroes and sky beings, Gulambre and Daramulan, as the candidate was brought out of the water or fire. The elders woke the candidate from his trance by laying their hands on his shoulders, and he was given quartz crystals to swallow and an individual totem to help him cure people.

A *carradhy* always played a leading part in the rituals of the Dreamtime, for which he was painted with arm blood or red ochre sanctified by chants as it was applied to the skin. All the crises of Aboriginal life were dealt with by magic, by rituals, by spells and by the sacramental paraphernalia owned by the *carradhys*. The *carradhys* also interpreted dreams, which were taken very seriously by Aborigines.

It was McEntire's life-blood Pemulwuy would apply himself to. On 9 December 1790, a sergeant of marines took a number of convict huntsmen, including McEntire, down to the north arm of Botany Bay to shoot game. They settled down in a hide of boughs to sleep. At about one o'clock in the afternoon the party was awoken by a noise outside the hide, and saw five natives creeping towards them. The sergeant was alarmed but McEntire said, 'Don't be afraid, I know them.'

Indeed he knew Pemulwuy from earlier expeditions. As McEntire advanced, Pemulwuy hurled his spear into McEntire's side. McEntire declared, 'I am a dead man.' One of the party broke off the shaft of the spear and another two took up their guns and futilely chased the natives. Then they carried McEntire back to Sydney Cove and got him to the hospital early the next morning. The governor was at Parramatta at the time, but was shocked by the news on his return.

Phillip detailed a sentry to wake the ever loyal Captain Tench. Tench walked up the hill to Government House and met a Phillip who was uncharacteristically enraged. He instructed Watkin to lead a punitive party of armed marines. The governor at first envisaged that Tench's party would track

down a group of natives, put two of them instantly to death and bring in ten hostages for execution in town. None of these were to be women or children, and though all weapons that were encountered were to be destroyed, no other property was to be touched. After prisoners had been taken, all communication, even with those natives 'with whom we were in habits of intercourse, was to be avoided'.

Tench was horrified. In explaining his tough policy, Phillip told Tench that 'in every former instance of hostility, they had acted either from having received injury, or from mis-apprehension. "The latter of these causes," added he, "I attribute my own wound; but in this business of McEntire, I am fully persuaded that they were unprovoked, and the barbarity of their conduct admits of no extenuation . . . I am resolved to execute the prisoners who may be brought in in the most public and exemplary manner, in the presence of as many of their countrymen as can be collected."'

The governor at this point asked Watkin for his thoughts, and the young officer suggested the capture of six might do just as well, and only a portion executed immediately. The governor decided that should Watkin find it possible to take six prisoners, 'I will hang two, and send the rest to Norfolk Island for a certain period, which will cause their countrymen to believe that we have dispatched them secretly.'

McEntire was not dead; indeed he seemed to be recovering at the hospital, but Phillip believed the lesson still had to be taught. On that issue, he met dissent from an officer who greatly respected him.

Lieutenant Dawes was conscience-stricken about the objectives of the expedition and spoke with his friend the Reverend Johnson about its morality. Dawes, though having bravely borne a wound in the American wars, saw himself above all as a student of peoples, a surveyor of surfaces and skies, not as a combat soldier. He had corresponded with William Wilberforce, the renowned leader of the campaign against slavery, and the objectives of Phillip's mission were abhorrent to him. In Sydney Cove he had spent a great deal of time putting together a dictionary of the Eora, a people who liked him greatly, and whom he, in return, admired. Above all, he admired Patyegarang, an Aboriginal girl of about fifteen years. She became his familiar and stayed in his hut as his chief language teacher, servant and perhaps lover. The language of Patyegarang recorded by Dawes might indicate either that he was a very affectionate mentor or something more. *Nangagolang*, time for rest,

Patyegarang said when the tap-to, military lights-out, was beaten from the barracks square near the head of the cove. *Matigarabangun Naigaba*, we shall sleep separate. And *Nyimang candle Mr D*, Put out the candle, Mr Dawes.

This relationship must have played a large part in Dawes's refusal to hunt the natives. Phillip told Dawes he was guilty of 'unofficerlike behaviour' and threatened him with a court martial. But Dawes simply refused to submit to one.

Though he ultimately agreed to go, he would later publicly declare he was 'sorry he had been persuaded to comply with the order'. And though this would further outrage Phillip's feelings, Dawes refused to retract his statement.

The expedition set out at 4 a.m. on 14 December. Three sergeants and forty privates made up the rank and file of this first expeditionary force, and some of the low soldiery carried the hatchets and bags for the collection of two heads. The force tramped south on a familiar track between bushy slopes and paperbark lagoons. They reached the peninsula at the northern arm of Botany Bay at nine o'clock in the morning. They searched in various directions without seeing a single native, so that at four o'clock they halted for their evening camp. At daybreak they marched fruitlessly in an easterly direction, then southwards, and then northwards. Back near the north head of Botany Bay they saw 'five Indians' on the beach, whom Tench attempted to surround, but the five vanished.

The British party waded swamps and swore at mosquitoes for the better part of two days before returning to Sydney between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. Phillip at once ordered a second expedition—his orders for the first had not been a matter of passion but the establishment of principle. This time the party would move by night, to avoid the heat of the day. Crossing the broad estuaries of Cooks River and the swamps behind the beaches of Botany Bay, the soldiers pushed towards the village they had visited the first time.

Meanwhile, the wounded Irish gamekeeper was still well enough to walk around the hospital. Though many had spoken to McEntire about the appropriateness of openly confessing any injuries he had done the natives, just in case he needed soon to face God, 'he steadily denied . . . having ever fired at them but once, and then only in defence of his own life, which he thought in danger'. He died quite suddenly on 20 January 1791. The surgeons did an

autopsy and found pieces of stone and shell inside the lobe of the left lung. Along with the magic which had been sung into them, they had contributed to the lung's collapse.



After missing all the drama of the two expeditions, Bennelong had returned to Sydney with Barangaroo full of exhilaration from the Cameraigal ceremonies across the harbour. Phillip saw that Barangaroo's body was exceptionally painted to mark the ritual importance of herself and her husband, red ochre colouring her cheeks, nose, upper lip and small of her back, while dots of white clay spotted the skin under her eyes. Bennelong and Barangaroo proudly wore crowns of rushes and reed bands around their arms. Barangaroo was, after all, a Cameraigal woman, and had returned to her people with her distinguished husband to be made a fuss of. Amongst the initiates was the youth named Yemmerrawanne, he who aspired to marry Abaroo. The initiates had each had a snake-like black streak painted on his chest, and his front tooth knocked out. Yemmerrawanne had lost a piece of his jawbone along with his incisor.

An incident was about to occur, however, which came close to convincing Bennelong to sever his association with Phillip, his name-swapper. After Christmas a raid was made by some natives who dug and stole potatoes—the natives called them *tarra*, teeth—near Lieutenant Dawes's hut. One of the Eora threw his fishing spear at a convict trying to scare the marauders away and wounded him. Led by Phillip, a small party went chasing the potato thieves, and two of them were found sitting with women by a fire. One threw a club, which the marines thought a spear, and three muskets opened fire. Both men fled, and the two women were brought in, slept the night at Government House, and left the following morning.

One of the two natives fired at was wounded. A surgical party led by White and accompanied by some Sydney Cove natives went looking for him and found him lying dead next to a fire. Bark had been placed around his neck, a screen of grass and ferns covered his face, and a tree branch stripped of bark formed an arch over his body. The musket ball had gone through his shoulder and cut the sub-clavian artery. He had bled to death. None of the Eora who went with the surgeon to look for him would go near him, for fear that the *mawm* spirit in him, the spirit of shock or mortal envy, would overtake them.

Bennelong was angry that death had been the punishment for the minor crime of stealing potatoes. At Government House he was plied with food, but refused to touch anything. The fruits of the earth were communally owned by his people, and here were the interlopers making a sop or a bribe out of them. Later, Bennelong appeared at the head of a group of several warriors in a cove where one of the fishing boats was working, and took the fish while threatening the unarmed convicts and soldiers that if they resisted he would spear them. When he next saw Phillip, the governor asked an armed guard into the room during a session in which Bennelong passionately argued the case for taking the fish. Bennelong saw as justice what Phillip saw as robbery. When confronted with two of the soldiers who had seen him from the boats, Bennelong launched into a rambling, insolent protest, 'burst into fury, and demanded who had killed Bangai [the dead Aborigine]'. Then Bennelong walked out on Phillip, and as he passed the wheelwright shop in the yard, he picked up an iron hatchet and disappeared with it.

Both Phillip and Bennelong had now become exceptionally enraged over their dead. Phillip gave orders that no boat should leave Sydney Cove unless it carried arms, and forbade the natives to go to the western point of the cove, where the crime of potato stealing had occurred. This prevented them from visiting their respected friend, Lieutenant Dawes. But even this breakdown of the relationship could not stop the too-amiable Bennelong from stopping fishing boats to ask how Phillip was, and to find out if the governor intended to shoot him.

A SUBTLE RESPONSE

When Lieutenant Ball of the *Supply* had been in Batavia in 1790, gathering supplies and sending Lieutenant King on his way to Whitehall on a Dutch ship, on Phillip's orders he had chartered a snow, a small, square-rigged ship to bring further supplies to Sydney. Sailing in *Supply*'s wake, the *Waaksamheyd* (*Wakefulness*) brought with it a cargo of rice and some beef, pork, flour and sugar.

At some stage Phillip would decide that this would be a good ship to contract for taking Captain Hunter, the officers and ship's company of the *Sirius* back to England for the *pro forma* court martial which always followed the loss of a British naval vessel. Phillip also wrote to the Home Secretary, Grenville, by way of the Dutch snow with a request expressing

a desire to return to England on account of 'private affairs' to do with his estranged wife, Margaret. When he had left for New South Wales in 1787, she had been ill and unlikely to live many years, and Phillip saw both potential benefits and horrific legal responsibilities arising out of her death. But in the request he sent Grenville was the added information that for the past two years, 'I have never been a week free from a pain in my side, which undermines and wears me out, and though this colony is not exactly in the state in which I would have wished to have left it, another year may do much, and it is at present so fully established, that I think there cannot any longer be any doubt that it will, if settlers are sent out, answer in every respect the end proposed by government in making the settlement.'

It would take Hunter and other representatives of the *Sirius* till the following year to reach Portsmouth. Their voyage via New Caledonia and Java was marked by Hunter's wisdom and inventiveness. He proved the exact location of the reef-girt Solomon Islands, and discovered a passage between Bougainville and Buka, a passage which would in a much later war in the twentieth century become a graveyard for Australian, American and Japanese sailors. Twenty-two of Hunter's sailors had fever when they left Batavia, and three would die by Cape Town, where at Hunter's insistence the *Waaksamheyd* would wait sixteen weeks, until mid January 1792, to allow recuperation.

In April that year, the snow reached Portsmouth, and Hunter faced his court martial for the loss of the *Sirius* on the reef at Norfolk Island and was exonerated.

8

ASTOUNDING JOURNEYS

INTO THE BLUE

The most astounding of the journeys of this era of heroic journeying was not one undertaken on land but one plotted and undertaken by the convict couple William and Mary Bryant in the hope of becoming the first to rise from their pit and appear again on the shores of the known world.

For the fisherman-smuggler Will Bryant, the past two years had been hard. In February 1789 he had received a sentence of 100 lashes for dealing in black-market fish. He had been kept on in the fishing service because, as Captain Collins said, ‘Notwithstanding his villainy, he was too useful a person to part with and send to a brick cart.’ Bryant burned inwardly, however. Like her husband, Mary also resented his punishment.

Expelled with Will from their fisherman’s cottage to live in the general camp, not only did she need to listen to the mockery of fellow prisoners and references to her fallen status but was exposed to the full squalor and hardship of the Sydney Cove diet. Into such deprivation was Mary’s second child, Emmanuel, born, and baptised by the Reverend Richard Johnson on 4 April 1790.

When, towards the year’s end, the *Waaksamheyd* arrived in the wake of the *Supply*, Captain Detmer Smith and William Bryant made repeated contact with each other. At some stage, in secrecy, Smith sold Will Bryant

a compass, a quadrant and a chart covering the route via the eastern coast of New South Wales and Torres Strait to Batavia. Then, towards the end of February 1791, Bryant called a meeting with five other convicts in his hut proposing the stealing of the boat in which he was employed. Mary was privy to these arrangements and may even have initiated them.

Because of a recent overturning of the cutter, it had been refitted at government expense with new sails, mast and oars. Bryant's and Mary's accumulated secret cache for their proposed escape included 100 pounds (45 kilos) of flour, 100 pounds of rice, 14 pounds (6.4 kilos) of pork, about 8 gallons (36 litres) of water, a new net, two tents, carpenter's tools, fishing gear, some muskets and the aforesaid navigational aids. Mary Bryant had collected a little pharmaceutical kit too, including amongst it the triple-veined leaves of the native sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*). (Some of her leaves would end up, as souvenirs of her escape, all over the world.) As seven other convicts accompanied them, they had probably contributed to this serious accumulation of stores as well.

Between nine and midnight on the evening of the day the *Waaksamheyd* departed Sydney, the Bryant party, some of whom were rostered on for fishing that night, stole the government boat and crept down-harbour past the light at the look-out station where Sergeant Scott and his men were obviously posted. They met with gratitude and exhilaration the pulse of the Pacific racing in through the Heads. This boatload should have been self-doomed, but it worked with an exemplary degree of co-operation and made its way to Koepang in Timor, part of the Dutch East Indies, achieving the (then) second longest open-boat journey in the world's history.

The escape party explained themselves to the Dutch Governor of Timor, Timotheus Wanjon, as survivors from the wreck of a whaler named *Neptune* in the Torres Strait, and claimed 'that the captain and the rest of the crew probably will follow in another boat'. This was a credible enough scenario. 'The governor,' one of the escapees, Martin, wrote, 'behaved extremely well to us, filled our bellies and clothed double with every[thing] that was wore on the island.'

Koepang proved a delightful place, favoured for recuperation by those who had suffered fevers in Batavia, and a welcome landfall for Mary and the others. Adding a further dimension to the stylishness of their escape, Bryant

and his party drew bills on the British government and so were supplied with everything they needed by the administration.



In another sense the absent Bryant had a lasting effect on the misbegotten society of New South Wales. It was reported to Phillip that, before his escape, Bryant had frequently been heard expressing what was a common sentiment on the subject amongst convicts—that he did not consider his marriage in this country as binding. It was a marriage for the sake of the alternative world in which fortune had placed him, and that it would not bind him should he return to reality, the established and accustomed earth. Phillip saw how dangerous this concept was to his community, to all the business of inheritance and ordered life of which monogamy was the keystone. Phillip issued an order that no time-served convict could leave behind in the colony any wife and children who could not support themselves.

Here was another instance of Arthur Phillip declaring that New South Wales was not virtual reality, it was their world, and the contracts made here bound people to the same pieties as contracts made anywhere. Thus, he intended to centre his people's lives in the colony. In so doing, he was making the first families of a non-Aboriginal Australia.

A THIRD FLEET

Already a large third flotilla, the Third Fleet, had been authorised by Whitehall. The contract was made in November 1790, and nine ships would sail on 27 March 1791. For the overall contract, Camden, Calvert and King were to be paid up to £44 658 13 shillings and ninepence, but they had plans beyond that—six of the Third Fleet transports were also chartered to trade in Bombay cotton on the company's account after they had discharged their duty of convict transportation. The other ships of the group would go whaling off New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean. Camden, Calvert and King's ships carried about £30 000 in coin aboard, to lay the foundations of monetary exchange in New South Wales.

The government and its bureaucracies such as the Navy Board, having made such an outrageously inappropriate contract, seemed content or even anxious that the disaster of the Second Fleet should go unreported in London. But via the Second Fleet ships returning, a letter from a literate

unnamed female convict from the *Lady Juliana* would make its eloquent way into the *London Chronicle* of 4 August 1791. The woman convict reflected on having seen the victims of Camden, Calvert and King and their officers brought ashore. 'Oh, if you had but seen the shocking sight of the poor creatures that came out of the three ships, it would make your heart bleed. They were almost dead, very few could stand, and they were obliged to fling them as you would goods, and hoist them out of the ships, they were so feeble . . . The governor was very angry and scolded the captains a good deal, and I heard, intended to write to London about it, for I heard him say it was murdering them.' The writer expressed gratitude to the good agent of the *Lady Juliana*—Lieutenant Edgar. For on *Juliana* only three women and one child had died on the voyage.

Sailors who returned to England on the *Neptune* and the other transports eventually swore statements condemning the behaviour of Captain Trail, though it was ultimately for the murder of a seaman that Trail was tried at the Old Bailey Admiralty sessions in 1792, long after the Third Fleet had already been sent.

Neither the Navy Board nor the Home Office welcomed the attention the trial attracted. Why scare off tenderers for the transport of convicts? In the end the charges failed, the judge mysteriously discounting the evidence and directing the jury to bring in a not-guilty verdict. Trail, a mass murderer, would return with impunity to the Royal Navy and serve as a master to Lord Nelson. As for Camden, Calvert and King, after putting together the third convict flotilla, the company would thereafter never be used again.

The chief scandal of this Third Fleet would prove to be the short rations for the Irish convicts on the *Queen*. Moreover, the *Queen's* indent list would be left behind and, echoing earlier oversights, would not reach Sydney until eight years after the convicts had arrived. For many Irish convicts of *Queen*, their time would expire and they would not be in a position to prove it.

If *Queen's* convicts were like later Irish shiploads, the crimes of the women were at least in part motivated by want when the potatoes gave out in the spring. A certain number of the males, about two dozen, were members of an Irish peasant secret society, the Defenders, who had arisen as local groups to protect Catholics against the raids of a similar Protestant organisation named the Peep-of-Day Boys. Many landlords disapproved of the radical, house-burning tendencies of the Peep-of-Day Boys, especially in

the Armagh area, where raids and murders of Catholics and burning of cabins and farmhouses occurred throughout the mid 1780s. Public sentiment on both sides of the sectarian chasm at first had some sympathy for the Defenders. Feelings deepened, however, when Defenders moved to the offensive against suspected Peep-of-Day-ers.

A little before *Queen* left Cork, the nine ships of the Third Fleet proper sailed from England in two divisions. On the interminable seas making for Sydney Cove, the *Mary Ann* was well ahead with her 150 English female convicts, nine of whom would die at sea. She did not call in anywhere but the Cape Verde Islands for fresh supplies, and that ensured a brisk passage. The converted frigate, HMS *Gorgon*, the store ship which also carried 29 male convicts selected for their trades, would lose only one male.

Separated at sea, *Atlantic*, *Salamander* and the aged *William and Anne* all met up at Rio, and then made the journey to Port Jackson without stopping at the Cape. While only nine men had to go from the *Atlantic* to the hospital in Sydney Cove, the smaller *William and Anne* would land a great number of convicts who were very ill on arrival. Its master, Captain Bunker, was ultimately fined for assaulting and beating some of the Irish members of the New South Wales Corps during the passage, so the conditions for the more lowly prisoners must have been harsh indeed. The agent on *Queen*, Lieutenant Blow, would later be reprimanded by the Navy Board for his lack of interest in the convicts' welfare. The second mate, who would later claim he was working on behalf of the captain, Richard Owen, ordered that the leaden weights used to calculate rations be scraped by one of the Irish convicts, who was rewarded with adequate food. The 4-pound (1.8 kilo) weight had 6 ounces (170 grams) scratched out of its base, the 2-pound (900 gram) weight almost 3 ounces (85 grams). The convicts were also cheated by the use of a 4-pound weight in place of a 5-pound weight, and a 3-pound for a 4-pound.

Magistrates in New South Wales to whom the convicts complained after landing would eventually find that the rations stipulated in the contract with Camden, Calvert and King had not been supplied, that frauds had been committed, and that those who should have seen that the full ration was served had failed to exercise their authority. The magistrates passed the matter on to Phillip, who wrote in his dispatch to the Home Secretary, 'I doubt if I have the power of inflicting a punishment adequate to the crime.'

The forerunner of this Third Fleet, the little *Mary Ann* with her female convicts aboard, appeared off Sydney on the morning of 9 July 1791. She had made the quickest passage yet—four months and sixteen days. But the captain, Mark Munro, not only had no private letters aboard, ‘but had not brought a single newspaper’. The officers on the *Mary Ann* could tell Tench, however—that there was ‘No war; the fleet’s dismantled.’

The women disembarking from *Mary Ann* were all very healthy and spoke highly of the treatment they had received from Munro. Tench thought that Captain Munro should be praised. ‘The advocates of humanity are not yet become too numerous: but those who practise its divine precepts, however humble and unnoticed be their station, ought not to sink into obscurity, unrecorded and unpraised, with the vile monsters who deride misery, and fatten on calamity.’ The *Mary Ann*, which carried sufficient stores to enable two extra pounds (c 1 kilo) of rice a week to appear on the colony’s humble plates, also brought the happy news that the store ship *Gorgon* was definitely on the way.

It also brought instructions for the governor confirming British policy that though those convicts who had served their period of transportation were not to be compelled to remain in the colony if they could somehow get home, ‘no temptation’ should be offered to induce them to quit it. So the mere prison camp was being transmuted into a society, one which operated not only by fear of punishment but by desired and embraced civil pieties. A founding element of New South Wales, and of the embryo nation it would make, was the practical inability of most time-served convicts to leave—the more the population of convicts built up, the more limited the means became of working a passage back home or accompanying a returning gentleman as a time-served servant. This meant that for many of the convicts, in no sense was New South Wales the *chosen* land. It was a netherworld where people got stuck, and having served time became, willy-nilly, citizens of New South Wales.

A later governor (William Bligh) would call the children born in New South Wales ‘National Children’, but it was an administrative, not a visionary, term. Now, with varying degrees of reluctance and acceptance, further time-served convicts moved out during that July of 1791 with their ‘national children’ to their authorised land grants around Parramatta.

The ships which arrived after *Mary Ann* did not maintain her high standards of care for prisoners. The *Salamander*'s convicts complained loudly that they had not had proper attention paid them. Phillip needed nonetheless to send the ship and her master on to Norfolk Island with convicts, stores and provisions. The majority of the convicts retained on the mainland were sent to Parramatta, employed to open up new ground at a short distance from the settlement.

The slow *Admiral Barrington* and her crew and convicts had suffered a hard time in the Southern Ocean and even off the New South Wales coast, where she was dragged out to sea by a ferocious southerly gale. She had suffered 36 deaths on the passage to Sydney, which she reached on 16 October 1791. The living filled White's hospital.

Mrs Parker, the wife of Captain John Parker of the *Gorgon*, took the trouble when that store ship finally arrived in Sydney to visit the convicts of the Third Fleet then in hospital. She was shocked to find herself 'surrounded by mere skeletons of men—in every bed, and on every side, lay the dying and the dead. Horrid spectacle! It makes me shudder when I reflect that it will not be the last exhibition of this kind of human misery that will take place in this country, whilst the present method of transporting these miserable wretches is pursued.'



In the midst of all the ill-run, profit-driven ships of the Third Fleet, the store ship *Gorgon* had appeared. 'I will not say that we contemplated its approach with mingled sensations,' wrote Tench, by now a veteran of such arrivals. 'We hailed it with rapture and exultation.' *Gorgon* contained six months' full provisions for about nine hundred people. Lieutenant King, having returned to England to be married, arrived back on the *Gorgon* with the new rank of commander, accompanied by his wife Anna Josepha Coombe, a generous-spirited woman who would look to the welfare of his children by the convict Ann Innett as well as to that of the child she herself was carrying. Obviously King had been frank about his colonial relationship before marrying Anna Josepha between successful conferences with Sir Joseph Banks, Grenville and Nepean. He had returned with assurances about ongoing support for New South Wales, and these he passed on to Arthur Phillip.

Indeed, an extraordinary validating device had arrived on the *Gorgon*, and been delivered to Phillip's office at Government House. It was the Great Seal of New South Wales. On the obverse were the King's arms with the royal titles in the margin; on the reverse, an image of convicts landing at Botany Bay, greeted by the goddess Industry. Surrounded by her symbols, a bale of merchandise, a beehive, a pickaxe and a shovel, she releases them from their fetters and points to oxen ploughing, and to a town rising on the summit of a hill with a fort for its protection. In the bay, the masts of a ship are to be seen. In the margin lie the words *Sigillum. Nov. Camb. Aust.*, Seal of New South Wales; and for a motto, *Sic Fortis Etruria Crevit*, 'In this way Tuscany grew strong'—a reference to Tuscany having once received the criminals of other places.

GENTLEMAN GO, GENTLEMAN STAY

By the Third Fleet, Governor Phillip received from Secretary of State Grenville a grudging permission to leave the colony: 'I cannot, therefore, refrain from expressing my earnest hope . . . that you may be able, without material inconvenience, to continue in your government for a short time longer.'

It was intended that the bulk of the marine garrison, now relieved by the purpose-recruited New South Wales Corps, should return to England on the *Gorgon*. In deciding what to do in his own case, Judge-Advocate Collins was caught between his dislike of the newly arrived Captain Nepean of the New South Wales Corps and his detestation of the departing Major Ross. Said Collins of Ross: 'With him I would not sail were wealth and honours to attend me when I landed.' And despite his loving correspondence with his wife Maria, he was in an association with Ann Yeates, alias Nancy, a young milliner from *Lady Penrhyn*, who had borne him two sons.

Collins reflected that though the masters of the Third Fleet ships knew they could have brought out a further thousand tons of provisions, instead they had loaded up with copper, iron, steel and cordage for sale at Bombay 'on account of their owners'. Dependent for his survival, like all the other European inhabitants of New South Wales, on this strange balance of beneficence and greed in shipping merchants, he decided that he would seek permission to go home at 'the first opportunity that offers of escaping from a country that is nothing better than a place of banishment for the outcasts of society'.

FINDING CHINA

Speaking their own language, and bound together in many cases by secret oaths and compacts, the Irish who had come into Port Jackson on *Queen* on 26 September 1791 presented particular problems. Irish was still the first language of over 80 per cent of Irish hearths, and now it was heard, to the discomfort of the officers and officials, in the fringes of the bushland of New South Wales. What were they plotting, these strange souls? What was behind their frequent, secret laughter?

One thing about them was the ready comfort they took in millennial fantasies. A new century was nearing and there were omens—the French revolution, before that the American—foretelling a successful uprising in their home country. Tom Paine was singing of the rights of the humble and the humble of the *Queen* were aware of it. At the dawn of the new century, the justice of Christ might reverse the order of the world, putting the first last, and the last first. In Sydney and Parramatta there developed amongst the Irish like a fever ‘the chimerical idea’ of finding China a habitable kingdom that lay beyond the mountains and the Hawkesbury to the north-west of Sydney Cove.

On 1 November—All Saints Day—twenty male Irish convicts and one pregnant female in Parramatta took a week’s provisions, tomahawks and knives, and set out into the bush to find China. A few days later, sailors in a boat belonging to the *Albemarle* transport met the pregnant Irish woman down-harbour. She had been separated from her group for three days. The woman’s husband was also later found and gave the same ‘absurd account of their design’ to officials in Sydney. Thus the proposition of Irish stupidity made its entry onto the Australian stage.

Other men were captured to the north near Broken Bay, and despite their suffering, attempted escape again a few days later. Thirteen of those who first absconded ‘were brought in, in a state of deplorable wretchedness, naked, and nearly worn out with hunger’.

Phillip ordered the convicts at Parramatta to be assembled, and told them that if they went missing he would send out parties looking for them with orders to fire on sight. Typically, Watkin Tench visited the convicts who had made the dash for China—it was he who called them ‘the Chinese Travellers’. He asked them if they really supposed it possible to reach China, and they informed him that they had been told that at a considerable distance to the

north lay a large river, 'which separated this country from the back part of China'. When they crossed this Jordan, they would find themselves amongst a copper-coloured people who would treat them generously.

Though a great proportion of the Irish were of farming backgrounds or had agricultural experience, Hunter would later describe them as 'dissatisfied with their situation here', and 'extremely insolent, refractory, and turbulent'. For the Irish combined their dream of China with a keen sense of their small quota of rights. The convicts of *Queen* at Parramatta were the first, for example, to stage an organised public protest. It was held outside the newly built Government House in Parramatta in the humidity of December 1791 and demanded that the issue of rations be changed back from weekly to daily. There was a certain justice in this. A weak or sickly person might be deprived of a week's rations by a bully in one swoop, but if the ration was issued daily, the weak could appeal to the strong to prevent any further, large-scale ration-snatching.



In December 1791, as the *Gorgon* lay in Sydney Cove ready to return the marines to Britain, offers were made to the non-commissioned officers and privates to stay in the country as settlers or to enter into the New South Wales Corps. Three corporals, a drummer and 59 privates accepted grants of land on Norfolk Island or at Parramatta, as Rose Hill was by now officially named. The rest wanted to return—indeed, of those who stayed, Tench thought the behaviour of the majority of them could be ascribed to 'infatuated affection to female convicts, whose characters and habits of life, I am sorry to say, promise from a connection neither honour nor tranquillity'. As for tranquillity, only the parties to the relationships could say anything, but it is a matter of record that many of these remaining soldiers and their women were founders of enduring Antipodean stock.

Robbie Ross was delighted to march the marines aboard the *Gorgon* on 13 December. His now adolescent son, Lieutenant John Ross, was in their ranks. *Gorgon* dropped down the harbour three days after the marines marched aboard, and vanished back in the direction of the known world the next day. A company of marines remained behind in Sydney Cove, waiting for the arrival of the remainder of the New South Wales Corps.

The *Gorgon* on departure was to an extent not a European but an Australian ark: 'our barque was now crowded with kangaroos, opossums, and every curiosity which that country produced', noted the departing Sergeant Scott, including plants and birds and the other antediluvian mysteries of New South Wales.

By the time the *Gorgon* left Sydney, the twenty-month-old voyager Emmanuel Bryant had died in the Dutch East India Company prison ship moored off Batavia, where Mary Bryant, her husband Will, and her two infants were kept prisoner after being picked up by the authoritarian Captain Edwards of the wrecked HMS *Pandora* in Koepang. Captain Edwards, who had been sent to the Pacific to find the mutineers of HMS *Bounty*, had recaptured the escapees in Koepang. He was in the meantime in good lodgings in the elegant Dutch quarter of Batavia, organising passages for himself, his prisoners and the *Pandora's* company on three Dutch ships to go home by way of the Cape. Before he could, Will died of fever in prison.

Mary Bryant was on her way to becoming the first person tried for return from transportation to New South Wales.

BARANGAROO GIVES BIRTH

At the end of 1791, Barangaroo died after childbirth. The causes were unknown but might have been the result of post-childbirth complications. When she was dying, the desperate Bennelong summoned the great *carradhy*, Willemmerring, the wounder of Phillip. When he did not arrive in time to save her, Bennelong would seek him out and spear him in the thigh. Indeed, in Barangaroo's honour, or more accurately to adjust the world to her death, many spears were thrown by Bennelong and her Cameraigal relatives, for death was always the result of some sorcery.

In intense grieving, Bennelong asked Phillip, Surgeon White and Lieutenant David Collins to witness his wife's cremation. He cleared the ground where the funeral pyre was to be built by digging out the earth to about 13 centimetres below the surface. Then a mound of sticks, bushes and branches was made about one metre high. Barangaroo's body, wrapped in an old English blanket, was laid on top of this with her head facing north.

Bennelong stacked logs on the body and the fire was lit. The English spectators left before the body was totally consumed.

With Watkin Tench gone, David Collins and Lieutenant Dawes and Phillip himself remained as the chief observers of the natives. Collins and others were aware that aside from British–Eora conflict, the old ritual battles of the Eora continued. There had been a confrontation between the Sydney and Botany Bay natives in April 1791 over the uttering of the name of a dead man. The natives knew that the uttered name could summon down havoc from the spiritual realm onto the physical earth. After a death, the deceased became ‘a nameless one’, said Collins. Mourners often warned Collins and other officers not to use the names of the dead.

Meanwhile, because of white settlement at Parramatta, and the area known as Toongabbie to the north-west of Rose Hill, many of the local Burramattagal clan were pushed west into the country of the Bidjigal. Here the warrior Pemulwuy of the Bediagal from the north shore of Botany Bay began to co-operate with the Bidjigal. If Bennelong had come to some accommodation with the accumulating waves of Europeans or ghosts, Pemulwuy had not. Near Prospect Hill, west of Parramatta, in May 1792, seven native men and two women stole clothing and corn, and a convict worker on the farm fired at a man preparing to throw his spear. The party fled, abandoning nets containing corn, blankets and spears. The natives took a fast revenge. A convict employed on well-digging on a farm near Prospect Hill walked to Parramatta to collect his clothing ration. On the way back he was attacked, his head was cut in several places and his teeth were smashed out. His dead body gaped with wounds from spears.

So here was the contrast. Bennelong was victualled from the store—he took the rations as recompense for damage done to his people. Pemulwuy, who was involved in the murder of the convict, would not deign to receive that sort of compensation. He would not take Phillip’s appeasing flour, or any other gift.

AN END TO FLEETS

The age of convict fleets had ended, because transportation by regularly dispatched individual convict transports had begun. Though there would

be many more disgraceful ships, the British government had retreated shamefaced from its dalliance with Camden, Calvert and King. It was as an individual transport that a large ship named the *Pitt*, 775 tons (790 tonnes), had sailed on 17 July 1791 carrying nearly four hundred male and female prisoners. The owner of the *Pitt*, George Mackenzie Macaulay, was what the East India Company called a ‘husband’; that is, a contractor who regularly chartered his ships to the East India Company business, and was reputable.

Yet the suffering of the transported remained intense. Smallpox struck the prison deck soon after the *Pitt*’s departure from Yarmouth Roads, and even before the Cape Verde Islands there were fifteen deaths amongst the prisoners. In the doldrums off Africa, the prisoners developed ulcers on their bodies from lack of Vitamin B and showed symptoms of scurvy. A fever struck, killing twenty-seven people—sailors, soldiers and their families—in a fortnight. The crew was left so short-handed that some of the convicts with maritime experience had to be brought up from the prison deck to help sail the vessel.

By the time *Pitt* arrived at Port Jackson in February 1792, a further twenty male and nine female prisoners had died, and one hundred and twenty of the men were landed sick. The hospital was again required to deal with a huge medical emergency. So though Macaulay’s ship did not replicate quite the horrors of the Second Fleet, it was still a ship of disgrace.

The *Pitt* had brought for the commissary store mainly salt beef, enough to extend the provisions of the settlement for forty days, and the ship was employed by Phillip to take a proportion of the supplies on to Norfolk Island.

Also aboard the vessel had travelled Major Francis Grose, on his way to assume command of the New South Wales Corps. He would be Phillip’s new lieutenant-governor, and came from a rather more privileged background than Phillip. His father was a renowned antiquary, and his grandfather a jeweller who had enjoyed the privilege of having George II as a client. He had a much more genial nature than Robbie Ross—if anything he would become over time too accommodating to the desires of the officers of his corps for land and wealth. Grose, like the majority of officers, had campaigned as a youth during the American Revolutionary War.

Having landed in Sydney with his young family, Major Grose was enthused by what he saw in Phillip’s Sydney Cove and Parramatta. ‘I find there is neither the scarcity that was represented to me, nor the barren sands

I was taught to imagine I should see; the whole place is a garden, on which fruit and vegetables of every description grow in the greatest luxuriance . . . Could we once be supplied with cattle, I do not believe we should have occasion to trouble Old England again. I live in as good a house as I desire; and the farm of my predecessor, which has been given to me, produces a sufficiency of everything for my family. The climate, though very hot, is not unwholesome, we have plenty of fish, and there is good shooting.'

Even though Grose saw Sydney Cove in such positive light, it was a hot season, and those male convicts of *Pitt* who had been passed as healthy on landing were put to work cultivating and clearing public ground beyond Parramatta. They found it hard under that hammer of the February sun, in New South Wales's most humid month. Many of them began to join their prison-deck mates in hospital. The record of burials, chiefly of newcomers, during that late summer is sobering. On 16 February 1792, four convicts were buried, and six the next day, and a further six on 20 February. Five were buried at Parramatta on the next day, a further two the next day, on 23 February a further six, on 25 February a further four. And on 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 March the burials continued. On 8 March there were five male deaths, and on the following Friday, two more and that of a child, Margaret Tambleton. The regular multiple burials of men continued throughout March.

Yet the vigour of the settlement had affirmed itself for Phillip when in late February he issued fifty-two further land grants to former convicts, chiefly in the Parramatta–Prospect Hill area, all—of course—without reference to any interested Eora or Dharug parties. Nonetheless, the governor wrote to the third Secretary of State he had had to deal with, Henry Dundas, a former Edinburgh lawyer, 'What I feared from the kind of settlers I have been obliged to accept has happened in several instances.' The convict settlers in some cases had grown tired 'of a life so different to that from which they have been brought up' and abandoned their grants or sold their livestock to acquire from ships and from stores like that set up by the master of *Pitt* 'articles from which they do not reap any real benefit'. He regretted, too, that twenty-two time-expired men and nine women intended to go home on the *Pitt*. 'Thus will the best people always be carried away, for those who cannot be received on board the ships as seamen or carpenters pay for their passage.' Even so, it was a minority of convict settlers who had either left without seeking a land grant or had lost or given up their land in this way.

THE DEVIL WITH THE CHILDREN

When the three Dutch vessels Captain Edwards had hired in Batavia reached Table Bay off Cape Town in March 1792, carrying amongst others the *Bounty* mutineers, Mary Bryant and the other Sydney escapees, they found that HMS *Gorgon* with Major Ross and other marines, including Watkin Tench, aboard, was already moored in the roads. Edwards decided to send aboard her the ten remaining *Bounty* mutineers 'and the convict deserters from Port Jackson': Mary, her four-year-old, Charlotte, and four other survivors. Will Bryant had died of fever, and so had their young son. The little girl was in a bad way, and, so too, were some of the marines' children. 'I confess that I had never looked at these people, without pity and astonishment,' declared Tench of Mary and the other escapees. 'They had miscarried in a heroic struggle for liberty; after having combated every hardship, and conquered every difficulty . . . and I could not but reflect with admiration at the strange combination of circumstances which had again brought us together.'

The *Gorgon* left Table Bay for England in early April. None of the children aboard were well, even after spending so much time in a shore camp in Cape Town being nursed and fed healthily for the continuation of their long voyage. Corporal Samuel Bacon and his wife, Jane, had already lost one child on the first evening out from Cape Town: 'It was ill on shore.' A little over two weeks later, the other of the twins of Corporal Bacon died. Clark wrote a few days later, 'This hot weather is playing the Devil with the children—down here it is as hot as Hell—I wish to God we had got twenty degrees the other side of the line [the Equator].' These lost children had all gone into the making of the great Sydney experiment, and were victims of a most peculiar imperial enterprise.

With so many barely consoled women howling close by, their children worn out by the distance between Sydney and London, Mary Bryant must have known Charlotte, who was under the axe of the same dietary exhaustion and fevers as the other children, was unlikely to survive.

'Last night,' wrote Clark on May's first Sabbath, 'the child belonging to Mary Broad [Bryant], the convict woman who went away in the fishing boat from Port Jackson last year, died about four o'clock, [we] committed the body to the deep, latitude 5°25 North.' The ship was surrounded by sharks, which had learned that a regular supply of flesh trailed from this vessel, the child of a marine having died only two days before Charlotte.

The *Gorgon* arrived at Portsmouth on 18 June 1792. Transportation was arranged at once to take Mary and the other escapees to London. A magistrate committed them to Newgate but 'declared he never experienced so disagreeable a task as being obliged to commit them to prison, and assured them that, as far as lay in his power, he would assist them'. As grim as the wards of Newgate were, the escapees all declared that they would sooner suffer death than return to Botany Bay.

James Boswell, famed companion of Dr Samuel Johnson, generous by nature and with a taste for handsome and robust girls of the lower orders, appealed repeatedly to the Home Secretary, Dundas, a friend of his, and to Undersecretary Evan Nepean for a pardon for Mary and the others. He collected 17 guineas as a subscription for Mary to purchase comforts in prison, and enquired into the nature of her family in the West Country by consulting Reverend William Johnson Temple, his 'old and most intimate friend' down in Devon. The Reverend Temple reported that the Broads were 'eminent for sheep stealing'.

On 2 May 1793, the Home Secretary advised the Sheriff of Middlesex that Mary Bryant had received an unconditional pardon. Released from Newgate, she remained in London, seemingly at Boswell's expense, until the following October. Amongst Boswell's papers is a record headed 'Mary's Money', which lists amounts paid out for her lodgings and for a bonnet, a gown, shoes and a prayer book.

Nearly one hundred and fifty years later, in 1937, amongst Boswell's possessions was found an envelope with the words in his handwriting: 'Leaves from Botany Bay used as tea'. It was the same *Smilax glyciphylla* which Mary had taken on the cutter with her and which comforted the scurvy-ridden and debased citizens of New South Wales.

OH! SHAME, SHAME!

The funerals continued, and the stores were still proving inadequate to sustain healthy lives. 'The convicts dying very fast, merely through want of nourishment,' wrote a newly arrived refugee from bankruptcy, Richard Atkins. 'The Indian corn served out is of little use in point of nourishment, they have no mills to grind it and many are so weak they cannot pound it. At present there is not more than eight weeks ration of flour at two pound [0.9 kilos] per man at the store. Oh! Shame, shame!'

By May 1792 Collins was grimly relieved so many had perished on and from *Pitt*: ‘Had not such numbers died, both in the passage and since the landing of those who survived the voyage, we should not at this moment have had any thing to receive from the public stores; thus strangely did we derive the benefits from the miseries of our fellow creatures!’

The law of diminishing returns had hit New South Wales. ‘Few, however, in comparison with the measure of our necessities,’ wrote Collins, ‘were the numbers daily brought into the field for the purpose of cultivation; and of those who could handle the hoe or the spade by far the greater part carried hunger in their countenances; independence of Great Britain was merely “a sanguine hope or visionary speculation”’.

Burials continued into May. On 3 May, three more convicts; the next day, two; on 5 May, three. On the next day, three more. All of them were men from the Irish ship *Queen*, or from *Pitt*. On 8 May, there were another three; on 9 May, four more. ‘This dreadful mortality was chiefly confined to the convicts who had arrived in the last year; of 122 male convicts who came out in the *Queen*, transported from Ireland, 50 only were living at the beginning of this month [May 1792],’ noted Collins.

But then, on 20 June, ‘to the inexpressible joy of all ranks of people in the settlements,’ the *Atlantic* store ship arrived, ‘with a cargo of rice, *soujee* [a form of semolina] and *dholl* [yellow split pea] from Calcutta’. She also brought two bulls and a cow with her, twenty sheep and twenty goats, which Collins thought of a very diminutive species. But the deliverance from hunger *Atlantic* seemed to offer was illusory. Since it had brought grain and *dholl* only, the ration of salt meat had now to be reduced. Richard Atkins said that in lieu of two pounds (c 900 grams) of pork per week, the stores now gave out one pound (c 450 grams) of Indian corn and one pound of *dholl*. All parties were united in a democracy of want.

Atkins and others were very cheered at the midwinter wheat crop in the Parramatta area, but there was need for more rain. Though the yearly rainfall in the Sydney Basin was approximately 48 inches (c 1220 mm) a year, it was subject to what we now know as the El Niño southern oscillation, which—from the frequent references to drought made in Sydney from 1790 onwards—seems to have had an impact on the first European settlers. The Eora were used to this phenomenon—it was one of the factors which inhibited their transition to what the Europeans, at least in theory,

would have desired them to be: farmers. When it refused to rain in the winter of 1792, one pleasant blue-skied day succeeded another.



In mid July, as rain came and the last of the stores were being cleared from the *Atlantic*, another signal was made from the South Head look-out station, and the *Britannia* store ship, returned from India, came down the harbour and anchored in the cove. Aboard *Britannia* was twelve months' clothing for the convicts, four months' flour and eight months' beef and pork, so that 'every description of persons in the settlement' could be put back on full issue. Suddenly, Sydney Cove was redolent with the baking of flapjacks and the frying of salt beef.

But, as usual, the prospects weren't as bright as they first appeared. Not all the supplies Commissary Palmer received were of high quality. Phillip came along to the storehouses with his dirk and began opening ration casks. He was reduced to shaking his head, and instructed Palmer that only such provisions considered 'merchantable' should be paid for. Many of the casks of beef were deficient in weight, and the meat lean, coarse and bony and 'worse than they have ever been issued in His Majesty's service'. Such a claim meant the product was near inedible. Further salt provisions for New South Wales, Phillip counselled, should only be acquired from Europe, since those from other sources, such as India, were appalling. 'A deception of this nature would be more severely felt in this country,' said Collins. 'Every ounce lost here was of importance.' Collins was reduced to considering this cargo from India as an experiment 'to which it was true we were driven by necessity; and it had become the universal and earnest wish that no cause might ever again induce us to try it'.

In a letter to Dundas on 2 October, Phillip wrote of the persistent need for so many articles of food and industry amongst a population which had not eaten amply for four years. They needed iron cooking pots nearly as much as they needed provisions, he said, and then all the cross-cut saws, axes and various tools of husbandry were in short supply or disrepair. And further hunger was inevitable.

Phillip himself remained a victim of the rations and an earth which was only gradually being persuaded to submit to European expectations. The newly arrived son of a merchant friend of Arthur Phillip wrote of the

governor at this stage that his health 'now is very bad. He fatigues himself so much he fairly knocks himself up and won't rest till he is not able to walk.'

A GOVERNOR LONGS FOR HOME

By October 1792, Phillip was still waiting to return home. He was anxious now to be relieved, and there had never been any idea that he, the uncon-demned, would choose to remain in this temperate, beguiling but harsh garden. He was enlivened when on 7 October the largest ship to enter Port Jackson up to that hour, the 914-ton (932-tonne) *Royal Admiral*, arrived with a large cargo of convicts. The ship also brought one of the last detachments of the New South Wales Corps, as well as an agricultural expert, a master miller and a master carpenter and close to two hundred and fifty convicts. The ship, owned by a London 'husband' who frequently contracted his ships to the East India Company, Thomas Larkins, was the antithesis of some of the appallingly run transports of the past few years. The *Royal Admiral* had embarked fewer convicts than the overcrowded *Pitt* which had arrived earlier in the year and whose men had died in such numbers throughout the New South Wales autumn. The naval agent for *Royal Admiral* was the former surgeon of the notorious but healthy *Lady Juliana*, Richard Alley, and the master and the ship's surgeon collaborated well with him in matters of convict health.

'She brought in with her a fever, which had much abated by the extreme attention paid by Captain Bond and his officers to cleanliness,' Collins recorded. The officers had also supplied the prisoners 'with comforts and necessities beyond what were allowed for their use during the voyage'. The master and officers were speculators nonetheless—they had freighted out over £4000 worth of their own goods to sell ashore.

By this time, the governor judged it necessary to send most arriving convicts straight up the river to Parramatta where work was to be done, since Sydney possessed 'all the evils and allurements of a seaport of some standing'. Phillip felt there would be difficulties in removing prisoners from Sydney once they settled in there. Even within a penal universe, under conditions of hunger, Sydney was already taking on what it would never lose, the allure of a city of pleasures and vices.

The *Royal Admiral* had brought also an important new talent to the colony, a convict who for his special gifts was allowed to stay in Sydney.

A Scots artist, Thomas Watling had been amongst the more than four hundred convicts who sailed in the *Pitt*, and had escaped in Cape Town. He had been arrested by the Dutch after the *Pitt*'s departure, put in gaol, and then taken aboard *Royal Admiral* by Captain Bond. Well-educated, and having worked for a time in Glasgow as a coach and chaise painter, he would become the most important artist of early New South Wales. He had been transported in the first place for making forged Bank of Scotland guinea notes. Rather than risk conviction and execution, he pleaded guilty, asked to be transported, and was sentenced to fourteen years.

Upon landing, almost at once he was snatched up by and assigned to Surgeon General John White, who as a naturalist made great use of Watling's artistic skills, especially for drawing rare animals.

For the newly arrived officers of the New South Wales Corps were quick to sense the advantages of the place and dealt with their state of want by themselves chartering the *Britannia* to travel to Cape Town or Rio for supplies, including boots for the soldiers. Phillip was not easy about it, since it was an interruption to the duty the *Britannia* had in relation to collecting her cargo under East India Company charter. The officers also expected land grants, but Phillip feared that in giving them any, he 'will increase the number of those who do not labour for the public, and lessen those who are to furnish the colony with the necessaries of life'.

Phillip feared that barter would develop in spirits, for which the convicts were crazy. The shops set up in Parramatta and Sydney for the sale of private goods out of the *Royal Admiral* were permitted to sell porter, but they were found to be selling spirits as well, with deplorable results. 'Several of the settlers . . . conducted themselves with the greatest impropriety, beating their wives, destroying their stock, trampling on and injuring their crops in the ground, and destroying each other's property.' In New South Wales, all the rage of exile and want was unleashed by liquor, but the officers of the New South Wales Corps could sniff not a social crisis but an opportunity.



Authority and equality were the two trees Phillip planted in Sydney Cove, and perhaps too the tree of grudging co-operative endeavour, into which the convicts were forced by circumstance. He had never invoked happiness, but he had invoked cohesion and its benefits.

So now Phillip had decided. Despite the rationing problems, whose end he saw in sight if the government and private farms were successful, he would sail home on the *Atlantic*, due to leave Sydney in December 1792. For by the time Phillip packed his papers and assembled his samples, he had imposed on this version of the previously unknown earth the European template. There were three and a half thousand acres (1418 hectares) under grant to various time-expired criminals and others. Over one thousand acres (405 hectares) were in cultivation on public land at Sydney Cove and Farm Cove, Parramatta and Toongabbie. As well, livestock now grazed on land-grant farms, and stock belonging to the public was kept at Parramatta.

The Sydney enterprise seemed now, and despite all, in a promising condition. Phillip's insistence on equity in rationing must have been a new experience for many convicts used to the corrupt systems of supply in prison and on board the hulks. His lack of skilled freemen elevated some convicts to civic positions as superintendents, overseers and settlers, and imbued a new sense of opportunity and potential influence. Only in New South Wales did land come to the convict who completed his time, and with it the sense of social order which accompanies ownership. 'A striking proof of what some settlers had themselves declared,' said David Collins, 'on its being hinted to them that they had not always been so diligent when labouring for the whole, "We are now working for ourselves."' Phillip had created a system of punishment and reward which, as repugnant as some of its elements might be to us, reliably provided for the convict and soldier-settler.



In his last days in Sydney, soldiers, convicts and servants carried Phillip's baggage down from his two-storey Government House, past its garden and the edge of public farmland, to the government wharf on the east side of Sydney Cove. When Phillip himself came down on 10 December, finally ready for departure, full of unrecorded impulses and thoughts, the red-coated New South Wales Corps under Major Grose presented arms. They dipped their colours and did him honour.

Phillip must have hoped that, leaving a place so little understood by the world at large, he would have a chance to advance towards greater responsibility and higher glory. But in fact it was with the children of his convict, free and military settlers, whom he was pleased to wave off, that his name would

achieve its immortality. Though greater formal honours awaited him, his chief remembrance would be in this cove, in this harbour, and in the continent beyond. And even so his abiding presence in the history of Australia would be more akin to that of a great totem beast than that of breathing flesh. He would not glow with the amiability or deeds of a Washington, a Jefferson, a Lafayette. He did not seek or achieve civic affection. He would forever be a colourless secular saint, the apostle of the deities Cook and Banks. Yet he would also be lodged not only in our imaginations, but in our calculations of the meaning of the continent and the society.

Thus the New South Wales Corps correctly saluted Phillip as he passed in his clouds of gravity.

SPIRITING AWAY

One of the most intense fears of the natives was, and would remain, that figures like Phillip would attract men and women out of their accustomed circuits and spirit them away from the Eora world. And it was happening now with Bennelong and the young man Yemmerrawanne, 'two men who were much attached to his [Phillip's] person; and who withstood at the moment of their departure the united distress of their wives, and the dismal lamentations of their friends, to accompany him to England'. They knew no map for where they were going, and only that it was *outer*, and that it was a region of incomprehensible darkness. The risk for Bennelong that he might finish by belonging to neither world was one he bore relatively lightly on this high summer day as he went aboard the *Atlantic*. Some might have thought also that Abaroo's ultimate rejection of Yemmerrawanne as a suitor could have added to that handsome youth's readiness to travel with his kinsman Bennelong.

With Phillip aboard, early on 11 December 1792, the *Atlantic* dropped down-harbour in semi-darkness. The desert interior of the continent sent a summer south-westerly to send Phillip out of Eora land.

The voyage proved uneventful, though Phillip's estranged wife, Margaret, had died by the time he returned to Britain. In her will she had released him from all obligations he had acquired during their relationship. So he devoted himself to defending and explaining his administration to officials in Whitehall, and asked the Secretary of State and the King for permission to resign his governorship permanently on the grounds of ill health.

Early the next year, he received a spacious annual pension of £500 to honour his New South Wales service. Phillip now had adequate resources to take a residence in Bath, consult specialists, and take the Bath waters.

His health improved, and he offered himself to the service again. He began to visit, and then married, Isabella Whitehead, the 45-year-old daughter of a wealthy northern cotton- and linen-weaving merchant. He would soon begin to regularly criticise the way things had gone in New South Wales since his departure.

Bennelong and Yemmerrawanne, meanwhile, had stepped ashore with Phillip at Falmouth towards the end of May 1793, to catch the London stagecoach. It was their turn to enter a mystery.

9

NO MORAL PERSUASION



AFTER PHILLIP

Left to govern New South Wales, Francis Grose was not himself a rapacious man, but seems to have been easily influenced by his officers and let them use the colony and its commerce in a manner Phillip would not have approved of. While Phillip had believed in a primitive commonwealth, where soldiers and convicts drew the same rations from the stores, and where convict labour at the government farms would sustain the colony, Grose thought it better to create a private sector consisting of his officers, his men and other colonial officials, in addition to some former convicts and a handful of free settlers. Without authorisation, he granted Other Ranks members of the New South Wales Corps twenty-five acres (c 10 hectares) each, offered land grants in the Sydney Basin to his officers, and awarded the use and rationing of ten convict labourers to each officer. Part of his motivation, he argued, was that he was plagued with ex-convict settlers who wanted to sell their land and livestock and return to England. Though their sheep flocks came from the government flock Phillip had issued to them, if he wanted that flock and its offspring to survive, he had to sell them as well since their wider holdings would ensure the ongoing strength of the sheep population.

When the Rhode Island ship *Hope* appeared in Sydney, Grose was also willing to allow the sale of a quantity of the spirits it carried to civil and

military officers. That was a significant decision and one which would in the end beget revolution. As the barrels of spirit were hoisted from the hold of *Hope*, the liquor business began in New South Wales, with liquor becoming not merely a quencher of spiritual bewilderments in the rag-tag population, but also a standard of exchange and a ticket to power.

Captain Collins recorded that, illegal though it was, the convicts preferred receiving liquor as payment for their labours to any article of provisions or clothing. In changing the convict hours of labour to a morning shift of 5 a.m. until 9 a.m. and then an afternoon shift from 4 p.m. until sunset, it was almost as if Grose were clearing the middle of the day for convicts to do business or tend their gardens. He was certainly creating boozing time. To men and women of small crimes but great, mind-scarring passages to Australia, the numbing power of spirits was much desired, and a string of liquor deaths was soon recorded.

Thomas Daveney, a free man whom Phillip had made overseer of the government farm at Toongabbie and called 'a most useful man', now lived on his own land in Toongabbie, granted to him by Lieutenant-Governor Grose. There he drank himself to death in July 1795 with half a gallon of Cape brandy. Spirits killed 'a stout healthy young woman', Martha Todd, by inflicting her with fatal gastritis. James Hatfield, a time-expired convict, drank too deep of the American spirits and died similarly. It was as if some were seeking suicide by liquor.

As the officers lawlessly sold and traded liquor around the colony, Grose uttered warnings already unrealistic: 'the conduct of those who had thought proper to abuse what was designed as an accommodation to the officers of the garrison would not be passed over unnoticed'.

Convicts found release also in gambling. John Lewis, an elderly convict, had the distinction in early 1794 of being the first man killed in Australia for a gambling debt. He was found murdered and his body thrown into a ravine, where dingoes had mauled it. It was believed that a card player to whom he owed money was guilty. Convicts gambled so recklessly that some, after losing their provisions, money and spare clothing on games of cribbage and all-fours, were left 'standing in the middle of their associates as naked, and as indifferent about it, as the unconscious natives of the country'.

More significant than the individual deaths from drinking, and indeed the loss to officers of land former convicts sold them in return for liquor,

was the reality that Grose had created a junta, and went so far in legalising it as to begin to substitute his military officers for civil magistrates Phillip had appointed during his later administration.

Phillip had earlier asked the British government to send to New South Wales free settlers who were intelligent, honest and good at farming. Early in Grose's lieutenant-governorship, a store vessel, *Bellona*, had arrived from England with so many supplies the storehouses could not contain them all, and provisions and flour were stacked in tiers in front of the store buildings. It also brought, along with seventeen healthy women convicts, the first free settlers to leaven the mass of haphazard convict farming.

Thomas Rose was a middle-aged farmer from Blandford, on board with his wife and four children. They had endured a rough journey in their berths below, for the timbers of *Bellona* seeped with water, and in rough weather admitted it in spurts. Rose was seen by the Sydney authorities as the natural leader of the free-settler group, which included Edward Powell, a farmer from Lancaster, and three other farmers who once had been crew members of the First Fleet's *Sirius*, and so in some sense must have liked the place and now returned to it. They had all been offered assisted passages, a sign of the way future immigration to Australia might work.

This group of perhaps more symbolic than substantial importance was rowed along the Parramatta River to choose land, and settled some eleven kilometres west of Sydney behind a screen of mangroves in an area which was thereafter known as Liberty Plains, near present-day Homebush. Here Rose was awarded 80 acres (32.4 hectares), and later a further 120 (48.6 hectares). The choice is puzzling, since Liberty Plains was a low-lying area of swamps and lagoons, and its tidal sediments held no nutrients. But soon he repented and moved with his family further west to the farmlands around Prospect Hill, and then to the richer alluvial country along the Hawkesbury River at Wilberforce.

Rose and his wife, Jane Topp, were models of sober and inconspicuous industry. Jane, delivered of an Australian son and daughter, lived to see her grandchildren's children, and when she died in 1827 was said to be Australia's first great-grandmother.

BENNELONG RETURNS

In December 1794, Grose returned to England for health reasons, leaving the penal settlement for some months in the hands of the equally amenable and malleable Captain William Paterson, Commandant of the New South Wales Corps. The sixty-year-old bachelor and former captain of the *Sirius*, John Hunter, returned to the colony as governor aboard the *Reliance* on 7 September 1795. He brought with him a few barrels of provisions, a town clock and the parts of a windmill for assembly ashore, and plenty of advice on how to sort out the military officers. Also aboard was the returning Sydney native and familiar of Phillip's, Bennelong. When Bennelong went aboard the *Reliance* at Deptford after two years in England, he had been suffering a bad congestion of the kind that had sent his fellow Sydney native Yemmerawanne to a grave in Eltham. Hunter wrote that 'disappointment' in England had broken Bennelong's spirit. Whether he meant that in leaving his charges to endure a hard winter in some solitude Phillip had let his spiritual brother Bennelong down, we do not know. But enthusiastic young Surgeon George Bass kept Bennelong warm and alive aboard *Reliance*, and the spring weather off the Azores restored him.

Captain Collins described Bennelong, returned to Sydney, as conducting himself with a polished familiarity towards his relations but being distant and quite the man of consequence to his acquaintances. He announced to the Aborigines of Sydney that he would no longer let them fight and cut each other's throats as had happened in the past. He would introduce peace amongst them and make them love each other. He also wanted them to be better mannered when they appeared at Government House. He seemed embarrassed by his sister Carrangarang, who had rushed up from Botany Bay to greet him, but having 'left her habiliments behind her'. At table at the white stucco Government House above Sydney Cove, he showed the greatest propriety. But he wanted to track down his former second wife, Karubarabulu, and was upset to hear she was living with a man named Caruey, who had inflicted bitter wounds on a Botany Bay native to establish his permanent title to her. Bennelong sought out the couple and presented Karubarabulu with an elegant rose-coloured petticoat and jacket, accompanied with a gypsy bonnet of the same colour, and for a time she deserted her lover and followed her former husband. But she confused the Europeans when, within a few days, they saw her walking naked about town. Bennelong

fought for her and according to one account beat Caruey severely at Rose Bay, using 'his fists instead of the weapons of his country'. Whoever won, Bennelong could not restrain Karubarabulu from returning to the younger man. Indeed, Bennelong himself was away from Government House for long periods, leaving his London clothes behind, returning to resume them when he chose and to toast the King with John Hunter.



In December 1797, Colby, the friend of Bennelong, and a young man called Yeranibe faced each other in town and attacked one another with clubs. Yeranibe's shield fell from his grasp, and while he was stooping to pick it up Colby struck him on the head. Despite the risk of being called *geerun*, or coward, and the likelihood that the friends of the young man would pursue him, Colby hit him again, and then ran away. Yeranibe was looked after by some of the Europeans, but died after six days.

By the side of the road below the military barracks Yeranibe was buried the next day. Every Aboriginal at the funeral seemed determined that Colby must die. Colby realised that he must either submit to 'the trial usual on such occasions' or live in continual fear 'of being taken off by a midnight murder and a single hand'. He decided to face the relatives of Yeranibe, but in town. In that way, he might be able to use his military friends as a brake on the anger of Yeranibe's clan. On the nominated day, Colby presented himself at the rendezvous, near the barracks on the western ridge of Sydney Cove. 'The rage and violence' shown by the friends of Yeranibe overpowered Colby, and when he fell and a group of Yeranibe's kinsmen rushed in to finish him with their spears, several soldiers stepped in, lifted Colby and took him into the barracks.

Bennelong had been present but had not taken any part in proceedings. He was armed, however, and when the soldiers stepped in he suddenly became enraged, like a referee who saw a violation of rules, and threw a spear which entered a soldier's back and came out close to the navel. Bennelong was dragged away by the new provost-marshal, an onlooker full of rage at the soldiers who had begun clubbing him with musket butts and inflicted a wound on his head.

The principles of Aboriginal justice would always confuse the British, and the sight of a fellow soldier transfixed with Bennelong's spear (the wound

fortunately healed) was not a good way to invite tolerant interest. Bennelong showed little gratitude at being saved from the anger of the military, and next morning he disappeared. He had become, in Collins's eyes, 'a most insolent and troublesome savage'.

The normal picture of Bennelong's life promoted by European writers—both Bennelong's contemporaries and of the present day—has him entering a decline, becoming addicted to liquor, and losing his influence with his people.

Indeed, when he died in 1813 on the grounds of the freed convict brewer James Squire at Kissing Point, north-west of Sydney Cove, the *Sydney Gazette* wrote, 'Of this veteran champion of the native tribe little favourable can be said. His voyage and benevolent treatment in Britain produced no change whatever in his manners and inclinations, which were naturally barbarous and ferocious.'

Yet at the time of his death, he was surrounded by at least a hundred kinsmen, which did not indicate a man rejected by his people. Was the *Sydney Gazette*'s judgment accurate, or did it bespeak attitude more than reality? Was the *Sydney Gazette* aggrieved that, despite the advantages of having encountered British society, Bennelong had not moved amongst his people as an apostle of European culture? Since he seems to have become a heavy drinker—like many of the Europeans in the Sydney Basin, yet perhaps more tragically given his previous lack of exposure to liquor—he has sometimes been depicted as an archetype of his peoples' tragedy.



In Hunter's time, and then later in Governor King's, Pemulwuy was still at large and leading his relatives and the western natives (the Dharug people) in the wooded regions of the Sydney Basin. He was energetic in razing maize fields, and by 1798 he had decided that because he had been frequently shot at but never severely wounded, he could not be killed by English firearms.

In Sydney, the authorities knew Pemulwuy's resistance was buoyed by what Collins described in 1795 as 'ill and impolitic conduct' on the part of some of the settlers towards the natives. Pemulwuy's warriors had told a young convict they had made friends with that they intended to execute three of the settlers—Michael Doyle, Robert Forrester, a First Fleet thief, and William Nixon—and had attacked two others mistaking them for

Doyle and Forrester. The young Englishman, John Wilson, to whom this plan of vengeance was mentioned was remarkably trusted by the various Sydney Aboriginal groups. A former sailor, he had been sentenced to seven years transportation in 1785 for stealing 'nine yards of cotton cloth called velveret of the value of tenpence'. Now he was an emancipist, a free or time-served former convict, but even while he was serving his sentence it was noticed he had a special relationship with the Sydney clans. Achieving his freedom, he began to spend most of his time with them, and such behaviour was repellent enough to his betters for them to consider him 'a wild idle young man'. The authorities had nonetheless used him in excursions to the west, north and south, and he had invented a patois halfway between Eora and English. The Sydney Aboriginals had given him a name—Bun-bo-e. He wore kangaroo skins—not entirely uncommon amongst the Europeans—and his body was scarred with ritual markings as noticeably as the bodies of tribespeople.

The government was fearful that he might tell the Sydney natives about the vulnerability of Sydney and Parramatta, so in February 1795 they sent him on an expedition to Port Stephens with a young surveyor, Charles Grimes. Here he stepped in on a confrontation with the natives and, talking to them in Eora, saved Grimes from being speared. The Port Stephens natives had already heard good things of Wilson by news passed up the coast via the Hawkesbury Aborigines, and his ritual markings were eloquent to them.

The next time he turned up in Sydney, in 1797, Wilson wore nothing but an apron formed from a kangaroo skin, and told people that the scari-fying of his shoulders and breast had been very painful. Interviewed by the governor, he described pastures to the south-west. Hunter decided to use this knowledge, and in January 1798 sent Wilson and two companions, one of them John Price, a trusted servant of the governor, to push into country unknown to Europeans. In the south-west, the Great Dividing Range, which hemmed in the Sydney Basin, retreated westwards, and the three explorers were able to reach the Wingecarribee River, more than 160 kilometres south-west of Parramatta. Wilson's two companions suffered great discomfort in the bush, and were saved by Wilson's bushcraft—his ability to navigate and hunt. The journal of Price, Hunter's servant who accompanied Wilson, was forwarded to Sir Joseph Banks, since it has the first record of the shooting of a lyrebird and the first written reference to the 'cullawine' (koala).

Governor Hunter was impressed enough to send Wilson and two other men back into the same country, and this time the expedition reached Mount Towrang, on the ridge above the site of what would become the town of Goulburn.

Despite the leverage these discoveries gave Wilson in the European community, by 1799 he reverted to 'the wildlife', and the following year was killed by an angry Aboriginal male when he attempted to take a young woman for what Collins referred to as his 'exclusive accommodation'. It was not the first time Wilson had been caught trying to coerce women. But this not uncommon cause of death amongst Aboriginal males closed out the life of the first European to attempt to live in a way his contemporaries considered savage.

POLITICALS

Though the Irish Defenders would have certainly considered their crimes as political, the authorities chose not to. The first prisoners all parties agreed on as being political and therefore dangerous were a group of five named the Scottish Martyrs—not all of them Scottish, but so named for the place of their arrest and trial. They were representatives of the thousands of men and women who promoted in Britain the ideals of the American and French Revolutions, and Hunter and, later, Governor King found them an administrative annoyance and suspected them of subversion.

In the 1790s, Britain had been swept by radical 'corresponding societies', men and women spreading revolutionary concepts through the mails, with even members of the Royal Navy—turbulent, unpaid, infected by the ideas of the United Irishmen and the French—participating in the passion. It ultimately meant that New South Wales was due to receive a few heroes rather than thieves.

The Scottish Martyrs were sentenced to transportation in 1794. One of them, William Skirving, had been educated at Edinburgh University, a prosperous farmer's son. In the 1790s he became secretary of the recently formed Scottish Association of the Friends of the People, and helped to organise a series of meetings in Edinburgh which were attended by radical members of the association from all over Britain and which government spies also attended. Its radicalism was directed in large part at the sin of landlordism, the hunger of the masses, general inequality before the law,

and republicanism. In December 1793, Skirving was arrested in Scotland with John Gerrald and Dr Maurice Margarot, who had come up from England for the meetings. At his trial for sedition Skirving was accused of distributing political pamphlets and imitating 'the proceedings of the French Convention' by calling other group members 'Citizen'. He was found guilty after the judge directed the jury to consider sedition as 'violating the peace and order of society'. Although sympathetic parliamentarians argued against his sentence of fourteen years in the House of Commons, Skirving was transported.

Dr Maurice Margarot and John Gerrald received similar sentences, as did Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who had written the offending pamphlets. Dr Margarot was something of a star radical, son of a French wine merchant, head of the London Corresponding Society, and though approaching his fifties, sturdy and keen-eyed. He had crossed to Paris in September 1792 to attend the National Convention, to which he extended his congratulations on the execution of Louis XVI. Pamphlets he wrote urged fiscal and electoral reform, shorter parliaments and a broader franchise. Margarot's trial generated mob demonstrations in his favour outside the Edinburgh court. His young fellow delegate to Scotland, John Gerrald, was the son of a West Indies plantation owner. His friends believed he would not survive transportation, because he suffered from consumption.

Thomas Muir, the last of the Martyrs, was a notable and promising young man, the son of a hop merchant from Glasgow and admitted in his youth to Glasgow University. He became a counsel on behalf of the poor and joined the Society of the Friends of the People. In early 1793 he was charged with sedition, but released, upon which he went to France to attempt to persuade the leaders of the revolution not to execute Louis XVI. The day after he returned to Scotland, he was arrested, imprisoned in Edinburgh, tried again and sentenced to fourteen years transportation.

Margarot, his wife and the other Scottish Martyrs, except Gerrald, travelled to Port Jackson on the *Surprise*. Though it had been one of Camden, Calvert and King's stinking death ships in the Second Fleet, there were fewer than a hundred convicts on board, and the Margarots and the others could travel as cabin passengers.

On arrival in Sydney, Margarot and the others were permitted to live in their own cottages exempt from labour, but Dr Margarot urged

Lieutenant-Governor Grose to pardon him, claiming he was entitled to 'the restoration of my freedom . . . inasmuch as I conceive my sentence to be fulfilled on my arrival here, that sentence being transportation and not slavery, the latter unknown to our laws, and directly contrary to the British Constitution as it was established in the revolution of 1688'.

Despite failing to gain his desired freedom, Margarot got on well with Grose, and also Governor Hunter. Governor King he disliked. He told King that he intended to report to London on his behaviour, a fact calculated to make King mistrust him. When King seized the outraged Margarot's papers, he found amongst them evidence of conspiracy with the Irish, denunciations of colonial avarice, and a forecast of Australia succeeding America as the world's chief post-colonial power. Margarot and his wife would ultimately be sent to Norfolk Island with other 'incendiaries'.

UNHINGEING A GOVERNOR

Governor John Hunter, Phillip's friend, suffered as much as anyone from the distance of New South Wales from England and the low priority it inevitably had with a British government struggling with post-revolutionary France. As much as any governor he was subject to sniping reports from various citizens, but none could snipe so efficaciously as John Macarthur.

Macarthur had been appointed by Major Grose, before Hunter's arrival as governor in Sydney, to the post of Inspector of Public Works in New South Wales, and Hunter made friends with him and confided in him until he experienced the fury of Macarthur's unquiet heart when he tried to restrict the trading activities of Rum Corps officers. Suffering barely disguised disrespect from the military in town, Hunter found his relief in explorations around Sydney, and in sending back specimens of Australian fauna to Sir Joseph Banks.

In 1799, a dispatch arrived from the Colonial Secretary recalling him. The sense that he had failed to control the military gentlemen's avarice weighed heavily on him. After returning to England, while serving on half-pay, he wrote a vindication of his administration. In line with the custom of promotion by seniority he became a rear admiral in 1807 and a vice-admiral in 1810. He would die in 1821, but many of his drawings of flora and fauna remain in Australia, at the National Library.

THE HEARTSORE IRISH

As D'Arcy Wentworth served on Norfolk Island with his convict woman and his sickly son, his wealthy cousin, Earl Fitzwilliam, was sent to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant in 1795. He was greeted by progressives with rapture, for it was known he intended to advance the Emancipation of Catholics and make peace with the Irish Whig leader Henry Gratton. Those comfortable with the divided state of the nation fiercely opposed to Emancipation petitioned London asking for Fitzwilliam's recall. With their powerful connections in Westminster, they were able to achieve it. Hence, the cancellation of Earl Fitzwilliam's warrant and his replacement by a hard-liner, Earl Camden, showed the Irish progressives that justice and independence could be established in Ireland only by force. The Irish people of all classes who formed a crowd all the way to the Dublin Quays and saw the earl departing on his ship back to England knew that a cataclysm was coming.

The peasantry, the Gaelic-speaking masses of the countryside, saw rebellion as a chance to adjust the land system in their favour, and, inevitably, to destroy the Protestant Ascendancy. They were the Croppies, the ready foot soldiers of revolution. What was of particular alarm to the British establishment in Ireland was the likelihood that Napoleon might send an army to reinforce any uprising, and that thus Britain would find itself with the enemy not only on the Continent but to its west. In the countryside remotely placed landlords found their peasantry boldly cutting down their trees to make pikes for the coming adjustment of justice.

The early success of the uprising can only be briefly dealt with here, but in Wicklow and Wexford there were pitched battles, and serious action in Ulster. When all seemed lost, after the climactic battle of Vinegar Hill near Enniscorthy in Wexford, a French army landed in County Mayo at Killala, joined up with the United Irishmen, and enjoyed some victories.

When the French ultimately surrendered they were treated well. But the United Irishmen of Mayo suffered the same excesses of torment as had been employed in the rest of Ireland. In a melee of arrests and beatings, impalings, summary executions and transportations, the army butchered anyone wearing a brown Croppy coat found within several miles of any field of action. It was decided by the veteran general Lord Cornwallis, rather than by London, that clemency must be conceded to men who surrendered. Clemency, however, in many cases would involve imprisonment

in typhus-haunted gaols and hulks, and ultimate transportation to New South Wales.

Who were these inflammatory Irish transported to the other side of the world? On the *Minerva* of 1800 and the *Anne* of 1801 were a number of 'prominent leaders' of the 1798 uprising. On the *Anne*, for example, perhaps more than one hundred of one hundred and thirty-seven convicts were guilty of political crimes, at least as they saw it. King called them 'the most desperate and diabolical characters that could be selected throughout that kingdom, together with a Catholic priest of most notorious, seditious, and rebellious principles'. Forty-one were listed as United Irishmen, seven as possessing arms or pikes, four as having been engaged in treasonable, rebellious or seditious practices, three as being involved in unlawful oaths, two as violating the Insurrection Acts, two as being rebel leaders or captains and one of fomenting rebellion.

Philip Gidley King, who became governor of New South Wales in 1800, described the Irish Croppy convicts as 'satanic'. And the Reverend Marsden, Low Church clergyman and high-toned magistrate who arrived in the colony in 1794 to work beside the Reverend Johnson, ultimately wrote a report to the London Missionary Society in 1807, declaring, 'The low Irish convicts are an extraordinary race of beings whose minds are depraved beyond all conception and their whole thoughts employed on mischief.' As for the United Irish leadership, 'leading men in their own country', they were still very dangerous towards a proper government and 'most of them are very wild and eccentric. The advantages of superior education have not been able to correct this part of their national character.'

Father Dixon of Wexford, the epicentre of the rebellion, was condemned to death by the British army in May 1798, but was saved on the intervention of several leading Protestant loyalists who said he had protected Protestants. His sentence was commuted to transportation. His cousin, a shipmaster named Thomas Dixon, was one of the rebel leaders, and Father Dixon seems to have been guilty by virtue of kinship.

The assumption amongst the authorities was that the priests were dangerous, but in fact the priests were generally against any United Irish uprising in New South Wales, because they believed it would be suicidal. Father Harold, a robust 55-year-old who had always preached non-violence, was arrested, his captors ignoring three orders from Dublin Castle, the

English headquarters in Ireland, for his release. He arrived in New South Wales aboard the *Minerva* from Cork, in January 1800.

Still opposed to violence, he told Surgeon Balmain in August 1800, in the last weeks of Hunter's governorship, that there were some plans afoot amongst the Irish of New South Wales to rebel, though he did not reveal the identity of the plotters. William Cox, a lieutenant critical of English excesses in Ireland, who had also sailed on *Minerva*, wrote to Samuel Marsden, the magistrate at Parramatta, reporting his suspicions, and Marsden and Richard Atkins went down to Sydney to tell Governor Hunter, who immediately started an enquiry led by the judge-advocate.

The hearing took place in early September and the first witness was Father Harold. Although he said that the planned uprising was well advanced, he believed he could restrain the convicts by moral persuasion and would not name the leader. He was committed to gaol for withholding the truth. It was assumed he had heard of the plot in the confessional, since under canonical law a priest thus informed may warn of a coming threat, but must not identify the person in whom it resides. Amongst the names that emerged as potential leaders from witnesses who turned King's evidence were those of Joseph Holt, an eloquent rebel leader from Wicklow, transported on *Minerva*, and Margarot, the Scottish Martyr.

Despite the enquiry, the concept for the rebellion remained steady: to gather during Saturday night, 4 March, and on Sunday morning to attack the church in Parramatta during the service, overpowering the soldiers, whose arms would be stacked or at their barracks. But one of the proposed leaders, Quinlan, had been found drunk at dawn and was arrested, and Francis King, a deserter from a militia in Cork, took over command. In the uncertainty, not enough turned up to storm the church.

A further ten supposed leaders were arrested—not all of them United Irishmen, or at least not transported for that offence. The authorities persuaded one to turn informer, a young man called John Connell. A new round of floggings was ordered. Father Harold was made to place his hand on the flogging tree when the punishments were carried out at Parramatta, and Joseph Holt was subject to the same order. Amongst those sentenced to punishment varying from 100 to 500 lashes was the young rebel lieutenant Patrick Galvin, and United Irishman Maurice Fitzgerald.

Paddy Galvin said during his flogging, wrote Marsden, that though he was a young man, 'he would have died upon the spot before he would tell a single sentence. He was taken down three times, punished upon his back, and also on his bottom when he could receive no more on his back. Galvin was just in the same mood when taken to the hospital as he was when first tied up, and continued the same this morning.'

On 21 October 1800 the *Buffalo* left Sydney Cove for Norfolk Island, to deliver the Irish prisoners, now punished by exile there, and from there for London, with retiring Governor Hunter aboard. Norfolk Island was at that time under the command of Major Foveaux, and there, too, the Irish planned a rising—for Christmas Day. At a final meeting it was decided that officialdom's women and children could be put to death and a conscience-stricken Irishman presented himself next morning at Foveaux's house 'in much agitation'. Two ringleaders were taken from church parade and summarily hanged within two hours. More than twenty were flogged; the five soldiers amongst them were drummed out of the corps.



After the initial Irish rebelliousness was crushed, the colony was quiet, said King, newly installed as governor, though the arrival of the *Anne* meant the number of rebels in New South Wales who, as King described it, had never dishonoured their oath as United Irishmen was close to six hundred: a regiment of disaffected Irish 'only waiting an opportunity to put their diabolical plans in execution'.

That the United Irish were disaffected was undeniable, but to the governor, in the meantime, the Loyal Associations recruited from Sydney to the Hawkesbury to serve as a militia were a comfort—'so many sureties to be of peace and tranquillity'. One of the sergeants of the Loyal Association who kept a musket ready on his farm along the Parramatta River, where he lived with his plentiful offspring and his common-law wife, Sarah Bellamy, was James Bloodworth, founder builder and brick-maker, ready to defend the sovereignty of the King who had transported him.

As for the gentlemen officers, King's garrison, who treated him—as they had Hunter—with increasing contumely as he tried to regulate their trade, they still had no fort to which to retire to resist a French regiment of the kind that, appearing from nowhere, perhaps charging in from the Heads, perhaps

marching up the old Frenchman's track from Botany Bay, would combine with the Irish and devour the population. Distance and unimportance were the governor's chief protection from the likelihood that United Irish gentry might be in France even then, persuading Napoleon to send a regiment to Sydney to vanquish the not quite martial Rum Corps, as the citizenry had long called the New South Wales Corps.

A NEW VINEGAR HILL

In the sweltering January of 1804 news arrived in New South Wales of the Irish rebellion led by Robert Emmet in the high summer of 1803 in Dublin. Emmet, wearing a uniform of green and white, had led his followers against Dublin Castle. On the way they had met the carriage of the Chief Justice and his nephew, and piked them to death. The force degenerated thereafter, and Robert Emmet withdrew to the Wicklow Mountains. He, like Irish rebels before him, had been negotiating with the French. The Scottish Martyr, Maurice Margarot, keeping his journal in his little hut in Sydney Cove, already knew about all this from various British radical friends.

When captured, Emmet was hung, drawn and quartered—literally, his body being torn into parts by four horses pulling in different directions. The news spread through the Irish community in the colony.

In Parramatta lived a French prisoner-of-war, François Durinault, and his transported United Irish wife, Winifred Dowling. Joseph Holt called on Winifred and her husband in late January. Durinault told Holt that four men from Castle Hill would call on him later in the day to ask him to lead a planned convict insurrection. Winifred scolded her husband 'that if she saw any more whispering or anything suspicious she would quit the place, for it was by such means the misfortune of her family as well as those of Ireland were occasioned'. Holt warned the Frenchman not to have anything to do with the plotters and promised that he himself would not. With his wife and children in the colony he was not willing to jeopardise them.

At a junction somewhere between Parramatta and the Hawkesbury, a number of Irish messengers met each other, carrying intelligence about the uprising. These men were talking about deliverance, redemption, the validation of all they stood for. Yet one of the Irishmen felt very much like Winifred Dowling that rebellion had been the cause of all his misery, and he passed the news that there was an imminent and serious uprising on

to the overseer of Captain Abbott. The overseer was a United Irishman from the *Atlas*, who after great thought passed it on to his master. Samuel Marsden, Parramatta's man of Christ, was informed and set off—as in 1800—for Sydney to notify the governor and request more ammunition for Parramatta.

The Munster men, the men from the south and south-west of Ireland, were heavily involved, it was said. Joseph Holt, having rejected leadership of any uprising, stayed at his liberal employer William Cox's house, Brush Farm, and two guards were set, both of them United Irishmen, but loyal to Holt.

At seven o'clock as darkness fell on Saturday 3 March, a convict hut at Castle Hill, to the north-west of Sydney, burst into flames as a signal that the rising had begun. Two hundred convicts at Castle Hill were guarded only by a few convict constables, most of whom joined the rising. The cry of 'Death or Liberty' was heard as they searched for the resident flogger, Robert Doogan, and a number of hated constables. Fortunately for their targets, there were a number of misfires, and no one was killed. Led by the United Irishman Philip Cunningham, the rebels scoured the area for arms, and at one house they found weapons and a keg of spirits.

The plan was that the Castle Hill convicts would march to the Hawkesbury where they would collect other disaffected men and form a force of over one thousand. The combined force would then return to Castle Hill and go on to Parramatta which 'two well-known disaffected persons', unspecified, would assist them to capture. They would plant the Tree of Liberty at Government House there and proceed to Sydney to embark on ships which would be waiting for them.

Cunningham had been the overseer of the government stonemasons at Castle Hill, and had spent twelve months building himself a stone house, as if he foresaw a future in New South Wales. But now he led the Castle Hill convicts to the top of a nearby hill where they divided into parties to raid the surrounding settlements for more arms and volunteers. They raided the convict stations at Pennant Hills and Seven Hills. They took settlers prisoner. One of the settlers escaped and galloped into Parramatta to give the alarm at about 9 p.m. He burst into Samuel Marsden's parlour where the Marsdens and Mrs Macarthur were sitting at supper. (John Macarthur at that time was in exile in England.) 'He told us that the Croppies had risen, that they were

at my Seven Hills farm, and that numbers were approaching Parramatta,' Elizabeth Macarthur would later write.

For the next hour the drums at the barracks beat to arms and the settlers headed there. They could see the flames at Castle Hill ten kilometres north. A dispatch rider was sent off to alert the governor and the New South Wales Corps that Parramatta expected an invasion of four hundred United Irishmen. Mr and Mrs Marsden and Elizabeth Macarthur, with the wife and children of Captain Abbott and of the deputy commissary, went down to the river and took boat for Sydney. Even then Elizabeth was full of fear. 'You can have no idea what a dreadful night it was and what we suffered in our minds.'

Parramatta's garrison of soldiers was expecting the rebels to attack and try to capture the arsenal. Instead, on a hill three and a half kilometres from Parramatta, the ex-soldiers and United Irishmen Cunningham and William Johnson drilled their men, looking down towards Parramatta lying in its bowl by the river. From here they could control the road between Parramatta and the Hawkesbury.

In Sydney the beating of drums started a little before midnight, with the firing of cannon. Major Johnston was fetched from his house in Annandale, a few kilometres west of the town of Sydney, and soon after Governor King rode up and told him five hundred to six hundred Croppies had taken up arms and that the call was to march to Parramatta. The governor got to Parramatta quickest, at four o'clock in the morning, and told the anxious men of the garrison that Major Johnston was on his way. A little after five o'clock Johnston arrived with his troops. The soldiers breakfasted on rum and bread. After a twenty-minute rest they marched to Government House, Parramatta.

King's latest information was that the rebels had recently been at the park gate near Parramatta and had retreated to Toongabbie, the work depot nearby. Johnston was to go after them. He sought and got permission to fire at anyone who attempted to run when called on to stop. King also signed off on martial law for a region north and south of the river and westwards.

At Toongabbie Johnston and his troops were told the rebels were on the hill above, behind the house of Dr Martin Mason, who had been the officiating surgeon at many a flogging. They found no one there, and marched on through a sweltering summer day. He pursued the rebels for sixteen kilometres and then heard from a mounted trooper that they were only two kilometres further on.

Johnston and his trooper galloped ahead and called to the Irish, and asked to speak to their leaders. They invited him to come amongst them. He replied that he was within firing distance of them and that he wanted to avoid bloodshed.

‘Death or liberty and a ship to take us home,’ was the reply, but in the end two rebels came down the hill. One of them, Cunningham, took off his hat, either as a gesture of obeisance or equality of status. Father Dixon cried out for an end to bloodshed. At that moment, as Quartermaster Laycock with the rest of the troops came into view, Johnston pulled a pistol from his sash and put it to the head of one of the leaders, who were innocent enough to think they were operating under a parley and some vestige of British honour in which, despite all, they believed. The trooper did the same with the other leader. Retreating with his two captives, Johnston called on his troops to begin firing, and shooting broke out on both sides. Nine rebels were immediately killed, and many wounded.

Most rebels, however, escaped in the following moonless night and some remained at large well into March. But Philip Cunningham was killed. A United Irish account credibly enough argues that some of the volunteers of the Loyal Association shot Cunningham and his fellow leader, William Johnson, after Major Johnston had left them in the care of Quartermaster Laycock. Johnston himself tellingly reported, ‘I never in my life saw men behave better than those under my command, and the only fault I had to find with them was their being too fond of blood. I saved the lives of six miserable wretches that the soldiers would have butchered, if I had not presented my pistol at their heads and swore I would shoot them if they attempted to kill them in cold blood.’

For to make up the numbers of the Loyal Association, many ‘volunteers’ were convicts serving time, and there was a notable lack of quick pardons for them after the uprising, perhaps as a result of their brutality during it.

The first ten rebels who appeared before court were sentenced to death, to be hung in chains. Marsden noted that four of them were Protestants and two Englishmen. They were executed at the place of their violation, and at Castle Hill, Parramatta and Sydney. Other rebels were condemned to flogging or sent to labour in the gaol gang.

In the meantime the Irish leadership, dispersed from Coal River (Newcastle) to Norfolk Island, were not in a position to play with the concept of another uprising. The frustrated idea, however, abided amongst humbler convicts.

10

SYDNEY REBELS



THE PERTURBATOR

Lord Hobart, the latest Secretary for War and the Colonies, had already written, in a dispatch to Governor King dated 30 November 1803, that ‘the gratification I experienced from the satisfactory view of the situation of the colony is in a great degree alloyed by the unfortunate differences which have so long subsisted between you and the military officers in the colony’.

Lord Hobart, described as ‘amiable and exigent’, had done two stints as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and it was upon this skilled but relatively colourless fellow that all the great passion of New South Wales was being unloaded by officers, rebels and the governor’s besieged supporters. No wonder King had started to drink too much, for his dispatches often display a sense of futility.

His long-running enmity with the officer corps was reaching a climax. King wanted to begin a government store where settlers could buy goods without a scandalous mark-up, putting a stop, he hoped, to what he called ‘the late commissioned hucksters’. He came down hard on John Harris, a licensed victualler and retailer of liquors, who gave spirits to two convicts for their week’s ration of salt meat from the public stores. Harris was deprived of his licence and all his liquors were to be ‘staved’, that is, smashed. But Harris was Macarthur’s man, and the staved barrels

belonged to him. Macarthur wrote to England to complain to a range of officials, and urged Colonel Paterson to do the same. Consequently, King rapidly developed a detestation of Macarthur which was matched only by his detestation of the Irish politicals. By 5 November 1801 he complained to Downing Street that Macarthur had incited Paterson to write to Sir Joseph Banks complaining that 'my too great economy had occasioned the present scarcity'. Macarthur had led the campaign to rid the officer corps and the colony of Hunter for trying to do away with the bankrupting effects of Rum Corps control of trade. Why shouldn't he achieve the same with King?

Yet the kindly Mrs King, Mrs Elizabeth Paterson and Macarthur's wife, Elizabeth, were all close and cherished friends, reliant on each other for ladylike society, not least in the new drawing room in Government House, Parramatta, and all of them collaborated in the founding of the Female Orphan School.

Macarthur himself drove the argument with the governor over freedom of trade and sanctity of merchandise and was not above savaging his own side. He became angry at Paterson for keeping up contact and conversation with King and thus standing in the way of Macarthur's attempts to have the governor 'sent to Coventry'. Indeed when the governor invited the garrison officers to dinner, only four failed to turn up, a fact which made Macarthur more implacable and more combative with Colonel Paterson. Gradually, over months, the officers other than Paterson began to shun the governor's table.

Manically, or perhaps maniacally enraged when crossed, Macarthur provoked a duel with Paterson, his superior officer, by leaking the details of a letter Mrs Paterson had sent to Mrs Macarthur. The duel took place in Parramatta and—against the rules of duelling—Macarthur was permitted to load his own pistols. He won the toss to fire first against his commanding officer, did so and severely wounded him in the right shoulder. Paterson could not return fire and by the time his carriage got him back to Sydney he was in a desperate condition from loss of blood.

After some delays, King, who would have liked to challenge 'the pertur-bator' Macarthur to a duel but felt it inappropriate to his vice-regal status, subjected Captain Macarthur to house arrest on the grounds that the King's Regulations forbade one officer to challenge another under pain of being

cashiered. However, Macarthur would not give the necessary securities for keeping the peace and insisted on a general court martial.

Macarthur arranged his colonial affairs, concluding by buying a 1700-acre (689-hectare) farm at Toongabbie, and a large flock from Major Foveaux. He left behind, to look after his interest, his wife Elizabeth, the competent and generous-hearted woman who nonetheless always sided with her husband's frequently excessive stances. Elizabeth had the pain, too, of saying goodbye to her eight-year-old daughter, also Elizabeth, and son John, a year younger still, who were going to England for an education which would separate them from her for years. They were early examples of a notable minority of Australians being sent to Europe for improvement. The 'perturbator' and his youngsters embarked on the *Hunter* for Calcutta. But in the Celebes (Sulawesi) the *Hunter* was dismantled in a typhoon which must have terrified the children, and was obliged to shelter at Ambon, where—in a zone considered Dutch—there was a trading post run by young Robert Farquhar on behalf of the British East India Company. Farquhar was about to be demoted for moving with East India Company troops on a nearby Dutch post, a provocative act, but Macarthur advised him to stand up against his superiors, including the Governor-General of India, Lord Wellesley, and insist his actions were justified. When this strategy bore fruit, and the *Hunter* had been repaired, the young man—who happened to be son to the surgeon and close friend of the Prince of Wales, the future George IV—sent off a letter praising Macarthur to his father, and thus to the prince's circle, as well as to a number of prominent Whigs. With this—and the parcel of fleeces he had already sent to Sir Joseph Banks—Macarthur had a lever he would use to grand colonial advantage.

His next piece of luck was that the chief witness against him, Captain Mackellar, second to Colonel Paterson at the duel, went aboard an American whaler returning to northern waters to present himself as Macarthur's accuser at the general court martial, and the ship was never seen again after leaving Sydney. It could seem that Macarthur enjoyed the preternatural luck associated with the being King considered to be Macarthur's uncle—the Devil.

Macarthur did not stop fighting the governor in London. Everyone he met, wrote Macarthur to his friend Captain Piper, 'applauds my conduct and execrates Mr King's'. Without a witness for the court martial, the

adjutant-general merely reprimanded Macarthur for earlier insisting on a pointless trial in Sydney, but made certain King could not court-martial him on his return.



Wool imports into Britain had been increasingly impeded by the war with the French, and wool manufacturers were keen to inspect the case of wool Macarthur had brought with him. He told them he was the only settler who had separated his merino sheep from his general herds, and that the results were wonderful. He wrote and published a pamphlet, *Statement of the Improvement and Progress of the Breed of Fine Woolled Sheep in New South Wales*. Its thesis was that he, and other likely settlers, could deliver Britain from wool dependency on the Continent. As a document it would have more impact on the manufacturers and government than would any plaint from Governor King. Macarthur submitted the essence of the pamphlet to the Privy Council Committee for Trade and Plantations. Sir Joseph Banks refused to believe that millions of sheep could be grazed in New South Wales. The naturalist spoke of Australian grass as 'tall, coarse and reedy'. But he had never been as far inland as Macarthur.

Macarthur, however, he was encouraged by the decline of the Tories, and looked for help from the new Whig government which came to power in May 1804 under Pitt, with Lord Camden as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Within two months Macarthur was again promoting his cause before the Privy Council. A wool merchant helped him by testifying that Banks's claim about the excessive expense of shipping wool from Australia was false. Then genial old Captain Hunter appeared and urged the council to listen to Macarthur. Thus Hunter, formerly an enemy, was forgiven.

The Privy Council wrote to Earl Camden urging he authorise a conditional grant of pastures to Macarthur. Camden was a man easily influenced and was strongly swayed by Macarthur's Whig friends. He signed off on a 10 000-acre (4050-hectare) grant to Macarthur and organised for him to leave the army to devote himself full-time to the wool enterprise.

King, in the meantime, was in increasingly bad odour with the military of New South Wales. He had taken five convicts and mounted them as his own bodyguard. On his arrival in New South Wales, King had been enthusiastic in wanting to take over and had been impatient for Hunter to go, but by now

he had become a haunted man. The acid of his enemies' machinations and their public contempt had eroded his soul.

BLIGH THE SINNER

The eminent William Bligh, Fellow of the Royal Society and darling of Sir Joseph Banks, committed his first unpopular act as governor by directing people to quit their houses built within the lines of demarcation of the public domain. 'He has ordered Morant's house and all that row to be pulled down, which has been done, to the total ruin of those poor wretches.' King had granted leases of fourteen years to some of the occupants. 'Some of these people,' wrote one complainant, 'in the erection of their houses, have expended the fruits of many years' industry. These are now forced to quit their dwellings without the least remuneration . . . If one governor can do away the act of a former one, all property of whatever nature must be uncertain.'

Then, when unpopular William Gore, the provost-marshal, was accused of having 'uttered a false note'—that is, forgery—Bligh directed George Crossley, 'sent here for perjury', to plead for Gore as his counsel.

These complaints were permitted to far outweigh Bligh's reforms—the flogging-as-torture and to extract confession which had marred King's regime was now ended, and promissory notes could only be issued for amounts in sterling, not for quantities of goods. Further, conditions for the arrest of a citizen were made regular. Bligh also looked upon the land as a sacred trust, and was sparing with grants and livestock, and put limitations on the use of convicts—a reform in the eyes of Whitehall but not in those of the officers, free settlers and others.

He quarrelled from the start with Macarthur. By now, Macarthur had been a year or more returned, and was pursuing the sheep business on his grant south-west of Sydney which he had obsequiously named Camden. Macarthur first called on Bligh in 1806 while the new governor was visiting Government House, Parramatta, where King was waiting for a ship home. As they walked in the garden, Macarthur claims Bligh savaged him, and there is a Bligh-like temper to the sentiments Macarthur quoted, even if he was an unreliable witness.

'What have I to do with your sheep sir? What have I to do with your cattle? Are you to have such flocks of sheep and such herds of cattle as no

man ever heard of before? No, sir! I have heard of your concerns, sir. You have got 5000 acres of land in the finest situation in this country. But by God, you shan't keep it.'

When Macarthur replied that the grant came from the Privy Council and the Secretary of State, Bligh cried, 'Damn the Privy Council and damn the Secretary of State too! You have made a number of false representations respecting your wool, by which you have obtained this land.'

According to Macarthur, Bligh behaved so irascibly at table that he caused the fragile King to weep, and after breakfast, when Macarthur tried to reiterate Earl Camden's interest in the wool project, Bligh said again, 'Damn the Secretary of State, what do I care for him, he commands in England and I command here.'

Soon Elizabeth Macarthur was telling her best friend, Miss Kingdon, in whose father's manse she had spent the happiest times of her girlhood, that Bligh was violent, rash and tyrannical. It would be easier to dismiss her if she were not such an admirable and genial woman, very loyal to her husband but capable of her own thoughts. Now that he had returned to Australia they lived principally on their property on the Parramatta River, which she thought delightful. She wrote that when they married, 'I was considered indolent and inactive; Mr Macarthur too proud and haughty for his humble fortune or expectations, and yet you see how bountifully Providence has dealt with us. At this time I can truly say no two people on earth can be happier than we are. In Mr Macarthur's society I experience the tenderest affections of a husband, who is instructive and cheerful as a companion. He is an indulgent father, beloved as a master, and universally respected for the integrity of his character.'

There were also complaints from the Macarthurs about King's friend and Bligh's, Mr Robert Campbell, a young man who had come to Sydney from Calcutta in 1800 to open a branch of the family company, Campbell, Clark and Co. He had made such inroads into the officers' trading monopoly that he was by 1804 agent for many of the officers, who ironically sometimes complained of his mark-ups. In his position as naval officer of the port as well, he had the opportunity to deal with all vessels that did not come to New South Wales assigned to any particular trading house.

Andrew Thompson, former convict, was also the butt of complaints of those who opposed Bligh. An emancipated Scot with a good practical head,

he ran Governor Bligh's farm, which Bligh's enemies depicted as a demonstration of the governor's rapacity, while his friends lauded it as a useful model farm. Thompson inadvertently gave ammunition to Bligh's opponents when he reported that he had exchanged inferior numbers of the governor's herd of cattle at the Toongabbie yards and obtained good and sufficient ones in their place.

Two of the first 'respectable' farmers of New South Wales, John and Gregory Blaxland, Kentish men who had been talked by Sir Joseph Banks into emigrating at their own expense, disliked Bligh for his non-compliance with what they saw as their just demands. The Blaxlands had burned their bridges behind them, selling their long-held family farm. They thought Gregory had not been adequately supplied with land, stock and convict labour, and looked at every resource supplied to Bligh's own model farm by Thompson with rancour.

Soon, scrolled-up pipes—anonymous lampooning political doggerel—attacking Bligh began to appear in the streets (as they had during King's governorship), the most noted drawing on the notorious mutiny led by Fletcher Christian on the *Bounty* against Bligh to declare: '*Oh tempora! Oh mores!* Is there no CHRISTIAN in New South Wales to put a stop to the tyranny of the governor?'

THE GRAND IMPASSE

When Bligh was appointed governor, Lieutenant John Putland, married to Bligh's daughter Mary, had accepted a post as his aide-de-camp, even though he was suffering from tuberculosis. Mary was small, vigorous and resembled her mother, who had not accompanied Bligh because she was a very poor sailor. In Mrs Bligh's absence, Mary Putland served as the mistress of Government House, where everyone thought her elegant and amiable.

For a man wary about granting land, on arrival in Sydney Bligh had had Governor King grant him the thousand acres (405 hectares) on the Hawkesbury he used for his model farm, but also 600 acres (243 hectares) at St Marys in Sydney's west for John and Mary Putland.

Late in 1807, Mary had written to her mother, 'Pappa is quite well but dreadfully harassed by business and the troublesome people he has to deal with. In general he gives great satisfaction, but there are a few we suspect wish to oppose him . . . Mr Macarthur is one of the party and the others are

the military officers, but they are all invited to the house and treated with the same politeness as usual.' When John Putland died from his tuberculosis in early January 1808, to be buried in the grounds of Sydney Cove's Government House, with the remains of Arabanoo and others, Bligh was worried about the effect it would have on his daughter's health. 'She has been a treasure to the few gentlewomen here and the dignity of Government House.'

In late 1807, Bligh and Macarthur had become locked in conflict over two issues. One concerned Judge-Advocate Atkins; the other was to do with the escape of an Irish convict on the schooner *Parramatta*, which made the owners of that vessel, Macarthur and Garnham Blaxcell, a free settler, responsible to pay a bond of £900. Macarthur and Blaxcell refused to pay, and so there was a warrant issued for their arrest. When the warrant was presented on the night of 15 December, Macarthur refused to acknowledge its legality and sent the chief constable away with a note which read, 'I consider it with scorn and contempt, as I do the persons who directed it to be executed.' Macarthur followed the letter into Sydney and was arrested four doors from Government House and committed to appear for trial at the criminal court on 25 January 1808. Now Macarthur brought his Atkins card into play.

Throughout 1807 and into early 1808, Macarthur began to use as a lever and a ploy a near-forgotten debt of £82 9 shillings and sixpence owed him by Judge-Advocate Atkins. In 1801 Atkins had repaid Macarthur with a bill which Macarthur had taken with him to England and which was there dishonoured. On Macarthur's return to the colony, Atkins had promised to pay it, but that had been two years past. Macarthur pointed out that to get justice he would have to 'call upon Mr Atkins to issue a writ to bring himself before himself to answer my complaint'.

Macarthur used this debt of convenience to attack the legitimacy of the court in one of its most vulnerable areas—the position of Judge-Advocate, particularly as held by an untrained drunkard like Atkins. He was also favoured by its other great weakness—its being composed of officers unlikely to bring too harsh a sentence down on one (formerly) of their own. All through January, as Macarthur awaited his trial, he tried to get Atkins removed, and Bligh said only the British government could do that.

On the night of 24 January 1808, the officers had regimental dinner at the barracks to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the colony due to occur two days later. The dinner was attended by all nine officers and a number of

their friends, including Macarthur's son Edward, and his nephew, Hannibal. The diners could see John Macarthur pacing the parade ground, a hungry presence, while the officers and gentlemen danced with each other to the music of the fife band. On his way home that night to Annandale, Major Johnston injured his arm 'from the over-setting of a gig', so that he was not able to attend the next morning when the court made up of Atkins and the officers sat. The New South Wales Corps had stacked the gallery with soldiers, and even before the indictment could be read Macarthur rose and argued the impropriety of Atkins sitting in his case. When the judge-advocate attempted to put an end to Macarthur's speech and threatened to throw him in gaol at once, Captain Anthony Fenn Kemp threatened the judge-advocate himself with imprisonment. Atkins left the courtroom and went to Government House to report to Bligh. About eleven o'clock that morning the six officers of the bench wrote to Bligh demanding he appoint another judge-advocate.

At 12.30 in the afternoon, the governor wrote back to say he had no power to replace Atkins, and without the judge-advocate, the court could not legally sit. Next Bligh sent a note to the officers demanding a return of the judge-advocate's papers. The officers refused. The papers, according to Johnston's later report, 'led to a discovery that the whole plan of the trial had been arranged, and every question prepared that was to be asked [in] the evidence of the prosecution, by the infamous Crossley'.

While this correspondence was in progress a number of armed constables, most of them convicts, were standing and joking outside the court ready to re-arrest Macarthur and drag him to gaol. The officers instead remanded Macarthur on his previous bail. Late in the afternoon, Bligh's orderly sergeant was sent out to Johnston at Annandale to ask him to come to Government House. Johnston answered that because of his fall he was unable to travel or write.

The following morning at nine o'clock, William Gore, the provost-marshal, arrested John Macarthur at the house of his friend, Captain Abbott. The policeman took Macarthur to gaol, but the officers in the court again wrote to Bligh demanding that he appoint another judge-advocate. The governor spent some hours in consultation with his legal advisers, including the despised George Crossley, the convict lawyer. At last Bligh wrote to Captain Fenn Kemp and the other five officers of the criminal court requiring them to present themselves to face a charge of treasonable practice at

Government House at nine o'clock the next morning. A few minutes later a dragoon arrived at Annandale with a letter from the governor, which informed Johnston that six of his officers had been so charged. By his own confession Johnston enjoyed 'temporary forgetfulness of my bruises' and immediately set off in his carriage for the town. In the late afternoon, Johnston turned up not at Government House, but at the military barracks on Sydney's opposing, western, ridge. The instruction went out for off-duty soldiers to accoutre themselves for action.

Amongst those who had been at Government House that day was Bligh's United Irish friend the Reverend Henry Fulton, now a magistrate appointed by Bligh, and a very different one from the God-of-Wrath Reverend Marsden of Parramatta. Back home for his dinner, he noted the activity occurring on Church Hill. Fulton rushed to warn Bligh, who was about to sit down to dinner with Robert Campbell and with his daughter in her mourning weeds.

BRINGING A GOVERNOR DOWN

One of the officers intimately involved in the uprising against Governor Bligh was Tipperary-born William Minchin, who seems to have realised that the way to prevent problems was 'to arrest him before he arrests us'. Minchin's attitude to Bligh was partly influenced by Bligh's treatment of Michael Dwyer, a famously respected Irish rebel, suddenly sent to Norfolk Island. Minchin, Dwyer's neighbour in the area to the south-west of Sydney named Cabramatta, had helped support Dwyer's family following his banishment.



Major Johnston, on his arrival at the barracks, immediately released Macarthur, who suggested that a letter be prepared and signed by all the civilians present calling on Johnston to arrest Bligh and take over governance of the colony. Macarthur supposedly leaned on the barrel of a cannon to write the letter that declared, 'Sir, the present alarming state of this colony, in which every man's property, liberty and life is endangered, induces us most earnestly to implore you instantly to place Governor Bligh under arrest, and to assume the command of the colony. We pledge ourselves, at a moment of less agitation, to come forward to support the measure with our fortunes and our lives.'

Johnston would later urge a number of pressing reasons for accepting this letter. First, at the barracks he saw 'all the civil and military officers collected, and the most respectable inhabitants in conversation with them. The common people were also to be seen in various groups and every street murmuring and loudly complaining.' It was known that the governor was shut up 'in counsel with the desperate and depraved Crossley, Mr Campbell, a merchant . . . and that Mr Gore [the provost-marshal] and Mr Fulton [the United Irish chaplain] were also at Government House, all ready to sanction whatever Crossley proposed or the Governor ordered'.

So the gentlemen entreated Johnston 'to adopt decisive measures for the safety of the inhabitants and to dispel the great alarm'. Johnston accepted the document, compelled, in his account, by the many signatures supporting it. Bligh would later say that the military took the petition around after the fact. Whatever the case, Johnston accepted it as his warrant, and the corps, about four hundred available that day from the Sydney garrison, formed up with its band and set off down the hill to Government House to the refrain of 'The British Grenadier'.

The merchant, Robert Campbell, wrote that he and the governor had just drunk two glasses of wine after dinner when they were told, probably by the Reverend Fulton, that Macarthur had been let loose. The governor went upstairs to put on his uniform and called out to his orderly to ready his horses. Perhaps he meant to face the rebels on horseback, perhaps he intended to flee with his daughter. Bligh began working in 'his bureau or trunk' and extracted a number of papers. It was then that he heard Mary Putland raging at the Rum Corps, who had turned up at the gate and forced their way in. As a witness said, 'The fortitude evinced by Mrs Putland on this truly trying occasion merits particular notice . . . Her extreme anxiety to preserve the life of her beloved father prevailed over every consideration and with uncommon intrepidity she opposed a body of soldiers who, with fixed bayonets and loaded firelocks, were proceeding in hostile array to invade the peaceful and defenceless mansion of her parent.' She welcomed the rebels to stab her through the heart but to spare the life of her father.

Campbell and the Reverend Fulton put up a good defence at the front door by refusing to open it, but at last the corps entered via Mrs Putland's bedroom and other doorways, and a search for the governor began. According to Bligh's account he was captured while attending to official papers.

‘They soon found me in a back room,’ he wrote, ‘and a daring set of ruffians under arms (headed by Sergeant Major Whittle), intoxicated by spiritous liquors, which had been given them for the purpose, and threatening to plunge their bayonets into me if I resisted, seized me.’

According to Johnston, writing some months later, ‘After a long and careful search he was at last discovered in a situation too disgraceful to be mentioned.’ A contemporary cartoon showed him being extracted from under a small bed in full uniform by the searchers, and the image is often accepted as literal truth.

Johnston was in charge of the overthrow, but the revolutionary hero Macarthur was carried by his supporters shoulder-high through the town for a night of jubilation. There was general joy even amongst convicts, and bonfires and illuminations, to celebrate deliverance from Governor Bligh. ‘Even the lowest class of the prisoners were influenced by the same sentiments, and for a short time abandoned their habits of plundering. The contemplation of this happy scene more than repaid me for the increase of care, fatigue and responsibility to which I had submitted for the public benefit,’ wrote Johnston. Bligh and his daughter would be stuck as detainees in Government House for the next year.



The Sydney rebels, after deposing Bligh, sought an undertaking from him that if he were released from detention he would sail to Britain. But he consistently refused to give his word on that. In early 1809, however, he agreed to go if he was allowed back on board his ship, the *Porpoise*, and it was only after it sailed from Sydney that he declared the promise had been extorted by force—a credible enough view. He turned for Van Diemen’s Land and sailed up the Derwent, looking for hospitality from Lieutenant-Governor David Collins, Phillip’s old friend and former secretary, who had founded the settlement of Hobart. Collins was in two minds about what had happened in Sydney and was politely remote, giving Bligh accommodation but refusing to become outraged by his situation. During his presence ashore and a-ship in Hobart, Bligh was criticised by Collins for behaviour ‘unhandsome in several respects’. Part of this unhandsomeness in Bligh had consisted of compelling local boats to supply the *Porpoise* with produce and paying them with bills he personally issued.

Bligh and Mary left Van Diemen's Land on the *Porpoise* only after he was assured that Governor Lachlan Macquarie had arrived in Sydney. A long period on the *Porpoise* and in Van Diemen's Land, in the company of her aggrieved but irritable father, must have been a time of exceptional stress for Mary, one that she bore with a conviction that her father was transparently in the right. But when the golden-haired Colonel Maurice O'Connell, native of Kerry and a handsome talker, came aboard the *Porpoise* in Sydney Harbour to greet Bligh on his return, Mary determined with her normal strength of mind that she would marry him. The marriage took place at Government House in early May 1810, and a few days later William Bligh returned to England. The O'Connells would leave with the 73rd Regiment to serve in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1815, and in time the colonel became a major general and was knighted, returning to Sydney in December 1838 to command the forces in New South Wales. His and Mary's son, Maurice Charles, was his military secretary, and Mary bore one other son and a daughter, maintaining throughout her life her integrity, and the slightly tempestuous firmness of character she had inherited from her father.

11

EARNING RESPECTABILITY



COMES THE AVENGER

On New Year's Day in 1810, the brief and unhappy interregnum of the officers of the New South Wales Corps was put to an end by the landing of a sandy-haired Scottish colonel and his own regiment of infantry, the 73rd. Although he was to be the last autocratic governor, his name was one to be much honoured in the Australian continent—roads, rivers, suburbs and a university would one day have his name attached to them. Yet Lachlan Macquarie, a man lacking patrons, may have been, at 48, the oldest lieutenant-colonel in the army. His father had been a humble tenant farmer from the Hebridean island of Ulva.

That hot day the 73rd marched to the parade-ground on Barrack Hill, the same parade-ground from which the 102nd had moved out two summers before to depose Bligh. The first legally trained deputy judge-advocate, Ellis Bent, who had come to Australia on the same ship, *Dromedary*, as Macquarie and his wife, Elizabeth, read the new governor's commission. In a strong speech, Macquarie promised justice and impartiality, hoped that the upper ranks of society would teach the lower by example, demanded that no one should harm Aborigines, and said that anyone sober and industrious would find a friend and protector in him.

He made quite an impression. No one would have guessed he could be volatile and resent criticism; no one could have guessed how he and Elizabeth still mourned their lost baby daughter; or that when he returned to London after fifteen years service in India he had felt like an 'awkward, rusticated, Jungle-Wallah'. He was august and stable rule incarnate.

D'Arcy Wentworth, former Irish highwayman and now principal surgeon of the colony, appointed after Bligh's overturn, felt uneasy about the man's intentions. Macquarie's secretary had posted a British government proclamation at Barrack Square declaring His Majesty's 'utmost Regret and Displeasure on Account of the late Tumultuous Proceeding in this His Colony, and the Mutinous Conduct of certain persons therein'. All appointments and land grants made under the authority of Bligh's deponents—Paterson, Johnston and Foveaux—were nullified.

It soon proved, however, that Macquarie was not going to enforce the letter of these proclamations. He let the 102nd Regiment—the Rum Corps—stay in quarters at Barrack Square and had his 73rd billeted at Grose Farm, five kilometres out of town, growling and living on bread and potatoes. Elizabeth Macarthur was an old friend of Mrs Macquarie and visited Government House, and so did the former rebel officers, even though Macquarie had been ordered to arrest Johnston and Macarthur, a task he was saved from by the fact they had both left New South Wales. The 102nd was to be returned to England in official disgrace in any case, and perhaps Macquarie's less than punitive actions were a pragmatic attempt to prevent the colony dividing all over again.

But D'Arcy Wentworth found he was still chief surgeon, and thus considered Macquarie a wise ruler.

WENTWORTHS RISING

D'Arcy Wentworth's three sons had a desperate love for their father, and the elder one, William Charles, also loved desperately those who smiled on D'Arcy, and hated with passion those who despised him. For he had spent his early childhood in the little house at Queensborough, Norfolk Island, when D'Arcy seemed prospect-less, and the chief food of the house, other than the occasional mutton bird, fish and turtle, was sea rations. On Norfolk, Wentworth, praised for his competence, impatiently awaited clarification of when his posts might become official.

D'Arcy had gone on residing with the convict Catherine Crowley. In narrow Norfolk, doubts must have been muttered about the little boy, William's, paternity, but D'Arcy remained devoted to the child, and the child would repay him. New authority had not made D'Arcy a martinet. He was liked by gentlemen and convicts both, because of his democratic manner. As superintendent at Queensborough, he had developed a gift for supervising agricultural work and for breeding livestock.

D'Arcy had served without pay as an assistant surgeon for some thirty-one months and as a superintendent of convicts for fifteen, when King, then commandant of Norfolk Island, wrote to the Home Office reminding Undersecretary Nepean of Wentworth's good behaviour and calling him 'a real treasure'. Two thousand bushels (73 m³) of maize and five hundred bushels (18 m³) of wheat had been produced under his supervision. King sent a letter to Earl Fitzwilliam too, asking him to use his influence to benefit his exiled kinsman. Fitzwilliam wrote back assuring King that he had spoken to one of the undersecretaries at the Home Office and that D'Arcy would be officially confirmed in the post of assistant surgeon.

Soon D'Arcy was raising swine on his own 60-acre (24-hectare) block given him by King. By May 1792 he received £11 2 shillings for selling six cows to the government, and on 3 May 1794 he sold a supply of pork for £20 7 shillings. Between January and May 1794 he sold grain worth £105 to the public stores. By the end of 1794 the island's population was made up of settlers and expirées as well as convicts and officials. There was a variety of trades involved in the economy and wheat, maize, potatoes, sugar cane, bananas, guavas, lemons, apples and coffee were all farmed. There were two windmills and a watermill and at Cascade Bay a long wharf.

On 3 October 1795, the *Asia*, an American ship from New York, berthed at Norfolk, and D'Arcy was amongst the settlers who supplied her with meat and vegetables in exchange for tobacco and spirits.

Wentworth, much trusted by Mrs King, treated the bibulous King for gout. By supporting King, Wentworth gained in status, and King cherished hopes of impressing Earl Fitzwilliam, who could perhaps help him achieve the governorship of New South Wales.

Against D'Arcy's income, Cookney, Earl Fitzwilliam's London agent, began to send shipments of trading goods: cloth, linen, china, combs, paper, pens and general groceries. There were gowns and ribbons of blue, lilac and pink.

Wentworth charged moderate prices to maximise goodwill. But for all his growing prominence on the island, he was still seen by some of the establishment as tainted by convictism. By July 1795, he wrote to David Collins about his continued disappointment at the Home Office's failure to commission him as assistant surgeon, and asked to be allowed to return to New South Wales and then possibly England. King supported the request.

D'Arcy and his time-expired wife and son boarded the *Reliance* and sailed for Port Jackson. The five-year-old, rather wizened, William, a clever child who would grow to dominate this locale, saw Port Jackson and Sydney Cove for the first time. The governor, Hunter, though in theory an autocrat still, did not have the power Phillip had enjoyed, because the military oligarchs and their friends ran the colony. Wentworth tried not to make enemies of any side and felt out his way. In 1797 he was plaintiff for recovery of debt in eight cases before the Court of Civil Jurisdiction against prosperous settlers to whom he had supplied trade goods, and sent the proceeds of these cases to cover his debts to Earl Fitzwilliam and to commission Cookney to purchase more goods for him. He received pay for the four years he had acted as assistant surgeon on Norfolk Island, and his belated salary as superintendent of convicts. Cookney sent goods to the combined value of these sums, and D'Arcy was suddenly a well-off New South Wales merchant.

In May 1798, he received two treasury bills for sales to the commissariat, one for £1000 and one for £500, and planned to invest them in the colony rather than remit them to England. He took to wearing a watch, a ring and knee buckles. Governor Hunter did not see him as an enemy, like many of the officers, and invited him to dine at Government House on Christmas Day.

In May 1799 D'Arcy became assistant surgeon at Parramatta. Hunter would grant him 140 acres (57 hectares) there, a couple of kilometres from the Macarthurs at Elizabeth Farm. Here he established his country seat, Home Bush, happy to live in relative seclusion with his convict spouse. Dr Margarot, the Scottish Martyr, wrote of Wentworth: 'A noted highwayman after repeated escapes owing to great protection and interference is at last transported; he ranks as a gentleman, sits at the Governor's table, plunders the colony and amasses a fortune after having twenty times deserved to be hanged.' This was the characterisation which D'Arcy was trying to escape. King, returning to New South Wales in April 1800, was advised by Surgeon

Balmain to exclude Wentworth from his table, even though Balmain was counted by Wentworth as one of his closest friends.

Catherine Crowley, mother of the boys, had died on 6 January 1800 aged twenty-seven, and her burial at St John's, Parramatta, was conducted by Samuel Marsden. William, then nine, was still small and clumsy, but he sometimes accompanied his father while D'Arcy transacted business. The attachment remained intense.

D'Arcy had acquired one of the best houses in Sydney and a chaise and horses, and employed two Irish male convicts in 1800, and the next year a female assignee. Governor Hunter had liked him and said that he had behaved 'not only in his official situation but upon all other occasions with the most exact propriety'. But the arrival of King, his champion, actually crimped D'Arcy's activities as the new governor forbade spirits from being landed from any ship without prior approval and written consent. Wentworth did not publicly go against his friend, King. But in 1803, when a cask of Wentworth's madeira was seized on a technicality, Wentworth petitioned the British government and went over at least in part to Macarthur's world view.

THE CONVICT'S CHILD GOES HOME

In 1802 William Charles Wentworth, twelve years old, and his brother D'Arcy, nine, sailed from the world they had always known on the *Atlas*, a ship which traded goods in China and at Calcutta before reaching its destination. In Britain, the conscientious Cookney, Earl Fitzwilliam's agent, acted as their foster father. He sent them to the Reverend Midgley's school in Bletchley, attended also by three of his own sons, and jovial Mrs Cookney welcomed them in the holidays. Letters from William to his father say they were happy at school, and were looking forward to seeing the kindest of parents again. They were eventually joined by their younger brother John, who arrived with the early symptoms of scurvy.

Major Foveaux, one of the rebels against Bligh, was strongly against the Wentworth boys returning to New South Wales, and advised military careers in India, but D'Arcy hoped William would become vendue master, that is, an auctioneer of confiscated goods, or provost-marshal in the colony. But William came home, however, as a young man in 1810 with some accomplishment in Latin and Greek but without any professional

training or government appointment. Despite this, in 1811 D'Arcy's rapidly increasing influence with Macquarie enabled William to become acting provost-marshal.

Young William, though their future champion, does not seem to have known any emancipists—the time-expired convicts—very well at this stage except for the successful ones: Simeon Lord; William Redfern, who had been accused of participating in the naval mutiny at the Nore in 1797; and James Meehan, United Irishman and Assistant Surveyor. Lord was a fellow magistrate of D'Arcy's, and Redfern was D'Arcy's medical assistant and a family friend. William did not much admire the retired officers who had stayed to make their fortunes in New South Wales. He despised their low origins, their gimcrack manners and their aristocratic ambitions. The most precise expression of this attitude was a pipe on John Macarthur and his family which he probably wrote about 1811, comparing a family like the Wentworths, representatives of true nobility, with the barbarian ancestors of the Scottish 'staymaker' or corset maker. His closest friend was young George Johnston, son of the Scots officer of the same name, and the Jewish convict woman Esther Abrahams. But there does not seem to have been a day when the shadow over his father, the murmurs about D'Arcy's being a convicted highwayman and himself a convict bastard, left him.

William liked the free settler Blaxland brothers too, and was willing to join with Gregory Blaxland and William Lawson, a surveyor, in an attempt to find more land beyond the Blue Mountains. Given D'Arcy's standing with Macquarie, Blaxland hoped that with young Wentworth in his party, Macquarie might soften his disapproval of himself and his brother, both supporters of the rebels against Bligh. In 1812 William Charles Wentworth had received a grant of 1750 acres (709 hectares) on the Nepean River and he probably made a number of exploratory probes into the nearby mountain range with James Meehan.

In the meantime D'Arcy treated Mrs Macarthur's spasms, and certain problems of the governor. Lachlan Macquarie had recurrent urinary problems arising from a bout of syphilis he had suffered in Egypt some years before, as well as dysentery and stress from overwork. By 1810 D'Arcy was principal surgeon, commissioner of police, treasurer of the police fund, magistrate, commissioner for the turnpike and hospital contractor.

IN THE HEART OF EMPIRE

In 1816, D'Arcy Wentworth sent his son William back to Britain in the hope he would achieve a commission in the Guards, but the war against France had ended and made that an unlikely career. Landed at Plymouth, William took the stage to London and arrived in Cookney's warm parlour late in the year, where he sought guidance as to whether he should enter the bar or the church.

He ultimately resolved to study law, but at the same time thought it politic to reassure his wealthy relative, Earl Fitzwilliam, that it was not his intention to abandon the country that gave him birth. 'I am sensible of the sacred claims which it has upon me—claims which in its present despised state and indigent situation, I should blush ever to be supposed capable of neglecting.'

In February 1817 William enrolled as a pupil at the Middle Temple and declared that he was the son of D'Arcy Wentworth Esquire of New South Wales. He had decided against attending Oxford first, telling his father he was already a better classical scholar than nine out of ten of the graduates. Besides, at Oxford he lacked the means to mix with the nobility and would be treated as one of the vulgars.

He frequently called on the Macarthurs in London, a family he had earlier secretly lampooned. In exile, Macarthur received him kindly as did Macarthur's 22-year-old son, John, who had studied at Cambridge and would soon be admitted to the bar. William had an ambition to marry Macarthur's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and saw it as a dynastic union. It would be 'the formation of a permanent respectable establishment in the colony', he told D'Arcy, and 'the accomplishment of those projects for the future respectability and grandeur of our family'. So now the staymaker's daughter was a suitable bride.



In Paris in 1817, waiting for the law term in London to commence, William Wentworth began writing his statistical, historical and political description of the colony of New South Wales. As soon as his book was published, he told D'Arcy, he would wait upon Earl Fitzwilliam to present him with a copy.

In 1818 William at last got into chambers at the Temple, which cost his father a great deal to furnish and fit out. He might now become an English

jurist, but 'It would require £500 to purchase anything like a tolerable library . . . a soldier might as well be without arms as a lawyer without books.'

Back in Sydney, which Macquarie was improving with the buildings of the contract-forging convict architect Francis Greenway, D'Arcy turned fifty-six in 1818. Maria Ainslie, a 43-year-old convict from Nottingham, had been the woman of the house at Home Bush since the death of Catherine Crowley. All the Wentworth boys loved her for her affectionate nature and lack of pretension. But now D'Arcy, wishing to replace her, had decided to move her from Home Bush to a cottage he owned in Sydney. His son John took offence at the proposal, and refused to talk to the young Mary Anne Lawes, a free servant who had abandoned her husband to become D'Arcy's new mistress. John swore he would not remain under the same roof as Lawes. William regarded the 25-year-old Mary Anne as an opportunist 'who for the single sake of ameliorating her condition . . . has abandoned her child, her husband . . . burst asunder the ties of nature as of society and stigmatised herself by the violation of every duty'. He hoped that his father would have his eyes opened to the folly and disgrace of his conduct. He saw D'Arcy as surrounded by a set of harpies waiting for his last sigh to seize and pillage the fruits of a life of industry and exertion.

Worse surprises were on their way. In 1820, William's brother John would die at sea of yellow fever. But it was the previous year that the greater shock came. William was not fully aware till 1819 of his father's four trials for highway robbery. He had heard rumours in Sydney, but probably dismissed them as low-bred jealousy. Now he read in print of the shame of his father's past, exposed in the vivid prose of the House of Commons reformer, Henry G. Bennet.

Before he went to France, William had made contact with Henry Bennet, a rallying point for disgruntled colonials, particularly those who wanted to complain about Macquarie's supposed indulgence towards emancipists. Like Jeremy Bentham, Bennet wanted to prove transportation cost too much, failed to punish, and generated debauchery. Many bureaucrats and Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, already believed it.

In his zeal, Bennet was willing to tell anyone about the sins of New South Wales, and in his *Letter to Lord Sidmouth* (the Home Secretary) of February 1819, a notable tract of more than 130 pages, pointed to D'Arcy Wentworth as a prime instance of the New South Wales malaise. Wentworth, said Bennet,

was not only a highway robber but had been transported for it, and was now superintendent of police, a magistrate lenient to spirit retailers, and the principal surgeon to boot.

Bennet hoped the ruling Tories would be embarrassed to hear of such a situation. He urged the government to set up a Legislative Council in New South Wales to curb the 'arbitrariness' of the governor.

William was crazed with rage. The furious young colonial presented himself at Bennet's house ready to seek an exoneration of blood, in blood. He was admitted to Bennet's study, where the gentleman 'changed colour and showed other signs of agitation . . . I commenced by observing that he had permitted himself to give to the world one of the most infamous libels that had ever been published.' Bennet was shocked and agreed that if D'Arcy was not a convict, 'he [Bennet] would make the most ample atonement for what he had written'.

Since he was to bring on in parliament in the next few days his motion respecting the state of the colony of New South Wales, he would then 'take that opportunity of doing you the justice to which you are entitled'. His real target was Macquarie, Bennet admitted, and what he had said was never intended as 'an individual attack' on D'Arcy but was directed against the system pursued by the governor.

Later in the day, William, having consulted Cookney, wrote, 'Sir, since I quitted you this morning, I have found in conference to my father's friend Mr Cookney that your assertion of his having been found guilty on a charge of highway robbery . . . is not founded . . . but that he was innocent of the crime imputed to him and I can positively take upon myself to say that . . . after his acquittal he protested in the most solemn manner that a jury of his peers had only done him justice. Very shortly after this trial he voluntarily embarked for New South Wales having first obtained the appointment of Superintendent of Convicts.'

This was a misstatement, but a son's misstatement. Believing himself descended from a long unsullied line of illustrious progenitors, William felt that the glory of his ancestry was in some degree tarnished by the mere imputation that had been cast on his father's character.

The next day, young Wentworth sat in the visitors' gallery of the Commons and heard a most thorough withdrawal by Bennet of the accusation in his pamphlet. Bennet withdrew the first edition of his pamphlet too, and

corrected the second. But the reality of his father's four charges hurt William and became a spur in his vitals. 'I will not suffer myself to be outstripped by any competitor and I will finally create for myself a reputation which shall reflect a splendour on all those who are related to me.'

Including, of course, the sometimes inattentive Earl Fitzwilliam.

THE COMMISSIONER VISITS

Under pressure from men like Bennet, the Earl of Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies and War, had decided that he was going to send an investigator to New South Wales to look at the question of the cost of transportation and whether it worked as a punishment. Bathurst suggested to John Thomas Bigge, a former judge in Trinidad and his appointed commissioner, that he should investigate all laws, regulations and usages of the settlement with a view to seeing whether transportation should be made 'an object of real terror', and that he should report any weakening of terror by 'ill-considered compassion'.

Macquarie had earlier applied to resign for health and other reasons, and when at the end of September 1819 Bigge came ashore in Sydney, Macquarie was totally taken by surprise and unprepared for him. The liberal-minded Macquarie, who had helped make New South Wales a viable society through his own discretion and labour, found himself subjected to the demands of a royal commissioner who was an aristocrat, a stickler, a man of the law's letter. Not that Bigge's investigative methods were of the highest order. He accepted attacks on Macquarie and others from witnesses without questioning their bona fides. There was no distinction made between sworn and unsworn testimony. Macquarie himself surmised Bigge's opening question was always, 'Tell me any complaint you have against Governor Macquarie.' In his free time, Bigge found much hospitality at the country house of John Macarthur, who was willing to utter every grievance about Macquarie's preference for emancipists. It was in part through Bigge's ear that Macarthur would have a hand in destroying yet another governor.

Bigge's three reports proved massive when they appeared: one on the state of the colony, published in 1822; one on the judicial establishments of New South Wales and of Van Diemen's Land, published in 1823; and one on the state of agriculture and trade, published the same year. Macquarie knew the reports would be very damaging to him even before they appeared.

He had quarrelled bitterly with Bigge over his intention to appoint the former Nore mutineer, Dr Redfern, as a magistrate.

In the first report, Bigge pointed to the inconsideration of Macquarie in having the Reverend Mr Marsden serve with Mr Simeon Lord, former convict, and the late Mr Andrew Thompson, ditto, as trustees of the public roads. But even more inconsiderate, said Bigge, were the efforts by Governor Macquarie to introduce emancipated convicts to the society of the military bodies. For Governor Macquarie and his deputy, Maurice O'Connell, Mary Bligh's husband, had success in habituating the officers and soldiery of his 73rd Regiment to being polite to convicts.

This was all part of what Bigge would call the 'mismanagement of convicts'. Macquarie sent home for publication his own *A Letter to Viscount Sidmouth*. He left Australia with his family in February 1822, giving place to Governor Brisbane, who had orders to enforce some of Bigge's recommendations—the setting up of an appointed Legislative Council, the use of convict gangs to clear land, the sale rather than granting of Crown lands, the accurate registration of prisoners, the creation of Van Diemen's Land as a separate penal administration. Bigge endorsed no legal reforms and did not recommend trial by jury in criminal cases. He left the legal status of emancipists in limbo. But the building program in which Macquarie had engaged was too extravagant, he said, and should be curtailed.

Macquarie and Elizabeth Macquarie were greeted in London by young Wentworth. By the time Macquarie and his wife went north to the Island of Mull to take over a farm his agent had purchased, they were so poor they could not travel by coach but made their way by a small, extremely perilous coasting vessel. Driven back to London by illness, Macquarie died in 1824 of some of the same symptoms of exhaustion and physical damage which D'Arcy had treated in New South Wales.

Having made such a compendium of New South Wales affairs, Bigge became a successive investigator into colonies, to the extent that the work itself, and the accidents and hardships of travel, certainly shortened his life, as he had shortened Macquarie's.

A HOTHEAD'S PROSE

In 1819, young William Wentworth's book on New South Wales, some of it written in a winter of rheumatic gout brought on by the excesses of life

in Paris, appeared in England. It was entitled *A Statistical, Historical and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, and William intended it to declare his arrival as his nation's annalist and coming statesman. The book would go through three editions, the second in 1820, the third in 1824, each seemingly dictated by his friends' and father's assessment of the latest situation in New South Wales. First there was a statistical section which contained long extracts from the surveyor and explorer John Oxley's journals. The second section contained historical and political description and, presaging Bigge, argued there should be a Legislative Council since—whether the governor was an acerbic Bligh or a genial Macquarie—the colony suffered from the governor's autocratic powers.

The third section had to do with immigration and the advantages of New South Wales over North America for British immigrants. 'I am in great hopes that a large body of Quakers will be induced by my representations to settle in the colony.' But William also spoke of the parlous condition of agriculture, partly due to the lack of a market for grain apart from the domestic needs of the colony. With no market for a surplus, there was no incentive to grow more. Together with frequent losses to drought and unscrupulous creditors, the majority of the settlers were kept in a state of 'poverty, slavery and degradation'. This was 'in some measure imposed on the settlers by their own imprudent extravagance'. But overall, he decided that the chief cause of their trouble was 'the actual impolicy and injustice of their rulers'. One of the impolicies, in William's opinion, was the granting of too many tickets-of-leave, which undercut the labour supply.

Then Wentworth raised the possibility that the colonists could be goaded into rebellion by British ill-rule, and described how they would be able to ambush the forces of tyranny in the ravines of the Blue Mountains. In this, says historian John Ritchie, he was influenced by Sir Walter Scott's contemporary bestseller, *Rob Roy*, in which Scots used their ravines to good purpose against the redcoats. Wentworth saw New South Wales as an exact or very close replica of Virginia, Georgia or the Carolinas. The result of Britain's refusal to negotiate responsible government, he said, would be 'a spirit which will be handed down from father to son acquiring in its descent fresh force, and settling at length into an hereditary hatred'.

He then detailed the commercial disability suffered by New South Wales under the monopoly of the East India Company and recommended that the colony be given parity in trading status with Newfoundland and the West Indies. All these grievances had been included with a petition from the leading emancipists to the Colonial Office in March 1819, which was sent off with Macquarie's endorsement. Since the changes Wentworth recommended were not within the power of New South Wales colonial governments to bring about, it would be up to the British government to effect change.



On 27 February 1823, Wentworth entered Peterhouse, Cambridge's oldest college. At thirty-two, William was much older than most of the undergraduates, but he wanted the éclat of having been to a famous university and he sought through the Chancellor's Prize for poetry to make a mark much larger than that young John Macarthur had. By this time, the father had prevented William's designs to marry his daughter Elizabeth. The subject for the prize that year was Australasia. Wentworth's 443-line poem was dedicated to Macquarie.

Wentworth's lines run more sweetly and authentically than those of the poet who won:

*Next, the dream that the child might become more glorious than the parent:
And, Oh Britannia! Should'st thou cease to ride
Despotic Empress of old ocean's tide;*

...

*When thou no longer freest of the free,
To some proud victor bend'st the vanquish'd knee—
May all thy glories in another sphere
Relume, and shine more brightly still than here;
May this, thy last born infant, then arise,
To glad thy heart and greet thy parent eyes;
And Australasia float, with flag unfurl'd,
A new Britannia in another world.*

In the circumstances, his poem emerges as yet another plaint for recognition, another lever to put beneath the vast stone of the world's indifference and hostility.



By 1823 William Wentworth, a notably unsuccessful lawyer and student, was telling D'Arcy he saw no prospect for himself in England. The New South Wales Act of 1823 had been passed establishing a Legislative Council but failed to introduce trial by jury in criminal cases. The new Legislative Council, said William, was a 'wretched mongrel substitute' for the partially elected one he had recommended. Civil juries were introduced, but based on a property qualification. The Act was to be revised in five years time, and William believed that if he returned to New South Wales he could be in place to influence its revision.

Wentworth was the first Currency child, that is, native-born, who saw a constitutional future of some robustness. But his patriotism, despite his threat about fighting the English in the Blue Mountains, was a British patriotism—he saw New South Wales as 'a new Britannia in another world', as he declared in verse. He now said he would hold no government position in New South Wales as he meant to lead the colony as a private person. He came to an agreement with Robert Wardell jointly to publish a newspaper that would launch his campaign on colonial civil rights. Wardell, a doctor of laws from Cambridge and the same age as Wentworth, was editor of the *Statesman*, a London evening paper under the threat of a Tory writ which would very likely finish it. Wardell was happy to escape. He embarked with Wentworth on the *Alfred* for Sydney in February 1824, along with William Redfern and John Mackaness, colonial sheriff designate, all of them tipplers and friends for life.

THE HIGHWAYMAN PASSES

D'Arcy Wentworth had made a heavy loss in being the chief partner in the building of the Rum Hospital in Sydney. The task was undertaken by Wentworth, Garnham Blaxcell and Alexander Riley, a close friend of Wentworth's and, like Blaxcell, a free settler. In return for the construction Macquarie had guaranteed to the partners the right to make a massive importation of rum—205 000 litres—over three years and sell it on whatever terms they chose.

Given the deal on which it was based, a much criticised hospital was built. But as a result of the experience D'Arcy had become less interested in trade within the colony and more heavily involved in the development of the pastoral industry and the export wool trade. Though his sheep were not merinos, the inflated wool market of England at war had returned him a very good price of 69 pence per pound (454 grams), and he flourished.

D'Arcy continued to serve as superintendent of police on a salary of £300 per annum, and, by one of those purely Australian ironies, he and his police had problems with bushrangers on the Parramatta and Liverpool roads. He was also treasurer of the police fund, but, he pointed out to Bathurst, £100 000 had passed through his hands in the eight years he had held the office without his receiving a penny's remuneration. Wentworth and Macquarie both recommended D'Arcy's friend William Redfern to take his place as principal surgeon, but it was not too much of a surprise when Macarthur's friend, the young surgeon James Bowman, instead received the post. Wentworth felt that Bathurst and his ministry had surrendered to all the guff in Britain about convicts being given public office. Wentworth, however, succeeded Captain Piper as president of the Bank of New South Wales in January 1827.

D'Arcy did not take much part in the society of the colony despite his popularity with most men and women he met. He had the grief that his son John, a young naval officer, had perished at sea in 1820, but he had also the joy of possessing an extremely dutiful and active son in William, whose book delighted him. And he was proud of D'Arcy junior having marched through his home town, Portadown, as an officer of the 73rd Regiment. He also willingly supported at least seven other children. Annually he gave a dinner to celebrate the anniversary of his arrival in the colony and he was still involved in horse racing. Gradually he resigned his official positions, which had been such a cause of scandal and outrage in Bennet's pamphlet. When he died in 1827 the procession from Home Bush to the graveside was said to be a mile long. Convicts had liked him so well that they competed to be assigned to him, which in a way proved Bigge's thesis that they were not being punished enough.

His name lay on his Antipodean grave as a challenge to his turbulent eldest son. Avenge this man. Avenge yourself.

12

DISCOVERING THE AUSTRALIANS



CURRENCY, NOT STERLING

The concern of ex-convicts that they and their issue would remain an under-class emerged very early. In a petition addressed to Governor King in 1801, they complained that in the past (and, they feared, the future) they were considered to be convicts attaint, without personal liberty, property rights, without any one right or privilege belonging to free subjects. They signed it 'the emancipated colonists of the territory of New South Wales'.

In 1810, Macquarie had written to Secretary of State Bathurst describing the colony as 'a convict country'. It was a statement of reality. Nine out of ten of the population were convicts, had been convicts, or were the offspring of convicts. Those born in the colony began to be called 'Currency', after the local coinage. If you were British-born, you were 'Sterling', the genuine coin.

Indeed, the free gentlemen were often determined to hold the line. Lieutenant Archibald Bell, when asked by Commissioner Bigge whether he had any objection to admitting convicts into society, gave the reply: 'I consider them as having once been tainted, unfit to associate with afterwards.' And many Britons at home felt the same way. The Reverend Sydney Smith wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1819, 'New South Wales is a sink of wickedness in which the majority of convicts of both sexes become infinitely more depraved than at the period of their arrival . . . no man who

has his choice would select it . . . as his dwelling place.' With a press like this, no wonder British gentlemen with the £250 capital they needed to get a 320-acre (130-hectare) land grant were not yet turning up to take their chances amongst the penal mass.

Even those who had been born free felt stained by association. James Macarthur told Commissioner Bigge that, alas, he had been native-born. The few native-born gentlemen could not hold their heads up, he said, because the native-born were generally a mass of the damned, the children of convicts. The young and gifted bushman Hamilton Hume commented that he hoped to lead an expedition 'altho' an Australian', implying that to be a native told against those who wanted command of things.

Affluent convicts like Henry Kable were in the minority and hoped to consider themselves the middle class of colonial society. It was this group which ultimately had the power to organise and even to send representatives to London to argue their rights. Two of Simeon Lord's native-born sons, Francis and George, worked from a sense of the rights of the respectable Currency over the pretensions of the arrived-free, and became members of the Legislative Council. By 1828 there were around 1167 Currency men to 1601 Currency women. But they were only the first crop of the tainted tree. Many thousands not yet born would have to negotiate the question of whether their origins should be a matter of spiky pride or lifelong regret and denial. And they would also have to interpret what their convict or free parents said about the world, and about Britain. 'Nothing induces me to wish for a change but the difficulty of educating our children,' wrote Elizabeth Macarthur, 'and were it otherwise, it would be unjust towards them to confine them in so narrow a society.' The little creatures all spoke of going home to England 'with rapture'.

As a young man, one of the spikiest, William Charles Wentworth, stood up for the Currency, especially the children of convicts, since he was the son of an Irish gentleman of doubtful legitimacy but also of an Irish convict woman. He accused the wealthier free settlers of wanting 'to convert the ignominy of the great body of the people into a hereditary deformity. They would hand it down from father to son, and raise an eternal barrier of separation between their offspring and the offspring of the unfortunate convicts.'

There were certainly ways in which Currency lads and lasses were pioneering social arrangements unlikely to be seen in other places on earth. Most

of the native-born children grew up on modest but adequate farms, and the lack of day-to-day discrimination at that level led to marriage between children of free settlers and the children of convicts.

The native-born children, currency or 'cornstalks', rode their farm horses bareback down dusty tracks, fished and swam in creeks and rivers, and learned bushcraft from each other and local Aboriginal children. It was assumed by many that these national children must be criminal spawn, abandoned by their 'unnatural parents' or raised amidst scenes of criminal activity and daily debauchery. In fact the colonial experience and later research shows, as the historian Portia Robinson says, that they grew up 'a remarkably honest, sober, industrious and law-abiding group of men and women'. By comparison with British society, the family life of the New South Wales children of ex-convicts and ex-soldiers would be shown, by a government muster taken in 1806, to have been very stable and sturdy. In New South Wales the child labour, hunger and vicious treatment which characterised the factories of Great Britain were missing. Though convict families sometimes lacked funds, they sought to apprentice out their children to equip them with a trade so that they would not be tempted into the youthful follies that had seen their parents transported. Former convicts (including, for example, James Ruse) spoke to other emancipists about apprenticeships for their sons, and many found work in the government dockyards and lumber yards. Other places for apprenticeships were Simeon Lord's enterprises, which trained colonial youths in a number of crafts associated with shipping and chandlery.

Alexander Harris would write that 'The Australians, we must now remark, are growing up a race by themselves; fellowship of country has already begun to distinguish them and bind them together in a very remarkable manner. Whenever they come in contact with each other, even when considerable difference of rank exists, this sympathy operates strongly.'

Before the arrival of Macquarie land grants to the native-born were closely related to the wealth or position of the parent: to those settlers who possessed much, much was further given. The way Macquarie granted land to the native-born, predominantly in lots of 60 acres (24 hectares), made it seem that he judged their claims to be above those of ex-convicts but below those of the free settlers. (Later, as a result of Bigge's recommendations, Darling became the first governor to be ordered not to settle his ex-convicts

on small allotments.) Unlike Macquarie, his successor, the godly Brisbane, a keen astronomer, agreed with Bigge and harboured a primary concern not for the ex-convict settlers but for the free sections of the community. 'The bad character of the masses of Inhabitants must in itself be for many an extreme difficulty to settlers from Europe.' He undertook a process of excluding the children of convicts from being granted land.

In the meantime, educated currency lad Charles Tompson wrote a not consistently gifted song for the anniversary of settlement:

*Then live, Australia! Nation young and mild!
Rear still bright Mercy's banner high unfurled
Pardon and peace for Britain's fallen child
Refuge for all the oppressed of all the world.*

In 1826 his *Wild Notes from the Lyre of a Native Minstrel* was the first book of verse published by a native son. Tompson dedicated it to the Reverend Fulton. To a boy like Tompson, the experience of a man like Fulton, urbane and generous, would have been a form of liberation.

Like all colonial children, some were creatures of action suited to a raw environment. Others were already concerned to define themselves. The business of worrying over being Australian had begun.

THE SEALERS' LIFE AND GOVERNANCE

It was Surgeon George Bass and Matthew Flinders, two adventurous Lincolnshire men, who first gave news of the abundant islands and seal populations of Bass Strait, which separates the Australian mainland from Tasmania. In 1798, the *Sydney Cove* had been wrecked in the Furneaux Islands of the strait. Two rescue operations to take survivors away from the beaches they had been swept up on were conducted by both Bass and Flinders, and on return to Sydney both men reported specific colonies of seals and their location. That same month, May 1798, an American captain, Charles Bishop of the brig *Nautilus*, arrived in Sydney after an unsuccessful attempt to seal in the Pacific and American waters. He refitted and set out on the first commercial sealing voyage in Australia, at first in company with Flinders and Bass on their handy sloop *Norfolk*. Bass and Flinders were naval officers and not interested themselves in seal harvesting. They wanted

to circumnavigate Van Diemen's Land, and show that there was a faster way to Sydney, through Bass Strait (which Flinders had graciously named for his friend), than rounding the dangerous southern capes of Tasmania. 'Mr Bass and myself hailed it [the circumnavigation] with joy and mutual congratulation, as announcing the completion of our long wished-for discovery of a passage into the Southern Indian Ocean,' wrote Flinders.

In the meantime Bishop and his men began the first cropping of the rich harvest of seals in the Furneaux group, Bishop putting a group of fifteen men into Kent Bay on wild and wind-torn Cape Barren Island at the eastern end of the strait. The southern waters had for millennia been the uninterrupted feeding and breeding ground for fur seals, hair seals and elephant seals, and now a new colonial business that involved living far from control in clothing of sealskin and wallaby, on a diet of ship's biscuit and stew made up of anything from wombat to kangaroo to cassowary to mutton bird would begin, and would have its attractions. The bludgeoning of seals, the boiling down of blubber and curing of sealskin for enormously distant markets, if tainted by the stink of putrefaction, was no worse than what men lived with aboard ship or in ill-sewered towns. The gangs scudded from island to island, killing-place to killing-place, in flimsy boats. Their calling was dangerous, but probably less so than whaling.

Leaving the men on Cape Barren Island in place, the *Nautilus* arrived back at Port Jackson on 25 December 1798 with more than five thousand sealskins. As busy as they were with Christmas, the former convicts Henry Kable and James Underwood had time to hear from Bishop.

The next time Bishop visited Kent Bay, in January 1799, he brought back nine thousand sealskins to Port Jackson. From 1799 to 1805 there were catches of three, four and five thousand seals. From about 1806, however, the harvest declined, and seals could be found only in places which were dangerous to get a boat to. The methods remained consistent: clubbing was the way of killing the fur seal but the elephant seal was stabbed in the heart so that its blood would drain away and not contaminate the blubber.

Far to the west of the Furneaux Islands, Captain Reid of the *Martha* sighted Kangaroo Island at the end of 1799. Three years later, sealing was firmly established there with gangs living at Point Cowper on the east coast and on the north-west coast as well. Nearly forty years before the Europeans settled the South Australian coastline across from Kangaroo Island,

the fires of the sealers were blazing near Kangaroo Head and beneath Billygoat Falls.

Portland Bay on what would be the Victorian coast, not far from the present South Australian border, also served as a base for visiting sealers years before Captain Collins attempted a settlement at Port Phillip in 1804, the one he quickly abandoned to take his convicts and settlers to Van Diemen's Land and the site of Hobart.

In October 1802 Governor King mentioned in a dispatch that he had allocated exclusive rights to seal at Cape Barren Island to the merchants Kable and Underwood. From 1803 the ships of these two redeemed convicts dropped off gangs on islands, and returned later to retrieve sealskins and oil. There were dwelling huts at Kent Bay in 1804 and even a shipyard for constructing a small coastal boat.

François Péron, the young zoologist on the French expedition of Nicolas Baudin, and now travelling on a scientific voyage to chart the Australian coast for French purposes, visited the sealers of Bass Strait and seemed fascinated by them. At the King Island fishery at Sea Elephant Bay he met the sailor Daniel Cooper and ten others who had been landed there from the *Margaret* in June 1802, and described their camp, not yet a permanent year-round settlement. The men, said Péron, lived in four huts or shanties. Daniel Cooper, their leader, occupied one of the hovels with a woman whom he had brought from Maui. A great fireplace fed day and night with tree trunks served to warm the inhabitants and cook their food. A large shed contained a huge quantity of barrels filled with oil, and there were several thousand sealskins dried and ready for shipment to China. From a butcher's hook hung five or six cassowaries, the same number of kangaroos and two fat wombats. A big copper filled with meat had just been taken off the fire. There was no bread or biscuit when Péron and some of the other French voyagers went to dinner there, but all the sealers seemed vigorous and healthy.

Over on the western end of the Great Australian Bight, in King George Sound, in what is now Western Australia, cropping of the seal population by visiting gangs had also begun. In February 1803, Baudin called there and met Yankee Captain Pendle of the snow *Union*, who was looking for seals but complained there were too few to give him a cargo. Baudin suggested he should try Kangaroo Island, which he did with more success.

After 1804, ships' visits to the sealers became less frequent and between 1805 and 1820 the sealers of Bass Strait became full-time residents of the islands. The Currency lad James Kelly's evidence to the Bigge enquiry in 1820 mentioned these communities. The sealers had houses, gardens and animals, he said, and they collected mutton birds and kangaroo skins as well as seal-skins. They used whaleboats to reach the seal colonies.

By this time, the population of sealers on Kangaroo Island sold wallaby pelts and salt from the natural lagoons there as well as sealskins. In anticipation of visiting ships, either from America or from Kable and Underwood and others, these goods would be packed on the beach. The merchants came in and took them, and left alcohol, tea and tobacco. The sealers received in kind or money a fraction—perhaps as little as one-hundredth—of what the merchants made. Kable, Underwood, Lord and others, former thieves, had learned from their betters how really to skin a cat.

As noted, the sealers were not alone on the islands. Aboriginal women, especially those from the violently windy Cape Grim country in the north-west of Van Diemen's Land, had been captured as sexual partners and were put to work as well since they knew how to build shelters in that region of constant wind, how to catch fish, dive for shellfish and trap wallabies. They could find birds' eggs, and thread shoes with the sinew taken from the tails of kangaroos. The Tasmanian Aboriginal women also taught the white men how to kill mutton birds, pluck their feathers and squeeze out their oil. By the late 1820s the Bass Strait communities, including the women, were sailing into Launceston to sell mutton bird feathers (for bedspreads), and mutton bird oil for lamps. Their unions were unconsecrated and often based on violence. In 1830, Robinson met seventy-four women living with sealers, and was told of another fourteen living on Kangaroo Island.

Penderoin, a Pennemukeer Aboriginal from Cape Grim, told Robinson that in December 1827 sealers had landed and ambushed a group of his people. One Pennemukeer man, hiding in a tree, threw a spear at the attackers and the sealers shot him, and captured seven women, stealing them away to Kangaroo Island. A few weeks later, in January 1828, another group of sealers opened fire on the Pennemukeer from the caves on the Doughboys Rocks opposite Cape Grim. Landing, they forced the Pennemukeer at gunpoint onto a cliff edge and bound them with cord. Twelve to fourteen women were abducted that day and taken to Kangaroo Island.

Since several Pennemukeer died in the raid, Pennemukeer men would later club three sealers to death.

There were even reports of the murder and trading of Aboriginal women. A Bass Strait sealer named Mansell certainly made occasional trades in women. In the Hobart press, the Aboriginal women living with the sealers were presented as animalistic—beaten with the bludgeons used on the seals, and fed after the dogs.

Yet sometimes these transactions were peaceable. As early as 1810 the north-east coastal Aboriginal people met up with sealers arriving in open boats. The sealers were honoured with a corroboree, and sometimes the tribal leaders would negotiate for women to go temporarily with the sealers and come back with meat and other payments in kind—dogs, flour or mutton birds. But such dealings became rarer.

Bushrangers faced with surviving in the seemingly trackless tiers of Van Diemen's Land, however, found exchange with the Aborigines essential. Aboriginal women could be wonderful guides to Europeans on the edges of the viable world. The bushranger James Carrot, for example, was taught by Aboriginal women to make moccasins from untanned kangaroo skin. Michael Howe, one of the most famous Vandemonian bushrangers, had an Aboriginal partner and, like many of the early bushrangers, dressed in kangaroo skins and blackened his face, signifying that he had more in common with the natives than with British society.



In south-eastern Van Diemen's Land, a small-boned girl named Truganini met pious Englishman and former engineer George Augustus Robinson. The would-be saviour of the Vandemonian natives was appointed by the colonial government to assess their welfare and at the time, in 1829, he was trying to establish a township and haven for the Aborigines on Bruny Island, south of Hobart. Truganini told him of a family's obliteration: her mother had been murdered by sealers, her sister was abducted by sealers and was believed to be living on Kangaroo Island, 600 kilometres to the west. Her uncle had been shot by soldiers, and her betrothed Paraweena killed by timber-getters. She was willing to help Robinson in return for the protection of her people from the firearms of the interlopers.

Robinson sailed to the Furneaux Group in November 1830 to battle the sealers for possession of their islands, which were needed for Aboriginal re-settlement. He also wanted to repatriate the sealers' Aboriginal women stolen from the tribes of north-east Tasmania. He would be defeated on both fronts.



Global politics were reaching out to contain these unofficial settlements of sealers and Aboriginal partners. In 1827, middle-aged Major Edmund Lockyer of the 57th Regiment was sent on an 84-ton (87-tonne) brig, *Amity*, all the way to the present Western Australia to form a settlement on King George Sound before the French could. He landed at Michaelmas Island in King George Sound on Christmas Day. There he found four Aboriginal men marooned, and returned them to the coast when he established his settlement. In the early new year a boat containing men previously dropped by a sealing ship in the Recherche group landed at the settlement. They were accompanied by two native women. They reported they were starving, having been dumped by a ship which never returned. As for the men, Lockyer was appalled. 'They are a complete set of pirates going from island to island along the southern coast from Rottnest Island to Bass's Strait in open whaleboats, having their chief resort or den at Kangaroo Island, making occasional descents on the mainland and carrying off by force native women, and when resisted make use of the firearms of which they are provided.' Lockyer recommended that the government should enter the trade each year from November to the end of the following April, but that there should be a severe penalty for killing pups.

Lockyer's settlement was moved in March 1831 to Swan River, but by then the catches for sealers in King George Sound were small in any case.

The sealers, as described by Lockyer, were thus a challenge to action for the Commissioners of the South Australian Company, who in 1836 were about to establish the province of South Australia. A report of the South Australian Company declared, 'The colonisation of South Australia by industrious and virtuous settlers, so far from being an invasion of the rights of the Aborigines, is a necessary preliminary to the displacement of the lawless squatters, the abandoned sailors, the runaway convicts, the pirates,

the worse than savages, that now infest the coast of New Holland and perpetrate against the defenceless native crimes at which humanity revolts.'

Yet a letter from South Australian Commissioner John Morphet in the supplement of the same report described the Kangaroo Islanders as 'intelligent, quiet men, having spots of land under cultivation; growing a little wheat, with potatoes, turnips, and other vegetables. They have all expressed pleasure at the opportunity of entering into the relations of civilised life.'

SOME NOTES ON MATTHEW FLINDERS

After his circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land with the energetic young surgeon George Bass, Matthew Flinders returned to England in March 1800. He was quickly promoted to the command of HMS *Investigator* and told by the Admiralty to explore 'the unknown coast'—the southern coast of Australia from the Port Phillip area westwards. Before he left for New South Wales in mid-1801, he married a parson's daughter whom he had known since youth, and was passionate enough to try to smuggle her on board. According to one story, the Lords of the Admiralty came to inspect the *Investigator* and found Flinders in the cabin with his wife, Anne, on his knee. Whatever the truth of this tale, even Sir Joseph Banks chastised him and warned him that if he took Anne to New South Wales, he would lose his command.

Flinders reached the unknown coast and began charting, and met the Frenchman Nicolas Baudin and his expedition aboard *Le Géographe*, who were coming westwards, at Encounter Bay in today's South Australia. Having reached Sydney and overhauled there, the young English commander decided to circumnavigate the continent, beginning by going north and making a detailed survey of what is now the Queensland coast and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Because of its un-seaworthiness the *Investigator* had to be careened in Torres Strait, and was found to have rotten timbers. Flinders set his carpenters to work. To his immortal reputé, he completed the circumnavigation of the continent in his flawed vessel.

Flinders planned to return to England as a passenger on *Porpoise* in great desire of seeing Anne, but also to scout out a suitable vessel to complete aspects of the survey which the condition of the *Investigator* had prevented him from doing to his satisfaction and the Admiralty's demands. But the *Porpoise* struck a reef on the Queensland coast and Flinders was left to

navigate her cutter more than a thousand kilometres back to Sydney. This time he sailed in a schooner named the *Cumberland*, a small ship of 29 tons/tonnes, which was also in terrible condition. After travelling via Torres Strait, Flinders decided in the Indian Ocean to put in to Mauritius to refit, for he had a French *laissez-passer*, which enabled him to approach French ports. Mauritius was to do great disservice to this honest officer, who was in the prime of his life and had much work to do.

The French explorer Nicolas Baudin had written to the governor in Mauritius asking him to treat any English ship forced to moor there with kindness, given that his own ships had been welcomed into Sydney and many of his sick crew treated ashore in Sydney Cove. But the small-minded Governor de Caen imprisoned Flinders as a spy, though later letting him live in the town where he spent time working on his journals. De Caen used the fact that the *Cumberland* was carrying dispatches from Port Jackson as an excuse to detain Flinders even after 1806, when Napoleon gave approval for his release. De Caen justified keeping Flinders in place by suggesting that he was the forerunner of a British intention to absorb Mauritius into the British Empire. Indeed, by 1809 the British were blockading the island and its capture by them became inevitable.

Eventually, from his estate, Revesby Abbey, Sir Joseph Banks wrote to Anne Flinders that he had ‘infinite satisfaction in informing you that Captain Flinders has at last obtained his release and is expected in England in a few weeks, and that on his arrival he will be immediately made a Post-Captain’.

At their reunion, Anne was appalled to see her 36-year-old husband grey-headed from his ordeal. But perhaps Flinders’s character as a man was seen in his willingness to visit French prisoners-of-war, whose families he had known on Mauritius, and distribute letters and money to them from their relatives. It was the kindness of various French families in Mauritius which had sustained him during his six-year capture and compelled him to this generosity.

At his lodgings in London he suffered from what he called ‘either a stone or gravel in the bladder’. He had suffered forms of this complaint almost throughout his entire detention. Sick as he was, and fevered, with a wife desperately worried for his health, he was delighted to hear that his journals were progressing at the publishers, as was his ‘general chart of

Terra Australis, or Australia'. He told a friend that he now looked fully seventy years of age. He died in 1814, the day after his work was published, aged forty.

GANGS

Lieutenant Jonathon Warner was typical of the young military surveyors posted along the length of the North Road being built from 1826 onwards to connect Sydney to Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. Newly appointed, he found himself stationed at Lower Portland Head on the Hawkesbury River, surrounded by rich floodplains, awesome escarpments, and close to the property of the ex-convict Cockney settler, Solomon Wiseman, who was making a fortune from the road and the ferry he managed. Lieutenant Warner's challenges included not only the doubly convicted men of the work-gang but also the proudly illiterate Solomon himself, who sold produce to feed the gangs. Wiseman was a Thames lighterman who had stolen a consignment of Brazilian wood, but although transported had been able to bring his wife and children aboard his convict ship, and after serving his time had run hotels and a shipping business before founding his own lordly estate on the Hawkesbury. At Lower Portland Head (now known as Wisemans Ferry), he built a large villa, two-storeyed, with wings and extensive outhouses. He called it Cobham Hall after the magnificent place in Kent he must once have seen.

When the travelling judge Roger Therry visited the enterprising Wiseman in 1830, he was half-amused at Wiseman's pride in his lack of education and manners, and his determination that his sons not be subjected to any spoiling from education, and yet, said Therry, Wiseman was earning £3000 to £4000 per year like a genuine aristocrat, just from government rationing contracts. For after the Great North Road had been marked out through his property, Wiseman had applied for a hotel licence, a ferry licence and for supply contracts. The government granted him everything he asked for, since he was so well placed to help. He was difficult to deal with and frequently dishonest, palming off inferior meat and supplies on the gangs.

Young Warner was dependent on the co-operation of convict overseers and constables along his section of the road. They were men whose savage authoritarianism pleased distantly placed officers, but which made them a target for those who had served under them. Henry Martineer, the overseer

of Number 9 iron gang, wrote to the authorities asking that, since he now held a ticket-of-leave, he be moved somewhere away from the North Road, 'to any other part of the Department'. Otherwise he would have to resign as an overseer for fear of reprisal. He was not only frightened of convicts, but of crafty old Solomon Wiseman. Wiseman had demanded that Martineer sign off on a greater quantity of fresh meat than the gang required, and had threatened to take Martineer's horse and ride off to a magistrate and have his ticket-of-leave confiscated. Martineer's own superior, Percy Simpson, a free, fully qualified surveyor, had himself several times complained about Wiseman's illicit behaviour, but because the gangs on the North Road were so dependent on the old lag and his sons for supplies, for bringing troops and members of gangs across the Hawkesbury by ferry, and for the use of a number of barracks for soldiers and convicts, there was nothing that could be done.

Governor Darling had described the convicts in the road gangs as 'the refuse of the whole convict population'. Certainly they were twice convicted, but in unlucky cases the second sentence imposed on them might have derived from a magistrate who knew and dined with the convict's master. It might have also involved what a modern mind would think of as forgivable offences like drunkenness.

Even so, the members of road gangs had a reputation for being plunderers of remote homesteads in their spare time—they would climb up the chimneys of their huts at night to escape or go walking off on Sundays to steal spirits or food or clothing. Sometimes conniving overseers—convicts themselves, or ticket-of-leave men—were accused of being the chief organisers behind the thefts.

Under Major Edmund Lockyer, chief surveyor, each iron gang contained up to sixty men in irons and was supervised by a principal overseer and three assistants. Road parties, unchained, were made up of fifty men. But Lockyer established also bridge parties made up of twenty-five or more skilled men who in their life before transportation had been carpenters, stone-cutters or masons. These men were given better treatment and allowed more latitude. There were, by 1829, forty gangs spread over hundreds of kilometres working for Lockyer's Roads and Bridges Department; in 1830 ten of the gangs—up to six hundred men—toiled on the Great North Road.

CONVICT NOVELISTS

Since commerce and the pastoral industry occupied the energies of literate males in early New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, it fell to convicts to write the first Australian novels, melodramas which despite their exaggerated effects convey the authentic flavour of the time, and the reality of the degradation of the penal system.

The very first novelist was Henry Savery, a well-educated businessman aged thirty-three in April 1825, when he stood trial. Tom Savery, his father, was a Bristol banker. Henry was the sixth son, but considered himself the fifth because one of his brothers had died three days after birth. Hence, the 'Quintus' in the name of his fictional gentleman-convict Quintus Servinton, whose name is also the title of the novel. Savery spent his early manhood in London and married the daughter of a Blackfriars businessman. They moved back to Bristol where from 1817 he was in partnership in a sugar refining, or 'sugar baking', business. In economic difficulties, for a time he edited the *Bristol Observer*, but returned eventually to the sugar refinery. The *Times* reported Savery's arrest in December 1824. He had committed the firm beyond its resources without the knowledge of his partner and had been negotiating money bills for two years with fictitious names and addresses. These fraudulent bills, worth between £30 000 and £40 000, were commonly known as 'kites' and made Savery technically guilty of forgery.

When these irregularities turned up in Bristol, Savery fled to London with his mistress, for he had been panicked by the recent execution of the famous forger Henry Fauntleroy. His wife tracked him down, but he told her to 'Go back! Your route will be traced and my ruin will be effected.' Savery booked passage for the United States on the *Hudson*, soon to leave from Cowes. He is said to have been arrested only thirty minutes before the sailing hour. When the constables boarded, Savery threw himself into the sea, was rescued, and restrained. He was then put under constant watch because of his suicidal behaviour.

Four months later, in the spring of 1825, he pleaded guilty before Lord Gifford, and was condemned to death by the judge who donned the black cap. One of the prosecutors, seeing Savery struck witless by the sentence, pleaded with the judge for leniency. Savery spent a miserable few days in the death cell, but on the eve of his execution the sentence of death was commuted. He was transferred in July to Campbell's old *Justitia* hulk at Woolwich.

From the hulk he joined the convict ship *Medway* which left Woolwich on 20 July 1825.

Half the convict population of *Medway* had to be sent to hospital on arriving in Hobart for treatment for scurvy. Savery himself was landed in prisoner's dress, his head closely shorn and conducted to the common gaol yard for inspection and assignment. Governor Arthur thought that Savery showed horror and remorse for his crimes. But he seems to have had a rugged ego as well. He worked as a clerk for the Colonial Secretary and then for the Colonial Treasury, receiving £18 per annum plus a ration. His early appointment to such pleasant posts drew attacks from enemies of Arthur, and criticism from the Home Secretary, Lord Goderich. There were also questions about why his forgiving wife was invited to join him, for in 1828 Mrs Savery embarked for Van Diemen's Land. Her original ship was grounded on the English coast near Falmouth, but she bravely tried once more and ultimately arrived in Hobart on the *Henry Wellesley*. But the voyage had provided her a chance for dalliance. On board she met and fell in love with the young Attorney-General of Van Diemen's Land, Algernon Montagu.

When Mrs Savery arrived in Tasmania she found that her husband had exaggerated his circumstances, and there was a great quarrel as a result of which Savery attempted suicide by cutting his throat. He had also been sued by creditors, and Mrs Savery's own possessions, brought out with her, were subject to the suit. Savery was imprisoned for debt in December 1828, and hardly three months after her arrival his exasperated wife left for England with her son on the *Sarah*, and Savery never saw her again.

Savery was in debtor's prison for fifteen months. In that time he wrote the non-fiction works *The Hermit of Van Diemen's Land*, *30 Sketches of Hobart Life* and *Characters*. Early in 1830, he was released and assigned to Major McIntosh in the New Norfolk district, north-west of Hobart on the Derwent River. It was in the later months of his time with McIntosh that he wrote *Quintus Servinton*. Advertisements appeared in the *Hobart Town Courier* and in the *Tasmanian* in January 1831 to say that the book would soon be published in three volumes. Most copies, it was announced, were to be shipped to England and only a few reserved for sale in the colony. The *Hobart Town Courier* wrote of the book on 19 March 1831: 'though it cannot certainly claim the first rank among the many eminent works of a similar

kind of the present day, it is very far from being discreditable to us as a first production of the kind in these remote regions’.

In June 1832, the Colonial Secretary was influenced by a number of petitioners to grant the novelist his ticket-of-leave. By then Henry Savery had become the assistant of Henry Melville at the *Tasmanian* newspaper. But under a general order which forbade convicts to write for newspapers, Savery was deprived of his ticket-of-leave for twelve months. He was suspected of having written a particular article about a police magistrate, but a free citizen journalist who had in fact written it came forward and admitted his authorship. But in the coming years Savery was the subject of many litigations. He was not a quiet soul, and had the misfortune of being seen as a proxy for the governor, and thus an easy target. Above all, he could not avoid financial trouble and insolvency proceedings began against him in the late summer of 1838. By that time he had received his conditional pardon and took over a farm at Hestercombe near Hobart. The Board of Assignment disapproved of his leniency towards a convict servant and terminated his right to have one. He began to make up bills with fictitious signatures on the back, a new and complete act of forgery.

There was a story in the *Hobart Town Courier* that Savery had fled to Launceston, hoping to escape to Adelaide. But he was arrested in Hobart and in October 1838 was brought for trial before Algernon Montagu, the man who may have been his wife’s lover. Montagu, reviewing Savery’s career, declared, ‘I will not, however, so far stultify myself as to suppose . . . reformation will be shown by you.’ He transported Savery for life to the Tasman Peninsula (or Port Arthur).

Savery died there fifteen months later. His former editor, Henry Melville, declared that he had cut his own throat. A visitor to Port Arthur recorded that on 9 January 1840 he saw Savery in the hospital, ‘the once celebrated Bristol sugar-baker—a man upon whose birth fortune smiled propitious.’ The witness mentioned ‘the scarce-healed wound of his attenuated throat . . . Knowing as I once did in Bristol, some of Savery’s wealthy, dashing, gay associates, I could not contemplate the miserable felon before me without sentiments of the deepest compassion mingled with horror and awe.’

The other early convict novelist was the author of a manuscript that came out of the Port Macquarie Literary Club, an officially condoned gathering made up largely of educated convicts, from the time when Port Macquarie, north of Port Stephens on the New South Wales coast, served as a station for relatively educated, though fallen, gentlemen. James Tucker was born in Bristol early in the nineteenth century and attended Stonyhurst Jesuit College from 1814. Later he worked on a farm owned by a relative of the same name until a disagreement over the planting of peas led to a split. James Tucker the younger, who had received £5 from his cousin, threatened him with a charge of unnatural crime unless he should pay another £5. His relative put a Bow Street runner on James's track, and he was arrested and brought to the Essex Assizes charged 'with feloniously knowingly and willingly sending a certain letter . . . threatening to accuse James Stanyford Tucker with indecently assaulting him'. Young James Tucker thus received, as improbably as it sounds to the modern ear, a life sentence, and arrived aboard the transport *Midas* in Port Jackson in 1827. In March 1827, Tucker was sent to the Emu Plains agricultural establishment, at the foot of the Blue Mountains, a place which, though dealt with melodramatically in his novel, clearly appalled him with the chicanery and brutality of its convict overseers and constables.

It is very likely that Tucker worked in a road party in 1830–31. There is an intimacy to his knowledge of life on a chain gang in the novel *Ralph Rashleigh*. 'The overseer would next say to him, "Why the devil don't you *bolt* [run away]? I'll give you some grub to get rid of you"; and the poor fellow, willing to earn a few days rest from labour by a sound flogging, would at last agree to abscond.' Three days had to elapse before the reward became available, and then the overseer would meet the absconder in the agreed place and 'bring his prisoner before the magistrates, magnifying his exertions, of course, in making this capture'.

By 1833 Tucker had found congenial employment as a government messenger in the Colonial Architect's office in Sydney. In 1837 he was made an overseer himself, in charge of a work gang in the Domain in Sydney. An educated eccentric convict, by being who he was he attracted the attention of meaner men in positions of authority. The severe terms of his ticket-of-leave prohibited drunkenness, but many ticket-of-leavers were

habitually guilty of it. However, in September 1839, Tucker lost his ticket temporarily and spent a fortnight at the treadmill at Parramatta for drunkenness. But he received it back again for his part in fighting a fire at the Royal Hotel.

Tucker's ticket-of-leave was made out for Maitland in the Hunter Valley. From his experience in the district, Tucker was able to get material for a later play, a comedy entitled *Jemmy Green in Australia*. In 1842, however, he became involved in a not unusual scam, one not utterly removed from fictional creativity. He forged letters purporting to tell two ticket-of-leave holders that their wives in England had died, letters for which he was possibly paid and which would enable the men to remarry.

For his punishment, he was re-sentenced and sent as a class of trusty named a 'special' to Port Macquarie. Port Macquarie, then in its decline as a convict settlement, provided a pleasant interlude in his life. He worked as storekeeper to the superintendent, Police Magistrate Partridge, who encouraged his writing. Old lags at Port Macquarie would later tell what an amusing fellow Jimmy Tucker was. *Jemmy Green in Australia* had its premiere performance there in the barn-theatre named Old Tumbledown. Amongst others of his plays performed there, but now lost, the old lags remembered *Makin' Money*, a satire of the Rum Corps era, and *Who Built That Cosy Cottage?*

When Port Macquarie penal settlement was broken up in 1847, Tucker, by then middle-aged, was granted another ticket-of-leave and stayed on in that port as a clerk and storeman for general merchants.

Tucker wrote two other novels, *Fearless Frederick Fraser* and *The Life of Mary Nayler*, about the lives of male and female convicts at Port Macquarie, neither of which have been found. He left Port Macquarie surreptitiously in 1849, but he was found, arrested, convicted and sent to prison at Goulburn, south-west of Sydney. Early in 1850 he again received a ticket-of-leave, but was continuously under supervision by police spies and was ultimately brought to court on a charge of stealing a watch.

The police were unable to prove their point and his ticket was renewed in 1853, this time for Moreton Bay. He was approaching old age, exhausted in his endeavours, and very conscious that the stain of being a convict would never allow him to be left in peace. His adventures in the Brisbane area are

not known, but he next appeared as a patient in the Liverpool asylum, near Sydney, where he died from 'decay of nature' in 1866. His novel presciently exhorts us at the end, on behalf of its eponymous hero Ralph Rashleigh: 'Reader, the corpse of the exile slumbers in peace on the banks of the Barwon far from his native land. Let us hope that his sufferings and untimely death, alas, have expiated the errors of his early years.'

13*

PASTORAL AMBITIONS



ARRIVING AT THE END OF THINGS

A convict arriving in Sydney or Hobart in the early to mid 1830s encountered prosperous-looking communities where women and men of wealth and property dressed in the best fashion of two British seasons past. The town of Sydney to which the 220 Irish convicts of the *Parmelia* were introduced in March 1834 as they marched from the landing stage to the main depot, ran raffishly inland along gentle hills either side of Sydney Cove. The settlement retained the narrow streets of the original convict camp of the late 1780s. Most houses were cottages with little gardens in front, and such structures clung in random clusters to the sandstone ledges of the Rocks on the western side of the cove. But they took on a more ornate, orderly character in the streets—Pitt, Macquarie—towards the eastern side of town. The landed prisoners heard the cat-calls of old lags as they staggered on unsteady land-legs uptown past St Phillip's Church on its hill, past the Colonial Treasury, the Barrack Square, and saw the town's theatre on the left. The barracks and the offices of government were built of Sydney's honey-coloured sandstone, the most splendid structures of this eccentric seaport.

* Some of the material from this section derives from the author's earlier *The Great Shame*.

The town abounded with ‘canaries’, convicts in government employ, in sallow-coloured jackets and pants, and free dungaree men, poor settlers and occasional tradesmen, who wore cheap blue cotton imported from India. The lean, dishevelled children of convicts, cornstalks or Currency urchins, ran wild, grown healthy by the standards of Europe on colonial corn doughboys, salt beef, fresh mutton and vegetables. Convict women on ticket-of-leave stood in gardens or outside public houses smoking Brazil twist in *dudeens*, clay pipes barely two inches long. Laggards, or ticket-of-leave men, wore blue jackets or short woollen blue smocks, and the hats of both convict and free were unorthodox, some of plaited cabbage-tree fronds, some of kangaroo skin. Soldiers and police were much in evidence in front of Customs House, Commissariat Office, Treasury, the post office, and all other government offices. But side by side with this martial formality, male and female sexual services were full-throatedly offered in a manner polite visitors said was more scandalous than in the East End of London. ‘A Wapping or St Giles in the beauties of a Richmond’, as one Englishman described Sydney. The abnormal imbalance between male and female gave the flesh trade an added fever, as did dram-drinking—the downing of Bengal rum out of wine glasses.

There was a huge gulf of urbanity and learning between the *Parmelia* men and their fellow Irishman Sir Richard Bourke, whose Government House and stables the line of felons from *Parmelia* passed. Bourke was an improver, though never a radical. He was considered by the Exclusives, the free settlers who wanted to keep the convict class down, to be dangerously soft on serving convicts. He had reduced the power of magistrates in remote areas of the colony to inflict punishment on convict servants. Property owners were always reporting in their paper, the *Sydney Herald*, the organ of the respectable townspeople and the free, as proof of Bourke’s ‘soothing system for convicts’, the impudence and unruliness of their servants and labourers.

The comfort in all this for the *Parmelia* men marching to the barracks was that they would find plenty of their compatriots, bond and free, ashore, amongst the upwards of thirty thousand prisoners then in Sydney and the bush. Added to this number and still bearing the stigma of former imprisonment were the time-served and pardoned emancipists, who also numbered as many as thirty thousand.

The final buildings *Parmelia*’s felons passed that day were the School of Industry and the General Hospital, called familiarly the Rum Hospital.

On one edge of the dusty green named Hyde Park lay St James's Church and the courthouse, both splendidly designed by the convict architect, Francis Greenway. Across from St James's were the outbuildings and chief barracks of Sydney's convict depot, Hyde Park Barracks.

Irish convicts were still seen as both very dangerous—most of the mutineers on Norfolk Island recently had been Irish. But the disembarked *Parmelia* men are interesting because they contained amongst their number sixty-two men guilty of so-called Ribbon offences, acts of peasant grievance in a landscape where landlords and middling farmers were under economic pressure and the peasantry burdened by rents and fear of the loss of their small holdings on which their potato crops grew and their existence depended. The 'Terry Alts corps' (a name adopted by some peasant underground groups to honour a County Clare shoemaker falsely arrested for an attack on a landlord) and the Ribbonmen (so-called for an irregular practice of identifying each other by wearing ribbons) were secret societies of cottiers and small farmers, uncentralised but not unorganised, designed to protect, by direct action, small tenants from (amongst other things) unfair rents and the eviction of peasants and small farmers from their land.

The Galway Free Press reported, as a minor item in the tapestry of conflict between small tenants and large land-holders, that on 9 March 1832 a threatening notice had been pinned on the door of a Mr Simeon Seymour of Somerset House in East Galway, 'stating that unless he complied with the Terry Alt rules and regulations, in raising wages and lowering the rent of lands, that he would meet an untimely fate'.

The 1837 Report on the Poor of Ireland estimated that even with the little rented plots called 'conacre' there were two and a half million persons in Ireland who were in a state of semi-starvation every summer as, the seedlings planted, whole families waited for the new potato crop to appear at the end of the season. Conacre was generally a little plot of an eighth of an acre (0.05 of a hectare), although sometimes as extensive as two acres. It was rented for one season to grow potatoes or, sometimes, oats. Conacre (as well as paid labour, and perhaps an item of livestock such as a pig) was essential for the hungry transit from spring to autumn. These little plots were the only hope of the men who posted the threatening notice at Somerset House. Since they could seek from neither court nor landlord help in adjusting the

balance of the world, they turned to secret companies of men of similar mind to themselves.

To administer a Ribbon oath or to take one was an offence meriting seven years transportation; the posting of such a notice as the one quoted above—as with similar notices posted by peasant and political societies in England—could earn you fourteen years transportation. There were two steps left in the Ribbonman's roster of options. The next one was to 'assault habitation'. The last was to shoot the landlord dead.

The young Hugh Larkin was driven—with others—by peasant rage and a fear that he, his wife Esther, and his two sons, if thrown off their quarter-acre (0.1 of a hectare) lot, would become *spalpeens*, 'penny-scythes', that is, summer day-labourers, or else outright beggars. At Mr Simeon Seymour's Somerset House one evening in the spring or early summer of 1833, Larkin was a leading figure of a Ribbon group who, bearing arms stolen or acquired, knocked a door down and uttered threats. This was Assaulting Habitation, and it had a statutory life sentence attached. Tracked down the next day and sent to the Galway Assizes, Larkin had other young Galway Ribbonmen for company in the county jail—one John Hessian, two brothers named Strahane. They were all sentenced at Assizes along with Larkin.

Larkin, Hessian and others were fortunate in being men accustomed to management of sheep. So—at the end of *Parmelia's* voyage from Cork—Irish peasant discontent would be pressed into the service of Australian pastoral ambition. Their penal lives would be spent minding sheep in the great stupor of the Australian bush.

BEYOND THE LIMITS

The original Nineteen Counties in eastern New South Wales, to which a twentieth north of Port Macquarie had been added, were designed to be the region where government operated and within which land could be acquired and sold legally. It was considered that this region, three times the size of Wales and containing five million desirable acres, was sufficient for the needs of the colonists. Two hundred and fifty miles (402 km) long at the coast, it ran inland to a depth of one hundred and fifty miles (241 km), where the Lachlan River provided its western boundary. As one commentator said, 'The Nineteen Counties, to all intents and purposes, meant Australia, and the government decreed that they should be viewed

as if the sea flowed all around.’ The borders of this region were named the Limits of Location.

But many of the settlers who employed convict stockmen and shepherds and who owned land within the Limits were very quickly attracted to occupy the great natural pasturage beyond them, and so many of the Ribbonmen of *Parmelia* and many other convicts as well found themselves hundreds of miles out in the hinterland, many days ride away from any magistrate, minding sheep on pasturage which, according to British law, belonged to the Crown and to which they had no right. It was inevitable that men should have settled on pasture-lands discovered by explorers beyond the Limits of Location, but they were technically squatters and that was the name given to them.

The Ribbonman John Hessian was assigned to a landowner/doctor at Broulee near Bathurst, and Larkin was assigned to Goulburn, within the Limits of Location, to a young Currency landowner named William Bradley, the rich and enterprising son of a New South Wales Corps sergeant. Bradley owned land and a brewery and mill at Goulburn, and was also running sheep beyond the Limits to the south-west of Goulburn, in the area known as Monaro. William Bradley took up land in the Monaro in 1834 and Hugh Larkin would be sent to work on Bradley’s squatted-upon land far to the south-west.

Bradley would become a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales when it became part-elected, and worked within it to have the system of squatting legitimised by the home government and by the colonial authority (both of which abominated it but ultimately gave in). His sheep and cattle runs in the Monaro would come to total 270 000 acres (1092 km²). He saw his squatting career as part of the same spirit of progress which moved him to become a promoter and investor in the first Australian railway, Sydney to Parramatta, and to finance the survey for a railway line to Goulburn. Such was the potential wealth derived from the raising of sheep and the export of wool on squatted land, and such was the social respectability of the practice that the daughters of this son of a Rum Corps NCO married into reputable British military and vice-regal families.

As one of fifty men Bradley employed to work under an overseer on his Monaro properties, Larkin exchanged convict clothing for the standard bush uniform supplied by masters—leg-strapped trousers, blue Crimean

shirts, and a cabbage-tree hat of plaited leaves. Larkin no doubt began as a shepherd, but if he were a good horseman, he would wear Hessian-style boots and spurs for rounding up livestock on horseback. Mustering stray cattle, riding up escarpments through the great verticals of eucalyptus trees, and armed against attacks from natives, the Ribbonman might have been mistaken for the master.

One of Bradley's protégés in the Monaro area would be a young man the same age as Hugh Larkin, William Adams Brodribb. Brodribb's father had been the young English solicitor mentioned earlier who had administered an oath and acted as counsel to the Berkeley Castle poachers. Brodribb senior had finished out his sentence as a ticket-of-leave attorney in Hobart, and now had become both a farmer and a shareholder in the Bank of Van Diemen's Land.

The younger Brodribb, arriving in Van Diemen's Land as a child in 1818, grew up in respectable Anglo-Scots colonial society, in which the family did its best to forget Brodribb senior's foray into secret oaths. Brodribb the younger arrived in New South Wales in 1835, when Larkin had been working for Bradley for a year. 'In those days,' Brodribb would remember, 'it was no unusual thing for a squatter to claim 200 or 300 square miles [518 or 777 km²]; land was no object; there was plenty for new squatters'. Brodribb's run lay in a deep corner of the Monaro, in a plain made bare perhaps by the firestick hunting methods of the natives who came there in summer. Wooded hills and snow-streaked alps rose above the pastures.

He would take cattle and sheep across the Australian Alps to Melbourne and stake out a run near present-day Benalla in Victoria, during which time, by informal arrangement with Bradley, Hugh Larkin worked for him and may have made the huge droving journey under his management. As well as managing his own run Brodribb also managed other squatters' runs, and when the wool price slumped in the early 1840s, he became the manager of Bradley's Monaro operations from 1843 onwards, headquartered—as was Larkin—at Coolrindong Station near present-day Cooma. Ultimately he would move west along the Murrumbidgee and take up land at Deniliquin.

After the settlers' runs were given some legitimacy, flamboyantly dressed officials named Commissioners of Crown Lands rode out in green uniforms, trailing a few mounted police behind them through the mists or heat hazes, to decide where Bradley's and Brodribb's properties

and grazing rights began and ended, and similarly where someone else's began and ended. Boundary lines were drawn with the same informality—natural springs, an Aboriginal tumulus of stone, tree-blazes, ant heaps, and isolated she-oaks all served as markers. Settlers were to pay £10 for every twenty square miles (51.8 km²) of country they occupied, and on top of that a halfpenny for each sheep.

Hugh Larkin, distracted by labour, distance and adequate diet from any clear impulse of rebellion, probably had his journeys too. When the wool had been loaded on its wagon in late spring, that is, October–November, a settler like Brodribb would start out with a reliable man to bring the load overland to Goulburn. From there they would ease it up the Razorback mountain range and down through endless hills to the place called the Black Huts on the Liverpool Road, where Sydney wool buyers posted themselves waiting to buy. The buyer would cut a slash in an ordinary bale, take out a handful of wool, hoping he had picked a representative sample, and make a bid. These were primitive but significant dealings, for on them colonial prosperity depended. What slave cotton was to the American South, convict wool would be to Australia. The mills of Britain had an illimitable hunger for both.

Could Larkin, or men of his ilk, ultimately hope—under ticket-of-leave or conditional pardon—to become graziers and land-holders themselves? Could the Ribbonman be transmuted into an Australian landlord? To establish a station, capital was needed, £5000 for a well-balanced flock, wagon and convict shepherds. But some determined former convicts, starting with small flocks, managed to become the living exemplars for the character Magwitch, the English convict who left his fortune to Pip, in Charles Dickens's novel of 1861, *Great Expectations*.

MEETING THE SEASONAL PEOPLE

For the convict shepherd and the stockman riding out from the central station, the day came when the natives appeared out of the screen of forest, old men and warriors ahead, women and children behind, to hold discourse and perhaps to trade. The Ngarigo had occupied for millennia this side of the Australian Alps between the Murrumbidgee and the Snowy rivers. They had ritual and marriage relationships with people named the Walgalu and the Ngunawal to the north, towards present-day Canberra, and with the

Bidawal to the south. They encountered in summer the Djila Matang from the western side of the alps, and traded for shells with the coastal Djiringanj to the east. Virtually until the year Larkin arrived in the Monaro, these had been the borders of their feasible world.

They wintered in the milder but still brisk northern Monaro, but came south to the higher Monaro in spring, to feast on the nutty, protein-rich bogong moth, *Agrotis infusa*, 'animated fat-bags' which settle inches deep on trees and in rock crevices to breed. It was in the time of the bogong that Brodribb's and Bradley's men met them. It is possible that Hugh, and certain that other convicts, living on a womanless cusp of earth, made arrangements for the use of an Aboriginal woman. But occasional spearings showed that such relationships were not always acceptable to the elders.

Aboriginal monogamy was based on blood laws, and was as strict as European morality, and in terms of legal sanction stricter. But the white convict shepherd lay outside the bloodlines and so outside the moral universe of the natives. He was often a contact neither forbidden nor approved; he was a chimera to the Ngarigo as Phillip's men had been to the Eora.

In protecting his master's livestock, the shepherd would eventually instigate or witness the collision between European and native, the explosion of the relationship into spear-throwing on one side, the firing of carbines on the other. There were policies designed by anxious governors to protect the natives. After Governor Bourke went home in 1837, the new man Sir George Gipps, an administratively gifted soldier, would appoint Protectors of Aborigines, usually Anglican clergymen, to patrol a remote district and save the native people therein from molestation. These men often came to Australia in answer to an advertisement in the *Church Times*, and believed they would live with their wives and children in a colonial manse amongst other white-robed natives. Instead they were given a dray and dispatched into the interior.

In 1842 the system of protectors would be abandoned, but the squatters complained that Governor Gipps himself acted as a Supreme Protector who generally blamed problems of violence on settlers and their shepherds, and his efforts in that regard, particularly his prosecution of those stockmen who shot and burned twenty-eight natives at Myall Creek, hundreds of kilometres north-west of Sydney, will be dealt with later. Squatters blamed

Gipps and not themselves for the seven or eight years of frontier terror and warfare between 1837 and 1845—all without their admitting that the terror cut both ways.

As for Larkin, he survived and having applied unsuccessfully to have his wife and children sent to join him in Australia, after his conditional pardon in 1848 he would marry a young Irish convicted shoplifter from the Parramatta Female Factory, Mary Shields, assigned to Coolringdon as a servant, with whom he would have five children.

14

BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS



THE HEADY BUSINESS OF EXPLORING

When the report of the 1813 crossing of the Blue Mountains by Gregory Blaxland, William Wentworth and William Lawson came to Governor Macquarie, he sent his assistant surveyor, George Evans, to follow their tracks and extend them.

Evans did not merely look down upon what Wentworth called ‘the boundless champagne’, he descended by steep defiles into it, and found grass intermingled with white daisies, ‘as in England’. This was a matter of previously unimaginable delight for a man like Evans, to be Adam-in-chief in a new Eden. ‘A kangaroo can be procured at any time, also emus. There is game in abundance.’ Evans encountered a river running very strongly as he pushed west beyond the present site of Bathurst. He called it the Macquarie, and a lesser stream the Lachlan.

These gestures of fealty to the Scots chieftain back in Sydney did not ensure Evans supremacy. He was passed over, as not quite an educated gentleman, and made second-in-command for the next excursion westwards led by the urbane naval lieutenant John Oxley, who wanted to marry young Elizabeth Macarthur and was considered by her irascible father a far better prospect than Wentworth had been. He established his depot on the Lachlan River to the south of the Macquarie. The large conundrum of Australian

exploration had been established. Where did these westward flowing rivers end up? Could it be that they emptied into an inland sea?

The Lachlan became a vast marsh Oxley could not penetrate, even though he believed it to be the edge of the envisaged sea. So he headed north and tried the Macquarie and again was defeated by marshes. Struggling back to the coast, Oxley found rich country which he named the Liverpool Plains, and found a way through the massive cliffs of the Dividing Range to the coast itself.

A vigorous though authoritarian surgeon, magistrate and farmer named Charles Throsby, and a Parramatta-born bushman named Hamilton Hume, forcing their way south from Sydney through coastal gorges, came into the Kangaroo Valley, and Macquarie then sent Throsby south-west to find more pasture and open up the plains which had been named after Undersecretary Goulburn. The natives of the Goulburn Plains told Throsby of a great lake and of a river named Murrumbidgee (meaning 'big water'), lying far to the south beyond the lake. Throsby discovered the lake in 1820 and called it George (what else?), and at last found the under-strength Murrumbidgee, reduced by seasonal drought.

A few years later, Allan Cunningham, a botanist who had worked in Brazil on the orders of Sir Joseph Banks, and had now been sent by Banks to investigate the country beyond the mountains in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, was ultimately dispatched by Governor Brisbane, first of all to find an easy way into the Liverpool Plains, which he managed to do but not to the governor's satisfaction, and then to look to the far north—to Moreton Bay and the Darling Downs to its west, whose lusciousness as pasture and farming ground pleased all parties.

The young Hamilton Hume had now squatted at Lake George—to be a squatter one had not only to have some capital but also to be born at a fortuitous time, and to be on site, if not before the official discoverers, then following their fresh wagon tracks. The 27-year-old Hume wanted to explore south-west from his Lake George homestead. Governor Brisbane declared that Spencer's Gulf in present-day South Australia should be the target of such a journey. Hume disagreed with him and wanted to end the journey in the Port Phillip area. Hume was supported by William Hovell, an English settler at Narellan, to the south-west of Sydney, who agreed to put in resources and money and to accompany Hume as long as

he was acknowledged equal leader. Hovell was a former mariner, and had worked for many years as a master for Simeon Lord. He was a robust and determined man and had navigational skills.

For Hume's part, he sold some of his farming effects to raise his side of the money, and Brisbane at last gave some equipment. Hume and Hovell took with them six convict servants on the promise of freedom. Their aim was to reach Westernport on Bass Strait, where in 1804 David Collins had briefly made a settlement for Governor King, before abandoning it and shipping everyone to Van Diemen's Land and the site of Hobart.

To the south of the plains of 'Canberry' they found the Murrumbidgee River in full rage, but Hume and a convict named Thomas Boyd swam it, creating a ferry rope with which they could tow stores, men and animals across. They could see the snow-streaked Australian Alps but steered away south over scrawny hills which gave onto excellent grass, and natural lagoons full of fish and fowl.

Hovell and Hume had soon begun quarrelling, Hume being contemptuous of Hovell's navigational capacities. It was a conflict between British technical skill and raw Currency bush-lore. Bickering away, they encountered all that one would expect: grass fires, carnivorous insects and declining amounts of food. They mounted a hill from which they saw not pasture but jagged terrain heavily covered with forest running away to the west. They called it Mount Disappointment.

Hume and Hovell ended by going on alone, Hume limping from a gash in his thigh, Hovell still highly motivated. He who found pasture became a pet of governors and a darling in his community.

Ultimately, they came to a gap from which they looked down on far-off plains stretching away to the ocean. Coming down to the coast, they believed they were at Westernport but in fact they were at Corio Bay in Port Phillip on the site of the future town of Geelong. Looking to the west were plains stretching away in that park-like manner which convinced settlers that the Divine Hand had designed them for grazing.

Returning to camp they found their men grown mutinous. A promised pardon seemed meaningless out here, in comfortless bush country which seemed to have a lien on their bones. Yet their return journey to Sydney took only five weeks and their news of wonderful new pastoral land around Westernport created a rush by squatters. Negative reports, however, came

back from pastoralists who had decamped with livestock to the true Westernport. Hovell's navigational mistake of one degree would go on confusing people for some years yet, but it convinced Governor Brisbane to send a small party of convicts and soldiers to settle Westernport, as King had done twenty years before, for fear that the French would do it first. But what Botany Bay was to Port Jackson, Westernport would be to Port Phillip—less satisfactory water sources, anchorages and hinterlands would typify the two lesser ports.

The quarrels which characterised the journey now continued in the press. The emancipist *Australian* stood up for the virtues of the native-born Mr Hume, declaring, 'Mr Hovell lacks all the qualities befitting a bushman.' But the *Sydney Gazette* lauded Hovell. Without his navigational skills, said the *Gazette*, the party would have been lost. The dispute would continue another thirty years and beyond, English contempt for his colonial-born status souring Hume's old age.

By now another governor, Ralph Darling, after the inadequate rainfall of the winter of 1828, authorised an Indian-born English officer, Charles Sturt, to go back to the Macquarie River and to follow it to its outfall, since the great barrier of reeds and swamp that had stopped others must now be in drought as well. Sturt was old enough to have served under Wellington in the Spanish campaigns against Napoleon and had also seen service on the Canadian border. He had arrived in Sydney in May 1827 in command of the military escort on the convict transport *Mariner*.

A new Surveyor-General, Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, was on his way from England to Sydney Cove, and the fact that Darling sent Sturt off without waiting for his arrival caused rancour between the two men. Sturt made his starting point the depot at Wellington Valley on the Macquarie River, and set out from the station in the heat of the Australian summer on 7 December 1828. He had Hamilton Hume with him, a number of soldiers and seven convicts, and a boat fitted out with sails and carried on a dray drawn by ten oxen. This boat was designed to be the first to break the waters of the inland sea which everyone believed lay beyond the great reed beds of the Macquarie. They were as well provided as a provident officer could make a party in such a situation.

Where Oxley had earlier given up the attempt to penetrate the reed-clogged waters of the supposed inland sea, the reeds still grew three metres

high, and beyond them one entered a huge plain with scattered runs of water. Sturt launched his boat in one of the small rivers but got only thirty kilometres before he was stopped by reeds. The local Aborigines cut ahead of them and set fire to the reeds in their path, while leeches and ticks afflicted them intermittently. A crowd of what Sturt called kangaroo flies descended upon the party and bit them crazy in what Sturt later said was the ultimate 'day of torment in my life'. It was indeed a resistant country, as resistant and potentially dark in its effects as Africa. Sturt was left to repeat the sentiment of Oxley—none of this could become the haunt of civilised man.

They were working along a branch of the Macquarie, which would later be called the Bogan, and at last it moved into a noble river, very broad, deep-banked, beguiling and crowded with bird life. Naturally he named it for the governor—Darling. But the water was salty. They would have all perished had not Hume found a pond of fresh water, but in the meantime the saltiness of the Darling convinced Sturt that they were close to the inland sea. However, Hume soon discovered salt springs in the river. They turned back to the drying Macquarie marshes and then found a dried-up river they named for Castlereagh, the Secretary of State.

The tribespeople in this harsh season brought forward their children and begged for food and Sturt wondered how they could avoid dying out in this withering landscape.

He followed the Castlereagh to its junction with the Darling, and found himself on a plain surrounded by beautiful semi-arid hills. The landscape seemed to call up a vast desert ocean; the distance shimmered like water. But there was no sea. He turned back. His management of the expedition had been impeccable. But he was confused. He had not found a meaningful outfall for the westward flowing rivers.

By the time he got back to Sydney, Major Thomas Mitchell had arrived. He would be the ultimate industrious surveyor, but Darling ignored him and gave Sturt the next westward journey—to trace the Murrumbidgee to its outfall, hoping it would lead into the great inner sea or something else significant. Sturt left Sydney in November 1829. It was his destiny to penetrate the interior distances in their harshest season. Again he took with him soldiers, convicts and a dismantled whaleboat carried in drays.

After reaching the site of what is now Gundagai, they followed the Murrumbidgee through sand and desolate country, where, in tune with his

reading of the landscape, Sturt found the Aborigines 'sad and loathsome'. At last he took to the river, having his men fashion a mast in the wilderness from a cypress tree. He divided his company in two, taking with him the red-headed George Macleay, son of the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, three soldiers and three convicts. After two days the skiff they were towing, which was loaded with supplies, hit a hidden log and sank. The pork was contaminated and only fit for the dogs. When they camped at night the local natives soundlessly invaded their tents and made off with cutlasses, tomahawks and frying pans. Suddenly the river picked up its pace and tossed them down through narrow banks into a noble watercourse, which Sturt named after the British Colonial Secretary, Sir George Murray. Sturt was not aware that Hume and Hovell had already crossed this river and called it the Hume, but a Colonial Secretary in any case gazumped an Australian-born bushman.

On the banks of the river war-like natives appeared, clashing spears against shields and uttering chants. Fortuitously for the Europeans, young red-headed Macleay was mistaken for an ancestor, possibly because of a missing tooth. An Aboriginal came forward to be the party's protector and strode along the riverbank beside the whaleboat, until it was swept away by increasing current.

They hoisted sail for the first time on 23 January 1830. They passed the mouth of the Darling and so rowed down into the estuary of the Murray, by now subsisting on damper and tea. They came in February 1830 to a lake which Sturt named Alexandrina, the first name of a princess who would later become Queen Victoria. They could hear the murmur and thud of the surf of the Southern Ocean to the south, into which their river ran. They found it impossible to get to the entrance to the sea, dragging their boat over sandbanks and through shoals, so they turned back in a blistering February. Rowing up the Murray, they found their depot deserted.

The men were now dying on their ration of flour. The Irishman Macnamee was raving. Sturt sent two of his soldiers to walk more than two hundred kilometres to the nearest station to find the missing party from the depot upon whom their lives depended. A relief party from Hamilton Plains arrived just as Sturt was pouring out the last of the flour.

The light of the interior had damaged his eyes. He would become blind in the end. It was like a parable. This was what the great suns and spaces of Australia did to the European eye.

DUST AND ENDURANCE

To a people who had brought the dreaming of livestock with them from England, Scotland and Ireland, the man who found new pasture became an Antipodean demi-god. Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, a Scots veteran of the Peninsular Wars against Napoleon's armies, became Surveyor-General after the death of John Oxley, and his first task was to upgrade the roads of New South Wales, including the one from the Blue Mountains west towards Bathurst. These roads remain in place to this day. He would ultimately die from pneumonia caught while surveying a road across the Great Dividing Range from Braidwood, south-east of present-day Canberra, to Nelligen near the coast. In his surveys and throughout his more famous explorations, he proved a determined and not always obedient officer, famous for his quarrels with governors from Darling in the late 1820s to Sir William Denison in the mid 1850s.

Mitchell's first endeavour into the interior, after his *bête noire* Governor Darling had gone home, was based on the report of a recaptured convict, George Clark, alias the Barber, who had lived some time with Aboriginal people in the manner of many escaped convicts. To save himself from punishment the Barber announced that there was a river in the north-west named the Kindor, which flowed through wonderful plains to an inland sea.

Mitchell at last came upon the Gwydir and the Barwon rivers but neither of them looked to be mighty streams flowing to a sea. He concluded they flowed into the Darling River, which, of course, had already been discovered by his hated and younger rival, Charles Sturt, with the help of Hamilton Hume. Some of Mitchell's theorising about the interior rivers of Australia had already been disproven by the handsome and personable Sturt.

Soon after Sturt's return to Sydney from his second expedition in 1831, he expressed a desire to settle in Australia, but the damage to his sight forced his repatriation. The rest of his life would not be easy, either in terms of health or prosperity, but Mitchell remained envious of him. He had found new well-watered pastures along the interior waterways while Mitchell had merely been duped by the Barber. Later, having recuperated and regained his sight, Sturt would penetrate the interior of Australia again looking for the non-existent inland sea, trying to breed cattle in country near the Murray but running out of food and needing to be rescued by Edward John Eyre.

Sturt's blindness returned. His Australian farm having failed, Sturt was honoured for his sufferings with the post of Colonial Secretary of New South Wales and ultimately retired on a pension of £600, spending his last days in well-watered Cheltenham, a charming English spa town.

In the meantime, Mitchell's second expedition did not earn the gratitude of pastoralists either, but his third, in 1836, to follow the Darling to the sea or discover if it entered into the Murray, was the one which made his name. In fact, he failed to explore the entire length of the Darling River, which ran in a great arc through what is now western New South Wales. But south-west of the Murray he turned away and rode into the great pastures of Australia Felix, the western part of modern Victoria.

Another explorer who, like Sturt, was honoured for his endurance rather than his discoveries was a young Englishman named Edward John Eyre, who was liberal with respect for Aboriginal Australians and their title in the land and whose tough, if sometimes ambiguous, partner in exploration was the Aboriginal Wylie whom Eyre had earlier brought east to South Australia by ship.

Eyre, defeated by the dryness and harshness of the country north of Adelaide, decided to try in 1841 to find a path across the south of the continent to the new colony in King George Sound, south-east of present-day Perth. The region he would cover was one of the most desolate on the Australian continent. His journey was in a sense a long romance with the possibility of perishing by thirst, since there was no running water along the way, and frequently it was only the local knowledge of Aboriginals the party encountered that enabled them to drink. To the desert tribes—the Murmirming, the Ngadgunmaia, the Warangu—this flat and desolate country was a precious home to whose resources they were ceremonially bound by ancestry, which they praised and revived in song, and for which they were grateful. To Eyre, Orpheus in the underworld, it was a great test. Surviving the un-endurable became the entire point of the expedition, in a landscape treacherous not least for its lack of European-style reference points—mountains and rivers and benign springs.

The Aboriginal people of the interior used various way markers, incomprehensible to Europeans, to plot courses in what we would call a 'desert wilderness'—a term meaningless to the Diyari people, for example, who

inhabited country between the Simpson Desert and the Sturt Stony Desert, separated from the Strzelecki Desert by Coopers Creek.

The Diyari used *toas*, symbolically painted pieces of wood placed in the ground as important means of communication. The heads of *toas*, often made of gypsum decorated with dots, circles and winding lines, infallibly told one clan where the other was. As with other desert people in the interior of Australia, the Diyaris' movements were dictated by the availability of water. An individual clan would be able to strike out into its traditional country during the winter rains and make use of the standing water which, as warmer weather came, evaporated. They would then retreat to the water-holes along Coopers Creek and the soak holes of the Simpson Desert. Lake Eyre itself would be dry for years on end. In such a country, their indicative markers were life-saving road maps.

The ultimate European endurer was Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt. Leichhardt was a Prussian, and it is said that part of his motivation for coming to Australia was to avoid Prussian conscription, mainly because it would be an interruption to his passion for the sciences. On arrival in Australia he had hoped to be appointed Director of the Botanical Gardens in Sydney, but did not achieve that post.

His first expedition involved a journey from the Darling Downs, west of Moreton Bay and Toowoomba, to the now phantom settlement of Port Essington on the Coburg Peninsula in the present Northern Territory. He was sponsored by merchants and pastoralists, and on his way across this occasionally arid and then tropic zone, he lost to Aboriginal spears the brilliant and genial young English ornithologist John Gilbert. He arrived in Port Essington—it is said his party staggered in—in December 1845. Returned to Sydney, he too became a licensed hero, having found land of pastoral value, even if it was only gradually taken up, and received subscriptions not only from government but from private citizens. Now his dream was of the ultimate—the crossing of the continent from the Darling Downs to the Swan River in Western Australia. The first attempt was abortive, and it was rumoured that Leichhardt, as competent as he was in the natural sciences and in observing the country through which he passed, was incompetent with men. He was not to be dissuaded, however. He set out again, preferring to skirt the northern edge of the central deserts, and, beyond the last outstation, he disappeared. A number of expeditions were sent to find him

but did not succeed, and the Leichhardt legend abounded with rumour and does so to this day. It is not uncommon even now to hear stories of someone who knows, or met an Aboriginal who knows, where Leichhardt finally perished.

By 1860, there were two major parties dealing with the mysteries of central Australia. One was that of John McDouall Stuart, the South Australian government's nominated explorer for crossing the Australian interior from south to north. The second was led by a Victorian, a former goldfields police magistrate and Galway man with all the strengths and weaknesses of his background. Robert O'Hara Burke travelled in co-leadership with an English surgeon, William John Wills. Both of these sets of expeditioners desired to pass through the furnace and stand on Australia's northern coast.

15

THE BOUNTY IMMIGRANTS



MERRIE ENGLAND

In 1820, a series of protest marches were held in Scotland in favour of a general strike. The protesters were autodidact artisans of a different social class than the more famous Scottish Martyrs of earlier in the century. They were chiefly weavers, who on the eve of the industrialisation of their craft could still work their own hours, acquire literacy and ideas and read the Scottish radical newspaper *Black Dwarf*. There was armed conflict between the protesters and troops at Bonniemuir, and eight people were killed. Nineteen Scottish social radicals were sentenced to transportation to New South Wales.

In 1825, the journalist William Cobbett toured southern England reporting on its cultivation and the standard of living of its labourers. The demobilisation of the military in 1815 had put 250 000 soldiers and sailors back in the job market when prices were falling. Farmers cut the wages they paid for labour further as the parish rates they had to pay rose to cover poor relief. ‘Judge, then, of the change that has taken place in the condition of the labourers!’ lamented Cobbett. ‘And, be astonished, if you can, at the pauperism and the crimes that now disgrace this once happy and moral England.’

Crime fell in the good harvest years of 1828 and 1829. But in 1830 riots broke out in the counties across the south and in the midlands, where a great

deal of enclosure had occurred, when threshing machines cut down on the need for labour, and workers and their families were forced to apply for poor relief, of which there was not enough to go around. Illegal combinations of labourers, the English equivalent of the Ribbonmen, began to post threatening notices signed 'Captain Swing', their mythic avenger. They also began to wreck machines, burn barns and hayricks, and hough (that is, cut the tendons in the legs of) cattle. For their participation, a total of four hundred and seventy-five rioters were sentenced to be transported, mostly for arson, including the burning of machines.

In September 1831, when the Tory-dominated House of Lords rejected the Reform Bill, there were serious attacks and disturbances throughout England. In London the houses owned by the Duke of Wellington and the bishops who had voted against the bill were attacked. Dragoons were brought out to attack the crowd in Bristol who burned down one hundred houses, including the bishop's palace, the Customs House and the Mansion House. The mob, like the one which started the French Revolution by liberating the Bastille, set their torches to a number of unpopular citizens' houses and released prisoners from the gaols. In London, the government, 'frightened to death at the Bristol affair', gave the military *carte blanche* against 'the malcontents'. The entire United Kingdom was on the edge, and as always the penal colonies of Australia waited to receive the minor or occasional major actors.

A STEERAGE PASSENGER

Henry Parkes, a young journeyman ivory- and brass-turner from Birmingham, was a bounty immigrant; that is, he had his passage paid for, either in large part or in full, under a system operating from 1828 onwards. It used government funds raised through the sale of Crown land to reward shipping companies for landing healthy free immigrants in Australia. The system was at its height between 1837 and 1843, the period in which Henry Parkes and his young wife, Clarinda, travelled to Australia.

The emigrants were recruited by the Emigration Commission, with the system geared towards robust young individuals and families with small children. It was a profitable business if the shipowner and the emigration officials chose wisely. By 1840, for example, an amount of £19 was paid to shipowners for emigrating unmarried female domestics or farm labourers

aged fifteen to thirty. Thirty-eight pounds was the bounty paid for man and wife emigrants, £5 per child up to seven years, and £10 for those between seven and fifteen. The control exercised against the danger that the unscrupulous would fill ships with sick and unemployable emigrants was that authorities in Sydney had the right not to accept those selected in bad faith, or to withhold payment of the bounty for them.

Parkes was a literate young man of ideas, an autodidact. He had been intermittently educated at Stoneleigh parish school, but while still a child worked in a brickpit and on a rope walk, a long narrow building where laid out hemp was twisted into rope, before being apprenticed successfully to a brass- and ivory-turner. While still an apprentice, like thousands of others he educated himself in the library and lecture hall of the Birmingham Mechanics' Institute. At the age of seventeen he joined the leading Birmingham Chartist Thomas Atwood's Political Union, and publicly and proudly wore its badge. Throughout Parkes's adolescence, Birmingham was the Chartist capital of Britain, and men organised passionately either to petition for their rights or exact them by force. The belief Henry and other young Chartists shared was that England held for them no future unless they could wrest from it the objectives of their People's Charter: universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments, payment of parliamentarians, abolition of property qualifications for members of parliament and equal electoral districts.

Parkes married Clarinda in 1836, and started his own ivory- and brass-turning business in 1837. The couple regularly attended Carr's Lane Independent Chapel, where a remarkable preacher, John Angell James, could be heard. Though aging, Pastor James impressed the young man by delivering two-hour sermons, exquisitely polished, from memory. Those fires not yet lit in Henry by Chartism were ignited by the Reverend James. In these two passions, the chapel and the Charter, he had much in common with many of the respectable young radicals who would be selected for emigration.

Henry Parkes and Clarinda had married without the full approval of Mr Varney, Clarinda's father, and it seemed to be more Henry's poor prospects and political pretensions than his character which influenced this idea. So when Henry's ivory-turning shop failed in 1838, he and Clarinda agreed that they would give their homeland one more chance in the capital, far from

Mr Varney's reproach, and if that did not work they would emigrate. They found lodgings at Haddon Gardens, a furnished room and a good-sized dressing closet where, Henry informed his sister Sarah, they kept bread and cheese and coal.

Throughout that winter they were always short of money. By 6 December, Henry visited the Emigration Commissioners office in Westminster because they had made up their minds to emigrate to Australia.

There were many certificates to be acquired—a certificate of good behaviour and references from four respectable citizens of Birmingham. They had been counselled that they would be at sea for four months, and 'as there is no washing allowed on board, we must have at least fifteen changes of clothes etc. each, be they ever such poor ones'. Henry's sister and mother were pressed into labour to make them. His well-used books, including the works of Shakespeare and the novel *Caleb Williams*, were exchanged for shirts and pants. Like many emigrants, Parkes gathered seeds to take with him, half a pint of marrow-fat peas, half a pint of scarlet runners, and fine carrot seeds.

The young couple could not wait to go. The Australian colonial propaganda Henry had read led him to believe, as he told his sister at home in Birmingham, that in Australia mechanics could earn a whopping 40 or 50 shillings a week. Sugar cost a mere 2 shillings a pound, tea 2 shillings, beef tuppence a pound, wine sixpence a bottle, and rent was only 4 shillings. 'My hopes are not extravagant, though I make sure of getting rich and coming home soon to fetch all of you. I had forgotten to say the climate is the healthiest in the world.'

But fast escape was impossible. The ship that was leaving before Christmas, and could have delivered them from the discomfort of the rest of the winter on land, was fully occupied, and the next ship would not leave until the end of March. Clarinda and Henry had to endure a cold, final English Christmas. Henry was sad to report that his and Clarinda's only Yule fare, after two or three days without anything to eat, was their landlady's daughter's plum pudding and wine.

Henry had time to compose his farewell verses, *The Emigrant's Farewell to His Country*. Many such farewells would be written by yearning young men and women awed by the decision they had made, but his has survived.

*I go, my native land, far O'er
 The solitary sea, to regions, where the very stars
 Of Heaven will strangers be,
 To some untrodden wilderness
 Of Australasia's land—a home, which man has here denied,
 I seek at God's own hand.*

The family wanted him to have likenesses painted of himself and Clarinda, and sent him money for the purpose, but he had to use it to pay for food and expenses. Over the winter Clarinda had become pregnant, but the young couple received little support—a mere shilling in fact—from Clarinda's father. By comparison with Mr Varney, Parkes's father sent a pound on the eve of their departure.

Henry had time before going to the ship to be idolised as a poet by the old ladies in his lodging house, for the *Charter* published his verse. Even so, by the time he and Clarinda boarded the emigrant ship *Strathfieldsay*, he had only the seven shillings that his sister had sent to have the images made. 'Just enough to take us to Gravesend,' he lamented, but consoled himself that another poem of his would appear next month in the *Village Magazine*.

THE SCOTTISH WAVE

Until the early 1800s Scottish lairds—landowners—had hung on to their crofters, or peasants, and resented those who had emigrated to North America. To absorb some of the human overflow on their estates they had founded Highland regiments, but with the Napoleonic wars long over, the men of the regiments were back home, prices had fallen, and the lairds were, compared to their ancestors, hard up. Like those of many Irish landlords, their estates were encumbered with debt. Improvement of the estates, by replacing tenants with revenue-producing livestock, was a way out for the burdened gentry of both Ireland and Scotland. How fortuitous and providential it was—for the landlord, if not for the individual crofter, his wife and their hungry children—that just as the landlords of the Highlands and Islands came to bemoan their region's density of population, the new world, and notably the Australian colonies with their willingness to underwrite migrant ships, cried out for more people.

Many lairds, even—and especially—those most sentimentally attached to the traditions of Scottish culture, became remorseless evictors of their tenants. The methods of clearing off the crofters from their notoriously squalid huts were often the same as those used in Ireland—military and constables at the ready, then the roof crushed in, even the house set afire.

One commentator described a clearance or eviction of an entire village: ‘For some days after the people were turned out one could scarcely hear a word with the lowing of the cattle and the screams of the children marching off in all directions.’ On the Isle of Skye, more than 40 000 people received writs of removal, and in some places one family was left where there had been a hundred. The owners and the gentlemen co-operated with the immigration agents to send off many ships of poor tenants between 1837 and 1839.

Those evicted would become, in many cases, bounty emigrants, lured by speakers such as the New South Wales Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang, who was honoured at a public breakfast at the port of Greenock, his native city. He had come back to Scotland to attract Highlanders and Islanders to Australia. Lang believed the Scots would make ‘the hills and vales of Australia resound with the wild note of the *pibroch* and the language of the ancient Gael’. Scotland would not lose the emigrants; Scotland would be enlarged by their translation to Australian places.

As in England, a bounty was offered to immigrants to Australia—£10 was paid to the shipowner for every immigrant Scot safely landed in Australia. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s Australia slowly became one of the chief destinations of displaced Scottish Islanders and Highlanders.

16

LIBERTY AND THE PRESS



‘ALL FREEDOM AND SENTIMENT’

The press in New South Wales began as *the* press, a single unit, a wooden and iron press Phillip had brought with him and which sat for more than a decade in a shed behind Government House. Here a convict occasionally ran off a government notice or edict. But the man who would turn it to the function of a newspaper did not arrive in the colony until towards the end of 1800. George Howe, transported for robbing a mercer’s shop, had been born in St Kitts in the West Indies and had then worked in printing in London. Soon after he arrived in Sydney, Howe became the government printer and in 1802 printed *New South Wales General Standing Orders*, claimed to be the first book produced in Australia. Howe was not without a journalist’s skill, and Governor King authorised the founding of the *Sydney Gazette* as a weekly newspaper, printed in the same shed as the decrees had been, in 1803. The paper was carried on at the risk of Howe who, though he had been pardoned in 1806, did not receive a salary as government printer till 1811. Even then it was only £60, and when subscribers to the *Gazette* fell behind in their payments, he frequently became desperate. He had five young children to feed, the offspring of his alliance with a convict woman, Elizabeth Easton. He was driven to try to keep a school, and to trade in sandalwood from New Zealand, and by 1817 he was one of the original

subscribers when the Bank of New South Wales was founded by emancipists and some exclusives. He died in 1821.

It was his eldest son, Robert, who maintained the *Gazette*, started *The Australian Magazine* and published the currency lad Charles Tompson's book of verse.

Robert Howe's paper was suspected of being a tool of government, yet was often liberal and certainly not timid. His newspaper was not emancipist enough nor national enough for the young returned-home William Wentworth, however.

On 14 October 1824 Wentworth and his fellow lawyer and drinking companion Robert Wardell launched a weekly newspaper, the *Australian*. They were influenced in part by the fact that the first Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, to which John Macarthur and his nephew Hannibal Macarthur had been appointed, did not contain a single spokesman for the nativist or emancipist side, a role which Wentworth himself had hoped to fulfil. Wentworth and Wardell were also appalled that when on 24 October 1824 lists of those deemed eligible to serve as jurors were fixed to the doors of Sydney's churches, no one who had come to the colony as a prisoner was on them. Wentworth used the courthouse and his paper to challenge this decision. Full of combativeness, when he was elected a director of the Bank of New South Wales, ill feeling between the exclusives and emancipists on the board grew intense, and so the exclusives resigned to found their own institution, the Bank of Australia, in 1826.

Wardell looked after the day-to-day running of the newspaper and wrote most of the copy. Wentworth wrote some editorials and paid more than £4000 in 1824–25 as his share of the capital and running costs. Wardell and Wentworth's editorial brio made Governor Brisbane give up any attempts to censor the milder *Gazette*. Barron Field, the colony's new Supreme Court judge, said of the *Australian* that it was the equivalent of producing a radical newspaper in Newgate.

On 26 January 1825 occurred a great dinner hosted by Wardell and Wentworth at which the thirty-seventh anniversary of the colony was toasted. They drank to a House of Assembly, freedom of the press, trial by jury and to the Currency lasses. The ex-convict poet Michael Massey Robinson called on them to drink to, 'The land, boys, we live in'.

William Wentworth's interest in Currency and emancipists must have been redoubled by his association with a young plaintiff named Sarah Cox, a twenty-year-old daughter of two convicts, in a breach of promise suit in the Supreme Court against a sea captain who traded between Sydney and Van Diemen's Land. By the time the jury awarded her £100 damages plus costs, she was two months pregnant with Wentworth's child. He had repeated the pattern of his father in finding his partner amongst the despised. Miss Cox had grown up in a modest home at Sydney Cove next door to her father's ship and anchor smithing workshop.

In 1825 at an estate Wentworth rented near Petersham, his and Sarah's daughter, Thomasine (or Timmy), was born out of wedlock. Wentworth would buy Petersham from Captain Piper and stay with Sarah on weekends and spend the rest of the week in Sydney. Though Sarah's father's business was successful in Sydney, he had left a destitute wife, Margaret, and their three sons and infant daughter in Shropshire surviving on poor relief. Sarah's mother was Frances Morton, transported for life on a charge of stealing.



Governor Brisbane was summoned home in 1825 after trying to leave the day-to-day running of the penal and colonial engine to his New South Wales Colonial Secretary, Frederick Goulburn, whose brother had been undersecretary in the Colonial Office from 1812–21, and the results were seen as not effective. Brisbane had given six days and nights of the week to his astronomical observations at Parramatta, and to writing papers on astronomical matters, in order to gain what he most desired—a doctorate from the University of Edinburgh.

The new governor, Ralph Darling, decided to take on the scurrilous press. He wanted to enact a statute that would allow him to bring editors to court on charges of seditious libel. And he wanted to drive the papers out of business by imposing a fourpence stamp duty on each copy sold. Even Robert Howe of the *Gazette*, a man with such a debt to government, wrote material that mocked his intentions. Darling's efforts to control the press were also opposed in New South Wales by Chief Justice Forbes and in London by James Stephen, the legal counsel to the Colonial Office.

The *Monitor*, the newest paper in the colony, had been founded in 1826 by a former lay preacher and social worker named Edward Smith Hall.

Hall's editorial position was based on sincerely held ideological conviction, and there was thus a sense in which he was more dangerous than Wentworth of the *Australian*. Colonel Henry Dumaresq, clerk of the Legislative Council, aide to Darling and also the governor's brother-in-law, complained in a report to the Colonial Office that servants went up to five miles (8 kilometres) to read the *Monitor* in the evenings, and soldiers as well as convicts were constantly seen reading the paper. Thus, argued Dumaresq, a dangerous sense of unity amongst the prisoners and soldiers was building and disaffection to the Crown was being created. The security of the colony depended on stopping such a thing.

Darling proposed legislation which would establish a licence system for newspapers, provide for its forfeiture upon conviction for any blasphemous or seditious libel, and confer on the governor an unconfined discretion to revoke the licence. A second proposed bill would impose a stamp duty on newspaper sales.

Under the New South Wales Act all legislation required a certificate from the Chief Justice to the effect that the legislation proposed was consistent with the laws of England. Darling, with the assent of his Legislative Council, enacted the new provisions concerning stamp duty and criminal sedition even though Chief Justice Forbes had warned him he might not be able to provide the requisite certificate.

In the end Forbes refused to certify the stamp duty of fourpence Darling wanted to impose on each newspaper in New South Wales. 'By the laws of England,' Forbes decided, 'the right of printing and publishing belongs of common right to all His Majesty's subjects, and may be freely exercised like any other lawful trade and occupation . . . To subject the press to the restrictive power of a licenser, as was formerly done, both before and since the Revolution [of 1688], is to subject all freedom of sentiment to the prejudices of one man.'

Darling's Stamp Act had already been enforced by the government awaiting Forbes's certification. The day the provisions were first enforced, the *Monitor* was printed with a black border. Edward Smith Hall planned to evade the tax by turning his newspaper into the *Monitor Magazine*, a stitched book. Robert Howe published a 'humble remonstrance' against the proposed laws. He estimated that the duty would cut his weekly circulation from 2000 to 600 and cost him £1200 a year.

Only Wardell refused to pay the stamp duty. Darling suspected that was because Wardell was a friend of Judges Stephen and Forbes.

When Forbes ruled against the duty, Hall was delighted to greet at his door one of the colonial bureaucrats who had come to return his stamp money. But Darling now set himself to curb the press by prosecutions for criminal libel. He had especial rancour for the 'republican' outpourings of an agitator such as Hall. Hall would receive a jail term and fine for libel in 1829. So too did E.A. Hayes, the journalist Wentworth and Wardell sold the *Australian* to.

For Hall was the one who most firmly believed that it was up to the press to protect citizens from tyranny: 'We are the Wilberforces of Australia who advocate the cause of the Negroes [convicts] . . . Packed juries, and magisterial juries on magisterial questions, and taxation without representation, cannot long exist in the burning radiance of a free and virtuous press.'

Darling, meanwhile, had worked out yet another tactic to defeat 'the republicans'. In August 1827 a convict printer not formally assigned to Hall was suddenly withdrawn from the *Monitor* office, and when Hall tried to retain him he was fined by the Police Court. Then, early in March 1829, the assignment to Hall of two convict printers and one convict journalist was revoked by the governor. When one, Tyler, came to work anyhow instead of reporting to the barracks, he was gazetted as a prisoner illegally at large, arrested and sent to Wellington Valley in the west of New South Wales. Hall not only failed to obtain his release by *habeas corpus*, but was fined for harbouring a runaway convict. All these judgments came from lower court magistrates despite the fact that the Supreme Court had recently ruled the governor could cancel an assignment of a convict only if he intended to remit the rest of his sentence. So both sentences were quashed in the Supreme Court in June 1829. Tyler was returned to his master who, however, was himself in Parramatta gaol. Darling was outraged by the Supreme Court decision and it was not until July 1830 that the Crown law officers in London upheld the right of the governor to revoke assignments as he saw fit. When that decision came through to Sydney, Darling again arrested Tyler, but was later rebuked by the Colonial Secretary in Whitehall for acting from political motives in doing so.

To silence Hall, still writing 'libels' in prison, Darling talked the Legislative Council into passing unanimously a new law based on one of Britain's

repressive Six Acts of 1819, which were enacted after the savage suppression of dissent in regional British towns, and in particular after the army's massacre of rioters in Peterloo. This made it mandatory for the court to impose banishment to a place of secondary punishment on any person convicted of seditious libel for a second time, and was designed to stop the gaol in Parramatta becoming an editorial base for attacks on His Excellency's administration. The *Australian* bitterly condemned the Act and gave up publishing editorials. Where the editorial would have appeared, there appeared instead a picture of a printing press chained up by a military officer, the printer hanged on his own press, and all taking place within the confines of a large 'D'. Hall, too, left a blank place where his leader should have gone. He put in its place the figure of a coffin with a black epitaph.

As for Hayes, editor of the *Australian*, he was liberated from prison in January 1831 when two young Sydney radicals, Francis Stephen, the son of the judge, and C.D. Moore, brother of the Crown's solicitor, paid his £100 fine. Stephen, a barrister, was suspected of having being the true author of the seditious libel for which Hayes had suffered.

While Hall resumed his editorials, news of Darling's new Act reached London in July 1830 at the time parliament was in the process of repealing the sections of the English statute of 1819 that related to banishment. The colonial Act thereby became inconsistent with English law and in January 1831, Earl Goderich, the Whig Secretary of State for the Colonies, disallowed it. Darling was discouraged from bringing any further prosecution against Hall.



In March 1831, Goderich notified Darling that he was to be relieved. Darling felt he had been treated shabbily by the Colonial Office. But there were noisy celebrations of the governor's departure in October that year.

The office of the *Australian* was illuminated with a transparency—a series of lights—depicting the triumph of the press over the tyrant. 'Rejoice Australia! Darling's reign has passed!' it told its readers. 'And Hope, once more, reanimates our Land.' The *Monitor* gave two hogsheads of liquor to the crowd who had turned up to look at its coloured transparencies which declaimed, 'Liberty to the press unfettered by the Darling Necklace' and 'He's off!' They set off fireworks and made toasts.

But it was on the lawns of Williams Charles Wentworth's newly acquired house at Vacluse, and in the hearts of his fellow campaigners that the most frenzied joy was found. From the deck of the governor's departing ship, *Hooghly*, the lights of Vacluse and the celebrations there were visible. By invitation, Hall gave a speech, and the band cheerfully played 'Over the Hills and Far Away' while four thousand ordinary people, refreshed by copious potations of Wright's strong beer and 'elated by the fumes of Cooper's gin, did justice to their kind host's tables loaded with beef and mutton'.



The new governor, the Irish liberal Sir Richard Bourke, who arrived in Sydney on 3 December 1831, favoured trial by jury, representative government and full civil rights for emancipists. And he told the gangling young Undersecretary at the Colonial Office, Lord Howick, the future Earl Grey, that 'without free institutions where the press is wholly unrestricted no government can go on'.

In this new era, Robert Wardell, Wentworth's friend, still in his prime, was riding around his Petersham farm when he saw a suspect and makeshift camp. It belonged to three absconded convicts with whom he exchanged angry words. One of the three, Jenkins, shot him through the heart, not knowing that he was killing a champion of the convict class.

17

OTHER PARTS

NEW HOLLAND

The western side of what Flinders's navigation in 1802–03 had proved to be a continent was still known as New Holland. It was more than two and a half million square kilometres of arid and semi-arid earth, some of the oldest on the planet. Its spacious and well-wooded south-west was considered promising by the few who had seen it. Yet for more than twenty years after Flinders's great circumnavigation it had not generated in any British cabinet or in any colonial governor an urgency to occupy and consecrate it to the Crown.

In 1822 as a result of lobbying by the London representatives of Macarthur and other pastoralists, the British government reduced the import duty on Australian wool, and it was then that the Australian Agricultural Company, set up by royal charter in London, was granted 405 000 hectares of land north of Newcastle on the continent's east coast to raise sheep and sow crops.

This phenomenon impressed a naval officer named James Stirling. Stirling had begun his naval life at the age of twelve, but unlike Arthur Phillip he had a powerful patron, his uncle, Rear Admiral Charles Stirling. By the age of twenty-one, he was commanding naval sloops attacking American shipping and forts on the Mississippi delta.

He was prodigiously fortunate in 1823 to marry, on her sixteenth birthday, a jovial young woman, Ellen Mangles, whose father was a director of the British East India Company and head of the family's own shipping line. In the 1820s there was a great deal of French naval activity in the Pacific, and Governor Darling was ordered to create a number of outposts on the Australian continent. Captain Stirling was given the command of HMS *Success* and was to sail to Sydney with a cargo of money and then voyage to the far tropic north to collect convicts and garrison from Melville Island, where a settlement had recently been established. Darling had already sent a garrison to King George Sound in present-day Western Australia. On his arrival in Sydney, Stirling argued that the monsoons would prevent him getting to Melville Island for some months, and that he would be better employed for the moment looking at the west coast of Australia, particularly at a river in the south-west discovered by one of the Dutch captains and named the Swan.

Darling liked the idea, but the Colonial Office did not. In Stirling's words, it sniffed out his interest in the site as a settlement, and 'trembled at the thought of the expenditure involved'. Nonetheless he made a reconnaissance to the Swan with a botanist from Sydney named Charles Frazer and they were both very impressed with the country. Stirling then took off for the Melville Island garrison, and thence returned to his duty on the East Indies station. It was when he was sent home sick with a stomach ailment that he was able to talk to his father-in-law about the fine country around the Swan. Helped by the Mangles family he assembled a syndicate, and relentlessly harried the officials at the Colonial Office to give the group government approval and grants of land.

Stirling had further luck in that in May 1828 Sir George Murray, an aging Scottish general and friend of the Stirling family, became Colonial Secretary. Stirling had by then placed articles on the proposed colony in English newspapers and popular magazines. One of Stirling's advocates, the merchant H.C. Sempill, compiled on the basis of the captain's description a most attractive evocation of a country he had never seen. The Swan River, according to Sempill, had one of the finest climates in the universe and was suited for the production of cotton, silk, tallow, provisions, linseed, hemp, flax, corn and vines. The county was of an open and undulating character with excellent soil; it was beautifully, but not too much, wooded,

well adapted for wool growing and the raising of stock, and the coast and river teemed with fish.

Sempill also pointed out the proximity of the Swan River to the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, the Indian sub-continent, Batavia and New South Wales. He foretold low prices for provisions. A commissioner would sail in the first immigrant ship, escorting the immigrants to their destination with the sole purpose of assisting their settlement. The immigrant, Sempill promised, would not have to wage hopeless war with interminable forests, 'as he will find extensive plains ready for the plough share'. He would not be 'obliged to mingle with, and employ those bearing the brand of crime and punishment; and as no convict of any description of prisoner will be admitted into the colony, those who established property and families will feel that their names and fortunes cannot be mixed hereafter with any dubious ideas as to their origin. Land so situated, without tithes, taxes or rent, under the special care and protection of His Majesty's Government, and where the British laws will be rigidly and uprightly administered, cannot fail being worth the attention of every industrious and discerning Briton.'

TALKING TO THE SULKY ONE

On 2 May 1829, Captain Fremantle of HMS *Challenger* took possession on behalf of Stirling of a large stretch of land at the mouth of the Swan River. Stirling arrived on 18 June with his wife, civil officials and a small detachment from the 63rd Regiment on the store ship *Parmelia*, and proclaimed the colony on a bright afternoon beneath Mount Eliza. Rarely had a settlement been made on the basis of so little knowledge of the nature of the hinterland. It was decided that there would be a port at the river mouth, later named Fremantle, and a main site upriver, just beyond the point where the river named the Canning entered the Swan. This settlement would be named Perth, to honour the seat Sir George Murray held in the House of Commons. It was already the meeting place of a tall and sinewy people who called themselves Bibbulmun, though they would later be more commonly named the Nyoongar, the word in their language for 'man'. In the cosmos of the Bibbulmun the most significant creature was the Rainbow Serpent, who had to be persuaded, flattered and appeased ceremonially into continuing to provide the elements of life. The Bibbulmun often called the Rainbow Serpent 'the Sulky One', because they knew from millennia of experience that

their beloved country required exertions, priestly and physical, from them, and that the Sulky One must be conciliated into making plenty possible.

The town of Fremantle, said one *Warrior* passenger, 'was composed of a good number of miserable-looking tents, most of which were grog shops'. In unloading his cattle, Captain Molloy, a middle-aged and retired captain of infantry, saw them dash away into the scrub, since there were no stockyards to hold them. Goods were simply unladen anywhere on the beach. 'I was obliged to keep watch night and day,' said one passenger, for though there were no convicts there were still thieves and desperate people. The places where a settler's goods and furniture were landed were widely scattered, dependent on the tide and which beach was chosen by a particular lighter. Women wept for broken china and sea-ruined furniture.

Newly arrived colonists were to enrol their names in the register, receive permission to reside, and call on the governor. A charter boat would take people up the Swan River to the settlement of Perth. The river, its wide reaches, black swans and verdant foreshores were enchanting to many, and consoled them in the extreme choice they had made. But the settlers who came by *Warrior* were told that the best land, along the Swan and the Canning, was already taken. The officers of HMS *Sulphur* and HMS *Challenger*, who had arrived in 1829, had taken up most of the river frontages. 'It was the opinion of not a few that the Governor had acted very improvidently in giving . . . an extent of river frontage to one individual. It would perhaps have been better, to have made a square mile [2.3 km²] the maximum of any grant on a river.'

On a large eucalyptus tree the written newspaper of the place was attached, in the form of public and other notices. A visitor, E.W. Landor, saw the governor's written permission for one individual to practise as a notary, another as a surgeon, and a third as an auctioneer. 'There did not appear to be an opposition tree, and so much the better; as although a free press may do good to a community arrived at a certain state of perfection, yet I think it may be doubted how far it can be serviceable in an incipient colony.'

Three hotels had been licensed by January 1830. If tent life got too much for a family, they might stay, perhaps, in the one named the Happy Immigrant.

The governor's house was on the banks of the river, 'a commodious wooden building'. Captain Stirling's young wife, twenty-three years old,

despite her wealthy background endured the fierce summers with grace, and with what everyone agreed was a lack of pretension which might have been welcome in her husband. A young gentleman visiting for tea said that she was 'a pleasant contrast to the bridling and haughtiness of some half-bred persons whom I remember at home'.

Before he left London, Captain Stirling had been offered a grant of 100 000 acres (40 500 hectares) with priority of choice. He (and his brother) hoped to select land in Geographe Bay, south of Perth. Settlers would later claim that Stirling continually changed his mind about where to choose land, 'and on the discovery of any new or fertile district he has immediately appropriated the best part of it to himself, thus severely checking enterprise and the spirit of exploration amongst the settlers, who cannot afford either the time or the money to explore land for the Governor'.

Indeed in Western Australia were available acreages that would make a European's head spin, and it was a proud feeling to write home and boast of the extent of grants, but the size of the enterprises required a labour force which generally did not exist.

E.W. Landor describes his and his brother's experience. Having been condemned to death by three eminent physicians, and being unable, like the wealthy, to go to Italy, his brother had had the climate of Swan River recommended to him. 'My younger brother . . . was a youth not eighteen, originally designed for the Church, and intended to cut a figure at Oxford; but modestly conceding that the figure he was likely to cut would not tend to the advancement of his worldly interests.' Landor and his brother left England in April 1841, taking with them a couple of servants, four rams, a bloodhound, a mastiff bitch and a handsome cocker spaniel. They also shipped a vast assortment of useless lumber. 'Nine-tenths of those who emigrate do so in perfect ignorance of the country they are about to visit and the life they are destined to lead.'

As for the Bibbulmun, 'When we first encountered on the road a party of coffee-coloured savages, with spears in their hands, and loose kangaroo-skin cloaks (their only garments) on their shoulders, accompanied by their women similarly clad, and each carrying in a bag at her back her black-haired offspring, with a face as filthy as its mother's—we by no means felt inclined to step forward and embrace them as brethren.'

Landor quickly pressed his legal qualifications with Stirling and was appointed commissioner of the Court of Requests while his previously sickly young brother ran the family farm. Such honest settlers were further discontented when those who had been granted good land near the settlements did not remain there or develop it. Early on, the common talk when settlers got together was about their having been misled by the reports of Captain Stirling and Mr Sempill. As a later-comer, Landor described the country thus: 'The first impression which the visitor to this settlement receives is not favourable. The whole country between Fremantle and Perth, a distance of ten miles [16 kilometres], is composed of granitic sand, with which is mixed a small proportion of vegetable mould. This unfavourable description of soil is covered with a coarse scrub, and an immense forest of banksia trees, redgums, and several varieties of eucalyptus.' However, 'the traveller at his night bivouac is always sure of a glorious fire from the resinous stem of the grass tree, and a comfortable bed from its leaves'.

Perth looked attractive to the Landor brothers, with its luxuriant gardens of grapes and figs, melons and peaches, bananas and plantains. 'The town has a never failing supply of fresh water from a chain of swamps at the back, and the well is fed by them and never dry . . . No park in England could be more beautiful than the grounds around some of the dwellings.'

Yet the fate of many a Western Australian settler was a hard one. At first, said Landor, the settler was satisfied with finding that he could sell enough produce to pay his way, as long as he lived economically and showed a reasonable degree of good management. But unexpected expense, such as an illness or legal fees, could throw his economies awry. 'It is true he leads an easier life than he did in England; he is not striving and struggling for existence as he was there, but he is making no money. His wife asks him daily, in the pleasantest connubial key, why he brought them all from England, to bury them there, and see nobody from morn to night? What, she urges, is to become of their children? Will Jonadab, their firstborn, be a gentleman like his maternal ancestors? But how, indeed should he, with the pursuits of a cow-boy and the hands of a scavenger? . . . Is she to endure this forever, and see her daughters married to men who wear long beards and blucher boots?'

But Stirling never grew sick of it. He stuck on, and administered the Swan River settlement from June 1829 until August 1832, when he left on an extended visit to England during which he was knighted, and he was then

back as governor from August 1834 until December 1838. He was succeeded by a young bureaucrat named John Hutt, a bachelor whom colonial maidens considered with interest but who earned a certain unpopularity for following Whitehall's orders too exactly.

One of the issues facing Hutt was whether the natives were British subjects or not. The Nyoongar were unwittingly in something of a cleft stick—if not subjects, they could be shot; if subjects, they frequently came foul of the law. 'By declaring the savages to be in every respect British subjects,' wrote Landor, 'it becomes illegal to treat them otherwise than such.' Thus, 'the poor native, who would rather have been flayed alive than sent into confinement for two months previous to trial, whilst his wives are left to their own resources, is heavily ironed, lest he should escape, and marched down some sixty or seventy miles to Fremantle Gaol, where the denizen of the forest has to endure those horrors of confinement which only the untamed and hitherto unfettered savage can possibly know'.

OH, MR WAKEFIELD

Handsome Mr Hutt, the new governor at Swan River, was a disciple of a visionary Briton named Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a flawed yet passionate seer. Wakefield's father had been a friend of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and his grandmother, Priscilla Wakefield, was one of the founders of the Savings Bank in England. Edward Gibbon, historian, was a relative, and Elizabeth Fry, the famed Quaker prison reformer, his cousin.

As a young man Wakefield, on leave in 1816 from service as secretary to the British envoy at Turin, eloped with Eliza Ann Frances Pattle, a ward in Chancery. Through the influence of the Lord Chancellor the marriage was approved by parliament and Wakefield went back with Eliza to the Turin legation. The couple had a daughter, and then a son, ten days after delivery of whom, in July 1820, Eliza died.

Wakefield had a substantial income from this marriage. And yet in 1826 he abducted a fifteen-year-old heiress, Ellen Turner, from her school, married her in Gretna Green, then fled to Calais. Ellen was persuaded to return to her parents and Wakefield came back to England to stand trial. He and his brother William, the latter as accomplice, were convicted of statutory misdemeanour, and on 14 May 1827 were each sentenced to three years imprisonment. Had he received a seven-year sentence, as was not

uncommon with abductors, he would have been transported. This time parliament annulled the marriage.

Wakefield was an enquirer and while he was in Newgate he examined his fellow prisoners and tried to assess how effective their punishments were, and as a result of his study produced a tract, *Facts Relating to the Punishment of Death in the Metropolis* and also *Swing Unmasked, or the Causes of Rural Incendiarism*. Two years later, he produced a further two pamphlets on punishment and populist politics.

While still imprisoned, he devised a plan for colonising 'Australasia', published in June 1829 under the misleading title *A Letter From Sydney, The Principal Town Of Australasia*.

Though he had never visited the southern continent, Wakefield claimed in the pamphlet that the Australian colonies were suffering from chaotic granting of free land, shortage of labour and consequent dependence on convicts. He argued for a more systematic exploitation of 'the wasteland' of the Crown as a means of providing money for the emigration of labourers. If the price for Crown land were made sufficiently high, it would discourage labourers from immediately acquiring land they could not use. Settlement should expand in contiguous blocks and the volume and pace of immigration should be related to available land. Deficiency of labour and a congenial society would attract capital, encourage immigration, assure prosperity and justify the rights of the colony to elect representatives to its own legislature.

Though there's something inherently comic in a man dreaming up colonial schemes for Britons to apply their hopes, capital, bodies, families and breath to while in Newgate, it cannot be denied that Wakefield's theories had serious results. The *Spectator* wrote: 'The imprisonment of Mr Edward Gibbon Wakefield in Newgate will probably prove the source of the most essential benefit to the country.'

Indeed, Wakefield's ideas made up what one historian calls 'a seductive package'. Like the Greek colonies of old, the new colonies Wakefield proposed were to have balanced populations based on all classes of society; they would be extensions—not denials—of civilisation. Having harboured colonies of the fallen, the enemies of God, society and reason, Australia was now to become the continent of model and reasonable and Christian settlements. In particular, the area now known as South Australia would be home to these idyllic societies.

Unlike Western Australia, however, with all its problems, South Australia was to be subjected, beneficially, said Wakefield, to divided authority. The Colonial Office would appoint a governor who was to be responsible for affairs of state other than land sales and immigration. Land sales and immigration were to be under the control of a board of commissioners, set up in 1835. The board was to preside over the sale of all land alienated from the Crown at a price of at least 12 shillings an acre, much less than Wakefield's ideal 'sufficient price'. The money from sales was to be used to foster immigration by poor labourers. The allotted area for sale comprised 802 511 square kilometres. All this huge area was designated, without thought for the Aboriginal inhabitants, as 'wasteland of the Crown'.

The colony had to be self-supporting. The commissioners were authorised to raise £200 000 to finance the first settlement and the foundation of government, and £50 000 against the sale of land to begin the immigration program. At this stage land was selling for 5 shillings an acre in New South Wales. The board advertised its prospectus and attracted attention in the press. Settlers bought into the enterprise sight unseen; sight merely described in most flattering language.

After demand dried up they dropped the price of all land to 12 shillings an acre. Finally Angas saved the speculation from total collapse by forming the South Australian (Land) Company as a philanthropic and business venture to buy out the balance of the land, and by December 1835 sufficient land had been sold to initiate the colony and a £20 000 guarantee was lodged by the board with the Treasury.

Behind this lucre lay the hope of a new society free from political patronage and the evils of a privileged church. John Hindmarsh, a naval captain, was appointed governor and a reputable 25-year-old solicitor named James Hurtle Fisher would give up his London legal office to become the resident commissioner. The colony would achieve self-government when its population reached 50 000. Meanwhile, a nominee council would assist the governor.

All was set for a colony whose society would be not only superior to New South Wales's but superior to Britain's itself.

RE-ESTABLISHING PORT PHILLIP

Port Phillip in the south-east of the Australian mainland first gained its settlers from Van Diemen's Land, that august island whose mountains, east

and west, hemmed settlement to its central valley running from Hobart to the coast north of Launceston. Whalers and sealers had also built huts at Port Fairy and Portland, in today's western Victoria. The Hentys, an English family, had pioneered more permanent settlement there. Their leader was Thomas, a gentleman sheep farmer from Sussex who sold up his property at the age of fifty-four to set sail for Australia, bringing with him his flocks and seven of his well-educated sons. The Hentys were amongst the unlucky immigrants who arrived in Van Diemen's Land on their chartered ship just after free grants of land had ceased in 1831. One son, James Henty, tried Western Australia, but considered the land granted to the family there too poor to be worth working. In their own vessel, the Hentys began investigating the coast of the mainland. After three reconnaissances, in November 1834 another son, Edward, was 'much pleased' with Portland Bay, far to the west of Port Phillip, with its 'extraordinary vegetation and good climate'. Inland he found plenty of good grass and the Hentys began farming there in earnest. They hoped the land they had occupied would in time be confirmed as theirs. Whalers stole their beef, but then they got involved in whaling as well. They were a family-based, uncondoned version of the South Australian (Land) Company. Their area would later be visited by the surveyor and explorer Major Thomas Mitchell, who would be astounded to find them there and who would name the region Australia Felix. Later it would be more commonly named the Western Districts and the Hentys would become mythic for their impertinent land grab. But when their father died in Launceston in 1839, the tenure of the Hentys was still insecure, despite having besieged the Colonial Office for acknowledgment of their Portland Bay settlement.

Meanwhile the Port Phillip Association had been formed to settle the desirable bay of that name. The scheme had created a great frenzy of enthusiasm amongst the young and the discontented in Van Diemen's Land.



The convict population of Van Diemen's Land had been a mere 568 in 1817, but by the early 1830s the numbers were in the thousands, and it was these men and women, assigned to Vandemonian masters who moved to the Port Phillip area, who created the labour for the expansion of the pastoral industry into the Western Districts, Australia Felix. The life for both squatter

and servant was barbarous: often torpid, occasionally interspersed with brutality. Yet the pastoralists were not like the bounty settlers—they had capital and they meant to go home and live in comfort when they had earned their fortunes. Many of them got caught, nonetheless, by the scale of their hunger for wealth or by other attachments.

The young Vandemonians were responsible for more than 300 000 sheep grazing in Port Phillip in 1837. By 1839 intending settlers from Van Diemen's Land formed more than half of total arrivals, even though emigrant ships had begun to arrive directly from Britain.

From their lush corner of the greater Port Phillip region, the Hentys, too, continued to wage a paper war with the Colonial Office and the Sydney government until they won title to their land in 1849. Major Mitchell's account of Australia Felix had already attracted a great number prepared to invest and settle in the district. The flow from Van Diemen's Land to Australia Felix—as well as to Port Phillip itself—was on.

Governor Bourke appointed Captain William Lonsdale to Port Phillip as police magistrate. By the time of his arrival the population of the whole district 'exceeded 5000 souls . . . and more than 100 000 sheep'. Bourke named the village Melbourne to honour the prime minister of Great Britain and directed that a town be properly laid out. Land was to be put up for sale at both Melbourne and its port, named Williamstown. He travelled to Geelong and visited the stations of Thomas Manifold and Philip Russell, youngish, vigorous men from Van Diemen's Land, and could not entirely dislike them for taking their chances.

The settlers at Geelong, a new port servicing Australia Felix, asked for protection and from Sydney Bourke dispatched Captain Foster Fyans as a police magistrate. He also saw that it was necessary that appointed or elected members from Port Phillip attend the legislature at Sydney, even though the natural commercial partnership would be with Launceston or Van Diemen's Land in general. A judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales would hold Assizes twice a year at Port Phillip. Then there was the matter of land tenure to consider.

Bourke had ordered one hundred town allotments be surveyed for Melbourne, and similarly a few at Williamstown. Otherwise the unsurveyed reaches of the new pastoral region spread away without apparent limit, and those who took it were to pay the usual not very onerous licence fees.

The Crown Lands Commissioners should exercise their wit to prevent crises between blacks and whites, Bourke decided. There were hopes that the natives could be persuaded to settle in villages and make themselves useful under the generous aegis of the chief protector, George Augustus Robinson, who had struggled to protect the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines. In that vast country, Bourke could not prevent the occupation and exploitation of land by squatters. He sought, however, to ameliorate the effect upon the native inhabitants.

The first Sydney-side overlanders drove cattle from the Murrumbidgee to Melbourne in December 1836 and sold them at £10 per beast. Other journeyers from the Sydney side could follow the deep ruts which had been left by Major Mitchell's boat-carriage. By June and July 1837 there were numerous overlanders following this same route and by 1840 it was said that there were 20 000 cattle between Yass and Melbourne, moving slowly southwards. Some of these parties went through to South Australia, the hospitable Hentys providing them with accommodation at Portland, whereas others sent their stock to Adelaide by ship. Meanwhile, Joseph Hawdon, from the Cowpastures near Sydney, took two months from the Murrumbidgee to Melbourne but others were not so fortunate—some found their assigned men unmanageable as soon as they were beyond the reach of a magistrate's court; others had to treat their flocks as best they could when scab and catarrh broke out in them. One typical overlanding party composed of thirty men, an overseer and two natives. There were 5000 sheep, 600 horned cattle, twenty horses, two pigs and forty working bullocks besides a variety of dogs. 'Our provisions and baggage are carried by four bullock drays and two horse carts. The sheep are enclosed every night in strong nets which are fastened at top and bottom to stakes driven into the ground and are watched all night by one of the men.' At night horses and working bullocks were hobbled and tents were put up. The provisions were flour, beef, tea, sugar and tobacco.

Governor Gipps, who succeeded Richard Bourke, would remark on the quality of the overlanders: 'Young men of good families and connections in England, officers of the Army and Navy, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, are . . . in no small number amongst them.' All of them were convinced of their future fortunes. After the overlanders came the first fresh arrivals from overseas, eager young men who had read the treatises on sheep and cattle in *The Library of Useful Knowledge*, in Major Mitchell's *Travels in Australia*

and in Mr Waugh's *Three Years' Experience*. Many of them were from the lowlands and border area of Scotland, because the fares to Australia for a gentleman were cheaper than those from London by a differential as great as £50 for cabin passage and £20 for steerage.

Neil Black, a partner of Neil Black and Company of Liverpool, was the son of a Scots farmer from Argyllshire and had a little capital of his own. Taking his chances in Australia, he much preferred Melbourne to Sydney, finding it to be more of 'a Scots settlement', though its streets were hazed with dust, and an open sewer crossed the main thoroughfare. The names of locations in Skye, the Hebrides and the Highlands would compete with local Aboriginal names to be given to pastoral runs throughout the Western District.

Between 1839 and 1840 the population of the entire Port Phillip region nearly doubled to 10 291 because of arrivals from overseas, including assisted immigrants. By the middle 1840s when Port Phillip was divided into five regions, there was scattered settlement in each of them. But there were only forty-four runs in Gippsland compared with seven times that number in the rich Western District.

The men from overseas by now outnumbered the Vandemonians in the total population, but immigration from Van Diemen's Land continued. Those with capital always brought with them ex-convicts to swell the numbers of the labouring population. By 1841 newcomers had to *buy* stations, and it was already hard to find suitable new runs. The government had been defied in the initial making of the settlement and it remained, as Sir James Stephen, British Undersecretary for the Colonies, said a 'systematic violation of the law' which was 'countenanced and supported by the society to which they [the squatters] belong'. Stephen was aware of the fact that the founding minor crimes of Australian penal society were nothing compared with the audacity of the squatters.

Melbourne, Geelong and Portland had become depots and meeting places for squatters from up country and whalers from the sea. Here was society created by white men almost exclusive of women, and concerned almost wholly with work. Portland remained a whaling town and throughout the winter every inhabitant was alert for a whale blow, and when the alarm was given there was a scramble to take to the boats. At night the whalers roystered and fought in the streets and scandalised the inhabitants.

Sophie de Montollin, the wife of the superintendent of Port Phillip and governor-to-be of the ultimate colony of Victoria, had grown up in an environment of privilege as the daughter of a Swiss Councillor of State. She had met earnest young La Trobe when he arrived in Switzerland after travelling across the prairies with his famous American friend, the writer Washington Irving. His own book, *The Rambler in North America*, had just been published. Though an Englishman, Charles La Trobe had spent a great deal of time in Switzerland, and was probably educated there before becoming a mountaineer and a tutor to 'good' families. He was brave, intelligent and pious—a devout Moravian Methodist whose family had campaigned passionately against slavery. In 1835, though not wealthy, he must have seemed a good, reliable fellow to Sophie.

He was offered the superintendency of the Port Phillip area because he had acted successfully as a rapporteur for the British government in determining how West Indian slaves could best be equipped for freedom. Sophie de Montollin settled with a will into the La Trobe hut in Port Phillip. Her husband was more tentative in his decisions—especially since he had to answer to a new governor, Gipps, in Sydney, and to the Colonial Office, and to deal with determined graziers. He was lord of a process he could not control.

THE COLONY OF THE SAINTS

The dominant spirits of South Australia were ambitious middle-class townsmen, often radical both in politics and religion. South Australia was their great gamble both in terms of real estate and Utopian hope. Hindmarsh, the first governor, as a fifteen-year-old had been the only officer to survive on the quarterdeck of the renowned *Bellerophen* at the Battle of the Nile in 1798. Some South Australian Company commissioners would come to wish it were otherwise. He had been promoted by Nelson himself on the victory and had lost an eye like his hero. Hindmarsh subsequently had a dogged rather than a dazzling naval career, and now he was still dogged. To him, South Australia was a posting, not the thorough destiny it represented for the settlers.

Hindmarsh arrived on the *Buffalo*, disgruntled, and concerned for his family of three daughters, a wife and a son. In landing, Mrs Hindmarsh's piano fell into the sea: culture was drowned.

By the time he arrived in South Australia Hindmarsh had already come into conflict with the commissioners of the South Australian colonisation scheme. He quarrelled with Surveyor-General Colonel Light over the site of the capital of the colony. He also argued with Resident Commissioner Fisher. He suspended Robert Gouger and other public officers, and the commissioners complained of him to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Despite the squabbling, on 28 December 1836 the province of South Australia was proclaimed in the earlier manner of Western Australia, by a huge gum tree on a grassy plain studded with peppermint gums and melaleucas, near the sand dunes of Holdfast Bay and at the mouth of Patawalonga Creek (near today's Glenelg). A flag was hoisted, a party of marines fired a *feu de joie*, and a cold collation followed in the open air. The Adelaide hills sat behind the gathering of new settlers, the yellow kangaroo grass ran amidst trees all the way to their peaks.

The local tribe, the Kaurna, seemed friendly. They interested Hindmarsh, who wrote of them, 'Instead of being the ugly, stupid race the New Hollanders are generally supposed to be, these are intelligent, handsome and active people, being far better looking than the majority of Africans. The women exhibited a considerable degree of modesty.'



Now the first comers were camped, like eastern convicts long before them, under canvas amidst scorched summer grasses, awaiting the delineation of their capital by the surveyor, Colonel William Light.

Light was the son of a Portuguese Eurasian mother and an East India Company adventurer father, and had lived the early part of his childhood in Penang. He had fought in forty engagements in the Peninsular War without being wounded. In the 1820s, he fought with the Spanish liberals against King Ferdinand and was badly wounded. At the time of his appointment he was suffering from tuberculosis.

The work load laid down for Light by the governor and commissioners would have killed him, had tuberculosis not claimed him in any case. He was to find, first, a commodious harbour, safe and accessible at all seasons of the year. Second, a considerable tract of fertile land immediately adjoining. Third, an abundant supply of fresh water. And so on, ending with tenth, a site for a gaol. One thing in which Hindmarsh and the commissioners were

enlightened was in the instruction that Light would ‘make the streets [of the colony’s capital] of ample width, and arrange them with reference to the convenience of the inhabitants and the beauty and salubrity of the city; and you will make the necessary reserves for squares, public walks, and quays’.

So Light was required, within a few months, to examine all the good harbours on 2400 kilometres of coast, found the first town and as many secondary ones as he had leisure for, and complete a complicated survey of about 40 500 hectares of country sections. All this in unexplored country, in the midst of a heatwave, amongst natives already alienated by whaling and sealing gangs, who had stolen their women away to Kangaroo Island.

By the time Light found the little river called the Port Adelaide River and the harbour upstream and the attractive Adelaide Plains, the first settlers were already there, pitching their tents. Heat and flies and mosquitoes were their lot. The wife of the new colonial secretary, Robert Gouger, was six months pregnant and found the huge temperature range—between 41 and 10 degrees Centigrade—hard to deal with. Just the same, George Stevenson, the first editor of the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, noted in the diary he kept with his wife: ‘We are all delighted with the aspect of the country and the rich soil of the Holdfast Plains. Mount Lofty and the hills before us are wooded to the very summits . . . on the plain there are numerous splendid trees of the eucalyptus species . . . I have seen the Pickaway Plains of Ohio and traversed the prairie of Illinois and Indiana, but the best of them are not to be compared with the richness of the Holdfast Plains.’

In fierce heat, with the breath of the Australian interior blowing on him, the city was laid out, a metropolis of imagination and fire whose limits were ‘the enchanted hills’, the Mount Lofty Ranges. In this landscape there were no geologic complications to distract Colonel Light. Many of the streets had a 30-metre width. A minimum width was 20 metres. But the terraces were broader still.

THE MAIDEN OF AUSTRALIND

Plans for a second Wakefieldian settlement followed the proclamation of South Australia. Under the aegis of the Western Australian Company, settlers were to take up land south of Perth. The new settlement, subject to the authority of the governor of Western Australia, was to be named Australind,

to honour the hope that its produce would become the basis for trade with India.

Louisa Clifton was a young gentlewoman of a devout Quaker family from Wandsworth, just outside London. Her highly respected father, Marshall Clifton, had served as secretary of the Admiralty Victualling Board. But he came home as early as 1839 engorged with a new enthusiasm. He was to be Chief Resident Commissioner of the Western Australian Company. Louisa read the company prospectus on Australind. 'It is hardly possible to conceive a finer situation for a Town.' It was a region of plentiful fish and exotic native birds, said the prospectus, including the famous black swan. It told the intending emigrant that land had been set aside for a college, pleasure gardens, hospital and observatory—which all implied that the town would quickly become a version of the world he was leaving.

The Clifton family was related to Quaker reformers such as Elizabeth Fry, and to Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the systematic colonisation man, himself. If the move to Western Australia frightened Mrs Clifton as much as it inspired her husband, it also, with good reason, alarmed the wide-browed, lustrous-eyed, handsome girl Louisa. Though pursued by a suitor in England, Louisa wrote, 'I chose Australia; dearest Mamma's bitter tears have decided my wishes.'

A week before the Cliftons' ship left London, however, Lieutenant Grey arrived from Western Australia to say that the land intended for the settlement had been resumed by government. Grey also declared that the area was a veritable Sahara in any case. In early 1840 the emigrants set sail into this vacancy of promise, and after an average passage on a ship named *Parkfield*, landed and made contact with Western Australian surveyors at Port Leschenault, 165 kilometres south of Perth, who quickly came to the conclusion, by talking to the newcomers, that the whole effort was amateurish and unrealistic.

In the first place, 'Papa's' agent, sent ahead, had gone mad. But even so Louisa's vigour of soul let her be cheered by the pretty aspect of the inlet and the shoreline. From here Mr Clifton set off with others to survey the new site of Australind, about 12 kilometres to the north of present-day Bunbury, and Louisa fulfilled the Christian duty of visiting the man who had become deranged. 'He was lying nearly naked, dirty beyond anything, on a mattress in the corner of his tent.' The poor man told Louisa that he wouldn't like

his wife, who had already landed, to stay in this country. At last the *Parkfield* carried them down from Port Leschenault to their encampment site. Mrs Clifton and Louisa were both charmed to see the neatly pitched tents and the beautifully wooded riverbanks.

The women came ashore and *Parkfield* sailed away, and Louisa and her mother and sister became tent-dwellers. Louisa was revived by camp life. 'An immense fire of branches was soon lighted on the level ground a little distance below our tent, water boiled, and tea made, and having fortunately got up our plate chest containing knives and forks, teacups etc., we sat down to a welcome repast, and with more comfort than we could have imagined possible. I wish you could have seen the interior of our new abode, some sitting on the ground, others sitting on our mattresses rolled up; I making tea on a gun case seated on a hassock in the midst. By degrees all the young men collected to this centre of comfort and sociability.' Memories of the solid comfort of a fully equipped London house were not permitted to cheapen the edge or resolve of life here and now. Louisa had brought with her a chest of clean linen and patterns and books and found that they had been all dampened, and she turned the lot out to be dried in the sun.

When a party of male settlers visited the camp, she was not impressed. 'Colonial Society! How little captivating or refined it is!' One of the visitors was 'vulgar and unprepossessing, young, rough, and of course in dress, to English eyes anything but a gentleman. The want of gentlemanly dress is an additional friction to "taste". A very stupid dinner. I felt low spirited and requiring to be drawn out rather than to exert myself in conversation.' It must have been disappointing for a woman sustaining a ladylike life under canvas to discover the limitations of potential colonial husbands. Nevertheless, Louisa was determined not to let her standards slip. Had they been Englishmen or Englishwomen on a grand tour of Europe, Louisa could not have set her fellow settlers higher standards.

Her father began to clear woods, or, more accurately, 'set some Indians to clear'. At last, at the end of May 1841, the first public building, the storehouse, was finished and on a day of streaming rain, forty settlers were entertained in it. Kangaroo soup, kangaroo pies and steaks, pork, beef, pease pudding and suet puddings were served. Soon thereafter, a year after the founding of the colony, the Cliftons received a party of visitors

who included a Mr Eliot, Louisa's future husband as it turned out, in their new habitation.

Yet in this scatter of tents and half-finished huts, 'I was in hopes that I had obtained the first contribution to our Australind museum in the form of some skins of beautiful birds that he [Mr Eliot] begged me to accept . . . He is a very droll person and I cannot quite understand him; truly and thoroughly amiable in the best and highest sense, and gentlemanly in every feeling.'

Sheets of water came through their roof still, and Louisa and her sister, Ellen, slept habitually in wet beds. 'But I found it acceptable nevertheless, being dead tired . . . No future settlers can suffer what we do; for when others come they will find things made for them and our experience available . . . Friends in England should be made acquainted with this Australian coast in this season . . . I feel horrified to think of people blindly coming out at any time of year, to be exposed to such awful weather as this.'

Louisa was speaking of the Western Australian winter, when a desert-like cold prevailed at night and all the year's rain fell in fiercely concentrated bouts. At last, the Cliftons' house of thin planks, with a rush thatching and a floor composed of a layer of bricks packed close and tight upon the sand, was finished. The situation of two Aborigines brought before her father for theft evoked her best, but unavailing, feelings of Quaker compassion. 'Some of them will be sent, I fear, to Rottnest [gaol] . . . but being deprived of liberty and independence so dear to wild man, they soon die of broken hearts . . . When will justice appear upon earth? Not I fear while white man who professes Christianity falls so far short of acting up to its first principles.' In 1843 the Western Australian Company ceased to operate its Australind holdings: land and any company equipment. Most emigrants had to go elsewhere—the labourers to look for work. Marshall Clifton lived on in the area on an Admiralty pension.

Louisa also stayed, having married George Eliot in June 1842, and began an honourable career in the hinterland as a settler's wife, the mother of young colonials, and an exponent of kangaroo cuisine.

18

DISPOSSESSED AND CONTESTED



MYALL CREEK . . . AND BEYOND

In the 1820s outposts like Bathurst, to the west of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, had barely more than a hundred settlers, and the wish of the surrounding Wiradjuri was that they might be driven off forever. The leader of Aboriginal resistance in the area was a man named Windradyne (also dubbed by the white settlers ‘Saturday’). The Wiradjuri had been affronted by the destruction of native game, and did not understand why shepherds and pastoral foremen were so aggrieved when, in compensation, the tribespeople slaughtered livestock.

Windradyne’s idea was like Pemulwuy’s before him—of consolidating scattered clan groups into a larger and more militant group. The Bathurst commandant was a man of tyrannous nature named James Morisset—he later became commandant on Norfolk Island—and his 1824 imprisonment of Windradyne in leg irons seems to have accelerated rather than stopped Aboriginal attacks. Aboriginal people were shot at on sight, or treated to flour laced with the arsenic dip used to cure scab in sheep. Windradyne survived a massacre over the taking of potatoes in which he saw members of his family group shot down, and became more militant still. Some Wiradjuri under his leadership attacked a hut and stockyard which had been built on a ceremonial site about which they had earlier made a protest.

Three station hands were killed in the attack. The next day they killed four further hut-keepers and shepherds. These were shocking killings—every settler was haunted by the possibility of being a corpse studded with spears.

Meanwhile, the *Sydney Gazette* had been appalled to hear of the killing of Aboriginal innocents, who were, after all, British subjects. The *Gazette* declared, ‘The adoption of the most determined measures must be speedily resorted to, to effect the suppression of such wanton and horrid murder.’

‘Philanthropus’, writing to the same paper on 5 August 1824, agreed: ‘I suppose the New Hollanders to be *human creatures* and that their maker has taught them more than the beasts of the earth. I think they have with myself, and all other men, one common ancestor . . . Hence I have been led to estimate even the least one of these, my despised and injured brethren, at more value than all the sheep and cattle on Bathurst Plains; than all the flocks and herds in the territory of New South Wales; than all the animals in the whole world!’ Another letter-writer sympathetic to the Aboriginals and appalled at the idea that they should be hunted down for the sake of sheep, nonetheless argued a fine point in the same journal during the same debate, ‘They are the *inhabitants*, but not the *proprietors* of the land.’

Even if malice did not operate, the two dreamings—Aboriginal and European—of what should be done to the earth were in conflict with each other, and there was a sense in which that was a trigger for all the tragedies.

Morisset did send an overseer and four of his men to Sydney to stand trial for killings on the O’Connell Plains, south-east of Bathurst. They were all acquitted, and the lesson became apparent—one was unlikely to be found guilty of the murder of natives, particularly if there was provocation and no record was made. A settler named William Cox told a public meeting in Bathurst, ‘The best thing that can be done is to shoot all the blacks and manure the ground with their carcasses. That is all the good they are fit for! It is also recommended that all the women and children be shot. That is the most certain way of getting rid of the pestilent race.’

Certainly somewhere near twenty shepherds and hut-keepers were killed, but the losses on the Wiradjuri side were probably five times that number, and increased after the governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, in August 1824 proclaimed martial law west of the mountains and sent a detachment of the 40th Regiment to Bathurst. The soldiers in Bathurst now numbered seventy-five and there were an equal number of enraged settlers willing to

join them on any expedition. A group of Wiradjuri camping on the banks of the Macquarie to the north-west of Bathurst was attracted to a party of soldiers who laid out some food as bait and then shot down thirty of them. Another detachment of soldiers forced a party of Wiradjuri over the cliffs at Bells Falls. Many of these people had had no involvement with any of the attacks on the huts.

After two months Wiradjuri society had been torn apart, and survivors had to hide in the remotest gorges of the country. Leading his family and some survivors over the Blue Mountains and down to Parramatta to surrender, Windradyne gave himself up. Some whites wrote 'Peace' on a sheet of cardboard, attached it to a straw hat and made Windradyne wear it. His life spared, he would be a reduced man until his death as a result of a tribal fight in 1829.

When the Liverpool Plains, in the area surrounding present-day Gunnedah, were settled in the 1830s, there were some four thousand Kamilaroi in the area, and the normal skirmishes took place. One posse of pastoralists, drovers and mounted police rode through the area for two weeks and executed eighty Kamilaroi people. Then, when the Kamilaroi came down the valley of the Gwydir from their winter quarters in the spring of 1837, they were horrified to see the damage done to their land by grazing animals. There were immediate retaliatory killings of livestock and conflict arose over the misuse of Aboriginal women by settlers.

The tragedy for the Kamilaroi was that Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass was for two months, over New Year 1838–39, the Administrator of New South Wales, awaiting the arrival of Governor Gipps. Snodgrass was a man of pastoral bent and, in answer to complaints of pastoralists about the activities of the natives, sent the commander of the New South Wales mounted police, Major James Nunn, to the Liverpool Plains with the instructions: 'Use your utmost exertion to suppress these outrages. There are a thousand blacks there, and if they are not stopped, we may have them presently within the boundaries.'

Major Nunn and his party of twenty-three mounted police arrived near the settlement of Manilla in early 1838 and joined up with a posse of local stockmen. At first light on a January morning, they surrounded an Aboriginal camp on the northern bank of the Namoi River. In desperation, one group of surrounded Aboriginals accused another group of being the

raiders of cattle and Nunn accepted their word, taking the 'wild' group prisoner. One of them was shot, and the others let go. At Waterloo Creek, on the Namoi River, the captives were massacred—up to fifty Kamilaroi were shot. A similar encounter had earlier taken place at Ardgowan Plains Station. When Nunn and his party arrived at Gravesend Station, grateful pastoralists put out the welcome mat for the major all the way back to Sydney. At Tamworth the hands who worked for the Australian Agricultural Company cheered him, but when he saw the new governor, George Gipps, there were no congratulations. Gipps was appalled at the licence Nunn had taken and so was the Attorney-General of New South Wales, the Irishman John Hubert Plunkett.

Plunkett had been good friends of both Daniel O'Connell, the famed Liberator of Ireland, and of the liberal governor Richard Bourke. He and Bourke had framed legislation for Irish-style national schools in New South Wales; they had stood against any attempt to establish an official church; they believed that colonial self-rule should not be delayed. Now Plunkett and his new governor, Gipps, decided it was time to prosecute those who took the lives of Aborigines. It was apparent to Nunn that this was the view of the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Glenelg, as well. Though he was a hero on the frontier, he was not considered one in Whitehall. But because he had operated on Snodgrass's orders, it was decided nothing could be done about him. Nor was Snodgrass indicted.



Henry Dangar was a long-established pastoralist of Cornish background who lived in the Upper Hunter Valley, but also had a station on Myall Creek which ran from the Gwydir River on the northern Liverpool Plains, near present-day Inverell. The people on Myall Creek were relatives of the Kamilaroi named the Kwiambal, and the Kwiambal group and the stockmen on Dangar's property got on well together. The station was run by a man named William Hobbs with the help, amongst others, of two assigned convicts transported for life—George Anderson and Charles Kilmeister. George Anderson had a relationship with a young Kwiambal woman named Impeta, and was sympathetic to the natives, and so it appeared was Kilmeister. The stockmen would often join the Aboriginal people after work for socialising on the banks of the creek.

When some of Dangar's station hands went off to bring cattle in closer to the station, Hobbs followed them to guard against stragglers in the herd. The men with the main herd met a posse, led by a man named John Russell, an emancipist, and including five assigned convicts, all armed, and travelling—with their overseers' sanction—to 'deal' with the natives. One of the men was a black Liverpoolian, John Johnston, and another an Irishman named Ned Foley. Russell asked the drovers if there were any Aboriginals living on the Myall Creek station. They replied that there were about twelve women, twelve children and sixteen men. They were anxious to protect the Aboriginal people by saying that they had been there for many weeks, and that therefore they could not be the blacks who had caused trouble further down the river.

Back at Myall Creek a superintendent from a neighbouring station had arrived and commissioned ten Kwiambal men to go downstream and cut bark. So the men were absent when Russell's posse, grown considerably in number, galloped up to the homestead with every display of their intentions.

The Aboriginal women and children ran from the creek to Anderson's hut, believing that their white friends would protect them, while Kilmeister went out to meet the posse. He was relaxed with them, since he knew most of them. With the Kwiambal huddling around him, Anderson asked Russell what his plans were. He was going to tie them all together, he said, and take them 'over the back of the range' to frighten them. Russell and others forced their way past Anderson. The Aboriginals called out to Kilmeister and Anderson to save them. Kilmeister did not resist, but Anderson protested. A woman who claimed to be the spouse of Yintayintin, one of the Aboriginals who worked round the station, was left behind, and another woman was also excused in an attempt to win Anderson over. Anderson also managed to hide a child in his hut. The prisoners were led away and later two shots were heard but no more.

Two kilometres out in the bush near a new stockyard lay a heap of twenty-eight butchered Kwiambal bodies, including Charlie, the three-year-old station favourite. Most of the children had been decapitated by swords and the adults had been hacked to death.

The next day the killers seemed in excellent spirits as they breakfasted at Myall Creek, and made occasional reference to the killings. Anderson

was particularly appalled to hear them speak of the pack rape of one of the younger women. When they saw Anderson's disgust, Russell, the leader of the party, asked Ned Foley to stay with Anderson and make sure he did not do anything 'unwise'. That day they burned the bodies, with Kilmeister accepting orders to tend the pyre.

The Kwiambal bark-cutters had arrived meanwhile at a nearby station where the overseer, Eaton, knew that they would be in danger from the posse. He sent them and all the people from his station into the hills. A small number of them were pursued, caught by the posse and shot.

At Myall Creek, the manager, William Hobbs, arrived back the next day. He began quizzing Anderson and Yintayintin. Kilmeister had gone off with the posse on their latest excursions, and now returned. Later that afternoon Yintayintin took Hobbs to the stockyard massacre site, which he would later describe as 'horrible beyond description'. Hobbs at last decided he must write letters outlining what he knew of the massacre to the police magistrate at Muswellbrook and to Henry Dangar. Public opinion in pastoral areas disagreed with what Hobbs had set in motion, and Dangar would soon dismiss him, perhaps under pressure from other pastoralists.

The Attorney-General decided that Kilmeister, John Russell, John Johnston, Ned Foley and seven others were to be charged. The men brought down to Sydney were tried in the Supreme Court for the murder of Daddy, an old man whose body had been most identifiable at the site. The senior prosecutor was Plunkett himself. Chief Justice Dowling gave strong instructions in favour of conviction, but it took the jury a mere fifteen minutes to acquit the men. When the verdict came in the court broke into loud applause. The Attorney-General now cut back on the number of accused and charged seven of the men with the murder of four victims including the three-year-old boy, Charlie. Many newspapers called for the release of the prisoners and the *Herald* attacked Gipps as a zealot.

Henry Dangar, as he had at the first trial, paid for the defendants' counsel. But Anderson and Hobbs were potent witnesses. The seven were found guilty of the murder of a child unknown, and Governor Gipps confirmed their sentence. Although they were willing to confess to their crime, they felt grievously unlucky, since, as they said, killing Aborigines was a common activity on the frontier. They must have wondered why Major Nunn could kill so many, and they had to swing for a lesser number.

Pastoral associations all over New South Wales angrily demanded a reprieve. The *Herald* pleaded, 'Where, we ask, is the man endowed with even a modicum of reasoning powers, who will assert that this great continent was ever intended by the creator to remain an unproductive wilderness? . . . The British people found a portion of the globe in a state of waste—they took possession of it. And they had a perfect right to do so, under the Divine authority, by which man was commanded to go forth and people, and till the land.'

The *Herald* also declared that there was a chance that this judgment would encourage more vengefulness against the natives, and sadly, vengefulness and secrecy now became the established mode. Plunkett's hope had been to protect the Aborigines from molestation and intrusion upon their rights to the same extent that the emancipists were protected. Things would not turn out as well as that.

CONTESTING THE LAND

The idea that Australia consisted of waste lands waiting to be seized by enterprising Europeans was both in law and at the popular level a common belief in the nineteenth century. Indeed in 1819, the law officers of the British government had declared Australia to be *terra nullius*, land belonging to no one prior to British occupation. But there was barely a season in which the concept of *terra nullius* was not challenged—by Aborigines and sympathetic Europeans. Debate over the legitimacy of the settlers' seizure of land would emerge very early. Captain David Collins had written in the 1790s, 'But, strange as it may appear, they [the Aborigines] have also their real estates. Bennelong, both before he went to England, and since his return, often assured me that the island of Me-mel (called by us Goat Island), close by Sydney Cove, was his own property; that it was his father's, and that he should give it to Bygone, his particular friend and companion. To this little spot he appeared much attached; and we have often seen him and his wife Barangaroo, feasting and enjoying themselves on it. He told us of other people who possessed this kind of hereditary property, which they retained undisturbed.'

The debate over waste land versus native title raged over the years in the colonial press, and in the huts of the hinterland and around the fires of stockmen. In 1844, a young man named Henry Mort living on the frontiers

of settlement in Queensland described to his mother and sister in England the conversation he had had with his fellow educated stockmen: 'Had a very animated discussion on the "moral right of a nation to take forcible possession of a country inhabited by savages". John and David McConnell argued it was morally right for a Christian nation to extirpate savages from their native soil in order that it may be peopled with a more intelligent and civilised race of human beings, etc., etc.'

A normal justification for settlers in moving onto Aboriginal lands was a reference to the Bible, and in particular to God's Old Testament instruction to go forth and multiply and subdue the earth, as quoted by the *Herald* in the wake of the Myall Creek trials. The Aborigines had failed to subdue the earth and thus left it open to those who were willing to. Christopher Hodgson, a parson's son who had farmed the Darling Downs west of Brisbane, wrote of his years in Australia, 'Thus far the creator of the universe is just, in that He allows the superiority of civilisation over barbarism, of intellect over instinct or brutish reason . . . the world was made for man's enjoyment and created not as a beautiful spectacle, or spotless design, but as a field to be improved upon.'

The political radical Presbyterian JD Lang was inevitably attracted to this basic issue. He was sympathetic to the natives, but he had a not uncharacteristic take on the subject for a man of his period. In a speech to the meeting of the Moreton Bay Friends of the Aborigines, he was reported as saying that the settlers 'were certainly debtors to the original Australian Aborigines, for they had seized upon their land and confiscated their territory. In doing that he did not think they had done anything wrong . . . The white man had indeed only carried out the intentions of the Creator in coming and settling down in the territory of the natives.' Later, though, from his questioning of Aborigines, he decided that 'particular districts are not merely the property of particular tribes; particular sections or portions of these districts are universally recognised by the natives as the property of individual members of these tribes'. If an owner decided to burn off grass on his land, 'which is done for the double purpose of enabling the natives to take the older animals more easily, and to provide a new crop of sweeter grass for the growing generation of the forest', then tribes from all about would be invited in, the landowner giving his permission for all to come to the land and hunt its wild animals. 'I have often heard natives myself tell me, in answer to my

own questions on the subject, who were the Aboriginal owners of particular tracts of land now held by Europeans; and indeed this idea of property in the soil for hunting purposes is universal amongst the Aboriginals.'

Occasionally a less ambiguous statement would appear in the press, such as that in the *Launceston Advertiser* of 26 September 1831. 'Are these unhappy people, the subjects of our King, in a state of rebellion, or are they an injured people, whom we have invaded and with whom we are at war? . . . They have never been subdued, therefore they are not rebellious subjects, but an injured nation, defending in their own way their rightful possessions, which have been torn from them by force.'

Such opinions did not wash so well, said E.W. Landor, the Western Australian lawyer settler, once you had to live amongst the nomads. 'The most prominent idea in the imagination of a settler on his first arrival at an Australian colony is on the subject of the natives. Whilst in England he was, like the rest of his generous minded countrymen, sensibly alive to the wrongs of these unhappy beings . . . Full of these noble and ennobling sentiments, the immigrant approaches the scene of British colonial cruelty, but no sooner does he land, than a considerable change takes place in his feelings. He begins to think that he is about to place his valuable person and property in the very midst of a nation of savages, who are entirely unrestrained by any moral or human laws or any religious scruples, from taking the most disagreeable liberties with these precious things . . . We have acted exactly as Julius Caesar did when he took possession of Britain . . . We have a right to our Australian possessions; but it is the right of conquest, and we hold them with the grasp of power.' Such would often be the language of the frontier—'You don't know them as we know them.'

Edward Curr, an early Port Phillip settler and conservative who had seen the process of encounter between the nomads and the pastoralists frequently, could understand the Aboriginal side. 'The meeting of the white and black races in Australia, considered generally, results in war. Nor is it to be wondered at. The White Man looks on the possession of the lands by the Blacks as no proper occupation, and practically and avowedly declines to allow them the common rights of human beings. On the other hand, the tribe which has held its land from time immemorial and always maintained, according to native policy, the unauthorised digging up of one root

on its soil to be a *casus belli* [reason for war], suddenly finds not only that strangers of another race have located themselves permanently in their lands, but that they have brought with them a multitude of animals, which devour wholesale the roots and vegetables which constitute their principal food, and drive off the game they formerly hunted. They are also warned that they are not to hunt the livestock that is present on the land which they consider theirs. The tribe, being threatened with war by the white stranger, if it attempts to get food in its own country, and with the same consequences if it intrudes on the lands of a neighbouring tribe, finds itself reduced to make choice of certain death from starvation and probable death from the rifle, and naturally chooses the latter.'

Curr's reflections show that pioneers did indeed often understand the dilemma they presented to the natives, as well as the dilemma the natives presented to them. It is not to excuse anything to recognise that killing might become the way out not only for commercial frustration (the decimation of flocks), not only for cultural frustration (the apparent refusal of Aborigines to give up their claim to land and sites of importance), but even from moral frustration for a problem which seemed to test a wisdom greater than normal men possessed.



Edward John Eyre, the South Australian explorer, declared in his *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery*, 'that our presence and settlement, in any particular locality, do, in point of fact, actually dispossess the Aboriginal inhabitants'. The localities most cherished for grazing and cultivation were also the places where Aboriginal food was most easily procurable. In South Australia in 1840, however, Governor George Gawler and his Land Commissioner, Charles Sturt, had to explain to a group of leading, disgruntled settlers why the Aborigines would be given the right to select land as reserves before the British did. For South Australia, both at the level of its charter and by government instructions, was meant to recognise native entitlement as 'Those natural indefeasible rights which, as His Excellency conceives, are vested in them as their birthright.'

Elsewhere, though, native attacks put any idea of 'natural indefeasible rights' out of settlers' minds. In 1840, the Port Phillip pastoralist David Waugh went to Melbourne on business and when he returned to his station,

having taken out his squatter's licence and procured supplies, he found that the local Aborigines had killed the two men left in charge of the sheep and plundered the head station, putting its stockman to flight. The losses were considerable—638 sheep were destroyed or died from wounds.

There had been similar depredations by Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land. One account tells us, 'Mr Bell's house and servants attacked on Great Jordan Lagoon; the natives kept at bay from the house, but one man received a spear through the thigh. Mr Hopley murdered about a mile from Mr Betts, James Macarthy desperately wounded. February 12 1830, Mr Howells' dwelling burned, Mrs Howells and her children narrowly escaping the flames.' And so on.

A quarter of a century later, in the Wide Bay area around Maryborough, north of Moreton Bay, many stores and houses were robbed and two settlers were killed, and again stock losses were considerable.



It was a further misfortune for indigenes that the great passion of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century science, on whose behalf people from Phillip onwards sent back Aboriginal skulls for study in Europe, was phrenology. This so-called science dismissed the Aboriginal skull and brain as substandard. In the *Colonial Literary Journal* of August–September 1845, a correspondent wrote under the name 'Aneas': 'The Aboriginal cranium appears to be large, although in reality the brain is not so . . . The great preponderancy of the brain in the New Hollander, as in all savage nations, lies in the posterior parts of the head—the seat of the passions, and inferior sentiments; the moral and intellectual portions, with few exceptions, are very deficient.'

With eminent men assuring the settler of the primitive nature of the Aboriginal brain, there was less reticence about putting a bullet in it. An allied myth which condemned the Aboriginal was that native ownership had been bloodlessly yielded up due to the cultural inferiority of the Aboriginal. As one phrenologist said in November 1851, 'The Cape Caffre and the New Zealanders, possessing superior phrenological development to our Aborigines, have each cost the British nation much blood and treasure to subjugate, while the dim twilight intellect of a New Hollander yields his country a bloodless conquest.'

In 1838, the missionary Lancelot Threlkeld, who had tried to train the Hunter Valley natives in agriculture, attacked the pseudo-science of phrenology as 'this miserable attempt' to deduce that Aborigines 'have an innate deficiency of intellect rendering them incapable of instruction', a belief that led men to the idea that they were merely 'part and parcel of the brute creation'.

THE END OF TRANSPORTATION



MOLESWORTH'S COMMITTEE

Everyone—James Macarthur, the Reverend Lang, every pastoralist who employed convict labour as well as every commentator who thought such employment immoral—wanted to bring their evidence to the Select Committee of Parliament on Transportation which met during the spring and summer of 1837 in a drafty committee room of St Stephen's Hall, Westminster, where the British Parliament then still sat. And whoever it was, each wanted to give the committee his thoughts not just on the convict assignment system, but on the effect the system had on the whole society of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.

The committee chairman, Sir William Molesworth, was a wealthy and noble-hearted young man, twenty-seven years of age, who was also a radical. He had founded the *London Review* as a radical organ, and then acquired and edited the *Westminster Review* with the philosopher of radicalism, John Stuart Mill. As a radical he was mindful always of the poor and the slave. He had been disfigured in childhood by scrofula and this had resulted in teasing about his looks while he was at boarding school, an experience which gave him sympathy for other marked men and women.

Another member of Molesworth's committee, Lord Howick, was the young George Grey who entered parliament in 1829 and had a remarkable

future as Earl Grey. Lord Howick disapproved of assignment but did not want to see the committee recommend the total abandonment of transportation which Molesworth himself obviously desired.

The Presbyterian minister JD Lang was available to give evidence since he was already in Britain recruiting Scots emigrants. In line with his capacity to damn both sides of a question, he disliked emancipists for their presumptions and exclusives for their sins. He told the gentlemen of the committee that transportation could work as a punishment, 'but it has not been hitherto subjected to a fair trial in the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land for lack of free population'. Society's tone was created by the convicts, 'instead of by a virtuous population'. As for assignment, he pleased the committee by declaring it 'is unequal in its operation, and consequently unjust to the convict'. It depended for its severity on the character of the master. There was nothing that could be done to prevent this unevenness, in Lang's opinion.

Lang thought the number of assigned convict servants in Sydney and their ready access to 'ardent spirits' was the cause of dissipation and licentiousness which would lead inevitably to more crime. There were fewer temptations for convicts assigned as field labourers in the interior. Even so, all assignments should be discontinued, he argued. Would there not be a great want of labour? he was asked. Not if proper exertions were made to bring in free immigrants, said Lang.

As for the convict road parties, 'They have opportunities of escape, and they avail themselves of these very often to prey upon the settlers.' The chained gangs were under more vigilant superintendents, and found it harder to flit away.

By the questions it asked, the committee, so certain that convict transportation was morally indefensible, obviously knew very little about the details of the system. When a convict woman is married either to a ticket-of-leave man, or to a free man, she becomes free? they asked. Lang told them that she was free as long as she conducted herself with propriety. But if she got drunk—as was frequently the case—she was liable to be sent to the Female Factory or to have her ticket-of-leave cancelled.

Then came the significant question: 'You said that the assignment of women tended to demoralise them; is not the sending them out there to

become the wives of the emancipists and ticket-of-leave men tantamount to rearing up a criminal population for that colony?

Lang said he did not think so. Marriage had a reformatory impact on many. But then the question was, 'Is it a good description of punishment, merely to send a woman out to be married?' Certainly not, said Lang. But the disproportion that existed between the sexes was a great source of crime and depravity, and should be addressed.

'There is an action and reaction in the colony perpetually going on between the classes of society originally depraved and those which have, ostensibly at least, a better character,' he continued. The impact of the assignment of educated convicts, for example, to become editors of newspapers was 'the very worst possible . . . The influence of these individuals on the press was virtually . . . to persuade the community that the free immigrant portion of the population was really no better in point of character than the class from which they had emanated, the convicts . . . they were perpetually endeavouring to persuade the community that their situation was the result of misfortune and not of misconduct.' They also sought 'to impress on the community that the mere fulfilment of the man's term of transportation restored him, to all intents and purposes, to the same condition in society as the man who never had been a convict'.

Lang was also not impressed that many schoolteachers and tutors in private families were convicts or ex-convicts. 'There is at this moment the son of an English clergyman in New South Wales who was educated by a person of this class, and who is now a convict [himself] under sentence of transportation for life in Van Diemen's Land.' John Dunmore Lang certainly believed that the amount of immorality amongst the Australian mass, free and convict, was higher than in England. The number of couples living in 'concubinage' particularly concerned him.

In truth, the Reverend Lang was in favour of the abolition of transportation as it then operated in New South Wales. A border should be drawn near Port Macquarie and the whole land north of that should be used for a new experimentation in transportation. The Highlanders of Scotland should be the settlers introduced into a new system, under which convict labour would prepare the settlements for immigrants. The funds derived from the sale of Crown land should be employed exclusively for that purpose. Free immigration was the only means 'by which we can get rid of the evils which

that system [convict transportation] has entailed upon the colony hitherto'. Bringing in a numerous population of Scots free settlers 'would give a high value to land, and then, that population would be enabled to pay for the land such a price as would repay all the advances of government'.

Such were the dreams of a Scots visionary expressed in Westminster to a committee determined to end transportation to eastern Australia.

Another witness before the committee, the English Benedictine William Ullathorne, who had heard the confessions of brutalised Norfolk Island prisoners about to be hanged for rebellion, agreed with Lang that transportation had not produced reform amongst convicts. The committee probably had in hand in any case his pamphlet, *The Horrors of Transportation briefly unfolded to the People*, published that year in Ireland and England. James 'Major' Mudie of Castle Forbes, a former magistrate appointed by Governor Darling, had also written a book, *The Felonry of New South Wales*. In it he condemned the malice of convicts and the discipline-softening measures introduced by Governor Bourke limiting what local magistrates could do to punish disobedient or insolent assigned servants. Even E.A. Slade, a former superintendent of the convict barracks and inventor of a special no-nonsense whip for use on the premises, wanted to give evidence along the same lines as Mudie. However, Ben Boyd, a squatter of the regions far south of Sydney, argued, 'I believe there is no employer of labour in the colony who would not prefer a ticket-of-leave man to a bounty immigrant; for my own part, although I came out here at first with all my English prejudices against the prisoner class, I now from experience prefer them so decidedly, that I have at this moment but few immigrants in my employment.'

The committee's final report was an attack on the penal system of New South Wales. It brought an end to convict assignment in 1838, and ultimately an end to transportation.

CATEGORIES OF WOMEN



THE GIRL FROM THE FEMALE FACTORY

Like many Australians trying to deal with the past, the author became interested for family reasons in one unexceptional young convict woman who seemed in background, crime and penal experience to represent a multitude of her kind. At the Limerick City Court of Sessions in the autumn of 1837, thirteen Irish labourers and servants were unremarkably sentenced to seven years transportation each. One of these was an auburn-haired, handsome young woman of twenty-two years named Mary Shields.

Mary Shields had been found guilty of stealing clothes from a Timothy Reardon. Since her occupation was given as that of servant, she may have been Mr Reardon's servant. It was recorded also that she was a native of Tipperary, so she and her parents very likely belonged to the mass of landless or evicted peasantry who wandered into cities and took what work they could find.

This young woman, only five feet one-and-a-quarter inches (155 cm), was already the mother of a small son and infant daughter. She had been married at eighteen in May 1834 to a man named John O'Flynn in St John's

* Some readers will have encountered events narrated here in the author's *The Great Shame*, although emphasis will differ from that earlier account.

Church, Limerick. Their first child was baptised at St Michael's Church, Limerick, in October 1835, and was named Michael. A daughter, Bridget, was baptised in December 1837.

Not all people sentenced to transportation were in fact transported, and for the first phase of her sentence Mary, in Limerick City gaol, was still in contact with her husband and children. In fact, children often accompanied their parents to prison. Mary's son, Michael, must have been at least part of the time in the wards of the gaol with her.

We know something of Irish criminal offences, and the date of Mary Shields's crime, in the summer of 1838, has some significance. The potato did not last after early summer, and the new crop was not harvested until September. Shields was at least a city woman, receiving a cash salary. But unlike peasants she had no fattened pig to sell to buy summer oatmeal and as the price of food rose as the season advanced, it was not uncommon for rural and city women to steal goods to convert stolen clothing into cash, or to steal food directly.

Like most of the women who were to accompany her to Australia, Mary had no previous conviction. More Irish female convicts—as compared with convicts from the rest of Britain—were married women; more of them were mothers of young families; more came from the country. Apart from Dubliners, few were prostitutes. Fewer, too, had been found guilty of crimes of violence such as assault or highway robbery.

The bill for an Irish Poor Law had passed the British Parliament on 31 July 1838, three months before Shields's crime. The Limerick workhouse would not be ready to receive its poor until May 1841. Yet to many people, even after the workhouses were in place, a minor crime committed to deal with a needful emergency would prove preferable.

When a number of prisoners including Mary were moved to Dublin to board their transport, she took her son Michael with her. What became of her infant, Bridget, is not known.

Mary's ship was to be the bark *Whitby* of 431 tons. Throughout January and February 1839, one hundred and thirty prisoners and twenty-nine of their children were rowed out through the misty estuary of Dublin Bay and arrived in piercing cold on the damp prison deck. In the struggles for space, rations and warmth, Michael was both burden and protection. Not that the other women were hardened criminals. Only three of them had done serious

prison time. Whatever their slyness, sullenness, loudness, they were normal, powerless women, most of them in grief.

On 16 February 1839, Captain Thomas Wellbank signed the Lord Lieutenant's Warrant, acknowledging the 'several bodies' he had received on board, and their prison shifts, jackets, petticoats, etc. The surgeon superintendent on *Whitby* was the naval man John Kidd, who found Mary, like Larkin before her, had reading but not writing. Thus, as a small girl, she must have attended a hedge school, an unofficial school run in the open or in a barn by Irish itinerant scholars—the only source of learning for her class.

Many of the children aboard were young and delicate, said Kidd, and 'several of the women old and infirm'. He kept the women busy with sewing and exercise on deck, and as in most well-run ships, the noise of some crewman's fiddle and the distant thump of jigs was heard through the mists by occasional winter promenaders ashore. The time of anguish and noise came on 18 February. *Whitby* left Ireland, as so many transports did, in the midst of the season of storms.

It was surprising how many of the prisoners were going to a reunion. Amongst others, Eliza White of Dublin travelled in hope to her convict husband, Christopher Reilly, and Mary Carroll, a 39-year-old dairymaid, wanted to show her convict husband her two-and-a-half-year-old son whom he had never seen. A sixty year old, Ann Murray, also had a relative on his way to New South Wales: her son, aboard the *Waverley*, a ship for males which left from Dublin a week after the *Whitby*.

In late June 1839, *Whitby* at last sailed through the sandstone headlands of Sydney Harbour. The drag of sea slackened. Mary heard raucous Australian birds call from the bushy heights above Watson's Bay.



The skills of the *Whitby* women, advertised by government, brought relatively light demand, and none for women with children. So, on 1 July the women and their infants were rowed down-harbour and landed on the western side of Sydney Cove. Lined up unchained, they were lectured by a number of colonial wives, members of the Ladies' Committee, who gave them sisterly, evangelical advice on the perils and possible rewards ahead of them.

Five Irish nuns of the Charity order had come from Cork the previous December to look after and protect their convict sisters. There were two or

three of them at the women's section of the Hyde Park barracks in Macquarie Street. The others Mary Shields would encounter at Parramatta, acting as visitors at the Female Factory, which was to be her home. Detention in Sydney was brief. The *Whitby* women and children were brought back down to the water, put into whaleboats by constables, and rowed up the Parramatta River, a broad waterway with islands, inlets and fine juts of sandstone, and, further up, mangrove swamps. The journey was 23 kilometres as the crow flies.

The Female Factory for which the women were bound was built in 1821 at Parramatta on 1.6 hectares on the riverbank. The disproportion of males to females in convict society—one hundred male convicts to every seventeen women—had called the place into being, to save females from prostitution. At first the factories produced cloth known as 'Parramatta' or 'Georgetown', after the respective Female Factories. But by the time the women of the *Whitby* arrived, there was no consistent work done at the Parramatta site. Its reputation was questionable but not as bad as that of the Cascades Female Factory, which was seen as a de facto brothel for the town of Hobart. The Cascades Factory was certainly the scene of scandalously high mortality amongst infants and young children who inhabited the place with their mothers and, like the Parramatta Factory, it was now continuously overcrowded. The Parramatta and Cascades Factories were not the only ones in the colony—there were at this stage or later similar Factories at Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Moreton Bay, and at Launceston and Ross and elsewhere in Van Diemen's Land.

The Parramatta Factory had been designed by the talented convict Francis Greenway, the Bristol architect transported for forging a contract. Behind its 2.7 metre walls, it was three storeys high, and was meant to house three hundred women. Within a year of Mary Shields's arrival there, it held 887 women and 405 children. Since free immigration for deserving poor spinsters from the British Isles was taking jobs once given to convict women, women accumulated in the Factory. In some ways the Factory was an extended, land-based version of the convict deck. 'Major' Mudie, the severe Hunter Valley magistrate, disapproved of the Parramatta Factory on the grounds that 'So agreeable a retreat, indeed, is the Factory, that it is quite a common thing for female assigned servants to demand of their masters and mistresses to send them there and flatly, and with fearful oaths, to disobey orders for the

purpose of securing the accomplishment of their wish.' By contrast, reformers said that many convict women arrived with 'good resolutions' at the Factory, making their imprisonment unnecessary and degrading.

In the dormitories, women competed for space by maintaining a phalanx with those from the same ship and county. *Whitby* women stuck together against women from earlier arriving ships such as *Lady Rowena*, *Diamond*, *Sir Charles Forbes*, *Surrey* and *Planter*. The English women from these last two ships had their own encampment in the Factory's long dormitories, but the Irish had a larger one, and many of the arguments over space and food were conducted with that Irish raucousness which would become an Australian characteristic, but which polite people mistook for lowness of soul. The Sisters of Charity did their best to mediate.

A few months before Shields's arrival at Parramatta, Governor Gipps had as part of his new initiative dismissed a tipsy matron and an incompetent superintendent. All Gipps could fall back on was a pragmatic but venal couple who had earlier been sacked from the post—the Bells, George and Sarah. During Shields's time at the Factory, the Bells were its day-to-day managers. They had in their care three categories of women. Category 1 consisted of women like Mary who were eligible for assignment, had the right to go to church on Sundays, receive friends at the Factory, and earn wages if there was something for them to do. Category 2 were returned assignees, and Category 3 those undergoing punishment. The Category 1 single women were sometimes 'drawn up in a line for the inspection of the amorous and adventurous votary, who, fixing his eye on a vestal of his taste, with his finger beckons her to step forward from the rank'. It was often with no previous acquaintance with the man at all that a young woman would choose an unpredictable marriage over life in the Female Factory.



Gipps had been horrified to find that the women of the Factory were completely idle, apart from cooking and washing for themselves. The year before Mary Shields's arrival, the Governor decided that he would introduce a supply of New Zealand flax which could be picked by the women and turned into mesh for fishing nets and screens for fruit trees. From 18 October in the year of Mary's arrival, the public was informed too 'that needlework of all sorts is performed at the Female Factory in the best possible manner and

at very moderate charges'. None of the Factory's operations was particularly profitable for the government, but Gipps favoured them for their rehabilitative aspects.

Lady Elizabeth Gipps, daughter of a British major-general and a woman of progressive mind, had the best behaved thirty or so of the Factory women visit Government House, Parramatta, to receive lessons in needlework. Mary Shields walked up the driveway of the vice-regal residence to attend these sessions, and breathed the urbane air of a civilised household. In the parlour, the women awed to reticence for once by this elegantly genial British lady in her thirties who sat down amongst them along with her housekeeper, the classes proceeded, though they were interrupted in the early 1840s by Lady Gipps's bad health.

With whatever skills she possessed, Mary was motivated to ensure her son's rations. When he reached the age of five in 1840, Michael was sent to one of the orphan schools in Parramatta, probably the one founded by the Sisters of Charity. Contact between Mary and Michael was permitted, especially on Sundays. The boy was growing up amongst the children of other convicts, yet the orphanages of Parramatta did not seem to be schools for criminality. Michael would not come to manhood lawless.

Mary spent a largely unrecorded four years in the Factory's rowdy sorority. Though no notable misdemeanour or illness raised Shields to public notice, she suffered from the way the prison-cum-refuge was run. Embezzlement of funds, over-ordering and short-rationing were the *modus operandi* of steward and matron, Mr and Mrs Bell. News of Factory dissatisfaction eventually reached Governor Gipps, and he agreed to meet a delegation of convict women. 'They represented that they'd been sentenced to be transported, but not to be imprisoned after transportation . . .' They contrasted, 'I must say, with great force and truth', their treatment with that of women in prison in Britain and Ireland.

Even though convict assignment had ceased in 1838 Governor Gipps, upon the Molesworth Committee's recommendation, in March 1843, approved a scheme to place some of 'the best conducted women' with reputable employers. Mary Shields was due for her ticket-of-leave that year, after four years of her sentence, so it is a little mystifying that her release was cast in official papers as part of this plan of reward. In any case, by April 1843, twenty-two women were selected for the scheme, and then in June a further

eleven were added, amongst them a number of the *Whitby* women, including Mary. Applications from potential employers were to be accompanied by references from clergymen or magistrates, and the Colonial Secretary took the trouble to draft a special set of rules for the employment of these women. They were to be paid between £8 and £10 per year—Gipps said he wanted this group to have purchasing power from the day they left the Factory. Money the women earned was to be sacrosanct and not taken by the police.

Three women were to travel initially to the inland town of Goulburn—Mary Shields; Bridget Conelly, who had arrived on the *Diamond* from Cork in March 1838; and Margaret Carthy whose transport, *Sir Charles Forbes*, had put into Sydney on Christmas Day 1837. Shields had been applied for by William Bradley of Lansdown Park, Goulburn.

Each of the three women carried on her person her ticket-of-leave, indicating that she was permitted to stay in the district of Goulburn. The women were to present their papers on demand to magistrates and police along the way, in the knowledge that any dallying or diversion from their approved route would be reported. This was their first open experience of a society which was said to be the most debased on earth, and of a landscape in which any European woman was a rare sight likely to release male frenzy. How they negotiated it, how they evoked protection and respect from some men to balance the savage intentions of others can only be surmised. That these three came from the Female Factory was evident in their well-kept clothing, and women from the Factory possessed a certain *éclat*. Whether it was swamped by the male brutality of their surroundings we do not know.

By day, the three women travelled on the outside of coaches—the fares consuming part of their 10-shilling advance—or took rides on wagons, walking up the steeper grades. The authorities did not want to see women molested or prostituting themselves around the night encampments, so police magistrates would have assigned the three travellers shelter in empty cells or unused police shacks.

Having crossed the Razorback Range the women approached the Goulburn police magistrate, who arranged for them to be delivered to their employers. Mary, at the end of her institutional existence, said goodbye to the last of her Factory comrades. She went in the first instance to Lansdown Park, Bradley's home near Goulburn, a fair imitation of a

British country estate, which employed dozens of convicts and former convicts. Recently elected to the new Legislative Council of New South Wales, representing the County of Argyle, Bradley had left management of his business within the Limits to a young Englishman, John Phillips, to whom Mary would have presented herself. She was not to stay long, however, but was slated to work as housekeeper in the Monaro bush with the manager of the huge Bradley sheep runs further south, Mr Brodribb.

When Mary and her son, Michael, went off on a wagon to the far south, they still had to travel about the same distance as already covered, and in wilder and less administered country. The wagon advanced over the Limestone Plains and upwards into the grand, windy, stone-strewn, mountain-rimmed reaches of the Monaro, where European women were a rare phenomenon. Young Michael served as something of a protection as mother and son took their rest in rough company, in overseers' and shepherds' huts along the way.

The homestead at which Mary and Michael arrived at last, their Factory neatness jaded by distance, lay beyond Cooma Creek at a place named Coolringdon. The main house was certainly nothing like Lansdown Park. Inside the slab timber and bark walls, on the packed earth floor, Mary found an occasional excellent item of furniture, and good linen and silverware, and bound editions of the Latin and Greek classics as well as volumes of sermons, histories, and even novels.

The bark kitchen where Mary fulfilled some of her duties was separate from the house. The huts of the workers on the station stood nearby. In one of them resided her future lover, Hugh Larkin, whose Irishness and humour were, she clearly felt, close to her own.

21

SETTLERS AND SQUATTERS



THE POOR EMIGRANT ASHORE

The ship bearing young Henry and Clarinda Parkes anchored in Sydney Harbour on 25 July 1839, after Clarinda had given birth at sea to a baby girl just after they cleared Bass Strait. The couple possessed two or three shillings, and ‘the first news that came on board was that the four-pound loaf was selling at half a crown [two shillings and sixpence]!’.

On landing, they could not afford a carriage and Clarinda had to walk a mile across town, her infant in her arms, to ‘a little low, dirty, unfurnished room, without a fireplace’. It would cost them 5 shillings per week rent. ‘When she sat down within these wretched walls overwhelmed with fatigue, on a box which I had brought with us from the ship, I had but threepence in the world, and no employment.’ At length, ‘completely starved out’, Henry took a job inland from Sydney as a common labourer with Sir John Jamison, whose model property, Regentville, lay near the Nepean River some 58 kilometres from Sydney.

He and Clarinda ate the same rations as the convicts. Thus Parkes, a free Englishman, had the chance to comment on the complaints made by many convicts about what masters gave them to eat. He told his sister that they each received weekly 10½ pounds (4.8 kilos) of beef sometimes unfit to eat; 10½ pounds of rice—of the worst imaginable quality; 6¾ pounds (3 kilos)

of flour, half of it ground rice; 2 pounds (900 grams) of sugar; a quarter pound (114 grams) of inferior tea; a quarter pound of soap ('not enough to wash our hands'); and two figs of tobacco ('useless to me'). And this from a master considered to be a reputable one. Parkes had no time to make a vegetable garden since 'the slave masters of Sydney require their servants to work for them from sunrise till sunset'.

The Parkes's marriage bed consisted for the first four months of their habitation at Regentville of a disused door laid on cross-pieces of timber, lined with a sheet of bark off a box tree and covered with articles of clothing for warmth. The hut's walls and roof admitted sunshine, rain, moonlight and wind. Their boxes, coming up from Sydney on Sir John's dray, had been broken open along the way, and almost everything worth carrying away was stolen.

Towards the New Year Henry and Clarinda and the baby returned to Sydney, where he found employment with Russell Brothers, Engineers and Brass Founders, in George Street, getting 5 shillings per day finishing brass work. He did not like the work much and thought he might need to return to the country after all. The town of Sydney was an execrable place. 'I have been disappointed in all my expectations of Australia, except as to its wickedness; for it is far more wicked than I had conceived it possible for any place to be, or than it is possible for me to describe to you in England. For the encouragement of any at home who think of immigrating, I ought to add that I have not seen one single individual who came with me in the *Strathfieldsay* but most heartily wishes himself back at home.'

But slowly Parkes began to meet kindred souls—not least a bookseller named McGee of Pitt Street, of whom he was a client. And by September 1840 he had got work as a Customs House officer, and things were better. 'I spend most of my time on board ships, where I have a great deal of leisure to write poetry.' Some of it was published. And Robert Lowe, a member of the Legislative Council, a descendant from one of the most illustrious families in England, had not thought him undeserving of his kindness, Henry said. 'I lately sat down to table with some of the most respectable merchants in Sydney.' He had 'a more comfortable home than it was ever my lot to possess in England', and was accumulating books again, though regretting that poor Clarinda spent a solitary life apart from the company of their daughter, 'our dear little blue-eyed ocean child', Clarinda Sarah.

Parkes saw the onset of the colonial depression. 'The merchants of Sydney are all in a state of bankruptcy.' (And the four-pound loaf, he remarked, was now only 8 pence.) He believed too many immigrants were arriving for everyone's good. 'A week ago there were eight vessels lying at anchor in the harbour, all crowded with emigrants! And though many of them have now been engaged to go into the interior, I am afraid great numbers will not be able to obtain employment.' The cry for increased immigration came from those who wanted to keep labour prices low and keep Britons in the role of coolies, said Parkes.

Parkes confessed that when he went home in the evenings, his daughter would run to him with the plea, 'Father, take us in a big ship to see Grandfather and aunties in England, do, Father!' But distance from England had its benefits. It made him willing to offer peace to his father-in-law. 'Tell Mr R. Varney that his daughter is comfortable, and as happy as a virtuous woman in her situation can be. Tell him it is time any enmity he may feel towards me should cease, though in some measure he may have had cause for it. The fact of our being separated to the opposite extreme of the earth, should, I think, help to make us friends.'

Pleased to report that the greatest poetical personage of Birmingham was now living in Australia—the Chartist-leaning, independently minded Miss Louisa Twamley, now married to the Vandemonian pastoralist Charles Meredith—Parkes himself was preparing for press a volume of verses, *Stolen Moments*, for which he had subscribers for one hundred copies. By now he knew Charles Harpur, the Australian-born poet. 'I am now more happily situated,' he wrote, 'but there is much bitterness at best in the lot of an exile.' His poetry would emphasise the banished British spirit and potential Australian democratic glory.

PASTORAL MIGHT

While convicts struggled with poor rations and hoped for tickets-of-leave and free emigrants battled to survive the economic downturn, patriots, patriarchs and pastoralists were at work in the politics of the colony. In 1842 an Imperial Act granted New South Wales, which still included Victoria, the right to elect twenty-four members to a legislature. A £20 rent or licence fee franchise was the basis of the Electoral Act, and there were democrats, from Charles Harpur the poet to Henry Parkes the customs officer who

considered it far too high. It was not corruption of society by convicts which worried these men, it was the concentration of political power, whether in New South Wales or Whitehall, in the hands of the pastoralists, the men who, living under bark, had grown the Golden Fleece in the great distances and ennui of the bush.

A great political crisis emerged in April–May 1844 when Governor Gipps stated new terms under which settlers and squatters could occupy land. He and the British government were appalled that squatters could occupy unlimited acres for a mere £10 licence fee. He now proposed that squatters pay a licence fee for each run of twenty square miles (52 km²), that the squatter could buy his land over a long period at not less than £1 per acre, and that to achieve security over his land, the squatter should purchase a 320-acre (1.29 km²) homestead area which would secure his title to the run for eight years, and that he pay £320 every eight years to renew his rights.

The pastoralists reacted to these modest ideas with fury. To fight Gipps the Pastoral Association in New South Wales and its Port Phillip counterpart, the Mutual Protection Society, began lobbying in Britain and locally, predicting the ruin of their industry if licence fees on squatting land and the collection of quit rents within the boundaries went ahead. The Committee on Land Grievances came into being, as gentry like Ben Boyd, WC Wentworth, Henry Dangar and others refused to accept the right of the imperial government to control land policy, a stand, as Gipps said, ‘in opposition to all Constitutional Law and the positive enactment of Parliament’. At a meeting in Sydney, to the delight of genuine republicans, Wentworth—no longer young, now a pastoralist operating beyond the Limits, and well on his way to becoming a Tory—played the republican card by arguing that the Crown had been acting as ‘but the trustee for the public’. All land taxes not sanctioned by the Legislative Council of New South Wales were illegitimate, he said. Ben Boyd, with land holdings on the south coast of New South Wales and over the mountains to the interior, argued that the payment of a £10 licence fee should vest the occupier with freehold over an area twenty miles square (52 km²). One squatter suggested, ‘The best thing they could do with Sir George [Gipps] now would be to Bligh him.’ Another thought that twenty good stockmen would defy ‘any regiment in Her Majesty’s Service’; a third, that the soldiery would switch loyalties in return for twenty acres (8 hectares) and a few cattle apiece. The revolutionary spirit amongst squatters was strong.

One who was initially attracted to their cause was Robert Lowe, the patron of Henry Parkes, an albino lawyer who had come to New South Wales with his wife for his health. But he and other urban liberals ultimately saw through the pastoralists' rhetoric, and Lowe withdrew his support from the squatters. 'To give them a permanency of occupation of those lands—those lands to which they had no better right than that of any other colonist . . . I can never consent to.' He decided that having thought they fought for liberty, 'he found they fought only to defend their breeches pocket'.

Throughout the 1840s the argument about whether Australia was to be 'a sheep walk forever' (to borrow a later phrase from Robert Lowe) would continue, along with struggles between and within sects and amid a coruscating display of political passion.

A LIMITLESS FUTURE



FETCHING SPOUSES

Hugh Larkin had by the time of Mary Shields's arrival at Coolringdon served ten years of his life sentence. Eighteen months earlier, on 21 December 1841, he had filled out a form he got from the police magistrate in the new village of Cooma, forty or so kilometres away. It was an application to have his wife, Esther, and their children, Patrick, then ten and Hugh, eight, sent to Australia at the British government's expense. 'The Petitioner is desirous of being reunited to the family from which he was separated at the time of his transportation.' William Brodribb certified that 'the Petitioner above named has been in my service since the month of March 1834, during which period his conduct has been such, that I respectfully recommend his Petition to the favourable consideration of His Excellency . . .'

More than a year earlier, Esther had made her own appeal to Dublin Castle asking the Lord Lieutenant to look upon her situation with the eyes of pity and send her and her boys by free passage to New South Wales. Perhaps Hugh had received a letter from Esther and was operating on the basis of Esther's stated willingness to cross the mighty ocean.

Hugh's petition needed to make its way by bullock wagon and mail coach to Sydney, where two months later a Colonial Secretary's clerk checked

Larkin's record and wrote, 'Nothing recorded.' On that basis, Governor Gipps himself inscribed the petition, 'Allowed.'

The approving document would have reached Ireland in the summer of 1842. There was no problem with the way Hugh had addressed the petition. Laurencetown was a well-known market centre, Lismany a few kilometres north of it. Since Esther was still in the parish of Clontuskert, in Laurencetown or Lismany, under the eyes of relatives and the clergy, it was not likely that a lover delayed her. In early 1840 she had been more than willing to voyage to Australia, in fact desperate to. If she did ever receive the invitation to travel, it may have been an elderly and ailing parent who halted her departure. Or perhaps Esther found she did not have the financial means to travel with her sons to the port of embarkation, or acquire the food and range of clothing required for the journey. Or maybe she never received the approval: sometimes, for reasons of inefficiency on the part of the Irish constabulary, the papers were not delivered.

The most likely, and most pathetic, explanation for Esther's failure to reach Australia was the success of the anti-transportation movement. Convict transportation to New South Wales was ended by a Royal Order-in-Council in August 1840, implementing the recommendation of the Molesworth Committee. But the wives of convicts could receive free passage only on convict vessels. Even when Esther Larkin made her petition in February 1840, it was already nearly too late to link up with the last women's ship, the *Margaret* from Dublin. So, probably for lack of a ship, Esther remained in Galway, and all enquiries and demands she made were futile.

The Colonial Secretary in Sydney had signed Hugh's ticket-of-leave on 1 June 1843. By the time Mary Shields and her son ascended the slope where the homestead of Coolringdon stood, Hugh was entitled to go out and seek employment where he chose; to set up in business in his own right if he wished. Like many convicts who rubbed along well enough with a master, he chose to remain in the rawness and splendid space of that rising plain. The arrival of Mary may also have been a cause of his sticking with Brodribb. Vivacious Mary must have been a wonderful relief to the weight of languor which afflicted the bush.

A BIRTH IN THE BUSH

Apart from the bush flies, ants, large spiders, and the occasional hut-intruding brown or red-bellied black snake (a particular terror to the natives

of snake-free Ireland), the timber and bark homestead must have seemed freer and more pleasant for Mary Shields than the Female Factory. As the Australian spring came on, in the rush of activity around shearing when excitement, talk and the flow of liquor was at its peak in the Monaro, she and Hugh Larkin took each other as partners. The following July, she gave birth to a boy, whom they named Thomas. Though an observing Anglican, Brodribb seemed philosophic about these liaisons between felons, even if both were married to others, as in this instance; such flexibility, shocking to visitors from Britain, was not considered extraordinary in New South Wales.

Brodribb himself was to be married that year, 1844, and would bring his wife, Eliza Matilda Kennedy, to Coolringdon. She was a cultivated young woman who had grown up on her father's pastoral stations. In the bush's natural democracy, her own children in years to come would play around the woolshed with convict children such as the Shields-Larkin son, perhaps under the care of Michael O'Flynn, Mary's Irish son, who was nearing ten years of age when his half-brother was born.

Now that ceaseless tragedy was the daily order of famine-struck Ireland, those transported earlier lived lives almost of banal well-being in their distant quarter of New South Wales. Hugh Larkin and Mary Shields did not escape the average, bitter nineteenth-century bereavements, though. In December 1847, a second child, Mary, was born and lived only eleven days. With the mother still ailing, Hugh took the small coffin and his dead child by cart to burial somewhere in that immense country. Mary had now lost both daughters she had given birth to: O'Flynn's Bridget and Larkin's Mary, and that must have weighed appropriately on her.

It was apparent to her that they must marry for the sake of young Tom Larkin, now three years old. On the one hand, there was no doubt that Hugh and Mary, being now dead to the Old World, could still not permit themselves to marrying outside the church. But the priests were not as easily convinced. In their eyes the fact wives or husbands in the northern hemisphere were unreachable did not justify new unions at the earth's extreme south. An Attorney-General of New South Wales, the Irishman Roger Therry, who lived thirty years in the colony, was well aware of the marriage stratagems of some of his convict brethren. He told of how a man transported from Cork had left his wife and two children behind in Ireland. On becoming free, he wished to marry within the colony. He was able to produce a letter, complete with a

Cork postmark forged in Sydney on the envelope. The letter, purporting to be from his brother in Ireland, indicated that the man's dear wife had died in the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church, a touch which worked well, said Therry, with the clergy.

In the end, Hugh and Mary managed to marry just before Hugh's conditional pardon was granted, when in theory he still needed permission from the Convict Department. This wedding prior to Hugh's freedom could have occurred only because both Esther Larkin and John O'Flynn had died in Ireland or else through the use of subterfuge of the kind mentioned by Therry. In any case, the ceremony took place on 16 March 1848, the eve of St Patrick, at Sts Peter and Paul's Catholic Church at Goulburn.

There was now a new governor in New South Wales. Well-meaning George Gipps had left in 1846 in a state of failing health and with the general disapproval both of the progressives, who saw him as too much a servant of the Crown, and of the squatters who believed him to be too lenient towards Aboriginals and indifferent to their problems of tenure. The new governor, Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy, had fought at the age of sixteen at Waterloo, and had experience of colonial government in both St Edward's Island in Canada and in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies.

It was FitzRoy who, on 1 June 1848, signed the conditional pardon of Hugh Larkin. In this ornate document, towards the bottom of its page of print and penmanship, lay the clause: 'Provided always . . . that if the said Hugh Larkin, shall at any time during the continuance of the term of his said Sentence, go to, or be in, any part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, then this Pardon shall thenceforth be and become wholly void . . .' He could not take his dark, knowing benevolence even temporarily back to Galway to encounter his sons.

Hugh had an intention now to give up the remote stations. He and Mary left that boulder-dotted high plain, as their own people, possessed of freedom of movement and the rights of ambition. In late October 1848, Hugh bought for £25 a town allotment in Cowper Street, Goulburn, and set to work to build a house upon it and opened a small store. An infant, Anne, born of Mary Shields/Larkin on 30 November 1848, was healthy, and like her elder brother Tom, now five years old, would live on into another century. These colonial children, speaking in a potent, crow-harsh Australian accent, confirmed for their parents their distance from the Irish

Famine disaster, but also evoked other children who spoke more liquidly in Limerick or Galway.

The future seemed promising for the Larkin children, but utterly limitless for the children of their parents' former employer, the two young Brodribb daughters and a small son. But in the middle of 1849, when Hugh and Mary were establishing themselves in Goulburn, Brodribb's wife, Matilda, fell ill, and almost at once his daughters too. It was diphtheria. At the end of July 1849, Brodribb's eldest daughter died. Brodribb rode by phaeton forty kilometres to Cooma for a coffin. Eight days later the second daughter died in great suffering. Mrs Matilda Brodribb recovered, but the 'loss of our daughters weighed heavily on her mind'.

William Bradley, Brodribb's employer in turn, also suffered grief. During his journey to Europe, he lost his sickly wife, Emily, whom Italy was meant to cure.

But for the moment, Hugh Larkin's Australian wife and children bloomed. Soon they would share the pews of Sts Peter and Paul with Irish farm labourers and maids, desperate bounty emigrants from Famine-ravaged Ireland. Though the greatest mass of starving refugees would go to England, America and Canada, some thousands of Irish men, women and children reached Australia as a result of the Famine.

23

THE NEW POLITICS



DEMOCRACY

By 1848, Henry Parkes, former labourer, brass-finisher and customs officer had earned enough to turn shopkeeper, selling a miscellany of items from his premises in Hunter Street, and had founded and led an Artisans' Committee which secured the election of the lawyer Robert Lowe, the first populist candidate, to the New South Wales Legislative Council. One of Lowe's policies was to reduce the reserve price of land to 5 shillings an acre, leaving squatters in possession until bona fide settlers purchased the land. It was a form of unlocking the land which would ultimately become popular many years later.

There was inevitable conflict between the old gentry who had bought or been granted their land and the squattocracy who had acquired it cheaply. Wrote Benjamin Boyd, himself a squatter, 'there always has been, and will be, bitterness of feeling and dissension. The old settlers cannot forgive the squatters their long leases; the squatters cannot forgive the old settlers their free grants of land.'

Squatting nonetheless was contrary to the idea of a 'merrie Australia', an Australia of villages. Indeed free men did not like to work on remote stations. Fear of Aboriginal spearing acted as a disincentive too. The work was monotonous. The free working class therefore failed to meet the woolgrowers' need for labour.

So the squatters were the chief voice favouring renewal of transportation, and it was one of the motives behind the establishment of the Moreton Bay Separation Movement, pushing for an independent colony in what is now Southern Queensland. The clash between men who wanted a continuing supply of cheap convict labour and those who wished for reputable artisans was very deep.

As the Currency poet Charles Harpur vividly declared in 1845,

*Hark Australians! Hark, the trumpet
Calls you to a holy fight! . . .
Down with Wentworth! Down with Martin!
Murray, Marsh and all their clan!
Sticklers for the rights of cattle—
Sneerers at the rights of man!
We were slaves—nay, we were viler!
Soulless shapes of sordid clay,
Did we hound not from our Councils
Wolves and foxes such as they . . .
By the majesty of manhood
Righteously and nobly free,
We will pause not till Australia
All our own—our own shall be.*

In the atmosphere in which he wrote this, Harpur knew that in New South Wales a little over one thousand people occupied 44 million acres (almost 18 million hectares), and a similar disproportion in land ownership existed in the Port Phillip region.

THE TOYSHOP MOB

By 1848 Henry Parkes, former bounty immigrant, was a political force. The room behind his shop in Hunter Street, which sold everything from ivory by the tusk and pound to musical instruments, stationery, desks, whales' teeth, boxing gloves and Malacca canes, was a meeting place for the literary and political radicals of Sydney. Some called this grouping 'the toyshop mob'.

In February 1849, Earl Grey announced the resumption of transportation to New South Wales. He had yielded to the desires of the pastoralists, and was

sending to the colony a number of trusty convicts known as 'exiles' on a ship named *Hashemy*. Parkes's parlour was one of the epicentres of outrage at Earl Grey. The air was full of republican rhetoric, particularly from the Reverend Lang and a little dandy of a Currency man, Daniel Deniehy. Respectable liberal leaders of some means would fight for control of this newest cause, since they were frightened that the toyshop radicals would use the betrayal by Earl Grey to take New South Wales in some drastic revolutionary direction. After all, only the previous year, the French had overthrown a king and installed a poet, Lamartine, as president of France. The Legislative Council would condemn Earl Grey's decision, to make possible revolutionaries feel they had friends at the top.

Shops closed the Monday after the *Hashemy* arrived in Sydney in June 1849, and thousands of people made their way to Circular Quay. Parkes had hired a horse-drawn two-decker omnibus which carried a banner declaring, 'Defiance'.

Rain began to fall, but the crowd did not move. Parkes's friend Robert Lowe was there, though no longer popular with the lower classes who had helped elect him to the Legislative Council. But when he spoke at length, Lowe was aflame. 'I can see from this meeting the time is not too far distant when we assert our freedom not by words alone. As in America, oppression is the parent of independence, so will it be in this colony . . . And as sure as the seed will grow into the plant, and the plant into the tree, so will injustice and tyranny ripen into rebellion, and rebellion into independence.'

This statement, said the *Herald*, was met with 'Immense Cheering'. But the truth was that most people there that day were looking for redress within the British Constitution; they did not want, or even contemplate, independence. Even Lowe might have been merely raising the American Revolution as a spectre to frighten the British government into constitutional action.

But when a delegation, including Lowe and Parkes, took the motions and petitions from the meeting to Government House, they found the garrison out and guarding the fences of the Government Domain. Let in, they met the new governor, Sir Charles FitzRoy, the aristocrat who combined earthy tastes with superciliousness towards political activists, particularly lower-class activists like Parkes. The governor said he had assured the people of

Port Phillip that the prison ship *Hashemy* would not land its cargo there, and so it would have to dock in Sydney. The delegation left in the cold of a June dusk, outraged at FitzRoy.

The exiles aboard *Hashemy* must have looked at the shore and longed for a landing, and wondered why, when in the past far worse lags had been landed, they could not be brought ashore without creating a vast public riot.

The governor's ill-grace was a great rallying call for another mass meeting a week later. From the top of his bus, Parkes said that now the heavens smiled on their endeavours whereas the week before they had wept for the gross injustice represented by the convict ship. Parkes then spoke to a motion moved by the lawyer Alexander Michie—'That it is indispensable to the well-being of the colony and to the satisfactory conduct of its affairs, that its government should no longer be administered by the remote, ill-informed, and irresponsible Colonial Office, but by Ministers chosen from and responsible to the colonists themselves, in accordance with the principles of the British Constitution.'

The convicts were nonetheless landed from *Hashemy*, and some were applied for as assigned servants now that that was again temporarily possible, and the rest were sent up to Moreton Bay. But it was apparent to FitzRoy and Earl Grey that no more convict transports could come to Sydney.

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A LAND OF ENGLISH RACES



EAST INDIAMEN

The abolition of slavery in Britain in 1833 had helped create a system of indentured labour by which large numbers of Indians were shipped to Britain's African and West Indian colonies as a cheap labour force. Some entrepreneurs and pastoralists in Australia, faced with the end of transportation, now thought of Asian labourers as an answer, particularly in light of the harsh economic conditions of the late 1830s. Australian craftsmen and workers, however, did not want to compete against 'coolies', whose labour was so much cheaper than their own.

Nonetheless, in 1836, John Mackay, who had arrived from India where he had lived for twenty-eight years, began to test the interest on the part of New South Wales pastoralists in importing coolies, and in conversation with an uneasy Governor Bourke told him that they produced work fully equal to Europeans in any agricultural job 'excepting the plough'.

Those, like Mackay, interested in employing coolies were quick to point out that when the indentured labourers returned to India, they would take with them 'not only improved manners, customs, arts, agriculture and laws, but also the blessings of Christianity'. And so, the opponents of slavery were told, this was not slavery; this was the spreading of the light.

The edgy governor therefore received the 'Hill Coolie Proposal', a letter from 'certain flock owners' begging him to consider 'the urgent necessity that exists of sending to Bengal for shepherds, cow herds, labourers and household servants'. The government was expected to pay the expenses of recruitment, passage and provisions during the labourers' voyage to Australia.

Through June and July 1837 a Legislative Council committee of land-owners considered the matter. Hannibal Macarthur and John Blaxland were members, and the chairman was Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass, the Scot who had earlier authorised Major Nunn's murderous expedition against the Kamilaroi. Some of those giving evidence were on the edge of bankruptcy, given the slump in the price of wool and the long-running drought, and their attitudes towards labour costs were thus influenced. All of them were about to take heavy losses, including Hannibal Macarthur.

The committee's report came down in favour of more migrants from Britain, but noted briefly that Indians were a hardy, industrious race likely to give 'immediate and temporary relief' to the labour shortage. There were problems with the paganism, habits and colour of the Indians, the report said, and yet, out of necessity, the committee concurred in the expediency of granting a bounty of £6 sterling for every male Dhanger, or hill labourer, of Bengal, who would be embarked before the end of 1837. The governor, Sir Richard Bourke, forwarded the committee's rather apologetic recommendations to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg.

The coolies left Calcutta on the *Peter Proctor* with a native surgeon in 1837 and reached Sydney in late 1837. In February 1838 fifteen coolies absconded from two properties in the Sydney basin. The chief constable of Parramatta apprehended them hiking west near the modern township of Wentworth Falls, with the ambition of walking home to India. Appearing before a bench of magistrates seven days later, one of them, Madhoo, complained of insufficient food and clothing as well as the non-payment of wages for the two months they had been working. The rags they had on, the *Monitor* reported, seemed to be the tattered remains of the clothing in which they had left India.

Mackay was prepared to drop charges if the labourers would return to employment. Madhoo agreed on condition that they received sufficient food and pay, and clothes were issued monthly. Here was something convicts had been unable to apply in any coherent way without being destroyed

by it—industrial action. It was not the first such case in Australia, but an early one.

Edward Smith Hall of the *Monitor* wrote about these ‘unhappy maltreated Heathen British subjects’. The coolies of Mr John Lord were working well, however, on the remote Williams River in what would become Queensland, and Mackay complained that the Indian coolies who went west had been ‘seduced to abscond’ by local progressives. Though the *Herald* said ‘More and more labour from India should be the cry of the colonists of New South Wales’, there were attacks from the *Australian* against the ‘Eastern slave trade’.

In July 1838 the New South Wales Legislative Council passed new resolutions in favour of continuation of convict transportation, because in some ways it was beginning to seem more acceptable than immigration from India. Yet, the *Australian* asked, ‘Shall this, our country—shall Austral-Britain—become the Emporium of the Eastern slave trade? Shall our future generations be a mixed race? Shall the inveterate prejudices of colour and caste—shall Hinduism and Mahomedanism—be transplanted and take deep root in this Christian, British soil!’

In terms of humanity towards the coolies themselves, in 1838, the British Cabinet initiated a bill for the protection of the coolies, and there was an order-in-council that the human traffic should stop until regulations could be worked out to protect the recruited labourers. Legal opinion was clear that this applied to Australia also. In January 1839 a petition was drawn up by pastoralists and addressed to the Queen and both Houses asking for the continuation of convict transportation and assignment. The petitioners agreed that one cheap alternative to transportation would indeed be to supply themselves with coolie labour from India, but that would ‘inflict on this colony injury and degradation only inferior to what has occurred in the slave states of the union in America’.

Major Lockyer of Ermington outside Sydney, who had spent sixteen years in India, was one who criticised convict thieving and claimed that convicts cost twice as much as Indians. People of like mind to him had not abandoned the coolie option. Indeed in June 1841 a petition for coolie labour was signed by 202 colonists.

That same year James Stephen at the Colonial Office in Whitehall enunciated the principle that Australia should be a land ‘where the English race

shall be spread from sea to sea unmixed with any lower caste. As we now regret the folly of our ancestors in colonising North America from Africa, so should our posterity have to censure us if we should colonise Australia from India.'

The issue rolled on through the 1840s, especially after the formation of a Coolie Association by Australian landowners. WC Wentworth and Captain Maurice O'Connell, both committee members of the Coolie Association, tried to depict themselves as 'the working men's friend'. For if the colony collapsed economically, they said, it was the workers who would suffer.

An anti-coolie petition signed by 1421 artisans and small businessmen was forwarded, with Governor Gipps's opinion in its support, to Queen Victoria. The British Colonial Secretary Lord Stanley told Gipps that the Queen had read their petition, and that Her Majesty's government had no plans to permit the immigration of coolies into New South Wales. The British government did not wish to create a new colonial underclass in New South Wales, and neither did what were generally condemned as 'the democratic classes' in the colony.

Still the coolie faction fought on. But between the Indians' failure to be 'meek and mild Hindus', and the lack of enthusiastic support from government, things were not flourishing for the coolie faction. Soon there was discussion about Chinese labourers, with employers speculating whether they would prove to be less unruly.

WHAT ABOUT CHINESE?

During the First Opium War (1840–42), when the Chinese resisted British attempts to use Indian opium to pay for increasing imports of China tea, Australian pastoralists, disenchanted with the Indian coolie experiment, discussed the desirability of importing Chinese coolies as cheap labourers, but they were unable to do so until the war was over. Then, in 1847, amendments to the Colonial Master and Servants Act made it attractive to import Chinese labourers into Australia. The first shipload of indentured labourers arrived in Sydney in October 1848 from Amoy (Xiamin), organised through the agency of J. Tait, a British merchant house in that port. There the labourer, recruited by Chinese middlemen, signed a Chinese-language contract concerning pay and rations, and undertook a five-year exile to some as yet unknown station in the remote Australian bush. On

arrival in Sydney, the labourer would sign an English-language contract not always identical to the one he had signed in the Amoy depot.

The arrival of Chinese coolie labour was immediately unpopular among Australian workers, the same people who had been involved in the abolition of convict transportation. Australia would receive between 1847 and 1853 approximately 3500 Chinese indentured labourers. They represented in their very persons a challenge to the home government and to the European settlers' concerns over wages and race. These latter sentiments would ultimately win; the importation of Chinese labour would represent the peak of the large pastoralists' economic and political power.

Benjamin Boyd, an exceptional entrepreneur who had been involved in the founding of the Royal Bank of Australia in London, used its finances to move a number of his ships and himself to New South Wales. By 1844, after only two years in the colony, he and the bank controlled 2.5 million acres (just over 1 million hectares) on the coast, in the Monaro and the Riverina. He added a new twist to the indentured labour issue by bringing in Pacific Islanders, generally Melanesians, to work in his whaleboat crews and on his sheep stations. In 1847, for example, ships of his brought to Australia 185 men and seven women from small Melanesian islands such as Ouvéa and Lifou in the Loyalty group, from Tana and Aneityum in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and even from a Polynesian island beyond Vanuatu. The men were to work as shepherds, labourers or seamen for five years at £1 6 shillings a year with food, clothing and bedding supplied. White shepherds at this time were earning £25 a year, so Boyd seemed to do very well out of his Islanders. Scrupulous people accused Boyd of virtually kidnapping the natives to bring them to Australia, but an enquiry by the Attorney-General of New South Wales dismissed the accusations.

Some of Boyd's Islanders who were assigned to his mountainous stations in the Monaro suffered severely from the winter cold, and others could not get accustomed to the great stretches of plateau and Riverina plains, and returned to Twofold Bay—Boyd's base on the New South Wales south coast—begging him to transport them home. By the end of 1847, only sixty of his original Islanders remained with him.

The squatters in the northern sections of New South Wales, that is, in future Queensland, were the biggest users of indentured labourers from China. Many were employed also to clear land around the farms and

townships of Narrandera, Hay and Deniliquin in south-west New South Wales. They were a mobile workforce who, hired out, would set up their own camp, work and move on. Time off was usually spent in the Chinese quarter of the nearest big town.

There were at this time similarities between the pressures on the individual Chinese male and those on the Irish and the Scottish Highlanders. They were likely to have joined local gangs and secret societies to create a network of support for themselves in a landscape where their hold on land was shaky.

The indenture system was essentially a system of thralldom, making the Chinese labourers a captive labour force—in getting employees to chalk up purchases from the station store against unearned wages, employers were forcing their coolies into a situation of debt peonage, which could be enforced by recourse to the law. The coolies were unable to accumulate money to buy their way off the station they were indentured to.

Two men named Pekié and Chiok Kaon absconded from their station similarly owing amounts of more than £3. The magistrates always returned the workers to their masters after they had served their hard labour, and the masters retained the men's contracts. Fortunately for the Pekies of the back blocks, the masters did not usually bring charges for absconding because they knew they would lose three months hard labour from the coolie they had invested in. But they tried to use locking them up in the cells at regional police stations as a chastening tool, after which the owner would not turn up to court. The lock-ups were harsh. The Tenterfield one was described as 'a wooden box for prisoners in the centre of a common hut', and was capable of causing 'all but the most recalcitrant labourers' second thoughts.

One coolie named Sang was charged with assault and battery on his master Robert Fleming, for which he was found not guilty. Sang stated that he was still owed £10 for the past year's work.

Overall, despite many misunderstandings and deliberate abuses on the part of employers, the Chinese were considered 'good shepherds, yet they are difficult to manage'. A lot of problems ceased as understanding of the English language and laws grew amongst the labourers. As their contracts expired, they often found they were able to demand wages closer to what white labourers earned.

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PANNING FOR THE FUTURE



GOLDEN EPIPHANY

One sultry night early in 1851, on a trans-mountain farm near Orange, New South Wales, a devout Methodist farmer's son, William Tom, Cornish-born, was working in a shed by lamplight, hammering together a wooden box shaped like a child's cradle, but with compartments inside it and an upright handle attached to it. Once it was completed, a party of men placed the cradle on the bank of the creek below the Tom homestead, under the command of a hulking, black-moustached 34-year-old Englishman, Edward H. Hargraves. They shovelled in gravel and rocked the cradle so that heavy grains of gold would remain in its tray. When they did not have much luck, they put the cradle on a horse and moved it some 16 kilometres to Lewis Ponds. Here, where Hargraves and the local publican's sons had already found grains of gold by panning, they ended with sixteen grains of gold in their cradle.

Hargraves, a proud Orangeman, took to his horse and headed east for Sydney to announce the find. He believed from American experience that there was more reward in announcing the discovery of gold in workable forms than in digging it. While in San Francisco the previous year, he had written to a Sydney merchant: 'I am very forcibly impressed that I have been in a gold region in New South Wales, within three hundred miles of Sydney.'

To go to California, he had left his wife and five children behind in the coastal New South Wales town of Gosford, but he had not relished the drudgery of fossicking, especially not in the blizzards of winter or the slush of the Californian spring. Until he could get home again he knew he was in danger of being beaten to what he thought would be a world-altering and life-transforming discovery of Australian gold.

In January 1851 Hargraves returned to Australia and told people in Sydney he would find a goldfield in the interior. He had heard from the Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson, that gold had been found in quartz in Carcoar, near Orange, but when Hargraves, on the way there, stopped at the settlement of Guyong, west of Bathurst, he saw in the local inn specimens of copper, pyrites and quartz, of the kind he had seen in Californian goldfields, from a nearby copper mine. Hargraves borrowed a tin dish, a hand pick and a trowel and headed north-west with the publican's son, John Hardman Australia Lister. It was a warm day in the bush, a day when the ancient landscape seemed set in its ways and resistant to sudden revelations. In the valley of the Lewis Ponds Creek, a creek which did not run in dry weather, they found a waterhole and made the usual pannikin of tea, and then Hargraves announced he would attempt to pan for gold. He saw the gleam of a gold grain at the bottom of his pan. He washed, in total, six dishes for six grains. Others might consider it a nugatory amount but having been in California, Hargraves knew what it meant. These grains of gold were mere scrapings from the lode. By the waterhole in the bush that morning, he had made a famous speech, with only young Lister to listen. 'This is a memorable day in the history of New South Wales. I shall be a baron, you will be knighted, and my old horse will be stuffed, put into a glass case and sent to the British Museum.'

The Toms and Lister were anxious not to draw in a rush of diggers. To reassure them, Hargraves, before leaving for Sydney, devised on a sheet of paper under the presumptuous words 'On His Majesty's Service' a deed allowing them to mine the richest point of the creek. Hargraves named the area Ophir in honour of the biblical goldmine, and gave Lister and the Toms the exclusive right to the gold, though he probably guessed the paper was worthless. But to the young Australians, it meant they were possessors of their own Ophir, their own King Solomon's mine, their own biblical vein.

If others came to claim it, they had Hargrave's document to establish their prior ownership.

In fact, Hargraves knew that by a set of ancient statutes all gold belonged to the Crown. That was why he had gone to Sydney—to seek a reward. The government had been worried about the number of young men who had left the colonies for California. This discovery would reverse things. In his red overcoat he waited three hours for another interview with Deas Thomson. Thomson was not at first impressed. Hargraves expediently forgot about the baronetcy and asked him merely for £500 as compensation for the expense of his expedition.



Secretly, despite his undertaking to Lister and the Toms, Hargraves wanted to attract crowds of men to Ophir, since the richer the goldfield the greater his reward from the government. After making his claim to Deas Thomson, who seemed a little bemused as to its significance, Hargraves returned to Bathurst, where he lectured on his discovery, displayed pieces of gold and told his audience where they could find it.

The fifty kilometres of track to Ophir were soon marked by dray wheels and horses' hooves. When Hargraves escorted the government's mineralogical surveyor Samuel Stutchbury, an English mineralogist and biologist, to Ophir in May 1851, the diggers, in the throes of gold fever, barely noticed their arrival.

Back in Sydney Deas Thomson showed Hargraves's specimens to a man newly arrived from California. The man laughed and said that the gold obviously was found in California and had been planted at Ophir. The official reaction to Ophir was thus confused and delayed.

On 22 May, Sir Charles FitzRoy, the governor, wrote his first dispatch to England concerning the new discoveries and suggested that Hargraves was exaggerating. But before this dispatch was put on board a ship, a report arrived from Stutchbury saying that many men were panning an ounce of gold or even two every day with only a tin dish.

FitzRoy now proclaimed the Crown's right to all gold found in New South Wales, declaring no man could dig it up without buying a licence. The charge would be 30 shillings a month. Naturally the miners resisted the first

attempts to impose licences, and soon the inspector of Sydney police was preparing to take reinforcements to the goldfields.

An experienced but hard-up magistrate, John R. Hardy, former Cambridge blue in cricket and a man to reckon with, was appointed the new Commissioner of Crown Lands for the gold district. He had an escort of ten deputies armed and mounted, and between them they were to issue licences, administer the diggings, arbitrate between diggers and, in Hardy's case, sit as a justice in the Court of Petty Sessions. By the time he reached Ophir in early June 1851 there were a thousand men camped along the creek. Hardy behaved sensibly, allowing diggers to work for several days until they had enough gold dust to pay for a licence. All went peaceably, and Hardy thought Ophir as quiet as an English town.

Deas Thomson, however, now insisted that all men buy a licence before they lifted their first spadeful of gravel. Hardy protested, but went along. He thought it unfair, but the system was meant to be unfair, in the hope of forcing the agricultural labourer or the farmer back to his normal work. Policemen were instructed to smash the cradles and tools of unlicensed men. The licences were still fairly readily paid, however, Hardy estimating that at least half the now 1500 men at Ophir found on average £1 worth of gold each day. Jewish merchants moved from tent to tent buying gold. Everyone was doing well, and there was little disorder.

Within three months the number of diggers at Ophir had begun to ride home. Governor FitzRoy, who had grown fond of the licence revenue, was suddenly anxious that a new field be found. He appointed Hargraves a Commissioner of Crown Lands and sent him to find new Ophirs in southwestern New South Wales. His journey was not productive. Next FitzRoy asked the help of the Reverend W.B. Clarke, a formally trained geologist. He did not want to leave his parish of St Thomas's in North Sydney, but in the end he undertook the trip into the bush, being able to preach to miners and pastoralists on Sundays, since one of the conditions of the gold licence was that the Sabbath be observed. His journeyings were exhaustive, and he found sites from Omeo, south of the Alps in the Port Phillip area, all the way up into the Darling Downs.

On top of Hargraves and Clarke's explorations, the miners themselves were searching northwards from Ophir to the Turon River. Gold was sprinkled thirty kilometres along the Turon—'as regular as wheat in a sown field',

reported Hardy, who despite his own wages being sequestered to pay his debts, was not tempted to leave his post and harvest those ears of precious metal. The Turon would have a population of 67 000 during 1852, centred on the instant town of Sofala, whose hotels and lodging houses had calico walls not even decorated to imitate brick, as was the case with the canvas hotel walls of San Francisco. In Sofala, most men wore the long, curved throwing knife which enabled them to prise gold from cracks and wedges in the bedrock, and they carried arms to protect their gold. Yet the murder rate was low.

At a sheep station 80 kilometres north of Bathurst, an Aboriginal minding the sheep of Dr Kerr, his master, cracked an outcrop of white stone with his axe and saw a reef of gold. He told his master and overseer. Some gold-studded quartz was packed into a trunk and taken to Bathurst by wagon. Dr Kerr kept the gold taken from the site, since Aborigines were not eligible to apply for a licence.

William Charles Wentworth was worried that his workers would desert his estate at Camden, and even some of the Chinese coolies were leaving their masters and clearing out to the Turon. Governor FitzRoy expressed his amazement to Deas Thomson after the Government House porter took the road to the diggings, carrying a government-owned shovel with him. Thomson had had discussions with the American consul in Sydney, who told him that the rush could bring good results for the colony if a licence system was maintained and if there was adequate policing. By planting some good press in Europe and the United States, said the consul, the authorities could expect a boom in immigration and the spread of wealth amongst ordinary folk.

The population of the diggings dropped off that cold winter of 1851, and then in the springtime, to the relief of Thomson, many diggers left their claims to shear and take in the harvest. Meanwhile many residents of the Port Phillip area—since November 1850 the newly created colony of Victoria—were clearing out to the New South Wales goldfields. It was the turn of the new Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, Charles La Trobe, and his thirty-member Legislative Council (twenty of whom were elected) to worry about an exodus of working men. As representative government began in the new colony of some 18 000 population, the place was aflame with gold fever as well as devastating bushfires.

GOLDEN VICTORIA

In granite hills at Ballarat, 110 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, an elderly man named John Dunlop found gold, and so in early August 1851 did the blacksmith Thomas Hiscock at the village of Buninyong under the mountain of that name, just south of Ballarat. The squatters in the area included a former sea captain named John Hepburn, an early promoter of the Port Phillip District. They were all men who had come to the area in the late 1830s and the 1840s, and lived in slab timber with their ticket-of-leave stockmen, often Vandemonians. They had survived the burning seasons of drought and the biblical floods, and the downturn of 1842.

Despite the cold winter of frosts and snowfalls on the hills, diggers came up the road from Geelong, 60 kilometres to the south on the western edge of Port Phillip Bay, walking and pushing barrows loaded with cradles and pans, food and tents, or riding on carriages or with hired bullock teams, with all their gear wrapped in canvas, all making for Ballarat and the Yarrowee Creek which cut its valley. At the new-found field the Gold Commissioner, Doveton, and his Aboriginal troopers recruited from throughout the region, found eight hundred to a thousand men digging in the area.

A journalist from Geelong witnessed a meeting the diggers, summoned at eight o'clock one night by gunshot, held to decide on the miners' attitude to licence fees. Their opinions were uttered which would come to bedevil the Crown in future years. One man described himself as free and hard-working, willing to pay a fair share to government—but not 30 shillings a month. Perhaps more significantly, another said, 'It's more than the squatter pays for twenty square miles.' Another: 'I spent all the money I have fitting myself out for the diggings, and now I am to be taxed before I have been here a week.' Then: 'I propose we get up a memorial to Mr La Trobe and that we all sign it.'

So Ballarat goldfield politics began. The memorial told the government that the 30-shilling monthly fee was 'impolitic and illiberal', that the gold in the Buninyong field could not support such an impost, that the new Executive Council (of four members, appointed by La Trobe) should in any case give diggers a period of grace to work their claims, and that if these sane propositions were not acceded to, the miners would move to Bathurst in New South Wales.

A few men came to the commissioner's tent to buy their licences and when leaving 'were struck and pelted by the mob'. But under the protection of the black troopers others paid, and by afternoon the commissioner ran out of licence forms. In the Legislative Council in Melbourne, Dr Francis Murphy, a member of the Irish and colonial bar, condemned the licence fee as 'unproductive, unequal and vexatious'. He asked that it be replaced by a duty on gold. Murphy was a conservative lawyer trained at Trinity College, Dublin, yet for his motion to succeed he needed the diggers to resist paying the fee, but in the end they did not, because the field was rich enough to make the 30-shilling monthly charge seem a minor expenditure. Once men found how much gold there was beneath the pastures they began to pay up. But their opinions remained as expressed in that first meeting—especially the complaint that in lean times they were being billed more than squatters.

For each had a mere 2.4 metre square to dig in, unless they formed a team and combined the leases. Once alluvial gold had all been panned or was considered an inadequate return, the miner had to dig down through soft earth and gravel, using local timber to line and support the shaft. Next he met layers of clay, red and yellow, sticky and heavy to dig. Then harder clay still, studded with gravel, then a seam of blue clay rarely more than 13 centimetres thick in which the gold lay. Sometimes this blue clay was 3 metres down, sometimes 9 metres, sometimes not there at all. That kind of hole had a name—a shicer.

The impact of all this displacement of earth and felling of trees on Ballarat's bosky valley was prodigious. The forest disappeared, the landscape became a maze of clayey holes. The miners did their best to wash the clay and mud off at the end of each day, but it penetrated their skin.

La Trobe was aware that the Colonial Office in Whitehall wanted him to deal with the new state of affairs without spending imperial funds. How to cope with the expense of new emigrants and new townships? 'The gold revenue must be charged with it,' he jotted in pencil on a letter from his Auditor-General.

La Trobe made a significant visit to the Ballarat field after it had been open a month. He talked to the diggers, stood on heaps of clay above the shafts, and glanced down into the pits into which Mammon would draw them, even at the risk of cave-ins, six days a week. He got the impression that a great deal of lucky wealth was emerging from the shafts, and was aware

of the pressure these fortunate fellows were imposing on government. For example, he talked to a team of five men who had dug 136 ounces (3.8 kilos) of gold one day and 120 ounces (3.4 kilos) the next. He heard of one digger washing eight pounds weight (3.6 kilos) of gold from two dairy-maid dishes of clay, and of a partnership of diggers finding 31 pounds (14 kilos) of gold in one day. His impression was that the diggers could very easily pay for the government's new expenses.

There were very soon 5000 diggers at Ballarat, though the number dropped off towards the end of the year, many having gone to Mount Alexander, near Castlemaine, 65 kilometres north of Ballarat. Chris Peters, a hut-keeper on a sheep station at Mount Alexander, had broken off a piece of quartz from a reef in the pastures and seen gold. He and a companion resigned and worked at the rock, but were spied upon by a number of squatters.

North of Castlemaine, in Bendigo Creek, gold was visible at a glance. One of the first to notice it for its value may have been Margaret Kennedy, wife of the overseer at Ravenswood Station, while she rode about delivering rations to the convict shepherds' huts. With the wife of a barrel-maker, she made a tent from a linen sheet. The women were the first diggers at Bendigo, soon joined by three male prospectors.

Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe was trying to manage the burgeoning fields with only forty-four soldiers. He also had fifty-five constables in Melbourne, but fifty of them wanted to resign and go digging. William Lonsdale, the Colonial Secretary in Victoria, told Doveton, the first Gold Commissioner, to be discreet in demanding fees and to take the money only from men who had it to pay from their earnings. Other diggers were to be given a card signed by the commissioner which would permit them to search till such time as they found gold. Doveton was also told to exact no fees for September, given that the month was so far advanced. But Doveton and his notorious sergeant, the former blacksmith, Armstrong, behaved with that petty authoritarianism which was one of the sins of minor Britons, and corrupt ones at that. Armstrong would quickly penetrate every area of wealth and exchange on the goldfields. A Quaker visitor to Ballarat, William Howitt, described the appalling 'Hermstrong' as a monster who took money from diggers by illegal means, including blackmail. Armstrong was one of the initiators of the police practice by which men found without their licence, even if it were just metres away in their tent or spare shirt pocket, were chained

overnight to trees. Liquor sales were banned on the goldfields, so sly grog shops abounded, and only the ones police were taking money from were permitted to survive. Police often confiscated liquor from the competitors of the Armstrong-sanctioned shops, and broke kegs. When Armstrong retired to Melbourne after only two years, he boasted that he had cleared £15 000 by speculation and bribery and extorting miners. When the miners found that one of the streets in the new town of Ballarat, designed by the surveyor Frederic Charles Urquhart, was to be named in Armstrong's honour, they saw yet another sign that the authorities were making a mockery of them. The streets and cross streets were all named after commissioners, police functionaries or magistrates.

As well, the diggers saw little civic improvement for the taxes they paid. The roads got worse, there was no hospital, the mails were unreliable, and the police, some of them ex-convicts from across Bass Strait who had learned corrupt habits as overseers, were grossly untrue to their charge.

But at least there could be no more transportation now. Why would government bother sending prisoners for punishment to places that men were now willing to pay a high premium to reach?

ON THE DIGGINGS



HOW GOLD MAKES ALL NEW

William Charles Wentworth, by now the consummate Tory, was working as chairman of the New South Wales Select Committee to formulate a Goldfield Management Bill to limit the rights of miners and hold labourers in place on pastoral lands. In the proposed bill was a clause reserving any gold found on squatters' leaseholds to the squatter himself. Goldfield commissioners were to be empowered to tear down the homes of unlicensed residents. And while the miners' licence fee was to be reduced for locals to stop them going to Victoria, the fee was to be doubled for 'foreigners'.

Henry Parkes mocked the legislation. 'Men with brains, men with ambition, men with a ha'penny's worth of gumption and tuppence worth of nous were not going to sit in some shepherd's hut for the benefit of some big absentee shepherd king. No sir. And even an imbecile knew that to discourage the gold interest was a great public wrong.' Wentworth's bill was passed in modified form.

But busy with politics and his shop, Parkes himself did not go looking for gold. He was more interested in exalting Australia in the eyes of the imperial centre, a not uncommon Australian impulse.

Miners' associations existed on many goldfields, and the native-born and British were as one with newcomers in seeing the act as destructive

(despite the token reduction in their own licence fees), and intended to make everyone return to being serfs of the pastoral interest. So passionately was this felt that at Sofala on the Turon, at Bathurst and elsewhere, mass meetings were held by the red-shirted miners, and there was talk of resisting the new Act by armed force and the old Irish Croppy weapon of the pike. On the day before the new licences were to be introduced, 7 February 1853, 1500 armed miners, aggrieved storekeepers and other traders who feared the goldfields being depopulated marched on Sofala—there were speeches, and WC Wentworth, once the tribune of the populace, was burned in effigy.

Next day at Sofala the commissioner was nervously shifting in his saddle on the far side of the Turon waiting for troops of the 11th Regiment of Foot to arrive and restore order in the sprawling canvas town. Before they did, fourteen men crossed the river and defied him to arrest them, since they would not purchase a licence. They were arrested and charged. Waving pistols and shillelaghs, a furious crowd of miners then crossed in the face of the Gold Commissioner's troopers. But a clergyman spoke up and managed for the moment to soothe the miners.

Gold, said the clever little Corkman Justice Therry, brought to the colony a state of society which combined the minimum of comfort with the maximum of expense. House rents rose 100 per cent when the diggers came back to town with their money. Hay quadrupled in price. Couples who had worked for an annual wage of £50 as domestics now demanded more than three times that. The salaries of all government officers had to be raised nearly 50 per cent to keep them from leaving for the Turon. At first, just before the discovery of gold and just after, Sydney looked tenantless, given that so many had gone to the diggings in California and others to the new ones near Bathurst. So the first fortunes of the gold rush derived, in the continuing spirit of Sydney, from a real estate killing made by men who remained in town and bought up rows of empty houses, banking on the inevitable coming demand. Within twelve months such men were selling the houses at twenty times their previous value. Similarly, those speculators who bought livestock from farmers and squatters when herdsmen and shepherds decamped for the diggings would soon make a fortune from them.

But the Victorian goldfields threw all former discoveries in any country and in New South Wales into the shade. The population of Victoria in 1851 was already 77 000. In the next three years it grew to 250 000. In spite of the

difficulties of administration, La Trobe was comforted by the deposits made to the Government Savings Bank which implied the growth of settled life.

Roger Therry in New South Wales, where the phenomenon was not quite as intense as in Victoria, told of an old friend he met in Sydney. "Then," I said, "You seem to have had good luck at the diggings?" His answer was, "I did not go near them." The man had owned a pub on the high road to Ballarat from Geelong and had earned an enviable £6000 a year, and was going home again with £20 000, an improbable fortune for an ordinary immigrant.

Therry also entered a very elegantly fitted-out shop in Sydney and saw there that 'a red-shirted fellow, face hidden in hair, was smoking a large pipe that filled the room with smoke'. Therry mentioned the roughness of the man to the shopkeeper. "Oh sir!" was his reply. "That gentleman has been just buying £70 worth of goods for the lady near him, so, you know, we must be civil to such a customer."

GOLDFIELD ARRIVALS

It is a truism that diggers emigrating to the Australian colonies in hope of a golden bonanza brought with them new attitudes, their backgrounds making them intolerant of police officiousness and sceptical of oligarchies.

Peter and Richard Lalor, for example, who arrived in Australia in 1853, might be taken as typical of the educated Irish. They had left a nation gutted by Famine and cowed by political repression, and they brought with them a family tradition of both civil resistance and physical force. Their father, a middling farmer, had been a supporter of Daniel O'Connell, and had been elected to the Westminster parliament as a member of the Irish Party in the House of Commons. Their brother, James Fintan, was an ideological force of the Young Ireland Movement and of the Irish uprising of 1848. He wrote that only those who worked the land should own it, a doctrine which anticipated Marx and Engels. In the midst of the Famine he urged farmers to go on a nationwide rent strike, and was arrested and then released from prison as his health declined. He agreed to take part in an uprising in the summer of 1849 to protest against the sending of the harvest out of starving Ireland, but nothing came of it and two days after its proposed date he died in Dublin. Peter and Richard Lalor therefore came from no vague tradition of nay-saying. Their father, Patrick, would state in the year of his sons' emigration

to Australia, 'I have been struggling for upwards of forty years, struggling without ceasing in the cause of the people.'

Arrived in Melbourne, Richard and Peter entered a business partnership as spirit and provision merchants, which gave Peter finance sufficient to go to the Ovens goldfield late in 1853. In 1854 he moved to Ballarat where he tried several spots, finally sinking a shaft on Red Hill and living in a small hut made of logs on the Eureka goldfield.

John Basson Humffray arrived in Ballarat the same year Peter Lalor went to the Ovens. He had been born in north Wales in 1824, the son of a master weaver who made sure he was well educated. His home county, Montgomeryshire, and his hometown, Newtown, were centres of the Chartist movement, in which the young Humffray involved himself.

In Ballarat was another young man of ideas, the Italian Raffaello Carboni. An Italian nationalist in his early thirties, Carboni had been briefly imprisoned for his politics while a seminarian in Rome. Having left the Church to work in a bank, he became a member of the Young Italy movement which sought to unify Italy by driving the Austrians out of the north, taking the Papal States from the Pope (who, said the rebels, should be content to be a spiritual prince), and the south from the heinously corrupt Bourbons who ruled the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. Carboni was also an officer in a Garibaldian battalion and was wounded three times in the leg during Garibaldi's defence of Rome. When Garibaldi went again into Peruvian exile, Carboni settled in Cornhill in London, taught languages and read graphic accounts of the Australian goldfields in the *London Illustrated News*. He was in Melbourne by mid 1852 and was soon at Ballarat. 'I had joined a party; fixed our tent on the Canadian Flat; went up to the Camp to get our gold licence.' Then he walked to Golden Point and jumped into an abandoned hole. 'In less than five minutes I pounced on a little pouch [a seam]—the yellow boy [gold] was all there—my eyes were sparkling—I felt a sensation identical to a first declaration of love in bygone times—"Great Works!" at last was my bursting exclamation.' This was his favourite epithet, and the exuberant young man was known and liked as Great Works Carboni.

LETTERED MINERS

Not all diggers were as well educated or politically sophisticated as Peter Lalor, John Humffray and Raffaello Carboni, but many of them were. By the

time of Carboni's arrival, there was a lending library established at Golden Point and it was passionately patronised by diggers. It proved that by 1854, the literacy rates in goldfield males were much higher than those prevailing in the British population. Eighty per cent of the goldfields Irish, for example, were literate.

This reality altered and even elevated the goldfields, though they did not look like salubrious locations. The Sabbath was well observed. Methodists were established by the end of 1853 with a resident preacher, and Father Matthew Downey, a Kerry man educated at Naples, was the first Catholic priest to take up residence on the Ballarat fields. His bishop described his habitation as 'the most miserable apology for a dwelling I have ever seen. A few wine casks serve as chairs . . .' Theatres were opened on the Gravel Pits field in late 1853 and on Eureka in 1854, while the Adelphi Theatre in Ballarat itself quickly followed. A racing club was formed and cricket was played in the summer.

The diggers seemed to be imposing their own version of order. Yet a new Victorian governor, Charles Hotham, wrongly believed he was dealing with anarchic and unlettered scum. Westminster, too, was thinking of putting an export duty on gold as well as the licence fee. The diggers pointed out that such a step would be 'class legislation, inasmuch as there is no export duty on wool or tallow'. And they were the inheritors of the tradition of the year of revolutions, 1848, when that famous bloodless French coup had delivered a poet-president, Lamartine, when even the starving Irish rebelled abortively, when the Italians had risen against the French and the Austrians.

Indeed, as the Irish made their way to the ports to take ship to a saner world, in Victoria they found all they hated—the landlord, the bailiff, the equivalent of the tithe-gouger, anointed by authority—in their path. The old tyranny was encapsulated in the uniform of the Victorian police. And La Trobe, and Hotham after him, had not released even enough ground to allow the miners a vegetable garden.

Charles Hotham was a hardnosed naval captain of some diplomatic experience, but no appeaser. New provisions for constitutional reform for Victoria and New South Wales were under consideration in Whitehall, as a result of pressure from colonists. In the meantime Victoria was to be wrung into shape like a warship might be. The policy, and Hotham's mindset, would

be catastrophic. Feeling the gritty winds blowing off the goldfields in 1854, Hotham did not need a prefabricated hut—he lived in reasonable splendence in a residence in Toorak, and received dispatch riders from the goldfields.

In November 1853, Carboni had gone to a meeting on Bakery Hill, just above Eureka, where four hundred diggers expressed sympathy with the plight of the police-plagued Bendigo diggers and a petition was raised for a reduction of fees. There was a ‘great waste of yabber yabber’, said Carboni, about the lack of digger representation in the Legislative Council, and much complaint about monopoly of the land. ‘I understood very little of these matters at the time,’ Carboni later admitted. ‘The shoe had not pinched my toe yet.’ But there was talk of a diggers’ congress, and the storekeepers of Ballarat added to the diggers’ petition their own protest declaring that the licence fee was ‘unjust in principle, partial in collection’.

Soon afterwards, a new field was found on the Buckland River near Beechworth, towards the New South Wales border in the north-east, and five thousand men rushed there, forgetting their politics. On top of that nearly a thousand diggers, mainly Americans, sailed away to try the goldfields discovered at the headwaters of the Amazon, though they were replaced by 1500 supposedly apolitical Chinese.

Governor Hotham knew he must now visit turbulent Ballarat. Driving up the dusty main road from Melbourne with his wife, the grand-niece of the illustrious Lord Nelson, he arrived in the town on a Saturday evening and was pleased to find ‘an orderly and well conducted people, particular in their observance of Sunday’. A digger carried his wife through the mud and a nugget of 75 pounds (34 kilos) was found and named in Lady Hotham’s honour. The governor was pleased to note that shafts had to go deep to find gold, since that meant a digger had to stay fixed in one locality for the better part of six months before he bottomed out, either on a vein of gold or nothing. At nearby Bendigo Hotham was presented with a petition to do away with the licence fee, and met the diggers and spoke equably with them. Even so, his military eye had noticed that a soldier invading the surface of the goldfields would be poorly placed to deal with a digger firing upon him from within a shaft.

Hotham’s brief, like that of any governor, was to cut debt. Revenue from the goldfields had declined in the last months of 1854. Hotham’s advice, however, was that only half of the diggers paid their licence fee. He instructed

his Gold Commissioners and the acting Commissioner of Police that an effective search be made on all the fields at least twice a week to raise revenue.

As far as the diggers were concerned, they would now be hounded even more by the corrupt police and officious soldiers of the Camp. A digger had described the Camp as ‘a kind of legal store where justice was bought and sold, bribery being the governing element of success, and perjury the base instrument of baser minds to victimise honest and honourable men, thus defeating the ends of justice’. Yet His Excellency foolishly put his fondest hopes in it.

The soldiers and police lived well in the Camp, and the police were involved in the sly grog business not only as paid-off protectors but also as partners. Some had a business arrangement with James Bentley, a former Vandemonian convict, Melbourne confectioner and gold-buyer, who had built the first-class Eureka Hotel that could accommodate eighty people. Bentley’s premises were always protected by the police. But Sergeant Major Milne, a notorious policeman, descended upon Frank Carey, an alleged American sly-grogger who would not pay him bribe money, and closed him down. Many policemen also forced diggers to give them a share of their gold.

By now, Carboni’s contempt for colonial authority was complete. For a Gold Commissioner, Carboni’s advice was, ‘Get a tolerable young pig, make it stand on its hind-legs, put on its head the cap trimmed with gold lace, whitewash its mouth, and there you have the ass in the form of a pig. I mean to say a “man” [who] possesses in his head the brain of both the abovementioned brutes.’



In early October 1854, there had been a murder amongst the miners’ ranks that helped fuel their resentment of the Camp. Earlier in October, two young Scots diggers had gone into town on the tear, and on the way back to camp tried to get a drink at Bentley’s Eureka Hotel. Words were exchanged at the pub shutters, and the two were then pursued along the Melbourne Road by one of Bentley’s servants, who killed young James Scobie with a shovel.

Immediately the police network sprang into efficient action to save Bentley. But the miners called a meeting at the place where Scobie was killed. Because that was not far from the Eureka Hotel, there was a certain threat attached to the meeting. Bentley asked for police protection, and both the

police and a number of soldiers turned up. Those who spoke at the protest meeting were Thomas Kennedy, a former Scots Chartist and a Baptist preacher; a man named Hugh Meikle, who had been a juror at the Coroner's inquest into Scobie's death; one Archibald Carmichael; and Peter Lalor, the Irish digger.

Mounted police advanced a short distance from the meeting place to the hotel. Cries broke out from the crowd demanding Bentley show himself. Some boys in the crowd began throwing stones, windows were broken, and then suddenly the crowd was pulling wooden boards from the walls. Lieutenant Broadhurst and some more men of the 40th Regiment arrived and lined up on the right of the building.

Robert Rede, the Gold Commissioner, also turned up, and mounted the windowsill to address the crowd. Eggs splattered him. All at once the bowling alley of canvas next to the hotel was alight. The police were left trying to beat the flames down while the military marched back to the Camp.

Later, Carboni would vividly recall the fire: 'The redcoats wheel about, and return to the Camp. Look out! The roof of the back part of the hotel falls in! "Hurrah! Boys, here's the porter and ale with the chill off." Bottles are handed out burning hot—the necks of two bottles are knocked together!—contents drunk in colonial style.—Look out, the roof, sides and all fall in! An enormous mass of flames and smoke arise to the roaring sound—the sparks are carried far, far into the air, and what was once the Eureka Hotel is now a mass of burning embers. As she burns the crowd calls, Hip Hip Hurrah!'

Later that afternoon hail and rain fell on Ballarat and the rumour in the Camp was that an attack would be made on them to capture Bentley. The women and children resident in the Camp were moved out and 1000 rounds of ball cartridge were issued. A small number of diggers were arrested that night but were quickly rescued from the police, who galloped back affrighted to the Camp. 'The people ask for justice, not bullets!' wrote Humffray. He declared that the Eureka Hotel had become 'a bundle of crayons with which to write the black history of crime and colonial misrule'.

A diggers' committee made an eight-page submission setting out the facts of Scobie's death and urging Governor Hotham to look into it. Down in his villa in Toorak, he replied that he had offered a reward for the capture of Scobie's murderer, and that if he was to order an investigation into matters

on the goldfields, an essential prelude to that would be the gold miners' obedience to the law of the land.

In the matter of the fire, Hotham soon found himself the victim of police stupidity, in that one of the accused, Andrew McIntyre, was a man who tried to restrain the crowd, while the other one, Thomas Fletcher, a printer, had not left his office that day. Many of those who had raised bail for McIntyre and Fletcher now wanted to storm the Camp instead and release them by force. Henry Holyoake, a London Chartist, addressed an impromptu meeting on Bakery Hill. He managed to contain the fury of those who were outraged by the indiscriminate arrests of the two men. The accused had been committed for trial at Geelong, since it was clear no goldfields jury would condemn them. A crowd of miners marched along the Melbourne Road, letting their pistols off.

Commissioner Rede was determined not to let things settle down quietly, since that would lessen the authority of the government. He looked forward to mass arrests and the imposition 'of a frightful lesson'. Rede, a former surgeon, was calling for blood. He was in unconscious unison with his governor, who had been told by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Britain, the Duke of Newcastle, to bring the issues of Victoria's goldfields to a head, if necessary. Before Rede followed up, though, he intended to wait upon the arrival of a detachment of the 12th Regiment from Melbourne 'in sufficient force to punish'. He sent out his troopers the next day to hunt for unlicensed diggers and to 'test the feelings of the people'.

CELESTIALS

News of the gold discoveries in Australia reached southern China in 1852. Their tickets funded on credit by Chinese merchants, about five hundred Chinese embarked as diggers for Australia in that year and the next, but then, in 1854, 10 000 arrived throughout the year. They came mainly from the Guangdong delta. Their villages were hard up, densely populated, frequently raided by warlords, and now paying English taxes as well. The countryside was involved in guerilla warfare against the Ching government, and rebels, outlaws and bandits sheltered in the mountains above the estuary.

As they walked to the goldfields from Geelong or Sydney, there were acts of petty spite by white miners, including the pulling of cues, called 'pigtails', by the Europeans, and the upsetting of Chinese diggers' gear

carried, coolie-style, on both ends of a long bamboo pole. In that age, the Chinese miners' lack of Christianity, the essential marker of human worth, made them a butt of jokes or abhorrence.

Though a number of witnesses spoke of good order, sobriety and discipline amongst the Chinese, the Victorian Goldfields Commission of Enquiry would condemn them as practising 'degrading and absurd superstition', as being incurable gamblers and possessing other unspecified vicious habits. They were so undemanding of physical comfort that their overall effect was 'to demoralise colonial society', declared the Enquiry. These thunderings would have redoubled if the Enquiry had known that many households in China tolerated the idea that a married man who made good—or good enough—might marry also in Australia, and not necessarily to a Chinese woman. These Australian marriages were considered secondary marriages by the man, and a number of non-Chinese wives were shocked when they ultimately ventured to their husbands' villages and met the primary wives.

Despite social ostracism, there were women who married the Chinese and these were often Irish orphan girls. Marriages were more common than expected and a lot of them were stable and successful. But European women in relationships with Chinese men were described as lazy, degraded creatures, outcasts from European society. It was also often presumed that the women who married Chinamen were opium addicts. Some may have been, and certainly some became opium abusers, but these cases were the notable ones.

In June 1855, the Victorian Legislative Council imposed a poll tax of £10, payable by the ship's captain, on every Chinese arrival. Furthermore, captains were permitted to land only one Chinese national per 10 tons of displacement. To avoid the tax, ships' masters began to disembark Chinese passengers in New South Wales, or at Robe on the coast of South Australia. From there the Celestials—the name commonly used and derived from China's self-description as the Celestial Kingdom—walked overland to the Victorian goldfields, a distance of 400 kilometres through hard country. On 8 April 1856, for example, a party of 150 Chinese left Adelaide for the Victorian diggings under the escort of an experienced bushman, Lionel Edwardson. Five two-horse drays carried food, utensils and general luggage. The average rate of travel was 19 kilometres a day.

At Robe between 17 January and 3 May 1857, 10 000 Chinese immigrants were landed, from ships which had sailed from Hong Kong. Guichen Bay off Robe was not a very safe harbour, open to buffeting southerlies. So the ships landed their Chinamen and made a quick turnaround. The Sub-Collector of Customs at Robe remembered this Chinese invasion of the 1850s: 'The Government of the sister state [Victoria] never forgave South Australia for this loss to them of about £20 000.'

South Australia introduced its own poll tax in 1857, and a number of similar New South Wales bills were passed thereafter.

By 1861 there were more than 24 000 Chinese immigrants on the Victorian goldfields of Ballarat, Beechworth, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Maryborough. The *Argus* of 4 June 1856 said, 'Like Southey's rats they seem to come in at the windows, and under the doors, and down through the ceilings and up through the floors.' At the same time there were 11 000 Chinese on the New South Wales goldfields in places like Armidale, Binalong, Bathurst, Braidwood, Lambing Flat (Young), Carcoar, Mudgee, Tamworth and Tumut.

On the Mount Alexander goldfields, one in four adult males was Chinese. Contrary to accepted wisdom, Chinese and European miners often worked side by side, mutually dependent on adequate water to work their claims, and mutually subject to its ravages. The mineshafts at Mount Alexander's Moonlight and Pennyweight Flats, for example, were about 9 metres deep and all diggers of whatever stripe worked furiously to keep water out of them.

Despite this, from 1854 onwards there had been a number of anti-Chinese riots on Victorian and New South Wales goldfields, inspired by a complex of emotions on the part of white diggers. These included objections to the way the Chinese worked in gangs, their supposed exploitation of desirable sites, the existence of separate Chinese camps, which seemed sinister to other diggers, and the ethnic hysteria they evoked simply by being there. In 1860 a string of anti-Chinese riots began at Lambing Flat near Young, north-west of Goulburn in New South Wales, and would culminate a year later in a riot which destroyed Chinese camps and drove more than a thousand Chinese miners away.

The Chinese were willing to live rough, and that helped white miners sneer at them, but their clan loyalty also affronted some. There were also

complaints that Chinese migrants remitted too much of their money back home and did not spend it in Australia.

The Chinese diggers indeed lived frugally and acquired whatever wealth they could for an eventual return to the Celestial Kingdom. Once the alluvial gold played out many did return home. But from those who stayed came the population of Chinese labourers, market gardeners, cooks and urban businessmen who would beget Australian families and themselves grow old in Australia.

‘SON OF THE SOIL’



THE REPUBLICAN PUSH

In 1847, Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary, and James Stephen, his Under-secretary, had a plan for a new Constitution for New South Wales. Its benefits or disadvantages would wash along the Australian continent to the new and junior colonies of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. It was a re-working of a constitution prepared that year for New Zealand. The plan envisaged a federation of the Australian colonies. District councils, instituted in 1842, were to remain, also the colonial legislatures, then a federal authority would be placed over all.

However, there were still very few federalists in Australia in the 1850s. Governor FitzRoy of New South Wales was one, though he kept quiet about it. JD Lang, who abominated the governor, was another. Throughout the early 1850s FitzRoy and his two sons—Captain Augustus FitzRoy, his aide-de-camp who would later be killed in the Crimean War, and George FitzRoy, his private secretary—acquired a reputation as notorious lechers. Dr Lang denounced ‘the flagitious immorality’ of the three of them, all the more shocking given that the sainted late Lady FitzRoy had been killed in a coach accident for which FitzRoy’s ego and recklessness were to blame. Lang wrote: ‘Sir Charles FitzRoy was engaged in one of his Vice-Regal progresses in New South Wales when he reached the inland town

of Berrima . . . and took up his abode at the hostelry of an innkeeper of the name of See, formerly, I believe, the [boxing] champion of New South Wales.' See's daughter was 'by no means destitute of personal attractions'. Miss See became pregnant and paternity was laid at the door of Governor FitzRoy. Lang believed that by sending reports on 'the FitzRoy brothel' to the new Colonial Secretary the Duke of Newcastle, he had helped get rid of the FitzRois. When Governor FitzRoy ultimately left New South Wales in 1855, an address of farewell was prepared in the Legislative Council, to which Lang tried to add his own clause: 'That the moral influence which has emanated from Government House during His Excellency's term of office has been deleterious and baneful in the highest degree to the best interests of the community.'

Lang's visit to America in 1840 had enlarged his republicanism and he had produced a book-length tract while at sea entitled *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*, in which he divided the settled areas of the Australian continent into states named for heroes such as Cook and Flinders. Earl Grey's plan helped, said Lang, in as far as it paved the way for 'the President of the United States of Australia'. But it was a plan imposed from above, with the franchise rights of voters not yet defined, and Lang wanted to provoke a plan which flowed from the people. His Australian League was formed to establish 'one great Australian nation'. Republican federalism had its first domestic champion in this rambunctious Presbyterian minister.

At a public meeting in the School of Arts on 16 April 1850, Lang uttered a plaint which would echo down generations. 'You have hitherto, even in the estimation of Great Britain herself, been the tail of the world, and every brainless creature of blighted prospects and broken fortunes from England . . . has been systematically placed above you even in this the land of your birth. Why, it is the rule of the service under the present regime that no native of the colony, however able, talented and meritorious he may have proved himself, can be appointed by the governor to any office under government with a salary of above £100 a year.'

Other republican sympathisers included notable Currency children grown to early manhood. Daniel Deniehy was a prodigiously gifted young man of fifteen by the time he travelled to Ireland and Europe with his

former convict parents. His father, Henry, had been transported and had arrived in New South Wales in 1820 serving a seven-year sentence for vagrancy, a common enough way of off-loading some of the Irish poor. Mary McCarthy, his mother, had also served a seven-year sentence. The boy was born in 1828. The father began his free life as a labourer, moved into business as a produce merchant and then became a general merchant. Young Deniehy went to school at the Sydney Academy, which later became Sydney Grammar, and in later years remembered the sleepy schoolroom in Phillip Street 'with small old-fashioned windows encased with great vines and honeysuckles'. The Sydney he grew up in was still a wild town, characterised by garbage heaps and open sewage drains. Short of water, plenteous in grog, its population did not generally bathe, so that when the garrison corps paraded in the humid Sydney summer near Hyde Park, the passer-by could smell them.

Deniehy's visit to his parents' homeland, Ireland, a place of seasonal misery and close to perpetual unrest, sharpened his republican instincts, while the Continent rounded out his education as a colonial of sensibility.

The Deniehys left Cork by the immigrant ship *Elizabeth* in January 1844 to return to Sydney. The town had trebled in size since Deniehy's youth to a population of 36 000, and the old struggle between the emancipists and the exclusives—the pure merinos as they thought of themselves—was in full play, as was the Currency–Sterling divide. In monetary terms, currency was of less value than sterling, and thus 'Currency' were implicitly themselves of questionable value. But young men like Deniehy accepted the term as a badge of honour.

The three big political issues of Deniehy's late adolescence were the question of self-government, the prevention of the renewal of transportation, and the making available to ordinary settlers of land from the vast estates held—some would say locked up—by the squatters. The Pastoral Association had been formed to protect the privilege of the squatters, and their ability to control numbers in the Legislative Council was helped by their votes being worth so much more than those of city merchants. The property qualification to vote was high as well. The Currency poet Charles Harpur wrote scathingly of the statesman of the pastoral interest, William Charles Wentworth.

*Now behold him in his native hue,
The bullying, bellowing champion of the few!
Patriot!—he who has no sense nor heed
Of public ends beyond his own mere need.*

Dan Deniehy of New South Wales, a mere articulated clerk, also took up his pen to mock the squatters out of their claims, and to apply to their sons the nickname 'Geebung', after a form of native shrub. Deniehy, who would soon be mounting platforms for the cause, considered the pastoralists a lumpen commercial crowd who would rather put a bullock driver into parliament, as long as he owned property, than 'an impoverished Fox or an O'Connell living on his rents'. The Geebung did not want to mix with other Currency, at least as Deniehy depicted them, but could never become fully British.

The man for whom Deniehy worked as an articulated clerk was a literary patron of great generosity of spirit, Nichol Drysdale Stenhouse, a partner in the legal firm of Stenhouse and Hardy in Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Stenhouse was the perfect employer for Deniehy. Lack of legal opportunity in Edinburgh had forced Stenhouse to become a steerage immigrant to Australia. Since arriving in his new homeland, Stenhouse had gathered a library of four thousand volumes, and a circle of literary friends, including Charles Harpur, to whom he sent books by post to soothe Harpur's solitude in Maitland. Now his clerk Deniehy began to publish fiction in the *Colonial Literary Journal*.

In his fiction Deniehy wrote of young love in an entirely Australian environment. In *The Legend of Newtown* the hero reflects Deniehy's own sentiments. He is 'the son of the soil, generous, ardent . . . his enthusiasm made him proud of the land of his birth, jealous and sensitive of the slights too often thrown on her, and the vapid sneers which expatriated wittlings find so much gratification in showering on the land that supports them, and gives them their daily bread'. The heroine in this piece is Australian too. Her features 'were exquisitely fair and regular, and her figure possessed all that sylph-like grace and fragile delicacy of the Australian female form'.

And in his verse, Deniehy projected an Australian idyll for him and his kind:

*A cottage shall be mine, with porch,
Enwreath'd with ivy green,
And bright some flowers with dew-fill'd bells
'Mid brown old wattles seen.*

Stenhouse's residence and library at Balmain had become a regular meeting place for Sydney radicals, and through Stenhouse Deniehy, the literary patriot, was introduced to the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, whose heroic if not always practical character made an impression on the young man's imagination. Here was a sort of rebel, a man who did not want to serve Prussian militarists by fulfilling his state duty of conscription, but instead sought the interior of a newer, freer, less constricted place.

The other great radical venue of the time was Henry Parkes's 'toyshop' back room. There Deniehy met David Blair, a journalist on Parkes's *Empire*, to which Deniehy also contributed. 'He was clad in the style of a finished man of fashion—in fact, a perfect little dandy,' Blair wrote of Deniehy. Blair thought that some of Deniehy's writing was so good that it took the breath away—it was like meeting an ancient Roman emperor walking in broad daylight in George Street.

Deniehy's friendship with the poet Charles Harpur also began in Parkes's parlour. Harpur had just given up schoolteaching in the country and was in Sydney for a brief visit. Along with an Irish schoolteacher named John Armstrong from Tullamore, Harpur and Deniehy decided to take over the Mechanics School of Arts, the intellectual centre in Sydney prior to the foundation of the University of Sydney in 1852. The new program, once that had been achieved, involved a series of lectures by Deniehy. In his lecture on modern English poetry, he praised his friend Harpur, calling him 'the earliest of those Sons of the Morning who shall yet enlighten and dignify our home, building up as with the hands of angels the national mind'.

Henry Kendall was another Currency visitor to Henry Parkes's back room. Born in Ulladulla on the New South Wales south coast in 1839, he had sailed on a whaler at the age of sixteen and returned to Australia in March 1857 to settle in Sydney's Newtown. Kendall, too, would pursue the Australian voice, and was encouraged by another literary solicitor, J.L. Michael, who made Kendall a clerk at Grafton, in the beautiful Clarence Valley of northern New South Wales.

Australianisms appeared in Kendall's poetry—he called the dingo the warragul, a common coastal usage at the time. The kookaburra he called 'the settlers' clock'. He was particularly annoyed by the non-Currency belief that Australian birds had no song. The magpie certainly did, and the bellbird, and with colonial pride he pushed them in his writing. He possessed a sense of care for nature—he complained that the loss of many native species of birds was due to the extinction of Aboriginal hunters in many areas, which had led to a glut in the population of the huge lizard named the goanna, an eating delicacy which the Aboriginals had kept in check.

He yearned as only a colonial can for the power to combine the Australian landscape he devoted himself to with poetic sensibility.

*A lyre-bird lit in a shimmering space,
It dazzled my eyes and I turned from the place,
And wept in the dark for a glorious face
And a hand with the harp of Australia.*

In 1851, young Dan Deniehy was admitted as an attorney to the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He took what work he could and kept writing, and within the year married Adelaide Elizabeth Hoalls, a young woman visiting Sydney as part of a world trip with her mother. She met Deniehy at the house of the Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen. Miss Hoall's father held Deniehy in absolute detestation 'as having clandestinely won the affections of a young innocent girl [his daughter] in a strange land'.

HOUSE OF COLONIAL LORDS

In 1853 a Select Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly applied itself to the task, as first devised by Earl Grey, of drawing up a new Constitution with a bi-cameral system. The committee was chaired by William Charles Wentworth, who, along with James Macarthur, son of the great Perturbator, and Edward Deas Thomson, envisaged a Constitution which would ensure the control of parliament by the pastoral faction.

James Macarthur saw himself as a fine aristocrat. By 1832 his famous father John Macarthur had been consumed by his demons and declared a lunatic, living under his wife Elizabeth's care. She and his household had been his chief supporters and comforts, but now amidst other rantings he

accused her of sexual and commercial infidelities. He had died in unrelieved torment at Camden Park in 1834. His son's original ambitions were similar to those of his famous father—he hoped to continue to establish the Macarthurs' freehold lands within the Limits of Location in the manner of the great British, land-accumulating noble families. But he so despaired of the potential impact of the gold discovery in Australia that he thought of giving up the land of his childhood and living in England. Over time he became the ally of that more opportunistic conservative William Charles Wentworth, and between them they knew they must produce a Constitution which best served the pastoral ascendancy.

The committee's report provided for a lower house elected by votes of unequal value and without secret ballot, favouring rural interests, and a nominated upper house based on the House of Lords. The idea of a lower house controlled by the men of the great pastures outraged the leading merchants, and the concept of a 'lordly' upper house appalled democrats. A People's Constitution Committee was formed to protest against the proposed upper house and Deniehy was its youngest member. It held a mass meeting at the Royal Victoria Theatre, filled to overflowing, where many speakers made their protests. Deniehy rose, small and stooped, and was at first called on to speak up. He certainly did speak up, to make one of the most famous speeches in colonial history. He said that Mr Wentworth's having repented of the 'democratic escapades' of his youth had led now to high Tory sins sufficient to cancel out a century of former service. Loud cheers began, and mounted. Deniehy denounced 'those harlequin aristocrats—these Botany Bay magnificos—these Australian mandarins'. He imagined that James Macarthur would style himself the Earl of Camden and his coat of arms would be a green field with the rum keg of the New South Wales order of chivalry. 'They cannot aspire to the miserable and effete dignity of the worn-out grandees of continental Europe.' As the common water mole is in Australia transformed to the duck-billed platypus, 'in some distant emulation of this degeneracy, I suppose we are to be favoured with a bunyip aristocracy'. He concluded, 'The domineering clique which makes up the Wentworth party are not representative of the manliness, the spirit and the intelligence of the free men of New South Wales.'

The next morning, with the air still ringing from Deniehy's insults, Wentworth spoke in Macquarie Street on the second reading of his

Constitution Bill. This was an older, more successful Wentworth, but still rancorous, still haunted by society's earlier and, in some cases, still existing prejudices against him and his wife Sarah, who was the daughter of a former convict blacksmith and had borne him three children out of wedlock. He admitted that purely on a population basis, Sydney should have seventeen members in the Legislative Assembly instead of the six proposed. But he insisted that as the pastoral industry produced most of the colony's wealth, it should have more representatives in parliament. He defended the hereditary element of the proposed upper house. He said such a house would be a good and stable bulwark, while lack of titles was a great blemish in the American Constitution, declaring, 'We want a British, not a Yankee Constitution.'

A few weeks later there was another constitutional protest meeting on some vacant land near Circular Quay, where Deniehy took up the challenge once more. Applauded again and again, he was still talking when the sun went down.

Despite his gift for oratory, Deniehy was not prospering in business—he had, wrote his friend Miss E.A. Martin, 'careless and reckless generosity, and the utter want of business capacity which distinguishes men of genius'. He regretted the hardships to which his wife was thus subjected, believing that if she had not married him she would have had a comfortable position in English society. But if adoration of the public and his peers could have achieved a financial dimension, he would have been rich indeed.

Charles Harpur was teaching in the Hunter Valley when he read the report of Deniehy's speech in a newspaper. He ecstatically devoted a poem to his friend.

Little Dan Deniehy!
Brilliant Dan Deniehy!
Dear is the light of thy spirit to me!
Dear as a streaming ray
Out from a gleaming bay
Is to some weather-worn barque from the sea.

Harpur's wife, Mary, had married him in 1850 and their first son was named Washington. He farmed in the Hunter Valley until 1859, when

he was appointed a gold commissioner at Araluen in southern coastal New South Wales. There he selected a residence on the Tuross River at Eurobodalla, and established a farm and lived a stable life with Mary and their children.

Thus his future prospects proved much happier than Deniehy's, who became gradually and increasingly a victim of alcohol and short finances.

THE MINERS' CAUSE



POLICE STATE?

The conservative fear that the more men sought gold, the more the gold-fields would be scenes of blood and brawls and riots initially had proved unfounded. Instead, gold was raising prices, property values, rents and incomes so high that the £10 voting franchise threshold would soon be easily reached by ordinary men. Samuel Sydney, an English publicist of immigration, wrote an 1852 manual for potential immigrants, entitled *Three Colonies of Australia*. Gold, he told his readers, had transformed Australia from a mere 'sheep walk tended by nomadic burglars' into the 'wealthiest offset of the British Crown—a land of promise for the adventurous—a home of peace and independence for the industrious—an El Dorado and an Arcadia combined'.

Riches and independence may well have been within the grasp of some lucky diggers, and the merchants who benefited from their largesse. But those left at home were not so enamoured with gold. Janet Kincaid wrote from Greenock in Scotland to her husband in the Victorian gold town of Maryborough complaining that he had embraced the independence of the gold-seeking life to the neglect of his family. 'You left the ship to better *yourself* and to get your *own money* to your *self*. You never cared much for

your family, far less for your wife. You sent £5 two years and a half ago. Would £5 keep you since you left the ship?’

Indefatigable Caroline Chisholm, the Catholic promoter of female and then family immigration, also ran a personal family reunion program for the goldfields: ‘I have promised parents to go in search of their children—I have promised wives to make enquiries of their husbands—I have promised sisters to seek their brothers, and friends to look for friends.’ Chisholm was aware of how hostile gold rushes could be to the interests of women, not only those in foreign parts. Destitution and desertion were the lot of many colonial women too.

Frances Perry, wife of the Anglican bishop of Melbourne, was attracted to camp life when she and her husband visited the government compound on the goldfields. ‘Life in the Camp is most amusing, and was quite a novelty to me. There is a large mess I can attend, where the commissioners, military officers, superintendent of police, etc. etc. take their meals, the Chief Commissioner presiding.’

Jane Prendergast, a woman stuck on the fields with her husband, wrote to her father-in-law in 1853. ‘On one point certain which I will never agree, he likes this country and I do not; I can understand the gentlemen liking it, their lives are so very free and independent . . . but no ladies like it: the fortunes of their families and a wish to get some gold out of the land of gold have brought them here, and necessity obliges them to remain.’

Gavan Duffy, a much-tried Irish seditionist but by the 1850s a coming statesman who would ultimately be premier of Victoria, observed that the income of the gold seeker was not so great in the long run when compared with that of ordinary pursuits. ‘But the employment had the unmistakeable charm of not being a servile one.’

Meanwhile, Governor Charles Hotham was still edgy about law and order. In spite of broad popular opinion against mining licences, he would not abandon them. He regarded some of the speeches reported from the goldfields as akin to the Chartist assemblies, and the speeches and marches made in England in 1848, that year of revolution across Europe. R.L. Milne, a former soldier, wrote that nothing but moral supervision would ‘save Australia from the gambling, stilettoing, vile abominations and

desecrated Sabbaths of an assassinating Italy, infidel France, and republican America’.

In fact, their own year of revolution was coming their way.

The police took on a function more akin to that of the Royal Irish Constabulary, attending and reporting on goldfields meetings, infiltrating diggers’ groups and keeping a firm authoritarian grip on mining society. The goldfields essentially became a police state. By mid 1854, with 1639 men in the police force, Victoria was more strongly policed than California.

As the Miners’ Reform League called ‘Monster Meetings’ to protest at police tyranny and to appeal to Governor Hotham, diggers were subjected to little daily dramas of arrest, corrupted evidence and a sequence of protection for police favourites and beatings and chainings for honest men.

By late 1854, meetings were being called on the goldfields every few days, which panicked the Gold Commissioner, Rede, and the Commissioner of Police—in a short period of October Catholic miners held a meeting; the next day a protest was held over the imprisonment of the two diggers arrested for the burning of Bentley’s hotel; and two days later there was to be a meeting of the ‘Tipperary Mob’, that is, men from that Irish county. The police and soldiers at the Camp hoped that a promised detachment of the 12th Regiment would arrive before that meeting, and Rede was beginning to feel that the place could be defended only by cannon. Rede was determined to bring it all to a fight as, so it seemed, did Hotham. In Ballarat there was an attempt by the authorities to sign up special constables amongst ‘all loyal and respectable inhabitants of the goldfields’. Only three citizens presented themselves. On 19 October, more foot police arrived and then, within a few days, Captain White arrived with a detachment of the 40th Regiment. A number of diggers and other people, especially those with families, pulled out and left for Cressley’s Creek, where the diggers were said to be bottoming out at 5.5 metres, 3.7 metres less than at Ballarat, with 8 ounces (226 grams) of gold. Two thousand people vanished from Ballarat.

Rede was planning further arrests and was organising the Camp to take action. Tents which obstructed its line of fire were simply pulled down, houses inside the walls were protected by piled-up bags of grain, loopholes

cut in the walls, and barrels full of water placed to extinguish fires. All these preparations were to be made in silence, said Rede.

On 30 October, Hotham decided to dampen unrest by setting up a Board of Enquiry. The Board tried to get the *Ballarat Times* to give widespread publicity to its arrival on the goldfields, but the editor, Henry Seekamp, refused to do so. He had bought out the *Ballarat Times* and married a Dublin widow, Clara du Val, the leading actress in the Camden Theatre on the Gravel Pits, in December 1854. He had served on the Committee of the National Schools and had recently called a meeting to found a hospital for sick and destitute diggers. He told Hotham in a letter, 'The corruption of every Department connected with the Government in Ballarat is become so notorious and so bare-faced that public indignation is thoroughly aroused; and though the expression of public feeling be for a time in abeyance, on account of the numerous armed mercenaries lately sent up from town, the fire of indignation is not extinguished; it still smoulders, only to burst forth again with unabashed and unabateable vigour . . . It is not fines, imprisonment, taxation and bayonets that is required to keep people tranquil and content. It is an attention to their wants and their just rights alone that will make the miners content, and that they must have, sooner or later, either given to them soon with a good will, or taken by them later with no will but their own.' Seekamp's advice was dismissed by the governor.

The honest Chartist bookseller, John Humffray, argued that those who did not now complain to the Committee of Enquiry had only themselves to blame, but the miners had no confidence in the committee. So the board left Ballarat satisfied that, with two exceptions—those of Magistrate D'Ewes and Sergeant Major Milne—the conduct of all in the Camp had been excellent. There had been a chorus of complaint against D'Ewes and Milne from publicans to storekeepers. The committee went back to Melbourne sure that the removal of the two men would be enough to pacify the goldfields. They also recommended a more equitable manner of deciding disputed claims and a decentralisation of the police, so that they could hunt for licences on their own initiative, and thus be more flexible. They also reported that the system was 'a great source of irritation', and that its abolition would bring only good. They advised Hotham both to listen to the diggers but also to overpower by stern means 'every attempt on the part of the populace to take the law into their own hands'.

The evidence the committee considered had come from only sixteen diggers, sixteen publicans and storekeepers, fifteen Camp officials and eight professional men. One of the non-British diggers who gave evidence, the German Frederick Vern, said that others would have come forward if they had had any confidence in the government.

Carboni depicted Ballarat as a 'nuggetty El Dorado for a few, a ruinous field of hard labour for many, a profound ditch of sedition for body and soul to all'. And yet the gold finds were increasing. And the population was increasing despite those who left to escape the attentions of the Camp, including the continual licence hunts.

Meanwhile a jury in Melbourne had found three diggers guilty of burning down the Eureka Hotel. But the jury also made a statement: 'The jury feels, in returning a verdict against the prisoners at the bar, that in all probability they would never have had that fateful duty to perform if those trusted with government at Ballarat had done theirs properly.' The judge also took the chance to address the diggers at Ballarat, telling them that 'the eyes of the law are upon them, and, if necessary, they will be brought to justice'.

On 11 November 1854, the Ballarat Reform League was officially launched on Bakery Hill above Eureka in the presence of 10 000 miners and their wives and children. Anastasia Hayes, for example, Irishwoman, future creator of a miners' flag, was there, babe in arms. It was a Saturday afternoon. The meeting had begun in a large tent, where Dr Carr made a speech on equal representation in parliament and the unlocking of the land. The meeting then moved outside onto the hill where John Humffray, the fiery Scot Thomas Kennedy, and Frederick Vern, the German, addressed the crowd. Humffray was elected president of the league, and a number of motions were passed, the meeting noting that the people of the goldfields had been provoked 'beyond the bounds of human endurance'.

The assembly called on the governor 'to introduce the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws [they were] called upon to obey', declaring that 'taxation without representation is tyranny'. The meeting further determined 'That, being as the people have been hitherto, unrepresented in the Legislative Council of the Colony of Victoria, they

have been tyrannised over, and it had become their duty as well as interest to resist, and if necessary to remove the irresponsible power which so tyrannises over them.' It was not, however, 'the wish of the League to effect an immediate separation of this Colony from the parent country, if the equal laws and equal rights are dealt out to the whole free community. But . . . if Queen Victoria continues to act upon the ill-advice of dishonest ministers and wage obnoxious wars with the colony under the assumed authority of the Royal Prerogative, the Reform League will endeavour to supersede such Royal Prerogative by asserting that of the people which is the most royal of all prerogatives, as the people are the only legitimate source of all political power.' The immediate object of the Reform League was stated to be a change in the management of the goldfields by disbanding the commissioners and totally abolishing the diggers and storekeepers' licence tax.

Henry Seekamp was at the meeting, and wrote in the *Ballarat Times* that the formation of the League was 'not more or less than the germ of Australian independence'.

In Melbourne on 27 November, George Black, editor of the *Diggers' Advocate*, and Thomas Kennedy presented themselves to a rather harassed Governor Hotham in Toorak with the resolutions. Hotham was an assiduous, incorruptible and rather stiff man, but not lacking in warmth. He had already ordered that the hated magistrate D'Ewes be sacked and his name erased from the Commission of Police. The much complained of Sergeant Major Milne's career was ended as well. Hotham was preoccupied with cutting the public service, and bravely trying to deal with corruption which had arisen under La Trobe. But his overriding concern was revenue, and for that he looked, not to the squatters with their vast land holdings, but to the miners and their licence fees. What did the miners expect? he must have privately asked himself. His deficit for 1854, so his auditors told him, was £2 226 616.

Black and Kennedy, on behalf of the League, also demanded the release of Fletcher, McIntyre and Yorkey, the men sentenced over the Eureka Hotel fire. His Excellency went into a fit of rage at the word 'demand'. The decision of the jury had to stand, said Hotham. He would not upset a verdict, though he could pardon the men if that was appropriate. Kennedy thought the word 'demand' could be rescinded, and solemnly implored Hotham to consider

the matter, if for no other reason than to keep back 'the spilling of blood which must be the case with infuriated men'.

Hotham listened to them but then, after they had gone, wrote the notation 'Put away' on the documents they had left him. This may well have been a synonym for 'File', but the phrase had a symbolic eloquence. Hotham would have loved to put it all away.

29

MARTIAL LAW



THE BATTLE

Major General Sir Robert Nickle, Commander in Chief of troops in Australia, based since August 1854 in Melbourne, was a man approaching seventy. He sympathised with the miners' cause, but was told by Governor Hotham to reinforce the Camp and to put his protégé Captain Thomas of the 40th Regiment in charge. The Camp was swollen to overflowing with almost five hundred armed men enclosed in its cramped spaces. At the Camp on the evening of 28 November, the day after the meeting with Hotham, the promised detachment of the 12th Regiment arrived.

On Thursday, 30 November, Raffaello Carboni, who had been working from an early hour, went to his tent at 10 a.m. for a rest. He wanted to sign off on his letter to a friend. 'Just on my preparing to go and post this letter, we are worried by the usual Irish cry, to run to Gravel-pits. The traps [police] are out for licences, and playing hell with the diggers. If that be the case, I am not inclined to give half-a-crown for the whole fixtures at the Camp.' The time of resistance had come. At Bakery Hill, Carboni found Peter Lalor up on the stump, his rifle in his hand, calling on volunteers to fall into ranks. According to Carboni, Lalor took him by the hand and said, 'I want you, Signore: help these gentlemen (pointing to old acquaintances of ours, foreigners), that if they cannot provide themselves with fire-arms, let each of them procure a

piece of steel, five or six inches long, attached to a pole, and that will pierce the tyrants' hearts.'

All the diggers fell in file two abreast and marched from Bakery Hill to Eureka. 'Captain Ross of Toronto was our standard-bearer. He hoisted down the Southern Cross from the flag-staff, and headed the march.' The Southern Cross flag had been run up by Anastasia Hayes and other women out of sheets. Its design was a white cross with the stars of the Southern Cross constellation at the end of the arms of the cross and one at the intersection in the middle, all on a field of blue.

It seems that having marched to Eureka many of the miners then dispersed to their tents throughout the area. At the Gravel Pits close to Eureka, men held small, impromptu meetings and many still carried any arms, pikes or rifles, they possessed. Commissioner Rede advanced out of the Camp, supported by a skirmishing line of infantry and cavalry, to attempt to disperse them.

He had great trouble reading the Riot Act, partly because his horse kept rearing. A few shots were fired by both sides. Eight diggers were captured and taken to the Camp. Rede met Humffray in his role of pacifist but engaged observer, and admonished him: 'See now the consequences of your agitation?' Humffray responded, 'No, but see the consequences of impolitic coercion.'

That afternoon, a meeting of captains and interested parties occurred in a store run by Martin and Ann Diamond, and Carboni described black bottles and glasses being put on the tables to make it look like a social occasion. Amongst them was the young Prussian Edward Thonen, a little man who sold lemonade to the diggers and was a brilliant chess player. The Irish were led by Timothy Hayes, Anastasia's husband, the tall well-built Irishman of liberal mind 'and, above all, of a kind heart, and that covers a multitude of sins'. John Manning, a bald-headed Irishman, about forty years of age, a self-educated man given somewhat to drinking, was there. Then long-legged Frederick Vern—from Hanover, and well-meaning Peter Lalor, the Irishman with a history, a man of some thirty-five years.

Lalor, despite disclaiming any knowledge of military matters and recording his disappointment that Humffray was no longer their leader, declared: 'If you appoint me your Commander in Chief, I shall not shrink; I mean to do my duty as a man. I tell you, gentlemen, if once I pledge my hand to the diggers, I will neither defile it with treachery, nor render it contemptible by cowardice.'

Vern pointed out that he could provide a German rifle brigade of 500 men and felt that he could be an appropriate chieftain. But Peter Lalor was elected by, as Carboni says, unanimous acclamation. All hands now fell to to make some improvised fortifications of slabs of timber, reinforced with rough earth work. There were a few stores laid by, and diggers camped in huts within the newly constructed stockade. The ruins of Bentley's hotel lay a few hundred metres away.

The stockade was the scene of another meeting at sunset. The Southern Cross was raised with Captain Ross, sword in hand, and his division standing beneath it—the matter of an instant but a moment which would never fail to inspire Australia. Lalor, rifle in his left hand, mounted the stump again and asked all to leave who were not prepared to swear an oath. The men fell in in their divisions around the flagstaff, led by their captains, who saluted Lalor. Yet of the thousand who had marched to Eureka, only half that number took the oath. Lalor knelt, bare-headed, and with his right hand pointed upwards. The oath of the Southern Cross flag was sworn on that late afternoon of Thursday 30 November by men who in large numbers still felt fealty to Britain. 'We swear by the Southern Cross,' went the oath as enunciated by Lalor, 'to stand truly by each other, and fight to defend our right to liberties.'

The five hundred oath-takers shouted 'Amen'. The Camp was on alert all night for an attack. It did not understand that the diggers' actions were intended to be defensive. Parties of miners and sympathisers had left the stockade to collect arms and provisions for which receipts were to be issued. Everyone was under orders to respect property. Sentries were posted between Eureka and the Camp. But there was a cost to the diggers' resistance in that their mineshafts were gradually filling with water. A deputation was sent to Rede. As long as the commissioner would give an assurance not to reinstate licence hunts, and to release the eight prisoners he held, the diggers would lay down their arms and return to work. Carboni, George Black of the *Diggers' Advocate* and Father Smyth were elected to take this message.

It had been raining that night and men would be glad to get back to their pits to bale them out if possible. When the delegation reached the bridge over the Yarrowee, an inspector took them to Rede, who came out from the Camp to meet them so they would not see his fortifications.

'The deputation,' wrote Carboni, was at last 'before King Rede, whose shadow by moonlight, as he held his arm *à la Napoleon*, actually inspired me

with reverence; but behold! Only a marionette is before us. Each of his words, each of his movements was the vibration of the telegraphic wires directed from Toorak [where Governor Hotham resided]. He had not a wicked heart; some knew him for his benevolence, and he helped many an honest digger out of trouble . . . I would willingly turn burglar to get hold of the whole of the correspondence between him and Toorak.'

They turned back on the road to Eureka and found miners anxious to hear from them. Carboni's opinion was that Rede would be out riding and hunting licence defaulters by the next day. Father Smyth made a further appeal to Rede later in the night, and said he would return to Eureka and have all the diggers back at work in the morning if the commissioner would tell him when he intended to go licence-hunting again. Rede refused to do this.

The next day, Friday, drilling of rebels continued at the stockade. Men who had gone back to their own tents to sleep turned up again for that. In solidarity, ten thousand diggers did not return to their work that day even though it was chiefly the 500 oath-takers who were drilling in Eureka. On that Friday afternoon a 300- to 400-strong contingent of miners arrived from the goldfields at Creswick, some twenty kilometres away, but they were unarmed, unprovisioned and exhausted.

The same day, Major General Sir Robert Nickle started out from Melbourne with considerable reinforcements for the Camp, including marines from HMS *Electra*, 600 further men of the 12th and 14th Regiments, and four pieces of field artillery. This was practically all that was left of the armed forces in Victoria. At the stockade, a German blacksmith was producing pikes 'as fast as his big strong arms allowed him; praising the while his past valour in the wars with Mexico, and swearing that his pikes would fix redcoats and blue pissants especially'.

The morning of Saturday 2 December saw a repeat of Friday with the men returning from their own quarters to the stockade. Lalor gave Father Smyth permission to speak to the Catholics, and he expressed to them his grave concern, knowing that a well-armed force he estimated at 700 to 800 men occupied the Camp and that more were on their way. He asked them to attend mass the following morning, but when they were unable to guarantee that, the priest went away, saddened.

When by Saturday afternoon no licence hunt had occurred, the defenders of the stockade were so unfitted for military reality that they decided

they would not be troubled again until Monday. The diggers went off to eat at noon and the stockade was almost deserted. They had already planned a meeting of the Reform League, to be held at two o'clock on Sunday at the Adelphi Theatre.

About four o'clock that afternoon, however, there were 1500 men in and around the stockade and James McGill, the captain of the Independent Californian Rangers, whom Carboni had earlier dismissed as a poseur, arrived with his men. A few Americans had joined the oath-takers as individuals, but this was the first American company to join Lalor's men. McGill was appointed second-in-command to Lalor. The password into the stockade for Saturday evening was the name of both the old Irish and newer colonial battlefield—'Vinegar Hill'.

McGill rode out that night to set up a series of outposts to prevent the surprise arrival of reinforcements for the Camp from Melbourne. Lalor retired at midnight without appointing any second-in-command in McGill's absence. By then only about 120 diggers remained in the stockade.

In fact the Camp was ready for an attack. Fireballs had been prepared to throw on the houses to rob the diggers of vantage points. Rede had a notice put up ordering all lights in tents near the Camp to be doused by 8 p.m. and no firearms to be discharged. Offenders would be shot by the sentries.

Sometime during the night he heard from a spy that the stockade was almost deserted and that the Americans had wandered off on a mission of McGill's devising. The commissioner held a night council with Captain Thomas and others. Since Nickle was on his way from Melbourne, it was up to Thomas and his troops if they wished to make a pre-emptive move before the meeting of the Reform League at the Adelphi that afternoon. An approach to the stockade was planned that would not alert the men sleeping in it.

At about 2.30 a.m., 182 mounted and foot soldiers and 94 police were quietly and suddenly ordered to fall in. Thomas gave them their instructions and issued them with rum. The stockade was to be attacked, and the ambiguous order was that only those who 'ceased to resist' would be spared. The important thing was to get close to the stockade and thus confine the battle within it, rather than the holed ground the miners knew well. The Camp party set out at 3.30 a.m.

The attacking force quietly approached the stockade from the north, at its rear attended by three magistrates, to read the Riot Act if necessary. Henry de Longville, a digger, saw them approaching and fired a signal. Frederick Vern called, 'Here they are coming, boys: now I will lead you to death or victory!' There was some panic amongst the diggers. Few of them knew what to do in a real fight, and of course the soldiers and police did. Carboni was stuck nearby in his tent. But Lalor reacted quickly and prepared a knot of men around him to make a defensive stand. He kept cool, and told his men not to fire until the police and soldiers were close. The slaughter of miners had already begun on the edges of the stockade, and it was obvious that surrender was not a choice. The first returning fire of the diggers caused the troops to pause. Captain Wise fell wounded, but soldiers and police poured in upon the diggers. Under the leadership of the Irishman Patrick Curtain, the pike men fought wildly. Only a handful in Curtain's group would survive.

Shots sang past Carboni's tent and penetrated his chimney. 'The shepherds' holes inside the lower part of the stockade had been turned into rifle pits and were now occupied by Californians of the IC Rangers' Brigade, some twenty or thirty in all . . . Ross and his division northward, Thonen and his division southward, and both in front of the valley, under the cover of the slabs, answered with such a smart fire, that the military who were now fully within range did unmistakeably appear to be swerved from their ground . . .'

Inevitably, the troops soon breached the flimsy rampart, and the cavalry started striking down those who tried to escape. Thonen, the lemonade seller, was killed when he was shot in the mouth. Captain Ross, the Canadian, had taken up a position at the foot of the Southern Cross flagpole but was lying mortally wounded in the groin when a constable hauled it down.

There was a spate of hand-to-hand fighting, and then the engagement ended. Three privates were dead, and Captain Wise was dying. The police had contributed little to the battle but now were guilty of atrocities against the wounded. The police also attacked the homes and tents of diggers, and harried any wives and children stuck inside the stockade. A digger, shot through the thighs, was fallen upon by three soldiers, one of whom knelt upon him while another tried to choke him and a third went through his pockets for money. A miner from Creswick, Henry Powell, appeared outside

his tent well away from the stockade and mounted police struck him with a sword to the head, fired at him and rode over him several times. Another incongruous victim was the correspondent of the *Melbourne Morning Herald*. He was stopped by a mounted policeman three hundred metres from the stockade and shot through the chest. A.W. Crowe, an advocate of moral force, witnessed the killing of two Italians, neither of whom had taken any part in the uprising. One of these Italians was shot, and as he lay wounded, his gold was taken and then he was bayoneted to death. Of the wounded, Carboni wrote, 'What a horrible sight! Old acquaintances crippled with shots, the gore protruding from bayonet wounds, their clothes and flesh burning all the while. Poor Thonen had his mouth literally choked with bullets; my mate Eddie More, stretched on the ground, both his sides shot, asking for a drop of water. Peter Lalor, who had been concealed under a heap of slabs, was in the agony of death, a stream of blood from under the slabs heavily forcing its way downhill.'

Carboni went to fetch water. 'On my reaching the stockade . . . I was amazed at the apathy showed by the diggers, who now . . . allowed themselves to be chained by dozens, by a handful of hated traps.'

The dragoons, swords in hand, rifles cocked, brought them in chains to the lock-up in the Camp. Commissioner Rede wrote a notice: 'Her Majesty's forces were this morning fired upon by a large body of evil-disposed persons of various nations, who had entrenched themselves in the stockade on the Eureka, and some officers and men killed. Several of the rioters have paid the penalty of their crime, and a large number are in custody. All well-disposed persons are requested to return to their ordinary occupations.'

Lalor estimated there were 34 digger casualties, of whom 22 died, and said that the unusual proportion of the killed to the wounded was 'owing to the butchery of the military and troopers after the surrender'. Carboni, with his red hair and previous prominence in the movement, was not in the stockade during the engagement, but he was arrested by Sub-Inspector Carter soon after. As he walked away from his arrest that morning, a trooper fired his carbine at him. The shot struck the brim of his cabbage-tree hat.

Carboni was then called on by the physician Dr Carr to give assistance with the wounded at the nearby London Hotel. He was sent to procure some stretchers and to fetch Carr's box of surgical instruments from

the hospital on Pennyweight Hill, six kilometres away. He returned with the instruments and another surgeon, Dr Glendinning. Re-entering the stockade, a friend of his took Carboni warmly by the hand and said, 'Old fella, I'm glad to see you alive, everyone thinks (pointing to a dead digger among the heap) that's poor Great Works!'

At about 8.30 a.m. Carboni was attending a wounded digger when Henry Goodenough, a trooper and spy who knew the Italian well, burst in the door of the London Hotel. Goodenough arrested Carboni at pistol point. He was taken outside and chained to a dozen more prisoners and found himself marched into the Camp, where he was stripped of his clothing, kicked, knocked down and thrown naked and senseless into the suffocating lock-up. He passed into a state of delirium. In the small hours of Monday, Rede had the prisoners removed to the storehouse, which was more commodious and better ventilated.

On Monday morning, Governor Hotham met with the Executive Council, and they jointly decided to proclaim martial law in and around Ballarat, though they were cautious enough to order that no death sentences be carried out without Hotham's express consent.

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EUREKA



THE AFTERMATH

The afternoon of Sunday 3 December, after the battle, Peter Lalor spent hiding at Warrenheip, but that evening or next morning, he walked into Ballarat, suffering greatly from his wounds. He sheltered for a while in the tent of a friend, Stephen Cummins, until it became clear that he was going to die without medical help. A desperate Cummins approached Father Smyth, who told him to get Lalor to the presbytery. Once darkness had fallen, Cummins managed to move Lalor across the gully to the priest's house, where two doctors decided that amputation of Lalor's arm was an immediate necessity. They performed their task in the presbytery with the priest, Anastasia Hayes and Mrs Cummins present to assist. It is part of Lalor's legend that as he came to his senses during his period under ether, he cried, 'Courage! Courage! Take it off!'

Some days later Lalor was moved from the presbytery to the home of Michael Hayes, Timothy's brother, from where, after a few weeks, he was taken by dray to Geelong, to the house of his fiancée, Elysia Dunn. A reward of £200 had been offered for his apprehension.

There was a hunt on not only for Lalor but for George Black and Frederick Vern as well. But none of the rewards were paid. No one came forward. Vern was sheltered by various diggers and wrote blustering

letters to the newspaper. Black was similarly saved from those searching for him.

On Monday morning, 4 December, Henry Seekamp, the editor of the *Ballarat Times*, was arrested and joined the rebels in the Camp storeroom, where Timothy Hayes, John Manning and Carboni, amongst others, were still prisoners. Only about one-third of the 114 captives were Irish and only eleven were 'foreigners', that is, German, Spanish or Italian, which made it hard to pass off the uprising as an Irish-foreign plot.

When the prisoners were paraded that morning in the Camp, an Irish prisoner asked the others, 'Where do you read in history that the British lion was ever merciful to a fallen foe?' The prisoners believed that a mass grave was being dug, and even feared they might be buried alive.

John Dunmore Lang summed up a lot of public opinion in a letter to Henry Parkes's *Empire*. His was the normal democratic cry that government officials and squatters had blotted out the voice of the people. 'There had not been a more incapable, a more extravagant, a more unprincipled or a more unjust and oppressive government in Christendom.' An *Age* editorial chimed in: 'Let the Government be undeceived. There are not a dozen respectable citizens in Melbourne who do not entertain an indignant feeling against its weakness, its folly and its last crowning error . . . they do not sympathise with injustice and coercion.'

A crowd of people was assembled in Swanston Street in Melbourne by the mayor and asked to show fealty to the Union Jack over the Southern Cross, but refused to do so. On Wednesday, 6 December, 6000 people who gathered outside St Paul's refused to support the government because to do so would betray 'the interests of liberty'. The countryside was full of similar meetings demanding redress, representation and land, the freeing of the prisoners, and a larger measure of justice. Independence from Britain was claimed as both a right and a necessity, and republican ideas were asserted. The days of arbitrary or despotic rule in Victoria were finished, but Hotham wanted the leaders of Eureka to face charges of high treason.

Carboni found himself hobbled to John Joseph, a black American alleged to have been one of those who shot Captain Wise, during preliminary hearings in front of the authorities at Ballarat, and listened while various government witnesses perjured themselves by claiming he had attacked them with a pike and that he had been captured inside the stockade. Carboni called his own

witnesses, including Dr Carr, but as they did not present themselves, fearing retaliation from the Camp, he—like Joseph—was committed to stand trial for their lives.

Some weeks after the events at the stockade, the thirteen remaining state prisoners, including Carboni and Joseph, were moved under escort to Melbourne Gaol, taking two days to get there. In Melbourne Gaol, the prisoners were locked in their cells, four or five together, for thirteen hours at a time, with no tobacco, writing materials or newspapers. Their food was vile. But that was nothing beside the consequences if they were found guilty of high treason.

The February and March trials of the Eureka accused would be crucial to the future of justice in the colonies. If they were found guilty, the old authoritarian and corrupt system would be validated. If not guilty, then political representation for diggers, good administration, the unlocking of the land and the abolition of a property basis for the electorate would be the unavoidable outfall.

Carboni was pleased to welcome in prison James Macpherson Grant, a canny Scottish solicitor. ‘God bless you, Mr Grant!’ he wrote. ‘For the sake of you and Mr Aspinall, the barrister, I smother down my bitterness, and pass over all that I have suffered . . .’ Richard Davis Ireland, an Irish barrister, also defended the prisoners.

The first to stand trial was John Joseph—some thought this was because the jury would find it easier to bring down a guilty verdict against a black man, and then would be bound by precedent to find others guilty. Chief Justice a’Beckett, the arch conservative, was on the bench and the prosecutor was the Attorney-General, William Stawell. The Crown challenged all Irish potential jurors, and anyone who was a publican, while Joseph amusingly objected to gentlemen and merchants. Ultimately there were no men of ‘doubtful exterior’ or of Irish extraction in the empanelled jury and the trial began.

Two government spies swore to seeing Joseph in the stockade, and two privates of the 40th Regiment claimed he had fired a double-barrel gun at the military, perhaps wounding Captain Wise. The problem for the Crown, however, was to convince the jury that it had been Joseph’s intention to make war ‘against our Lady the Queen’. His defence barrister, Aspinall, made some fun out of the idea that Joseph, as ‘a riotous nigger’ or ‘a political

Uncle Tom', sought 'to depose our Lady the Queen from the kingly name and Her Imperial Crown'.

The jury came back quickly with a verdict of Not Guilty, and the cheering was so loud that a'Beckett singled out two members of the public in the gallery for a week in gaol.

John Manning, a former schoolteacher and possibly the author of an article deemed seditious in the *Ballarat Times*, was next. The same arguments were made and the jury again brought in a verdict of Not Guilty, which so enraged Mr Stawell that he sought a month's leave of proceedings so he could compile a new list of jurymen.

Governor Hotham was now so unpopular that people cat-called him as he passed in the streets. But he did not have the flexibility to back away from pursuing the other prisoners, and by mid March the Attorney-General had a new list of 178 jurors. The first to be tried this time would be Timothy Hayes, a definite ringleader in the eyes of the Crown. Richard Ireland was his defence counsel.

All Irish and publicans were again kept out of the jury and Redmond Barry, a good Orangeman, was to be the judge. He and Ireland had been admitted to the Irish Bar together in 1839 after they had both graduated from Trinity College. Once more, police spies came forward and reported on Hayes's doings. In Hayes's defence, John O'Brien, a digger, testified that he was in Hayes's tent near the Catholic chapel while the firing was going on at the stockade and that Hayes had been in bed but got up to go to the priest's house. Father Smyth swore that Hayes had indeed come to him and told him that his services were needed at the stockade. Grey, an *Argus* journalist, testified that he heard no seditious words from Hayes, except perhaps the question that Hayes had asked at a meeting on Bakery Hill, 'Are you prepared to risk your lives in defence of your liberties?' And when Hayes had been arrested 300 metres from the stockade, a current licence had been found on his person.

The jury took only half an hour to bring down a verdict of Not Guilty. It was a great relief to Hayes's wife, Anastasia, who was worried publicly about why Tim had shown so little manhood as to get arrested in the first place. She had also complained to the police that the stockade had been attacked on Sunday rather than Saturday, 'when the men were ready for you'. Thousands assembled outside the courthouse talked of storming it to release Hayes were

he found guilty. Now, freed, he was carried through the streets shoulder high by a cheering crowd.

Carboni had been under arrest four months by now, and his turn came on 21 March 1855. Attorney-General Stawell brought forth eight witnesses—four of the 40th Regiment and four constables, and it was not too late at all, if he could get this Italian, for honour and authority to be restored.

A crown witness named George Webster declared that Carboni had made a speech on Bakery Hill to the effect that he'd come 16000 miles to escape tyranny and that the diggers should put down the tyrants of the Camp. The prisoner tore up his licence and threw it towards a fire, added Webster. Mr Ireland for the defence, however, was able to hand the witness an intact gold licence covering the period when the licence was allegedly burned. One soldier declared that Carboni was armed with a pike in the stockade. Another stated that he saw Carboni and two other men chasing the first private. A third soldier said he was at the stockade and saw Carboni, and so did a number of troopers and a non-commissioned officer.

Mr Ireland warned the jury of the horrid reality of the punishment for high treason—hanging, drawing and quartering. 'Never mind the stench,' wrote Carboni later, recalling Ireland's words, 'each piece of the treacherous flesh must remain stuck up at the top of each gate of the town, there to dry in spite of occasional pecking from crows and vultures.'

The jury retired at nine o'clock at night to consider the evidence. 'To remain in the felon's dock while your jury consult on your fate is a sensation very peculiar in its kind.' At twenty minutes past nine, the jury came back. The verdict was Not Guilty. 'The people inside telegraphed the good news to the crowd outside and "Hurrah!" rent the air in the old British style. I was soon at the portal of the Supreme Court, a free man. I thought the people would have smothered me in their demonstrations of joy.'

The trials had become a farce now, but Hotham continued with them. The last prisoners were tried in a group of six, and acquitted. The governor was shaken in health and confidence. The Secretary for the Colonies, John Russell, wrote to him and told him that even if he had acted upon good advice to the best of his judgment, it had been inexpedient to charge the diggers with high treason. One of the acquitted, John Manning, spoke of the deliberately non-Irish juries that sat at the trials: 'The future history of Australia will remember them with honour, and posterity will exalt

with a laudable pride that, in even the darkest and gloomiest moments of their history, their ancestors had been found to the very last moment, true to their post.'

When the report of the Commission on the Goldfields, authorised by Hotham in December, was tabled, it condemned 'the resort to arms'. Peter Lalor, still technically at large, wrote to the *Age* asking why nothing had been done to fix affairs 'before this bloody tragedy took place'. 'Is it to prove to us that a British government can never bring forth a measure of reform without having first prepared a font of human blood in which to baptise that offspring of their generous love? . . . Or is it to convince the world that where a large standing army exists, the Demon of Despotism will have frequently offered at his shrine the mangled bodies of murdered men.'

The *Age* wrote of Hotham that he had 'brought the good faith in the government into disrepute by systematic breach of contract . . . and a disgraceful system of espionage'.

Lalor, having survived his amputation, found that his friends had raised enough money for him to buy a portion of land near Ballarat. Even while the reward still existed for his apprehension he was moving around freely and had even bid publicly for his land.

It was an exhilarating time for Australian patriots. On 15 June 1855 the Gold Fields Act had been passed. It provided that local courts would undertake the majority of the work formerly done by the gold commissioners. The Act gave the diggers the right to elect members of the court, and its powers were wide, covering the regulation of conditions on the fields. On 14 July 1855, Raffaello Carboni was elected to the Ballarat Local Court and took his place with eight others. He was embittered by the loss of his money and personal belongings during his imprisonment, but he was delighted with his new position. In November 1855 he stood unopposed to represent Ballarat in the Legislative Council, and was again elected when a new Constitution came into force in 1856. He stayed in Australia until his book, detailing the Eureka battle and events leading up to it, was launched at the end of 1855, and then returned to Italy and to a place in Garibaldi's unification struggle.

John Basson Humffray was the other representative elected under the new Constitution from Ballarat. He founded a new group, the Victorian Reform League, but it did little since most of what it sought was achieved

when Hotham despairingly implemented the recommendations of the Gold Fields Commission of Enquiry.

In November 1855, Hotham was induced to forward his resignation to the Colonial Office. When it was later moved in the Legislative Council that a sum of £1000 be expended on a monument to his memory, Lalor, elected that very month to the Assembly, rose and said he did not want to cast a slur on the dead (for Sir Charles by then had died), but that Sir Charles had a sufficient monument in the graves of those slain at Ballarat. Less than a year later Peter Lalor said he was 'free to confess that it was a rash act' he had taken part in at Eureka.

For Australia now seemed to the vast majority of its people—other than indigenes—a forum where crises could be resolved by constitutional and moral means. What would become an endemic cynicism about politics and the venality and jobbery of individual politicians had not yet possessed the souls of citizens. Peter Lalor would in 1856 be elected to serve in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, all property qualifications for being a voter having been removed in 1857 in that state. Backed by wealthier Irish and other well-off progressives in the Goulburn area, Daniel Deniehy, an oratorical catherine-wheel fuelled and hollowed by alcohol, would serve in the more limited Legislative Assembly in New South Wales before 1858, when the franchise was still restricted to payers of £10 rent or owners of property worth £100, and after, when property qualifications was abolished and the old Chartist option of the secret ballot was instituted. (It had after all been a year earlier in Victoria.) Following the arrival of the last convict ship in 1853, the former Van Diemen's Land, now named Tasmania in an attempt to turn a new page or more accurately to rip out an old one, the political prisoner and Irish nobleman, William Smith O'Brien, wrote that had the bicameral institutions introduced there been in operation in Ireland they would have had peace and quashed rebellion.

As soon as the enormous colony based on Moreton Bay and containing a population of 25 000 received its independence in 1859 under the name Queensland, elective government came into being, though the electoral districts were drawn in such a way as to give a pastoral vote much more value than a city one. South Australia, influenced constitutionally by its neighbour Victoria, held its first elections in 1857, whereas Western Australia, with its small population and commercial tenuousness, would be governed

by viceroy and Legislative Council until the first elections for an assembly in 1890.

To keep a lid on radicalism, there existed in the new states Legislative Councils full of government appointees in the case of New South Wales, and in the more advanced politics of Victoria, elected on the basis that candidates owned property worth £50.

Henry Parkes, never a brilliant businessman, had temporarily left the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales in an attempt to save his newspaper the *Empire*. He had earlier abandoned his attempts to make a living through his shops. But to him the new Legislative Assembly, which he soon re-entered and in which he was a robust liberal, provided a career, though one in which he was always hard-up. As for others, on one hand was the Reverend JD Lang, still turbulent, fighting off a libel charge brought by the South Coast landowner Alexander Berry, and regretting that his republican, federal vision had not emerged in the new constitutional arrangements. And on the other the aging and unappeasable William Charles Wentworth.

He and his family were in a self-imposed exile in Britain, where Wentworth mourned the death of his teenage daughter Belle. Despite his role in creating the New South Wales constitution, he saw the finished item as 'a scandal to the British race and character'. Not only did he believe that the non-hereditary Legislative Councils would permit 'the folly of Democracy' to destroy the sylvan glories of the New South Wales he had written about in his youth, but his own proposal for a General Association of the Australian Colonies, a harbinger of an ultimate federal assembly, had been ignored. The universal franchise and a lack of an hereditary upper house seemed drastically radical to him and certainly likely to reduce the power of pastoralists. They would not do so to the extent he feared, given the influence of that group in the Legislative Councils of the various colonies and the squatters' capacity to adapt.

So that was Australia now, at the end of the 1850s, a country where most demands seemed to many people—including outside commentators, the Lalors of the earth, and the city progressives—to have been met; and where the penal past had been transmuted into a diverse future, in which Australians would bravely attempt to live down the origins of their society.

PART II

EUREKA TO
THE DIGGERS



From 1860 an era commenced in which Australians pursued glimmering visions of equity but also engaged in savage class conflict; became a place of cities but ‘unlocked’ the land to redeem the immigrant and native-born from urban squalor; dreamed of the illimitable continent whose limits painfully revealed themselves; became a nation but retained provincial objectives; was independent and craftily subservient; made a legend out of bush-rangers, industrial fights and brutal wars, but underestimated how, beneath these things, the living flesh of ordinary men and women shuddered and trembled; honoured anti-authoritarianism but saw no revolution arise; saw the immigrants increase and the indigenes diminish; planned big for the Australian North but could barely populate it; sought racial whiteness as the sole possible condition of its life yet spent an era quaking at the closeness of Asia and the militancy of Japan; became in the mind of the world, and in its own mind, the Working Man’s Paradise, but retained what Lawson called ‘the armies of the rear’, the regiments of want; and was a nation of both vision and earthy pragmatism. This was the country of the larrikin and the emergent artist; of the prophetic and the hardnosed; of radical oratory and ultimate respect for society’s structures; the Promised Land and the land the immigrant would have left had he owned the fare home. Suffusing it all was the idea that, although provincial, we were an especial people; that although

distant, in our social experiments and reforms, we were a society the world had much to learn from; that we were better than those who thought us crass and that, unleashed, we would show them a thing or two. The thunder-clap of a world-wide war reinforced the mythology of Australian uniqueness even while helping create a world that widened class schisms and bespoke unresolved and coming peril.

It can be asserted again, in the hope that the book confirms the assertion, that none of this was dull.

OLD AND NEW FACES IN A COLONIAL SOCIETY



POST-TRANSPORTATION CONVICTS

Conviction was at an end in Eastern Australia, but because of its shame it had induced in the white community a tendency to pretend that all convicts vanished utterly at the date of the abolition of transportation. Much later in the nineteenth century, the *Bulletin* wrote that the day ‘among all others which has been forced upon us as the natal-day of Australia is that which commemorates her shame and degradation’.

The convicts, however, were in many cases still serving sentences, or else living in the community, some of them lost souls, some cherished by families, some treasured even by society at large.

Mary Witherington, born in England in 1805, died in the town of Ross in Van Diemen’s Land in 1890. She had been transported for stealing a blanket while working as a housemaid in London. In 1835 she married a convict stonemason, Daniel Herbert, transported for life in 1827 for highway robbery. He was subjected to severe punishments for idleness, insolence, drink and absconding. But he worked as an overseer on the Ross Bridge, a fascinating little sandstone arch which is decorated with the faces of many of the citizens, convict and free, of Tasmania, as well as those of classic and Celtic mythology. One of the faces is Herbert’s wife, Mary.

Most former convicts came from the labouring classes but there were also the bourgeois ex-convicts. Francis Abbott had been a watchmaker

transported for seven years in 1844 for acquiring watches by false pretences. He had a wife and seven children for whom his arrest and sentencing must have been a great crisis, but all of them would follow him to Van Diemen's Land. He not only ran a successful jewellery business in Hobart but by 1860 was a member of the Royal Society of Tasmania and a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, London, and was made a fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society in 1869.

Even more notable was the career of the Irish political prisoner and surgeon, Kevin Izod O'Doherty, involved in the abortive Irish Famine uprising of 1848 and transported to Van Diemen's Land the following year. Pardoned in 1856, by 1862 he had settled in the new colony of Queensland with his young wife Eva, a notable Irish poet. By the mid-1860s O'Doherty was one of the two most esteemed Brisbane surgeons, founding president of the Queensland Medical Association, a member both of the militia and of the Queensland Parliament, and a pioneer of public health and quarantine in that city. Though tragedy would take his two brilliant sons from him, and liquidity problems and anti-Irish bigotry later blight his life, he was for many decades a model of the successful ex-convict.

Did former Vandemonian and New South Wales convicts settle in South Australia? It would be remarkable if they did not, thus rendering the colony less pure than it chose to think itself. The South Australian Act of 1838 excluded them, and Adelaide's first execution, in 1839, was of an escaped Irish convict from New South Wales named Michael Magee. Other convicts and ticket-of-leave men came as members of droving parties, and some settled in shacks in the Adelaide Hills and were referred to as Tiersmen, fearless, lawless Irish who lived on the tiers of the hills above the Anglican plain of Adelaide. Other ex-convicts worked for the South Australian Company itself at its Encounter Bay whaling station, again as early as 1839. That some of them did not marry or beget young South Australians is improbable.

Western Australia remained the only Australian colony accepting convicts in the 1860s. From a want of labour, and under the aegis of Earl Grey, the British Secretary of State, in 1849 it had adopted the practice it once renounced, just as the other colonies were abandoning transportation. It wanted only those convicts whose prison record was good. The first load of seventy-five sailed for Western Australia in March 1850 on the *Scindian*, and on that and later ships the prisoners were guarded by military pensioners—that is, veterans who trav-

elled with their families to Western Australia, where they were contracted to spend a number of years as penal guards in return for an ultimate land grant. Few of them, of course, went back. Even in the convict system, population building was the primary concern in Western Australia.

There was a pattern from the start to issue tickets so that convicts could work for private employers, and the system was more successful than assignment had been in the east, in part because there were no women convicts transported to Western Australia. A Visiting Magistrates Board was established in 1850 to hear any complaints from either side of the contract. By the 1860s the convicts were building prisons at Perth and Fremantle, a new Government House, the Pensioner Barracks at Fremantle and the Perth Town Hall. Ships running between the east and Western Australia preferred the southern town of Albany as a port, but the road between the south coast and Perth remained primitive. Further roads closer in, however, were built by convict labour. Around York to the east of Perth and southwards towards Bunbury the new thoroughfares were hacked out by convicts amongst the huge shafts of native hardwood. The York pastoralist, landowner and merchant John Henry Monger would employ in all sixty-three ticket-of-leave men up to 1871. He was the largest exporter of sandalwood and so an important generator of capital for the under-capitalised west.

Western Australia had trouble getting all those it wanted. The number of statutory transportation sentences had diminished since the high days of eastern convictism. Only 300 British were so sentenced in 1860 and another 300 the following year. The Western Australian administration wanted 1000 a year and could not get them. Later in the decade some 600 a year would be sentenced—in large part due to republican offences in Ireland.

J.S. Hampton, who had been a feared controller-general of convicts in Van Diemen's Land, came to Western Australia as governor in 1862, and in 1866 scandalously appointed his son Comptroller-General of Convicts in Western Australia, a lucrative post. The son's severity was not far removed from the harsh conditions then being promoted at British prisons such as Pentonville, where a soul-scarifying form of silence, solitude and lack of stimulation were imposed as the new cure for criminality. His thinking was influenced by an 1863 British Committee on Prison Discipline, which recommended that there should be a far more severe experience of punishment than that which transportees underwent. Transportation was no good for punishment, since

Western Australian property owners wanted as many of the convicts working out of prison as possible. Young Hampton managed at least to abolish the Board of Visiting Magistrates in March 1867. Convicts no longer had any right of complaint. If they were guilty of misdemeanours they found themselves on bread-and-water diets in darkened cells in grim Fremantle gaol, backed up by flogging and banishment to chain gangs as distinct from mere work gangs. Attempts at escape tripled under Hampton junior.

But a new comptroller named Fauntleroy arrived from England in that year, and Hampton senior left office in 1868. Fauntleroy at once established a more humane, though still severe, regime and reduced the number of chain gangs. The British government was about to announce that transportation would end, and the last ship, the *Hougoumont*, arrived in January 1868 with convicts and an especially recognised and quartered group of Irish political prisoners, or Fenians. They were young men, self-taught, often middle class, who had observed the Famine in their childhoods and believed that Ireland must be freed from the Crown to be run equitably. A large number of these Fenians, when landed, worked in road and timber gangs.

Throughout the history of convictism, except perhaps for some gentlemen prisoners after the Irish uprising of 1798, there had not been any accommodation of the idea of separating the politicals from the 'common criminals' as on the *Hougoumont*. The civilian Fenians aboard had access to paper and books and produced a handwritten newspaper edited by a young Fenian named Cashman. One of their leaders was a young man named John Kenealy, their spokesman when Prime Minister Gladstone pardoned four dozen of them in 1869. Kenealy was a young man who in time would repent of physical force but who would nonetheless invest in a Yankee whaling ship, the *Catalpa*, to rescue the last of the unpardoned life-sentenced Fenian soldiers on Easter Monday in 1876.

The transportation of these young men caused a great deal of anxiety amongst the Western Australian establishment, and a body of citizens sent a delegation to Earl Grey begging him not to send the Fenians. The Crown Solicitor, George Leake, warned citizens that America too was full of Fenians and that it would take only one American Fenian vessel 'merely armed with one long 18 pounder to lay Fremantle in ashes in a few hours'. The commodore of the British Naval Station in Sydney, Commodore Lambert, told Governor Hampton that to allay the fears of citizens he would send him

HMS *Brisk*, a corvette of sixteen guns. Two companies of the 14th Regiment would also be temporarily brought from Tasmania.

Many of the civilian Fenians were pardoned by Prime Minister Gladstone in 1869 as a gesture towards Ireland, and most of them settled in the United States. Some of the civilian Fenians whose names were inexplicably not on Gladstone's list had to serve out their terms. Most ex-convicts of either criminal or political origins remained labourers or became small farmers after their release.

DESOLATE IN THE EXTREME

It was in this era that Australians had it confirmed to them that at the country's core lay no mothering wellsprings, no surging waters. Dryness was to be destiny. There could be no American-style rush to the centre, and no cities of the central plains. No great spine of water favoured the continent as the Mississippi did the United States. There was no Ohio, no Missouri, no Cumberland, along whose banks Jeffersonian farmers might settle. The serpentine water ran underground, was richly envisaged by the original race, but denied explorers a sight of it.

Combined with the idea of blistering, stony emptiness was the idea that the explorer must suffer inordinately, and indeed, to enter the pantheon, should perish or disappear. John McDouall Stuart, in many ways a paragon of Australian exploration, evaded death in the Centre only by his skills of organisation and his wisdom, but is not honoured as are the bumbling Burke and Wills. Stuart was a small-statured Scot born in 1815 and full of vigour when he first undertook his journeys in Australia. In 1844 he had travelled with Charles Sturt into the centre of the continent and saw the effects of scurvy on members of the expedition. There were other members of *Homo sapiens sapiens* out there who did not suffer from scurvy and had lived there for millennia, but they knew the country in a different way. In May 1858, with the help of William Finke—a South Australian merchant who would have the supposed oldest river on earth named in his honour—Stuart moved out of Adelaide with a companion, an Aboriginal tracker and provisions for four weeks to explore beyond Lake Torrens and Lake Gairdner and to look for grazing land. He got as far as Coober Pedy before turning south and then west.

In 1859, he went out again, financed by Finke and a colleague, James Chambers. Stuart always travelled swiftly, with small parties and without any

Burke and Wills panoply or over-expenditure. He came back saying that he had found waterholes to provide the basis for a permanent route northwards. But his pace was frenetic, and he never allowed much time between expeditions. On 4 November that year he set out with his third expedition, and then was off again on 2 March 1860 with two men and thirteen horses. Most of their provisions were soon spoiled by floods and it was now that the party reached a channel temporarily full of water, which Stuart named the Finke.

Despite Stuart's careful preparations and stress on travelling lightly, the party began to suffer from scurvy and Stuart lost the sight in his right eye. They followed the Finke to the mountains that Stuart named after the Governor of South Australia, Sir Richard MacDonnell, the barren but beautiful range which stretches westward from the present site of Alice Springs. They headed north and on 22 April 1860 camped at a place that Stuart's readings told him was the centre of the continent. Nearby he named Central Mount Sturt, later changed to Central Mount Stuart, and planted a flag as 'a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilisation and Christianity were about to break on them'. After a futile attempt to go to the north-west, he found a creek which he named Tennant's Creek and travelled on north 200 miles (320 kilometres) before he turned around, though not entirely because of an onslaught by the natives at Attack Creek, more than two-thirds of the way across the continent. Starting again on New Year's Day 1860 he got 100 miles (160 kilometres) beyond it but met impenetrable scrub and himself began to die of dietary deficiency. Water was ever the problem—his horses on one occasion were 106 hours without it. Two months later the party dragged itself back into Chambers Creek Station in South Australia. The Centre had almost done for Stuart again.

At the end of 1860 the South Australian government voted £25 000 to equip a large expedition to be led by Stuart. This time he penetrated further but provisions ran out, clothes shredded, and he gave in. He got back to Adelaide on 23 September 1861. He received the 1861 gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society, but crossing the continent was still his furious ambition and he was quick to apply himself to it again and was ready to leave by the end of October. These quick turn-arounds after bouts of dietary disease and exhaustion seem ill-advised to a modern reader.

This time he took a botanist, Frederick Waterhouse, with him, and nineteen-year-old John Billiatt, future stalwart of Glenelg, Paraguayan adventurer,

owner of a fencing school and enlightened student of the desert Aborigines. Early in that last expedition, Stuart was knocked down by a horse which then trampled his right hand, dislocating two joints of his first finger, tearing the flesh and injuring the bone. He rode back to town for treatment, evaded amputation, then took off in pursuit of his party.

Months later, he penetrated the scrub that had defeated him beyond Sturt's Plain, and reached Daly Waters, named to honour South Australia's new governor. Stuart thought that in the Roper River area he had encountered 'the finest country I have seen in Australia'. He admired the Adelaide River too, though fire burned along it. The party rested at Daly Waters for two weeks, then on 24 July 1862 they forced their way through a tangled mass of vegetation and saw the Indian Ocean on the coast of Kakadu. 'I advanced a few yards onto the beach, and was gratified and delighted to behold the water of the Indian Ocean ... It was not an idyllic beach but one of soft blue mud, typical of the tropic, the mud from which mangroves rose.' The next day they fixed a Union Jack to a tall bamboo stalk and had a modest celebration.

On the return journey, Stuart was ill with scurvy and became nearly blind. He could not eat much because the condition of his teeth prevented him from chewing. He declared that he was 'very doubtful of my being able to stand the journey back to Adelaide; whatever may occur I must submit to the will of Divine Providence'.

As the party continued south, Stuart found it hard to endure the motion of the horse for twelve hours a day. On Tuesday 7 October he wrote, 'What a miserable life mine is now! I get no rest night nor day from this terrible gnawing pain; the nights are too long, and the days are too long, and I am so weak that I am hardly able to move about the camp.'

By 16 October things were worse. 'I am now nearly helpless; my legs are unable to support the weight of my body.' By 27 October he was vomiting blood and mucus. The next day he lost the power of speech for a time. He was living on a little beef tea and some boiled flour. He could see nothing at night, and one of his party 'informed me that my breath smelt the same as the atmosphere of the room in which a dead body had been kept for some days'.

He had been carried on a stretcher, slung between two horses. But now he found his health improved a little. At Polly Springs on the Finke River on the edge of the Simpson Desert he was able to walk two or three steps leaning on members of the party. But the strength was soon diminished by

an attack of dysentery. At last, on 26 November and on a stretcher again, he was carried into Mount Margaret Station, the northernmost settled point in South Australia and the point at which all his expeditions, including this one, had begun. While still far from Adelaide, he wrote, 'I am very doubtful of my being able to reach the settled districts. Should anything happen to me, I keep everything ready for the worst. My plan is finished, and my journal brought up every night, so that no doubt whatever can be thrown upon what I have done.' The willpower required to keep his journal up to date must have been of an astounding scale.

The party arrived in Adelaide on 17 December 1862. Stuart had assiduously observed the Sabbath throughout his treks and had lost not a single man. He was able to report that the country from the Roper River to the Adelaide River, and thence to the shores of the Gulf, was 'well adapted' for the settlement of a European population, 'the climate being in every respect suitable, and the surrounding country of excellent quality and of great extent.' These reports were not lost on enterprising pastoralists, though some of those who took him at his word would feel as disappointed as, long before, Phillip had been at Cook's report on Botany Bay. As Stuart's party entered Adelaide, people lined the streets to cheer him and he was awarded £2000. But on that he was permitted only the interest to sustain a life now broken. He was white-haired, exhausted and nearly blind. He returned to Scotland to see his sister and his journals were published in 1864, but his health was ailing and he died of swelling of the brain—very likely cerebral meningitis—in June 1866. Some questioned whether he had reached the Indian Ocean in 1862 and others spoke of his alcoholism, but the tree on the Indian Ocean shore which he had marked with the initials JMDS was rediscovered in 1883 and photographed two years later.

SENIOR INSPECTOR BURKE

When the Royal Society of Victoria had decided that the golden pre-eminence of Melbourne warranted that it put together the first exploring party to cross the continent, they chose as its leader Senior Inspector Robert O'Hara Burke, a man born of a genteel Galway Protestant family in 1821 who had never been beyond the settled regions. Burke combined in his character the stereotypical stage-Irish virtues and flaws—a yearning for the beyond, a Celtic romanticism about death, a volatile temperament balanced by charm and

humanity. His posting was to Beechworth but in the pre-Ned Kelly era, when new land laws were just beginning to trouble the squatters. Amongst other things, Burke was meant to prevent squatters using fake agents—dummies to select lands—but he was forgetful enough in his duties that he is said to have papered the walls of his Beechworth residence with reminders and documents to be dealt with.

When young he had served in the Austrian army as a hussar, but in 1848, the year of European revolutions, when the Austrians were fighting the Italian nationalists for possession of Milan and Rome, some shadow had fallen over his career, perhaps gambling debts. He was allowed to resign—a form of shame. He served in the Irish constabulary before emigrating to Victoria in 1853 with a promise of patronage and good hopes of promotion. Waiting for a posting, he ran up gambling debts at the Melbourne Club.

The name of William Wills, the expeditionary surveyor and astronomer, is a paler though perhaps more admirable presence in the expedition. He was in fact third-in-command. Second-in-command was George James Landells, who had both acquired and was responsible for the camels. But since it was Wills who struggled with Burke through the mangroves of the Flinders River to within reach of the Gulf of Carpentaria, tasted the water there and found it salty and suitable to validate their claim of a first crossing, and because they then died at Cooper's Creek, their names are cemented together. Burke'n'wills is an Australian term for bad luck, admirable but futile effort, and—despite the fact that they died by a flowing creek amidst Aborigines who were celebrating a good season—death in the desert.

The Royal Society of Victoria, consumed by civic ambition, wished to forestall the proposed third expedition of John McDouall Stuart, which sought to cross the continent (but which did not manage to). In making that journey, great natural resources might be found. Burke and his lieutenant Wills managed the south-north crossing in February 1861, while McDouall Stuart did not make the transit till July 1862. It would be a painful triumph though, since Stuart's would be the route used forever more and serve as the route for the Overland Telegraph Line, and Burke and Wills gave their lives for their success.

From the beginning of the expedition Burke quarrelled with the English camel expert, Landells, and shed men and equipment as he went. He used his generous but ageing meteorologist-naturalist-geologist, Ludwig Becker, for

menial jobs such as loading the camels. While Burke was plunging northwards with Wills, the Irishman and former soldier John King and a sailor named Gray, Becker would die near Cooper's Creek (near the junction of present day New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia) in the spring of 1861.

Burke and Wills struggled over the Selwyn Ranges, past the present site of Cloncurry, and on into a Carpentarian wasteland of mud and mangrove and bewildering watercourses. In the better parts of this country they had sighted Aboriginal huts. But at the height of this triumph of European transit, all they could do was to taste the brackish water whose salt showed that they had reached the fringes of a shore they lacked the strength to struggle through and find.

At the same time, Burke and his three began their return journey wasted emotionally and physically not only by the conditions of travel but by scurvy, which killed Gray. They reached Cooper's Creek depot, and the tree marked DIG, to find that the party that had waited there for them for over three months had ridden out just hours before and left a cache of supplies buried in the soil beneath it! Then came Burke's decision, after rest, not to follow the track of the departed depot party but to strike out south-westwards towards a station in South Australia. And then, that proving hopeless, they went back to Cooper's Creek for the last time.

King would prove to be the survivor, fed in particular by a woman named Carrawaw with fish and the edible grass seed named nardoo. Burke and Wills too had both eaten nardoo, which before they died they prepared with King by grinding it and mixing it with water. Wills said they ate three to four pounds of it a day. Only when King was a near-helpless survivor did Carrawaw begin to feed him with nardoo prepared in the native way, from roasted seed. Without the roasting the nardoo did not provide thiamine. Burke and Wills, having unwittingly omitted one step in preparation, were somewhat amazed they were failing despite the use of the great Aboriginal staple.

While John McDouall Stuart was still crossing the continent on his last journey, the bones of Burke and Wills and the living survivor, King, were retrieved from Cooper's Creek by a party led by William Hallett. Hallett, the survivor and the remains all reached Melbourne just before Christmas to be greeted by the Exploration Committee and Ellen Dougherty, Burke's former nurse, now elevated to new status as nurturer of the immolated Burke. As

one historian, Michael Cathcart, justly says, the exposing of the remains of Burke and Wills was a Victorian-age necrophiliac orgy.

When the remains arrived in Melbourne in a tin box, they were taken to the Royal Society Hall and examined (fragments of bone and tooth were stolen as civic relics). They were then displayed for fifteen days in a raised catafalque on which stood glass-topped coffins. Those with influence were actually permitted to handle the bones. Volunteer regiments accompanied the hearse on the way to burial, and houses and shops along the way to interment were draped in purple and black. The *Age* claimed 40 000 people wept. Stuart's interment was a far less crowded affair at London's Kensal Green cemetery.

The death of the explorers had redeemed all their failures. The fact that the country they had travelled was of little economic promise was forgotten in a paroxysm of grieving. While Stuart's expedition had practical results, there was nothing practical to be gained from Burke and Wills' journey. Their funeral was a massive recognition of the idea that Australia's core was malign and unfair.

GENTLEMAN TRANSPORTEES

By 1860 the idea of Australia as the place for the less talented or more disreputable young Briton was well established in British culture. It would long continue to be so.

Charles Dickens can be seen as typical of a number of nineteenth-century bourgeois Englishmen who saw Australia as offering possible redemption for unsatisfactory sons. It is famously known that as a boy Charles Dickens worked in a blacking factory—that is, a factory which made shoe polish and dispensed it in bottles. Surrounded by squalor and coal barges, he had yearned for beauty and education and, when he came to affluence and success, he was pleased to be able to send his own sons and daughters to good schools—three of his sons attended a fashionable boarding school in Boulogne—and to share with them a series of increasingly fine residences from Devonshire Terrace to Tavistock House and the beloved Gad's Hill Place in Kent. In these transits of success, Dickens picked up from meetings with such folk as Caroline Chisholm, the great promoter of emigration to Australia, a particular view of the distant colonies. In the last issue of his magazine *Household Words* in May 1859, he wrote, 'It is unquestionably melancholy that thousands upon thousands of people, ready and willing to

labour, should be wearing away life hopelessly in this island, while within a few months' sail ... there are vast tracts of land, of country where no man who is willing to work hard ... can ever know want.'

He exploited that destination in his imaginative work as a place to send a failed gent such as Mr Micawber, the hapless debtor in his novel *David Copperfield* (1850). Aboard the emigrant ship, Micawber cried, 'This country I am come to conquer. Have you honours? Have you riches? Have you posts of profitable pecuniary emolument? Let them be brought forward. They are mine!' Micawber rises in Australia to become a magistrate at a fictional place named Port Middlebay. In *Great Expectations*, which Dickens began writing in 1860, Magwitch, a transported convict who returns to England illicitly but as a wealthy man, was also indicative of popular British belief in Australia's being a less mentally and morally testing environment for success. If former convicts could do well in Australia, young gentleman should have no trouble at all.



Dickens' tenth child and youngest son, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, and his sixth son, Alfred D'Orsay Tennyson Dickens, were both future Australian immigrants. Alfred acquired the family pet name Skittles, and the younger Edward was called Plorn.

Dickens' interest in Australia had been piqued again when in 1862 he met Sir Charles Nicholson, who had served as a doctor in New South Wales and whose interest in archaeology led to his name being attached to a museum of archaeology in Sydney University. He had published a book, *The Australian Colonies, Their Condition, Resources and Prospects*, which Dickens devoured with his customary energy. Enthusiasm for Australia was also at work in the mind of the novelist Anthony Trollope, when he gave permission for his son Frederic to emigrate to Australia in 1863. Young Frederic wrote back enthusiastic reports of station life which might well have reached Dickens through his friendship with his fellow novelist.

These factors caused Dickens, with whatever degree of enthusiasm from his son, to decide on Australia as a place for Alfred. Alfred had been working at an importer's involved in trade with China, but now he was off to a place of greater opportunity. At the time of his departure Alfred was twenty years old. His ship arrived in Melbourne in early August 1863. An English friend

of Dickens, the Reverend G.K. Rusden, had worked on bush stations before becoming Clerk of Parliament in Victoria. Rusden and Sir Charles Nicholson took an interest in young Alfred, and advised him on possible employment in the bush. He became manager of Conoble, a sheep station nearly 100 miles (150 kilometres) north of Hay, in flat, drought-prone country, a planet away from the England of Dickens' novels. He wrote from there that he was 'as happy as a king'.

In 1867 Dickens withdrew young Plorn from school, telling his headmaster that he intended for him 'an active life', and determining that this should be in Australia. At the boat train at Paddington, bound first for Plymouth, with his brother Henry travelling with him to that port to see the sixteen-year-old Plorn off, Dickens was distraught. 'I shall never forget, so long as I live, the parting that took place between my father and my brother Edward, his youngest and best loved son,' Henry would later report. Dickens would never see either Alfred or Plorn again. Indeed, thanks to the relentless pace of his work, he was eroding his health and had only two more years to live. As for his sons—whom we shall revisit later—they would suffer many Antipodean tests and tragedies, and one can see through them the gulf between what Europeans expected of Australia, and what Australia was.

BEING BLACK AND WHITE

By the 1860s, the battle for land between the two races was in full flower across the north of Australia. In the southern regions of Australia, the battle had already been won. People in cities and 'settled districts' were already finding evidence in science, the Gospels and social science that the conquest, if regrettable, was inevitable. First of all, the concept of the Great Chain of Being, a proposition deriving from Aristotle, was a given in the European view of the cosmos. At the base of being were rocks, at the apex was God, beneath him angels, and beneath angels, man. Inevitably Christians stood highest amongst mankind's creeds, and Europeans highest amongst the races of man. Aborigines were thought lowest. Phrenology, the science of grading humanity by studying the shape of the head and the size of the brain inside it, had been used to explain the criminality of convicts. But it also explained the low state of Aborigines. Phrenology had such respectability that men with high qualifications could assure audiences in the south-eastern cities that, scientifically, the Aboriginal skull showed deficiencies in morality and

brain power, and an excess of aggression and powers of observation (hence their capacity to track animals and men).

The Aborigines also had reason to fear certain colonial interpretations of Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* (1859). More in sorrow than in hate, the *Age* declared in January 1888, 'It seems a law of nature that where two races whose stages of progression are brought into contact, the inferior race is doomed to wither and disappear ... in accordance with a natural law which, however it may clash with human benevolence, is clearly beneficial to mankind at large.' Thus, too much kindness only delayed an inevitable obliteration.

It would be wrong to see such opinions as deliberately malign. They were taken as science by decent people, on the basis of ideas powerfully arrayed to support them. It was phrenology which made Truganini, the Tasmanian Aborigine, very nervous of what would happen to her body after her death. William Lanney, her husband, seen as the last surviving full-blood Tasmanian Aborigine, had died in 1869 and his corpse had been immediately dismembered and beheaded. 'I know that when I die the Museum wants my body,' Truganini told a clergyman. She had good reason to be fearful that her head would join the hundreds on display for the use of scholars in museums in Australia and throughout the world. Indeed, after her death in 1876, the Dandridge family, who had protected her in life, buried her at midnight in the remains of the old Female Factory at the Cascades. It was scientific men from the Royal Society of Tasmania, not ghouls, who exhumed her body in December 1878 and kept it in a secure part of the museum for study by scientists. But ultimately, in the early twentieth century, as she had feared, she was placed on public display. She would again be buried—with honours and more publicly than the first time—a hundred years after her death.

POLITICS AND BANKRUPTCY

By 1860 Henry Parkes, the activist whose eloquence had helped put a final end to the transportation of prisoners to eastern Australia, was a politically adept member for East Sydney in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. He embarked upon becoming a consummate politician, but remained a bad businessman, a writer of poor verse, and a fancier of women.

He had already met another great colonial politician, Charles Gavan Duffy, when Duffy first arrived from Ireland, and had seen at once that he

was a man of similar skills. 'Had I been myself an Irishman, with Mr Duffy's temperament and his principles, I believe I should have been a rebel like him.' Like Duffy, he was already a convinced Federationist. 'The time is coming,' he said in the early 1860s, 'when we must all be Australians.'

Always over Henry Parkes, there was the shadow of debt. William Bede Dalley would declare of the middle-aged Henry Parkes in 1872, 'If he lives long, he will rule over a nation, not of admirers and friends, but of creditors.' Said another contemporary, 'The very ring of his voice has a promissory note in it.' A prodigious liability of £50 000 had been built up by his liberal newspaper *The Empire*, and Parkes had been forced by it to quit politics in 1856. In the same year he published his second volume of poems, *Murmurs of the Stream*. His verses were undistinguished but had an idealistic ring:

*Poor land! Of what avail for thee
Thy summer wiles and skies resplendent,
If all this light still lifeless be,
And man grow here a thing dependent.*

But small issues of business woe dragged him down from transcendence of Australian vision. He wrote of 'Disappointment's pain and trust deceived, and efforts foiled.' His heart bled under 'misery's fang'. But Australia, he said in a poem to his son, 'the little southerner', 'shall startle the world from its pomp of old sins'.

Wisely or not, he re-entered Parliament for the North Riding of the County of Cumberland in 1858, and declared his support for Charles Cowper's Electoral Law Amendment Bill, introduced to the Legislative Assembly in May 1858, proposing representation on the basis of equal population per seat, manhood suffrage and vote by ballot. The Lancashire-born Cowper was a strange—some would say wonderful—combination of progressive businessman and radical. According to the conservative John Hay, the bill was likely to lead to mob chaos. 'It left the good old English path ... and was an indication that the Government of the country was on a downward course towards democracy and the tyranny of an unthinking majority.'

Supporting such reforms, Parkes still had to resign when one of his creditors, Sir Daniel Cooper, demanded repayment of £11 000 with which Parkes had bought *The Empire's* premises. The matter went before the Supreme

Court, and possession of the property was taken and *The Empire* was advertised for sale. There were attempts by Parkes' political supporters to take up the mortgage. The paper closed down, leaving his house in Ryde threatened and forcing him 'to begin life afresh with a wife and five children to support, a name in a commercial sense ruined and a doubt of the practical character of my mind'. But through help from friends, he had at least avoided bankruptcy. But he had to surrender his estate, the liabilities being estimated at £50 000 and the assets at £48 000.

Though exonerated by the judge, Parkes had given his opponents a stick to beat him with. When he appeared before the electors of South Sydney at the general election of 1859 he was 'vilified, oppressed, penniless', but by the time the 1860s dawned he was the member for East Sydney, and economically but not politically humbled. He was still considered a radical, since he told the House that the parliament of a new country 'has no graver duty to perform than guarding against the accumulation of special enactments which ... are often at variance with the maxims of common law'. The common law favoured the rights and freedoms of citizens, not those of special interests or large land-holders.

The issues which were to make him unpopular with Catholics were already arising—state-aided religious schools were adverse to his belief that all religious bodies in the colony should work on a voluntary and self-supporting principle. Catholic priests denounced his secularism, and to some extent what they saw as his sectarianism, from the pulpit. He was already worried about the scale of Irish immigration. He complained that in the period 1860–69, 15 000 out of 20 000 assisted immigrants were Irish, and he saw the Irish Catholics as representing one solid priest-ridden political force alien to British progress. This assumption would in time make him behave obsessively towards the Irish, as when he opposed an assisted-immigration bill in 1869 because he 'had no desire that his adopted country, the birth place of his children, should be converted into a province of the Pope of Rome'.

It was true that there was mainstream prejudice against the Irish. During the 1860s, signs reading NO IRISH NEED APPLY were placed at the doors of many businesses and factories. (Ulster Protestants were exempt from this exclusion.) In response, Irish Catholics began to organise to take workplaces over for their own kind. Catholic children in Melbourne schools in the 1890s

would be told that members of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church had 'taken over' the city's tramways, and so they could always get a job there.



Early in 1861, under the sting of want, Parkes accepted an invitation by Cowper to tour Britain with W.B. Dalley as an official government lecturer on immigration at a salary of £1000. His objective, he said when he was leaving, was to attract rich men as well as poor men to Australia. Some believed that he was offered this job, and its welcome salary, as a means for his enemies to get him out of Parliament. Cowper knew Parkes needed the money and, as William Lyne said, thus 'in the course of a few days, one of the most prominent and consistent of the radical party ... was removed from the arena'. When he sailed in May Parkes left behind his wife Clarinda and his children impoverished on their rented farm at Werrington.

Dalley and Parkes opened offices in London, and described their official position—New South Wales Government Immigration Agents. They had letters of introduction to Mr Gladstone, Lord Brougham and the Duke of Newcastle. In dispatches home, they said that they were having problems because of 'the indisposition of the wealthy classes to immigration'. Manufacturing was booming and the larger employers of labour were for the present in need of workers, and did not want to see a haemorrhaging of people to any of the new world countries.

Though touring for money in an era before the payment of members, Parkes lost none of his sense of destiny, and during the progress of his journey he was able to meet and converse with such literary stars as Thomas Carlyle, renowned writer of *The History of the French Revolution*, and Richard Cobden, advocate of peace and free trade. Going to Birmingham, the city of his birth, to lecture, he took the opportunity to come to a business agreement with a fancy goods exporting business. He hoped (in vain) that this might guarantee his family's affluence for the rest of their lives.

Back in Sydney, in January 1864 he returned to the House at a by-election for the seat of Kiama, which he would hold until 1870. He was helped by the fact that Kiama was the headquarters of the anti-Catholic Orange Lodge.

In 1865 Cowper tried without success to buy the ever cash-strapped Parkes off with an offer of the post of Inspector of Prisons, and when Parkes rebuffed that he offered him a ministry portfolio. But when Cowper lost the

confidence of the House in early 1866 and the more conservative Cork-born James Martin was commissioned to form a ministry, Martin valued Parkes' alliance and made him his colonial secretary.

Parkes' portfolio of Colonial Secretary made him responsible not only for internal New South Wales administration but also for liaising with the Colonial Office in Whitehall. Of Parkes as a minister, the *Sydney Morning Herald* would declare that, 'No man among us knows better where to find the heart of the dark-browed and the rough-handed'—that is, of what would come to be called the proletariat. As for his passion for state schooling, Parkes declared, 'My motto has always been, fewer gaols and fewer policemen, more schools and more schoolmasters.'

PLORN TRIES TO DO A MAGWITCH

The story of Edward 'Plorn' Dickens in Australia would be characteristic of that of a number of genteel young Britons, in a class of more elevated self-transportees. His elder brother, Alfred, had left Conoble for a new job as manager of Corona, a station in the barren Barrier Hills north of the site of what would be Broken Hill, and when in December 1868 young Plorn arrived, just sixteen, Mr Rusden organised a job for him at Eli Elwah, a large sheep station near Hay in New South Wales. Ten days after Plorn left for Eli Elwah, he turned up again in Melbourne, declaring that the resident owner was not a gentleman. Whatever had happened, Rusden wrote to Dickens that Plorn was lacking in resolution. Dickens, having suffered a stroke, or a series of small ones, wrote to Rusden in early 1869 both warning his Australian friend not to believe the dire news about his health, and also declaring Edward to be 'a queer wayward fellow with an unformed character ... I still hope he may take to colonial life. I know that it is an experiment which may not succeed, and I know perfectly well that if it should not succeed, the cause of the failure will be in himself alone.' One wonders how many young men of a nature like Plorn's, dispatched to Australia, felt the same alienation and bewilderment when a kindly person in Sydney or Melbourne found them a position in some remote place full of rough-handed, harsh-souled men.

Plorn's new post was even more remote. Momba Station, 80 kilometres north-west of Wilcannia on the Darling, was in country marked by stony hills and lagoons and waterholes. Nearly two million acres, Momba carried

353 cattle and 75 000 sheep. Rainfall was meant to be 25 centimetres annually but did not always oblige. The other Australian reality was that millions of rabbits infested the pasture. The rabbit had taken only a few short decades to colonise the remotest Australian pasture land.

The storekeeper at Momba Station was W.H. Suttor, who would later be a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. He himself had had hard times in 1868–70 on a station of his own in this country of saltbush and cottonbush, and told young Plorn that he was enjoying John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens*, a work which was based on the great writer's conversation and anecdotes. He thought Charles Dickens one of 'the Great Magicians' able to distract from the harshness of station life.

The family back in England surmised that Alfred would be able to give emotional support to Plorn. In fact, over 200 kilometres of rough terrain separated the brothers. On the day before his death in 1870, Dickens addressed a letter to Alfred at Corona and the subject was in large part Plorn. 'I am doubtful whether Plorn is taking to Australia. Can you find out his real mind?' But Plorn endured life there, in country an Englishman who had never seen it could barely imagine. It provided for young Plorn an experience which was sometimes exciting and sometimes the Australian equivalent of his father's blacking factory days.

The store Suttor ran was like those on all the big stations, where drovers bought their tobacco and other needs. Distance made the prices high. But Suttor the storekeeper remained a bush patron to the younger Dickens and helped him with advice about horses he wished to buy with the money he had brought from England. Since Plorn had gone to Momba as an apprentice, he received no wage, or only a very small one, for all his work. Before he died Dickens was pleased to hear about Plorn's ventures into Australian horseflesh. Plorn, he wrote—approvingly now—was taking 'better to the bush than to books'. Horse racing was often the only communal sport for these widely spread people and Edward would enjoy it all his life.

Dickens suffered a severe stroke, and died on 9 June 1870. It was August before the news reached the boys on their remote stations. Edward's resolve to stick to the business of being a bushman was nevertheless reinforced. After his father's death, Aunt Georgie, Dickens' executor, sent him a yearly allowance of £100, enough to buy horses with. But he was not yet twenty-one and able to inherit. He wrote asking for a larger part—for he wanted to become

an Australian pastoralist. As it would for many others, the land would grind him on the anvil of its drought years.

In December 1872, however, four months before his inheritance would be released to him, Plorn and two partners bought a small part of and took a lease on the rest of Yanda, a station of 300 000 acres along the banks of the Darling on the road from Bourke to Wilcannia. Plorn must have felt that he had joined the world of men and validated his father's memory.

One of the partners, William Hatton, undertook to live on the property, while Plorn was fortunately employed by the pastoral company, E.S. Bonney and Company, to manage the neighbouring station, Mount Murchison, which was about half a million acres with a 25-mile frontage on the Darling.

He was closer to Wilcannia at Mount Murchison, and became a young Justice of the Peace in the area and sat as a magistrate. He was a member of the committees of both the Church of England and the Wilcannia Jockey Club. His horse, Greytail, was second in the Wilcannia steeplechase. Later in his career, his horse Tam O'Shanter won by a length, while his Murky Morn won the squatter's purse of £15 at the Mena Murtee Station races. He scoured local stations to create a cricket team to play the township, and he was captain of it.

Plorn met a girl named Constance Desailly, whose father ran a station named Netallie west of Wilcannia. The marriage was to take place in July 1880. Though there was a week of feasting, dancing and celebrations at Netallie Station, he and Constance did not go on a honeymoon but instead headed straight back to Mount Murchison, to the demands of running a station in hard country. Plorn told Rusden in a letter that he was in receipt of £300 a year for running Mount Murchison and thus he would have no difficulty in supporting a wife. He had moved to a new house, the old homestead, spacious enough for a woman to put her mark on it.

Now Momba and Mount Murchison were bought by the South Australian firm Elder, Smith & Company, and Mount Murchison was absorbed into Momba. It became a property bigger than Ireland, two million acres carrying 190 000 sheep. But Yanda, Plorn's leasehold, was not flourishing. His partner, Hatton, who managed Yanda and to whom Plorn and his wife were now heading, complained of the drought and wished them a happy trip on their way to him 'and a wet one'. Pastoralists in that area did what they could to retain the yearly rain, building dams and high mounds to stave off the wind,

planting trees and covering the tanks with water weeds to protect them from the sun. But the evaporation was furious, and only 9 to 12 inches fell on the plain around. There would be three straight years in which only 7 inches of rain fell. Magwitch had not made his fortune in country like this—he had been transported early enough to find the pasture lands further in. But the Dickens boys were struggling to survive on the edges of desert.

SOCIAL BANDITS

At the other end of the pole of social aspirations and pastoral dreams lay the bushranger, generally a selector of land, or a selector's son. Bushranging had begun with absconding convicts such as Martin Cash in Tasmania and bold Jack Donohue in New South Wales. But in the second half of the nineteenth century it was influenced by the movement of gold around the countryside from regions not yet serviced by railways, and by land discontent and a rancour towards the law and the squatter.

The high standing of the bushranger in popular imagination has been enduring. Ned Kelly remains fabled, where the man who condemned him to death, Redmond Barry, despite being a great Victorian in both senses of the word, despite his statue outside the State Library of Victoria, despite being one of the creators and Chancellor of Melbourne University, despite his brilliance as judge and classicist, despite his being a defender of Aborigines, is unknown in popular legend. Yet when the bullet-ridden corpse of Ben Hall was buried in Forbes in 1865, respectable girls and women attended the gravesite, on the grounds of his gallantry to those he held up or detained as temporary prisoners, though they were secretly attracted by his glamour and daring.

Ben Hall, most renowned of all 1860s bushrangers, was born at Breeza Station, west of Tamworth in New South Wales, in 1838, his father a convict from Bristol, his mother one from Dublin. The family settled on the Hunter. To many hand-to-mouth smallholder former convicts and immigrants, cattle, sheep and horse theft was no sin. Cattle duffing and gully-raking for wandered livestock were in some cases a prelude to bushranging. There were many small land-holders who boasted that they never ate their own meat, and indeed butchering a neighbour's cow was tolerated by the owner as long as large numbers of livestock were not slaughtered. Young bushrangers knew every horse in their district, and who owned them. The native-born bushranger Frederick Ward, also known as Captain Thunderbolt, was shot dead

while trying out a horse at Kentucky Creek near Uralla in the New England area of New South Wales. Ben Hall walked with a limp as a result of a friend trying to set a broken leg for him, but on a good horse he was lightning.

When New South Wales established a new centralised police force in 1862 it was modelled along the lines of the British and Irish constabularies, and staffed by men from both these forces. Fear of corruption meant that those who had served in the old New South Wales police forces were given no encouragement to join the new one. Though corruption was avoided, valuable knowledge of rural areas was squandered. Telegraph stations were too far apart, police weaponry was inferior and the centralised nature of the force required any officer pursuing bushrangers to report first to Sydney. To deal with the outlaws, if they were brave enough, the bush policemen rode the cheapest horses the government could acquire, on which they had no chance of capturing the bush-crafty renegade on his stolen thoroughbred.

Under the reign of bushrangers, there were periods of lawlessness when central government seemed at peril. The mails on the southern roads beyond Goulburn were stopped and plundered day after day, locals complained. The roads around Mudgee and Bathurst were almost as dangerous, and the police seemed helpless to prevent crime or to detect offenders.



The Empire newspaper wrote in 1864 ‘that a large portion of the South-Western and Western Districts of the interior of this colony has been under the control of robbers rather than the Government’. In October 1863 Ben Hall’s gang went into Bathurst one Saturday night, bought oranges, visited a gun shop and took over the public house. There was no intervention by the police. With John Gilbert, Hall held up the town of Canowindra, some 50 miles (85 kilometres) west of Bathurst, for three days. They offered hospitality in a pub, in what does appear to be a benign sort of hostage taking, at Robertson’s Hotel; stopping each dray and team that passed through town, they lodged and fed the passengers and supplied them with drink free of charge. Townspeople who wanted to move about the town were given signed passes by Ben Hall. It was this power and stylishness that resonated with the sons of small selectors. It was on the road from Binalong to Goulburn, where the Halls were taking horses of sundry origins for sale, that Ben first met the bushranger Frank Gardiner, alias Christie, a charismatic scoundrel of Scots

descent. It is harder to attach the social bandit label to Gardiner. One could make a stronger case for his being, even in his own mind, a criminal and nothing more, but he had a certain way about him. He had already served a sentence at Cockatoo Island for horse theft before getting a ticket of leave. Later, in the early 1860s, the young Ben would link up with Gardiner in one of the famous Royal Mail gold escort raids.

Ben had never intended to become a bushranger. He settled on his own small station outside Forbes while managing a larger one which belonged to a squatter, Hamilton. He had met a young woman, Bridget Walsh, who, according to fellow bushranger John Bradshaw, was a disgrace to her sex, a curse to her husband, a woman more vicious than the Empress Messalina. While Ben was away mustering, she left him, taking their infant son with her, to run away with a man named Taylor. Her departure, together with the financial stress of keeping a small farm going in the Weddin Mountains, and then the burning of his homestead by the police, are said to have turned the genial Hall into a professional bushranger in a colony where great unpoliceable stretches of track existed.



Hall's native hills were placed in the midst of a series of gold-mining and pastoral towns—30 miles (50 kilometres) from Forbes, 40 miles (60 kilometres) from Lambing Flat, and only 15 miles (25 kilometres) from Grenfell. All portable wealth which travelled these roads was, by the authority of his whimsy and sense of grievance, potentially forfeit to him. The hold-up of the Eugowra gold escort in April 1862 was an extraordinary feat of bushranging, the hold-up par excellence. The location was a steep gully where the coach had to both slow and pass a rock outcrop. The bushrangers—including Ben Hall, Frank Gardiner and John Gilbert, a Canadian-born expert horseman and model of boldness—persuaded some bullockies to block the road with their wagons and to pretend to be drunk or sleeping. At the appearance of the bandits, the horses bolted and the coach turned on its side, the driver and four police fled for the bush, one of the police being shot in the testicles. A fabulous £14 000 in gold and bank notes were taken.

Gilbert was with Hall, too, in the hold-up of the entire town of Bathurst, in the raid on Canowindra, and the kidnapping of Gold Commissioner Henry Keightley. In November 1864, while holding up the Gundagai–Yass mail with

Hall, Gilbert killed Sergeant Parry, and then burned down a store in revenge for an attempt by the proprietor to hunt them down. Social banditry was starting to get bloody. In all, between 2 February 1862 and 10 April 1865, Gilbert had a part in at least forty-four armed hold-ups in New South Wales, including the theft of five racehorses. Outlawed under the Felons Apprehension Act, Gilbert was shot by Constable John Bright on 13 May, and buried in the police paddock in Binalong. Hall had earlier been shot dead in a police ambush near Forbes.

The young man whom some named Mad Dog Morgan or 'the travellers' friend', the latter name attaching to his treatment of ordinary travellers not large pastoralists, had operated on both sides of the Murray and had raided stations whose owners had a reputation for severity. At Burrumbuttock Station he made the owner write out cheques totalling £400 for the station employees. He was an energetic ambusher of coaches, where he behaved with the same sort of gallantry as his contemporary Ben Hall. But his volatility and mental instability, and two murders he was guilty of, explained the nickname which would attach to him in bushranging history. In 1865 he crossed to Victoria to work above the King River, and a station owner named George Rutherford and five station hands were able to ambush him and shoot him dead.

It might be from the treatment of his body that the awe for the bushranging phenomenon can be judged. Hair was cut from his head and beard as souvenirs, and after his body was displayed in Wangaratta, his head was removed and sent to Melbourne University. There were rumours lasting to this day that his scrotum was fashioned into a tobacco pouch.

CULLIN-LA-RINGO

In October 1861, the highly entrepreneurial Victorian landowner Horatio Wills, son of a convict transported for life for highway robbery, lay dead and badly hacked with eighteen other European corpses in the tall grass of a run named Cullin-La-Ringo, near the present town of Springsure, inland from Rockhampton. The Kairi people had killed Wills and his stockmen and their families. This party had travelled for three months by ship and then overland to reach these natural pastures. It was a notable case in that it set a tone for relations, black and white, in north Queensland.

Horatio Wills had been born in Sydney in 1811 and was at the height of his powers by 1860. From the 1830s onwards, after a period in which

he edited his stepfather George Howe's renowned *Sydney Gazette*, he had shown a capacity to move cattle and sheep over great distances. In the 1840s he had taken up a run of 125 000 acres in western Victoria, a property he named Lexington. Horatio experimented with breeding and with wheat, and Lexington became a model station. After he sold it and took up residence near Geelong on a smaller property named Bellevue, he was able to travel, live graciously and educate his sons in England and Germany.

In the Western District of Victoria inland from Portland, where Horatio Wills had established Lexington, the squatters, including Wills himself, had been concerned by the Aborigines and their attacks on shepherds and settlers. Augustus Robinson, the famous Protector of Aborigines, had listed Horatio Wills as having shot a number of Aborigines. On the other hand, Horatio would have argued he got on well with the non-predatory Aborigines who lived close to his homestead, and fed them rations twice a day. Rations were a form of peacemaking, and for the natives a pleasant break from the arduous work of hunting and the gathering and grinding of seeds.

The large pastoral stations once available by squatting and then by lease in Western Victoria were by 1860 hard to come by, but inland Queensland offered the same promise the Western District once had. In 1860 Horatio Wills had taken over the lease of four blocks, each of 16 000 acres, the whole going by the title Cullin-La-Ringo.

In January 1861 he left his wife behind at Bellevue and set off with his son Thomas and a group of his stockmen, wagon drivers, shepherds and servants, along with their wives and children, by ship to Brisbane, where they would buy livestock and drove it to the station. By taking his son Tom on this journey Horatio hoped he would be able to introduce him to a more serious world of frontier business, since the convivial twenty-five-year-old, whom his father had taken the trouble to educate at Rugby School in England, had until now pursued no career except as a sportsman, playing in intercolonial cricket matches where he had a reputation as an intimidating bowler. Twenty months before the Cullin-La-Ringo massacre, he had helped codify for his cricket club a most remarkable code of football.

In early February the party set off from Brisbane, with five bullock wagons, and moved over the coastal range to the Darling Downs where Horatio assembled a herd of ten thousand sheep. From here it was a 600 mile journey. They reached Rockhampton in seven weeks, and then turned west.

At the time Horatio Wills' party turned inland from Rockhampton, Lieutenant Powell of the Native Mounted Police had recently been through the region of Cullin-La-Ringo with George Dalrymple, former Sri Lanka coffee planter and now Commissioner for Lands. The pair had made unrecorded punitive raids on the Aborigines. By the time the Wills party arrived, both sides were committed to ferocity and, on the Aboriginal side, to vengeance.

The people who settled central and northern Queensland, the Territory and Western Australia possessed an acquisitive and martial spirit. But the splendidly built natives of Queensland had convictions about the landscape and their right to it as much as any grazier. Being human, they were not above attacking pastoral or mining parties for the goods on their wagons as well as from outrage at their unthinking trespass. As distinct from the defence of their livestock and homesteads, the frontier settlers already saw punitive excursions as a necessity, and any native raids on Europeans as treachery.

It was into this hostile atmosphere that confident Horatio Wills rode. Now, from Wills' campsite on Cullin-La-Ringo, in between flat-topped hills, as the men set to cutting slabs of wood for a new series of huts, Horatio had the heady experience of seeing his grassland stretching away without apparent limit. Perhaps he hoped that his son Tom might take on the job of overseer.

The Aborigines could be heard in the bush shouting to each other but Horatio was not concerned. Seven days after arriving at Cullin-La-Ringo, he ordered Tom to take two empty drays and two men to Albinia Downs Station 50 miles (80 kilometres) south for a load of supplies. The journey to and from Albinia Downs took a full week.

As Tom and his drays returned and neared the proposed homestead site at Cullin-La-Ringo, the stench of corpses drifted out to meet them. Riding nearer he found scattered the victims of retaliatory slaughter—nineteen dead, including his father. It was clear the dead had been taken by surprise. Women still had sewing in their hands. They had not been violated. The cook was by his fire, the children by their mothers. Three of the men had been erecting a tent at the time of the attack.

This would prove to be the largest massacre of settlers on the frontier. It would be used to justify untold slaughter of natives. Occurring early in the settlement of the region, its impact on future contact between the races was enormous even if it cannot be exactly measured. To edgy men on a perilous frontier the massacre was an act of war. Punitive expeditions set off almost at

once. Daniel Cameron on Planet Downs Station wrote disapprovingly, 'Bloodshed, terror and anarchy, retaliation and revenge will be quick and sharp ... the innocent and guilty alike will disappear.' Another contemporary source, F.H. Grundy, declared 'the greatest punitive expedition in pioneering history gathered in force from points north, east, south and west. Hundreds of blacks were slaughtered.' It is not mentioned whether Tom Wills rode with any of these parties but he certainly expressed anger with anyone who recorded that they had come across a group of Aborigines and not exacted revenge. Tom felt the most savage war had been waged against him and his family. But his attitude was reflected too in others who were miles from the disaster.

Meanwhile, Tom's first and most pressing need was to find a knowledgeable man to help him at Cullin-La-Ringo. He would honour his father by running the property. However, the realities of bush life ultimately defeated Tom Wills. Given his failures of competence, the trustees of the company his father had founded to oversee the affairs of Cullin-La-Ringo removed him from its management in 1864. Travels from Queensland to Melbourne to take part in interstate or intercolonial games of cricket had in any case distanced him from the management of the place.

TAKING FURTHER SHAPE



THE SQUATTER GRANDEE

It would not be until the mid-1870s that the price of wool declined. But while the fleece was golden, the squatters were flush and enthused enough to employ architects and craftsmen the gold rushes had brought to Australia to build country houses which mimicked those found in the English countryside. Horatio Wills' Lexington was one. In remoter Queensland, the slab timber house made of bark and branches, all pegged down with lengths of timber, was still the characteristic homestead, but such rough materials would no longer suffice for the grandees of Victoria and New South Wales.

By the 1860s the old features of the squatter's life were giving way to elevated architecture and comforts, as well as pretensions, manners and attitudes. Sir Samuel Wilson, a Northern Irishman, married Jeannie Campbell, daughter of another wealthy squatter. During the gold rushes, he had brought supplies by bullock team to the gold diggings, and the miners knew him as 'Bullocky Sam'. His later photographic portrait in the suit, buttoned britches, long hose and buckled shoes of his knighthood, his sword clasped by the blade diagonally in his gloved hand, has nothing of the bullocky about it. Wilson came to acquire many squatting properties in the Wimmera, to which he added many more in other parts of Victoria and at Yanco in

New South Wales. In 1874 he would endow the University of Melbourne with £30 000 to build Wilson Hall.

Charles Ebdon of Carlsruhe in Victoria earned the nickname 'The Count' because he refused to talk to any except the most important visitors to his property and consigned the rest to a slab cottage or the workers' quarters.

Rachel Henning on Exmoor Station in Queensland required men to dress in suits when sitting in the parlour. White employees ate in the kitchen, black stockmen and servants on a bench outside the back door. She did not mix with any of the local farmers for fear they would borrow tools, horses or oxen, and become unduly sociable.

Barwon Park near Winchelsea, south-west of Melbourne, built in 1869–71 by the pastoralist Thomas Austin, who would introduce the hardy rabbits which would infest Australia for the rest of its history, was an extraordinary pile. Austin's wife, Elizabeth, had been mortified by her sister-in-law's grand house and had been ashamed to receive the Duke of Edinburgh in her own homestead, which she considered of inferior quality, when he was visiting Victoria in 1867. The result of her ambition was a massive bluestone house with forty large rooms, an entrance hall and a staircase. Her husband died, but Elizabeth lived in the palazzo for forty years and finally endowed the Austin Hospital in Melbourne. The central staircase, columns, mouldings and balustrades of Barwon Park are of a quality fit for the grandest British house.

Werribee Park was a similar house near Melbourne, built by the squatter Thomas Chermside, son of an East Lothian farmer. While still showing the rough edges of his earlier squatting life, Chermside, a bachelor, built a mansion containing sixty rooms in two wings. The old bark homestead was permitted to stand on in the grounds as a reminder of humbler origins.

In 1874 Sir William Clarke, in his sixties, a Van Diemen's Land settler who then moved his operations into the Port Phillip region, built a mansion named Rupertswood near Sunbury. He had a private railway platform built to receive house guests arriving by rail.

At Birksgate near Adelaide, Thomas Elder, a Scot who would create one of the biggest wool-buying and -selling companies in the world, and who bred camels for transportation in the hinterland of Australia and shipped in Afghans to manage them, acquired the mansion of Birksgate near Glen Osmond and installed his own gas plant to light up the house and conservatory. On the grounds he stocked a zoo and built a tower from which he could

signal to yachts racing on Gulf St Vincent. He was also a massive endower of the University of Adelaide.

OTHER PASTORAL ORPHANS

While at remote Corona, Alfred Dickens was host to an expedition which had been surveying the exact boundary between New South Wales and South Australia. They were astonished to find in this harsh, stony country the son of the famed novelist. But now he had opportunities he did not have before his father's death. He had received £7000 as his share of his father's inheritance. Dickens had expressed the hope that each boy would use the money from his will to become 'proprietors'. By 1872 Alfred had taken up a property further east, Wangagong near Forbes in New South Wales.

Alfred, having lost a great part of his inheritance in western New South Wales, went to Melbourne to take up a job with the London and Australian Agency Corporation Limited in their wool warehouses and office in Collins Street. He became engaged to Augusta Jessie Devlin, the daughter of a master mariner. They were married at St John's Church of England in Toorak on 13 March 1873. Alfred gave his occupation as 'gentleman'. He told his relatives that his wife was 'beautiful and accomplished'.

Misfortune struck again—the company he worked for went bankrupt itself. Drought had snuffed them out too. In 1874, as part of his new work—acting secretary to the Deniliquin and Moama Railway in New South Wales, though still domiciled in Melbourne—Alfred came to the Western District of Victoria, and Hamilton in particular. There he made such an impression as a good fellow that they selected him as a member of their cricket team. By January 1874 he was in partnership with Robert Bree as a stock and station agent of Hamilton, within energising sight of mountains named the Grampians. Clearly intending to settle permanently in Hamilton, Alfred bought a nine-room house and furnished it in a way which must have impressed his neighbours. He and Jessie possessed oil paintings, Wedgwood statuettes and a piano. There were stables, an underground watertank and a pony carriage in which his wife went driving. Jessie gave birth to two girls, members of the group immigrants called 'natives'.

Was this the Australian success his father had imagined? He pursued the Dickens' passion for cricket as a member of the Hamilton Cricket XI and secretary of the Cricket Association. He also joined the racing club

and the whist club. He attended balls and civic events. Then, in 1878, Jessie was thrown from her pony cart and killed. There was grief for Alfred, and then, the year after his wife's death, the partnership with Bree was dissolved. Alfred d'Orsay Tennyson Dickens returned to Melbourne to work in his own right as a stock and station commissioner and a general financial agent. With Yanda sold to pay debts, Plorn also came to Melbourne and they ran the company as partners, though, for reasons unknown, the company bore Plorn's name alone—E.B.L. Dickens and Company.

THE DUKE, LOYALISM AND PISTOLS

Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, the second son of Queen Victoria, was just twenty-four when he visited Australia in the ship he commanded, HMS *Galatea*. He reached Adelaide at the end of October 1867. To his own mind he was just a young man looking for a good time, but in the mind of the parliaments and populists he was an embodiment of that Crown which stood at the apex of all Australian law, civic piety and even land use. In Melbourne his visit was attended by a riot, or more accurately an Orange Protestant versus Irish Republican brawl.

In Sydney a royal charity picnic, open to the public, was to be held at Clontarf—a delightful beach in Sydney Harbour—on 12 March 1868. Amongst the public who crossed to Clontarf by ferry that day was a young mentally deranged man named Henry O'Farrell, a self-appointed Fenian—not a member of the official organisation. He carried two weapons, a Smith & Wesson and a Colt, concealed in his clothing.

At Clontarf, O'Farrell manoeuvred himself behind the prince and the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Belmore. The bullet O'Farrell fired entered to the right of the prince's spine and lodged in the flesh on the right side of the chest. O'Farrell was wrestled to the ground, yelling, 'I'm a Fenian—God save Ireland!'

The prince was taken back to Sydney, the bullet was removed from the chest—according to some without his taking anaesthetic—and the wound pronounced non-fatal. Young and robust Prince Alfred would recover, later giving his seal of approval to the founding of two hospitals, one in Sydney, one in Melbourne, in his name.

When questioned by the police O'Farrell told them that he had been authorised by the international organisation of Fenians to kill Prince

Alfred, a statement which created hysteria amongst some loyalists. O'Farrell withdrew the statement on the eve of his execution at Darlinghurst gaol, but many throughout Australia believed his original statement and chose further to believe that he represented in his actions the desires of all Irish Catholics.

Sir Henry Parkes, Attorney-General of New South Wales, was a competent stoker of the frenzy. He even let a convicted confidence man out of gaol to go into the bush, to such places as Grenfell, and track down Fenian cells amongst the Irish. It was believed too that Fenian cells were working on the state railways. Lord Belmore warned Parkes of the dangers of provoking sectarianism, but Parkes had found hysteria too useful a political asset. Even in the police force Irishmen were under suspicion and any item of reported pub gossip was likely to attract an energetic investigation. Throughout all the colonies, many Irish Catholics were immediately sacked, creating generations of bitterness.

Prince Alfred would marry a daughter of the Russian Tsar and live until 1900. On both sides of the sectarian divide, the bitterness would last longer.

SECTARIAN VITUPERATION

After Catholic bishops from all over the world voted in the Vatican Council of 1869–70 to acknowledge the sovereignty and infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morals, the Irish Catholics of Australia accepted the dogma without much fuss. The future Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, scholarly, austere Patrick Francis Moran, had attended the Vatican Council as a proxy for an Irish bishop, and he had no doubt about papal infallibility and, after his appointment to Sydney in 1884, vigorously espoused it.

But the irony was that far from intending his primacy as a tool to make Irish Catholics disobey civil power, Pope Pius IX and his followers wanted them, for the sake of good relations with Britain, to be less politically engaged in the question of Irish independence. The Vatican wanted, for diplomacy's sake, the Irish to exhibit loyalty to Crown and Empire.

A Catholic colonial politician like the eloquent and prodigiously gifted Gavan Duffy abominated the Vatican's interference in Irish politics and in Irish nationalist causes espoused in America, Canada and Australia. But the mainstream, who having mistrusted papists earlier now had an added prejudice—in a contest between civil authority and the Vatican, who would the Irish obey?

A CHILDHOOD IN THE CITY

Alfred Deakin was born of English immigrant parents in George Street, Fitzroy, in August 1856. Alfred's father William was a partner in a cab, coach and dray business, which was taken over in 1857 by a syndicate led by a young American, James Rutherford. The company secured a monopoly on mail delivery and would come to be known as Cobb and Co. But despite the romance which attaches to that name, the Deakins were genuine Melbourne suburbanites, and Deakin's young life was that of any British boy growing up in a British provincial city.

When Alfred was six the family moved to South Yarra and lived in what might be called 'frugal comfort' by biographers. In the cottage in South Yarra he was presented by his father with books to enrich the intensity of his imagination. He and his older sister Catherine were sent out to Kyneton 50 miles (80 kilometres) from Melbourne to attend a well-regulated little boarding school run by two sisters, the Misses Thompson. The Misses Thompson soon transferred their school to South Yarra.

To a stricter teacher he would have seemed talkative and a little distracted. But all such flaws of concentration then were considered to arise from the devil's influence, and when for the first time in his life he was clapped around the ears by a male teacher, his parents removed him to a nearby school, one within walking distance, the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School.

The city in which Melbourne Grammar was an estimable institution had reached a population of 140 000, such a population comparing notably with that of many major provincial cities in the United Kingdom and the United States. It was a city too which had a university, libraries, theatres and all the facilities appropriate to a community anywhere on earth possessing ambitions to be notable.

The school was, of course, like similar ones founded by Presbyterians, Methodists and the Jesuits, a version of Rugby, Eton, Harrow and Winchester. But instead of holding a quotient of the offspring of hereditary peerages and earldoms, it had sons of squatters, of city merchants much wealthier than the Deakins, and of aspiring (though not rich) families like Alfred's. The staff of such colonial schools were generally graduates of the major British universities: Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh or Trinity College, Dublin. The headmaster, the Reverend John Edward Bromby, had once competed for the Cambridge Chancellors' Medal—as William Charles Wentworth had also

done in his youth—against Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He had arrived in golden Melbourne in 1858. Since his manner was never vicious, his sense of humour was advanced, his learning carried lightly, and his cane rarely plied, he was beloved by Deakin as by most of his students. He would give boys informal instruction while he chopped wood with them.

Deakin would later regret that he had been too concerned with adventure books, but a younger teacher, J.H. Thompson, an athlete and a scholar, gradually turned Deakin into ‘a passable student’. There had been some doubt, not least in his own mind, as to whether he would attempt to matriculate for entry into the University of Melbourne. But then a forceful boy, one who had quarrelled with his headmaster at another school, turned up as a classmate of Deakin’s. Theodore Fink was the son of a Jewish family who had emigrated from Guernsey and who were merchants in Melbourne. Fink was tall and full of vivacity, and chose to respect only those teachers who had intellectual gifts. Deakin said later that through meeting the precocious, happy, mature Fink, he ceased to be a wandering imagination and became a person. And so he passed the matriculation exam in 1871, algebra, Euclid (geometry) and history being the subjects in which he shone. Surprisingly—given his eloquence as a politician—English and Latin were not amongst the subjects at which he excelled.

MAKING GAMES

Tom Wills, son of the massacred Horatio, arrived back in Melbourne to play for them in their next intercolonial cricket match against Sydney in the Domain in the new year of 1863. There was great bitterness between the teams and complaints about bowling and umpiring.

Around 1860, the cricket clubs of Melbourne (the MCC), Richmond, St Kilda and Corio (Geelong) were well-established entities with both gentlemen (players who played for nothing) and professionals (paid players). The paid players were eternal schoolboys without inherited wealth and eventually, despite his father’s success, Tom Wills would have to become a professional. Cricket at Rugby had involved underarm or round-arm bowling, with the arm not to rise above the shoulder. The young Tom Wills was a ruthless round-arm bowler in intercolonial cricket and was accused of being a thrower and of raising his arm above the shoulder. In one intercolonial match, ‘the Hobart crowd observed with distaste Tom jump about exultantly when the cricket ball hit the batsman’.

But he is remembered for more than his version of bodyline bowling. A letter Tom Wills wrote to the magazine *Bell's Life* in early winter 1858 suggested that now cricket had been put aside for the season, rather than allow 'this state of torpor to creep over them, and stifle their new supple limbs', the Melbourne Cricket Club should form a football club and appoint a committee of three or more to draw up a code of laws.

There was already football in Australia, of course, both uncoded versions and ancient ones. Various witnesses in the west of Victoria had seen the Aborigines there playing a form of football with a ball made out of tightly rolled plant roots. Did Tom see the game as a child and, if so, did it contribute to the new game? That is, is Australian Rules millennia-old, or simply a post-gold rush phenomenon, a creation of the sporting fever which kept step with other Melbourne enthusiasms in the Golden Age? Irish Australians often assume that the game derived from the then chaotic Gaelic football, which was not codified until 1880, but which in its essence resembled the Melbourne game.

In any case, advertisements for an initial experimental game appeared in the *Argus* and *Herald*, and on Saturday 7 August 1858 on Richmond Paddock, by the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the first game was played under uncertain laws but roughly on the pattern of football which would increasingly capture the passions of the southern and western regions of Australia from that day on. The first game of the new as yet uncoded form was primal, contested by forty Scotch College boys against the same number of Melbourne Church of England Grammar boys. Tom Wills was one of the umpires. The robust game lasted three hours and ended in a score of one goal each.

On the night 17 May 1859, Tom and four other enthusiasts from the Melbourne Cricket Club met at the Parade Hotel on Wellington Parade, up the hill from the Melbourne Cricket Club. During games there had been by now too many fist fights about rules, and nose-breaking and limb-fracturing confrontations. The men who joined Wills at the Parade were themselves interesting. Newspaper man William Hammersley, Oxford-educated and a cricket fanatic, had first played against Tom Wills during a cricket match when the latter played for the Gentlemen of Kent against the Gentlemen of Surrey at the Oval three years before. The other attendees were Thomas Henry Smith, the classics master at Scotch College, and James Thompson, the sporting editor of the *Argus*. Thompson too was English-born and studied

at Cambridge University. Thus only one of the four men was a native-born Australian, and either meritoriously or not, in part because of his earlier letter to the newspaper, it was Wills's name which would always be honoured with initiating one of the earliest codifications of any game on earth.

Wills advised against a slavish imitation of the game then known as Rugby, but to work out 'a game of our own'. Ten rules were established. Some of them are irrelevant to today's game but all of them were aimed at preventing chicanery and violence, and promoting fluidity. There were arguments about the taking of penalty goals—Tom desired that the best kicker be given them (as at Rugby), but the others disagreed. The mark, at least in its modern codified form, was sanctioned in rule six that night. Wills wanted an ovoid ball, Thompson a soccer ball.

During a Richmond and Melbourne game two weeks later, in which Wills captained Richmond and Thompson led Melbourne, Wills made it a condition that the ovoid ball be used. Thompson would write in the *Argus*: 'Another drawback to an otherwise almost perfect afternoon's enjoyment was the objectionable shape of the ball.' There was an argument, too, about a cross bar being placed between the goals. Thus, barely more than three and a half years after the battle of the Eureka Stockade and some three years before Cullin-La-Ringo, Tom helped or led the process of codifying a game which, to the new and massively ambitious city, would become its divine frolic, its identifying mark, its focus of civic cohesion between native and newcomer, between Irish minority and British majority, and its map of the world.

FIRST TOURERS

By 1865, when he captained Victoria and scored a then unprecedented 58 runs against the New South Welshmen on the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Tom Wills was at the peak of his authority, having walloped a team which included two All-England players, one of them the Sydney sporting man and cigar parlour owner Charles Lawrence. It did not seem to trouble Tom the cricketer that it was his brothers Cedric and Edgar who were left with the running of haunted Cullin-La-Ringo for the trustees.

The Melbourne Cricket Club passed a motion in January 1866 which raised the possibility of bringing an Aboriginal team to the Melbourne Cricket Ground to play against the Melbourne club. The event would be a splendid fundraiser and, for some of the chief promoters, profitable. Tom

Wills, though in theory a gentleman player, was receiving payment from the Melbourne Cricket Club, and he was certainly offered a worthwhile contract when he was appointed coach of the proposed Aboriginal team.

To recruit his team, Tom left for Lake Wallace, near Edenhope, west of the Grampian Mountains. Tom still thought of the Aborigines of his childhood, the Jardwadjali people of the Djabwurrung language group, as substantially different from the murderous crew who had slaughtered his father. The Aborigines he was to coach were the Jardwadjali whose relatives he had known as a boy. He called in young Aboriginal males for trials and found that a young man named Johnny Mullagh, Oonamurriman, was a fine batsman. The team was to play on the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Boxing Day 1866. Tom would play with them.

They attracted a crowd even when they arrived at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for their first practice. Aborigines had become a rarity in the Melbourne area, and the western Victorian players had novelty value.

It proved to be very important to the Melbourne Cricket Club that, as Britons, they should not be defeated by the Western District's semi-civilised natives, as good as those same cricketers were for the gate takings that day. They stacked their team with players from other clubs, and won by seventy runs, after Mullagh and tall, sturdy Harry Bullocky top-scored for the natives, and the slighter Johnny Cuzens took most of the white wickets. Bullocky and Cuzens were chosen to play for Victoria against the Tasmanians.

A Melbourne entrepreneur of questionable honesty, Captain W.E.B. Gurnett, was now planning to take over the team and bind them to a contract to tour the colonies and England. When the players signed Gurnett's contract on 8 January 1867 their Aboriginal and European names were both listed. From this document we learn that Jemmy Tarpot's real name was Murrumgunariman, that Harry Bullocky's name was Bullenchanack, that Johnny Cuzens's name was Yellanach and Dick-A-Dick's name was Jungagellmijuke. Wills's name was not on the contract but Gurnett engaged him as coach.

After a series of poorly attended matches in Melbourne and Victorian towns, Captain Gurnett, Tom Wills and the Aborigines left for Sydney by steamer. There they stayed at the Manly hotel of Charles Lawrence, a former English professional who had settled in Sydney. When the game, which was attended by the governor, was played against the Albert Cricket Club at Redfern—a strong team, captained by Lawrence—the Aborigines were

required not only to play cricket but to give exhibitions of boomerang and spear throwing, and to ward off thrown cricket balls with shields.

Within a day or so Gurnett was arrested on serious fraud charges, since the Victorian leg of the tour had left him virtually bankrupt and he had spread bad paper all over the colony. He was imprisoned in Darlinghurst gaol. There had been criticism anyhow, notably by the secretary of the Aboriginal Protection Board, R. Brough Smith, that the whole business was exploitation of innocence. Smith suggested the Victorian government should prohibit the tour planned for New South Wales and Britain. Now the promoter was in gaol, so the tour was off in any case. The team returned to Melbourne with Wills, and thence to their country near Edenhope in the Western District.

Meanwhile, the Central Board in Victoria failed to have legislation passed to look to the welfare of Aborigines contracted for tours, so Charles Lawrence travelled to Edenhope to re-recruit the former team and add some newcomers for a tour of Britain. Thus the first major team to represent Australia internationally was made up of old Australians, not settlers.

The team left for England in February 1868 on the *Parramatta*. The base of the team was in Kent, but after their first match at the Oval, attended by 7000 spectators in picnic mood—and which the Australians played with loud enthusiasm, and lost—their journeying became hectic. They travelled on most of their rest days and had little time for practice. In mid-June they played the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) at Lord's. Here too, at public demand, the team was required to participate in shows of native skill.

A conscientious sergeant of police from Edenhope had warned before the team left Victoria that some of them had chest problems. Not long after the Lord's game—during which Yellanach was again the star bowler, taking ten wickets in the MCC's two innings, including those of an earl and a viscount—King Cole (Bripumyarrumin) died of tuberculosis at Guy's Hospital in London and was buried at the Victoria Park cemetery. The impact of this on the other players is not recorded, but their fear of the naming of the dead, and of what damage a disgruntled spirit far from home might wreak, must have been intense.

After their ten games in the south of England, of which they won only one, they moved northwards, beginning to achieve success as they went, winning fourteen matches, losing an equal number and drawing nineteen. They were sensitive to racial slurs and Mullagh, after being insulted at York,

played sullenly. When less discontented, he and Cuzens, together with their white captain, Lawrence, were the best bowlers and batsmen. Cuzens's score of 87 at Norwich was typical of his skill. At Reading, Mullagh scored 94, in an age when centuries were rare.

The players returned home on two ships which left England in October. On their arrival in Australia in February 1869, they played one of their final matches against a combined team from the sailors of Prince Alfred's HMS *Galatea* and the Victorian garrison. The prince, recuperating from being wounded by an Irishman in Sydney, himself attended. Even as they played that game, the Protection Board was in the midst of founding four reserves for Aborigines, including one named Framlingham near Warrnambool, which was meant to contain the Jardwadjali players and their clansfolk.

Mullagh and Cuzens returned to their home country after playing for the Melbourne Cricket Club and tried not to be gathered into the reserve. Mullagh would play for Victoria in 1879 against Lord Harris's touring English XI. He became a rabbit-trapper and died a respected man in 1891. Other Aborigines disliked the new reserves, and Hugh McLeod of Benayeo and A.A. Cowell of Brippick Station permitted groups to live on their properties and supplied them largely from their own pockets. The former members of the cricket team, Peter (Arrahmunyarrimun) and Tiger, lived on these stations. Dick-A-Dick, who also played professional cricket in Melbourne, eventually returned to Mount Elgin Station and worked as a drover.

OVERLAND TELEGRAPH

The Northern Territory was the preserve of South Australia until 1910. In 1870 the South Australian government sent a party to the north coast by ship to select a port for a settlement. The port named Palmerston near Escape Cliffs was created with a small staff of administrators, six officials and thirty-eight men under the management of Dr J.S. Millner. A less-than-gifted South Australian official named Captain William Bloomfield Douglas soon took over as permanent Government Resident and hoped to become a local satrap in the manner of his grand relative, Sir James Brook, who had ruled as the white Rajah of Sarawak. By his lordly manner Bloomfield alienated all the Darwin officials he had to deal with, and by his financial incompetence lost favour in Adelaide.

The local Larakia tribe, who had encountered Europeans earlier through a party led by the South Australian surveyor George Goyder, looked upon

the settlement with curiosity and were attracted and pacified by gifts of axes and food. Axes transformed a man from a warrior of stone to a warrior of iron, and flour was a deliverance from the time-devouring business of harvesting and pounding native grasses. It must have seemed a miraculous 'convenience food'. For most of the perhaps 50 000 natives of the Territory, the European intrusion was for the moment too minuscule to make a dent in their lives. An overland telegraph would be the beginning of change, however.

The small, vigorous, stubborn English astronomer and telegraphic expert Charles Todd had come to South Australia in 1855 to build the telegraph lines throughout that colony, having been nominated for the job by his superior, the astronomer royal, Sir George Airy. Even in the late 1850s, Todd, still in his early thirties, began to plan for a telegraph connection between South Australia and Melbourne and Sydney. Todd had also created a series of meteorological stations in South Australia, which began operating in the early 1860s. He made friends with the Victorian Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, Samuel McGowan, and together they persuaded South Australia and Victoria to finance a line laid down under Morse's system. The British themselves were recommending telegraph connection to Australia—it had already been established between England and India, and it could be extended south to Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. A sea cable could be laid around the east coast of Brisbane then, and thence a land line to Sydney. But John McDouall Stuart's crossing of the continent in 1862 made Todd think of a telegraph overland all the way from Adelaide to the northern coastline of Australia.

Early in 1870 the British Australian Telegraph Company, which was laying cable from its ships in the seas north of Australia, sought permission from the Premier of South Australia, Henry Bull Templar Strangways, to land the line at the barely peopled port of Palmerston, and Strangways decided that an overland line should be built from Adelaide to meet it. For this task Todd—now Postmaster-General as well as Superintendent of Telegraphs—relied on the maps and documents of Stuart's expedition.

He divided the work of creating the line into three sections, the southern and northern being let out to contractors under the supervision of Todd's overseers, and the central to be done by government labour under his direct management. The Aborigines through whose land the line passed looked at it with some interest but did not seem to see it as representing the same scale

of intrusion new pastoral stations had. Occasionally they set fire to the poles, since they were good sources of fuel in a land of mere undergrowth, and the porcelain conductors looked fascinating. The repeater stations, placed every 180–300 miles (300–500 kilometres) to on-forward messages down the line, were now built with materials available in the region (often of stone) and staffed by telegraphists. The telegraph was completed in 1872 and for the first time created an expensive but as good as immediate communication with Europe.

The repeater stations along the line began to change native life by serving as bases for gold prospectors and pastoralists—as was the case at Pine Creek, where a gold rush began almost simultaneously with the building of the Pine Creek repeater station. Other repeater stations to pass the communications of Australian businesses and governments northwards to the greater world were based at Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to the south, where further settlement gathered.

GOYDER AND ALL THAT

To emphasise the matter of dryness and the limitations it placed on colonial expectations, in South Australia in 1865 young surveyor George Goyder drew a line across the southern reaches of the colony, in substance following the 10 inch isohyets beyond which less than 25 centimetres of rain fell a year. North of the line was country where the droughts had already destroyed many prospective settlers and where no one could expect to pursue agriculture. In the mid-1870s, when South Australia experienced higher than average rainfall, settlement extended over Goyder's Line, and the South Australian government helped farmers to settle nearly as far north as a flooded Lake Eyre, the great salt lake many considered the abomination of desolation at Australia's heart. But in bad times, the validity of Goyder's Line became tragically apparent to all.

It was thought that artesian water would be the answer to the Australian reality. Artesian wells, which had been first dug in Artois in northern France, tapped water lying beneath the earth, often between layers of impermeable rock. In 1879 Ralph Tate, professor of palaeontology from Adelaide University, travelled to Lake Eyre and found water gushing from hummocks. This was artesian water, closer to the surface here because this was the western outer rim of a huge saucer, the Great Artesian Basin, most of it lying beneath

Queensland but also beneath parts of the Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales. The other side of the saucer on whose rim Tate stood lay on the western side of the Great Dividing Range in Queensland. The basin would prove to contain over 650 000 square miles (1.7 million square kilometres) of submerged water. So there might be no desolation at all—the much-needed living water ran beneath the rock!

At this stage a pair of Vandemonian brothers, Charles and Suetonius Officer, were running cattle at Killara near Bourke, close to the centre of the Great Artesian Basin. When in 1878 their cattle trampled down a mound spring and reduced it to a morass, the manager David Brown used a mechanical rig to drill 1800-foot (550-metre) bores. One of them spouted up 13 000 gallons (58 000 litres) per day. Near another mound spring Brown sank a second bore and hit water at less than 20 feet (6 metres).

In that same year, the Victorian government began to drill in the Western District. The news that there was artesian water beneath the ground provided the Australian pastoral and agricultural imagination with a subterranean Mississippi, a redemptive lake. In Queensland, in the drought of the early 1880s, the government began to build tanks and dams on the stock routes throughout the bush, with government engineers sinking wells in such places as Winton, a town that was barely self-sufficient in water. Simon Fraser, grandfather of the twentieth-century politician Malcolm Fraser, had been running cattle in Queensland since the 1860s and engaged a Canadian well borer named J.S. Loughead to drill on his company's Thurulgoona Station, 50 kilometres from Cunnamulla. Loughead's machinery could drill nearly 1600 metres into the earth. In the summer of 1886 he discovered a submerged reservoir of water at just under 520 metres and from it came 2.1 million litres per day. Loughead drilled similar deep bores at Barcaldine in January 1888 and at Blackall. Grazing could now be extended into country that had previously proved untenable, and squatters poured into the Artesian Basin country in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. By the early 1900s, when there were 1500 bores, some of the disadvantages became apparent. So much drilling released pressure in the hidden water and flows became more modest.

Though artesian water extended pastoral possibilities, and allowed cattle to degrade an even larger part of the surface of remoter Australia with their hard hoofs, it did not make the wilderness bloom and did not generate cities. Artesian water also meant that more Aborigines, accomplished in living in

arid regions kept safe from intrusion by their very dryness, were driven off land they had thought till now they securely possessed.

THE ASIAN SOUTH AND NORTH

North or south, the Asian miner attracted rancour. One of the many grievances white miners had against the Chinese is that they did not participate in the struggle for miners' rights. It was true that there had been no Chinese miners at Eureka, though the question arises as to whether they would have been welcomed into the rebel ranks. The first widespread outbreak against the Chinese had occurred in 1861 at Lambing Flat, the future town of Young, where 13 000 diggers had gathered. Two thousand Chinese joined the Europeans and were described by the Lambing Flat paper as a 'swarm of Mongolian locusts'. After a large meeting at which there was a great deal of inflammatory rhetoric, the miners from Tipperary Gully marched into Lambing Flat, collecting men as they went, and then moved on towards Victoria Hill, where the Chinese were working. The physical harm to the Chinese was not as extreme as the oratory which preceded the riot, but it did involve the riding down of Chinese and whipping them. Their tents were burned, however, and much of their gold, dredged by great labours, was plundered. At Back Creek 500 more Chinese were attacked. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, some attackers cut off Chinese pigtails 'with the scalp attached'.

On 14 July 1861 a party of constables arrested three of the rioters, whereupon 3000 miners marched on the police camp with guns and sticks. One white miner was killed in the attack and others were wounded when a detachment of mounted troopers charged the mob with drawn swords, forcing them to flee, some of them bleeding from wounds to their faces and heads. The fury this created amongst the miners and the risk of retaliation drove the police and troopers to retreat to Yass to await reinforcements. Soldiers and artillery were sent from Sydney and, arriving on the goldfields, imposed a sullen order. Eleven miners were charged but acquitted by juries who favoured them. The Chinese of the area hid or left for other goldfields, or in many cases took up other occupations, as reapers, shearers, carters of wood and water, tailors, carpenters or hawkers of fish, vegetables and fancy items.

The Yass Chinese merchant Lowe Kong Meng wrote, 'If such a thing had happened in China—if a number of English miners had been subjected to

such cruel and wanton outrage—every newspaper in Great Britain would have been aflame with indignation.’ The reaction in New South Wales was, however, the passing of the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act of November 1861, which imposed a Chinese residency tax similar to one already in place in Victoria.

Metropolitan Australia harboured a considerable anxiety about what was happening up north and the dangers of tropical Australia becoming ‘Mongrelia’ and ‘Piebald Australia’. The Chinese had arrived in small numbers in Queensland by 1860, at gold diggings at Gympie but further north as well, at Cape River, Crocodile Creek and the Gilbert River. Although by 1870 there were only 2000 Chinese, the Palmer River goldfield near Cooktown would attract 1000 a week during April 1874 and there were 18000 miners from southern China on the Palmer goldfield alone by the middle of 1877. An anonymous poet in *Queensland Punch* expressed the standard hostility.

*Though we annoy them as much as we dare
Fair play or foul, they are more than a match for us . . .
They’ll be our bosses and we’ll grow their cabbages
If they go on the way they’ve begun.*

The Chinese were in Cairns from 1877 when the town started, having moved there from the Palmer River goldfields up the coast. In the hinterland they made up almost half the population in tropical North Queensland. Many of them worked under contract to clear the tropical rainforest on blocks selected by Europeans under the Queensland Land Acts of 1876 and 1884, acts which excluded the Chinese themselves from land ownership. Chinese workers cleared land energetically by a method called ‘scarfing’, setting up a domino effect in the trees. Once the clearance work was done, they often hired land back and grew plantations of bananas. The Hop Wah plantation was established outside Cairns in 1879 by a syndicate of 100 Chinese. These growers shipped the bananas down to the coast on sampans and then transferred them to junks, which took them into Cairns. About fifteen junks operated in the area of Trinity Bay north of Cairns, where rivers such as the Barron, flowing down from the Atherton Tablelands, entered the sea. The junks themselves were made from cedar logs felled in the rainforest by full-time Chinese boat builders.

There were a number of Chinese merchants in Cairns by 1890—a hat maker, a jeweller, a watchmaker. The Chinese lived in their own Chinatown around present-day Grafton Street, and if they fell ill were treated in an aliens' ward in the hospitals. The Chinese contributed to local charities and institutions in towns like Innisfail and Cairns. Though there was a ban on Chinese travelling first class on coastal steamers, the rule was ignored for the more prosperous Chinese. Wealthier Chinese merchants invited Europeans they knew—generally lawyers, bankers, the local newspaper editor, the inspector of Polynesians and so on—to Chinese New Year banquets. A dinner given by Willie Ming and Ah Young in 1897 was attended by all the white worthies of Cairns.

To the white community, however, the chief threat remained not only to prosperity or wages but to racial purity. If Europeans were the highest form of humanity, any dilution of whiteness was a violation. Travelling from Innisfail to Cairns, a *Bulletin* commentator who described himself as 'Bluey' declared he was forced to journey with two 'Chows', a Japanese and six Kanakas. He was horrified to find the port at Cairns full of Chinese sampans selling fruit to the people on the steamer. Cairns was in fact considered a disgraceful town, where white men ate with Chinese, slept with Japanese prostitutes who had been recruited from Nagasaki, and let themselves be outwitted by the Asians. As late as 1941, forty years into the white Commonwealth, the Queensland census showed that 40 per cent of Cairns and nearby Cardwell were still Chinese, Japanese, Manilamen (Filipinos), Sri Lankans and Kanakas.

THE ENNOBLING LAND

Immigrants from land-starved northern Europe, particularly peasants and working-class people, were infatuated with Australia's promise of land. Yet by 1891 more than half of Australia's people were living in the cities. This remained the unarguable truth of Australia despite the intent of the Eureka rebels and progressive law makers in the nineteenth century to 'unlock the land'.

In Victoria, after the fall of the pro-squatter Nicholson government in 1861, a group of reformers led by Richard Heales and John Henry Brooke won twenty-two of the twenty-seven goldfield seats and were able to form a government. In this government Charles Gavan Duffy, the former Irish rebel

so often charged with sedition and tried for it in his own country, but now an urbane member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, framed a Land Act which became law in 1862. City workers, former miners, shearers and landless labourers could select a minimum 40 acres of land that was not designated as gold-bearing or did not have stands of red gums. They were required to occupy such land, live on it, put at least 10 per cent of it under crop and build improvements equivalent to £1 (\$2) per acre. The annual lease payments were high enough to allow the land to be handed over by the Crown to the selector outright at the end of eight years.

Throughout the bush in New South Wales and Victoria people crowded into the land offices set up by the colonial governments in all the major centres. Here the former Scots crofter or factory labourer, the Irish bounty emigrant in whom the appalling land system of his country had induced a ferocious thirst for land, and the English from the Midlands and north and poorer parts of London crowded in, acquiring maps, hungrily eyeing them, getting on horseback to inspect the available lots. How bright futures must have looked then, in the early 1860s, with the land laws passed, and men possessing the franchise. And the residency requirement would surely prevent the squatters from using proxies or dummies. Duffy, always a city dweller himself, whether editing the rebellious *Nation* newspaper in Dublin or shining as an urbane Melburnian, hoped to open up 4 million acres in the first three months. Ireland could not be reformed. Victoria seemed gloriously reformable.

Most land acts passed in other colonies partook of similar clauses, and were motivated by the same intent as Duffy's. But successive land acts in all the colonies were never able fully to thwart the squatters or, above all, help selectors come to terms with the fierce demands of the selected land. When north-east Victoria was opened up for selection, three squatting partnerships or families increased their holdings by a total of 210 000 acres through using proxies and moving quickly to claim the best 'unlocked' land. In their minds, they had been the first there, had borne the dangers and discomforts, so why not tie up what interlopers would otherwise take?

Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, a future British radical politician and visitor to Australia, would write, 'The squatter is the nabob of Melbourne and Sydney, the inexhaustible mine of wealth. He patronises balls, promenade concerts, flower shows, he is the mainstay of the great clubs, the joy of

the shopkeepers, the good angel of the hotels; without him the opera could not be kept up, and the Jockey Club would die a natural death.'

Queensland introduced selection to pay for the railways it had to build. In this state, too, the normal pieties about the holiness of the land were uttered. The *Brisbane Courier* of 23 March 1872 believed that farmers 'lived nearer God', and the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane said that a man with a few acres was less likely to turn into a socialist. The best land for selection was on the Darling Downs, where conditions seemed better than in most of that either too-dry or too-tropical colony. The Selection Acts produced a great number of selector families in the region.

In South Australia there had always been a concern in the city that pastoralism would prevent the growing of enough food. But through selection, South Australia became in fact an exporter of wheat to South Africa and England, as well as to other Australian colonies.

The first permanent pastoralist settlement in Central Australia was not founded until 1876, when Owen Springs and Undoolya south-west of Palmerston were taken up by Irish-born Ned Bagot, who had copper-mining and pastoral interests near Kapunda in South Australia, and who was the contractor who had built the southern section of the Overland Telegraph from Port Augusta to just north of Lake Eyre. In 1877 Glen Helen, named for the niece of the pastoralist Alexander Grant, west of Alice Springs, and Henbury, south of the telegraph station at the Springs, were established. By 1884 there were thirty-two stations in the Territory, although most of them were in the north.

The sturdy Tiwi people of Melville and Bathurst islands resisted every attempt to turn their country into cattle stations. Any whites landing on the islands were prevented from going inland by tall, well-built angry natives. Indeed Arnhem Land would prove so unsuitable to the purposes of settlers that it was ultimately returned, freehold, to Aboriginal ownership.

ON OUR SELECTION

Henry Lawson, a selector's son from Eurunderee in the Central Ranges of New South Wales, knew something of the reality of selecting, the husband often having to go away droving to supplement income. He wrote of a 'Land where gaunt and haggard women live alone and work like men/Till their husbands gone a-droving will return to them again'.

Another who knew of that reality was the Queenslander Steele Rudd. His true name was Arthur Hoey Davis, his father a Welsh blacksmith and his mother, Mary Green, one of the Irish orphan girls shipped to Australia in the late 1840s from the workhouses of famine-stricken Ireland. Arthur—or Steele Rudd, as he is known to history—was born in 1868 in Drayton, where his father mined for tin. Under the Land Settlement Act the Davises took up a selection of 160 acres north of Toowoomba in country heavily covered by timber. The setting-out of the family for their selection must have been a thousand if not ten thousand times repeated in Australia. ‘We came from Stanthorpe on Jerome’s dray—eight of us, and all the things—beds, tubs, a bucket, the two old cedar chairs with the pine bottoms and backs that Dad put in them, some pint pots.’ The house they built was ‘slabbed’, with a shingled roof, and was divided into two rooms. ‘The floor was earth, but Dad had a mixture of sand and fresh cow dung with which he used to keep it level. About once every month he would put it on; and everyone had to keep outside that day till it was dry ... [The] slabs were not very close together, we could easily see through them anybody coming on horseback.’

The requirement for secure title to the farm involved improving the land, and thus felling the box and ironbark trees which rose all around the hut. This timber was the reason the land had not been selected earlier. The first objective was to clear some 4 acres and put in corn, but this turned into fierce labour and the trees, once felled, ‘lost all their poetry’. When the character Dave (often depicted as a buffoon in standard Australian jokes but taken seriously enough in Rudd’s work) asked his father why they ‘didn’t take up a place on the plain, where there were no trees to grub and plenty of water, Dad would cough as if something was sticking in his throat, and then curse terribly about the squatters and political jobbery’.

In the world according to Rudd, the women laboured like drudges and were afflicted by loneliness, want and fear of losing the place. Concern about money was constant. Children laboured at blistering work, such as shelling corn. Dad went to the produce merchant to sell it and found the lot, after his bill for food and stores was deducted, was worth £3. So kangaroo stew became the staple. Dad was reduced to roasting a slice of bread on the fire till it was like a coal, then pouring boiling water over it and letting it draw. ‘That served as coffee for a time.’ At the right time Dan, an older son, turned up with money earned in shearing. Child labour on and outside the farm was

so desperately needed by the family that it was remarkable if a child could be spared many years for education. Rudd attended Emu Creek school and, because he was a clever boy, was able to stay till he was twelve.

In Rudd's world, the real world of the Queensland selection, Rudd's family were, like their class, an enduring people. But frequently endurance was not enough. Australia ate people like the Rudds alive. 'You'll ride all over it filled with the proud spirit of ownership,' wrote Rudd, '... even the wild flowers and darn stones'll be yours! How you'll admire it all!' But possession of it hung by a thread.

KANAKA DAWN

For sixty years the native races of Polynesia and Melanesia were kidnapped from their homes and then enslaved, murdered, or simply left to their own devices on the edge of the towns and settlements of Australia. There were two periods of Kanaka 'immigration', of plantation labour that cost about sixpence per head per day. The first Kanakas were brought to Australia from 1847 onwards by the New South Wales pastoralist and trader Benjamin Boyd. Boyd offered the recruited islanders supposed contracts, signed indecipherably by them. Their pay was to be 26 shillings a year plus food and clothing. Boyd kept three of them in Sydney as a walking advertisement which might attract orders from other grandees.

But their work as shepherds in the bush was not successful. They became targets for Aborigines, and if they wandered onto other stations they were persecuted by white agricultural labourers, who did not want their wages undermined. Ultimately Boyd had to return them home at his own expense. When they got back to the New Hebrides, the Kanakas discovered that during their absence their wives had been put to death according to custom because they had been presumed dead.

Kanakas (the word means 'human being' in Polynesian language) became fashionable again in the 1860s, when northern Queensland was subject to energetic settlement. Entrepreneurs began to look again to the New Hebrides as a possible source of labour. A lugger, *Don Juan*, arrived in Brisbane in August 1863 with a cargo of sixty-seven Kanakas ordered by Robert Towns, a robust Geordie who had married the half-sister of William Charles Wentworth and who had interests in banking, land and trade. He was exactly the sort of man who was now expanding his interests into both the

Darling Downs and those northern regions of Queensland already named to honour the martyred explorer Edmund Kennedy.

In the small city of Brisbane, there was much press and public condemnation of *Don Juan* and Towns. In North America, Gettysburg had been fought in the name of the liberation of black races, and there were clergy and professionals in Brisbane who knew that, and were appalled that Towns was making an opening bid on a new form of slavery. An uneasy Queensland Legislative Assembly ordered Towns to submit to them the written instructions dated 29 July 1863 he had given his 'blackbirding' captains, Grueber and Ross Lewin.

These letters of course emphasised the care the captains and supercargoes (managers of the shipped labourers) were to take to allow the native to make an informed choice, and on general welfare of those shipped. But Ross Lewin was a sadist who had been cashiered from the Royal Navy after the first China war, had worked as a 'slave driver' in the sandalwood trade for Towns, and was troubled by the concept of kindness for South Pacific Islanders. The reality was that only a few of those who sickened on board were returned home, as promised, within the stated period, and the healthy were kept in Queensland for three years or longer. Towns had asked Grueber to make friends of any missionaries he met and to use them to help recruitment. Towns' circular to be issued to the missionaries read, 'I, with my cotton emigration ... will do more towards civilising the natives in one year than you can possibly in ten.'

Towns' ships the *Uncle Tom* and the *Black Dog* could carry more than 100 Kanakas and the *Spec* sixty-three. When the Kanakas arrived, Towns sold their labour to other planters but maintained 300 himself on his own cotton plantation on the Darling Downs. Towns ran a nineteenth-century version of a Potemkin village, Townsvale, 40 miles (60 kilometres) from Brisbane, and used it as a model farm for exhibition to the governor, Sir George Bowen, and other influential colonials. After a visit in which Bowen saw well-clothed and well-fed Kanakas attending to duties that did not demand severe labour, Sir George congratulated Towns on a 'splendid example of colonial enterprise'. But not all was splendid.

Ross Lewin was charged at Brisbane Police Court in 1867 with the rape of a girl whom he had dragged aboard his boat at Tanna in the New Hebrides, but there were no white witnesses and the magistrate refused to commit Lewin for trial. When Towns dismissed Lewin in any case, Lewin set up in

business for himself and said he would be happy to receive orders for the importation of South Sea natives at £7 a head.

Meanwhile, sugar plantations were proliferating in north Queensland and sought Kanaka labour as well. Captain James Louis Hope, like Towns a member of the Legislative Council of the colony, had been experimenting with the growing of sugar on his property at Cleveland, south of Brisbane, and built a sugar mill in 1864, buying up the labour of fifty-four Kanakas from Towns' schooner *Uncle Tom*. It was Hope who showed how efficiently Kanakas could be made to work on sugar plantations.

Some masters were conscientious in their treatment of islanders, others behaved more questionably. But the evil was that a plantation aristocracy was emerging. Sometimes wooden buildings were provided for the incoming labourers, sometimes the Kanakas were allowed to build their own conical grass or cane huts on the edge of the plantation. In all cases, sanitation and water supply were poor and disease common. He observed that their diet consisted chiefly of pumpkins, damaged corn and corncobs, 'and when a bullock was killed they got the head, entrails and other reject parts'.

Nineteen natives employed by George Raff MLA absconded from his plantation early in 1868, complaining they had not been given sufficient food during their twelve-month service. They also alleged ill treatment by George Raff's son, Robert. The party, including a woman, made their way to the Brisbane Immigration Depot and asked to be returned home. Instead, they were brought before the Brisbane Police Court. No interpreter was available. The magistrates ordered the men to return to the plantation. They refused to go, and so were again brought before the magistrates and had their agreements cancelled with the loss of twelve months' wages.

Later in the same year twenty-three Kanakas employed by the Maryborough Sugar Company went on strike, claiming they had been promised a passage home within twelve months. The company relied on the alleged existence of three-year contracts. The men, who had been subsisting on the edge of town by eating grass, were arrested and sentenced by Maryborough justices to seven days' imprisonment.

A premier of Queensland, Sir Robert Ramsay Mackenzie—son of a baronet, conservative politician and friend of squatters, as well as an auctioneer and stock and station agent and commission broker in Brisbane—joined a ring of cabinet ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly and

Council who chartered the 240-ton *King Oscar*. Mackenzie was the sort of man for whom Queensland was a good place to make money and exercise power but not to settle for good. He had every intention of going back to Scotland rich. The consortium advertised:

South Sea islanders: The *King Oscar* has arrived, and will be again despatched to the islands without delay. Parties wishing to engage South Sea islanders for employment on stations, plantations, & C, are requested to apply immediately to the agents, FENWICK AND CO.

The group employed Ross Lewin as its recruiting agent. Lewin sailed to the New Hebrides on the *King Oscar*, shot some Islanders who resisted recruitment, burned villages, collected a cargo and sailed back to Queensland, where the Kanakas' services were sold for £9 per head. Thus he and others earned nearly £2500 for a fortnight's work. Missionaries in the islands began sending outraged reports to the Anti-Slavery Society in London.



In the end some 67 000 Kanakas would be recruited over nearly forty years. Some of them came on the collier *Syren*. After her captain had unloaded his load of Australian coal at New Caledonia in 1867, he called all hands together and announced that he intended to fill up with a cargo of Kanakas for the return journey. His men invited natives aboard, cut their canoes adrift and then set sail—the Kanakas being now locked up in the hold amidst coal dust-coated walls. Their wives swum after the ship for more than three miles, 'crying loudly for the restoration of their kidnapped husbands'. At a nearby island, natives were invited aboard and their canoes then sunk by gunfire. Of the 110 natives conscripted by the *Syren*, twenty-one died of dysentery before the ship reached Queensland. Earlier in the same year, one of Robert Towns' ships, the *Curlew*, had been attacked and destroyed by natives in the New Hebrides. Three of the crew were killed, in part because the islanders knew Towns had failed to repatriate natives within the three years he had earlier promised.

The Royal Navy was now ordered to deal with the kidnapping and murder of natives. Captain George Palmer of HMS *Rosario* would write an outraged account, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, of his patrols in the region.

In March 1869 the *Rosario*, at the orders of Commodore Lambert of the Australia Station of the Royal Navy, made inquiries throughout the South Seas of the kidnapping of natives by vessels flying the British flag. His first stop was New Caledonia. Here he found that French vessels were also kidnapping natives from the New Hebrides for work in the colony. The French offered Captain Lambert little aid.

Palmer found that in the recent past no fewer than thirteen Australian vessels had been engaged in illegally taking natives from Lifou and Maré in the Loyalty Islands, French-controlled islands north of New Caledonia, and nearly all these vessels were from Sydney though they delivered their cargo of islanders to Queensland. Their documents, when inspected, declared they were picking up cargoes of bêche-de-mer and coconut oil.

A native who Captain George Palmer respected on Tanna in the New Hebrides was the orator Yaufangan. He told Captain Palmer that he himself had helped procure twenty-four Tanna men for a ship named the *Young Australia*, and they had all agreed to go for one yam season—that is, for one year. Palmer asked him had he ever seen violence done to Tanna people and Yaufangan readily answered yes, he had seen men dragged from the shore, he had seen men hauled up on ships by the hair of their heads, and forced along by musket. He had seen girls kidnapped to be sold in Australia, generally to Kanaka men who wanted wives. The more Captain Palmer investigated, the more appalling the news was.

The next island the *Rosario* touched at was Erromango, north of Tanna. Long before blackbirding—the recruitment of natives, by force or inducement, for indentured labour in Australia—it had been the scene of many depredations by sandalwood traders, and its natives had struck back with intermittent murder. It was here a chief told Palmer of the kidnap more recently of ten natives, who were lured aboard a ship with a promise of tobacco. Another ship took five. One captain got nine Erromangans aboard by telling them he could supply them with pigs for a coming feast. And so it went, a regular attrition of small numbers of men. Palmer discovered that not a single native that had been taken from Erromango had ever come back.

Captain Palmer and many others came to despair of Queensland legislators and officials. The Sydney *Empire* wrote, “The more inquiry into the Polynesian Labour question is prosecuted, the clearer it becomes that

nothing less than a species of slavery is intended to be perpetrated by the planters of Queensland.' The Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen, son of a Donegal rector and described as 'a good trumpeter' for Queensland, was told by the Colonial Office that the traffic in islanders was one 'in respect of which ... you are under the most serious responsibility'.

The Queensland government was thus forced in 1869 to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into the operations of the Polynesian Labour Act. Six of the seven members appointed either favoured the indenture system or used Kanaka labour themselves. The witnesses summoned consisted mainly of planters and government officials, though Robert Short, the Queensland correspondent of the Anti-Slavery Society, was also summoned; his evidence would prove so damning that it was not included in the printed document sent to London.

The committee reported there was no evidence of kidnapping, no abuses during voyages and no complaints received about conditions on the plantations. It further ruled that reports of brutality were entirely due to the behaviour of slavers from Noumea and Fiji. Queensland recruiting vessels were 'in nearly all cases humane and kind'. The implication that this was slavery was denied, Captain Palmer lamented, 'and even sleek oily men in sable broadcloth are found to stand forth in defence of the man-stealers'. Much evil had been done, and would now continue to be done, said Palmer, under the Polynesian Labour Act of 1868.

The Queensland Parliament ultimately amended the Act in 1870 to allow for government agents. It also enacted that recruiters were to take out a government licence and lodge bonds of £500 to refrain from kidnapping and 10 shillings per recruit to return him to his home within three years. The master of each vessel had also to obtain a certificate from a prominent white man on the island of origin of the recruited native stating that the recruits understood the agreement and consented to it. The planters who purchased islander labour were to keep a register showing the names and condition of all natives employed, reporting any deaths to the local magistrate. And so on. Yet there were many ways to evade the pieties of this law. Captains could sail from distant parts of Queensland, recruit their natives and then land them back in unsupervised stretches of the Queensland coast.

The British Parliament in 1872 passed the first Pacific Islanders Protection Act, which empowered Australian courts to accept native evidence and

try any British subject caught blackbirding. Until then only the evidence of another European was admitted.

STEAMING TO AUSTRALIA

Immigration to Australia, and mail and freight to and from Australia, had become more predictable because of steamships. The first regular steamship to Australia was the *Chusan*, which had come to Melbourne in 1852 after a seventy-five-day voyage from Southampton. In 1857 the new iron steamship *Royal Charter* established the record for the England–Australia run, fifty-nine days. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869 steam voyages of thirty-three to thirty-five days became normal. In 1877 the Orient line's new steamer *Lusitania* brought 1000 passengers—more than Phillip's 1788 penal fleet transported—in forty days.

On arrival, free passes were given to those immigrants who wished to travel inland to take up advertised jobs. When arriving at the country town to begin his employment, the immigrant was to hand in the pass at the police station and receive in return free board and lodging for at least two days. In Sydney many single women immigrants were still accommodated at the Hyde Park Barracks, part of which was also being used as an asylum for aged women. Generally, the girls quickly found jobs as servants to middle-class families. Of the hundreds of thousands of migrants who came to Australia in the nineteenth century, as little as one in ten ever got to see 'Home' again.



In the early 1860s the new Queensland government had found it hard to persuade ships to sail to that colony instead of to the more profitable southern ports. The Queensland agent-general in London was able to organise two shiploads of immigrants, but to attract shipping, conditions imposed on shipowners as regards space and diet were eased.

Two shipping groups, James Baines and T.M. Mackay & Company, both agreed to transport immigrants to Queensland according to the rules and free of charge in return for a land grant to them of 18 acres for each person landed. The migrants recruited were offered not only a free voyage but they themselves were promised by the Queensland government a grant of 12 acres after a period of continuous residence. Hence, 11 000 immigrants, many of

them laid-off hand-loom weavers from Manchester, arrived in Queensland over two years, and the shipowners acquired 200 000 acres.

On arrival in Queensland in the mid-1860s, the migrants were put in the old military barracks in Brisbane. Many families found it so uncomfortable and unclean, and the sewage so bad, that they moved away and camped under trees. Their rations in the meantime were of very poor quality. Tradesmen and professional men had to go on the road looking for agricultural work. Of one such family an immigrant wrote, 'That is what too many of our poor English come to ... he, and other deluded villagers, agree to rush out to Australia, only to scrape on as best they can ... little better all of them than walking skeletons, living in a mere log hut, and lamenting having left their English home.' Some accounts give the impression that Australia could never have been populated if the journey back home had been affordable.

In the early 1860s a number of English railway workers and their families were brought to Queensland to build the coastal lines, but in 1867, due to recession, the men were dismissed. They descended on Brisbane in protest and the authorities defused potential revolution by giving them free passage to Rockhampton and other coastal towns. For the length of the depression the assisted-migration scheme was dropped. Nonetheless, Queensland advertised in 1868 for migrants who could pay their own way and offered in return 80 acres of 'best agricultural land', or 160 acres of pastoral land at a nominal rent for five years, after which they would be granted the freehold. Assisted migration resumed in the 1870s and a new immigrant depot was built, with sub-depots in ports such as Maryborough, Rockhampton and Townsville and even at some inland towns. Many immigrants to the colonies brought the latest industrial and technical crafts with them, which helped accelerate Australian industrial growth.

MINERAL DREAMS

By the 1860s the gold rush was turning into a mineral industry. The joint stock company was replacing the individual red-shirted digger. The prospector had become an employed miner, and the world of the miner was an early catalyst of industrial action. A young Orkney Islander named William Guthrie Spence, who had arrived in Melbourne with his parents in the Roaring Days, specifically 1852, had created a Miners' Union which he united with the Amalgamated Miners' Association in 1878 in the first

coup of a career devoted to industrial action. A vigorous Presbyterian and temperance man, he might be found throughout the 1860s addressing miners across Victoria, in Clunes and Ballarat and Castlemaine, and with equal eloquence preaching to Presbyterians, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians on Sundays.

In the early 1860s, 40 000 miners left eastern Australia for the Otago gold rush in New Zealand's South Island, but to compensate that loss, an increasing number of women and families came to join husbands and fathers in Australian gold-mining areas. The women humanised the gold towns, introducing sheets to go with the blankets, serving meals on china and putting muslin curtains in the windows. Even so, Anthony Trollope found the store tents and shops in the valley at Bendigo, which ran for seven miles, 'dirty, uncouth, barren, and disorderly'. He declared the hospitals excellent, however, and charitable welfare, in his conservative view, so good as to almost encourage poverty.

Well-ordered cottages, broad streets and stone churches were by now the mark of Ballarat. The pubs, when they were built—477 public houses and hotels in Ballarat alone—were numerous and sometimes remarkably elegant compared to the shebeens and grog tents of the first days. The gold buyers often built their fortunes here, buying cheaply on the fields, sending the portion they bought off to Melbourne by gold escort.

Not all the goldfields had achieved sophistication. Young diarist G.O. Preshaw joined the Bank of New South Wales and was sent to the remote goldfield of Kiandra, a later field than Ballarat, Bendigo or Ophir. The bank was still located in a calico tent, and Preshaw had to carry all the gold deposits of the day nearly a mile to the small military and police camp where they were stored under the commandant's bed.

Indeed, to get enough gold on some of the goldfields now, diggers had to buy and install quartz-crushing equipment, great machines called 'batteries'. Several such machines had been in operation at Bendigo as early as 1855, but their use accelerated from the 1860s onwards. By 1864 the number of small miners in Bendigo had dropped to 83 000, of whom a third were Chinese, and average earnings were about £70 a year. Machine drills now came into use and took the mining underground, and the typical lung diseases of miners began to be seen, including 'black spit'. Individual prospectors might still be found in places like Ararat, Stawell and

Rutherglen, but when they eventually went they often left a mining ghost town in their wake.

In a Queensland depression in 1867 James Nash found gold at a place named Gympie, north of Brisbane. Gympie's white reefs of gold helped create the standard mining town with wooden fronts and canvas posteriors. Charters Towers' gold was discovered by men who were too late to Gympie to cash in on its wealth.

SOCIAL BANDITS II

Red Kelly, Ned's convict father, who had served his time in Van Diemen's Land before coming to Melbourne and marrying Ellen Quinn, the daughter of free settlers, was continuously anxious about police attention. While farming at Avenel, north of Seymour, he was arrested for cattle stealing and having in his possession illegally one cowhide. His sentence was a £25 fine or six months in prison, and although £25 was an enormous sum for people like the Quinns and Kellys, the money was raised before he had served the full six months. He died in 1866, soon after his release, 'of dropsy', or congestive heart failure.

The Quinns were a large bush clan, and characteristic of the small, alienated selector and farmer to whom stock theft came naturally. So pervasive was the problem that Mr McBean, a squatter from Kilfera Station in north-east Victoria, grew disgusted at the lenient sentences handed down and posted an advertisement in a newspaper addressed to sheep stealers.

In consequence of the decision of the magistrate in the Benalla Court, the undersigned would be obliged if sheep stealers would take only what mutton they require for private use.

Under the Land Act of 1865, the widowed Mrs Kelly took up a small area at East Greta in north-east Victoria close to the main Melbourne–Sydney road, a location which she hoped might help in the success of the farm. But it was poor country and Mrs Kelly found it hard to fulfil the cultivation requirements. The Kelly boys grew up as part of a group of wild locals known as the Greta Mob.

As a selector, Ellen Kelly—like the men who married her daughters, such as William Skillion—was hampered in the taking out of acreages by

the squatters' stratagems known as peacocking, dummying, and the use of Duffy Certificates. Duffy Certificates were issued as compensation to those who purchased land at auction in the 1850s and had paid more than £1 per acre. They were used by pastoralists as proof of title to good land and so to frighten selectors away. And the demand that the police deal strenuously with all stock theft led ultimately to a relentless and vengeful bullying of the Kelly clan.

Ned Kelly's famous Jerilderie letter, detailing all his complaints against the established world, was written to justify his path. The letter was started in Euroa when he had held up the bank there in December 1878 and finished in the virtual capture of the town of Jerilderie in the Riverina of New South Wales in February 1879. By the time he crossed the Murray, his mother Ellen, with babe in arms (the father, her partner George King, an American), had been arrested by Sergeant Steele at the Kelly farm. After being handcuffed she was charged with aiding and abetting one Edward Kelly in a murder attempt. She had been sentenced by Redmond Barry at Beechworth to three years' servitude. What else would be needed to enhance a young man's sense of being engaged in civil war?

Sergeant Michael Kennedy, who had earlier in the month assisted in the court proceedings against Ellen Kelly, created a police camp at Stringybark Creek in the melancholy bush outside Mansfield in late October 1878. The detachment stationed there were all Irish themselves. On the afternoon of 26 October 1878, the Kelly gang were attracted to the place by tracks they spotted and because one of the constables, McIntyre, fired at some parrots and gave away the police position. The Kellys bailed up McIntyre and Lonigan, the other policemen then in the camp, late in the afternoon. Constable Lonigan began firing from behind a log and was shot dead. McIntyre, unharmed, became a prisoner. The gang then concealed themselves until Kennedy and Scanlon arrived back from their patrol at 6 p.m. McIntyre rose to advise his colleagues to surrender. Kennedy at first thought him joking, then drew his revolver and slid down off his horse, which McIntyre took hold of and immediately escaped on. Kennedy was mortally wounded and, in bloodlust or mercy or an instinct partway between, Kelly shot him dead through the chest. Scanlon too had been killed in the exchange. McIntyre rode into Mansfield to warn of what had happened.

There are signs that Ned, who was not a killer by nature, became fatally haunted by the men murdered at Stringybark, and from then on set about, however aggressively, seeking forgiveness before man and God.

At lunchtime on 9 December 1878, a party of four men had sauntered into the yard of Faithfull's Creek station a few miles to the north of Euroa. The gang at that moment consisted of twenty-three-year-old Ned, his seventeen-year-old brother Dan, Steve Hart and Joe Byrne (both selectors' sons from the Beechworth district). The manager and the whole workforce were 'bailed up', and when at dusk a hawker drove up to the station, Ned and the gang took him and his assistant prisoner and fitted themselves out from his stock with new suits, boots, hats and magenta Tommy Duds (neckties). Mrs Fitzgerald, the station cook, and other women were allowed to move about the station as they pleased, but the male prisoners were kept in the storeroom, where they played cards and talked to Ned about the killing of the policemen at Stringybark Creek six weeks before. Ned insisted that it had not all been deliberate murder.

Euroa, like other of Ned's acts of hostage-taking, was in part a kindly affair, and some of the men, without being pressured, even offered him money for his cause. The next day Ned's lieutenants cut the telegraph wires north of town, and the hostage numbers increased with the arrival of some sporting kangaroo hunters and telegraph-wire repairers.

In Euroa, the two bank tellers and a manager opened the safe and over £2000 in cash, gold and jewellery was removed. The outlaws, as was always their custom, also took mortgage papers held by the bank against local selectors, an act which further enhanced the sympathies between the gang and the small farmers. The bank manager's family, the Scotts, were gathered up from the bank residence at the rear of the bank for transport back to Faithfull's Creek station. The Scott family having been taken to Faithfull's Creek station, Ned sat down to write a detailed letter to Donald Cameron, MLA, member for West Bourke, who in the House had asked the Premier of Victoria to look into the issue of whether the behaviour of policemen in Benalla had provoked the Stringybark Creek murders. Then the outlaws, who as a result of these and other raids and acts of self-justified depredation had become known as 'The Gang', issued graphic threats against any of their captives who tried to leave the station before 11 p.m., and departed, shouting and jumping their horses over fences, in the direction of the wild

Strathbogie Ranges. As the Kelly Gang crossed the Murray and rode to New South Wales and their consummate raid on Jerilderie, Ned carried in his pocket the pages of what would become his Jerilderie letter, over 8000 words long when finished, a document in which his denouncement of police competed with his plea for absolution for the Stringybark killings.

In Jerilderie, late on a Saturday in early 1879, Ned captured the police station and Senior Constable Devine, whom he locked up. Next day, dressed in Devine's uniform and posing as a visiting trooper, he would accompany young Mrs Devine to Mass, treating her entirely as the good, devout Irish young woman she was, but letting her know her husband's survival depended on her behaviour. The other constable, Richards, was more easily cowed than Devine and took the uniformed Ned Kelly and his brother Dan, similarly attired, to the Royal Hotel, the Bank of New South Wales being located within the building.

They held up the Royal Hotel, including any customers who happened to be there, then went on to the bank. There they found the manager, John Tarleton, having a bath. The safe was opened and over £2000 was taken along with all the papers, including mortgages. Once the robbery was over, Ned Kelly went to find the town newspaper proprietor, Samuel Gill, to give him his letter for printing in his *Jerilderie and Urana Gazette*. However Gill had left town on hearing of the gang's arrival, and was hiding in a drain in the countryside. Ned instead handed his manifesto to Samuel Gill's assistant, Living.

When it was time to leave, Ned gave the normal fiery and eloquent speech about what had turned him into an outlaw. His anxiety to justify himself is telling. No other bushranger sermonised to pubs full of citizens or went searching for someone to publish his apologia. The gang then gave an exhibition of rough and skilful riding in the main street before vanishing, back across the Murray and into the mountains of north-eastern Victoria, the country in which they were utterly at home.

At the time of the Jerilderie raid, despite the fact that under the Outlawry Act the Kelly brothers and their companions were considered to be beyond the normal protection offered by the law, but could be shot at any time by anyone, though twenty-three Kelly relatives and associates were in gaol in Beechworth and though a fabulous reward sum for turning the Kellys in was on offer, information and aid continued to flow to the gang. Seven of the twenty-three gaoled men were Kelly relatives; contrary to the view

of Kelly's support being entirely Irish-based, three were Scottish and the rest were English. For every man locked up there were now even more willing to defy the police.

The Jerilderie letter Ned had left with Living seems to come directly from the language of Irish protesters, and of Irish transportees who saw themselves as victims of a system rather than, as the authorities would have it, criminals. There existed a pernicious system which had not let him live in peace, Ned claimed. The Victorian police were successors of those Irish who were willing to serve 'under a flag and nation that has destroyed, massacred, and murdered their forefathers'. In his view an Irish policeman was 'a traitor to his country, ancestors, and religion'. The persecution had extended to Ned's family. 'Is my brothers and sisters and my mother not to be pitied also who has no alternative only to put up with the brutal and cowardly conduct of a parcel of big ugly fat-necked wombat headed big bellied magpie legged narrow hippled splay-footed sons of Irish bailiffs or English landlords which is better known as officers of Justice or Victorian police?'

Then the letter takes on a manic tone. 'I give fair warning to all those who has reason to fear me to sell out and give £10 out of every hundred towards the widow and orphan fund and do not attempt to reside in Victoria ... Neglect this and abide by the consequences, which shall be worse than the rust in the wheat in Victoria or the druth of a dry season to the grasshoppers in New South Wales.'

In fact Ned's justification, threats and appeal for absolution would not be published in the time left to him. It was suppressed. The New South Wales attorney-general sent a cable to Jerilderie warning Living against selling it to Melbourne papers, which clamoured for it. Instead the manuscript was seized by the New South Wales police and sent to the government of Victoria.



On a weekend in June 1880, Ned put into action a plan that centred on the town of Glenrowan. Ned had brought to Glenrowan the famous armour hammered out of ploughshares which he and the others would wear at various stages during the coming siege.

At pistol point on Saturday night, he made several railway platelayers lift segments of the line by a steep embankment just north of Glenrowan. He had reason to believe a police special would come up from Benalla pursuing him.

Had Ned passed over into a state of nihilism in which death-dealing was the chief principle of his life? If so, he had not displayed that tendency at Euroa or Jerilderie—and he was so haunted by Stringybark that it was unlikely.

According to a kinder view of Ned, and that of eminent historian John Molony, as the train arrived from Benalla he would have the stationmaster flash a danger signal, and the occupants would be informed by an emissary, a Kelly supporter, of the situation they were in and warned that if they tried to reverse, the line behind them would be blown up by blasting powder. Indeed, had Ned intended loss of life by train wreck he would surely have derailed the line to the south of Glenrowan. He wanted to use the captured police, including Superintendent Francis Hare, Kelly-hunter-in-chief, as hostages to exchange for his mother's freedom. He expected the police to come post-haste during Saturday night, resulting in an early Sunday morning confrontation. Instead the police in Melbourne and not Benalla put together the response. Everything would be delayed a day.

Ned expected police to come to Glenrowan from Benalla because he had organised an event to attract them. While Ned was attending to pulling up the rail, he had sent his brother Dan and his lieutenant Joe Byrne to threaten a police informer who had grown up with the Byrnes, Harts and Kellys in the Beechworth area, one Aaron Sherritt, who was sheltering in his hut under a guard of five police. Unfortunately, words which Sherritt, in a fit of guilty anger, had uttered to Joe Byrne's mother—'I'll kill him and before he's cold I'll fuck him'—provided Joe Byrne with an absolute warrant for Sherritt's death. Despite the five police guards hidden in the bedroom, Aaron Sherritt was shot dead by Joe. The outlaws then rode away to meet Ned at Glenrowan. To acquire some hostages the gang took over Mrs Anne Jones's Glenrowan Inn, where some sixty people were detained, including a local schoolteacher named Thomas Curnow.

Ned's expectations grew in grandeur during that Sabbath. He would capture the train, its police and horses, and with them as his bargaining pieces, advance down the line raiding banks, perhaps even kidnapping the ultimate hostage, the Governor of Victoria.

In Mrs Jones's pub there was singing—even a Kelly ballad was performed by one of Ned's guests. 'Ned would go through the waltzes, he was laughing and amused all around him,' Mrs Jones later told police. Mrs Jones said that not everyone approved of the idea of derailing trains—a sign that in the

eyes of the hostages Ned did contemplate a train wreck. 'But the devil was in us. We had to be looking at the darling man, but sure Ned was a darling man.' Towards three o'clock on the Monday morning it was decided that all the women at the pub could go home, but first Ned gave his obligatory self-justifying speech, and while he was still speaking, a train was heard.

Curnow, having been released on the plea that his wife was expecting a baby, returned home southwards along the line, collected a red scarf to screen a candle, and bravely signalled the train to stop at the station rather than thunder through to Beechworth. Ned's idea of taking those on the train hostage was stymied.

Amongst those held at the Jones inn was Constable Bracken, a local policeman, who when the train pulled up and the bushrangers began armouring themselves escaped and ran to the station to join up with the disembarking party, whose passengers included Superintendents Hare and Nicholson, Stanhope O'Connor, the officer in charge of the black trackers specially brought along, and two women who had come as spectators. In all, fifty-seven police would be involved in the siege.

Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart, confronted by the police, left a bonfire blazing in the open and used Mrs Jones's hotel as a flimsy fortress. Ned was in the bush nearby. The police fire led to Byrne being wounded in the thigh and bleeding to death. Ned was wounded in the foot, hand and arm. At about 5 a.m. Ned, looming through the early mist in his armour and rapping its steel plates to attract police fire, made his way to join his confederates in the hotel, and on the way took many wounds in the legs. More police arrived half an hour later. Inside the hotel Ned could not find Dan or Steve because they were in one of the back rooms. He assumed they had already escaped on horseback, and walked into the backyard of the hotel to find his horse. It had fled.

It was dawn when the police at the northern end of the hotel saw Ned emerge from the mist again, a terrible figure in his armour. 'Come on,' he called, 'and we will lick the lot of the bloody police.' Ned fell with a total of twenty-eight wounds in his extremities, and the police moved in and removed his helmet. Sergeant Steele wanted to kill him as he lay there, but Constable Bracken, who had been Kelly's hostage, prevented him. Around 10 a.m., by which time the morning passenger train from Wangaratta had arrived by way of the now-repaired rail, civilian spectators were calling on

the police to grant a truce and stop firing on the hotel, where there were still hostages. Superintendent Sadleir, who had taken over from Hare when Hare was wounded in the hand and would be demoted for his inflammatory part in the whole Kelly business, allowed a ceasefire. The hostages came out and were forced to lie on the ground until their identity was checked. By now Ned's sister Maggie Skillion and Father Matthew Gibney, who earlier had given the last rites to Ned, offered to act as intermediaries to get Dan and Steve to surrender, but the police threatened to shoot Maggie if she went near the building. At 2.30 p.m. the hotel was set alight by a policeman under covering fire. Father Gibney protested to Sadleir, ignored his orders and ran into the burning hotel. He found Byrne's dead body where it had fallen by the bar, and in the back room Dan Kelly and Steve Hart lying side by side, their heads on rolled blankets, their armour by their side, a dead dog at their feet. He presumed they had suicided but in fact it seems they had been laid out in that dignified manner by one of the Kelly supporters who had broken into the inn, a friend known to and ever after cherished by the Kelly clan. Flames drove Gibney out of the hotel, and the police dragged Byrne's body free and rescued the wounded Martin Cherry, last of the prisoners, who died almost immediately.

When Dan Kelly's body, consumed by fire to below the knees, was drawn out of the ruins, Maggie Skillion and her sister Kate Kelly leaned over it keening. Ned, with two dozen or more wounds to the arms and legs, was transferred south to Benalla with the body of Joe Byrne. And so on to the 'Such is life' consummation, the trial in Melbourne and the hanging in Melbourne Gaol.

As far as south-eastern Australia was concerned, bushrangerism died with Ned. No later outlaws would seize the popular imagination in that way and to anything like that extent again.

33

ONE HUNDRED YEARS COMPLETE



THE BROKEN HILL

Charles Rasp had been born in 1846 at Stuttgart and became a chemical technologist in Hamburg. When in 1868 he suffered a serious lung infection, it was decided he should move from Germany to a warmer climate. When he first arrived in Melbourne in 1869 he pruned vines before becoming a boundary rider on Walwa Station and then on the Mount Gipps Station in the Barrier Ranges in the far west of New South Wales. There had been discoveries of silver at Silverton and a place named Daydream and now every station hand was searching for indications of the metal.

When the shearing season occurred at Mount Gipps in September 1883, thirty-seven-year-old Charles Rasp, who was fetching sheep in from 12 miles out to the south end of the run, carried with him a book on prospecting and began to chip at the rocks and gather samples at the site known as 'the broken hill'. The samples were very black and heavy for their size and Rasp thought that perhaps they were tin. On the advice of his station manager, George McCulloch, a syndicate of seven was formed and seven blocks were pegged out across the whole ridge. McCulloch, a university graduate who had tried to farm in Mexico, was a heavy-built Scot, loud-voiced and genial, and hard up from long drought. The broken hill would transform his fortunes and, like Rasp, he too would live a rich man.

Each of the seven members of the syndicate invested £70 in the Broken Hill Mining Company which was now formed, though without official registration. Each partner also paid £1 per week so that the claim could be worked. An analyst's report done in Adelaide was disappointing but it was found the analyst had only tested for tin. When the rocks were tested for silver the results were different. Rich silver ore was found and a Broken Hill Proprietary Company was set up, and 16 000 £20 shares sold. Within five years Rasp had made his fortune. When dividends were declared, he was able to move to Adelaide, marry there and buy a house, Willyama, where he and his wife Agnes lived as grantees. Agnes entertained and Rasp amassed a huge library of French and German books. The man with the weak chest would live until 1907.

MORE KANAKA SCANDALS

In 1880, two Queensland government health officers, C.K. Hill-Wray and John Thomson, carried out a full statistical investigation of ten large plantations in the Maryborough district. They found that the death rate of Kanakas was up to twenty times greater than among white men of similar age groups. Nearly 500 native deaths had occurred on the ten plantations in the previous five years, yet not one death certificate had been forwarded to the registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Yet, by the early 1880s, the profits to be made out of an industry employing islander labour had begun to attract the attention of many of the devout Presbyterian capitalists of Melbourne and Sydney. Pioneer planters now sold out their sugar plantations to the capitalists from the south, the original owner sometimes staying on as supervisor. The 6000-acre Hambledon estate near Cairns, for example, was sold to Thomas Swallow, founder of Swallow & Ariell, the biscuit manufacturer seeking sugar to sustain his industry.

The blackbirders had by now been driven out of the New Hebrides by the Royal Navy, and so turned to New Guinea as a source of labour. Premier Sir Thomas McIlwraith, who would temporarily annex New Guinea to Queensland, was a partner in the North Australian Pastoral Company, which was at this stage transforming pastoral land into sugar plantations. He needed Kanaka labourers and had the ships to bring them to Queensland.

The island trading company Burns Philp was also involved in blackbirding in the 1880s. The *Heath*, the *Hopeful* and the *Minny* were amongst the Burns

Philp vessels used for recruiting. The *Heath* was the oldest of the fleet, but still managed to bring back several cargoes of Kanakas. Late in 1883 the new premier, Samuel Griffith, prosecuted the master of the *Heath* for recruiting islanders under false pretences. The master served a gaol term. Burns Philp sued the government for the financial loss involved, losing the case only after years of legal manoeuvring. The captain, recruiting agent, government agent, mate, boatswain and two crew members of the *Hopeful* were prosecuted for kidnapping and murder. All were found guilty. A petition on their behalf was later organised and signed by 28 000 supporters of the Kanaka industry in Queensland. When in 1888 the Griffith government lost office and Boyd Dunlop Morehead became premier, he ordered the release of the two murderers and four kidnappers and they were carried through the streets of Brisbane by cheering crowds. The import of Kanakas was nonetheless suspended.

As depression hit in 1890, many of the mills and plantations were closing. But in 1892, Samuel Griffith rose in Parliament to announce the 'temporary reintroduction' of the Kanaka trade to enable sugar growers to cut their costs and survive. The reformer William Brookes, dying, had himself carried to the Queensland Parliament on a stretcher to oppose the bill in the Legislative Council, and spoke for an hour. The proponents of White Australia opposed the new Kanaka bill too, complaining that imported native labourers worked for fourpence a day, and white men could not compete. The British government also protested. But a further 11 000 natives were recruited.

The activities of the Queensland government were not acceptable to the Commonwealth Parliament when it met in 1901. A Pacific Island Labourers Act was quickly passed prohibiting the importation of natives after 1904, and arranging for the repatriation of survivors in Australia. Queensland fought a rearguard action, asking the British government to disallow the Commonwealth Act. The final Commonwealth Act allowed natives who had lived in Australia for more than twenty years to continue to do so, as well as those who owned land, and those who were too old and sick to return. Even with these wide exceptions only about 1300 natives remained. So did the unmarked graves of the island recruits to Queensland labour.

THE END OF DICKENS' ORPHANS

The stock and station agency E.B.L. Dickens and Company, founded by Plorn and Alfred Dickens in Melbourne in 1882, operated as a realtor for the

pastoral industry, but also offered to purchase goods in any city for transportation to stations. Plorn Dickens promised that he and Alfred would personally supervise the buying and packing of these supplies.

Still the ambition to be more than an agent existed. In September 1882, Plorn invested £2000 on leases for South Australian land, 2000–3000 square miles (approximately 5000–8000 square kilometres) in country north of Lake Eyre. Why Plorn would buy into land beyond Goyder's Line is hard to discern. Despite rumours of a copper find in the near-desert, he would never mine or run livestock in the country.

He returned to Wilcannia in 1883 to begin a Wilcannia branch of the company, leaving Alfred to run the company in Melbourne. He folded his own company into a Western Pastoral Agency he founded with two other Wilcannians, one of whom would soon go south to the emergent silver settlement of Broken Hill, which was the coming town in the region. Shares in the Broken Hill Proprietary Company would rise from a preposterous £175 in January 1888 to £409 in February that year. Within seven years the mining population of Broken Hill would reach 20 000.

His partners in the agency went under and he was left on his own. The town of Wilcannia endured. It had 2000 people and its warehouses and stores withstood both heat and cold. The Athenaeum Club and Library of Wilcannia was opened in a torrid January 1884, and the Druids and Oddfellows and Masonic Lodges honoured it with a procession through town. On that same hot day in January three large stations were auctioned by a larger brokerage, but in collaboration with E.B.L. Dickens and Co. The April 1884 Jockey Club meet had to be cancelled because of dust storms, which the writer Tom Collins described as 'Wilcannia showers'. Barges and steamers were stranded at various places along the river as it dried out.

Before the end of 1884, drought or not, Edward had fulfilled the duty of any robust colonial gentleman, being elected president both of the Jockey Club and the Cricket Club. He also began to take an interest in land legislation made in Parliament in Sydney's Macquarie Street for regions many of the politicians had never clapped eyes on. Out in this dry country, Edward considered the selectors 'not farmers but blackmailers'. That is, they selected or threatened to select a farm of 320 acres, the legislatively decreed size of a selection, knowing it could not sustain them, and waited for the pastoralist to buy them off. Edward was elected honorary secretary of the Land

Bill Opposition Society and was even involved in a Separation League which threatened to cut the west off from the state of New South Wales and make it its own colony. Edward moved the proposal that a petition on the matter be sent to the British government.

It was true that when the legislators in Macquarie Street thought of the impact land laws were making, they tended to have in their minds the better-watered central-western regions of the state, places where a prudent selector might survive. But, as Edward argued of the legislators, 'They knew no more of these parts than we know of the moon.' He emphasised that the proposed new colony would be about 60 000 in population, more than Victoria's population when she separated from New South Wales and more than twice Queensland's. The colony's revenues would be drawn from the Barrier silver mines to the south. Only water was needed to develop the rich resources of the area, he said, and to him as to many colonists the water problem was half beaten by water conservation and the sinking of more wells. Dickens also felt that the existence of a new colony would hasten Federation. The new western state would build bridges and roads which would knit together the region with other states.



A new Land Act for New South Wales was to make special provisions for the far west of the state. According to the act, the minimum homestead lease was for a 'run' of 5000–10 000 acres. The owner had to live on the property for at least six months of every year and fence the outer boundaries within two years. Most westerners still considered such an area would not be viable. But Edward—to his own relief, since he needed the income—was appointed an Inspector of Runs. The Chairman of the Wilcannia Board, equally anxious to earn an income now that he had lost all, arrived in December 1884. It was Frederic Trollope, son of Anthony. Thus the sons of the two most notable English novelists of the nineteenth century were at the same time living in this small and inaccessible town far in the interior of Australia and just scraping by.

The long drought ended in January 1885, with floods in the Darling and Paroo rivers. The result, as so often when droughts broke, was damaging floods which swamped many houses. Plorn, having himself taken up a homestead lease of 10 000 acres—a great reduction on the square mileages in South Australia on which he had lost money—led a delegation to Sydney

to talk about the realities of life in the west. Like all Wilcannians, he felt the threat of extinction in the fact that the railway had reached Dubbo to the east and was proposed for Bourke, further up the river, bypassing Wilcannia. As well as that, a tramway was being built to connect Menindee in the south with Silverton, the mineral town near Broken Hill. It seemed that Edward's beloved town was being abandoned.

In 1886 Fred Trollope left town to take up full-time employment in the Lands Department in Sydney. Plorn replaced him as a member of the Wilcannia Licensing Court and was elected alderman. A new electorate of Wilcannia was established in 1888 to send a member of the Legislative Assembly to Macquarie Street, and Plorn was asked to stand as the Protectionist candidate. He was attracted to Protectionism, even though many pastoralists were Free Trade, for the way it had kept the prices of grain and livestock high and thus profitable in Victoria, which he believed was outstripping New South Wales in wealth and power. Many New South Welshmen thought their colony would benefit from a similar policy, and a National Protection Association was formed.

Dickens' policy speech declared that 'the splendid position and general prosperity of the neighbouring colony of Victoria' was the outcome of Protection. But he would also campaign for a new Land Act, the present one being a dismal failure. Nine out of ten homestead lessees, he asserted, would clear out tomorrow if they could get even nine-tenths of their money back. But the government would not compensate graziers for improvements on their properties, and people did not want to walk away and let a new leaseholder have the benefit. The rabbit was an essential part of his platform too. As an example of the sort of cost to pastoralists that Plorn was struggling to explain to urban legislators in Sydney, Momba Station spent up to £3000 a month on rabbit extermination.

The election was held. There was a time lapse while votes were retrieved from all over the huge, 200 000-square-mile (500 000-square-kilometre) electorate. But it emerged that Dickens had won by a two-to-one majority. At the end of summer, Plorn departed with his wife Connie by coach on the first leg of his journey to Macquarie Street, and on 5 March 1889 was introduced to Parliament.

The Sydney the Dickens came to had a population of 350 000 and must have seemed a metropolis indeed to Edward and Connie, who took up

residence at a hotel in Gresham Street. During his time in Parliament, Plorn took the opportunity to found an office of E.B.L. Dickens in Sydney. Dickens' six years in the Legislative Assembly came at a time when the collapse of the land boom brought desolation to the finances of the Australian colonies, and he must sometimes have thought himself fortunate to be receiving a parliamentary salary. But from the first, he campaigned as promised, not least attacking the unsatisfactory reaction of Macquarie Street to the great degrader of the pastoral landscape, the rabbit.

Apart from certain bacteria which reached the indigenous peoples even before they had so much as seen a white man, the rabbit had been Australia's most successful European explorer, having, while retaining perfect health, conquered Australia to its very core within less than a hundred years of settlement. The rabbit was not a charming mischief-maker in a blue coat as depicted in Beatrix Potter's tales, but a consumer of futures and destinies. Stock riders on the stations herded thousands at a time into a 'battue', a trap with calico wings which funnelled the pests into a small yard where local children clubbed them to death. But that was not adequate. A Rabbit Department had been set up by the New South Wales government to administer a system under which bounties were paid for the scalps of dead rabbits, but some squatters began to suspect that rabbiters employed under it left enough of their prey behind to ensure a recurrent plague. It was believed that men looking to make a living might release rabbits in an area, and then go to the farmers and be paid to kill them. John Reid, manager and part-owner of Tintinallogy, a station between Wilcannia and Menindee, said that the first thing trappers did in an area was not to kill rabbits, but their natural enemies, the goanna, hawks, feral cats and dingoes.

Needless to say, by the time Plorn got to Macquarie Street, the government had received many complaints of the ineffectuality of the eradication scheme. In his maiden speech in the Legislative Assembly, he would announce that, in some cases, the capacity to carry livestock had been reduced by half through the rabbit plagues.

He would go on to explain how the present Land Act, though framed with good intentions, was a failure.

I took up 100,000 acres as a homestead lessee. I spent about £250 cash upon it and it was one of the best areas available, being close to a town.

I thought it better eventually to sacrifice the £250 and to allow the lease to be cancelled than to spend more money on it ... The proportion of good seasons to bad seasons is about one in four. Therefore if these unfortunate men do get their heads a little above water in one season they are dragged down again.

Then he made the point that Sydney had received in rain in March 1889, an inch more than Wilcannia had received in the whole year of 1888.

Dickens' speech yielded no fruit and when he next rose, on the night of 23 May 1889, it was to comment on a new Crown Lands Bill. His address took for granted—as the man himself did—that these far western leaseholds could be made fruitful, an idea of which he, along with his fellow Britons, would never be cured despite all the evidence about rainfall and pasture he himself presented to the House. However, if a man had to abandon his lease, 'Compensation for water improvements is a right'. If this were done, said Dickens, hundreds of men walking around the country with swags on their shoulders would find employment, apparently because new lessees would take up the improved land and make further improvements and would need labour. But if men were not able to take over abandoned leases at a fair price, 'the Government will find that they will have on their hands a lot of silted up tanks, a lot of fences tumbling down, and wells falling in.' For brave leaseholders who tried to conserve water under such conditions, compensation from the state should be automatic.

The new Land Bill, with fewer blemishes from Dickens' point of view, was passed in the Assembly on 18 December 1890 and was rushed through the Council, its speedy passage there being guided by Edward's old friend the storekeeper from Momba, W.H. Suttor, who believed it a great improvement over the previous Act.

THE GREAT RABBIT PRIZE

It was believed that the initial rabbit infestation of Australia began not with the less hardy species brought on earlier ships but with the consigning of two dozen grey European rabbits in 1859 from James Austin in Glastonbury, Somerset, to his brother Thomas Austin, a Geelong district pastoralist, who wanted to use them for hunting and eating. (His crime of folly is partly expiated by his widow's ultimately endowing the Austin Hospital in

Melbourne.) The rabbits swiftly spread to neighbouring properties, and Austin spent a considerable sum trying to exterminate them to appease outraged graziers. One of them, John Robertson of Wando Vale, spent more than £30 000 trying to wipe them out.

The rabbits reached the Murray River by 1872, and by 1884 had appeared along the Lachlan and Darling. They somehow crossed the central deserts and could be found in Western Australia by 1894, having by then also infested Queensland and South Australia. Government and private expenditures applied to hunting and poisoning having failed to diminish the population, New South Wales under the premiership of Sir Henry Parkes, now eighty-one years old and enjoying a fourth term, had decided in 1887 to offer a reward of £25 000 for the biological obliteration of the rabbit. To claim the prize devised by Parkes and Minister of Mines Francis Abigail, the saviour of pastoral Australia would need to prove the efficacy of his method to an Inter-Colonial Royal Commission on Rabbit Destruction, and the eradication process would need to operate successfully for twelve months.

The advertisement of the New South Wales prize was published in Europe, and the great French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur had it pointed out to him at a friend's dinner table. He ordered his nephew Adrien Loir, barely twenty years of age, to prepare flasks of virulent cultures of chicken cholera, cultivated in water in which beef had been boiled, to take to Australia. The Pasteur Institute was cash-poor, but Pasteur was so confident as Loir departed with two small boxes of chicken cholera flasks that he assured his bankers that Loir would soon be back with the £25 000 reward.

Accompanied by two doctors who worked at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, Loir arrived in Australia in 1888 to begin work on the issue. But he faced the immediate problem that New South Wales had passed a law forbidding the introduction of foreign microbes and that Victorian law forbade experiments by people who were not doctors. Just the same, he was able to earn some revenue for the Pasteur Institute by advising Thomas Aitken, owner of the Victoria Brewery, on developing brewing cultures for the manufacture of Victoria Bitter.

In Sydney there was a meeting between Mr Abigail and the French, from which Loir got the impression that the chicken-cholera method was being ruled out by the government. But soon Loir and the others were called to

appear before the Commission on Rabbit Destruction. The owner of Tarella Station near Wilcannia had offered his property as a testing ground.

By now Dr Archibald Watson, Professor of Anatomy at Adelaide University and a competitor for the prize, was selling rabbits infected with a fatal disease named 'rabbit scab' to South Australian farmers in the belief that, once introduced, it would kill all the other rabbits. Overall there were 1500 entries into the contest for rabbit eradication. Most of them were complicated machines for rabbit trapping. There were 115 biological submissions, of which forty-two came from the Australian colonies, six from New Zealand, and the rest from Britain and Ireland, the United States, France and from nearly every country in Europe.

The Pasteur men were treated with widespread suspicion. A suggestion was made that Pasteur's methods should be tried experimentally on an island. The young Dr Henry Allen, Professor of Medicine at Melbourne University, declared that one could not predict the direct or indirect impact of Loir's chicken-cholera cultures. There was a perception amongst the public—which the anti-Pasteur people were willing to spread—that chicken cholera was a close relative of the fatal human disease just now being defeated in the cities by sanitary engineers. Allen cited all the latest research from Germany and France to attack the French plans.

Loir and his team were sidelined into trying to find a cure, working with diseased sheep from a property in the Riverina owned by a pastoralist named Arthur Devlin. In a Sydney laboratory, Loir made cultures from the lesions on the dead sheep and tested them on mice. Loir declared that Cumberland disease was in fact anthrax. He tried it out on rabbits, which quickly died.

Despite the prejudices against them, Parkes himself was anxious to keep the Frenchmen in Australia, and ordered the construction of a research station on Rodd Island near Iron Cove in the Parramatta River for them to carry out their research projects. But Parkes' government showed no understanding of intellectual property and had the Experiment Committee of the Rabbit Commission performing the same experiments as the Pasteur team virtually as soon as Loir had reported them home. This was possible because Parkes had every telegram that came to Pasteur's representatives in Australia, and every one they sent, presented to him and made available to cabinet and the bureaucracy.

Eventually William Lyne, a Protectionist, future premier and future federal member of Parliament, who himself owned a rabbit-infested station

in the central west of New South Wales, asked Parkes in Parliament whether any communications from Pasteur to his representatives had been interfered with. Parkes admitted some early ones had been opened at the Colonial Secretary's office by mistake, but had since been let go to Loir unopened.

Loir and his Pasteur Institute colleague Dr Germont kept on carrying out animal anthrax experiments in an enclosed pasture on Yarah Station in the Riverina, near Junee. Soon 260 000 sheep were available for inoculation, and on 20 October 1888 Pasteur sent a telegram to Loir telling him to instruct the New South Wales government that a supply of the anthrax vaccine could be purchased at a cost of £100 000.

Parkes intercepted the telegram as usual, and was outraged that Pasteur was asking for a sum for anthrax eradication that was four times the amount of the rabbit eradication prize. Pasteur now complained to the British government and even the Prince of Wales, an acquaintance of his, about the interception of telegrams. A member of the Legislative Council and former *Bulletin* editor named William Traill had already attacked Parkes for the damage done to New South Wales in the international press.



In 1889 Parkes, threatened with insolvency once more and under suspicion from his followers that he was not a true Free Trade man, was the victim of defections that enabled Sir George Dibbs to become premier again. Pasteur was delighted that Parkes was gone, and in hope of a big sale posted off to Australia further tubes of anthrax. Even as he did so, the preliminary report of the Commission on Rabbit Destruction was being written on the Pasteur scientists' chicken-cholera scheme. It read, 'The Commission cannot recommend that permission be given to disseminate broadcast throughout Australasia a disease which has not been shown to exist in these colonies.'

When Loir left Australia, he took with him 250 000 French francs from the sale of cultures, but not the prize money. Pasteur told a French journalist that his representatives had 'clashed with the malevolent intentions of the Commission appointed by the Australian Government'. Parkes, yet again returned to government, engaged Loir's services once more and brought him back to Australia in 1892. Loir had convinced Pasteur to let him go ahead with the anthrax vaccination scheme. Arthur Devlin, the

Riverina pastoralist, was again a great customer of the vaccine. By the end of the year pastoralists had made the anthrax and the pleuro-pneumonia vaccine so popular that Loir was able to send back a further 700 000 francs to the Pasteur Institute.

Loir, returned to France again, achieved his doctorate with a thesis entitled 'Microbiology in Australia'. This document achieved great currency amongst scientists and was used by Pasteur to get even with the Commission on Rabbit Destruction. Loir, with his new wife, boarded the steamer *Australien* for Australia and New Caledonia. Arriving in Sydney in August 1892, he found that public opinion was starting to run in Pasteur's favour.

In this new and more genial atmosphere, Loir announced that he intended to stay in Australia permanently if he could get the right backing. The *Sydney Morning Herald* supported the idea that Pasteur should be given the prize, and Premier Sir George Dibbs, being Parkes's political enemy, was not unsympathetic. Loir was able in the meantime to go ahead with testing the vaccine of a student of Pasteur's. Professor Saturnin Arloing's black leg (anthrax) vaccine was designed to protect Australian cattle against an affliction endemic in Australia. But when Loir's thesis, now translated into English, was published in excerpts in the Australian newspapers, many colonial scientists were enraged. It was, in particular, Pasteur's own inserted commentary on colonial biological ignorance which created the most anger. Loir departed Australia for good in 1893 to run the Pasteur clinic in Tunis. Though he would never see the rabbit prize awarded, he would live until 1941, nine years shy of the introduction of the organism myxomatosis into Australia's enduring rabbit population.

IS ART POSSIBLE?

Could the Australian harshness and otherness permit poetry, and could the light and strangeness permit painting? Henry Kendall, struggling with alcoholism, former shepherd, gold commissioner on the New South Wales South Coast, and finally a New South Wales inspector of forests, was a notable Australian lyric poet at the beginning of the 1860s. Indeed his 1869 book, *Leaves from Australian Forests*, derived from his penetration of the coastal bush on horseback throughout that period. Generations of children in schools learned his gentle, celebratory and subtly nationalist 'Bell-birds'.

*Through breaks of the cedar and sycamore bowers
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers;
And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing.*

Adam Lindsay Gordon, twenty-seven in 1860 and with only another ten years to live, was no tender philosopher-poet—he was a boxer, a mounted trooper, a horse breaker and an extraordinary horseman in all ways. He too had something wayward in his soul, and in that was characteristic of a number of well-bred Britons who brought their flaws to Australia, a place that was well designed to magnify them. A graduate of the Royal Military Academy, Gordon came to Adelaide in 1853, at first serving in the police and then becoming a horse breaker and steeplechase rider. In 1862 he married Margaret Bark, a girl of seventeen. His first poem, ‘The Feud’, was published in March 1865, at a time when he was a member of the South Australian House of Assembly. He gave that up to settle on land in Western Australia but returned to South Australia, impoverished, and lived in Mount Gambier in 1867. His poems showed his classical education even in their titles, such as ‘Finis Exoptatus’ and ‘Quare Fatigasti?’.

‘I’ve had an interview with the banker,’ went his lament for broke squatters in ‘Exodus Parthenidae’,

*And I found him civil, and even kind;
But the game’s up here, we must weigh the anchor,
We’ve the surf before, and the rocks behind.*

Throughout this time he was publishing verse in the *Australian* and *Bell’s Life* in Victoria. He tried to run a livery stable at Ballarat, but again went broke. He had a bad riding accident in 1868—jumping fences and barriers in his enthusiasm for steeplechase training. His only child Annie died, and his wife left him. Yet for all this bitterness, Lindsay Gordon seemed a romantic figure. At Flemington he won three steeplechase races on one afternoon, two of them on his own horse.

In March 1870 he fell badly in a steeplechase and suffered a head injury. The day before he shot himself on the beach at Brighton in June 1870 he published his *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*.

Lindsay Gordon's death from the head injury evoked extraordinary tributes from sources as diverse as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Governor of Victoria. Oscar Wilde said he was one of the finest poetic singers the English race had ever known. 'A shining soul,' said Kendall, 'with syllables of fire who sang the first songs this land can claim to be its own.' In 1934 his bust would be placed in Westminster Cathedral to represent Australian poetry. For Australians and many Britons his poem 'Froth and Bubble' took on the moral force Kipling's 'If' would later exert.

*Life is mainly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.*

At the same time Adam Lindsay Gordon died, twenty-five-year-old immigrant Marcus Clarke was putting the last touches to the novel *His Natural Life*, which was first, in the style of the time, published in serial form and which raised the embarrassing questions of British brutality and convict endurance. In 1856 the journalist Frederick Sinnett, writing in the *Journal of Australasia*, said that it was not possible to write Australian novels because Australian life, scenery and settings were unsuitable for the purpose. Although time would prove him wrong, it was clear that many Australians, native-born and immigrant, felt the same. Immigrants and people who thought of the northern hemisphere as their true home sought their literature from that source. As they believed colonial policies coincided with that of Great Britain, so they believed should their taste in books. Thus the impact of Clarke's Australian novel on liberal-minded colonists was enormous, and though its purpose was not necessarily nationalist, it was the sort of book which gave wings to the desire for the distinctness of the native-born Australians. Sadly, Clarke would not write a corpus of novels because he died in 1881 at the age of only thirty-five, after a career first with the *Argus*, then at the Melbourne *Herald*, and finally at the *Age*.



Rolf Boldrewood (the pseudonym of Thomas A. Browne), author of *Robbery Under Arms*—which was first published in the *Sydney Mail* over late 1882 and

early 1883—enhanced the image of the bushranger as ‘iron-barked within and without’ and thus thoroughly Australian, badly used and striking back with skill. As a struggling pastoralist himself, perhaps Boldrewood’s novel was his extended daydream about getting even with banks and other forces of authority, even though he had been a gold commissioner and Gulgong magistrate. Until now heroes in novels published in magazines had been gentlemen Britons colonising Australia. The stylish rebel bushrangers of Boldrewood’s novel were emphatically Australian. The reality that the bushranger was often Irish was avoided for the sake of mainstream sympathy, and the central character was true-blue Briton hero Ben Marston.

Between 1890 and 1905 Boldrewood would write a number of other novels, short-story collections. He also helped Louis Becke, once hailed as the ‘Rudyard Kipling of the Pacific’, write and publish his famous South Sea ‘blackbirding’ stories involving the piratical Bully Hayes, with whom Becke had sailed. But *Robbery Under Arms* would earn Boldrewood/Browne an international reputation; on their journeys to Australia Mark Twain and Rider Haggard would seek him out.

Writing remained a particularly hard option for colonials and one not everyone understood. The reason for coming all this way was inevitably, and in the huge majority of cases, to acquire the wealth to justify the journey. In this atmosphere Kendall found it impossible to work full-time as a writer, and Henry Lawson, considered a prodigious success by Australian standards, earned only £700 pounds from writing in his first twelve years—far less than most labourers’ wages. In 1899 he would write, ‘My advice to any young Australian writer whose talents have been recognised would be to go steerage, stowaway, swim and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuktu.’ Failing that, he suggested, study anatomy and thus know where to shoot oneself dead accurately. From several editions of *My Brilliant Career*, Miles Franklin would earn a mere £24. That seemed to prove the point.



Painters, particularly painters from elsewhere on earth with an established reputation, brought a worldliness with them when they turned up for the Australian phase of their careers. Louis Buvelot (1814–88), born in Switzerland, served as the bridge between the colonial and the Heidelberg paintings of Tom Roberts and others. He was a painter of huge, exotic land-

scapes who arrived in Melbourne in 1865 at the age of fifty-one. Buvelot had taught at a Swiss art school near Bern after earlier spending eighteen years in Brazil, where his uncle owned a coffee plantation. He would paint Australian material for the next twenty years, concentrating on Australian light. There is a resemblance between Buvelot's paintings and those of Conrad Martens (who had sailed as artist on the famous *Beagle* and whose landscapes concentrate on Sydney Harbour) and those of the Viennese landscapist Johann von Guerard, who would paint in Australia for sixteen years. The work of these three artists was commonly accused of stressing the similarities between Australia and Europe instead of facing up to the unique demands the Australian environment made on the European sensibility, the demands which Tom Roberts and his Heidelberg School camping companions are seen as addressing.

Buvelot's paintings of cattle grazing at Templestowe and Coleraine, and also his 1869 waterpool near Coleraine, do seem European in landscape, but looked to his contemporaries like an exciting blend of northern Europe and the Antipodes. Frederick McCubbin felt that *A Summer Afternoon near Templestowe* was 'thoroughly Australian' despite the fact that it did not look anything like the bush McCubbin himself would paint. Buvelot was the Melbourne painter of his day who was most likely to be exhibited (and bought), and his work was shown at the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866.

Julian Rossi Ashton was a different sort of Australian beast. In his early twenties he had studied painting at the Académie Julian in Paris, and had his work accepted by the Royal Academy of Arts. He would ultimately move to Sydney and, through his presidency of the Art Society, establish a tradition of professional art and found his own painting school, whose students would include George Lambert, Thea Proctor, Sidney Smith and William Dobell.

Ashton, father of art in Sydney for more than half a century after he moved there in 1883, claimed in Melbourne in 1882 that he was the first Australian painter to complete a painting in the open. John Ford Paterson and John Mather, both Scots and friends of Alfred Deakin, liked the outdoors and sketched in the Healesville district and along the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay in the Heidelberg area. But it was the four major figures of the Heidelberg School—Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin, who at the end of Australia's first century were in their early thirties, and Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder, who were just twenty—whose paintings would convey

powerfully the sense of being in the bush. Ironically their adventures in the wilderness, as rich as they were in paintings, involved a journey of perhaps at most 20 kilometres from Melbourne.

DISEASE AND MORTALITY

Melbourne's weak point as it grew into a city of pretensions was the Yarra itself, apparently so poisonous in odour that no one could work near it without smoking tobacco to mask its stench. The *Bulletin* referred to Melbourne as 'Marvellous Smelbourne', for the Yarra was the Melbourne sewer into which liquid refuse from buildings, stables, factories of all kinds and urinals made their way by channels, constructed and informal, into the river. Some compared it to Port Said, and on 24 January 1889 the *Argus* quoted an observer as saying, 'I never saw a dirtier city than Melbourne, not even among the Heathen Chinese.'

In the 1880s, night cart men were cutting their working hours short by dumping the human waste they were supposed to dispose of in distant sand dunes within the city itself. Typhoid and diphtheria were thus large killers and Melbourne, in its mere sixty years of existence, had managed to achieve a level of pollution and peril to health which was more akin to the public image of Manchester than of the golden city it had been and still wanted to be. In 1889, for example, there were 910 deaths from typhoid fever in Victoria, over 550 of those in Melbourne, mainly in the typhoid season from February to May.

Adelaide and Sydney were healthier since they had each begun construction of a city-wide sewerage system. But the city authorities and the legislators of Melbourne were too busy with land shares to concentrate on installing similar schemes in the complicated urban topography. At the Intercolonial Medical Congress in January 1889, Charles Pearson, reforming Premier of Victoria, declared bitterly: 'We value so highly our constitutional rights—the rights of a man to pollute running water ... that many of us would oppose to the death any interference with ... the vested right of every Englishman to carry death into his neighbour's household.'

At last, in 1889, James Mansergh, a renowned sanitary engineer, was brought to Melbourne to consult on the idea of a deep sewerage system. He had devised a plan to supply Liverpool and Birmingham with unlimited clean water, had devised sewerage systems for a number of British cities and had been honoured

with a Fellowship of the Royal Society. Mansergh visited Melbourne for a ground survey and ordered all the survey maps the colonial and city authorities had. He was shocked by Melbourne in comparison even to the worst British cities. 'Open gutters conveying chamber slops and other foul liquids' into the Yarra and Hobsons Bay were normal, and the yards of houses were sodden with human and other wastes. He submitted a plan by which street gutters would carry only rainwater to the rivers, and all other water would be carried by pipes to land treatment plants on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Mansergh seemed to be the Empire's favourite improver of water supplies and sewerage. After the Melbourne plan he worked on the water system of Toronto and sewerage schemes for Colombo and the lower Thames Valley. There can be no doubt that his involvement in Melbourne would save the lives of thousands of the city's dwellers. 'People who had never known what it is to live unsurrounded by cesspits, privies, night-soil pails, or ill-kept earth-closets, or other of the vile appliances I saw in Melbourne, will wonder how they could have existed under such conditions,' Mansergh promised.

Through initiatives such as the Mansergh project, Australian life spans were increasing. The average life span of those attending the gold rushes was somewhere in the early thirties, lower than that of Britain. While the deaths of children dragged the average down, the squalor, poor sanitary conditions and inadequate housing of gold miners also contributed to the low figure. By the 1870s the average had improved to thirty-seven years for men and fifty for females. As for child mortality, at least the infant in the bush was protected somewhat from contagion by distance from other humans. In 1874, in the Sydney industrial suburbs of Alexandria and Waterloo, however, infant mortality was up to 46 per cent of births. Over a long period, mortality in Sydney suburbs was 50 per cent higher than amongst the same age groups in the Australian bush.

By the time Mansergh and other sanitary engineers had finished their work, and the Federationists had united Australia, Australian men could expect to live an average of fifty-five years and women fifty-eight.

Tuberculosis would still be a great curse, but tonics prescribed for it were laced with as yet unbanned opium. Every year some thousands of pounds of opium were legally imported into New South Wales, Victoria and other parts of Australia. The duties applied raised considerable revenues for the colonies. Holloway's Pills and Holloway's Ointment were laced with laudanum. The

temporary relief it gave the sick person was taken as proof of the efficacy of the patent preparations.

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE

Victoria had been transformed by new railways. The wheat farmers of the Wimmera—if they were able promptly to get a machine contractor to strip it—could send their crop to Melbourne on a train regardless of road conditions and without the high cost of road transport. In 1887 the Victorian and South Australian rail systems met up, and in 1888 New South Wales and Queensland met at Wallangarra on the border. In their own way, the railways federated Australia, despite the different widths between rails which meant trans-shipping at the border, as it would become possible for a citizen to travel from Brisbane to Adelaide by rail. Borrowing heavily from London financiers, the Victorians built 2400 kilometres of rail lines by 1885.



In the 1880s Melbourne had the character of a great city of the Empire which had transformed itself from squalid village to urban wonder in a little over thirty years. In Collins Street, around the Italianate Stock Exchange, the worldly top hat and morning suit were *de rigueur*. The Crimean shirts and clay-streaked pants of the 1850s were but a memory. Collins Street was the epicentre of fortune, and the privileged of the city considered the colonial legislature up the road, nearly every member of which was a director and investor in the banks and building societies of the city, as a mechanism for making easier still the inflation of bank shares and property prices.

For Victoria had no limit. The decade had begun with the triumph of the International Exhibition of 1880, for which the Exhibition Building was erected, and to which the world came. It showed up the less-than-brilliant Sydney Exhibition of 1870 by having the whole world of new technology and merchandise on display, and was followed by a further exhibition in 1888, this one astonishingly lit by its own electric generating plant. There were visitors from other states and the Victorian countryside who had had their first exposure to that new, intense, electric beam in the Exhibition Building in Melbourne.

James Munro, Presbyterian, Scottish-born temperance leader, the man whose acumen drove the exhibition of 1880, a cabinet minister and premier

(1890–92), had founded in the 1860s the Victoria Permanent Property Investment Building Society. With the funds in hand he developed entire regions of the city. By 1882 he also founded the Federal Bank and the Federal Building Society and, to bolster them when his personal withdrawals or outside investments made them unstable, the Real Estate Mortgage and Deposit Bank, shares in which were sold to bolster the concealed losses of his other companies. The brilliant young lawyer and legislator Alfred Deakin was himself a director of a building society, though he did not play the games Munro played with his institution, lending investors' and depositors' money to relatives and friends on the loosest possible terms, in the expectation that endlessly inflating land prices would, like a rising tide, cover all sins. James Munro had, on the strength of his financial companies, acquired great pastoral stations and leaseholds in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. The Munro of the 1880s was not a born criminal. The times made him. Escalating wealth unhinged him. On the floor of the House he was a political progressive. He sought female suffrage because he believed that women voters would support temperance legislation. In the pro-pub electorate of Carlton he had been denied a hall in which to address electors, and so built his own. He also built a number of what were called 'coffee palaces'—hotels which had considerable grandeur and comfort but which did not serve liquor. The Windsor, a famous Melbourne hotel, began its career as the Grand Coffee Palace.

In the 1880s banks and financial institutions like Munro's mushroomed up. What the building societies did was to finance 'spec' builders who ran up thousands of cottages in the inner suburbs. David Mitchell, the father of Nellie Melba, was building the mammoth Equitable Insurance Building at the corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets. The new hydraulic lifts made the building of such larger offices possible. As well as creating suburbs, David Munro was building bridges across the Yarra. There was no overestimating the impact of the telegraph on the works of Munro and others—now the Australian colonies knew what was happening in London virtually on the day it happened, and so did London investors see each day at rising what a gold mine Melbourne was, whether in bank stocks or in real estate.

The boom 1880s were an era of great stability in Victoria. Duncan Gillies and Alfred Deakin had formed a coalition which united liberal factions and brought in a long phase of political stability as well. This government would

not fall until November 1890, when the collapse of shares and property prices exposed the scale of what they had been borrowing from British investors for public work, including roads and sewerage and railways. These borrowings had certainly helped their friends and associates down in Collins Street, and also created the modern network of rail that made it immensely easier for wheat growers to get their produce to market and thus help the good times roll along in the bush as well as in the city. The writer of a private book of prayers, Alfred Deakin was himself a modest presence at the table of Mammon, director of a building society, an investor of his own and his father's money in a range of societies and banks run by fine temperance men. He, however, possessed a genuine spirituality and sought no more than affluence. It was Victoria's unlimited future which was his drug. Like thousands more, he lost his own investments and—more scarifying to his conscience—his father's as well.

THE LAST COLONIAL DECADE



THE WAY THE MONEY GOES

James Munro had been leader of the Opposition for some time when the long rule of the railway-building Berry–Deakin ministry ended, making him premier and treasurer in November 1890. There were some problems with his banks and financial institutions, along with those of other folk, but no one believed the 1880s boom was not only about to end but to implode. There had been industrial unrest—the Maritime Union strike of 1890 had brought other unions into a savage class battle—but by the time Munro came to power in November 1890 the unions were beginning to run out of funds.

Along with Victoria's collapsing fortunes, however, Munro's own apparently unassailable fortune began to evaporate. Almost instantaneously shares worth pounds descended to the price of a few pence, bewildering and impoverishing many middle-class families and hurling the mighty down from their thrones. Amongst those was Munro. After a year of trouble, a Voluntary Liquidation Act was passed on 3 December 1891 with the supposed aim of stopping mischievous speculators from forcing companies into compulsory liquidation against the will of the majority of shareholders. But above all, it prevented small shareholders from making any inquiry into a company's affairs, and enabled the companies to wind up their affairs privately, by 'secret compositions', often by paying their shareholders and depositors one penny

in the pound. (There were, by the way, 240 pennies to a pound.) That is, the fortunes of many people, including the modestly affluent, were reduced to about 0.4 per cent of what they had been worth a few months before.

Munro did not initiate this legislation but he agreed to it, and his Federal Building Society and Real Estate Mortgage and Deposit Bank availed themselves of it very quickly. Munro, pursued down Collins and Bourke streets by shareholders wondering where their money had gone, or abusing him for the declining value of shares, was pleased to hand over the reins of government to his deputy, William Shiels, and to plan to go to London to replace Sir Graham Berry as agent-general. There was a huge public protest at the appointment, and the *Age* and the magazine *Table Talk* lambasted him. He was called back from London by an embarrassed government. Sixty-one years of age, he was walking along Collins Street as a private citizen reduced in rank and wealth when a labourer named George Davis accosted him and shouted that investment in Munro's Real Estate Bank had cost him all his money, reduced him to the status of labourer, and left him with 'nothing but the Yarra'. That being so, he thought that he might as well kill Munro and go to the scaffold instead. He stopped short of murder but was charged with assault. He was fined £5, but the magistrate hearing the case said that it was remarkable, given the times the city had endured, that the citizens had behaved with such admirable composure.



Sir Matthew Davies, born in Geelong in 1850, was Minister of Justice in James Munro's cabinet from November 1890 to February 1892 and was largely responsible for the Voluntary Liquidation Act which allowed those 'secret compositions', that is, the winding up of banks and building societies without the principals ever having to face their creditors. Davies was lawyer to many of the so-called 'land boomers', the men whose companies attracted the citizens of Victoria and the other colonies and of Britain to invest in ever-inflating Victorian real estate. Davies himself began speculating in land, forming his first land company in 1882, buying and selling real estate on the basis of investment from the public. By 1887 he owned a network of about forty companies. Spacious in his gifts to charity, Davies lived in a splendid Toorak mansion.

The great crisis for Davies came in 1892 when his Mercantile Bank declared an 8 per cent dividend for its shareholders in February but then

suddenly suspended payment of it in March. He was forced to resign from Parliament in April. In January 1893 he was committed to trial for fraud for issuing a false balance sheet. The young, aggressive solicitor-general, Isaac Isaacs, Federationist son of a Yackandandah draper, meant to get him. Davies fled Australia before he could be arrested, but a Victorian detective followed on a later ship and arrested him in Colombo.

At his fraud trial in Melbourne, he was acquitted but forced to file his schedule in bankruptcy in 1894. All his companies collapsed and were wound up, and a then fabulous sum of £4 million invested by others was lost. To shareholders and other creditors he was permitted under his own pernicious legislation to pay one quarter of a penny in the pound of what they had invested. Losses of this nature, and accusations of fraud, were by then so common in Melbourne that his personal shame was diluted, and he would stand for Parliament again—though unsuccessfully—and still manage to be elected Deputy Grandmaster of Freemasons. He was also permitted to go on practising law.

A CHANGED WORLD

Striking shearers had gathered in Wilcannia in 1890, turning the world of jointly shared pastoral endeavour into a conflict. Their activism was not lost on Edward 'Plorn' Dickens, but he was on the government's side. 'Any demonstration made by the government,' said Plorn, concerning the intervention of police troopers, 'has not been made against trade unionism. The government have simply done their duty in protecting society against these ruffians and blackguards who always rise to the surface during a time of popular excitement.' However, he said, with somewhat more wisdom, Parliament should not pass hasty repressive legislation. 'In the excited state of public feeling the people are hardly fit to record their votes without temper or prejudice.'

A new force had entered the field, derived from Labor Leagues set up throughout Australia. For the election of June 1891 the New South Wales Labor Party for the first time nominated candidates and selected J.H. Cann against the sitting member for Sturt, which included Broken Hill. Labor won the seat. But in Wilcannia the popular Plorn was returned unopposed.

The Amalgamated Miners' Association created by William Guthrie Spence in 1878 was strong in Broken Hill. A handsome, driven and charismatic young

union leader, Richard Sleath, had risen to the presidency of the organisation before the age of twenty-three. He had succeeded in making the Broken Hill Proprietary Company accept a 'union shop'. He sat on a board of inquiry into lead poisoning of miners working the BHP silver-lead deposits.

By 1892 he was speaking in favour of nationalisation of the mines, and came into collision with BHP management, who—because of the collapse in world mineral prices—were devoted now to reducing wages and introducing individual contracts with workers. In June 1892 they told Sleath that they would not be paying the miners a flat wage but would vary it according to the ore they mined. The 'Big Strike' of July 1892 lasted eighteen weeks and brought Sleath frequently to the rostrum throughout Broken Hill, and the miners felt a communal power in his presence—a sense of power which grew dimmer, however, the hungrier their children got. He spoke ferociously about mining conditions at the BHP shareholders' meeting in Melbourne. When the company brought in non-union labour from Sydney and Melbourne, there were battles between the police and the union men, and Sleath counselled good order, though he was quoted by the *Herald* as saying that perhaps 'all the men should be armed and drilled'.

In September 1892 he was arrested with four others for supposedly inciting violence. The five men were committed to trial by a Broken Hill magistrate with the trial to take place in Deniliquin in the Riverina. They had to travel there via Adelaide and Melbourne, and were warmly welcomed by unionists in those cities. The trial in Deniliquin lasted five days and a guilty verdict was handed down. Sleath was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

The strike wavered and collapsed for want of funds to support the miners. But when Sleath returned as hero-martyr to Broken Hill he was greeted at the Sulphide Street Railway Station by up to 2000 men, women and children. Sleath and other released miners were taken in drays drawn by miners to the Theatre Royal Hotel for breakfast. Wages had fallen by 10 per cent, and the working week had been increased, but the thousands of Barrier miners dreamed of sending Sleath to Macquarie Street. Labour could not win a strike, but Labor members could win elections. A month after his release from prison, Sleath had given a speech in Wilcannia on 'Land and Labour', and was cheered by the audience.

During the 1892 strike, Plorn Dickens had visited Broken Hill on his way to Sydney for a sitting of Parliament and seen the silent mines. When

George Reid, a fleshy whimsical Free Trader, moved a motion to censure the strikers, Plorn told the House he had never seen men better behaved than the unionists on picket duty. Nor had he seen any aggressive police acts, he said. He praised his colleague, J.H. Cann, the Labour Member of Parliament for Bourke, and said that Cann had done as much as he could to settle 'this unfortunate dispute'. Plorn appealed to members to put nation before party interests and vote down the motion. The motion was indeed defeated.

But after a boundary distribution, the west was now suddenly full of Labor candidates ready to tap into the anger over the failure of the miners' strike in Broken Hill. In 1894 Cann was to be the candidate for Broken Hill, and Sleath was selected to oppose the relatively easy target, Plorn Dickens. By 1894 several Wilcannia banks had suspended payments for the duration of the financial crisis, and citizens had at various times found themselves without ready cash for simple household needs. A number of municipal employees had been sacked, and were ripe for change. So were the shearers. On one station the manager had had to send for the police to keep the peace between those willing to work for the cut rate of 25 shillings a week and those who refused to take less than 30 shillings. Because of his genial and sympathetic attitudes, Plorn was given a warm welcome by the workers at that and other stations. But he did not have a vision of organised fraternity to present.

When Parliament recessed for a new election in early 1894, a committee was formed in Wilcannia for Dickens' re-election. In the meantime Sleath was speaking in the mining towns of White Cliffs and Tibooburra. He and Dickens coincided in their belief that there should be no further influx of 'Asiatics', and both candidates urged the extension of the telegraph to the remote communities. They both also advocated locks along the Darling to keep its length navigable.

The *Miner* turned Plorn's own arguments against him, as if only Labor folk thought of the issues of the region. Broken Hill was caught between the 'inter-colonial cut-throatism' of South Australia and New South Wales, with South Australia regulating her railway tariff so as to make it cheaper for the mining companies to ship to Adelaide. 'Broken Hill people suffer both ways. It is they who have to pay Customs duty if they buy South Australian goods, and it is they who have to pay carriage for the long journey by sea and land if they buy Sydney side stuff.' There were no inducements and no reduction in costs from New South Wales—a cry Plorn had also raised in Macquarie

Street. Many, though not all, remotely placed people in Australia looked, like Plorn, to Federation, for it would bring free trade between the colonies.

The *Barrier Miner* concluded before the election between glamorous young Sleath and plodding Dickens that 'labour can be transferred so rapidly from one place to another and the prosperity of one colony means prosperity to the labourers of another colony. West Australia's prosperity improves the position of workers in New South Wales. The Labor party is therefore the only true Federal party.'

At a meeting at White Cliffs, the voters passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in Dickens and ended by giving three cheers for Sleath. When Dickens rode out across desert to speak at Tibooburra, a motion was carried in the hall that he was 'not a fit and proper person to represent the electors of Wilcannia'. In June 1894 the *Barrier Miner* revived the old slur that 'the most interesting thing about you is that you are the son of Charles Dickens ... If the theory is true, we ought not blame children born late in their parents' life if they do not attain the brilliance of these parents at their best.' It then estimated the size of Plorn's inheritance from his immortal parent and drew the conclusion that he had squandered it.

After the election, final figures were not known for a week, but it became apparent that the militant Sleath had won against the merely liberal Plorn with a majority of over 60 per cent. George Reid's Free Trade Party had won half the seats and would have to go into a coalition with Labor's twenty-three members, these including, as well as Sleath, the Balmain shopkeeper and future prime minister Billy Hughes.

Sleath's career in the Labor Party would prove turbulent. He would hold the seat until 1904 but would end by standing as an independent, since he was not amenable to party discipline.

TRANSPORTED GENTLEMEN DECLINE

Plorn was left to seek appointments from old parliamentary friends. On 20 September 1895 the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, J.P. Abbott, wrote that he was sure that a certain appointment would be made to Edward Dickens. It does not seem, however, that it was.

Meanwhile, possibly in the hope of finding mineral deposits, Plorn was becoming interested in the geology of the west. A mineral destiny, like the pastoral one, flickered on Plorn's horizon, as it did for so many colonials,

and then died. By May 1897 Plorn, back in Sydney, wrote again to Abbott asking for his help in securing a post. Abbott replied that he was bombarded with such requests and hoped that Edward's wishes regarding employment in Western Australia would come to fruition. The job he sought was that of Secretary to the Department of Aborigines in Western Australia. He asked G.K. Rusden, 'my oldest friend in Australia', to recommend him to Sir John Forrest, Premier of Western Australia and legendary explorer. Plorn told Rusden, mentioning the other race for the first time visible in the record of his life, that in his years on the Darling 'I saw a great deal of the Darks, and in fact took a great interest in them.' Edward did not get the job.

It would be June 1900 before he was given an appointment as an inspector in the Moree Land District, around the Gwydir River. The job involved visiting properties purchased under the new Land Act of 1895 to see that the contracts of occupation were being kept. If Connie joined him in Moree, where he lodged at the Criterion Hotel, she did not stay long but went to reside with her mother in Adelaide. Obligated to travel long distances on horseback over rough country roads, in the early days of Federation Plorn's health declined. His drinking became heavy. The landlady of the Criterion Hotel, Mrs E.C. Everingham, was a kindly woman who let Edward owe her rent.

Henry and Kitty in England heard of their brother's illness and sent him £100, which did not arrive until after his death on 23 January 1902. He died, said the doctors, of 'acute phthisis exhaustion' during a very severe summer where the night-time temperature did not fall below 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius) and the daytime temperatures were 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius) or more. One of Edward's other friends in Moree was a Methodist clergyman, the Reverend F.W. Hynes, who conducted the burial service in the Methodist portion of the Moree cemetery. So ended Plorn's attempt to come to terms with Australia.



Alfred Dickens had continued to manage E.B.L. Dickens and Company in Melbourne in the 1880s, but like other Victorians seems to have invested in the land bubble. In 1888 he married again, a young woman named Emily Riley. A year after Alfred and Emily moved to Hawthorn, the depression struck and Alfred was so short of money that he remembered a reading of his father's works that he had performed in Hamilton in the Western District

ten years before. He decided to take to the road lecturing on his father's life, and performing readings of his work. His first Melbourne lecture, addressed to the Bankers' Institute, was a triumph. He next played at the beautiful Athenaeum Hall in Melbourne, then went on to Geelong, Ballarat and Sydney.

The firm of J. & N. Tait, theatrical producers of Melbourne, would much later organise tours of the United Kingdom and America. Alfred was glad to go, in part because of his unhappy relationship with his new wife. According to his American producer, he never mentioned her, though he often spoke of his first wife and his children. In 1910 he toured the English counties for three months, including in his program two lectures in London. He then rested before sailing for America. He was now over sixty-five years old and the tour of sixty-six lectures must have exhausted him, even though he received warm receptions everywhere. Agents received invitations for him to return to nearly every town in which he had given his lectures and readings.

He returned to Melbourne somewhat more affluent than he had left it. Soon after arriving in England again he told a journalist that Australia was a magnificent country with 'a fine future for an immigrant with little means'. He said that the advance of socialism in Australia would never destroy the imperial and British spirit there.

Alfred left England for America in the autumn of 1911 in a weakened state. He lectured in New York, St Louis and elsewhere. Lectures continued to exhaust him, though he sometimes received over \$1000 for a single lecture. In New York on 30 December 1911, staying at the famous Astor, he felt particularly ill and collapsed in the hotel lobby. He cancelled that night's lecture, and died that afternoon in his hotel room. On 6 January 1912 his body was buried at renowned Trinity Church in lower New York.

WHAT THE *BULLETIN* DID

Established in 1880, the *Bulletin* found itself of a mind to exploit the disunion, uncertainty and class mistrust of the 1890s. John Archibald (a Victorian by birth who sometimes went by the name Jules François Archibald) saw his magazine, which he founded with an older journalist, John Haynes, as a means of focusing a new nationalism—radical, populist, republican, contemptuous of supposed nobility and pretension, anti-Semitic yet at the same time opposed to the sectarianism between Catholic and Protestant. Archibald had had an important experience on the Palmer goldfields in

Queensland, and believed he had found in the miners there, in their ruggedness, humour and their abomination of Asiatics, the essential and admirable Australian. Thus, though he and Haynes had spent most of their lives in the city, the *Bulletin* was called 'the Bushman's Bible', appealing to the mining prospector, the drover, the shearer, the self-educated, robust, new species. The Australian.

Ballads had been sung in the Australian past to combat the immensity and silences of the Australian interior. So ballads played a large part in the life of the *Bulletin*. In some ways the *Bulletin* celebrated a world already passing, at least closer in to the cities and wherever the railway reached. 'Those golden days are vanished', Henry Lawson grieved in the *Bulletin's* pages,

*And altered is the scene;
The diggings are deserted,
The camping grounds are green;
The flaunting flag of progress
Is in the west unfurled,
The mighty bush with iron rails is tethered to the world.*

But beyond the railways and the good roads lay the Australia the *Bulletin* sought to honour and set up as a template of the national soul. So did its readers and contributors, from John Farrell, another journalist friend of Archibald's who wrote the mocking, nationalist 'Australia to England', to the gentleman stockman Barcroft Boake, very much an Adam Lindsay Gordon sort of man, and Lawson and Paterson.

Paterson and Lawson are themselves interesting contrasts. Paterson was a Sydney solicitor who wrote ballads of the bush. He was the son of a pastoral manager, but as an adult was an urbane city dweller of a democratic temper. He was educated at Sydney Grammar School and the University of Sydney, yet began his education in a bush school at Binalong amongst the children of shearers and selectors. As a young balladist he used the name Banjo, after a family racehorse, and one of his own enthusiasms remained thoroughbred horses. He frequently rode them as an amateur jockey at Randwick and Rosehill racetracks in Sydney. The politics some people read into 'Waltzing Matilda'—itinerant swagman against landed capitalist—was entirely unintended by Paterson. 'The Man From Snowy River' has no

politics. Paterson personally expected justice from the station owner, who should be a man who worked with his shearers, paid high wages and was sympathetic to unionised labour.

Henry Lawson wrote of the city, but as a bitter place, and the bush as a test for the soul and an arena of struggle and quest for justice. His father, Niels Hertzberg Larsen, native of the Norwegian island of Tremoy, had jumped ship in Melbourne to go gold seeking. His son Henry Lawson, born in 1867 in a tent on the goldfields at Grenfell, and taken at four by his questing Norwegian father and tough young Australian-born mother to the Gulgong rush, mourned for and mythologised the old goldfields, squalor and all, even though—or perhaps because—he could barely remember them.

*Oh who would paint a goldfield,
And limn the picture right,
As we have often seen it
In early morning's light;
The yellow mounds of mullock
With spots of red and white,
The scattered quartz that glistened,
Like diamonds in the light;
The azure line of ridges,
The bush of darkest green,
The little homes of calico
That dotted all the scene.*

By the time Lawson was six, his father had given up looking for gold and had selected 40 acres near Gulgong. Lawson never found the selector's life romantic. He was a proletarian, one in heart with the itinerant shearer or agricultural worker, the drover and the doomed, scrabbling selector of the kind his father had been. But he also pitied the city working class, what he called 'the armies of the rear', because when not haplessly itinerant in the bush, he became one of them. He lived a harsh life from 1867 to 1922, and though many thought him a balladist beyond compare, he wrote for sixpence a line, so that his quality came and went with his thirst. His verses at their best were also a cry to anger and action in the white dispossessed of the cities who were required in their poverty to listen to city fathers blather

on about the classlessness, the equality and prosperity of Australia. 'They lie, the men who tell us, for reasons of their own, That want is here a stranger, and that misery's unknown.'

Working men and women thrilled to such verses as:

*That the curse of class distinctions from our shoulders shall be hurled.
An' the sense of Human Kinship revolutionise the world;
There'll be higher education for the toilin-starvin clown
An' the rich an' educated shall be educated down.*

This vengefulness sprang directly from Lawson's heart, for he had been a put-upon and ill-paid worker, had suffered social contempt for his drunkenness and his unsatisfactory performance as an employee and, above all, had suffered poverty.

Lawson, like his mother Louisa, was a republican too.

*The Queen has lived for seventy years, for seventy years and three;
And few have lived a flatter life, more useless life than she;
She never said a clever thing or wrote a clever line,
She never did a noble deed, in coming times to shine;
And yet we read, and still we read, in every magazine,
The praises of that woman whom the English call 'The Queen'.*

Far different in tenor and politics from Lawson was John O'Brien (Monsignor Patrick Hartigan, parish priest of Narranderra). In 1906 he would do for Irish Catholics what Paterson did for the community at large—he depicted the Irish-born or first-generation Irish cockie in all his contradictoriness, his amusing if excusable ignorance, and his capacity to endure. The famous Hanrahan, who complained in drought or flood that 'we'll all be rooned', was his creation, as was the bush kid of Irish parentage who could not tell a visiting bishop the importance of Christmas but suddenly remembered, 'It's the day before the races out at Tangmalangmaroo.'

In fiction the *Bulletin* wanted a terse style. 'Grit not gush' was Archibald's motto—it was certainly the attitude of literary editor A.G. Stephens, a Queensland journalist who, during his stint at the *Bulletin* up to 1906, was the comptroller of the magazine's literary taste—with a dazzling record in

that role. Other writers Stephens published included Edward Dyson, Ernest Favenc, E.J. Brady and Price Warung. Price Warung, whose real name was William Astley, did the *Bulletin* the service of depicting the convict days in a way that justified contempt for the British and provided ammunition for the supposedly coming republic. Louis Becke's tales of blackbirding in the South Seas appeared there too.

In this atmosphere A.G. Stephens published a literary phenomenon, a good-natured book as strong as Lawson in its respect for the unlanded, the despised. It was *Such is Life*, written under the pseudonym Tom Collins by Joseph Furphy. In its gritty, eloquent bush discourses all human questions, including free will and predestination, class and democracy, are canvassed. It concerns itself with 'the art of riding horses and the art of swapping them, the modes of spinning yarns and of telling whoppers, the varied crafts of the bushman and the formidable mnemonic power which they demand, the reticent loyalties of mate and dog, the eccentricities of bush-scholarship, the curiosities of bush-etiquette, and the firm pattern of bush-ethics'.

Joseph Furphy had been a drought-struck selector from the Riverina area of New South Wales who, finding the terms of Australian agriculture had defeated him, had to walk away from his farm. He became a bullock driver, but was a non-swearing practitioner of temperance. The drought of 1883 destroyed even the bullock-driving career. During the depression of the 1890s, he worked in his brother's ironworks at Shepparton in Victoria, and had a little shed in which he read devoutly and prepared to write a book in which the ordinarily despised bullockies and swagmen would be depicted as possessing a certain voice, rough and democratic, the voice of the humble of the earth waiting to be exalted and worthy of it, while the finance men who had seized their marginal land from them were creatures of the devil.

At the head of his book Furphy promised that his rambling tale would be in 'Temper, democratic; bias, offensively Australian'. The bush made living a crude and rough existence. But the novel worked against the idea that the bush made utterly brutal, unthinking men. 'Yet he has thoughts that glow, and words that burn, albeit with such sulphurous fumes that, when uttered in a public place, they frequently render him liable to fourteen days [imprisonment] without the option. Yet this futureless person is the man who pioneers all industries ... whose heavy footprints mark the waterless mulga, the wind-swept plains, and the scorching sand.'

Tom Collins, as he called himself for the purposes of publication, finished his book in March 1897, sent it to Alfred George Stephens of the *Bulletin*, and had it published in 1903 by that magazine. *Such is Life* was not successful in its day, and Furphy, retiring from work, took his wife and sons and went and lived in Western Australia, where he died in September 1912.



Miles Franklin, who at the age of sixteen wrote *My Brilliant Career* (1901), and Steele Rudd were others published by Stephens. Bernard O'Dowd, born in Melbourne in 1866, brought his powerful intellect and gifts to lay on the altar of the *Bulletin* tradition. For most of his life he was a Supreme Court librarian and parliamentary draftsman. Having renounced the Catholicism of his childhood, he was a socialist and founder of the left-wing magazine *Tocsin*. To him Australia was 'the whole world's legatee', inheritor of the best aspects of humankind and its institutions, and rejecter of the worst. In other words, Australia was the last chance of humanity.

*She is the scroll on which we are to write
Mythologies our own and epics new.*

O'Dowd and the young Christopher Brennan in Sydney were the first poets of serious ideas. Brennan was only thirty when he wrote his great inconclusive poem 'The Wanderer'. It was influenced not by shearers but by the French imagists as filtered by a young man with a classical education. All he shared with Lawson was a tragic thirst for liquor.

O'Dowd was Alfred Deakin's favourite and one can see why: he thought that the poet's work was central to society, in that it should deal with politics, religion, science and reform in general. There was a need for 'the permeator poet, the projector of ideals, the poet militant ... in this virgin and unhandicapped land of social experiments, embryonic democracy, and the Coming Race, Australia!'

His vision of a utopia, if not his belief in the central nature of poetry, was a very strong and common one amongst the Australians of his era. Every issue, from Federation to the unionism of shearers or seamen to the Empire and Boer War to suspicion of Jews and the abomination of Asians to the whimsy, misery or grandeur of the bush kept the pages of the *Bulletin* flowing with verse.

FEDERATION, PROTECTION, DESTINY

It seems to the reader of nineteenth-century Australian politics that Free Trade and Protection, though seriously divided camps, were often flags of convenience for politicians. No more principled shift from one to the other was the case of the young lawyer-journalist Alfred Deakin. Deakin had made friends with the powerful but reclusive David Syme, editor of the *Age*, a liberal progressive like himself and a Protectionist, that is, one who chose to design society by making foreign exports too expensive to compete with local factories, whose owners in turn nurtured a sane society by paying appropriate wages.

Syme brought him from Free Trade to Protection by holding out the concept that Deakin could do more to design society by Protection than Free Trade would permit him to do. It did happen that the Free Trade faction was always in the minority in Victoria and that to continue a Free Trader would have cramped his path in politics. Yet Deakin was genuinely pure-spirited enough to have a conversion like that of St Paul.

Federation became his other major dogma. Along with Parkes and others, Deakin was one of those who tried to drive it. One of the few groups actively engaged in Federation in the early 1880s was the Australian Natives Association, a largely Victorian group of Australian-born, founded in 1871, largely from the children of the post-gold rush generation, many of them born in the canvas towns of Melbourne or the goldfields. Deakin was a member of the Prahran branch of the ANA.

In the matter of Federation, he was also influenced and was to an extent a follower of Premier James Service, another of those thoughtful but deft Scots who was a Free Trader but, unlike most free traders, a liberal. When Sydney and Melbourne were linked by train in 1883, Service said: 'I decline to subscribe to the doctrine that I am to die before the grand Federation of the Australian colonies.' (Sadly, he would die in 1899.)

In 1883, the Queensland–German New Guinea crisis had occurred. In an attempt to prevent German expansion in the Pacific, the minute naval force at Queensland's disposal was sent by Premier McIlwraith to seize the southern half of Eastern New Guinea. Side by side with genuine concern that Australia and Britain were being trumped was a desire to keep for Queensland the trade across the Torres Strait and to blackbird in New Guinea if they wished. When, before ranks of sailors and a crowd of bemused natives, the new colony was

proclaimed in Port Moresby, Britain was embarrassed. It chastised Queensland for its presumption. It would, in fact, formally take over the area and its adjoining islands a year later, once it had cleared the business with its friend Bismarck, the German chancellor. But in the meantime there was a feeling in the Australian colonies that their interests in the Pacific were being betrayed by Whitehall. Service suggested a Convention of Colonies to consider the possibility of some form of federal action on both New Guinea and the future of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). 'Federation and all the islands,' he had cried. The convention met in Sydney in December 1883, and a Federal Council was created, a small body made up of two politicians (later four) from each of the colonies to frame laws on a few matters of common interest. But the New South Wales delegation refused to join the council because many thought it a Victorian plot to impose Victorian-style protectionist laws on them. Even Parkes, who had earlier suggested a similar council, now said it would delay Federation. He wanted faster, more definite action.

But in the meantime there was already extant the question that would bedevil all Australian politics for another half-century or more—to what extent was Australian policy to be a mere echo of imperial policy? It is sometimes believed that Australians did not push independence in this area until the fall of Singapore in 1942. But already in Deakin's young manhood, the colonials wanted in many areas to live by their own policies. And one of the problems would always be that the British, from Salisbury to Churchill, could never understand why they just didn't go along with the Empire.

In 1886, the British Colonial Secretary was Lord Stanhope, a man interested in saving imperial expense by encouraging the Australian colonies to federate (particularly on defence) and create a centre for their own combined strength. He called an Imperial Conference for the coming year, and Deakin, the young native-born Liberal leader in a Coalition in which he served as Chief Secretary, was nominated as the leader of the Victorian delegation. When appointed, his wife, Pattie Brown, had recently given birth to a second daughter, and their house in Walsh Street, South Yarra was being built. Despite all, he must go.

The conference met from 4 April to 9 May in 1887 in Whitehall. Other delegates were Samuel Griffith from Queensland and John Forrest of Western Australia, who had travelled on the same ship as Deakin and had discussed their own feelings on issues including Federation. The Victorian

delegation was backed by Graham Berry, retired Victorian statesman and agent-general in London.

The 1887 conference was opened under Stanhope's successor Sir Henry Holland, who invited Tory Prime Minister Salisbury to attend. The occasion provided, said Sir Henry, with a touch too much of the schoolmaster, 'a good opportunity of mixing a little wholesome bitter with the sweet, by pointing out that cases must arise in which strict colonial views clashed with the necessities of imperial policy, and that in such cases, H.M. Government, with every desire to uphold colonial interests, have a right to expect concession from the Colonial Governments'.

On 26 April Prime Minister Salisbury made a speech which was particularly aimed at the Australian colonies and provoked a hostile response from them. The speech told the Australians not to try to interfere with imperial intentions for the Pacific. At one stage during the conference, he thought the colonists 'the most unreasonable people I have ever heard or dreamt of'.

Deakin himself disagreed that 'for reasons of imperial policy' a colony had to sacrifice its aims. But for colonial politicians the trap was always baited with honey, and Deakin was treated, like the others, to dinners and visits to country houses—that is, he went through the process of being 'duchessed', as Australians called seduction by the British establishment. He was immune to it. He was offered a knighthood but refused. In his own time he ran off to Edinburgh and heard Annie Besant speak on Theosophism, saw Oxford and Cambridge and visited the graves of his grandfather and grandmother in Witney in Oxfordshire.

Far from being overawed, Deakin's opening speech was the antithesis of Salisbury's. He said he intended to raise matters that challenged imperial policy, including the presence of French convicts in the Pacific. The wishes of colonial people, he said, no matter how many thousands of miles away from Westminster, should move the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office and 'that mysterious entity, the Cabinet'. In that way there would be no difference between colonial and imperial interests—Australian interests in the Pacific islands should, he implied, also compel the interest of the imperial government in the exact same way, not in a different way.

The Earl of Onslow, undersecretary to Holland, remembered later that on one side of the table were the rulers of England, and on the other the representatives of the colonies, 'grave and reverend signors' who delivered

themselves of many platitudes, in excellent language—particularly in regard to loyalty to the Empire. ‘But Deakin was different. He told us at once what Australia thought of England. He said that when he took up the paper [at home] he learned that Mr Gladstone had a cold, or Lord Salisbury the gout—but when he took up the ... papers in England he could find nothing from Australia except that one man had won a sculling race, or a pugilist had beaten another.’ He complained with total frankness about how the British had given the islands of the Pacific to the French, and Samoa to the Germans, and ‘he told it with such bonhomie that we could not help realising that we had before us a real live man’.

It is said that in secret session Salisbury, prime minister and foreign secretary at the same time, chastised the Australian delegations for their anxiety about French designs on the New Hebrides, and declared that France might be allowed to annex them, and if so, the Australians should accept it. The New Hebrides were far from Australia he said, and if France could not be dissuaded from occupying the islands, Britain could not go to war over it. Therefore the colonials should let Salisbury do a deal: if the French would agree not to introduce convict transportation to the New Hebrides, they could have the islands in return. This was a settlement the French had already offered Salisbury, and Salisbury thought it a jolly fair thing. According to Deakin there was humble acquiescence by one New South Wales delegate and implied acceptance by Griffith of Queensland, but Berry and Service, the Victorians, both spoke out. Deakin himself followed with an angry, passionate and rational rejection of every point.

Though no transcript exists, we know that Deakin and others raised the matter of Scottish Presbyterian missionaries in Vanuatu who had appealed to the Victorians in particular for help in the face of a French occupation. The Australians believed too that France could be a potential enemy in the Pacific. Already French colonists and British colonists, or more exactly Scottish Presbyterian colonists, were locked in a battle to get their home governments to settle the issue. And now, in 1887 in London, it was largely settled by Deakin’s vehemence. The Foreign Office was at least edgy if not angry that the Australians wanted them to frighten the French, a valued neighbour, over obscure little islands which men in Whitehall and at Westminster had never seen before, were never going to, and might even be hard put to find on a map. But as a result of Deakin’s protests official instructions were given to

the British Ambassador in Paris to say that no concessions would be given to the French in regard to their taking over the New Hebrides.

The most significant decision arising from the conference was the recognition by Salisbury and his cabinet that on Britain's behalf the Australians should take responsibility for administering British New Guinea, the south-eastern coast of that huge island, along with the whole of vast New Britain, now Rabaul.

In other matters, the British also wanted financial contributions from the colonies to the Admiralty for their naval defence. The Admiralty would provide an auxiliary squadron of cruisers and torpedo boats for the Australian station in return for a payment by the colonies towards maintenance and the interest on the cost.

Deakin would come back from the colonial meeting in London a definite promoter of Federation, chiefly because he had been appalled at the timidity and disunity of the various Australian colonial delegates. They went to London without any preparedness to speak with one voice. If disputes were ever to arise between Australia and Great Britain, they would be much more quickly settled and in accordance with the approval of the people 'when we are united in voice and in aim, if our representations went home [to Great Britain] backed out by the high authority of a Federal Parliament and a Federal Government'.



Parkes would suggest that what further sparked him to campaign for Federation in the late 1880s and early 1890s was the report of Major General Sir James Edwards, a British officer who made a tour of inspection of Australian defences and fortifications and argued that the Australian colonies could create a basis of defence only if the colonies agreed to a federal system to organise it. But in a visit to Melbourne in 1889, down the railway line to Albury in his fine-fitted saloon carriage—in part to see another great exhibition in a Melbourne not yet fallen to rags and ashes—Parkes lambasted Victorian politicians who wanted union between the colonies but who put fierce taxes on imports from New South Wales and other states. The attack was sincere but also motivated by a heightened sense of destiny. The Governor of New South Wales at that time, Baron Carrington, had suggested to Parkes that it would be a climactic act of Parkes' life to lead the

colonies to Federation. It was the sort of talk Parkes found inspiring. Bereft of all economic success, he had also recently lost his wife Clarinda. He had his eye on another woman, Eleanor Dixon, but he also had intimations of bad health and mortality. However, a great destiny could compensate for all.

Duncan Gillies, the Victorian premier, former goldfields partner of Peter Lalor, Eureka rebel, was suspicious of Parkes. Why should New South Wales pose as the great Federation state when men like Service had made the running until now? And if Parkes was so keen on Federation, why didn't he join the Federal Council? Western Australia also suspected Parkes' motives. On a visit to Queensland to speak to the cabinet and legislators there, however, he received a more sympathetic hearing. Then, returning home, he spoke at a banquet at the Tenterfield School of Arts on 24 October, urging that the colonial leaders should be summoned to a convention to devise a federal constitution.

It is interesting that, although his speech had a potent impact, there is no grand ringing phrase remembered from it. He asked '[w]hether the time had not now come for the creation on this Australian continent of an Australian government', as reported in the third-person in the manner of nineteenth-century news reports. 'Australia,' he said, 'had now a population of three and a half millions, and the American people numbered only between three and four millions when they formed the great commonwealth of the United States. The numbers were about the same, and surely what America had done by war the Australians could bring about by peace, without breaking the ties that held them to the mother country.'



The Australian Federation Conference was convened and met in Parliament House, Melbourne, for eight heat-frazzled days in February 1890. 'Parkes too ill', said Deakin's diary. But he had been well enough to frighten some delegates with the fact that his resolutions did not include the words 'under the Crown' and to create suspicion that his old republicanism might be rearing its head again. New Zealand sent two representatives, but it became apparent to the Australians even as early as this that while New Zealand would not be opposed to federation of the Australian colonies, it would not yet be considering joining itself. Parkes was not so ill either as not to give the conference his broader thoughts on the Federation issue. 'Make yourself a united people,

appear before the world as one, and the dream of going “home” would die away. We should create an Australian home ... we should have “home” within our own shores.’ (Two years before that appeal to fraternity he had led attacks on Irish Catholics and raised the bogey of their potential disloyalty. Did he consider them part of the ‘Australian home’?)

It was proposed by Parkes and seconded by Deakin that the next step should be a National Australasian Convention, to be held in the following year, at which the first complete draft of a constitution was to be written and adopted.



At the end of February 1891, Deakin, out of office, occupying the back bench and secretly tormented by the part his over-confidence might have played in his own losses, his father’s and Victoria’s, had just returned from a journey to India, where he had been commissioned by Syme of the Age to study irrigation projects and where he went as a student of religion. Deakin was well placed to attend the National Australasian Convention in Sydney as a delegate appointed by the Victorians. Beginning in March 1891 the convention ran for five weeks. Although Parkes was in the chair, he did not take as active a role as others, in part because of a recent carriage accident. But he emphasised the name ‘Commonwealth’ to an extent that it became the accepted title of the proposed Federation. Over those five weeks, to the astonishment of many including themselves, the delegates came up with a draft constitution not far from what would be adopted later in the decade by the Australian people. The House of Representatives, Senate and High Court to interpret the constitution were all created by various sections of the document. Most delegates did not want to follow the American model of a cabinet separate from the legislature. The House of Representatives, the lower house, was to be the House the cabinet was responsible to, though senators could be cabinet ministers. The big argument was on the question of whether the Senate could alter money bills, bills passed in the Lower House to finance government itself, or could merely recommend changes. The smaller states wanted the Senate to have more control over money bills, since they would have the same numbers in the Senate as the large states would. And underlying everything, even the Victorians—such as Deakin, to whom protectionism was the map of a just society—were nervous about giving up customs and tariffs to a federal government who might lower them.

Between the conference of 1890 and the convention of 1891, the air had gone out of these seemingly limitlessly expanding colonies. Many formerly middle-class men were contemplating suicide rather than the culminating glory of Federation. Sir Samuel Griffith, a leading draftsman of the first constitution bill and a Queensland premier, declared, 'Every lesson of history teaches us that the manifest destiny of Australia is to be one people ... those who oppose union are opposing an irresistible force.' But in 1891 it seemed more a gentle tide than an irresistible force.

THE FEDERATIONIST WALTZ

Utopian novels were written about the coming Federation, about an Australia transformed by female franchise, just wages and peace. Catherine Helen Spence wrote a novel in 1888, *A Week in the Future*, in which a woman who is dying is offered the chance to spend a week in the federated Australia of 1988. She finds the working day shortened to six hours, accommodation organised collectively, disease and inebriation conquered, women liberated through equal education, the Empire vanished. Spence had been born in Scotland but brought to raw South Australia in 1840 as an infant. She became a leading campaigner for proportional representation in Australian parliaments and would become Australia's first female political candidate when she stood for election as a delegate to the 1897 Federal Convention. She was defeated in great part by the belief amongst many males that just because women could by then vote in South Australia (though not in any other colony), it did not mean they could necessarily be elected to Parliament. In Western Australia, under the influence of the same nexus of women's organisations that had won women's suffrage in South Australia, Western Australia also granted women the vote.

Spence was a leader in the fight for female franchise in South Australia, achieved in 1894, and was interested in Federation for its possibility of delivering the franchise for women. Working with her had been the Australian Women's Suffrage Society, formed in 1889, and the Women's Christian Temperance Organisation. These bodies would all support Federation, since Federation would create the possibility of giving the vote to women nationally, and reluctant states would have to follow. The Women's Temperance Organisation throughout Australia believed in far more than mere control of drinking, and thus preventing male brutality and family poverty.

Women's petitions for the vote and equal rights in marriage and property were presented to the 1897 convention, including that of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales, signed by, amongst others, the formidable and eloquent Rose Scott, cousin and soul mate of David Mitchell, from whom the famed library would derive.

A petition from the Women's Suffrage League addressed to the delegates of the crucial 1897 convention asked that in a new federal constitution the women of all colonies be empowered to choose their representatives 'so that United Australia may become a true democracy resting upon the will of the whole and not half of the people'.

There were predictable reactions to women's activism, not least from the *Bulletin*.

*Pray, lovely Woman, cease to tease
The Candidates with tearful pleas
About your suffrage matter.
Give us a chance pray, if you please,
To federate the colonies
Without your endless chatter.*

There were many at the convention of 1897 in Adelaide who supported female franchise but did not want to see it in the draft constitution for fear that in the coming referendum on the constitution some men would vote no specifically because it guaranteed the female vote. The compromise was the proposed Section 41, which said that no adult person who had the right to vote in state elections would be prevented from voting federally. At the time South Australian women had the right to vote in their state, and since it would be an absurdity for women of merely one state to be empowered to vote in a federal election, the other states would be forced to introduce women's franchise. The right of all women to vote federally would be covered by any eventual Franchise Act.

Rose Scott wasn't happy with that. In her house in Woollahra, which had been a salon for all the best colonial minds, she let furious ink flow. 'We don't want any "ifs" in a matter in which our absolute rights are concerned!' Not trusting the all-male framers of the constitution, she began to campaign against it, becoming what was called an 'anti-Billite'. The Golding sisters,

Annie and Belle, girls from the bush, schoolteacher and public servant, more socialist and less affluent than Rose, also saw the draft constitution as a men's plan to 'rivet chains on generations yet unborn, chains that will gall, chains that will drag them down, and never, never break'.

GOING FOR GOLD

Gold still possessed the power to compel men into deserts when it was reported in the 1880s from the Kimberleys, the Pilbara, the Murchison River and Southern Cross. It was a matter of mania and besottedness. Copper seemed a plainer mineral. It did not evoke images of men galloping out of the wilderness to register claims in town, though. The South Australians had nonetheless enjoyed the steady success of copper mining at Wallaroo, Moontah, Kapunda and Burra, where Cornish miners considered themselves lucky and prosperous, for decades. In 1871, for example, South Australia produced one-tenth of the world's copper despite having a settler population of a little less than 200 000.

All Adelaide entrepreneurs, including William Finke, patron of John McDouall Stuart, were able with as much panache as any eastern entrepreneur to offload their mining leases in London. Such companies as the Great Northern Copper Mining Company of South Australia appeared. When the governor himself, the difficult, dogmatic and spiky Sir Richard MacDonnell, rode out to see the site of the mine in whose London prospectus his opinion had been falsely quoted, and whose shares were being sold for enormous profit in London, he found an abandoned shaft.

South Australian wheat and produce fed the Victorian and New South Wales goldfields, but that did not bring in the masses of people gold had brought to New South Wales and Victoria. In 1863 the government had sought the services of Hargreaves, the man reputed to have found gold in New South Wales. Moaning about rheumatism in his hand, he fossicked to little effect in country out beyond Port Augusta.

South Australia, as mentioned elsewhere, became exuberant and speculative about mining leases in their Northern Territory, and later about the desert finds in Western Australia. The Coolgardie Gold Mining and Prospecting Syndicate was Adelaide-based. Those who raised money by company float to invest in mining had a speculative streak as big as the individual, pioneering prospector. They were often men who loved and gambled on

horse-racing. They were often the ones, not the discoverers such as Paddy Hannan of Kalgoorlie and the strapping Arthur Bayley of Coolgardie, who profited from the rushes others began. In many cases, they were profiting not with mineral realities, the only way a prospector could profit, but—as Sir Richard MacDonnell discovered—with rumours and feverish dreams.

The 1887 gold rush at Croydon, Queensland, south-east of the Gulf of Carpentaria, had found uncertain success in a tropical but water-starved landscape of humpies, desolation, typhoid fever and dysentery. It survived on the misery of its diggers. But Charters Towers, south-west of Townsville, had become so massive a source that its proud miners and citizens referred to it as ‘The World’. It was only when commercial mining began that Charters Towers became the second most important town in Queensland, many of its buildings, including its stock exchange, as grand as those of the Victorian goldfields.

In 1886, a Colonial and Indian Exhibition was staged in London and was visited by five million Britons. The Queensland display consisted of a stamp mill demonstrating the crushing of a hundred tons of gold-bearing rock from Charters Towers. A Charters Towers mine owner named Thomas Mills had raised up above the heads of the visitors to the exhibition a lump of gold worth £6000. He was able to float a new mine on the basis of the investment money he raised from those who stood beneath it and gawped up at it. Charters Towers residents, delighted at the sudden and unreal escalation of their own various shares, could not invent enough companies to satisfy the British frenzy for them. Many owners of useless Charters Towers leases simply took them to London and sold them for massive returns. The stock-brokers of Charters Towers employed large numbers of sales representatives, who went about selling to investors in other cities. Charters Towers was throughout the early 1890s the richest goldfield of all, even more so in that period than Mount Morgan, inland from Rockhampton. Its gold was deep, but in entire reefs.

In the Alaska gold rushes prospectors died of hypothermia. The prospectors of Australia, particularly of Western Australia, were likely to perish of thirst

or, more commonly, of the diseases produced either by a lack of water or the pollution of what water was available.

In 1890 J.F. Connolly, a draftsman from the New South Wales railways and an amateur ethnologist, had been brought over to Western Australia to work as a prospector for the Western Australian merchant F.C. Monger. East of Geraldton, he split his search party for further reconnaissance. Two of his men became lost and died of thirst, but Connolly safely returned to a station named Annean where some stockriders had pointed out a few traces of gold to him earlier. When he got there, he found others had already pitched their tents and were working the field. They had found the gold there plentiful, and the water supply from the nearby Murchison River more than adequate.

Gold had earlier been found in the Kimberley and in the Pilbara but a location inland from Geraldton, like Mount Murchison, was a much better proposition than the tropics. Alluvial gold was mined, miners could also pick up or extract visible, small pebbles of gold. But obviously this would ultimately be a field for commercial mining. The limitation of the Murchison field was that the water was unsafe and enteric fever killed diggers, who were buried in coffins made out of grocery cases advertising Coleman's Mustard and Condensed Milk.

Further south, gold was found in 1887 at Yilgarn, east of Perth. These finds were welcome in that they promised an inflow of capital and population. The Western Australian Stock Exchange was now created in Perth to speculate in shares. These were the sorts of events which caused Western Australians to cry of their colony, 'At last she moves.'

There was considerable excitement about reefs south of Yilgarn named Southern Cross. Southern Cross seemed the limit though. East of it lay the great desert plain. Even so, some men, using Aboriginal guides to take them to waterholes and camels driven by Afghans to carry their gear, went gold seeking beyond, towards the arid and dangerous east. There was indeed so much demand for camels that the elegantly and princely Afghan Faiz Mahomet, who had managed a desert camel operation for Elder Smith in South Australia, would arrive with his brother Tagh and three steamers full of camels, and with another two shiploads on order from India, to supply freight to Southern Cross and beyond.

Arthur Bayley was a twenty-seven-year-old prospector and athlete who competed for prize money in foot races, and was a champion hammer thrower. He had already mined gold in dismal Croydon in the Gulf of Carpentaria, in the Palmer River in North Queensland near Cooktown, and at Mount Murchison. His friend, William Ford, felt certain that Bayley was equipped by his previous experience to survive the wilderness to the east of Southern Cross. They put together a team of ten horses, and supplies adequate for a long winter of prospecting, rode out 120 miles (200 kilometres) into the desert, and were doubling back because of lack of water when near the site of what would be the town of Coolgardie they found a waterhole. The following morning, Bayley went rounding up horses and saw at his feet a nugget. He fetched Ford, and by noon they had picked up 20 ounces (over 500 grams) of gold. In a month they had collected £800 worth.

The news got out, and it seemed unprecedented news, as if this were the Western Australian find of finds. When interviewed, Bayley's friend Ford said, 'We gathered nuggets like spuds in a paddock.' This image had the power to stampede the imagination. Men from Murchison, and young men from Perth and other coastal towns, moved towards Southern Cross now, but only because it was the jumping-off point for Coolgardie. In the depressed eastern colonies, men and some women took ship for Western Australia. The population of Western Australia would increase fourfold between 1891 and 1901.

The so-called Golden Mile between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie would be an engine for Western Australian wealth and growth. The Garnbirringu natives of the area, whose word for the desert food silky pear would give the Kalgoorlie goldfield its name (just as Coolgardie derived its name from the words for mulga wood and waterholes), might have been justified in thinking that their home region, in which only they had the key to the water, would remain forever unvisited. Now they found their home full of grasping, squalling white fellows who struck out in all directions, spreading their chaos.

The possibility of waterholes being emptied by thirsty miners would lead the government in the end to build small reservoirs along the way. Cobb and Co began to operate a service and small corrugated-iron and hessian stores and shanties appeared along the track. Faiz Mahomet's camel teams, working from depots in Geraldton, Coolgardie and other centres, carried freight and water.

WAR IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

In some places in northern Australia a war between pastoralists and natives would continue for decades. Squatter George Sutherland recorded how in the 1860s he had arrived at Lake Mary in Central Queensland to confront the local people and 'rob them of their country', by means of carbine fire. Another squatter concluded, 'They are a hard-used race but we have to occupy the country; and no two races can inhabit the same country but the weaker must go to the wall.'

It was calculated in 1861 that in the southern districts of Queensland Aborigines had killed approximately 250 Europeans. Deaths on the native side were not calculated. Newspaper accounts detail seventy-six instances of raids on stock as well, though these are only the reported cases. The war seemed to become more intense the further north and west it moved. There was an energetic resistance in the Mackay and Bowen regions, and Governor Bowen in late 1866 believed that 600 whites had been killed by Aborigines. In 1869 the *Port Denison Times* reported, 'Our own town at least had its foundations cemented in blood.' The Cardwell district, the Palmer River goldfields and the Atherton Tablelands were venues for many fierce and bloody skirmishes and battles between settlers and natives. At Battle Camp south-west of Cairns in November 1873 the natives attacked the diggers' barricades and were shot down by the increasingly sophisticated and high-muzzle velocity bullets from rifles such as the Snider and the Martini-Henry, which made it possible to fire ten rounds a minute, more than three times the quantity of fire the indigenes of south-eastern Australia had faced.

Early in 1873 George Dalrymple, explorer and land commissioner, reported that the 'high, wild, broken conglomerate tablelands and ranges about Gilberton had suffered ten murders', and that 'the valley of the Gilbert [was] in undisputed possession of the Aborigines'. Dalrymple believed in firmness. Finding a group of natives on Shaw Island off Port Denison (Bowen), he told them through the medium of a Fitzroy River Aborigine, one of the six native troopers with him, that his party had come to return 'blood for blood' and his message was backed up with rifle fire from other native troopers on the slopes behind the beach.

At Gilberton the next year four white men were speared and all their property put to the torch. Mr William Hodgkinson MLA raged that the events 'would show the people in the North—those people on whom the

prosperity of the country so much depended—that they must shoot every black fellow they found, in spite of the pseudo-philanthropists'. Indeed, a northern squatter reported in 1877 that the Warrgamay-speaking clans along the Herbert River were 'disappearing one by one and sometimes in larger numbers by the aid of powder and ball'.

Posses of squatters and of native police were involved in pursuing the so-called Kalkadoons of the inland Gulf region, 'the Plains of Promise'. Kalkadoons were recklessly brave and often turned and charged the muzzles of the carbines. In the Gulf country, the Cape and along the western borderlands with the Northern Territory and South Australia, guerilla warfare against Kalkadon and the Waanyi-Garrwa people continued into the 1880s. The lessees of Gregory Downs, the Watson brothers, writing to the colonial secretary on 18 June 1880, testified that 'sub-inspectors [of Native Mounted Police] and their troopers go into the bush, round up the blacks and shoot them indiscriminately and kidnap the gins and the little boys'. The Native Mounted Police used in the north were recruited from along the Murray and elsewhere in New South Wales and Victoria and had no fellow feeling for these strange tribes they were ordered to attack. In 1884, at Battle Mountain, in far-western Queensland near the site of Mount Isa, as many as 600 Aboriginal warriors confronted settlers and Native Mounted Police commanded by a future Queensland police commissioner, Frederic Urquhart, in one of the largest and bloodiest confrontations of the frontier wars, in which as many as 200 natives were killed and the rest pursued and 'dispersed'.

Covert state involvement in this forced displacement was more open and prolonged than elsewhere in Australia, and the government of Queensland supported the Native Mounted Police as a 'force of extermination'. The Martini-Henry rifle came into operation in the 1880s and the Native Mounted Police were armed with it. It was claimed to be twice as accurate as the earlier Sniders. But in the 1880s the Winchester repeater rifles also became popular and could discharge fifteen-round magazines as fast as the trigger was pulled. There was no fighting against such weapons with clubs and spears.

The struggle between races in northern Australia, like a similar conflict in the prairies of the United States, was a struggle for control of waterholes. Given the scarcity of water in Australia, the conflict was intense. One of the most militant figures in this struggle was Constable William Willshire,

stationed at Alice Springs in the 1880s and then at Victoria River. During the 1880s up to 1000 Aborigines were killed in the Alice Springs pastoral district. Amongst desert populations these amounted to huge losses.

Willshire was a man of his time, implementing policy with which pastoralists and governments were content. He, with the aid of his Native Mounted Police squad recruited from other parts of Australia and armed with Martini-Henry carbines, was the instrument of racial theories harboured not only by himself but by many other participants in popular racial science. His memoirs read deplorably now, a Petri dish of noxious attitudes, but they were presented to the gaze of his generation in the confidence that they would be enthusiastically applauded.

Given the realities of remote Australia, and the war indigenes were fighting to retain land sites, there is no reason to doubt Willshire when he asserts that 'many sleepless nights and weary anxious days have been gone through in doing duty amongst wild tribes, who during the writing of this book committed murders and killed the settlers' horses and cattle; and the author, being a police officer in charge of native constables ... and those acts being exigencies of the service, he had to go out with his trackers and deal with each case respectively as the law provided'.

The lamentations and the tears belonged not to the punished natives but to the relatives of the dead pioneers alone. 'Oh sorrowing, oh, sorrowing mothers and sisters true, your sons' and brothers' bones lay bleaching in scenes of wildest desolation, and in scenes of picturesque beauty.' There is no denying that individual travellers, or small parties, had reason to be fearful of attack. Patrolling the Katherine, Daly, Gregory, Roper and Victoria rivers in the mid-1880s, Willshire claims he did not know when he lay down at night when the attack would come, and if this is so it could not have added to his kind thoughts. According to him the marauding natives often sheltered between murders at mission stations now beginning to spread across the north, run by Trappist monks, Presbyterians, Jesuits, all of whom he mocked. Their attack made, he said, they then retreated, reassuming the garments of the mission and its pieties. His energy was employed by contrast as missionary of the carbine, and he was relentless in spreading that light.

His memories are full of ambiguity towards his enemy. Like many Europeans he showed a certain respect for the full-blood Aborigines, and a genuine interest in their culture, even presenting a vocabulary of the Victoria River

language in his book. He described one Aboriginal girl as having ‘a face and figure worthy of Aphrodite—had she dwelt in a Grecian sculptor’s brain?’ He treated a pregnant mother with kindly attention, and when she gave birth to a child he reflected, ‘The newborn babe turned out to be a boy, the nucleus of a cattle-killer.’ Indeed, he confessed his initial weakness for the natives.

I lived with the natives for sixteen years. I spent hundreds of pounds to ameliorate their condition, and in return they attempted to murder me. I was exceedingly kind to them. I incurred the displeasure of white men, who said I was spoiling them through my liberality. My kindness was rewarded with the blackest of ingratitude ... when I saw my mistake and altered my hand, I became firm, and the natives then respected me with that fawning civility so characteristic of a low degraded race.

Like many Europeans, he despised fringe-dwelling half-castes, even though it had been through the sexual adventures of the settlers that half-castes were born.

A WORKER’S PARADISE?

Though work was hard and wages low, the idea was fostered in Australia that Australia was a working man’s paradise. This belief has been a potent and enduring Australian legend. The decade of the 1870s, said the *Sydney Morning Herald*, reminiscing in September 1890, was one during which workers were ‘the most fortunate, the best paid and the most prosperous in the world’. The truth was that Australian working conditions in the later nineteenth century were often as bad and occasionally were harsher than those of the Old World, particularly in the way people were worked in country areas but also in the manufacturies of the cities.

In the 1890s depression, there was a high level of burglary, babies were abandoned on doorsteps, in the slums there were evictions, and the number of people applying for charity doubled. Only South Australia and Western Australia had state-subsidised Benevolent Asylums, the equivalent of British and Irish workhouses, and these asylums, said the visiting Irish home rule campaigner Michael Davitt, ‘had at least some of the much-dreaded atmosphere of Poor Law Institutions in England’. On the other hand, he continued,

workers who had gone to the wall were not treated like semi-criminals, and there was no hereditary pauper class, as in England. And the richest investors in Australian enterprise often lived overseas, and this helped the development of the myth of Australian equity.

And yet ... In the 1870s, Dr. J.E. Neild, public health expert, wrote, 'I know from experience something of the chronic domestic dirt which prevailed among the lower classes in the manufacturing towns of England, but nothing that I ever witnessed in the West Riding of Yorkshire and in South Lancashire equalled in repulsiveness what I have found in Melbourne.' Though housing conditions were generally better than in the slums of London or Manchester, it was a matter of mere degree. On the other hand, even in the depression of the 1890s the average family's spending power in New South Wales was £38 per head of population per year, compared with £30 in Britain. Did that £8 difference create the basis for awarding Australia the crown as a working man's paradise? Similarly, the New South Wales statistician Timothy Coghlin found that the average Englishman had to work 127 days to earn the cost of his food, but the average Australian achieved the same result after 119 days of labour, and ate far better food in the process. The far better food was a considerable factor in the belief in the Australian industrial nirvana. To the European working class, meat and tea were luxuries, but were standard in the diet of the Australian working class. There was a chance that because of a better diet, the more successful of Australian working men and their wives and children developed into a distinctive physical type, taller and leaner but generally stronger. According to Rolf Boldrewood, the author of *Robbery Under Arms*, the Australian could 'generally do manual labour after a fashion and at a pace that would astonish a Kent or Sussex local'.

Politicians and society in general had held out the vision of the working man's utopia, and now unions intended to hammer down the conditions which would ensure it. The first attempts had been made in the late 1850s by the Operative Stonemasons' Societies of Melbourne and Sydney, who were transforming these cut-rate ports into modern urban glories. British masons usually worked under shelter and a milder climate, but here in Australia there were few workshops or other awnings to protect the stonemason from the sun or the wet. They believed that the sixty-hour week then in place was far too long. On the cusp of the 1860s, the Printers' Union was also campaigning for an eight-hour day.

In 1866 Farmer and Company, the large Sydney store, which like British firms had been willing to work their shop assistants ninety hours a week, became the first in New South Wales to close for the Saturday half-holiday. When Anthony Hordern died in 1868 his sons brought back the Sydney emporium's closing hours from 10 p.m. to 7 p.m. David Jones adopted even shorter hours during the 1870s and abandoned Saturday-night trading. All this was in part due to the progressive spirit in some of the major Australian shopkeepers. In Brisbane in 1879 the Dublin-born draper Thomas Finney pioneered 6 p.m. closing at his department stores, Finney Isles and Company, and he followed it with early Saturday closing in 1885. The idea of co-ownership appealed to Finney, and he subsidised a staff fund on a £1 to £1 basis. Profit-sharing as a means to motivate and elevate workers was a world phenomenon and many company owners adopted it. In 1888 Peter Johns, owner of a large engineering works in Melbourne, gave more than half his own shares to employees, an arrangement which helped him, in collaboration with his workers, to survive the 1890s depression almost without damage.

In South Australia the owners of the Burra and Moonta copper mines built cottages for their employees and introduced compulsory medical benefits schemes at low weekly rates. These paid half-wages to disabled men, and at Moonta in 1873 introduced a minimum wage of £2 a week in bad years. (Previously there had been no bottom to the lowering of wages in hard periods.)

George Marchant, a man from Kent who had arrived in Brisbane in 1874 'friendless and practically penniless', had not only worked in the bush as a station hand. To earn a living in town he collected empty bottles and he and his wife Sarah opened a soft drink business which spread from Brisbane to branches in other states. The company was based on his invention and patenting of a bottling machine which came to be used all over the world. Like many such self-made men, he had begun his career as a staunch anti-unionist, but began to fraternise with Labor thinkers such as fiery William Lane, editor of the *Boomerang*, and during the 1890 shipping strike chaired meetings which raised funds to support the strikers. He too practised profit-sharing in his factories.

The expectation that things would be better in Australia was a powerful motivator for workers. W.H.S. Blake, a tailor employed by Alston and Brown

in Melbourne who became a leader of the Early Closing Association, said that in his youth in England he had to start work at seven every morning and usually work until midnight—a working week of nearly 100 hours. To be employed in Alston and Brown's factory or showroom, which always closed at 6 p.m., made him ecstatic. Extra time gave working men a chance to raise themselves; in Collingwood, Joel Eade, Cornishman and a former gold miner in California and Victoria, attended drawing classes at the Melbourne Mechanic's Institute and was able to 'lift himself' from carpenter to town surveyor. He later founded the Collingwood School of Design for 'rising operatives'.

It was still true that a sacking or an industrial accident could nonetheless impose acute misery and hunger even in the house of a skilled worker. Families tried to invest in 'friendly societies' which would support them through the illness of the injured worker, and in insurance against his death. One of the 'friendly societies' was the Independent Order of Oddfellows, open to all craftsmen. By 1865 there were 106 lodges in Victoria, forty-six in Sydney and sixty-four in Adelaide. Lodges often employed their own doctors to look after members.



For unskilled workers, living and working conditions were much more squalid and unhealthy than for the 'rising operative'. When Henry Lawson went to work at Hudson Brothers' railway carriage works at Clyde in the 1880s, he had to rise at 5 a.m., walk across the city to catch the train at six from Redfern, and go to work painting and rubbing down carriages with 'blood coming from finger ends and trickling over the pumice stone'. He would return home at 6.30 p.m. in a stupor of weariness. He knew what it was to wander from job to job and have the 'furtive and criminal-like' shame of his position. Such was his experience of the working man's paradise. Later, in the midst of celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee, he would write about workers with a personal fury:

*I listened through the music and the sounds of revelry
And all the hollow noises of that year of Jubilee;
I heard beyond the music and beyond the royal cheer,
The steady tramp of thousands that were marching in the rear ...*

*I heard defiance ringing from the men of rags and dirt,
I heard wan women singing that sad 'Song of the Shirt',
And o'er the sounds of menace and moaning low and drear,
I heard the steady tramping of their feet along the rear.*

Employees in newspaper and general printing offices were amongst the most misused. Indeed, many journalists in the 1880s received only 30 shillings a week. Compositors worked ten-hour night shifts with only a meal snatched while they worked. Their wages were about 27 shillings for the standard fifty-four hours' work. Boys were employed sometimes for 2 shillings and sixpence a week, and in 1883 the *Melbourne Herald* and the *World* newspapers each employed about thirty boy compositors to every four tradesmen. A compositor who complained could quickly be replaced. The Typographical Society succeeded in banning boy labour from night work at the *Age* and *Argus*. But twelve-year-old boys were still being employed this way on other presses and in the larger regional towns. Here they worked from 3 p.m. until 3 a.m.

The first Factory Act in Australia was passed by the Victorian Parliament in 1873, initiated by William Collard Smith, son of a Cheshire cotton factory owner who had come to Australia for the gold rush. Smith, living in Ballarat, had also been a pioneer in mine safety inspection. He was appointed chairman of a Royal Commission to investigate working conditions in 1883, ten years after the first Factory Act, and found that for thousands of workers 'a system of forced labour, repugnant to every sense of justice in humanity', was in place. Many employees were obliged to work beyond the limits of physical endurance. Smith and his fellow commissioners reported that the worst abuses occurred in companies whose growth had been encouraged by protection: high tariffs. Deakin would always believe such industries should be able to afford high wage levels—high profits and high wages were the rationale of protectionism. But in many factories, protection as an engine of prosperity for workers was failing.

In textile and clothing factories, men earned an average of 35 shillings a week, women only 10 shillings, boys about 7 shillings and girls 4 shillings. The mills secretly agreed to employ entire families so that pittances could be combined. Truant officers were supposed to extract child labourers from these factories, but were not always able to—the child's own parents often

worked there too and pleaded with the truant officers that they needed the child's wages.

Nine- to twelve-year-olds also worked in the tobacco industry. At Feldheim, Jacobs and Company in Melbourne, nine-year-olds earned 7 shillings for working six days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. producing 50 000 cigars a week.

At one of the best mills, the Victorian Woollen and Cloth Manufactory in Geelong, all hands worked a sixty-hour week for which twelve-year-old boys were paid 8 shillings. The Victorian Royal Commission in 1883 visited some of the better clothing factories of Melbourne, and disapproved of many of them. Even twenty years later, at a further Victorian Royal Commission of 1900–03 on the Operation of the Factories and Shops Law, a woman who had an apparently invalided husband testified that she worked in a clothing factory from twelve to sixteen hours a day, six days a week, for which she was paid 12 shillings and sixpence weekly, and only survived because the employer took on two of her children to work the same hours at 5 shillings a week each. 'I consider we are nothing lesser than white slaves with our employers,' said one woman to the Victorian Royal Commission.

The Tailoresses's Union struggled with the issue for years. A Mrs Adams and her two daughters, who sewed moleskin trousers at McIvor and Lincoln's, worked from 8 a.m. till 11 p.m. each day, assisted at home by another child when she came home from school. Between them, these four females earned £3 a week. The desperation of workers to continue receiving wages caused them to turn up to work even when they were ill, spreading diseases like typhoid fever.



A witness quoted in the Report on the Condition of the Working Class, New South Wales, 1859–60, described living conditions as 'worse than in any part of the world that I have seen—worse than in London'. The Benevolent Society and St Vincent de Paul handed out small amounts of bread and meat, salt and soap in cases of need. A Royal Commission on Public Charities in New South Wales, entering a slum off Gloucester Street in Sydney, found entire families trying to live off less than £1 a week. Even in Adelaide a slum developed from the 1850s near East Terrace in tenements built in the mid-nineteenth century. The landlord was the Adelaide entrepreneur and self-proclaimed radical William Peacock, MLC.

At work the health conditions mirrored the slums where the worker lived. In the 1880s, at Mitchell's Brush Factory in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, there was no privy at all for male employees. At F. Joseph and Company Clothing Factory in Flinders Lane, employing men and women, the same conditions prevailed. At some Sydney engineering works men had to walk as much as half a mile to the nearest public privies and lost wages in the process. As in Britain, there were diseases caused directly by work but for which there was no compensation. Watchmakers suffered a disease of the bones because of the use of phosphorus in their trade. Grocers suffered a skin disease—'grocer's itch'—from a mite which infested sugarbags, dried fruit and grain. Painters contracted painter's colic, a form of crippling lead poisoning. Even knife grinders developed lung disease from the clouds of metal particles their machines generated. Children who were sent into confined spaces to service machinery often suffered accidents. A boy of twelve was crushed to death between the rollers of printing machinery. Machinery had no safety guards, and neither did sawmills or joineries have guards to prevent a bandsaw flying off the wheel.

On the basis of the 1883 Royal Commission, and with the support of a number of manufacturers, Alfred Deakin introduced the Shops and Factories Bill of 1885, but he was only able to force limited changes through. He had wanted all workshops with two or more employees brought under the Act and the registration of companies, sanitary requirements, limits on the hours minors could work and compensation for injury. The Legislative Council diluted the bill so much that the question of closing hours was handed over to local Shopkeepers' Associations and councils for separate decisions to be made in each suburb. So few changes were made that the trade unions began to found Labor Leagues with the goal of putting workers into Parliament, since well-meaning liberals like Deakin had failed them.

In any case, when health inspectors prosecuted businesses, the workers were too frightened to give evidence for fear of dismissal, and magistrates were often manufacturers themselves.



In 1896 Victoria established Australia's first wages board, in which employers and employees' representatives convened to agree upon minimum wages. The Shops and Factories Act was further strengthened in 1896 and 1900,

though there was no overall reform. Victoria was considered to lead the world in enlightened legislation. By the end of the century, most Melbourne shops adopted standard hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. Packers, however, continued work for long hours behind the shopfront.

While Victoria battled its way towards reform, other states did very little. In South Australia, a Royal Commission reported in 1892 on working conditions for the protection of women and children, but the first reform bill was thrown out by the South Australian Legislative Council in 1893. It was accepted the following year on condition that children of thirteen would still be legally permitted to work a forty-eight-hour week. Adelaide shops remained open at their discretion. Eight-hour bills were rejected in Queensland. Though Western Australia passed early closing and factory laws in 1897, Tasmania went without industrial legislation at all.

In New South Wales, whether the government was led by the Free Traders Henry Parkes and George Reid or the Protectionist George Dibbs, industrial conditions were left to market forces. Only in 1896, when George Reid became dependent on a few Labor Members of Parliament to retain power, was the first attempt at a Factories and Shops Act made. All the scandals revealed in Melbourne in the early 1880s were current in Sydney up to Federation. There was no regulation of outworkers—women in the clothes industries who were given piece work to do at home were often deserted or widowed wives. William Lyne got a New South Wales Early Closing Act through Parliament in 1899 under pressure from the Toynbee Guild, an association of reforming university men. But as long as shops closed on Wednesday or Saturday afternoon, they were allowed to stay open as long as they liked on Friday and Saturday nights and employers were still allowed to work their carters any number of hours they liked. The fact was that shopkeepers could work their employees up to sixty hours a week without any extra pay.

A number of wages boards existed under the legislation, but of five workers who became members of the Jam Industry Wages Board and voted in 1900 to increase adult wages from 30 shillings to 35 shillings a week, four were immediately sacked. Similarly, all five operatives on the Fellmongers' Board were warned what would happen if they voted against their employer's wishes. Many employers argued that lack of regulation allowed them to keep on slower workers at lower wages who under fixed-wage situations would be

thrown out of work and die of disease. By the birth of the Commonwealth, there was a lack of shared wealth amongst many bush and urban citizens of the new Australia. It is therefore easy to see why the new-born Labor Party and the trade unions did not consider Federation the primary issue.

THE GODLY RADICALS

A Staffordshire coal miner, Joseph Cook, like many early Labor men, combined socialist vision with religious orthodoxy. He was, like a young shopkeeper of Balmain, William Morris Hughes, a Free Trader to begin with, and believed that there should be but a single tax, and that on land. Married to a schoolteacher, he lived and worked in Lithgow. In August 1890, during the Maritime Strike, he served on the Labor Defence Committee at a time when the Lithgow mines were being worked by non-unionists, all under the protection of the New South Wales' small permanent army. The following year this honest, glum fellow was elected to the New South Wales Parliament.

At a Labor conference in March 1894 a resolution was passed that members had to bind themselves to espouse the official position reached by a vote in caucus. Cook and a number of others refused to sign this 'solidarity pledge', and he was voted as a Labor Independent. He would almost immediately take a cabinet position in George Reid's conservative Free Trade government, and would be increasingly abominated by his former fellow workers in the solidarity movement, including William Morris Hughes. But only fourteen members of 'solidarity Labor' were elected to that Parliament in 1894.

Labor was often suspected by conservatives to be a dogmatically socialist clique instead of the bunch of pragmatists the party was from the start. It disappointed radicals by showing little interest in the overthrow of society and too much in improving lives of working men and women by degrees—a shorter week here, a few more shillings in pay packets there, an improved safety law somewhere else. And in that vein the vivid Billy Hughes became a potent operator from the start. Elected to the New South Wales Parliament in 1894, a solidarity man, this amusing cynic recognised that his fellow Labor men were idealists but ready to make a deal. They quickly understood that they held the balance of power between Sir George Reid's Free Traders and Sir William Lyne's Protectionists. The Labor Party in Parliament had supported Reid because he had in turn introduced legislation which favoured their interests—early closing of shops and navigation bills. The

time was, as Hughes said, 'rotten ripe' for the working hours to be cut. Reid made the mistake of promising to limit the hours of shop assistants, but not to shorten the hours that the shops stayed open. Believing that the shop workers would be under pressure from their bosses to keep working the long hours anyway, Billy Hughes went as an emissary to see lanky, amiable Sir William Lyne. Lyne promised that if Labor came over to him he would pass an Early Closing Bill as drafted by Hughes. Labor members, through Billy, then assured Sir William Lyne that they would support him if he moved a No Confidence Bill. The No Confidence Bill against George Reid was promptly proposed and was passed; Lyne came to power and early closing became law. The Early Closing Act was 'welcomed with glee by those who stood behind the nation's counters'. It clipped, said Hughes, twenty-five to thirty hours off the shop workers' week and gave them their lives back.

When bubonic plague broke out in Hughes' own electorate in 1900, spreading from a ship from Mauritius which had moored at Sir John See's wharf—See being one of Lyne's ministers—Hughes began to pressure Lyne about public health. Hughes had visited the slums around Darling Harbour and saw impacted filth everywhere and heaped pyramids of offal, garbage and putrefying dogs in backyards. The harbour walls around Darling Harbour were 'daubed with excreta, and thousands of rats poking their heads out of holes in the wall'. It was something Sir William Lyne did not seem to be aware of and he was appalled. Hughes claims to have said to Sir William, 'But do you know that some, if not all, of these filthy dens are owned by Aldermen of the City Council ... the men who own these unspeakable hovels live in fine homes in the best parts of Sydney.' The problem was that people who lived in squalor had no votes in local elections because they were not rate-payers. Thus, Sir William devoted himself to altering the local electoral laws. It seemed that Hughes was becoming an igniter—what people would later call 'a fiery particle'.

Hughes was also outraged by the conditions of labour on the waterfront. The Wharf Labourers' Union had been smashed by the Maritime Strike of 1890, and members of the union were blacklisted. Work was very irregularly granted on the waterfront generally, and when they got it, men would often work a forty-eight-hour shift in a ship's refrigeration hold stacking meat, and then get no more work for a few weeks. The revival of the union began in 1896 with the Fiery Particle pushing it. The reinvigorated union

was launched at Federation Hall in 1899. Due to his alliance with Hughes, the premier, W.J. Lyne was willing to attend. So was the Minister for Works, E.W. O'Sullivan, along with nine other members of Parliament, as well as Archdeacon Langley of St Phillip's church and the Reverend Father Albury, whose parish was full of the impoverished dock workers of Darling Harbour. The waterside workers and their families predictably adored Hughes for organising this display of strength. But he was no firebrand. An industrial realist, before he left for Melbourne to serve in the federal Parliament in May 1901, Hughes urged the members 'to avoid any rash and ill-considered measures'.

35

SEEKING FEDERATION, AND HAVING IT



AND BE ONE PEOPLE

At Largs Bay, a beach near Adelaide, on a late summer day in 1897, two native-born men could be seen amongst the waves. One was the youngish, industrious lawyer, legislator and journalist Alfred Deakin, tall and with a trim beard. The other was a much shorter but indomitable fellow with water dripping off the end of his wax moustache. He was the attorney-general of Victoria, Isaac Isaacs, son of a draper from Yackandandah who had come from Russian-occupied east Poland. Isaacs had studied law at university part time, graduating with first-class honours thirteen years before this swim at Largs Bay. He could speak Russian, French, German, Italian and Greek to varying degrees. It was claimed he had a photographic memory and could read law reports at a speed close to their handing down, and by 1890 he was an accomplished advocate, representing banks, land and finance companies and, on one occasion, the stock exchange.

Both of these men were elected delegates to a Federation Convention which was about to meet in Adelaide. Isaacs was, however, not as trusted or respected as Deakin, for he did not have an appeasing temperament and possessed a naked ambition. He had also to suffer anti-Semitic attitudes of the kind so popular with the *Bulletin*, yet had much public support because of his interest in reform. He had the broadest knowledge

of other constitutions of anyone who was about to meet to finalise the Australian version.

Deakin saw that there was a plot in place to keep Isaacs off the Drafting Committee of the Federal Convention, but that was not to do with his Jewishness as much as his propensity to lecture other members on constitutional minutiae. Isaacs did not think that the future Senate should have equal membership for all states and wanted to exalt above all the House of Representatives. He did not want a broad right for those whose claims were defeated in the High Court to appeal to the Privy Council in London. And he was opposed to a Bill of Rights. On the Senate issue he would be defeated, but on the other two he would have some success.

Deakin saw Federation as an urgent task. How close was Federation to God's will in the mind of Alfred Deakin? 'Grant O God,' went one of the prayers Deakin composed, 'that I may have sufficient clearness of vision or sufficient antagonism to failure to avoid injuring the cause of true progress towards Thee and Thy kingdom on earth.' The way to the kingdom on earth lay through a federal Australia. In a speech to the Australian Natives Association at Bendigo towards the end of the three 1897–98 conventions, in March 1898, Deakin strove to express the piety he felt for Federation.

A Federal Constitution is the last and final product of political intellect and constructive ingenuity; it represents the highest development of the possibilities of self-government among people scattered over a large area ... Do not every year and every month exact from us a toll of severance? Do not we find ourselves hampered in commerce, restricted in influence, weakened in prestige, because we are jarring atoms instead of a united organism?

The crucial Federation conventions were held in Adelaide in March 1897, in Sydney in September the same year and in early 1898 in Melbourne. Ten delegates from each state were elected to travel to the three connected conventions, but Western Australian attendance was erratic, and the Queensland Parliament had not passed the legislation to make the election of their delegates possible. New Zealand decided not to send delegates. In Sydney the ascetic Cardinal Moran stood as a delegate for New South Wales to represent Catholic interests, but Protestant bodies campaigned successfully

against him. The Adelaide and Melbourne meetings were characterised by heatwaves, the Melbourne meeting coinciding with bushfires. All this was endured also by the delegates to the convention, men wearing formal suits, having travelled a great distance by train and ship.

The delegates who travelled to the first session in Adelaide by way of Victoria—the New South Welshmen and Tasmanians—were impressed by the welcome they received along the way. Ballarat honoured them, and a crowd at Albury had greeted the blasé and unreliable George Reid. It was in Victoria that the interest in Federation was most intense, but Deakin saw New South Wales as dominant at the convention, since its premier, Sir George Reid, Free Trader and political opportunist, was hostile to Protectionist Victoria, lukewarm about Federation and suspected New South Wales might lose economically. Victorian delegates were treated by Reid as ideological enemies, at best dreamers and at worst plunderers of New South Wales by the customs they collected from goods flowing between the colonies along the Murray and via the ports. Though under the draft constitution the collection of customs duties was to be awarded to the Commonwealth and the states were to lose the power to collect them, Reid was uneasy about it all, foreseeing a Victorian-dominated federal government soaking up most of the customs revenue raised by the federal government, driving up prices through high tariffs, rewarding the obedient smaller states with more than their fair share of revenue and starving New South Wales.

‘The chief and almost the sole offender was Reid,’ wrote Deakin, ‘who, having failed in all his attempts to induce the Victorians to wrestle with him upon their several rivalries, turned upon the South Australians, the Tasmanians and the Western Australians in turn with studied offensiveness and vulgar jibes until he who had entered the Convention at Adelaide its most popular, most influential, and most generous leader, left it the most unpopular, the least trusted and least respected of all its members.’

Deakin thought the men who brought home Federation at that convention sitting serially in three cities were the Sydney lawyer Edmund Barton, Barton’s fellow New South Welshman Richard O’Connor, Premier Charles Kingston and Frederick Holder of South Australia, George Turner, and Isaacs of Victoria, and John Forrest of Western Australia. Reid nonetheless let the Constitution Bill be drafted and committed himself to present the bill, as did the other premiers, to his parliament and, if accepted by them, to the

people of New South Wales at a referendum. This was the process devised by Dr John Quick at an earlier people's convention in Corowa. Quick was respected by all for watching over the bill in its infancy, 'as if it had been his own child'. His concern would always be that the public should be informed enough to be able to vote at referendum on the Federation issue. He had no doubt that to be an informed citizen would be to vote Yes.

Not everyone in the smaller colonies was as informed as Quick would have wished, but saw instead a number of reasons to be nervous of having their economies swamped by those of Victoria and New South Wales. Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania, proposed in Adelaide that the Commonwealth return to the states three-quarters of the customs revenue it raised. He saw the small states as potentially the poorer owners in an apartment block whose wealthier neighbours might embark on communal extravagances which could ruin their less affluent brethren.

Reid and Barton both opposed Braddon's idea that a guaranteed sum be raised by the federal authorities. New South Wales threatened to walk out over it. They were Free Traders and if Braddon had his way the Commonwealth would be prevented from going Free Trade, and would be forced to raise tariff barriers just to make enough revenue to run itself. Braddon's motion ultimately having been carried after midnight on the last Friday of the Melbourne session, it was blasted as 'the Braddon Blot'. Having the states rely on the Commonwealth for funds violated the central principle of federalism, it was argued: the principle that each government should be independent in its own sphere. Largesesse on one hand, begging and haggling on the other, should not characterise the relation between federal and state governments. In the end, Section 87 of the constitution, Braddon's proposal, was amended before Federation so that the arrangement was to last only for ten years.

The constitution as framed had now to be accepted by the colonial houses of parliament and submitted to the people for acceptance at referendum. Barton, O'Connor and Wise, wrote Deakin, 'though poorer in funds and richer in scruples than their antagonists, travelled New South Wales getting out the Yes vote'. There was hostility to them, but above all, a yawning Australian apathy. Federation, said the Nays in New South Wales, meant that their state would be plundered to pay for the benefit of its neighbours, and dictated to by senators from small states. The Senate issue—that little

Tasmania and under-populated Western Australia would have the same number of senators as New South Wales—was an important argument for the ‘anti-Billites’, as the opponents of Federation were called.

But there were also a pleasing number of enthusiasts. When the New South Wales Parliament voted for the bill and passed enabling legislation for a referendum, their stipulation was that the Yes vote, even if greater than the No, must total 80 000 or more. Voting was not compulsory, and many would declare it all bloody nonsense and stay away from the poll. Were there 80 000 enrolled Federation enthusiasts in New South Wales? The politically engaged gathered outside the *Sydney Morning Herald* office on referendum day, 3 June 1898, where the voting figures delivered by telegraph were posted on a sort of scoreboard. Many of the No party, however, preferred to make a crowd outside the *Telegraph* office, since the *Telegraph* was so furiously anti-bill. That morning the *Telegraph*’s headlines had read: THE MOMENTOUS THIRD, THE BILL SHOULD DIE TONIGHT, KILLED BY AN OUTRAGED DEMOCRACY ... VOTE FOR THE BILL AND THE STEP IS IRRETRACEABLE. At eight o’clock that night, the *Herald* posted the Yes vote at more than 80 000, and Barton emerged from the hotel where he had been waiting and was carried shoulder-high through the streets. The Federation flag, a white ensign with the Union Jack in one corner and with a blue cross punctuated by the stars of the Southern Cross, was broken out.

But the numbers were wrong; the *Herald* revised them. The final figures were 71 595 Yes, and 66 228 No. The Yes vote did not reach the 80 000 required for success. The anti-Billites rejoiced that Federation was stymied. That same day Tasmania and Victoria had voted powerfully in favour. The next day, so did South Australia. In South Australia the Yes vote had been 67 per cent, in Tasmania 81 per cent, and in Victoria 82 per cent, so that the mere technical failure to reach 80 000 Yes votes in New South Wales seemed a tragedy at the time. There would need to be another series of referenda, and New South Wales could again spoil it! And all the Federationists knew who to blame, that walrus-moustached George Reid, who was seen as having interposed his enormous body between the hope and the realisation of Federation.

The Federalists of New South Wales, led by Barton, kept fighting. Reid also came to realise that if he fell from power in New South Wales, and another Federation referendum was held and, under the influence of what had happened in other states, was won, he would be handing to Barton and

his crew all credit. He would be giving them entitlement and moral claim to represent New South Wales in a national house of Parliament. Besides, the majority who had voted Yes had shocked him. He began to see himself as history might see him—a pure spoiler. He therefore plumped for the idea of the bill, with appropriate amendments.

Barton stood against Reid in his own seat in July 1898, advocating three changes to the constitution bill: the federal capital to be located in New South Wales, the Braddon clause to be removed, and the necessity of three-fifths majority at a joint sitting of Parliament to resolve a deadlock should also be excised. He was narrowly defeated in a campaign which Reid made vicious. But in September Barton was elected for the Hastings and Macleay in a by-election and became leader of the opposition. A desire to replace Barton as both potential future prime minister and leader of the Federal movement led Reid to conduct a second referendum campaign with energy and his normal populist wit. A new referendum was to be held on 20 June 1899.

On the day, 107 420 New South Welshmen voted for Federation by a majority of nearly 25 000. So other colonies, except for Western Australia, passed new enabling acts for a second referendum, and Queensland for a first one. In South Australia Federation was reaffirmed by an even greater vote than before. Victoria and Tasmania voted in July, and in Victoria over 150 000 people voted for the bill and fewer than 10 000 voted against. In Tasmania the No vote was less than a thousand.

In Queensland there had not been much discussion of Federation in the press or politics or in the community, so that those in favour—men like Samuel Griffith—had to work hard and cover great distances to explain it. They found that Federation was most popular along the southern border, where producers looked forward to free access to Victorian markets, amongst sugar growers for the same reason, and in the north and centre of the state, where there was a passion for seceding from Brisbane, which people thought would be easier to do under a Federation. But in Brisbane itself, and the south-east, opposition was strong; manufacturers were worried about open competition with Sydney, and so were many farmers. The referendum in Queensland was held on 2 September 1899. The result was 38 488 in favour to 30 996 against.

Western Australia was yet to accept the bill. Many Western Australians felt that in Federation they would be too far away from the centre of politi-

cal and financial power in the east. So the Western Australians—including Sir John Forrest, the Western Australian who had made a great contribution in the various conventions, who wanted the federal Parliament to have the power to legislate the building of a transcontinental railway—desired to be able to impose their own customs duties on the other colonies and on the world in general for the first five years of Federation. The Western Australian Parliament wanted to give their electors a choice between the bill the other states had passed and the bill with the Western Australian amendments. But in the Legislative Council of Western Australia, the idea of presenting either bill was obstructed.

In January 1900 John Forrest went east to Sydney for the conference of premiers and abandoned three of the Western Australian amendments, but would not yield on the right of Western Australia to go on imposing customs for five years. To avoid making the people vote on Federation all over again, on legal advice an amendment to the bill was managed for the sake of getting Western Australia into the great federal tent.



Since the convention of 1891, New Zealand had taken no part in the framing of the federal constitution. New Zealand was mentioned, however, in Clause 6 as a possible state. In July 1899 a Federation League had been formed in Auckland, and the idea was discussed by politicians, the press and the people. Sir John Hall, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, had said at the 1890 Melbourne conference that the 1200 miles (1900 kilometres) of the Tasman Sea were 1200 reasons why New Zealand should not join an Australian union. Federationists pointed out that this was a very poor argument since steamships connected eastern Australia to New Zealand faster than to Western Australia.

New Zealand and Australia were, in the days of the Federation debate, united economically and socially by the large numbers of people who moved both ways across the Tasman, by the same banks and insurance companies, by trade unions, churches and professional organisations. The network of connections was stronger across the Tasman than it was across the Nullarbor. Yet the reason the Federation cause arose at all in New Zealand was fear of losing access to the Australian market, and Prime Minister Richard Seddon of New Zealand therefore appointed a Royal Commission on Federation.

Seddon's commissioners found that union would not bring a higher form of existence to New Zealanders, and were more interested in the fact that New Zealand would always need its own individual defence force, and that with Federation there would be a loss of independence to create one. Seddon answered the imminent arrival of a Commonwealth by increasing efforts to acquire Samoa, Fiji and Tonga and so make New Zealand the head of an island dominion rather than merely part of an Australian one.

Ultimately, on 17 May 1900, three days after the Commonwealth bill was introduced in the House of Commons in Westminster, the Western Australian Parliament passed an enabling act by which the constitution bill would be submitted to a referendum. On 23 May, Sir John Forrest said he would vote for Federation, even though he was uncertain about the benefits it would bring to Western Australia in the near future. All adults—men and women—who had been twelve months in the colony would be entitled to vote. The referendum was fixed for 31 July, and Sir John Forrest argued hard for a Yes vote, since he knew that to join the Commonwealth was an inevitability for the Western Australians, and they were better off joining now and helping to form policy. Western Australia would, after all, have as many senators as the big states. The anti-Federalists argued that federal control of customs would wreck the finances of Western Australia, and that Section 95, allowing Western Australia to retain intercolonial duties on a reducing scale over five years, was a mere token. On the day of the vote, Yes won by a majority of 25 109. Though country electorates voted against the bill, Perth and Fremantle voted for it by a small margin. On the goldfields, however, 26 000 voted Yes against fewer than 2000 No. Miners had been enraged by new mining regulations and resented the high prices they paid for store goods and freight on the overpriced railway. The goldfields would thus be forever praised or blamed for hauling Western Australia into the Federation.

BOER WAR

And, as the colonies contemplated Federation, they were at war, and if the war lasted long enough would pass it on to the new nation they were making. Famously, when Britain declared war on the Boers of South Africa on 3 October 1899, it was native-born Sir George Turner, Deakin's friend and soon to be first federal treasurer, who declared that 'if ever the old country were really menaced, we would spend our last man and our last

shilling in her cause', a sentiment which would be echoed by Andrew Fisher at the beginning of World War I. In Perth, John Forrest turned on a member who asked questions about the justice of the British cause in South Africa, which seemed to be nakedly expansionist to many throughout the world, and declared, 'We do not want to know.' William Morris Hughes, Labor man, spoke for a sizeable Australian minority when he accused Great Britain of engaging in a cowardly undertaking to bully the Boers out of the gold and diamonds of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Australia sent an extraordinary patchwork of troops to the Boer War, and there were in fact five waves of the Australian contribution. The first were the contingents raised by the Australian colonies after the outbreak of war in 1899 from the militia in the various colonies. The second were the 'bushmen' contingents, paid for by public subscription or wealthy individuals. The third were the 'imperial bushmen' contingents paid for by the government in Britain. Then there were the 'draft contingents' raised by state governments after Federation on behalf of the new Commonwealth government. And towards the close of the war Australian Commonwealth Horse Contingents were recruited by the federal government itself. The 4th Tasmanian, 6th Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian contingents did not reach South Africa until March–April 1901, just over a year before the end of the war. The Commonwealth's contingents did not embark until 1902 and most did not arrive in time for the war.

The first Australians arrived in Cape Town in December 1899 after the 'black week' of 10–17 December when the British lost three engagements with the Boers. By February, Australian mounted regiments were defending a semi-circular position, connected by farmhouses and small hills, at Colesburg, hundreds of miles up the Central Railway in the Northern Cape. Two Australian newspaper correspondents, Alfred Smiler Hayes, writing for the *London Daily News*, and Jack Lambie, correspondent for the *Age*, were amongst the first shot dead, but the Australian troopers, fiercely attacked by confident Boers, just as adept in the saddle and with a rifle as the Australians, fell by the dozens. A regiment of the Wiltshires came up in support and the line was held.

Meanwhile, in February 1900, 500 Queenslanders and New South Welshmen were riding and marching towards Kimberley in the Orange Free State in a great British column led by Lord Roberts. It was tough and

thirsty going. 'We killed our horses and almost killed ourselves to relieve the Diamond City,' wrote *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent Banjo Paterson. He saw many falling over with enteric fever, then the common name for typhoid. Medical facilities were scarce. Banjo wrote, 'Passed some infantry that had been on the march for days and were pretty well exhausted. It was pitiful to see them, half delirious with heat and thirst, dropping out of the ranks and throwing themselves down in the sun, often too far gone to shelter their heads from the sun, but letting their helmets roll off and lie beside them.'

Field Marshal Roberts' advance on Bloemfontein and Pretoria from the west was fascinating in detail, especially as recounted by Banjo Paterson. He brought to the deeds of the Australians the same romantic view he had expressed in 'The Man from Snowy River'. Genuinely remarkable was Trooper Lawrence Palmer of the Australian Horse, who was shot in the head and kept riding and fighting till he fell from his horse from loss of blood. The unworthy joke went around amongst the British that you couldn't stop an Australian by shooting him where the brain was supposed to be.

Men of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles had a part in what was to be their last major battle at Paardeberg in Cape Province in the same month. The Boer army became fragmented thereafter, forming commando units. Mounted troops were suitable for the pursuit of these groups. But enteric fever wiped out so many troopers that it—rather than determined Boer skirmishers fighting for their homes—became the major killer. During a period of rest in the newly captured town of Bloemfontein a further typhoid epidemic broke out because of corpses and human waste in the water supply.

One of Paterson's fellow campaigners was a young English journalist considered both brash and reckless, who would have a massive impact on Australia's future without ever setting foot there. This was Winston Churchill. Paterson and the young Winston Churchill travelled together, though a lot of their time was spent hanging around headquarters. According to Paterson, writing at a time before Churchill had achieved any status as a great politician, the young Englishman said to him, 'This correspondent job is nothing to me; but I mean to get into Parliament through it. They wouldn't listen to me when I put up for Parliament, because they had never heard of me. Now I am going to plaster the *Morning Post* with cables about our correspondent, Mr Winston Churchill, driving an armoured train, or pointing out to

Lord Roberts where the enemy is.' The man was a curious combination of ability and swagger, said Paterson.

From September 1900 Australian troops were sent to sweep the countryside and enforce the severe policy of cutting the Boer guerillas off from the support of their farms and families. It was a long, weary, not particularly meritorious guerilla phase which would last until 1902. It was in the latter phase that Breaker Morant, feeling he had implied authorisation to do so, executed a number of Boers and was himself tried and executed as a result of his actions. The burning of farms, the confiscation of horses, cattle and wagons and the rounding up of the inhabitants, usually women and children, made up a great part of soldiers' activities. So also did the long night rides, followed by an attack on a Boer farmhouse or encampment at dawn. The Boers were generally quickly overwhelmed or flitted into country they knew well. In the last five months of 1901, the New South Wales Mounted Rifles trekked over 1800 miles (3000 kilometres) and were involved in thirteen skirmishes for the loss of five dead and nineteen wounded. They reported killing twenty-seven Boers, wounding fifteen and capturing just under 200.

A majority of people at home became disenchanted as the conflict dragged on, especially as the effect of the war on Boer detainees was reported on by an outraged international press. For by mid-1901 General Kitchener had copied the Spanish procedure for pacifying Cuba and removed women, children and old people from farms, along with any male who surrendered his rifle and took the oath of loyalty, and detained them in concentration camps. The first two camps Kitchener ordered opened were at Pretoria and Bloemfontein. Some 28 000 Boers died in the camps, of whom 22 000 were children. 'It is a war,' complained the Liberal politician Lloyd George, 'not against soldiers but against women and children.' Over 100 000 black Africans were also detained to prevent them from being of use to the Boers.

Two hundred and eighty-two Australians died in action or from wounds, while 286 died from disease, from a total of at least 16 000 men engaged. Without belittling those deaths, the casualty rate caused the public and the authorities to expect a similar lenient death rate in a future great war in Europe.

THE LONDON STRUGGLE

By the time Western Australia voted Yes, a number of Australian delegates who had taken the bill to London, especially Barton and Deakin, were battling

the British cabinet to have it passed without amendment in Westminster. The British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, was a high Tory and in some ways a monocled incarnation of imperial arrogance. He gave very little weight to the fact that Australians, colony by colony, had ratified this bill as it was, and decided it would be necessary to amend it for its passage through the British Parliament.

In London with the New South Wales delegate and unofficial leader of the federal team, Barton, and the Victorian appointee, Deakin, were Charles Kingston, who would represent South Australia, and James Dickson from Queensland.

Dickson was interested in Federation chiefly because Queensland could not risk either isolation nor being written off later as a non-founding state. But in 1900, he was more interested in the Empire than in Federation, and would side with Joseph Chamberlain over the idea that there *should* be enshrined in the constitution a broad right of appeal to the Privy Council of Great Britain against decisions of the High Court. Should, for example, a British company, or indeed any person or body in Australia, lose its case before the Australian High Court, a final appeal could be to the Privy Council of Great Britain, an appeal which had been available to litigants in the colonies.

Sir Philip Fysh, Agent-General for Tasmania, would act as that state's representative in negotiations with the British government, and Sir John Forrest appointed S.H. Parker, a Perth lawyer, who was delegated to get special concessions for Western Australia.

In the published journal he would keep, Deakin would write clear-eyed assessments of his fellow Australian delegates and of the British leaders and nobility they met and dealt with. Deakin was far from being seduced by the supposed splendour and superior wisdom of the British ministry. He also believed that many of those he met would not be in politics except for the circumstances of their birth. Arthur Balfour owed his position, said Deakin, to the fact that he was Lord Salisbury's nephew. Indeed the term 'Bob's your uncle' is said to have derived from the relationship between Lord Salisbury and his nephew. He was the member responsible for pursuing the war in South Africa and had lost a great deal of credit from the exercise. Chamberlain, says Deakin, was by contrast the classic businessman—'Neither student nor philosopher nor man of culture'. The opposition Liberals, by contrast, were more to his taste and had merited their positions to a great degree.

During his meetings in Whitehall with the delegates from Australia, Mr Chamberlain and his officials sat on one side of the table and the Australians upon the other, 'both parties preserving a polite antagonism to each other'. Chamberlain knew that he had an advantage over them—they needed him to guide the bill through Parliament—and he was willing to use that lever.

At that first conference on 15 March, Chamberlain welcomed the delegates and said that the British government had decided not to ask for any amendments except those it deemed absolutely necessary. One of these amendments was to Covering Clause 2, and its objectionable declaration that 'This Act shall bind the Crown'. The claim that the laws of the Commonwealth should be binding upon British ships whose port of clearance or whose port of destination was in the Commonwealth should also be removed. Above all, Section 74, which denied appeals from the Federal High Court to the Privy Council of Britain, could not be permitted, Chamberlain said. Chamberlain wanted it clearly stated too that the Colonial Laws Validity Act, a British act, would apply to all federal legislation. That is, he wanted British legislation to override Australian legislation in the case of any conflict between the two. He also confused the delegates by expressing surprise that the Australians should send troops to the Boer War, a war which had little to do with their own interests.

All the delegates now spoke in reply. Barton made the point that the bill should be accepted with no alteration, but then seemed to yield and say that there should be as little alteration as possible. Deakin seems to have been more direct and confessed his amazement that amendments should be requested so late in the day, when the British could have commented on the bill before it was presented to the Australian people. If any changes were forced on the delegates, then they would need to be referred back to the Australian people, delaying Federation indefinitely. James Dickson, on the other hand, told Mr Chamberlain that the entrance of that colony in the federal compact depended on the Colonial Office interfering to make the constitution acceptable to Queensland, and that the Premier of Western Australia, Sir John Forrest, was only hesitating in calling a referendum because he hoped the Colonial Office would change the bill in Western Australia's favour.

The Australian delegates asked that the amendments be presented in detail the next day. It was, said Deakin, an 'unpropitious beginning'. The

delegates, however, met up privately at their hotel, and Deakin and Barton argued that there should be unity at all costs, and that they must oppose any amendment. This was aimed at stopping Dickson from breaking ranks. The next morning, Deakin, Barton, hulking Kingston and the rest were back in front of Chamberlain demanding again that the draft Australian Constitution, the bill, should be accepted without further consideration and that 'legislative independence [should be] recognised as amply as was that of the United States after their separation'. This was exactly the brand of colonial impudence Chamberlain hated. He confided to one of his British colleagues that if the delegates thought that they were going to get their bill through without amendment, 'he'd see them damned first'. He was determined to insist on some amendment, however small, simply to show them that he was their imperial master.

On 5 April, a conference open to all interested parties was held at the Colonial Office. Chamberlain knew that four of the delegates—the Western Australian Parker feeling he must be solidly with Deakin and the others despite his doubts—would not waver but that there were two, the Tasmanian Fysh and Queensland's Dickson, who were on his side and who could be persuaded to stay on it. Chamberlain began with an attack on the delegates' position. He said the case of New Zealand's trade would need to be assessed and that the desire of Forrest and Parker that Western Australia should go on collecting its own customs duties was a pressing one. He told Deakin, Barton and the others that if they did not give way on this minor point, federation of the states would be delayed.

The responses of the delegates were predictable. Barton answered that it was not within the rights of delegates to consent to an amendment of a constitution already voted on by the Australian electors, and that the delay and expense of a third referendum would be odious to Australians. Kingston declared that he had his instructions from South Australia and he was not intending to ask for further ones. The convention of 1891, he told Chamberlain, composed of representatives from the whole of the colonies, had voted to prohibit any appeals of any kind to the courts of Great Britain. The Australian courts were the Queen's courts just as much as any who sat in Britain. He then said that the good relations between Australia and the mother country should not be disturbed by harmful delay and useless debate.

Now it was Deakin's turn. The main interest of New Zealand, he said, was to go on exporting her goods into Australia, and these goods would be subjected to Australian customs if New Zealand did not join. As for the Western Australians, the concession asked by them was small, but it was the fault of their representatives to the conventions and at the premiers' conferences that this issue had not been worked out then. The issue of the Privy Council and Section 74, the relevant section, was not raised by Britain before the first referendum was held, and this led the Australians to think there was no objection.

By now, the three champions of the constitution, Barton, Kingston and Deakin, had written home suggesting that any reply to the British government sent by a new conference of premiers held to consider the issue should be sent to the delegates first so that they could refine it. That was done. Deakin and company also begged them to state their abhorrence for amendments.

At last Chamberlain told the delegation that the final conference was to be held on 8 May 1900, before the bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 14 May. The meeting began. 'Coldly, with impassive demeanour and sententious deliberation, Chamberlain stated his case.' The argument was still the Colonial Laws Validity Act matter, which of course the delegates saw as an intrusion on Australian sovereignty, and the right of appeal to the Privy Council. Chamberlain accused the delegates, in a voice that vibrated, of not having given proper attention to the amendments.

The three companions had already decided that if Chamberlain did not move they would threaten to leave London since their presence there could no longer serve any purpose. But Barton spoke and forgot to say so, sitting down prematurely to prevent himself completely losing his temper. As for Kingston, he was almost 'inarticulate with suppressed vexation'. Dickson, said Deakin, 'was brief and triumphant'. When Deakin's turn came, he accused Chamberlain and the Colonial Office of having omitted to take notice earlier of the draft constitution which had been extant in various forms since 1891. The only way he could see out of the dilemma was to create the federation and leave it to the federal government to alter the parts of the bill the British wanted altered, but even so he believed the Colonial Laws Validity Act should not apply at all. But, he said, for the British government to insist on the amendments at the expense of the Commonwealth bill 'was a fatal mistake likely to be fruitful of ill will'. The bill was dear to them all, said Deakin, not only because they were amongst its begetters but because it had been so

dearly bought. 'The pride in it and the love of it which the Australian people cherished were sentiments to be studied and not ignored, and to be satisfied, not offended, and might be rendered a motive power of perpetual gratitude.' If Chamberlain and the British cabinet would just accept it!

Chamberlain invited the delegates to dine with him that night. For the three great Federalists it was a wistful, half-amiable dinner. Deakin left early. Barton, Deakin and Kingston met the next day to look at a proposed Section 74 as it was now reframed by the law officers of the Crown. The accepted new Section 74 declared in layman's terms that no appeal should be made to the Privy Council ('the Queen in Council') upon any question which challenged the powers of the Commonwealth, or on any conflict concerning the constitutional powers of states, unless the High Court certified that it should happen. The constitution would not intrude on the Queen's prerogative to give special leave of appeal from the High Court to the council, but the Australian Parliament had the power to limit the matters in which leave could be asked. In other words, the whiphand belonged to the Australian High Court and to the Australian Parliament. And it left Australian laws immune from imperial revision. This gave Australia the effective sovereignty it sought and they realised at once that they had won.

The delegates were delighted, while Chamberlain himself pretended to have prevailed. After the meeting ended and 'the door closed upon them [the delegates] and left them alone, they seized each other's hands and danced hand in hand in a ring around the centre of the room to express their jubilation'. The settlement was announced to the crowded House of Commons by Chamberlain. Chamberlain's speech was, Deakin admitted, masterful. The passage of the bill was assured.

Yet Dickson, Griffith and the Queensland government attacked the compromise Section 74 which put the control of judgments on the constitution back in Australian hands. The Australian Natives Association applauded the delegates as did the South Australian politicians Symon and Downer and the New South Welshman Dick O'Connor, but the rest of Australia, said Deakin, 'shrieked censure upon the daring delegates'. The influential classes of the Australian colonies and the press were determined to strike out the new Clause 74 and leave an unrestricted right of appeal to the Privy Council on all matters. But when the bill passed through the British Parliament, the argument was all at once over, and the naysayers accepted it.

Deakin left London and travelled on the Continent, suffering from a rash of carbuncles, no doubt brought on by the stress of the experience he had been through.

Australia would federate, and the founding documents of the Australian community were signed in Sydney on 1 January 1901. It was time to reach for the bunting and the protocol books.

THE BIRTHDAY

The first Governor-General of the new Commonwealth, part of his task being the exercise of the reserve powers under the Constitution (the giving of royal assent to the bill, the ceremonial headship of armed forces, the invitation to the leader of an electorally successful party to try to form a government, and so on), was a trim little fellow of more charm than charisma, the Earl of Hopetoun. In his care also was put the duty of seeing that Australian legislation did not damage imperial interests.

Hopetoun had been born in 1860, a Scot educated at Eton and Sandhurst on the basis of an enormous family estate on the Firth of Forth. Its management had absorbed him until he became Conservative Whip in the House of Lords in 1883. He was a known quantity to at least some Australians. He had been Governor of Victoria during the 1890s depression and, in that hard-up age, had entertained extravagantly in Melbourne's Government House, a matter of admiration to some and shock to others. But he went on impromptu rides around Melbourne and made friends easily with citizens he encountered.

In 1898 he declined the post of Governor-General of Canada and became Lord Chamberlain, but in 1900, for whatever reason, he accepted the governor-generalship of the Commonwealth of Australia. On the journey to Australia he became ill with typhoid fever, and Lady Ethelred Hopetoun, a more imperious being than her husband, fell ill to malaria.

Tall, robust Premier William Lyne of New South Wales, a dubious Federalist who had, in alliance with Labor, passed an impressive list of reform bills regarding arbitration, work hours and factory reform, had begun to charm Hopetoun as soon as his ship, the *Royal Arthur*, reached Jervis Bay. Like Lord Hopetoun, Lyne loved thoroughbred horses and was a cheery fellow with an infectious laugh. For the ship's arrival in Sydney on 15 December 1900, Lyne organised a great harbour spectacular. On 18 December Lord

Hopetoun asked the advice of a number of men, including the Chief Justice and George Reid, about who should be invited to form a cabinet and, if successful, become prime minister. He did not seem to consult any Federalists. But Lyne was native born, premier of the senior colony, and so was eligible in Hopetoun's eyes, and he issued a commission to Lyne to form a government.

There was outrage amongst Federationists. Deakin wrote to Barton from the Australian Club in Melbourne on 20 December, telling him that the *Age* had accepted Lyne, and the political advisers to the Victorian government were settling down to accepting him too. 'The whole business makes me sick with disgust.' Lyne was, according to Deakin, 'A smooth, sleek, suspicious, blundering, short-sighted backblocks politician.' But Lyne now seemed an inevitability, and by 21 December Deakin was admitting to himself that his objections to Lyne were personal. Accepting him for now would give Barton greater moral and political power, Deakin thought. He told Barton: 'In my judgement it is your duty to join Lyne ... Australia will suffer if you refuse to crucify yourself.'

Lyne now consulted the premiers of three other states—Queensland's Robert Philp, South Australia's Frederick Holder and George Turner of Victoria, all in Sydney for the celebrations. The three premiers told Lyne they believed that Alfred Deakin and a number of leading Federalists would never agree to serve in a Lyne cabinet. Therefore, they said, Lyne could not form a credible government, and so he should advise Lord Hopetoun to send for Barton, who could. When Deakin's and Barton's friends O'Connor, Bernhard Ringrose Wise and Charlie Kingston refused to accept cabinet positions under Lyne, Lyne rode to Government House, returned his commission to Hopetoun, and suggested Barton be immediately called on.

Barton had no trouble in finding a cabinet. He wanted a largely Protectionist cabinet, raising its revenues from tariffs and protecting its people with them. But he sought one which represented all the states. He invited each premier to take a cabinet position. Philp did not want to leave Queensland, and so the sick and soon-to-die Dickson had to serve. Lyne had to be invited in and, to his credit, never became viperous towards Barton. Though his ambitions to be prime minister remained, they would never be fulfilled. Turner of Victoria and Forrest of Western Australia accepted at once, but Holder of South Australia was away on a holiday and could not be reached. So the recent premier and congenial soul Kingston was invited in. Holder would be desolated, but was

promised the post of first Speaker of the House. Likeable Neil Lewis, Premier of Tasmania, accepted but would resign in April before elections took place. And then Deakin and O'Connor, not premiers of the moment but great federal leaders, men dear to Barton, were offered cabinet posts.

Gathered together in the Sydney Domain on the humid New Year's Day of 1901 were mounted Australian troops who had returned from the Boer War, as well as Australasian lancers, infantry and cadets. The colonial troops were to march beneath ten arches between the Domain and the entrance to Centennial Park with detachments of British troops (no doubt pleased to be allotted to these duties rather than to the dreary, typhoid-ridden and deadly war in South Africa) and a detachment from the British army in India.

Yet the procession did not have a predominantly military tone. Billy Hughes, Labor Party member of the New South Wales legislature, decided he would gather 'a goodly bunch of shearers—all mounted, each man with a packhorse, carrying his swag'. The horses would be provided in Sydney. To gather this corps of horsemen Hughes got in touch with the Australian Workers' Union, who selected the men, all union-card shearers. Hughes met them when they arrived by train at Central Station. The shearers and their mounts became his contribution to the great federal nuptials.

For the procession route there was an arch to welcome the Governor-General, there were American, French, German and other community arches, a Citizens' Commonwealth arch, a Melbourne arch, a Chinese arch and so on. Miners wielding picks stood ready on the walls of the coal arch. Beneath these arches would travel the 'allegorical cars'—floats, including ones representing the Canadians, Japanese and Italians.

An Aboriginal arch was attended by sixty Aboriginal men, women and children. The Aborigines had no place in the Constitution except in Section 127, which read, 'In reckoning the number of people of the Commonwealth, or of a state or other part of the Commonwealth, Aboriginal natives shall not be counted.' While the clause might have been motivated by a desire to keep down the contribution per capita of population that the states with large Aboriginal populations, such as South Australia, contributed to initiating the Commonwealth, it would nonetheless continue as a noxious presence within the document.

Two hundred policemen marched with the troops that day, as did silver miners wearing lamps and carrying picks, coal miners, gold miners and

tin miners, all in white with sashes. They were joined by house painters, timber-getters, seamen and maritime engineers, bakers, furniture makers with miniature pieces of furniture on the end of sticks, and so on. Then came two carriages with presidents and secretaries of the Labor Leagues, the executives of major unions and the New South Wales Labor Council. After these came members of lodges and friendly societies. Fire fighters and church leaders preceded the politicians (including those who had opposed the bill), judges and senior academics. A choir of 2000 Catholic schoolchildren stood on the steps of St Mary's to wave and chorale the procession on its way.

It was a characteristic hot and humid midsummer day. In fact, some soldiers collapsed from the heat. In Centennial Park, under a temporary canopy, at a place now marked by an undistinguished little pagoda, the Anglican Archbishop recited the Lord's Prayer, a prayer for the Commonwealth and a prayer for the Governor-General. The Declaration of the Commonwealth and the reading of the Letters Patent of the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, then occurred. The Oath of Office was administered to the new Prime Minister and his cabinet. Deakin shook with the weight of the moment. Barton was Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Lyne was Minister for Home Affairs, Deakin and Turner were Attorney-General and Treasurer respectively, Charlie Kingston was Minister for Trade and Customs, Forrest from Western Australia was Postmaster-General, Dickson of Queensland was Minister for Defence—a gesture to cosset that state—and Neil Lewis the Tasmanian was Minister without Portfolio. The table on which Queen Victoria had signed the Act the previous year had been brought to Australia and was set up under the pavilion in Centennial Park. As commissions were signed by the still-sickly Lord Hopetoun, a hot wind blew some realistic grit in through the flaps to take pretension out of the moment. Papers flew off the table and officials ran around picking them up off the ground. 'God Save the Queen' was sung, as was the Hallelujah chorus, 'Advance Australia Fair' and 'Rule Britannia'.



Edmund 'Toby' Barton was in his early fifties when he became the first Prime Minister of Australia, and he was, appropriately, native born—at Glebe in January 1849. (Equally to be weighed, perhaps, in that era, was his lack

of convict background.) He had been a dazzling student in the classics at Sydney University and went on to do his Master's, and he learned to debate at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. He had organised several inter-colonial cricket matches and umpired in some major games.

Barton was admitted to the bar in 1871 and entered the Legislative Assembly eight years later representing the seat of Sydney University. He was well read and handsome, and loved Shakespearean theatre and the opera. In 1882 Barton, with his considerable knowledge of constitutional law, was appointed Speaker of the House, the youngest yet.

Payment of members, introduced into Victoria in 1870, would not be enacted in New South Wales until 1889, and even after he had become a minister, Barton went on representing clients in legal matters. He became affluent through his work at the bar until a devotion to the Federation cause depleted his finances in the 1890s.

Barton would afterwards describe how ordinarily the government of the Commonwealth began. All the early business was done at a table in a closed-off verandah of a government building, where he was assisted by his secretary, Queenslander Atlee Hunt, Robert Garran, who was to be secretary of the attorney-general's department, and one messenger. The Governor-General would come over daily from Government House to keep up on the planning for elections and for the first opening of Parliament in Melbourne. When Barton moved to Melbourne the state government there gave him similarly cramped quarters to work in.

Barton's first task was to arrange for the federal elections to be held. In the House he would represent the electorate of Hunter, and that January, as the indomitable Jeanie Barton prepared the household for a move to Melbourne, he gave his policy speech to an excited audience in the West Maitland town hall, with both Deakin and Lyne in attendance. He declared that this was 'the first time in history in which it is allowed to one body of men to govern a whole continent'. He promised to find a site for the federal capital as soon as possible, to create a public service and a High Court, and an Interstate Commission to decide revenue disputes between states and the federal government. There must also be federal conciliation and arbitration if there was a national industrial crisis. There must be a federal railway network—he undertook to build railways to Western Australia and to Broken Hill. Female federal franchise would be legislated

early, and so would a federal system of old age and invalid pensions. (As it turned out, these would not be introduced until 1908.) And, he told his enthusiastic listeners, he would introduce laws to prevent an influx of Asiatic labour and any further importation of Kanakas.

The customs department had been pre-recruited and had needed to begin operations from 1 January as the chief source of income for the federal government. 'The power of direct taxation of the Commonwealth I agree is a power not to be lightly or rashly exercised.' Since they had lost customs, the states could now only raise money through income tax. It would be, he said, 'an act of insanity' to do anything to disadvantage the states. However, it would take £700 000 to set up and run a federal government and all its activities, and therefore the Commonwealth tariffs collected by the customs department must be a high one. Within two years of the inauguration of the Commonwealth all intercolonial duties were to be dropped, and the states would immediately reap the advantage of intercolonial free trade. Western Australia could collect at a diminishing ratio over five years. In the meantime, the states should be certain that the tariffs imposed by the new government would suit their people and 'be thoroughly liberal and at the same time of a purely Australian character. The Ministry will not take any action that will have the effect of destroying State industries.'

The first elections were held on 29 and 30 March 1901. The Free Traders—city merchants and squatters and others—did well enough, especially in New South Wales where George Reid led the charge, to be confident that it would not be possible for Mr Barton to raise too high a tariff. A complex tariff system, involving different charges for various imported goods, according to their supposed capacity to undercut local products and manufacturers, would be put in place before the first session of Parliament ended in 1902. It would define Australia—managerial wages were in the age of tariffs no more than four or five times those of skilled craftsmen, and the skilled craftsman earned well. This would be all the work of liberal conservatives in combination at various stages with Labor Party blocs. It did not produce as equal a society as the visionaries wanted, but the historic irony is that the liberal conservatism of men like Barton and Deakin, influenced by the realities of Labor's parliamentary presence, would create better social conditions than would the more doctrinaire systems of industrial equality which came later here and elsewhere in the world.

OPENING BUSINESS

After Parliament was grandly opened at the Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 9 May 1901 by the Duke of York, the first session was held in the Victorian Parliament building and taken up with procedural matters. There were three distinct groupings in the first Parliament—Barton's Protectionists, Reid's Free Traders and the Labor Party led by the congenial Chris Watson. Billy Hughes was elected to the first federal Parliament as a Labor man. Alderman J.C. Beer stood against him in the West Sydney electorate, supported by local shopkeepers who disapproved of Hughes's part in legislating for early closing. Reasonably enough he declared, 'I'm afraid the Federal Parliament will have very little to do with fixing the hours of labour and levelling-up wages by means of minimum-wage acts—that will mostly be left to the states.' And then, a sure vote-winner: 'Our chief plank is, of course, a white Australia. There's no compromise about *that*. The industrious coloured brother has to go—and remain away.' Hughes polled nearly 7000 votes and Mr Beer a little over 2000.

There was no federal organisation yet for the Labor members who were elected to the federal Parliament in Melbourne. The caucus would come from a meeting held two days before Parliament opened and attended by eight Labor senators and fourteen members of the House of Representatives, a meeting at which the federal Labor Party was established.

None of the parties controlled Parliament on its own. And for the first but not last time in Australian history, the Prime Minister lacked the numbers to control the Senate. Whatever laws were passed came from a consensus amongst the members, but consensus was quickly achieved in May 1901 when laws were passed to create a public service for the various departments, appointment to be subject to competitive public examination. By the end of 1902 the Parliament adopted 'first past the post' voting as well as universal female franchise, thereby indirectly forcing those states who had not already given the vote to women to do so on the basis that those who had the right to vote federally also inevitably were entitled to exercise it at the state level. Women could also be candidates for election.

The unlimited franchise for Aborigines was debated and voted down. Only those natives already registered for voting in the states—that is, a minority—could vote in federal elections. By the early 1890s Aborigines could exercise the vote in four colonies, New South Wales, Victoria, South

Australia and Tasmania, and in the Northern Territory. Missionaries urged them to enrol. Yet Western Australia and Queensland excluded Aborigines from voting because they were a high proportion of the population. The Victorian radicals H.B. Higgins and Isaac Isaacs declared that Aborigines lacked the 'intelligence, interest or capacity' to exercise the vote. An amendment excluding them at federal level was easily passed.

Already and most pressingly, in that first year, the Parliament looked to achieve as soon as possible a White Australia through the framing, and passing in September, of an Immigration Restriction Act aimed at ending a Chinese presence, and a Pacific Islands Labourers Act. The states, which as former colonies had restricted Pacific Islanders and Chinese and non-Europeans in general from owning or leasing land or vessels, and from public works and railway building, were moved to impose further restrictions even after the federal government's legislation had passed. It was true that the federal parliamentarians had overwhelming support for their laws concerning race, including and perhaps especially the twenty-two members of Labor.

Deakin, Attorney-General, the first speaker in the immigration restriction debate, declared that the Commonwealth did not want to offend foreigners, and did not argue racial superiority. It was purely a matter of protecting the equity of white Australians in their country. Deakin confessed an intellectual interest in Buddhism and Hinduism, but he wanted to avoid for Australians the poverty he had seen in India. There was also the issue of shared values:

The unity of Australia is nothing, if that does not imply a united race. A united race means not only that its members can intermix, intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies one inspired by the same ideas, and an aspiration towards the same ideals; of a people possessing the same general cast of character, tone of thought—the same constitutional training and traditions—a people qualified to live under the constitution.

Underlying the question of exclusion of Asians from Australia was the problem that Britain devoutly desired friendship with Japan, had already made a trade treaty with it, and that Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, had warned the Australians who attended the Colonial Conference of 1897 to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee that 'to exclude, by reason of their colour, or

by reason of their race, all Her Majesty's Indian subjects, or even all Asiatics, would be an act so offensive to those people that it would be most painful ... to Her Majesty to have to sanction it'.

There were in that first Australian Parliament members who wanted to try to accommodate the British by an indirect method of excluding undesirable races. The government proposed a euphemistically named natal test, under which an immigrant considered undesirable could be prohibited from entering Australia if he failed to fill out in any European language an immigration application, and to write out a passage of fifty words in English dictated by an immigration officer. The test was at the official's discretion—British and other Northern European immigrants would in practice not be subjected to it.

There were a minority of politicians who attacked White Australia. Bruce Smith, a lawyer and member for Parkes until 1919, opposed White Australia as an hysterical policy. The federal government was there to prevent socially unsatisfactory acts by legislation, but not to legislate against cultural tendencies 'inherent in another people, and on that account make them such great opponents'. New South Wales Senator Edward Pulsford predicted that Australia might ultimately be ashamed of the White Australia policy for 'its brutal disregard of the susceptibilities of other nations'. Pulsford was an expert on international trade—in 1903 he published an influential book, *Commerce and the Empire*, in which he argued for open markets and attacked the delusion of Australia's 'preferential trade' with Britain. As he believed in open markets, he believed in open worlds. In 1905 he wrote a pamphlet supporting Japanese objections to White Australia.

After the Immigration Restriction Act was passed, Barton needed to soothe the Japanese Acting Consul-General, who claimed that there was a conflict between the Act and a protocol permitting Asian immigration to Queensland that the British had somehow made Queensland sign as part of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1895. But the Act stood.

While the members of the new Parliament argued in Melbourne about excluding the Japanese and other Asians, the Asian presence in much of northern Australia would continue for some years. Japanese were delayed in their arrival in the Northern Territory and Western Australia by the 1877 revolution of the old military caste of the samurai against the modernised Japanese army, for which many young men were conscripted into the armed forces. Pearling ultimately did bring Japanese to Australia, just twelve

divers to begin with, in June 1884. By the end of 1892 three Japanese-owned pearl luggers were working from Darwin. Having survived with their white fellow-residents the Darwin cyclone of 1897, nearly 300 Japanese lived in the Darwin area by 1898, most of them pearlers, some domestic servants and shopkeepers, some running boarding houses, and one of them a doctor.

But even after the early race legislation of the Commonwealth, Japanese divers remained in the pearl industry, and were considered essential personnel by whites in the north. When the young Commonwealth government decided in 1911 to replace them with Royal Navy-trained divers, the result was a catastrophe; three of the divers died of the bends, and the others left Broome in protest. The import of Japanese divers continued despite the Immigration Restriction Act.

Broome in particular remained a blot on White Australia. It had communities of Manilamen (Filipinos), Malays, Javanese (Indonesians) and Timorese. The pearling luggers were owned by European Australians but employed Japanese, Malay and Aboriginal divers. Many of the Aborigines had children by the Indonesian and Malay divers, in what seemed to be quite genial relationships.

Some things were impervious to race laws. Others were not. As a result of the Immigration Restriction Act, Chinese wives were not allowed to join their husbands as permanent residents, and the hope was that the Chinese would become extinct. In the 1920s and 1930s Chinatowns were cleared for lack of population and for want of any public sympathy. In 1922 the mayor of Cairns was congratulated by his constituents for his 'splendid attempt to wipe Chinatown off the face of the map of Cairns'.

As twin to the Immigration Restriction Act, the Pacific Island Labourers Act was passed under which Kanakas would be returned to their South Sea islands. This pleased Labor, since it meant an expansion of the job market in Queensland. As part of the cleansing the Pacific Islanders were to be repatriated to the New Hebrides and other former recruiting grounds during 1906 and 1907. Intervention from the Colonial Office in Whitehall and from islander supporters in Queensland who did not now want to see these people simply ejected irrespective of their ties to Queensland meant that some remained. Men already married into other racial groups often lay low as the police rode the Queensland hinterland looking for islanders. Some 4300 islanders, families severed or not, were returned to the islands.

TOBY ABROAD

Edmund Barton displayed considerable powers of tact and conciliation in both cabinet and in the House, but he was disorganised in administration and had never had a gift for political tactics. He needed to cobble together a different majority for almost every piece of legislation. When he delayed putting to Parliament the question of an £8000 allowance for the Governor-General, Hopetoun resigned at the delay. But when he went to England to attend the coronation of Edward VII and the Colonial Conference of 1902, he negotiated a new naval agreement with the UK. Believing an Australian navy was not yet viable, he pledged £200 000 to keep a British squadron based in Sydney. Barton now accepted a knighthood, having refused one three times before, and he received an honorary doctorate from Oxford. But Australian sectarianism burst forth when he visited the Pope and was given a Papal Medallion. Not only was the Vatican the Whore of Babylon, but Catholics in Australia were contributing money to support those arguing for Home Rule, Irish self-government, in the Parliament in Westminster. Barton was attacked in particular by the Reverend Dill Macky, a famous sectarian, who organised a petition of condemnation signed by 30 000 Protestants.

Back home in January 1903 Barton clashed with the new Governor-General, Lord Tennyson. Son of the renowned poet, Lord Tennyson had already made enemies while Governor of South Australia by speaking out independently, and not on his ministers' advice, on the business of appeals to the Privy Council. Barton had to visit Government House in Melbourne and remind the Governor-General that it was his duty to accept the advice of his ministers. Meanwhile, the Naval Agreement Act, to pay for a British naval squadron based in Australian waters, was carried in the House.

In September 1903, Barton resigned, attracted to another post offered him. It is hard to say whether Barton was designed for the prime ministership. His secretary, Atlee Hunt, would complain about Barton's lack of application, his willingness to waste his own time and that of others, and his weakness for perception-clouding drink. Deakin took his place, though it would only be until the election of April 1904, when Labor under Chris Watson would be able to form government. Within a few days of his resignation Barton was appointed a judge of the new High Court of Australia.

When World War I began, Barton was still on the High Court and agreed with the Commonwealth's defence power and its extensive control of the

civilian economy during the war. Barton enjoyed life even then. He liked to dine and go to the races, and went to Tasmania for the summer law vacations. His closest relationship was with his eldest daughter Jean. His son Wilfred was the first New South Wales Rhodes scholar and was serving in the British army in France when Sir Edmund visited England with his wife and daughter. On 10 June 1915, he was sworn into the British Privy Council, the same body of appeals which had been so fiercely argued over in 1900. In 1920 a heart attack led to the sudden death of Australia's first prime minister.

BY NAME ALONE

The future Australian Labor prime minister Andrew Fisher was born in Scotland—in 1866 in Cross House, a coal mining town near Kilmarnock. He grew up in a family of seven, the children and grandchildren of militant coal miners. His father was a trade unionist and one of the founders of the local co-operative society. His own suitability for mining was diminished by impaired hearing, which would plague him his entire life. During his childhood his father grew fatally ill with pneumoconiosis, commonly known as 'dusted lungs'. Thus, Fisher's formal education lasted only until he was ten. From that point, his mother needed his wages, and he began to work the typical twelve-hour day in the pits. He nonetheless managed to attend night school in Kilmarnock and use the library of the local co-operative, and was particularly influenced by the works of his fellow Scots, Robbie Burns and Thomas Carlyle, and by the American Ralph Waldo Emerson. At seventeen, he was elected secretary of the Cross House branch of the Ayrshire Miners' Union. James Keir Hardie, later credited with being the founder of the British Labour Party, held the position of general secretary of the union for some years, and Fisher was obviously influenced by him. Fisher had a gentle demeanour and was, like so many progressive Australian politicians, a devout Presbyterian. But he was effective enough as an organiser to have been twice blacklisted by pit owners because of his union activities.

Accompanied by his brother James, he arrived in Queensland on the *New Guinea* in August 1885. After unsettled beginnings, and unlike many other immigrants, he found the promises inherent in Australia fulfilled. He was involved in the sinking of a new mine at Burrum for the Queensland Colliery Company, and became the manager of the pit. By 1887 he was a miner but also shareholder of the Dudley Coal and Investment Company.

He left Burrum to settle on the goldfields of Gympie. Here, too, the miners were shareholders. But working as a miner at North Phoenix Number One field, and serving on the committee of the Australian Miners' Association, he was involved in an 1890 strike for half-holiday Saturdays for miners, and was sacked. Fisher had every chance to enter the ranks of management and capital, but consistently sided with union decisions.

Though still a moderate, Fisher was subject to further black listings for union activity. Again, there existed in his mind no contradiction between Fisher the banned miner and Fisher the superintendent of the Presbyterian Church, the member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the shareholder in the Gympie Industrial Co-Operative Society he helped found, and the member of the local unit of the Colonial Defence Force. Christianity was no enemy of wage justice, industrial safety or collective action. By 1891, he was also was president of the Gympie branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association and president of the Gympie branch of the newly formed Labor Party.

Fisher and other Labor candidates in Queensland first stood in the 1893 Legislative Assembly election, and Fisher won Gympie and held his seat for three years. He was an open-faced handsome man. He spoke in a strong Scots accent and was fond of cricket and chess. But he was a poor orator. He lost his seat in 1896, and because he attributed a great part of his loss to the lies of the *Gympie Times*, as well as starting a new job as an engine driver, he established a newspaper, the *Gympie Truth*.

He wrote a great deal of the copy but a bout of typhoid in 1897 forced him to concentrate purely on the paper's management. When he won his seat back in 1899, he was a member of the first Labor government elected anywhere in the world—however transitory, unstable and minority it was—a phenomenon which seemed to convince many in the outside world that Australia must be the working man's utopia. The government lasted only from 25 November to 7 December, and fell due to the failure of a coalition with Liberals, or as they were sometimes called Ministerialists.

Fisher devoted his energies to campaigning for the proposed Commonwealth before the Queensland referendum of 1899. In the first federal elections in March 1901 he won the seat of Wide Bay, and in May met in Melbourne with the other newly elected Labor parliamentarians to form a Commonwealth Labor Party.

In 1901 Fisher married Margaret Irvine, his Gympie boarding house land-lady's daughter. She was a Sunday School teacher in the program of which Fisher was superintendent. In her late twenties—an advanced age for marriage according to the perceptions of the time—she was marrying a man near forty. Margaret took part in street marches organised by the Alliance for Women's Suffrage and would be an active supporter of women's suffrage.

The same year that Andrew Fisher married Margaret, one of his brothers died in the north of England. Another had been killed in a mining accident in India in 1893 and yet another in a railway accident in Canada in 1895. In the meantime, Margaret Fisher bore five sons and one daughter, with another child stillborn.

In April 1904, Fisher would have a part in activating the first Labor government of the new federation. He moved an amendment designed to include state employees under the terms of the conciliation and arbitration legislation. Deakin, the prime minister, opposed the amendment, but in the following vote it was carried and Deakin resigned and Chris Watson, born in Chile, raised in New Zealand, took office, with Deakin's Liberals now the junior side of the coalition. Fisher had never wanted the alliance Chris Watson had made with Deakin's Liberal Party, but thought it could be tolerated while ever Deakin's men supported Labor projects. So a minority Labor government, led by Chris Watson with Fisher as Minister for Trade and Customs, came into being. The administration did not last long. Its collapse came in August as a result of Watson's version of the same Conciliation and Arbitration Bill being voted down.

Chris Watson suddenly resigned as leader of the party in October 1907, pleading ill health. This time Fisher, a Labor protectionist, defeated the Labor Free Trader Hughes for the leadership. He was able to neutralise Hughes's ironic bitterness through the respect even his opponents in caucus had for him.

Up to now Fisher had been on the left of his party, and saw society as a rift between the workers and the 'speculating classes'. Nonetheless, mutual appeasement was possible. In a presidential address to the ALP in 1908, he said: 'There are two ways open—the universal strike, and the other way of providing the necessary courts to see that the worker gets his remuneration. I am for the latter ... we can do in parliament for the workers what we could not accomplish by the universal strike.'

In November 1908 Labor, which was again in unofficial coalition with the Deakin government, defected from its alliance because it thought a set of Deakin's proposed tariff laws too weak to protect the workers. Deakin's government collapsed. Fisher was invited to form a government and so became prime minister and Treasurer in Labor's second minority government.

The emergence of Labor governments at federal level in Australia had an impact on labour movements everywhere else on earth, and Keir Hardie was one of many British Labour MPs who sent congratulations. The press reaction was anti-Labor, but Fisher himself was treated with a sort of patronising respect. His hold on government was tenuous, since the party always had to come to terms with its Liberal partners.

Under Fisher's prime ministership an amendment to the 1904 Seat of Government Act stipulated that the Yass-Canberra area would be the site of the new federal capital. As we will see, none of this settled the matter anyhow. And none of this was as important as giving the Commonwealth more power over wages and prices, measures Fisher was unable to get through the House. Like Deakin before, he was a promoter of the necessity for a navy to protect the shores of a White Australia. He believed that fast 'torpedo destroyers' were better protection for Australia than the massive dreadnoughts many conservatives wanted. In the end he reluctantly accepted the idea of acquiring a dreadnought, a symbol of a serious navy, from Britain. He ordered three torpedo destroyers and, to the disgust of some radicals, he introduced, at the suggestion of British general Kitchener, a scheme of compulsory military training.

By May 1909, Deakin's Liberals were tired of being dragged along by Labor's cries for more social reform than they desired, and Deakin had made a secret alliance with Joseph Cook, a former Lithgow miner and Labor man, soured by years of unsuccessfully pushing the Free Trade barrow. The new group, known as the Fusion Party, was led by Deakin and Cook, with Deakin as prime minister. People did not approve of the opportunism Deakin and Cook had shown and in April 1910 the Labor Party won at the polls and for the first time had control of both Houses of federal Parliament. Deakin would remain in the House but slowly fade. He had always had a tendency to work to the point of nervous or physical breakdown, and he now suffered from this over-exertion. He retired from Parliament in 1913, and lived reclusively near Ballarat, occasionally active, occasionally

travelling, always haunted not by his successes but his failures, always arguing with God about the value of existence. From 1916 a mental fog engulfed him and he would die an isolated death, watched over by his wife Pattie, in 1919.

With his mandate at the polls in 1910, Fisher was able to make his own policies for a trans-continental railway and new levels of social welfare. He created the Commonwealth Bank, of which he was the first depositor, a bank 'directly belonging to the people and directly managed by the people's own agents'. His government also legislated for the establishment of an Australian note issue for the whole Commonwealth, instead of the blizzard of individual bank-based notes with which people then did business. The new notes were at first mocked as 'Fisher's flimsies'. Other acts gave preference to unionists, lowered the criteria for pensions, provided workers' compensation for industrial accidents and disease, and introduced a maternity allowance granted to the mother on the birth of her child, 'the baby bonus'. He saw these reforms as a recognition of rights rather than a granting of privileges. Not 'the slightest stigma of charity [is] attached to this allowance proposal'. He knew that 'many women go through the most trying period of their lives, ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-equipped, without assistance, and with nothing left of them but a proud spirit'.

Fisher's house in Albert Park was now well peopled with his sons, his beloved daughter Peggy, his wife, and her mother and sisters. On a visit to Britain on official business in 1911, Prime Minister Fisher was informed he had been appointed a Member of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council. Apart from its judicial section, which was the final court of appeal in the Empire, and to which Australians could make appeals from High Court decisions with the High Court's permission, membership of the Privy Council had diminished in importance since the time of James II. But most Britons would still kill for the honour of being a member. Fisher, awkward about the offer, and perhaps knowing the appointment would not impress many of his Australian followers, begged off attending a Privy Council meeting convened to swear him in, using the excuse that he had an engagement in Kilmarnock—as he did, to meet members of the family. Correspondence between the Privy Council and Fisher became increasingly terse as it became clear that he hoped to leave the country without ever taking the oath and joining the Council. Eventually he was told that the King had consented to his being appointed to the office by an 'Order in Council',

an edict no Briton could disobey. He was warned that the next time he came to England he would have to be sworn in. It is unlikely that anyone else in history put up such a struggle to reject such an honour.

Such was the earlier career of an Australian politician now nearly forgotten. It would take on added significance when as a result of his government's legislation, though after Joseph Cook came to power in 1913 by a majority of one in the House of Representatives, the Australian navy emerged out of the Pacific. Appearing before the eyes of the public, the heavy cruiser *Australia*, launched by Lady Reid, wife of Sir George, in Glasgow, accompanied by the light cruisers *Sydney*, *Melbourne* and *Encounter* and the destroyers *Warrego*, *Parramatta* and *Yarra*, made their formal entry into Australia one early morning in October 1913. Lining the heads and foreshores, people had greeted her arrival as a validation of the new nation. The *Sydney Mail* wrote that here were 'ships of defence bought in love of country and Empire'. Though they were officially greeted as, to quote the *Herald*, 'harbingers of peace', the sailors and the public were aware of a formidable German East Asian Cruiser Squadron operating in the Pacific and led by Admiral Graf Spee. Billy Hughes would say of *Australia* and its flotilla that but for it 'the great cities of Australia would have been reduced to ruins, overseas trade paralysed, coast wide shipping sunk, and communications with the outside world cut off'.

The war having begun, Cook used his loyalty to Britain as a stick with which to beat a popular Labor Party, but the fact was that Fisher was as engaged in the issue as Cook was. In Benalla the day war was declared, Fisher told an audience, 'In a time of emergency there are no parties at all. We stand united against the common foe.' Most of his party were with him, although some saw the war fervour as a potential underminer of workers' welfare.

In September 1914 Cook deliberately brought on a double dissolution by trying to push through the Senate legislation to abolish preferences for union members. Hughes, Fisher's deputy, demanded that the election be postponed and that the Parliament support Cook for the duration of the conflict. Hughes wrote to Fisher, 'All ideas about having an election at the moment when our very existence is at stake, must be set aside.' If Labor renounced its almost certain victory at the polls, argued Hughes in a slightly

serpentine manner, Cook's carping and attacks on the loyalty of Labor would merely show he was putting his 'wretched party interests' above those of the nation. But the people wanted to hear only about the war and government existed only to deal with the war, and it should be one government.

Hughes's argument was an omen of the little Welshman's ultimate identification with the war, his intense sense that Australia should be involved not only for love of Empire but to make Australia safe from German ambitions and German warships in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is hard to recapture the urgency of that hour, the sense of threat at home Australians felt as well as the intimate sense of the threat abroad to the Empire.

But Fisher proceeded with the election campaign because he felt it impossible to work with the difficult Cook. Labor won. Although he had hope for diplomatic solutions, Fisher was now prime-minister-at-war. Under his aegis the AIF (Australian Imperial Force) would sail off to its various conflicts and the Australian navy take to seas from Northern Europe to the South Pacific.

With the war, and intimations it would not quickly end, Fisher was presented with demands for conscription, which he avoided since he knew it would split the party and its followers. Hughes complained from the start that Fisher was not aggressive enough to lead a nation in wartime.

The premiers of the states fought Fisher's plan to standardise the rail system as a first step in Australia's defence. But he held out to Australians his belief, which Hughes would never share, that when the war ended there could arise 'a great international tribunal' to resolve conflicts. He told his party that the 'great war was taking place because we were in a transition period from an era of capitalism, where there was commercial greed, to an era when the toiling masses of the world would have more control over international affairs'. Under pressure from such delegates to the Labor Party conference as young John Curtin of the Timber Workers' Union, who wanted protection from wartime 'price brigands', Fisher wanted to hold a referendum to give the federal government power to fix prices. But the states would undermine the proposition and the referendum was never held.

After the failure of August offensives on Gallipoli, a young journalist named Keith Murdoch wrote a damning 8000 word report on the Gallipoli campaign and sent it to Fisher and a number of leading British politicians. In London, the Australian High Commissioner, Fisher's old leader Chris Watson, was urging that Australia send its last man into the battle, a concept

that alarmed and haunted the prime minister. Empire loyalists attacked him for not doing enough for the war effort, while his faithful attacked him over war profiteering, and he bore the knowledge that Australia's finest children were being uselessly killed or maimed beyond repair on Gallipoli. In poor physical and mental condition, Fisher nonetheless came to agree with Hughes on the conscription issue, even though he despised the man. At one time, he tried to get him out of the way by offering him the post of High Commissioner in London, which Hughes declined. Now Fisher was being offered that role should *he* resign. He did so on 30 October 1915.

The sacrifice Fisher made in resigning, at least in so far as it was a sacrifice, would prove futile, since the Labor Party would split on conscription. Fisher worked for Australia's interests in London and in support of the AIF. He had established a working relationship and friendship with General Birdwood, the Commander-in-Chief of Australian and New Zealand forces in Europe. When, through Birdwood, he was offered the *Legion d'Honneur*, he refused, according to his vow never to accept such honours.

Fisher returned to Australia in 1921 and made a few gestures towards entering Parliament again, but he already had health problems and the onset of dementia. He returned to live in Britain in 1922, and tried but failed to get British Labour endorsement for a Scottish seat. He died in London in 1928.

SURF

Federation coincided with the emergence of a new relationship between Australians and the ocean. From 1810 there is evidence of Australians using their surf beaches for picnics, particularly the natural lawns and bush behind the beaches. But when, as early as 1877, surf-bathing began there were outcries about beach rowdiness and immoral practices. A bill was debated in the New South Wales Parliament in 1894 which sought to legislate for minimum legal public clothing, since there were bathing costumes that left 'the larrikins of Sydney with their abdomens bare and exposed to the view of females'.

The nineteenth-century ideal Australian was the selector. Coastal people, especially in the cities, were not as noble as those who were being tested and ennobled by the bush. In the poetry of the now largely urban Paterson and Lawson, figures such as Clancy of the Overflow transcended the urban mob, Clancy having 'the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended' while

city people had 'stunted forms and weedy' since they had 'no time to grow'. Henry Lawson similarly confessed,

*I look in vain for traces of the fresh and fair and sweet
In sallow, sunken faces that are drifting through the street.*

Those who went surf-bathing in the late nineteenth century were not culture heroes but larrikins, a word which then had the same meaning as 'lout'. And larrikinism was a product of all things mean, including Catholicism and slums. A correspondent had written to the *Bulletin* in 1887: 'Larrikinism is a disease begotten of sacerdotal slavery, hypocrisy, poverty, destitution, ignorance, bad housing, class oppression, and environment, and want of rational and elevating amusement.'

By 1900, however, the surf was becoming the place that in some minds gave fibre to the city dweller. As the popular, illustrated *Sydney Mail* wrote, the 'combat with the curling breakers ... and the exultant feeling of physical energy actively exerted in the open air vibrates through this summer seaside'. Surf-bathing and 'breaker-shooting' at Manly, Bondi, Coogee, Long Bay and elsewhere were quite suddenly not only a national pastime, but a rival to the bush myth. Paterson's city people of pallid face and nervous haste were soon rushing for the trams to Bronte or Bondi or Brighton. And a ferry trip to Manly could release the city dwellers from their urban greyness.

By 1905, Manly presented itself as being a sanatorium as well as a place of recreation, but that year up to a thousand surfers a day of both sexes—'families and friendly parties'—were seen in the surf on hot days. Many, including councillors and clergy, were scandalised, and they and the mayor of Waverley, R.G. Watkins, were fighting a rearguard action against surf-bathing when the 1907 swimming season began, and were particularly exercised about surf-bathers and sunbathers. 'After contact with water, the V-trunks favoured by many of the male bathers, show up the figure ... in a very much worse manner than if they were nude.' The chief anxiety seemed to have been the embarrassment of women visitors to the beaches caused by male nakedness rather than male lust caused by brazenness amongst the young women bathers.

But by now surf-bathing was not only believed to be healthy and invigorating, and a blessing to 'thousands of the toilers in the metropolis', but

surf-bathers were becoming middle-class heroes. In 1907 the *Sydney Morning Herald* described a gathering of surf-bathers at Bondi Beach as 'decidedly handsome, Roman centurions'. The beach was at the same time a venue for human equality, open to all, free of payment. 'The surf is a glorious democracy', one commentator, Egbert T. Russell, wrote in 1910. 'Plain primitive manhood and womanhood are the only tests the surf-bather applies to distinguish one from another.' The beach was even preparing Australian men for future national conflicts. A.W. Ralph, in 1908 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote, 'When Australia needs them, as someday no doubt she will, these men, training athletes, tan with the sun on the beaches, strong and brawny with the buffeting in the surf, will be well-fitted to take up their trust and do duty for their country.' Surf lifesaving clubs began to form, taking on themselves the duties of safety and rescue but also of keeping good order.

By the 1920s Harvey Sutton, former Olympic athlete and Professor of Preventive Medicine and Director of the School of Tropical Health at the University of Sydney, was helping the popularisation of surfing for its eugenic benefits for men and women. In the post-war suburbs, the idea that the surf could produce a better race was solidly entrenched as a sport and an engine to produce a better, unique race.

ACCENT ON THE 'CAN'

'I name the capital of Australia, Canberra,' declared young Lady Denman, wife of the Governor-General Lord Denman, good friend of Andrew Fisher, in an Australian paddock one blustery hot day in 1913. 'The accent is on the "Can".' Lord Denman suffered from hay fever and he may have asked his wife to make the announcement so that his own speech should not be interrupted by sneezes. Thus a spot on the Canberry Plains of the Monaro was consecrated to this high national purpose, and a considerable contest between competing locations came to an end.

A 'prohibitory arc', mentioned in Section 125 of the Australian Constitution, ran north, west and south of Sydney. The federal capital when chosen could not lie within it. Beyond it, bush municipalities of New South Wales and their politicians competed for some years to become the federal capital. Bathurst, for example, formed its own Bathurst Federal Capital League in 1900 in its desire to become the capital. A local man, Price Warung, was employed by Bathurst to write a booklet entitled, *Bathurst, The Ideal Federal Capital*.

In his words, Bathurst was desirable for its 'centrality and accessibility; salubrity; and capacity for impregnable defence'. Bombala, a timber and wool town in the south-eastern mountains of New South Wales, had its passionate local promoters pushing the idea that it could be capital and Eden its port. The similarly upland village of Dalgety would prove to have great endurance as a possible site. Commonwealth Commissioners appointed after Federation to consider the location of the capital suggested the region of Albury. So did Sir William Lyne, who relentlessly pushed for the Albury area, and in particular Tumut, within his electorate, to be the capital of the new Federation. He was sure that the Victorians would be happy with a capital closer to Melbourne than to Sydney. Queensland, however, wanted the capital to be as far north as possible, and some therefore liked the Armidale area.

One remarkable member of the new federal Parliament was particularly passionate about building an august capital. This was King O'Malley, born—he claimed—in Canada in 1858, a circumstance which if true gave him automatic British citizenship. In reality he seemed to have been born in Valley Falls, Kansas. He arrived in Brisbane around 1888, and tried selling insurance in Melbourne and Tasmania, and then in Western Australia, before settling in Adelaide. Here he became a successful insurance agent and, by emphasising his Canadian origins, was elected to the House of Assembly in 1896. In 1901, a month after the federal Parliament first assembled, he joined the Australian Labor Party. On 19 July that year, O'Malley moved in the Parliament a bill to set aside an area of not less than a thousand square miles (approximately 1600 square kilometres) for the ultimate federal capital. His thousand square miles was larger than some had previously envisioned.

Members of the House of Representatives and Senators, including the irreverent Labor sprite William Morris Hughes, made a number of tours of possible sites from March 1902 onwards. On their first expedition they travelled out into drought-stricken regions near Albury and then to Tumut, in both of which places people told them the conditions were not normal and therefore that they could expect better things in the future if they put the capital there. Later in the year, when the delegation rolled up the coastal range into Bombala by enclosed wagon, a fierce mountain wind blew all day and the coaches became, said Hughes, 'perambulating refrigerators'. The local policeman did not help by telling the visiting politicians that he had lived in Bombala for fifteen years 'and I declare to God this is the warmest

winter I have ever known'. But it was only at Bombala, they would report, that they saw enough water to support a new city. Billy Hughes, travelling with the party, found nearby Dalgety, west of Bombala in the Snowy Mountains, a 'frozen waste'. Descending into the Monaro region, they found that the drought-stricken Lake George, pushed by local pastoralists, an unreliable environment.



At last, a non-preferential ballot took place in the House of Representatives on 8 October 1902. In this first ballot Bombala got sixteen votes and Lyndhurst (the whistle-stop village in Reid's electorate, almost halfway between Bathurst and Cowra) and Tumut fourteen each. On the final, fourth ballot, Tumut beat Lyndhurst by thirty-six votes to twenty-five. In Tumut, the town crier went through the streets shouting the wonderful news.

George Reid and many Sydney members of the House were appalled that the capital would end up so much closer to Melbourne than to Sydney. When the bill resulting from the ballot was sent to the Senate, the New South Wales senators described the selection of a site a dog show. A Victorian senator said the New South Wales speeches against Victorian interests were no better than 'the outpourings of a sewer'. The Senate sent the bill back to the House of Representatives for re-consideration and, believing this would be the pattern time after time, Prime Minister Deakin dropped the matter.

In 1903 Lyne prepared a seat of government bill which involved proposing an act with the name of the chosen site as a blank, but members said they 'did not feel inclined to stand up and discuss a blank'. Chris Watson was next to try to finalise the issue. In 1904, as prime minister, he introduced a new bill which called for the federal territory to be within a square thirty miles (48 kilometres) in length and breadth. As a result of a new parliamentary ballot Bombala was now chosen, replacing Tumut, but not definitively. During the debate Tumut had been considered too low-lying, so Lyne scoured his electorate and came up with Tooma.

In despair and self-interest, others argued that Sydney and Melbourne should host alternate sessions of federal Parliament. On 9 August 1904, there was yet another House of Representatives ballot and Tumut mourned yet again as the Dalgety site near Bombala was voted in. Even as this ballot took place, the New South Wales principal engineer, L.A.B. Wade, had been

surveying the region between Yass, Goulburn and Queanbeyan and found it satisfactory, and the federal leaders showed no interest in rushing their parliament up to the wild environs of Dalgety.

The next potentially significant stage occurred some years later when, in early 1907, John Forrest, acting prime minister while Deakin was away attending a Commonwealth conference in London, visited the pastoral area Wade had nominated, a region which had been named Canberra or Canberry since it was settled. Forrest knew it had its advocates but declared it possessed 'Nothing of particular importance in either scenery or great natural features... There are no rising knolls for public edifices'. The summer of 1907–08 dried up most of the water in every site other than the Canberra region, however, and so Canberra passed an important test.

So by March 1908 Deakin, in his second prime ministership, wrote to Wade for copies of all reports on Canberra and its region. He delayed the bill until April, and then muddled the waters by saying, 'The supremacy of Dalgety is unchallengeable.' The urgency which had fuelled him towards Federation did not possess him when it came to choosing the national capital. He was, after all, a Victorian, and how convenient it was for him and the other Melburnite members to catch a tram to the federal Parliament in Spring Street instead of finding their way to a paddock in Monaro. The argument rolled on.

Sir John Forrest, however, urged his fellow members on 'because Federation will never be complete', he said, until the choice was made. In fact, a bill called generally the Dalgety Bill, reflecting Deakin's preference, was before Parliament, and when the House resumed at the end of September 1908 the debate began again. There seemed to be anxiety amongst members about the choice of Dalgety, its inaccessibility and its severe winters, and a growing enthusiasm for Canberra could be detected. 'If we go to Dalgety,' said William Morris Hughes, 'the climate will kill half the older men in parliament.'

On the evening of 1 October 1908, the House of Representatives agreed to have a new ballot. By the seventh round of the ballot Canberra was emerging as the choice. On the next ballot Canberra gained further support from those whose favoured locations had been eliminated, particularly from George Reid's Lyndhurst and Lyne's beloved Tooma. On the ninth and last ballot 'Yass-Canberra' beat Dalgety by thirty-nine votes to thirty-three.

In the Senate, which needed to confirm the decision, Canberra won against Dalgety by nineteen votes to seventeen. So when Andrew Fisher became Labor prime minister in November 1908, he took the Seat of Government (Yass-Canberra) Bill to its second reading and got it through both Houses. The argument about seats, municipalities and pastures was over.

Between November 1908 and April 1910, Australia had three prime minister-ships—Fisher, Deakin for a third time by creating a Fusion Party out of the three non-Labor groupings, and then Fisher for a second time by election, the first prime minister to have a majority in both Houses. Fisher now had much on his mind, so King O'Malley, as Minister for Home Affairs, was left to pursue the capital issue.

He decided that Australia must build the finest capital city in the world. Early in 1911, when Fisher's government announced the competition for the design of the city, O'Malley claimed for himself the right to make the final choice of three designs put forward to him by the selection board. O'Malley, like Billy Hughes, was a believer in the idea that Australia had a huge population growth ahead of it, and the conditions of the prize were that the city designs should be for an initial population of 25 000. By the closing date at the end of January 1912, seventy-two entries had arrived in Melbourne in large crates, and a display of the entries was organised at Government House.

Design twenty-nine came from an architect in Illinois, Walter Burley Griffin. It and a design by Eliel Saarinen of Finland, and another by Professor Alfred Agache of Paris, were the finalists. Agache saw the Molonglo as a potential mini-Paris and his was the only design to include an airport. Saarinen's Canberra was highly formal and classical, with major water features. It demanded cutting the hills and filling lower ground. Of these designs, that of the thirty-five-year-old Walter Burley Griffin was selected by O'Malley, as it had been by two of the three-man board. Griffin's technique involved simple, well-balanced designs, such as that of his proposed federal Parliament. All official buildings were to share the same scale and principles of size so that, looked at from any direction, they 'worked together into one simple pattern'. There was to be a lack of great towers. He argued that if you took up neo-classical architecture and built to reflect the great buildings of Europe, the results would be not grand but bizarre. And there were to be

radial roads as favoured by an Australian architect, John Sulman, who would design the famous Canberra Civic buildings. He also wanted to retain vistas of the surrounding mountains. Lakes were to run at right angles across the main road system.

In the Australian style, there were immediate attacks on the winning design in most major newspapers. Many wanted grand classical buildings of the kind Australia lacked, and Palace of Versailles fountains. O'Malley himself sought to pick what he considered the best aspect from all three designs. He claimed that the conditions of the contest gave the government the right to use whatever it liked from all the entries. O'Malley referred the final designs to a departmental board for its advice and it produced a hybrid in which Griffin's plans were dominant but not totally pursued.

On 20 February 1913, construction of the city was formally commenced at a stage when the disappointed Burley Griffin was far away in Chicago. O'Malley drove the first survey peg into open ground amongst gum trees. It was on 12 March that the chief ceremony, involving the naming of the city officially would be held. Trains from Sydney and Melbourne came to Queanbeyan and brought, amongst other citizens, motion picture cameramen. The visitors moved in long lines of automobiles, cabs, sulkies, buggies and bicycles from Queanbeyan to the ceremonial site within the Capital Territory, inside whose margins O'Malley had prohibited what he called 'stagger juice'. 'Canberra' was of course expected to be the name announced. But as a result of government invitation, there had been 750 suggestions for the capital's name. They included Sydmelbane, Sydmelperadbrisho, Wheatwoolgold, Kangaremu and Eucalypta. Others included Reveneulia, Gonebroke, Swindleville and Fisherburra. Those who did not like the prohibition on alcohol gave it names such as Thirstyville.

Andrew Fisher, King O'Malley and the sneeze-prone Lord Denman laid three stones for a proposed Commencement Column which would never be built, and then Lady Denman made her statement: 'I name the capital of Australia, Canberra.'

In the end Griffin would be brought to Australia to work on the scheme, but constant intrusions by bureaucrats drove him out by 1920. Early Canberra, according to Burley Griffin's plan, hunkered low in the Molonglo Valley presenting very little of the greened aspect the city would later have. Cynics called it a good sheep station spoiled. On 9 May 1927, the federal

Parliament would gather for the first time in the long, plain three-storey parliament building, but there had been something less than a rush to come to Canberra. Even by 1941 its population was barely 10 000, mainly bureaucrats and their families. The capital's airfield was a rustic grass strip which had to be tested for firmness before planes could land there.

But it was the capital.

THE TRICK OF AVIATION

Even allowing for the enthusiasm with which the rest of the world took to powered aviation, the Australians seized upon it with a prodigious vigour based on the size and unnegotiable nature of much of the interior and the ability of a flying machine to nullify distance. But aviation first appeared in Australia as a kind of magic trick, an extension of conjuring. Harry Houdini, the renowned magician, had bought a box-like aircraft named the Voisin in Germany, and had made some sort of brief wild flight in it there. Now he brought it with him on his tour of Australia. It was a biplane, its wings covered with fabric and lathe and connected by sections on which the word 'Houdini' was emblazoned. Houdini had been performing at Melbourne's Opera House, but he slept in his hangar at Digger's Rest with his plane each night waiting for the perfect morning to take off. When it came on 18 March 1910, he got himself airborne and made what was claimed to be the first 'controlled' flight in Australia.

Houdini flew three times on that early morning and on the second flight nearly crashed on landing. But the third flight at 7 a.m. was flawless. He took off in front of thirty witnesses, and though hampered by a cross current of wind he reached a height of from 90 to 100 feet (27.5 to 30.5 metres) throughout, and remained in the air for three minutes and 37 seconds. Houdini's rival aviator, Ralph C. Banks, had bought a Wright Flyer and set it up at Digger's Rest too, and had tried to fly on the morning of 1 March, but he crashed, the plane suffering minor damage. He would later sign the witness statement verifying Houdini's flight. Later in March Houdini flew the plane at Rosehill Racecourse in Sydney for over seven minutes.

LIVE SHOWS AND FLICKERS

There were five boys in the Tait family in Richmond, Melbourne, canny children of a Shetland Islander who combined a capacity for bespoke

tailoring with a passion for the theatre. Charles Tait, the eldest of the theatre-struck brothers, began work in 1879 at the age of eleven as an usher at Saturday night concerts in the Exhibition Building, the Athenaeum Hall and the Melbourne Town Hall. His younger brother, John, studied as a lawyer's clerk but gave it up to manage Nellie Melba's return tour of Australia in 1902. Nevin Tait also began with solid employment with a financier but by the time of Federation was working for J.C. Williamson's theatrical company.

In 1902 John, Nevin and Frank founded J. & N. Tait, and Nevin went to London to attract a number of famous artists to tour Australia, including the Welsh Male Choir, the violinists Haydn Wood and Mary Hall, and the renowned actress Dame Clara Butt and her husband Kennerley Rumford. Other excursions would net John McCormack, the fabulously loved Irish tenor, and the equally adored Scots music hall comedian Harry Lauder. Thus Australian theatre audiences were knitted into the entertainment stream of the larger English-speaking world.

Then, in 1906, the brothers produced the first extended narrative film in the world. *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, directed by Charles Tait, caused a sensation by running for an entire hour. Most of the film was shot on his wife's family property at Heidelberg, but it was in other ways as well a family affair. His wife played Kate Kelly, his children, his brothers and their children all took part. The production cost £1000, but the film was said to have returned the company at least £25 000.

Throughout, they eyed their rival, James Cassius Williamson. J.C. Williamson was an American who had come to the country with the Australian rights for *HMS Pinafore*. Williamson, with partners Arthur Garner and George Musgrove, formed a theatrical company that took over the Theatre Royal in Melbourne and which was often accused of swamping a healthy Australian repertory system. In 1886 they opened the luxurious Princess Theatre in Melbourne with *The Mikado*, and they brought the superstar Sarah Bernhardt to Australia in 1891.

Williamson and J & N Tait were between them responsible for the visits of all the stars—as well as the Melbourne-born diva extraordinaire Nellie Melba, they contracted Russian singer Feodor Chaliapin, violinist Jascha Heifetz, pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski and dancer Anna Pavlova, along with the native-born and eccentric composer-performer Percy Grainger. They also signed up local talent—the Geelong boy John Brownlee, for example,

who had been discovered in 1922 when Melba heard him sing Handel's *Messiah* at the Albert Street Conservatorium in Melbourne.



Raymond Longford, born in 1878, was the son of a warder at Darlinghurst gaol. After beginning his career in an English theatre in India, he came back to Australia to tour country towns with humbler theatrical companies than those of the Williamsons and the Taites. He was tall, had long features and a fine voice.

Lottie Lyell, the daughter of a Balmain estate agent, wanted to join the company Longford worked for, the Popular Dramatic Organisation, and in about 1906 her parents placed her in his care. Lottie had great vivacity and natural gifts of stagecraft and her oval face and large eyes were considered exemplars of beauty for her time. In 1911 Longford and Lottie met Cosens Spencer, who began screening moving pictures in New South Wales under his reversed name, Spencer Cosens. He had married a Scots girl, Mary Huntley, who became his chief projectionist and business partner. In 1905 they opened the Great American Theatrescope at the Lyceum Theatre in Sydney, and it became a permanent picture theatre from June 1908. It was Spencer's company which commissioned the young Raymond Longford to direct films. Longford made the business of being a film director a profession instead of a sideline.

He had already acted in a number of Cosens' films, including *Captain Midnight* and *The Life of Rufus Dawes*, based on Marcus Clarke's novel *For the Term of His Natural Life*, but now he directed *Australia Calls*, a film depicting invasion from Asia, in which Lottie starred. Indeed she acted only in films he directed and was by now his de facto wife. Longford made the first version of *The Mutiny of the Bounty* in 1916. The triumph for both of them was *The Sentimental Bloke*, made in 1919, in which Lottie played Doreen. She then played Nell in Longford's *Rudd's New Selection*. In the early 1920s Longford and Lyell formed their own production company, but Lottie was already suffering from 'the white plague', tuberculosis, and after working on *The Bushwhackers* in 1925 she died at the age of thirty-five. The company absorbed Longford's fortune but he continued to direct for wages through the 1920s and into the era of the talkies. His last film as a director was in 1934, though he appeared as a minor character in the films of others until 1941.

GOD'S WORD IN THE NORTH

When Robert and Frances Wilson, a Presbyterian missionary couple, appeared in their lugger in Port George near Derby, Western Australia, in 1912, the Worora people had a debate which echoed that held in the Sydney basin 124 years before. An elder named Ambula argued for killing them, but another, Indamoi, cried, 'No! They are not trying to harm us. They do not hunt our food. They have given us food and gifts. We have nothing to fear from them.' By the 1920s more than twenty Christian missions had been founded in northern Australia. The arrival of such missionaries was based in part on the idea of rescuing Aboriginal peoples before the impact of European settlement could destroy them. It was also, of course, to evangelise. At worst this involved a belief that the natives were vessels for noxious spirits, and that the vessels must be cleansed and refilled with Christianity's decent oils.

At Beagle Bay in the Kimberleys, Spanish and French Trappist monks set up a mission in 1892. They founded a school and conducted classes in French, since the monks did not know English, and in the Nyul-Nyul language. Daisy Bates visited this mission and was astounded to hear natives singing Gregorian chant. The Trappists tried to run the mission while keeping to the severe rules of their order—silence, unless they were engaged on missionary work, a plain vegetarian diet, and meditation and the singing of the Office from 2 a.m. till dawn, followed by a full day of work. In the case of the Beagle Bay mission the monks' diet consisted of pumpkin and rice and beer they brewed from sorghum. Ultimately, in 1901, due to the ageing of the Trappist community, they handed the mission over to the Pallottine Fathers, founded by St Vincent Pallotti, an order whose rule of life was less rigorous.

German-born Father Francis Gsell, future Bishop of Darwin and member of the Sacred Heart Order, established the mission at Bathurst Island, off the coast of the Northern Territory, in 1911. He had the wisdom to try to 'learn gradually their habits and customs so as to penetrate into their minds without hurt or shock'. Disturbed by native polygamy, he claimed to have bought more than thirty wives to save them from the practice. He declared in the end that after thirty years he had not made a convert.

When the Benedictine monks settled at Draper River in the Kimberley in 1908, although they hung presents and food in the trees, which were always taken overnight, no Aborigine came in to talk to them until 1912.

In 1913 the mission was attacked by the local natives and two friars were wounded by spears.

Some Aborigines were attracted by the claim of missionaries that they had special powers. The Benedictines at Draper River were able to cure cases of the skin disease yaws, and their supplies of food made them a desirable stop on the general circuit of Aboriginal life. Gradually the mission became a welcome sanctuary for those in trouble. These included men under the threat of tribal vengeance, young women escaping punishment for unfaithfulness to an aged husband and those fleeing from pastoralists or their stockmen.

Some missionaries tried to adjust the Christian message and endeavour to fit it to Aboriginal requirements. At the Trappist mission, Daisy Bates was surprised to see a girl of about twelve married to a much older man according to the Catholic rites—such marriages were normal in Aboriginal society, and it was better in the monks' view that they occur according to the sacrament and within a framework of monogamy. Robert and Frances Wilson, at Kunmunya, consulted with the Aborigines over marriage law problems, and their successor, a remarkable Ulsterman named Robert Love who served there from 1915–1940 and translated two of the Gospels into Worora, declared, 'In this mission we will never tolerate paternalism. These people are our equals in intelligence and our superiors in physique.' Some missionaries saw that to have Aborigines queuing up for food each day was degrading, and George and Jessie Goldsmith of the Methodist mission on Goulburn Island introduced a cardboard money system to allow Aboriginal members of the mission to buy food and goods of their choice from the store, and to cook it themselves.

Not all were as liberal-minded. Since missionaries understood that the older people were unreachable, they concentrated on the children, and enclosed dormitories for the children were a common feature of missions. If the parents protested at being separated from their children they were threatened with the withdrawal of rations. But in some cases they were happy to leave their children at the mission in the dormitory in the belief that they would be well fed. The dormitories were run according to strict regimens, and although some skills such as mining, engineering, carpentry and shearing were taught to the boys, there was nowhere close by where they could seek a job based on these skills.

Some permitted traditional culture to operate alongside the Christian and European virtues they were preaching. The Trappists and the Pallottines at Beagle Bay tried to end Aboriginal ceremonial. But their attitude changed through the work of Father E.A. Worms, a member of the Pallottines order who happened to be an internationally respected anthropologist and who arrived at Beagle Bay in 1930 to study the ceremonies of the Yaoro. He observed that Aboriginal religion was inherent in the daily practices of the Australian Aborigines, of whom he would ultimately show a knowledge of twenty-six language groups. Long before, in 1914, the Ulster Presbyterian Robert Love wrote of a ritual cleansing and feeding ceremony carried out by the Worora warriors to welcome visiting tribesmen and saw a connection between this and Christian sacraments, and indeed the Last Supper.

The liberal-minded missionaries, however, remained in a minority. Indeed, missionaries were often driven by their belief that a great imperative existed that their dogma replace all tribal darkness. They were yet another European legion, but empowered by a general benevolence rather than by a Snider rifle. Dr Charles Duguid came to Ernabella in Central Australia and was appalled by the mistreatment of Pitjantjatjara men and women on surrounding pastoral runs and reserves. With his wife Irene he opened a Presbyterian mission in 1937 and ran it on the principle that there should be no intrusion on the traditional way of life. The local language should be spoken, and responsibility for managing the community's business should be passed to the people who came to the mission. Even as late as the 1930s such ideas were considered revolutionary, but they had an impact on the Ernabella people, who requested that on his death (which did not come until 1971) Duguid's body be buried in their midst.

UNFEDERATED AT PLAY

Australian Rules football, operating in Victoria as a device for civic and tribal identity, did not attract widespread support in New South Wales and Queensland. It is often argued that the increasing eminence of Melbourne made this further form of Victorian inventiveness unwelcome. As Federation came, and Melbourne people looked forward to the first Federal Australian Rules season, New South Welsh people looked forward to a season of rugby.

The first Australian rugby club, based on the running game then played at Oxford and Cambridge, had been founded at Sydney University in 1864,

and a Southern (New South Wales) competition was formed at the Oxford Hotel in Sydney ten years later with the Wallaroos, Balmain, University and Waratah the foundation clubs. In this game the emphasis was not on goals kicked but on tries scored. On that basis, in 1882 the first Queensland–New South Wales match was played—a son of the Irish political convict Kevin Izod O’Doherty played for Queensland. Two years later a New Zealand team toured Australia and won all its matches. In 1899 when a British rugby team toured, and played a test series against Australia, highly nationalist Australian supporters filled the venues, though Britain won the series. The high water mark year for rugby was in many ways 1907—crowds for each match in a series against New Zealand were always in excess of 30 000 and reached 52 000 in Sydney. But a rival league was about to arise.

The issue had already been raised in rugby clubs in England, especially in the industrialised north, that men injured in games would lose pay while they were recovering. The Rugby Union offered no injury compensation to such men. In 1895 at the George Hotel in Huddersfield, a Northern Union, which took account of the fact that most of its players were not Oxbridge gentlemen of independent means but rather miners and mill workers, was formed. It proposed paying allowances to rugby players to cover their potential injuries. This Northern Union, abhorred by British rugby officialdom, departed the official union in 1895 and became the Rugby League. The number of forwards in the new game was two less than in rugby, allowing for more open, running play and, it was hoped, fewer injuries. A brisk process known as the play-the-ball replaced the endless rucks and mauls of the Rugby Union form of the game. Since most rugby players in Australia were working-class men, the principles of the British Rugby League appealed to them. The crowd of 52 000 who had seen them play the rugby test against the New Zealanders in Sydney made them aware that someone was making a lot of money out of their efforts.

Champion player of the Australian rugby team was Dally Messenger, a friend of the great cricketer and rugby follower Victor Trumper, who had earlier that year helped defeat the English cricket team at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Trumper and the entrepreneur and noted cricket umpire James J. Giltinan asked the working-class Messenger whether for a fee of £50 he would cross to a new code if it were founded. The inauguration of this new code occurred in 1907 at Bateman’s Crystal Hotel in Sydney. So many

players followed Messenger over that by the code's first day of play, 20 April 1908, the League was able to field eight teams. It was the almost immediate popularity of rugby league which further prevented the spread of Australian Rules into Eastern Australia. South Sydney were the first premiers, and an Australian team, 'the Kangaroos', was selected to leave for England to play in the northern winter of 1908–09. Dally Messenger was the star of that first touring team.

'I would be idle to deny that the League made a spectacular display,' wrote Gordon Inglis, a sporting commentator, but 'neither schools nor university are likely to waver in their allegiance to Rugby [Union]'. Indeed, many splendid players stayed with the Union and represented the national team, the Wallabies, across the world. So eastern Australia retained twin rugby obsessions which would, for the time being, drive out what the Victorians thought of as the true national game.

In the meantime, though the League continued to poach players from union, union officials in Australia looked upon the playing of even one rugby league game as a transgression of gentlemanly principles and amateurism. The adherence of the private schools and the university to rugby helped create a class difference between the two games. At a schoolboy level, rugby league was played not by the Great Public Schools but in the main by state schools and Catholic parochial schools. Often in eastern Australia when a person said, 'I support rugby union myself', he was not stating necessarily a sporting preference but the fact that he had been to one of the better schools.

No such distinction existed in Melbourne, where everyone, from the chairmen of banks to factory workers, were crazy for their game. But when it came to football, Australia remained unfederated.

CATTLE STATION BLACKS AND DROVERS' BOYS

In distant Melbourne the Commonwealth of Australia was legislating for an entire federated system, but up in the north each white boss was his own unconfederated master of the Aboriginal locals. The vast majority of native peoples employed in the Northern Territory worked in the cattle industry, where their wages were lower and their living conditions more squalid than those of white stockmen. Various acts passed between 1897 and 1911 in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory set down rations, clothing, medical care and wages as essential obligations for those who

attained a permit to employ Aborigines, but the regulations, over such reaches of space and bad roads, were hard to police and did not specify minimum wages. Payment was in fact often in rations, which attracted stockmen and their families but took them away from traditional food sources.

Many Aboriginal men and women, however, liked working on the cattle stations, riding stock, chasing cattle which broke away from the herd, mustering, and exercising all the skills that went with it. Their capacity to track also allowed them to find stock in remoter parts of the enormous stations. All this earned them a respect not easily extended to them elsewhere in Australian society. In the case of just bosses, native stockmen came to admire the station boss who worked so closely with them. There were some bosses who in the off-work season helped their stockmen and women to travel back to their country for ceremonies and even to their ceremonial sites.

Women, sometimes domestics in the station, were also cattle workers themselves. They dressed the same as the stockmen and were equally good riders. The institution of 'the drover's boy' came into being. The bush aphorism declared that, 'Women drovers work all day in the saddle and all night in the swag.' At Hermannsburg mission west of Alice Springs, the German Lutheran missionaries criticised the pastoralists for luring young Aborigines away, using the women to drive cattle and for sexual partners. Women were kept for purposes of sex on all stations, the missionaries asserted, and syphilis was widespread amongst both white stockmen and Aborigines.

Aborigines sometimes worked for European dingo hunters, crocodile and buffalo shooters, for the snakeskin and possum-skin collectors and gold and tin miners, the latter at such places as Bamboo Creek south of Darwin, and in small camps in the Pilbara and Kimberley. Tin miners used Aboriginal women to 'yandy' the tin, that is, to use the normal plant-collecting coolamon to wash light soils away from the heavier, remaining flecks of tin. The use of Aboriginal women in gold and tin camps was sexual as well. Sometimes Aboriginal men employed to wash soil brought in only enough mineral to keep the European prospector happy, and sold the residue themselves. In Western Australia, at the Shaw tin fields in 1906, Aborigines washed tin out of the soil quite profitably. Early in some of these relationships with Europeans, the Aborigines were negotiating as equals.

Once the mustering of cattle or the shearing of sheep had been attended to, Aboriginal stock workers were sometimes put to work diving for shell and

pearls off the coast on behalf of their pastoral bosses. Those on the tropical coasts of Australia found that working on a pearl lugger was adventurous but hard, and involved great risks to health. In Darwin many Aborigines worked as servants—by the end of World War I one out of every five local natives was a Darwin domestic, retiring in the evenings to humpies in the mangroves of Frances Bay or elsewhere. Most European children in the north of Australia were raised by Aboriginal domestics and were sometimes suckled by them.

THE GREAT WAR

ALIENS?

Until Australian Federation, a naturalised subject of one colony did not become a formerly foreign naturalised subject of the United Kingdom or another colony unless he went through a legal process. Thus one could be naturalised in, say, South Australia but revert to being an alien as soon as you crossed the border to Victoria. This was a constant grievance in the colonial German press. But colonial Britons pointed to the Lutheran schools in South Australia and along the Murray in New South Wales where classes were conducted in German, and based on the Prussian system of education, and declared that the German settlers felt superior to the Australo-British.

Once war broke out, naturalised Germans were immediately suspected of collaborating with intelligence-gathering networks based in the consulates. Consular officials and German businessmen were interned under the Trading With the Enemy Act, 1914. Unhappily, the spread of anti-German hysteria resulted in the reporting of innocent people of German origin or background. Some Germans might even have sought internment as a means of survival. Any German reservists who happened to be travelling in Australia or passing through when war began were also interned, as were the sailors on German vessels in Australian ports. Once rounded up, German colonial officials, and nationals and their families in New Guinea and

elsewhere, were also brought to camps in Australia. But to intern German-born naturalised citizens, and native-born Australians of German ancestry, required a special act of Parliament, which was quickly passed as the War Precautions Act, 1914. Nearly 7000 enemy aliens were interned from 1915 to 1919, and of these 4500 were residents of Australia before the outbreak of war. This included some 700 naturalised British. Thousands more lived under suspicion in the wider community and were not interned.

Many academics toured Australia warning that German *Kultur*—German achievements and the way they underpinned German destiny—was a great threat, and so young men should enlist, and trade unions should not hinder the war effort. The Bryce Report on German atrocities in Belgium—named to honour its chairman, Viscount James Bryce—arrived in Australia soon after its publication in Britain and America in early 1915, and it featured highly coloured accounts of German savagery in Belgium and sharpened Australian anti-German fury. As a result, German Australians such as Dr Eugen Hirschfeld, who had worked to spread the German language in schools, and Carl Zoeller, a prominent businessman in Brisbane, together with various Lutheran pastors, were interned and afterwards deported. German clubs whose name or program included that fatal word *Kultur* were closed down.

The German-born felt a natural sympathy for their motherland, probably all the more so as their adopted country treated them with scorn. In May 1915 Paul Schmoork was arrested after mentioning German military superiority in a hotel in Jindera. F.W. Scrimmes, the teacher at West Gerogery, claimed that German parents were punishing their children if they praised the valour of the Australians at Gallipoli. Some local Germans sported pictures of Germany and even of the Kaiser and Bismarck in their houses.

In June 1916 the New South Wales state government held a referendum on hotel closing hours, and during the campaign electoral officers were given the discretionary power to confiscate and annul the votes of people of enemy origin *and* their sons and daughters. The German Edward Heppner threatened to resign from Culcairn Shire Council, saying that the King himself had German parentage and was not prevented from voting.

Later, when the second conscription referendum was in prospect, those born in foreign countries were barred from voting even if they had taken out British citizenship, and so were their children. Postmen were paid one and a half pence for each name they submitted that could lead to a removal from

the electoral roll. One Hermann Paesch chaired a public meeting in Walla Walla to protest. Amongst other things he bemoaned the sentiments of Billy Hughes, who had said that there would be no Germans in the Australian forces because they might shoot the Australians in the back.

Members of the military Intelligence Division visited Walla Walla to inquire into German activity. In March 1918 four men—Hermann Paesch, John Wenke, Edward Heppner and Ernest Wenke—were arrested and taken by military police to Holsworthy concentration camp. No charge was brought against them. All were Australian born but of German descent. The secret services considered Paesch to be ‘the most disloyal and highly dangerous’. Yet Paesch and his wife Anna had raised or donated themselves over £1200 towards the war effort. His son said that they had given him permission to join the armed forces, though his enlistment was rebuffed by the army.



Perhaps the most engrossing case of a naturalised child of Germans at this time was that of John Monash, originally Monasch, a civil engineer in Melbourne and leading figure in the militia. The son of Prussian Germans, he was a graduate of Scots College and eminent in his profession, having served as president of the Victorian Institute of Engineers. In 1914 he had been likely to become Chancellor of Melbourne University and to be knighted for it. His marriage to a Jewish girl named Vic—Hannah Victoria Moss—was not entirely a meeting of souls but to all appearances was a properly run alliance. Yet though he had been married by a rabbi, his colleagues knew he was utterly agnostic, and he had had a long affair with another engineer’s wife, Annie Gabriel. Thus here was a successful man who could be undermined by a number of factors, not least amongst them his Germanness and his Jewishness.

Appointed commander of the Fourth Infantry Brigade with the rank not of brigadier general but of colonel in September 1914, he had in fact a great deal to give up by enlisting, including direct control of his engineering business. ‘I am virtual head of four large industrial companies, operating in Victoria and South Australia; also member of the University Council, and many of its committees, also Chairman and member of a number of scientific bodies.’ These considerations would have given other men every reason to remain, but he opted to go.

By October 1914 the slanders against him began to arrive at the office of the Minister for War, G.F. Pearce. Much was made in these attacks on the 'c' which had been omitted from his name. The mutterings would not disappear entirely, but the 'success', the brio and endurance of his Fourth Brigade at Gallipoli, and its love for its brigade commander, would give his name an enduring validity in Victoria.

RAISING THE FORCE

The Australian government had put in place a militia and cadet training scheme from 1911. The plan was that by 1919 these men and their units would be fully trained and able to wage war. Since the inspector general of the army, Australian-born General William Bridges, felt that no viable force could yet be built out of these units, he advised that an entirely new force must be created consisting of a division and the Light Horse brigade. There was government pressure on him to get the force together quickly. Within five or six months the Germans would have been driven back across the Rhine, and Australia must be part of the force that did it.

It was Bridges who devised the name Australian Imperial Force. Bridges and the staff officer Brudenell White had finished the planning for the structure of the AIF by 8 August. The recruited soldiers would be organised on a territorial basis, New South Wales to provide the first infantry brigade, Victoria the second, and the other four states the third. The Light Horse was also to be allotted by state, and individual battalions would be recruited not just from a state as a whole, but the particular region of the state. The second battalion, for example, came chiefly from the northern rivers of New South Wales or from the coal mines of the Hunter. The seventh battalion was to a great extent from the town and district of Bendigo in Victoria.

This large force of over 20 000 men was to be created within a month, with 12 September the proposed date of embarkation. The recruitment process Bridges and White had devised went into operation. Australian soldiers who were married would be required to sign a declaration agreeing to allot not less than two-fifths of their pay to their family. Pay rates were devised—five shillings a day for an infantryman, with a one shilling retrospective payment at the end of the service. The term 'six bob a day tourists' came almost instantly into use. Lieutenants were on £1 one shilling a day, while a brigadier general received £2 five shillings. For the recruits who presented at

the nation's barracks, 'It was a game to be played and they were players by nature,' wrote Charles Bean.

As the training began during August, many of the men laughed at regular officers whose accents of command were of the educated British variety. This was considered by Australian recruits to be a case of 'putting on the dog'. They did not like to be told that this or that area was 'out of bounds'. Fortunately Bridges had hardly any brigadier generals or regimental commanders who had not spent most of their life amongst the Australian populace, and so many senior officers understood how to appeal to the men in the ranks. The drab uniform the Australians were to wear, the lack of colour and decoration, was also deliberately chosen by Bridges, who had seen many a highly colourful and decorative British regiment in South Africa torn to tatters by Boer fire.

Drilling now took place on the outskirts of cities, but it was obvious that if Australia was to rush to the battlefield, the balance of the training would need to be done over there, somewhere in another hemisphere.

GREAT AND URGENT SERVICE

Within hours of the declaration of war, the Australian government received a telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking the Australians to send an expedition to destroy radio stations in New Guinea, 'a great and urgent Imperial service'. Indeed, some of the radio messages transmitted from the German island capital of Rabaul in the New Guinean island of New Britain had already been intercepted in Australia.

The Australians, mindful of the formidable German East Asia squadron in the Pacific began on 11 August 1914 to gather an expeditionary force of 1500 men, chiefly in Sydney. The Australian expedition was to be under the command of Colonel William Holmes, a citizen soldier whose normal work was as secretary of the Sydney Water and Sewerage Board. After being cheered through the streets of Sydney, the party embarked a week later on the *Berrima*. Six companies of the Australian naval reserve would follow soon after.

On the Queensland coast, the *Berrima* was met by the light cruiser *Sydney* and put in to Palm Island, a beautiful island used by the Queensland government as a detention area for misbehaving members of the Bwlgcolman and Manbarra Aboriginal peoples. Here the infantry trained in tropic bush as

bewildered Aborigines looked on at the first military gestures of Australia in what would become known as the Great War.

The Australian expedition moved on to Port Moresby, where it met up with a Queensland citizen militia force waiting in its ship, the *Kanowna*. Admiral Sir George Patey, the Englishman in command of the Australian navy, ordered the expedition's departure for Rabaul on 7 September. By now one of the German radio stations on Nauru had been destroyed by sailors from the *Melbourne*.

The chief landing parties on New Britain went ashore east of Rabaul and elsewhere along the coast. The first party were fired on by a German force of three officers and a number of conscripted natives, but kept on and overran the whole force, taking them prisoner. Sixty sailors came ashore from an Australian destroyer as reinforcements. The German wireless station hidden in the jungle was found and destroyed after skirmishes along thickly forested jungle tracks.

After further Australian confrontations with German officers and native troops, Ernst Haber, acting governor of German New Guinea, agreed to surrender. On 21 September German soldiers and 110 native troops marched in from the bush, exchanged salutes with the Australians, and laid down their arms. Holmes had granted to the Germans the full honours of war, that is, the right to march with the colours displayed, the drums beating, bayonets fixed and swords drawn. He felt this was a concession he had to make to achieve the capitulation. In that country, he thought (prophetically, and of a war yet to come), in this jungle, a few soldiers could hold up a considerable body of men, and he did not choose to incur the cost of that.

So control of what would prove to be a very important and strategic island in the eyes of both the Australian and Japanese governments was passed to Australia with a minimum of human damage on the day the Labor government of Andrew Fisher took office. A proclamation read at the surrender told the New Guineans what the new realities were. 'All boys belongina one place, you savvy big master he come now, he new feller master, he strong feller too much ... No more Um Kaiser, God save Um King.'

For Colonel Holmes, the next place to assert control was the port of Madang on the north coast of the New Guinea mainland. At the landing of men from the naval reserve, the infantry and a medical unit, the German civilians ashore surrendered and took the oath of neutrality. The storehouses of the New Guinea Company were taken over as a barracks for the troops.

THE GAME AT SEA

While the Australians were engaged in occupying German New Guinea and New Britain as an opening gambit in their Pacific game, at the other end of the Pacific the Japanese were engaged in another phase of their Pacific intentions, in a battle that might have received greater attention had it not been swamped by events in Europe. It involved Britain's Pacific partner, Japan, and their common enemy of the moment, Germany.

On 7 August 1914 the Japanese government had received a request from Britain for help in destroying German raiders in the North Pacific, and sent Germany an ultimatum on 14 August demanding the withdrawal of German naval forces from the North Pacific. When this was not answered, Japan declared war on the Kaiser on 23 August 1914. The Japanese agenda in this war was not only to clear the German navy out of the North Pacific and seize its territory in the Chinese province of Shandong but also to end the German government's pretensions to the control of the Marianas, Caroline Islands and Marshall Islands. Above all, it hoped to force on China demands which would reduce it to the level of protectorate. Only international opposition, especially from the United States, prevented the Japanese government from achieving that aim for now.

In August 1914 Tsingtao (Qingdao) was a great prize. Japan went about the business of seizing it with overwhelming force. Four dreadnoughts, four battle cruisers, thirteen light cruisers and all attendant ships were deployed. The first landing force was to consist of the Japanese 18th Division's 23 000 men. Great Britain despatched a small naval force to join them, as much to keep an eye on what was happening as to add strength. Under the command of Maximilian von Spee, Germany's East Asia Squadron, the same one which so troubled the Australian government, was ordered to leave Tsingtao before the Japanese fleet could trap it there. The Japanese blockaded the harbour and looked through their binoculars at the orderly military town, with wide streets and artillery redoubts which abutted the old Chinese town. Here 4000 German and Austrian troops were garrisoned. The Japanese landed, dug a siege trench and began operations, ultimately storming the hills and capturing fortifications. An omen of the future revealed itself to the sailors of the British dreadnought—a small number of aircraft were launched from a deck extended out over the sea on one of the Japanese battleships. These were reconnaissance planes, but they also performed bombing raids.

Tsingtao was the North Pacific bookend to Australia's success in New Guinea. While the Australian move could be looked at cynically too, enough had been seen by the British observers at Tsingtao to create unease about future Japanese intentions in the Pacific and certainly to reinforce Australian ones.

The Japanese would withdraw from Tsingtao in 1921 as part of the post-war rearrangement of borders, and allocation of other protectorates and mandates over islands in the North Pacific they had also taken from Germany in 1914.

TRANSPORTS

The first 20 000 Australian volunteers for the war in Europe, and a strong New Zealand contingent as well, confident that with a few weeks' training they were ready for any confrontation in the larger world, were waiting impatiently in barracks, frustrated and delayed. No one on the British or Australian side knew where Count von Spee's Pacific naval squadron were. Moreover the German raider *Emden*, a cruiser disguised as a mere freighter, had also by now begun to sink a huge tonnage of British shipping all over the Indian Ocean.

The British Admiralty, under pressure to get the troops of Oceania to the battlefield, ordered the Royal Navy's *Minotaur* and, in the spirit of the Anglo-Japanese naval treaty of 1905, the Japanese cruiser *Ibuki* to meet any Australian–New Zealand convoy at Fremantle and escort them onwards. But the Australian and New Zealand politicians were worried about danger to the transports in the Tasman Sea and the Southern Ocean. Fisher, in particular, was haunted by the possibility of Australia's 20 000 finest boys drowning. At the Australian government's order, some troopships which had already embarked from eastern Australia for the rendezvous at Fremantle were fetched back to Melbourne and Sydney. Meanwhile, the *Minotaur* and *Ibuki* reached Fremantle at the end of September. The captain of the *Ibuki* sent a message to the Australian Naval Board: 'We are grateful to Providence for the honour of cooperating with our Allies in the restoration of the peace of the world.'

When the German cruisers were found to have moved north in the Pacific and raided Papeete in French-controlled Tahiti, the Admiralty more pressingly urged the departure of the Australian–New Zealand convoy. But the New Zealanders still delayed, concerned about the inadequacy of the escort across the Tasman. Finally, on 16 October 1914, ten New Zealand transports

set out for Albany, and the eastern Australian transports began to move to join impatient troops from Western Australia. With the *Melbourne* standing off Gabo Island until the last transport from Sydney had safely passed, all Australian transports reached Albany by 28 October. On leaving Fremantle for the journey to the northern hemisphere, the Australian transports formed up three abreast, followed by the ten New Zealand vessels two abreast. The *Minotaur* led, the *Sydney* was on the port side to the west, the *Ibuki* to the east, and at the stern was the *Melbourne*. The concern was that they did not know where the *Emden* was, and if it sneaked amongst the convoy it could create mayhem, firing and torpedoing in both directions, drowning many Australians and New Zealanders and undermining their governments' resolve.

The Anzac convoy was now approaching the Dutch East Indies on its way to havoc such as would dwarf any damage the *Emden* could have done it.

The Australian navy's role in the war from then on was divided between the Indian-Pacific region, the Mediterranean and as part of the Grand Fleet in the North Sea.

THE BLOOD MYTH UNASSAILABLE

Though enthusiastically godfathered by Churchill, Gallipoli was an example of the work of the Easterners, those in the War Office and Admiralty who wanted to attack Germany through her supposed underbelly, her allies in the East. The Westerners, those who wanted to defeat Germany in Western Europe, sneered at the operation as if it were a sideshow and, given its mismanagement, it was indeed a frightful sideshow. And in the overall plan, the Anzac landings of 25 April were subsidiary to the main British landings at Helles in the toe of the peninsula. The Anzacs were meant to cross the peninsula and capture the heights which overlooked the Dardanelles, the approaches to Istanbul, in the area known as the Narrows. The British and French, sweeping up from Helles, were to connect up with them there. Once these heights across the Gallipoli peninsula were secured, the British navy would have some chance of sailing up through the Narrows to seize the Golden Horn and Istanbul.

Australians, supposedly a non-poetic race, turned Gallipoli into *their* legend, and pegged out the entirety of it. This was quite an act of national assertion. The British, for example, sent over 450 000 into the battle on the Gallipoli Peninsula, of whom 33 500 were killed. But the modern British

contemporaries of the young Australians who descend on Gallipoli each year probably do not even know where Gallipoli is. The Australian imagination has seized the campaign as if it had been predominantly fought by Antipodeans.

The claim on Gallipoli is all the more remarkable given the unruly and, according to British officers, disreputable behaviour of the Australians in Egypt. E.G. Halse, an Australian stretcher bearer, quoted Kitchener with glee as having said that it took him twenty years to make Cairo what it was, and the Australians had undone it in twenty minutes. The Anzacs, for example, had set fire to the brothel area of Cairo, the Wazzir, when one of their number was knifed there. Halse also observed the reckless amateur archaeology of Australian troops around Zeitoun and Heliopolis. 'They bring into camp bones and skulls which their entrenching tools have unearthed.'

They penetrated cafes and bars reserved for officers and showed no conventional respect for their superiors. Halse recorded: 'Sensation in Cairo yesterday. An Australian saluted an officer.'

At Gallipoli, says the legend, Australians showed that true discipline was not parade ground discipline, but the endurance tempered in the furnace of Australia's hard bush labours, skills, traditions and misadventures. (Again, the suburbs were downplayed.) And then the obvious fact that this peculiarly Australian vigour and panache was let down by the incompetence of British generals who, like General Hamilton, stayed snugly offshore on his command ship! In the Australian version the Anzacs were superior to all other forces, but in fact they were also quaking boys—if they had inherited stoicism from their forebears (and many, many of them had) it does not mean they felt no fear. To depict them as supra-human is in fact to diminish the bravery of the mass. Since no military victory seemed possible, fortitude itself became the victory and the national triumph.

The health problem on Gallipoli is de-emphasised in the myth. But threat arose not merely from the enemy but from an early lack of sanitation and from the flies which bred on excreta and the bodies of the dead and then landed and sat like a layer of black across every plate of biscuit, bread and bully beef a man ate. Typhoid, paratyphoid and dysentery struck down the brave, and many Australian mothers and wives, without knowing it, owed their menfolk's survival to the sanitation officers who created proper latrines and imposed sanitary order in the ravines and escarpments of Gallipoli.

Most Australians know of the misfortunes of the first day. The Australians and New Zealanders were to have landed on smoother terrain a mile or so further south, and any visit to Anzac Cove shows how the vagaries of the offshore currents damned them to land beneath intimidating heights, broken by ravines, where losses were guaranteed, where the chances of penetration seemed impossible.

Since the story of Gallipoli from a campaign point of view has in the past been so brilliantly written by others, it is instructive to look at how it appeared to the rescuers, the Medical Corps, their doctors, orderlies and stretcher bearers. A member of the Australian Army Medical Corps aboard ship saw landing parties going ashore on destroyers 'packed like sardines', with the destroyers towing barges no less packed. 'Many of these fellows, before they reached the shore, were shot and tumbled overboard—picked off by snipers ... one lot of ambulance men were picked off in this way.' The field ambulance men and doctors were confronted with the sheer cliffs and prickly scrub, and murderous machine-gun fire and shrapnel. The pebbly beach was described as not being wider than a cricket pitch, and the wounded had to be treated in the shelter of three-feet-high overhangs by men of the 1st Australian Field Ambulance. Some of them were killed by fire retrieving wounded.

Further forward a regimental aid post had been established and those wounded in the chest, abdomen and head, and others with severe leg wounds, were being carried back while others walked or limped to join the crowd on the beach, where a casualty clearing station had been set up. But it was dangerous and close to impossible to create field ambulance hospitals out of view of the Turks. The doctors and hospital orderlies had never expected anything like this level of mayhem, and triage—the sorting out of casualties—was near hopeless because of the scale of wounded.

On 25 April, 3000 wounded were cleared. All urgent operations were done, including amputations, tying of arteries, and attending to abdominal wounds, compound fractures of the skull, bladder wounds and compound fractures of the thigh. All these necessitated anaesthetics, which were administered in nearly every instance by non-commissioned officers or by privates.

After dark the wounded were placed on anything that would float them out to the hospital ships or the transports. At four-thirty the next morning, the only hospital ship off Anzac Cove at that time, the *Gascon*, rapidly

filled up with wounded. Two transport ships were set aside for the lightly wounded. Private Gissing on the transport *Seang Bee* described the ship's hospital being filled almost instantaneously. 'The mess tables were ripped up from below, blankets spread down and the men were laid here as closely as possible.' The *Seang Bee*, its decks already crowded with 900 wounded by 26 April, could not leave the area yet, since her hulls were still full of unloaded ammunition.

The medical situation at Anzac Cove between 25 April and 5 May was affected by delay and shortage of supplies. A ship full of medical equipment named the *Hindu* had been ordered away on the evening of 25 April without having unloaded its medicines and medical equipment onto the ships where casualties might be carried.

One of the first sets of women's eyes to look upon Gallipoli belonged to Daisy Richmond of the hospital ship *Guildford Castle* as it edged in to collect wounded on the morning of 26 April. Unlike the British and Canadian nurses the Australians lacked official rank, and were sometimes bullied by traditional army medical officers who, against much evidence to the contrary, believed nurses had no place close to the battlefield. The first casualties—eighteen men—came alongside at 2 p.m. on the deck of a destroyer but within hours hundreds more arrived. The nurses had to adjust to a new and unimagined scale of damage to young flesh. 'It was terrible. Badly wounded men kept crawling in from the barges. At times we worked for thirty-six hours without stopping.' The ships were as yet not equipped with the quantities of morphine and dressings needed for the magnitude of events. Surgical instruments were sterilised in water boiled over one or two inadequate primus stoves in a converted pantry.

Dressing stations and field ambulances were eventually set up in the more protected gullies, often dug into the sides of hills and covered with corrugated iron and camouflage, and then the wounded were carried down to the casualty clearing station closer to the beach but similarly concealed. From there, those who could be safely moved to a ship were so moved. Not all of this could happen by night. Casualties lying on the beach waiting for a barge to take them out to the ships were sometimes wounded again or killed by fire from above.

Private H. Chichenani, an Australian orderly, wrote that during the first fortnight abdominal wounds were predominant but as the men got better

entrenched, abdominal wounds lessened and head injuries were more noticeable. Private A. Gordon remarked on the new respect stretcher bearers received. 'Some of the fellows before this had looked upon the AMC men as cold footers—easy jobbers, etc.'

For the first three months after the landing and that early close call for the Turkish defences above the beach, the campaign was a matter of consolidating, but doing it in daily peril—even in the rear—of being sighted by snipers and artillery and killed or wounded—not in a charge, but in doing simple, homely things such as unloading crates of canned beef or strolling on the beach. The August offensives, when the British attempted to capture Krithia while the Australians assaulted Hill 60 and the New Zealanders were slaughtered on the slopes of Chunuk Bair, were the next great attempts to break out, and again the impossibly confused terrain prevented it all. Some generals blamed John Monash, commanding the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, for mistaking his objectives and getting his men lost, but the maps were inadequate, the darkness of the night of the attack confusing, the advice of guides ambiguous, while once again the valour of Monash's brigade was admirable. The critics were the same men who had failed to possess or provide adequate maps and lacked the capacity to read them competently, who did not know about the coastal currents of the Dardanelles and who—aboard their floating headquarters—had no topographic imagination. There had already been three ferocious battles for the village of Krithia inland from Helles, the toe of the peninsula, and some of the Anzacs were thrown in there as well. But after these August failures, simply hanging on to the beachhead at Anzac Cove, Suvla Bay and Cape Helles became the issue.

THE NURSES AT LEMNOS

Sister Kit McNaughton, from Little River in Victoria, was now serving at Number 2 General Hospital in Cairo, dealing with the wreckage of the August offensives on the Dardanelles, when she found out she had been accepted as a volunteer to work on the island of Lemnos. She and twenty-four other army nurses travelled by train from Cairo to Alexandria and sailed 650 miles across the Mediterranean to Lemnos in the northern Aegean, only a two- or three-hour journey from Gallipoli.

By now the wind-scoured Greek island of Lemnos had been taken over as the centre of medical activities in the area, the clearing station for all casualties. In September and October alone these casualties amounted to 50 000 men. The guns of Gallipoli, only 50 miles away, were quite audible, and the deepwater harbour was full of 'ships by the hundred', many of which had delivered the wounded and sick.

The nurses served in tent cities to the north-east and west of the harbour—East and West Mudros. It was stony earth. As a staff member, Sister Aitken, commented, 'At one period or other it seemed to have rained stones.' Nurses were always cheered ashore by soldiers and sailors in the surrounding ships, but their experience once they got to their nursing stations was more ambiguous. A number worked in the Number 2 Australian Stationary Hospital under the courtly Lieutenant Colonel Arthur White who, unlike some of his colleagues, respected their work. Nearby, the Number 3 Australian General Hospital also had its lines, along with two Canadian and a British stationary hospital, and a convalescent depot with accommodation for 2000 men. Across the inlet was a rest camp newly created to give relief and recreation and rotation out of the line for some of the Anzac Corps.

Though they failed to stress it in their journals because of the traditions of stoicism they had acquired in their Australian girlhoods, indications of the slighting treatment some nurses received emerge nonetheless. 'At times our presence was ignored by an officer, with the result we had little control over the orderlies,' wrote Sister Nellie Morrice. She declared that the patients thought otherwise because they lay there inadequately treated, 'dishevelled and dirty ... looking more like wild men ... unshaven, long haired and weeks of dirt and vermin on them'. She says that on arrival on Lemnos in September the nurses found men lying on muddy mattresses on the ground, and that dysentery patients were forced to hobble outside, dressed only in their nightclothes, to use commodes in the icy wind. 'It did not take the sisters long to get the beds raised ... [we] kept the men in bed and ordered that bed pans should be given to them.'

As the autumn came on, gales swept over the island creating cold sandstorms. The women lacked warm clothing and Colonel R.J.H. Featherston, Acting Director of Medical Services for Australia, ordered that they were to have gumboots, trousers and warm clothes even if that meant wearing men's clothing. Featherston cabled back to Melbourne that the women would

break down if their situation wasn't improved, and that 'if the sisters were not better treated he would take them off the island'.

As water was scarce, men and nurses had to balance the laundering of clothes against the need for bathing. The nurses regularly brought lice from the hospital tents back into their sleeping quarters, and Sister McNaughton took a cold sponge bath at eleven o'clock one freezing night to 'keep the creepy things away'. Food was primitive, but sometimes naval officers from ships on the harbour sauntered up and invited them to a rare afternoon tea or dinner aboard, and the young women rushed to accept the invitation. Some men from the Australian Field Artillery on the island sent over a hamper to them.

As in every other hospital in that theatre of war, nursing units were dealing with greater numbers than had been foreseen. In France it was believed that a stationary hospital should take only 240 patients and be staffed by twenty-seven sisters. Number 2 Australian Stationary Hospital had 840 patients, and this multiplied both the work and the infection rate.

Dr Featherston meanwhile claimed that Australian nurses were subjected to 'threats of personal violence' as well as 'petty annoyances and insults', arising from continual disputes with NCOs and orderlies about the nurses' authority. In a hospital where the commanding officer did not like female nurses—Number 2 Stationary seems to have been such a place—the position of the nurses was nearly as testing as the campaign at Gallipoli itself. Featherston recommended that Australian nurses be given commissioned rank to wear, and in 1916 this would become the case.

Yet as hostile as some of the orderlies and officers were, the nurses were welcome as visitors to the rest camp. Sister McNaughton wrote of going to a concert where she and her friend were the only two sisters in a crowd of 2000 men and were cheered to the front seats. It must have been a welcome contrast to their treatment in the wards. By October Kit McNaughton was showing some signs of exhaustion, depression and withdrawal—she could no longer identify with every individual in the mass of suffering and remain sane. In December she wrote, 'Saturday—life much the same, one big bustle and no one prepared for the invasion of patients—not enough to eat for anyone.' The next day they were expecting another 200 patients, of whom she wrote, 'God help them.'

Yet these women were liberated by the war from the strict social controls and demands of civil society. On Lemnos Olive Haynes, along with some

other nurses, simply cut off their long hair rather than go to the trouble of looking after it. By now they all dressed like soldiers and went out so dressed to pursue a social life, including an excursion to the hot baths at Thermos in the company of artillery officers from the rest camp. On the way up the switchbacks to the spa they undertook target practice with the officers' revolvers.

In December 1915 the Gallipoli Peninsula was evacuated. The nurses returned by hospital ship to Egypt in January 1916, 'the funniest looking crowd of weather-beaten and toil-worn women one could imagine—hats of various shape, coats ditto. And boots and gloves beyond description.' They were different women now, quietly proud of what they had done, and sufficiently haunted and educated by experience to have risen above the style of submission in which they had lived at home. But in Egypt they were now broken up and sent to various units—some to return to Australia on hospital ships, others to go to England and to France.

THE BLOOD MYTH UNASSAILABLE II

The withdrawal from Gallipoli in December 1915 seemed so brilliantly managed that for generations of Australians it would have the weight of a victory, not a retreat. From the Anzac area over 40 000 men had to be withdrawn. From 8 December onwards the first 20 000 left by dark, and by 17 December just over 20 000 held the line, but would in their turn creep by squads down the ravines to the beach over two nights, and be taken off by cutter and barge to the troopships waiting to return them to Lemnos and Egypt. Amongst the troop transports were three of the largest liners then afloat: the *Britannic*, the *Aquitania* and the *Mauretania*, which between them could take some 8000 wounded and sick, had been commissioned as hospital ships for the evacuation.

On the second last night, 20 December, 10 200 soldiers made their way down to the beach leaving 10 000 to endure a final day in the lines opposite the Turks. Then, on the last night, the men left at spaced intervals, down the hills to the transports, headed for the rest camps of Lemnos. In Australia the withdrawal was not seen as a defeat, nor did the soldiers involved seem to look upon Gallipoli as a fiasco. Or if they did, some of their morale had been restored by the triumph of the withdrawal.

WAR AND PEACE



I DIED IN HELL

In Australian memory the war in France is seen as a series of tragedies fought in a hellish, shell-hole-dimpled morass. It was, as Siegfried Sassoon, the British soldier-poet, wrote, ‘The place where youth and laughter go.’

For many Australian troops, though, it began as an idyll. Marseilles and the south of France were a delight after the blasted landscapes of Egypt and Gallipoli. It was, said the Australian Medical Corps man W.C. Watson, a ‘treat to be greeted by our own kind, the girls and women do give us a hearty reception’. In Marseilles the Fort Saint-Jean and Notre-Dame de la Garde seemed prodigiously grand and old to boys from a new country. ‘My eyes are sore,’ Watson wrote on the troop train heading north, ‘trying to see too much of this lovely southern France.’ But the sight of German prisoners at the railway junction of Laroche was sobering as well as fascinating; ‘it is really cruel to see the train loads of wounded coming in and their broken limbs etc. Nearly every woman here is in mourning for a relative of some sort.’

Despite many superb modern histories, for the lay reader the various battles blur, separated by ill-defined stretches of churned French and Belgian countryside, involving foul trenches, inhuman bombardment, satanic gas and night-hour raids on enemy lines. In the trench line stretching from the north coast of Belgium down to the Swiss border—a trench line 500 miles

long—the British sector was less than 150 miles, a minute distance by Australian standards. The British sector, in which the Australians would fight at various points and at various times, ran up from south of the Somme River, skirting Paris to run north-east up into Flanders—the lethal western province of Belgium—and thence to the North Sea.

Even though it was written of a specific battle, Pozières, in late July 1916, perhaps the best generic Australian evocation of the dismay of participation in that loathsome business was produced by Lieutenant J.A. Raws of the 23rd Battalion. Raws was an English immigrant and *Melbourne Age* journalist who would be killed by the end of August 1916. The region of Pozières was, said Raws:

nothing but a churned mass of debris with bricks, stones and girders, and bodies pounded to nothing. And forest! There are not even tree trunks left, not a leaf or a twig. All is buried and churned up again and buried again. The sad part is that one can see no end of this. If we live tonight, we have to go through tomorrow night, and next week and next month. Poor wounded devils you meet on the stretchers are laughing with glee. One cannot blame them—they are getting out of this ... we are lousy, stinking, ragged, unshaven, sleepless ... I have one puttee, a dead man's helmet, another dead man's gas protector, a dead man's bayonet. My tunic is rotten with other men's blood and partly splattered with a comrade's brains. I have had much luck and kept my nerve so far. The awful difficulty is to keep it. The bravest of all often lose it—one becomes a gibbering maniac. Only the men you would have trusted and believed in before proved equal to it.

He then mentioned one or two of his friends who stood like granite rocks.

But many other fine men broke to pieces. Everyone called it shell-shock but shell-shock is very rare. What 90% get is justifiable funk due to the collapse of the helm—of self control. [And then, under bombardment] I was buried twice and thrown down several times—buried with dead and dying. The ground was covered with bodies in all stages of decay and mutilation and I would, after struggling free from the earth, pick up a body by me to lift him out with me,

and find him a decayed corpse. I pulled a head off—was covered in blood.

But through it all was the undeniable shining star of brotherhood, of what Australians called 'mateship'. Major J.C. Toft wrote, 'When one gets close to rough chaps as some of these men were, one finds hidden qualities. All these men were wicked in the Church sense. All had a keen sense of humour ... One standard of honour was demanded. Each should do his fair share.' All sects, creeds and types were in the trenches with Toft, he said; 'men from Hobart to Lismore to Cairns, from Emerald, Barcaldine, Longreach, Winton, Cloncurry and Charters Towers ... men of different habits and thought saw much in each other to love'. There was a feeling that if such fraternity could be applied in civil life after the war, the world would be redeemed.

The Australian campaigns began first with the AIF's 5th Division under the unpopular but ambitious General McKay in front of the French village of Fromelles, north of the Somme, in July 1916. It was a deadly and failed attack of the kind military men called 'a demonstration', designed to stop German forces from moving southwards towards the Somme front. One Gallipoli soldier said of Fromelles, 'We thought we knew something of the horrors of war, but we were mere recruits, and have had our full education in one day.'

The casualties were about 6000, and the shattered division would be marched out to be replenished by new troops who would need training. Soon after, on 23 July 1916, three Australian divisions, the 1st, 2nd and 4th, were at various stages thrown against the German line at the village of Pozières in the Somme Valley. The 1st Division captured the village on the first day, but hanging on to it was deadly. The 2nd Division took over and mounted two further attacks, and then the 4th Division went up into the line and beat off the final German counter attack. The three divisions suffered in excess of 13 000 casualties. Mouquet Farm, on the ridge north-west of the wrecked village of Pozières, was by 3 September 1916 attacked nine times by these same three Australian divisions, resulting in another 11 000 Australian casualties. Surrounded by the Allies, it would fall in September 1916. There followed a freezing winter on the Somme, which at least cemented the mud in place but was the coldest the native-born Australians, and probably the immigrant diggers as well, had ever endured.

Again, it would be wrong to think that casualties would cease to be inflicted between major assaults. On 14 November, the 19th had been moved south again to the Pozières region, in front of the villages of Flers and Eaucourt L'Abbaye, and went into action accompanied by the Northumberland Fusiliers to take at least temporarily part of the enemy's first line, capture prisoners and assess German strength. In this sadly forgotten operation there were Australian casualties of twelve officers and 369 other ranks—about a third of the Australians committed.

In the spring, the fortified French village of Bullecourt, between Cambrai and Arras, was the target for an Australian 2nd Division offensive between 3 and 17 May 1917, which though partly successful produced a number of ferocious counter attacks. The Australian casualties at Bullecourt amounted to 8000 men.

Entrained for the north that same spring, the Australians took part in a successful assault on a ridge running between Messines and Wytschaete. Australian tunnelling companies had, like similar British units, dug saps under the enemy lines—such as the deep tunnel dug by the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company under Hill 60—and at the start of the assault nineteen underground accumulations of high explosives were detonated, causing instantly an estimated 10 000 German casualties. British and Anzac troops took all their objectives on 7 June, but German counter attacks continued for another seven days. Messines was the opening battle for the 3rd Division, led by John Monash, part of the Anzac Corps and of General Plumer's British Second Army, and unjustly mocked for their lack of involvement until now as 'deep thinkers' rather than actors. In this battle the 4th Division was led by Major General William Holmes, who had commanded the New Guinea expedition. Within a month, he would, unluckily, be killed by a shell while escorting the Labor Premier of New South Wales, William Holman, on a tour of the front. But in terms of objectives reached, Messines was considered a success.

'I died in Hell, they called it Passchendaele,' wrote Siegfried Sassoon. In that battle, near Ypres in late July 1917, when the French army was beginning to mutiny on a serious level, the 3rd Division struggled through acres of mud against furious machine-gun fire. A number of Australian divisions were then committed throughout September in the same campaign—known as Third Ypres—fighting either side of the Menin Road and in the

gas-drenched Polygon Wood, where cement strongpoints held them up. The gain of a few miles and the straightening of the salient seemed to satisfy the generals, but the Australian losses in just over a week in September were 11 000. The campaigning for the autumn closed and another bitter winter began. On 2 February 1918, Private John Keneally would write to his brother: 'Supposed to be the coldest for fifteen years ... when you want a wash or shave you have to get a bucket of ice and put it on the stove. You said in your letter you would like to have a bit of this life. Get that out of your head ... If you ever come near the front I'll shoot you myself rather than let you go in the trenches.'

With the Russian revolution of February 1917, the Russian army had become first rebellious and then mutinied. Lenin and his Bolsheviks accomplished the revolution later in 1917 by telling the army he would make a separate peace with Germany. In the meantime, the Russians undertook no offences in the east. The Germans now had many extra and rested divisions to hurl against the British in March 1918. Ludendorff, the German commander, hoped to smash his way through Amiens, dividing the French and British armies, and swing north to capture the Channel ports, thus encircling the British. The three major attacks on the Western Front from late March into May were known as the *Kaiserschlacht*, and soon after they began the Germans' chief objective seemed to switch from capturing the Channel ports to simply smashing an irreparable wedge between British and French and—something that now looked possible—the destruction of the British army before the Americans were ready to fight. The collapse of the British front on the Somme early in the offensive seemed to be catastrophic, with men stampeding rearwards through villages once won by rivers of blood, heading towards Amiens. Moved down from Flanders, where they had been posted during the winter, the Australian Corps of five divisions was now commanded by the Australian civil engineer and citizen soldier John Monash. The AIF advanced through the melee of British Fifth Army retreat, and in the villages they marched past British stragglers by the thousands retreating westwards, some of whom called to them, 'You won't hold them.' The sight of the British escaping in such numbers and in such disorder would create an ultimate belief, justified or not, that the Australians were asked to do more than their fair share, a perception which would generate mutiny amongst the diggers later in the year.

There is no doubting the morale or the determination of the men of the Australian Corps at the stage of the German attack. The historian C.E.W. Bean claims that a digger, cleaning his rifle, called to a village woman suffering obvious distress and anxiety, '*Fini retreat, madame. Fini retreat—beaucoup Australiens ici.*' Townspeople west of Bapaume, loading up farm wagons and lorries to join the stream of refugees from what seemed like an unstoppable German attack, saw the diggers and cried, '*Les Australiens. Pas nécessaire maintenant.*' An Australian was told, '*Vous les tiendrez*': You'll hold them. And that was indeed what happened.

On the Ancre the Australians could see German reinforcements pouring from buses in the background. The entire effort along the front involved ferocious fighting, shell and machine guns and all the rest of the horrors. For now, however, the Australians stopped the German advance on the Somme. This was a point at which all that Australia would come to believe of the diggers was validated. In Australian minds ever since, the idea has been that the four divisions of the Australian Corps saved the West, though many modern historians dispute that idea, claiming amongst other things that the Germans had by now overstretched themselves.

Characteristic of the Australian morale was a letter from Private John Keneally of the 19th Battalion in the 2nd Division written on 14 April 1918.

Things in this part of the world have livened up a good deal since old Jerry started his offensive, but his little game will soon come to an end ... His losses are terrible. They come over massed and it is quite a treat for our gunners to get going on them in the open, quite a change to get him out of his dugouts. All you can see is dead Fritzes lying about in scores ... I think it is his last dash and it won't be long before the boys are all coming home again ... I'll settle down in some quiet spot when this bit of a squabble is over.

On the eve of Anzac Day the Germans took the village of Villers-Bretonneux. The Australians had earlier captured it, but it had been lost by the two battle-weary British divisions placed there to hold it. Now the orders were to recapture it. In innumerable horrifying conflicts during night assaults, Sergeant Charlie Stokes and Lieutenant Clifford Sadlier of Subiaco in Western Australia decided to take the German machine guns in front of

them which were killing and maiming the men of the 51st Battalion. Their crazed assault, throwing bombs or grenades as they went, was successful. This was just one of many such furious encounters that night of face-to-face fighting when Australian young men struggled so intimately with German young men that they could smell the other's sweat and terror and the mud and blood and brain matter in uniforms.

Here ended the German offensive and the historian of the 5th Division was able to declare, 'Thereafter, no German ever set foot in Villers-Bretonneux, save as a prisoner of war.' The town, if not captured, would have provided a position from which Amiens could be reduced to ruins by artillery.

In the summer of 1918, the Americans arrived in numbers. According to Bean, the Australians were still heavily used: 'The Anzac fronts provided a quite extraordinary proportion of the news in the British communiqués,' he wrote. On 10 June, under Monash, the Australians seized the latest German front system at Morlancourt, south of Albert. Now the Battle of Hamel, a village just south of the Somme, was planned with great intensity by Monash and his staff, and according to Monash was meant to serve as a model of what could be done on the Western Front by collaboration between aircraft, artillery, tanks and infantry. The story of Hamel will be told later in this narrative, but this eminently successful assault gained in less than an hour more than many previous attacks had managed to gain in a month. Despite the triumph of the day, however, there were over 2000 casualties.

In coming days the Allies continued forward, but by now the shortage of tanks left the infantry less protected. On the last night of August the Australians crossed the Somme River to assault a mound named Mont St Quentin which overlooked Péronne. Mont St Quentin was like all the hills and ridges of this war—just high enough to give an inordinate advantage to those who held it and barely noticeable as a rise. By 7 a.m. the Australian troops had captured the slope and summit. They had taken 14 500 prisoners and 170 guns since 8 August, and the guns would be repatriated to Australia and donated to municipalities for display in such places as public parks, where they can be seen to this day.

The Germans were forced out of Péronne by 3 September, and retreated now to the Hindenburg Line. Throughout September 1918, the Australians attacked that line, the last and best prepared of the German trench systems.

They were frequently advancing across open fields, and their casualties were still high.

At 5.20 a.m. on 18 September Monash's troops went forward against a fiercely defended Hindenburg Line. They were escorted by only eight tanks, but Monash had ordered the construction of fake tanks to undermine German perception. The Australians penetrated quickly and could thus boast of being the first into the Hindenburg Line, where that day they took 4300 prisoners. Some days later, Australian and US troops were the first to advance against the centre of the Hindenburg Line at Bellicourt. There were heavy losses, not least amongst the untried 27th American Division. After four days the third section of the Hindenburg Line was breached. The Australians broke beyond and slept in the comfortable reserve German trenches and ate German supplies.

The last attack was against Montbrehain village beyond the Hindenburg. There were a final 430 Australian casualties. It was the last battle for the Australians. The Americans replaced them. Most of the Australians had been fighting for six months without a break, and eleven out of sixty battalions had been amalgamated into other units for lack of men. In the Australian army, there had been 27 000 casualties since 8 August. Captain Francis Fairweather wrote, 'Unless one understands the position it would seem that the Australians have been worked to death as we have been going continuously since 27 March, but they are the only troops that would have the initiative for this type of warfare.'

After the Armistice, the landscape opened up. On 27 November 1918 John Keneally wrote, 'We are today about 20 Kilo from the Belgian border. The French towns we have come through which were recently held by Fritz are in a bad way. No one could believe what a hard time the civilian population have had under the Hun ... they are all practically starving but the Jerries will pay dear for it all.' Billy Hughes thought the same way.

The Australian forces engaged throughout the war totalled 417 000 which, though much less a number than the armies of the major powers, was a massive commitment for a population of four million. The casualty rate was nearly 65 per cent wounded, prisoners of war or stricken with serious illness related to the war. Nearly 60 000 would die. This was a higher rate of casualties than those of the British forces, and much, much higher than those of the Americans. Billy Hughes would remember this as well.

THE CATEGORIES OF MISERY

In popular imagination, World War I has become predominantly a war of mud. Mud intruded in sundry ways. In front of the village of Lagnicourt in March 1917, the ground had begun to thaw so that the rifles of a South Australian battalion were choked with mud within 50 yards of the German line. Seven of the South Australians' Lewis machine guns also clogged, and a man spent all his time running from post to post, trying to clean them with strips of German blanket. Combine that degree of liquefaction with the cling of mud upon uniform, boots and other equipment and one gets the picture of the wallow of France and Flanders

W.C. Watson, a stretcher bearer, describes entering the recently thawed and thus nearly uninhabitable British trenches on the Somme near Bapaume in the spring of 1917. The mud of the region added pounds of clag to the boots, equipment and arms of men marching up to the line. This was the muck in which the dead of the previous summer had been buried, and their putrefying bodies liberated from the grave again, in whole or part, by endless artillery barrages.

A man's native susceptibilities had to be deadened by the effect of walking over the dead body of some poor Tommy lying scarcely covered in the bottom of the trench or here and there to observe a limb, boot or hand or a piece of khaki sticking out from the side of the trench with no other legend than 'an unknown British soldier' . . .

Watson had a fear of being buried while sheltering in undercut holes in the sides of trenches. Here men slept like dogs, he said, but whenever high explosive shells began to arrive, he would come out. 'I felt always a horror of being buried alive.'

It was a terrible element for those who were casualties. On 13 October 1917 stretcher bearers were trying to find the wounded in front of the German lines in the morass of Passchendaele. The Germans mercifully refrained from firing and in some cases, seeing the bearers wallowing in the mud, even directed the bearers to wounded Australians who had become barely visible in the mire. But finding a wounded man was merely a beginning. Carrying the wounded back to the nearest form of medical attention, the regimental aid post, was a labour with mud, and a struggle with traffic

of other mud-encumbered men that could take half a day. At the aid post areas themselves men were laid down in mud, still under shelling, which filled the air with falling body parts and mud. The alternative was the freezing of the terrain, which replaced trench foot with frostbite and froze men's mufflers to their face. Thus there were only two seasons at the front—mud and ice.



General Monash, like other generals on both sides of the line, was willing to use gas. Near Ypres in late February 1917, Monash combined smoke and gas shells in the preparatory bombardments of his divisional artillery. When the Australians attacked, smoke shells alone were fired in the final bombardment so that the Australians would not be subject to the poisonous effects, but German defenders, seeing the smoke, would continue to wear their incapacitating gas masks. This method of deception would be used by both sides in World War I since it was taken as axiomatic that men could not fight a battle in gas masks, and that they hated wearing them only a little more than they hated the blistering, choking range of gases used by both sides. By the time the Australians reached the Western Front, gas was still released in clouds from cylinders when the wind was right.

As the war continued, gas arrived chiefly by shells which landed not with a bang but a thud. For another two decades, Australian families would hear the racking and wheezing of the gas victims. The gases they had been poisoned by included the damaging and often fatal lung irritants such as chlorine, phosgene and diphosgene, which could make a man choke to death by attacking the pulmonary system and bursting apart the walls of the air sacs in the lung. When phosgene and the other lung irritants were inhaled, the victim's lungs would flood with oedema fluid. After the most acute torture, death would result by choking and drowning.

The last category were the vesicants which irritated or burned the skin—the most famous being dichlorethylsulphide or mustard gas. Mustard gas could slough away the membranes of the trachea. The dead skin served as a breeding ground for secondary infections and men could die of bronchopneumonia and other diseases. Men who sat on ground that was contaminated by mustard gas would often be burned through their clothing and develop blisters.

It was militarily useful also to use the less deadly but disorienting 'lachrymators', tear gas, such as benzyl bromide, or sneezing gas, which the troops called 'smokes'. The chemical officers of both sides mixed and matched all these ingredients at any given time. If an irritant gas could get to a man's mouth and nostrils a second or two before he got his clumsy mask on, it could cause such acute irritation of eyes or nose that he was likely to rip it off again and become subject to something more deadly.

Australian nurses such as May Tilton, working in September 1917 in a ward for gas victims at a casualty clearing station several miles behind the lines in Belgium, noticed how, unlike the other wounded, the gas victims wore 'such frightened expressions'. She bathed the victims' eyes with sodium bicarbonate, put cocaine drops in them, and relieved the outer flesh and inner membrane pain of mustard-gas burns with morphine. She and other nurses administered oxygen from a device named 'the octopus', an oxygen cylinder to which many tubes and masks were attached, allowing a number of soldiers to benefit from the cylinder at the same time. But she and the other women could work in the ward only for a certain time, since the gas fumes rising from the men and their uniforms would begin to attack the nurses' throats and eyes also, and they would go out into the open to inhale air and drink tea before returning. Sister Tev Davies found that even when the gas victims got as far from the front as Boulogne, their condition was still pitiable. 'Mum, such cruel stuff it is ... one runs all day with inhalations, gargles, douches, eye baths. Mercy me! Fritz is fiendish alright. Not warfare at all, it is slaughter absolutely.' Adolescent Fritzes, of course, suffered as badly from the same causes as did the British and Australians.

SHELL SHOCK

There were cases of war-induced 'madness' at Gallipoli, and the 287 cases ultimately evacuated from Gallipoli were only the worst instances. In aid stations on the slopes running down to Anzac Cove, regimental medical officers began to see tremors, stammering, speechlessness (mutism or aphonia) and paralysis. Previously brave young men who, without being physically wounded, were obviously unfit to carry on were taken off the beach to the island of Lemnos or to Malta or Alexandria to recuperate.

At Gallipoli there was never relief. There could be no going AWL, ducking back to a village for wine or the company of women, as the Australians in

France became notorious for. Neuroses and mental breakdown were not the preserve of the private soldier. From 25 April 1915 Lieutenant Colonel W.T. Paterson amazed other officers by his behaviour, hunting around with a revolver in his hand 'looking for General Bridges to kill him'. Paterson was shipped out to Lemnos and eventually to Egypt with 'nervous instability'.

The nurse May Tilton remembered nursing a twenty-year-old who regained his reason but had lost his ability to talk in more than nearly inaudible murmurs. 'He told me in the faintest whisper that he saw his two elder brothers killed one day on the peninsula. He went mad and wanted to rush the Turks' trenches; remembered being prevented; then knew no more.'

Major Alfred Campbell, who would serve in Egypt and run the first 'nerve hospital' for diggers at Randwick in Sydney, wrote of the trigger for mental disorder that 'in most the cause was a severe shock, such as a shell explosion close at hand, lifting them in the air and burying them with debris'. One man had been rendered blind due to psychic shock within a few minutes of landing at Anzac Cove. He made a rapid recovery and returned to the front but the first nearby shell explosion brought the blindness on again. 'These were not necessarily wanting in courage,' said Campbell. 'Many of them possibly self-goaded continued on duty for weeks ... some were finally knocked out, but not wounded, by an explosion of some kind.'

Campbell took particular note of a case of the condition named hemichorea in a young man who had done considerable trench fighting at Gallipoli. 'Movements of face, trunk and limbs on one side so violent that the subject was unable to walk, use a bed pan or take food unassisted.'

In 1916, as the Australians went into action in France, the British military were still avoiding the term 'shell shock'. They divided all such cases diagnosed in the field into two categories—one was 'shell concussion', the symptoms of concussion of the brain or spinal cord of a severe nature, and the second was 'nervous shock'. Soldiers in the first category were to be evacuated as wounded, and the second as sick. The latter were directed to special clearing stations behind the lines.

In France, the men in the frontline did not doubt the reality of shell shock. Doomed young Lieutenant Raws saw the officer commanding the 23rd Battalion go 'temporarily mad' and desert his men. References to temporary madness stud soldiers' letters, and later—even in civilian life—the madness and the torment could return and become more permanent. The term 'poor

fellow' was often used for those who were sent back to the rear with manifestations of more long-running mental disorders. W.C. Watson saw men crazed by shells bursting near them. 'It was pitiful to see the nervous wrecks of men being led out by the hand crouching in terror at the sound of every passing shell.'

How temporary madness and ultimate shell shock might arise is suggested by Corporal Archie Barwick, who wrote, 'As the ground heaved under the frightful bombardment any amount of men were driven stark staring mad and more than one of them rushed out of the trenches towards the Germans, any amount of them could be seen crying and sobbing like children, their nerves completely gone. How on earth anyone could stand it God alone knows. We were all nearly in a state of silliness and half-dazed.' Captain G.D. Mitchell, a young man who would later write a book on his experience, *Backs to the Wall*, admitted that at the beginning of the winter of 1916 a nearly disabling terror overwhelmed him. It was probably a delayed reaction, he believed, for the night was quite still, there was no bombardment and he was on listening duty—listening in particular for enemy activity and patrols. 'In that hour was born in me a fear that lasted throughout the whole winter. It was the dread of dying in the mud, going down into that stinking morass and though dead being conscious throughout the ages. It was probably a form of claustrophobia.' Indeed, one of the common triggers of 'madness' or shell shock was burial alive in soil impregnated with gas, rats and body parts. Sergeant J.R. Edwards of the 27th Battalion wrote almost cheerily of the experience of being buried alive. He and a friend were lying together in a recess of a trench running alongside the road between the village of La Boisselle and Pozières when:

A 5.9 landed fair on the parapet above our 'possie'. It broke down the 3 or 4 feet of earth above the recess, and buried us ... I tried to raise a cry but the earth was over my face and my hands were pinned across my chest by the weight ... I struggled like hell but could do nothing. All of a sudden the pressure became heavier; it was irresistible, and I was blotted out. I recollect thinking, 'I'm gone', and knew nothing more until coming to in the colonel's dugout sometime later.

It had been at Pozières on the Somme in late July 1916, said the psychiatrist Lieutenant Colonel J.W. Springthorpe, that for the first time shell shock

'fell like an avalanche' on thousands. C.E.W. Bean would also write, 'The genuine shell shocks were a feature of Pozières.' Bean admitted he had been appalled 'with the look of the men' in general. The Somme had wrought this. Doctors attributed some of the problems to the passive and impersonal nature of the warfare when, as official historian Lieutenant Colonel Butler wrote, 'after each minor advance the troops must sit tight in sectors of the front system which the enemy then pounded to dust'. With this went lack of sleep, poor food, unrelenting anxiety and acute physical discomfort. As Charles Bean wrote, the Somme sector left the Australians 'facing the storm with no other protection than the naked framework of their character'.

The numbers who suffered the conditions should not be exaggerated nor underestimated. Between October 1915 and August 1918 nearly 20 000 sick and wounded casualties were sent home to Australia. Of these 878 were considered to be suffering from the freshly diagnosed condition named shell shock, but 1400 from disordered action of the heart (DAH), a diagnosis often deployed by surgeons to save brave men from the stigma of mental disease, for which the high command had little sympathy. One historian argues from the details provided for casualties that 16.96 per cent of the Australians on the Western Front suffered from shell shock at some time or other, though many recovered with treatment. But any attempt to work out how many soldiers suffered shell shock in combination with wounds is an impossibility.

POWS

Prisoners of war are not often mentioned in the popular record of World War I. Perhaps it was difficult to find them a place in the Anzac legend. In all, 3800 Australians surrendered to the Germans. Five hundred were taken at Fromelles, the opening Australian engagement, another 1200 the following spring at Bullecourt and more still at Villers-Bretonneux in 1918. The imprisonment of these latter men was relatively short.

Private G. Davidson, captured at Fromelles, later remembered a reasonable level of treatment by his German captors. 'I was taken to Douai hospital [behind German lines in France] and I remained in hospital there until October ... was then sent to Munster ... then transferred to the Lager ... until December 7 1917. Then I was moved to Mannheim where I passed the Medical Board for internment in a neutral country.' Davidson's Fromelles wounds, which had kept him in hospital for nine months, made him no

further threat to the German state and so he was sent to Holland under the care of the Red Cross and ultimately repatriated.

Not everyone thought fondly of the Douai military hospital. Lance Corporal Alder went through four operations on his arms and legs there but was at one stage left for twenty-three days without fresh bandages. 'My wounds were covered in maggots. I complained to the doctor through the interpreter ... he replied to catch them would be a good pastime for me.' Private Wait says he often saw a German under-officer named Marks ill-treat the men, and when they cried out in pain behave even worse. 'He was brutal in his handling of the patients ...' In some cases men became aware of the shortages of everything from food to bandages that were occurring due to the blockade of Germany by the Royal Navy and which might explain some of the neglect of prisoners. Anaesthetics became rare commodities, and paper bandages began to replace cloth ones. Some Australian POWs believed that the Germans were particularly vengeful towards them for fighting so far away from their homes, in a war that—in German eyes—was none of their business.

The story of the neglect and misuse of Australian POWs by Germans must be balanced against the experience of Alice Ross King, an Australian nursing sister at Number 2 Casualty Clearing Station near the front. In November 1917 she heard the cries of men from beneath a tent she had not noticed before. Inside, she found fifty-three wounded German prisoners who had been forgotten for the past three days, a period during which the clearing station had been flooded with wounded. She found their condition horrifying and, though everyone on the staff was 'dead beat', she called the doctor and they went to work, getting orderlies to remove the thirteen who had died and treating the other forty patients. Similarly, George Faulkner of the Medical Corps confessed that when a German plane which was constantly bombing the frontlines, communication trenches and dressing stations crashed, and a surviving airman, wearing an Iron Cross, came to the dressing station, 'I gave him as much pain as possible, felt like knocking him out.'

The War Department was skimpy in the details it sent to relatives of such men, and did not see taking much further interest in them as its chief business. One of the most meaningful and informative points of contact between the Australian prisoners and the home front was provided by an Australian volunteer, Miss Mary Elizabeth Chomley. Mary Chomley, a woman in her mid-forties, was the daughter of a Victorian judge. She had

been involved in the Australian arts and craft movement, and in 1897 had served as secretary of the Australian Exhibition of Women's Work. Chomley had gone to England as a Red Cross volunteer worker early in the war and worked in a British hospital until in 1916 she was given an office in Red Cross headquarters as Secretary of the Prisoner of War Department of the Australian Red Cross.

One of her first steps after Fromelles was to discover from the Red Cross the location of prisoners taken in that battle and to write to them. Miss Chomley's new department not only gave the wider Red Cross organisation the names and prison addresses of POWs so that comfort parcels could be sent, but it received about 20 000 letters a month from Australian prisoners and relatives, all of which Chomley and her small staff attempted to answer. The department also catalogued personal details of prisoners, such as clothing and shoe size, and medical requirements, so that they could assemble personalised comfort parcels for the prisoners. Prisoners wrote to her asking for toothpaste, books and boxing gloves. Many of the letters thanked Miss Chomley and told her of the regular arrival of parcels, or else reported on their failure to turn up. Robert Duff of the 43rd Battalion told Miss Chomley that the arrival of the parcels 'lets a chap know that he is not forgotten'. Watt Finlay wrote to her in July 1918: 'Ask any Australian here what he is going to do directly he arrives in England—and what do we hear? "Go direct to the Red Cross and meet Miss Chomley ... She's the goods."'

Prisoners' rations could be supplemented by food packages from Australia and Miss Chomley's Australian Red Cross POW Department, which sent food parcels every fortnight containing meat, tea, jam, butter and tobacco. Some repatriated prisoners, including Private W. Mayo of the 53rd Battalion, said they would not have survived without the Red Cross parcels. But often the packages were plundered or German guards would tease prisoners with their contents and then withdraw them. Private Patrick Regan wrote, 'Prisoners tended to be as much resigned as resentful at having items pinched knowing as most did that the guards had little to eat themselves.' The battle cruiser *Australia* and the light cruisers *Sydney* and *Melbourne* were operating in the North Sea as part of the Grand Fleet preventing neutral ships from carrying goods to Germany, and thus contributing to the discomfort of Australian and other prisoners, and of their guards and their guards' families. The Australians pitied fellow prisoners—Italians, Russians—who

received no such relief as Miss Chomley offered at all. Private J.P.V. Marrinon claimed that many Russians and Italians simply died of starvation or misuse. From pity, the Australians gave some of the food that arrived by parcel to prisoners from other countries.

POWs also asked Miss Chomley to write to their mothers and wives and reassure them, and she obliged. A Lance Corporal Baird tried with other Australians to escape the prison depot in Lille. Miss Chomley was able to verify for his family that he had not been shot on recapture but had received fourteen days' solitary confinement. Lieutenant Arthur Dent's family received a notification that their son had been killed in action in November 1916 in the final days of the Battle of the Somme, but then Mary Chomley's office was able to tell Mrs Dent that her son, though badly wounded, was alive and a POW in Germany. Dent would ultimately write a letter of glowing gratitude to Miss Chomley and her staff. 'Untold sufferings are alleviated by their prompt attention to the prisoner's requirements.'

On thousands of others no definite news was ever received, there being none. They were many who simply vanished, children and brothers and husbands who had been torn to gobbets by heavy artillery, or whose bodies, gouged by machine-gun bullets, sank into the mud of France or Flanders.

THE MODEL GENERAL MAKES THE MODEL BATTLE

John Monash was not particularly liked by C.E.W. Bean, the lanky redhead official correspondent and, later, historian. Monash in return believed that both his 4th Brigade at Gallipoli and then his 3rd Division in France received inadequate praise in the pieces C.E.W. Bean wrote for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Bean reserved the strongest criticism he had of any general for Monash. To what extent Bean's attitude was based on Monash's powers of self-promotion, and to what extent on Monash's German heritage and Jewishness, is hard to say.

General Birdwood, administrative head of the AIF—or, in title, General Officer Commanding—had been invited by the British to take over the shattered British Fifth Army, which had caved in under the German spring offensive, and re-form it. At the same time he was to continue in his job as GOC of the Australians. From the beginning of Australian campaigning in France, Lieutenant General William Birdwood, an English soldier appointed to overall command of the Australians and New Zealanders at Gallipoli, had

left his staff in London under the industrious and clever Australian General Brudenell White and gone amongst the troops. He became a favourite with the Australians, and instinctively understood the difference between their military casualness and genuine indiscipline.

Bean was shocked not only at Monash's elevation to command of the corps, but also appalled to learn that Birdwood intended to send Brudenell White to take over full time as chief of staff of the Fifth Army. He thought the corps command should go to White. Although Bean believed that Monash had worked to get the generalship of the Australian Corps 'by all sorts of clever, well hidden, subterranean channels', nearly forty years later he wrote in the margin of his diary, 'I do not now believe this to be true.'

Monash was aware of the plots against him, including those involving Bean and influential journalist Keith Murdoch, and certainly saw them as due in part to his Jewishness. 'It is a great nuisance to have to fight a pogrom of this nature in the midst of all one's other anxieties.' It was a rare reference in his life to anti-Semitism. Birdwood would say in any case that he had absolute confidence in Monash, as did General Rawlinson, the British general within whose Fourth Army the Australian Corps was the jewel, and who declared that Murdoch was 'a mischievous and persistent villain'.

The Battle of Hamel, narrated below, partially put paid to the plotting, and the 8 August 1918 offensive against the Germans, a triumph for the corps, closed the issue.



From early June 1918 Monash had been talking with Major General Sinclair-Maclagan and Major General Gellibrand, two of his divisional commanders, about an attack to straighten out the German bulge in the Australian lines at the extreme southern end of the British army in France. Maclagan was a Scot who had been so exhausted, mentally and physically, by the first two days of Gallipoli that he had needed to be rested, but he soon returned to action and was a great critic of the lack of planning which went into some of the Gallipoli operations. Gellibrand and Monash were critics not only of Gallipoli but Western Front tactics and planning. Monash believed that it was time that 'some commander on our side of No Man's Land' should begin to think creatively about an offensive. At the Fourth Army, of which the Australian Corps was part, there arrived a new kind of tank, and Monash thought

they could be used against the German bulge in which lay the Somme village of Hamel, whose capture would straighten the line.

Monash took the tank with an intense seriousness, to the extent that some of those who admired him would attribute to him the founding tactics which would later be used by the Germans in France in 1940, a position perhaps mocked by British historians but strongly upheld by much Australian opinion. Monash believed that the tank, by drawing fire onto itself and providing cover, would reduce infantry losses. Monash's idea was that 'each tank was, for tactical purposes, to be treated as an infantry weapon', and advance level with the men. For the first time in history each tank would be assigned to and controlled by an infantry officer.

Monash also wanted attacks by aircraft to be coordinated with the ground assault. He presented a plan for a 4th Brigade dawn assault using artillery and tanks and aircraft in an intense collaboration not previously achieved. Monash had also depended very strongly on reconnaissance by aircraft of the enemy positions and of night bombing and strafing to exhaust the men opposite the Australians. Each day until the attack a gas and smoke shell barrage would be fired, but on the day of the attack only smoke shells would be used, so that the advancing men would be uninhibited by gas masks though the Germans would probably be wearing theirs.

Rawlinson asked whether Monash would like Americans to join the battle, and Monash asked for 2000 men of the US 33rd Division, organised in eight companies. On 2 July, two days before the attack, Billy Hughes made his visit to Monash's sector. 'I talked to the boys who were going into the Hamel stunt just before they started,' said Hughes later. 'Words are poor things to describe them, but as they stood there thousands of them armed cap-a-pie: helmets [and] full kit ready for action their bayonets glistening in the sun. . . I thought that with a million of such men one could conquer the world.'

On the day before the battle, half the Americans were withdrawn, to their great chagrin, but then later in the afternoon Monash learned that General Pershing did not want any American participation—the motivation seeming to be an unwillingness to have Americans commanded by anyone but Americans. As Monash said, 'The whole of the infantry destined for the assault at dawn next morning, including those very Americans, were already on its way to its battle stations.' Withdrawing the Americans would mean abandonment of the battle, he argued.

The withdrawal of a thousand of the men from the 33rd American Division was ultimately beyond his control, but a thousand Americans remained, distributed by platoons amongst the three Australian brigades that would be making the first assault. In the small hours of 4 July the Australians and their intermixture of Americans went forward into an as yet un-churned no-man's-land and lay down in the grass and the crops which had been sown there. A ground mist which mixed with the smoke shells helped create an even greater screen for the advance. At the appointed second, the infantry rose up and with the tanks behind them walked forward behind the creeping barrage of cannon- and gunfire.

It was all over in ninety-three minutes, Monash would later exalt. It was the perfect set piece battle of the war. One participant wrote, 'It wasn't a battle at all—just a Sunday morning stroll through the park. No rifle fire, no machine gun fire, no shell fire, no casualties, nothing at all.' But it was not so in all parts of the line. There were 1400 casualties—tragic enough, but light for France—and 800 of these Australian and American casualties were walking wounded. The tanks came back festooned with cheering wounded. The forests of Vaire and Hamel woods had fallen to the 4th and 11th Brigades, the first line of the advance, and the 11th and their tanks captured Hamel village itself. Sixty tanks were sent forward and only three were temporarily disabled. The advance 'gave us possession of the whole of the Hamel Valley, and landed us on the forward or eastern slope of the last ridge, from which the enemy had been able to overlook any of the country held by us'.

Hamel became the model for all other operations of the corps. It was the first battle in which the experiment of using aeroplanes for the purpose of carrying and delivering small-arms ammunition was tried. Until then it required two men to carry one ammunition box of a thousand rounds which a machine gun in action would expend in less than five minutes. These carrying parties had to travel probably not less than two or three miles, often across country open to fire. Each plane carried two boxes of ammunition as well as bombs (grenades), and they could be released by hand lever, and thus dropped by parachute. After some training, the pilots could drop the ammunition from a height of at least 1000 feet to within 100 yards of the appointed spot.

The Supreme War Council in Versailles were riveted by this victory. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau visited the 4th Division and told them how they had astonished the continent of Europe by their valour, and when they cheered, declared, '*Des jolies enfants*.'

Monash, not a modest man, declared that the effect of Hamel 'was electric ... it stimulated many men to the realisation that the enemy was, after all, not invulnerable, in spite of the formidable increase in his resources which he had brought from Russia. It marked the termination, once and for all, of the purely defensive attitude of the British front.'

A CONSCRIPT NATION

When Labor prime minister William Morris Hughes put the conscription issue to the Australian people, he was accused of being a moral coward by those who wanted conscription. They did not fully understand the difficulties he would have forcing it through the Senate, or the determination of many Labor members and the unions to oppose it. But by mid-1916, Hughes and others who believed conscription necessary to make up for the Australian losses suffered on the Somme were under moral pressure from other Dominions, such as Canada and New Zealand, both of which had introduced conscription. They may even have felt that trade with Britain might be dependent upon Australia's going this step further because distance from Britain put the country's trade in a difficult situation. But Hughes also genuinely desired that more Australian youths be sent to reinforce the remaining volunteers, and thus increase the chances of survival of all Australian soldiers.

The first referendum was on 28 October 1916. In most Protestant churches worshippers were urged to vote Yes, since the war was a holy conflict and thus the necessity of enlarging the army was depicted as a moral rather than a political issue. Not all of the Protestant community, however, voted as the pastors would have wished them to. The proposal was narrowly defeated, with a majority against it in three states. In a poll of over 2 500 000 voters, conscription was defeated by a mere 72 000. At a Labor conference in Melbourne in December 1916, Hughes and all those who had been in favour of conscription were expelled from the Labor Party. Hughes was aggrieved, and never again quite at home in politics. He had not left the party, he declared. The party had left him. In the end, he was forced to join the opposition in a combined National or 'Win the War' Party, of which he was elected head and thus became prime minister. He won an election in May 1917, even though Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne had declared from the pulpits of Melbourne that a vote for Hughes was a vote for conscription.

Indeed, Hughes felt forced to revive the conscription issue now. He argued that Australia needed 16 500 recruits each month, but in the early months of 1917 there were not more than 5000, dropping to 2500 in the second half of the year. By the end of 1917, as the second referendum approached, Australians seemed emotionally exhausted. There was not only a sense that conscription would kill not save more boys, but also a fear that Australia, because of its losses and its class divisions, would never be the same again.

The second referendum on 20 December 1917 was lost by a larger majority of 166 000. It was not such a majority, however, that it failed to show how split Australia was. The *Australian Worker* declared that conscription 'is the most immoral of all forms of gambling. It is fraught with tragedy; red with murder and foul with abomination.'

To many Australian workers the priority was not to win campaigns in France, but to improve their wages in the face of ever rising prices for food. By August 1917, a strike would begin at the Randwick Tramway workshops, ostensibly over rosters, and would eventually enlist the state in a crisis involving fuel, food and transport workers. To middle-class men and women all this was a betrayal of their sons at the front.

The public rancour of the time was shown by a conscription rally held on the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 10 December. Anti-conscriptionists invaded the ground, and hurled eggs, road gravel and glass bottles at the speaker, including Hughes. A large stone came close to hitting the Prime Minister, and a witness claimed that a soldier knocked a knife out of the hand of a man attempting to throw it in the direction of the rostrum. Even as a rumour, this was a sign that the debate was poisonous.

In regard to conscription and most other issues, the Irish and their children remained a source of unease, even though many soldiers of Irish ancestry had joined the ranks. Most Irish in Australia did not favour the Easter weekend uprising in Dublin in 1916 when it first occurred. Britain had as good as guaranteed Irish Home Rule, a form of Irish independence akin to that of a self-governing Dominion, at war's end. The Easter rebels were seen as having jumped the gun to a provocative extent. But when the British executed many of the captured Irish rebels in Dublin's Kilmainham gaol, Irish opinion turned against Britain. William Butler Yeats put it best: a terrible beauty was born. And Irish people in Australia asked themselves was this an Empire worth sacrificing their sons for?

BRINGING THE FABRIC DOWN

During the war the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical movement imported from Chicago with wide support among unionists, had affrighted public opinion with their combination of strikes and sabotage. The IWW, or the Wobblies, were anarchists and believed that the sole structure required to bring peace and plenty to the earth was not corrupted government but One Big Union (OBU) involving all the workers of the earth in unconquerable combination.

Hughes blamed the Wobblies for orchestrating a waterfront strike in February 1916, and was all the more furious since he had just managed to achieve the first federal award for the industry and had been pleased by the patriotism which had kept industry humming through 1915. Soon the Wobblies would encourage wildcat strikes on the waterfront, in the North Queensland sugar mills, the Government Clothing Factory in Melbourne, the railways workshop in Sydney, and amongst railway construction workers in South and Western Australia.

Many admired this side of the Wobblies' activities. But the IWW were avowedly advocates too of 'direct action', sabotage and arson. Fires had broken out in a number of buildings in Sydney, allegedly through the use of 'fire dope', a phosphorus incendiary much favoured by anarchists. During June and July 1916, there had been five spectacular fires in central Sydney commercial buildings, one of them being set in the Co-operative Building. The IWW was not backward in telling the world it was their work. 'Far better to see Sydney melted to the ground than to see the men of Sydney taken away to be butchered,' said Peter Larkin, brother of Irish revolutionary James Larkin, now released from gaol, at the Sydney Domain. Twelve Wobblies were arrested for arson.

The Wobblies were seen as being behind all strikes, such as the great strike that occurred in August 1917 when some 6000 railway and tramway employees in New South Wales walked away in protest against the introduction of a work recording system. One of the strikers was far from being a Wobbly—the junior engine-driver and future prime minister Ben Chifley. The strike lasted eighty-one days and had by then been joined by 76 000 other workers, most of them not Wobblies. Forty thousand unionists marched through Sydney. The Riot Act was read in military camps to warn soldiers who might think of siding with the strikers, and 1500 special constables were sworn in to guard trams, trains and workshops.

Stories of attacks by non-combatants on the fabric of the society for which they had fought greeted soldiers on their homecoming in 1919. Many former officers in particular would begin to form their own 'secret' paramilitary groups to fight against Bolshevism. But the reality was that the Australian candidates for genuine Bolshevism were few in number.

The mutinous streak that had emerged in many Diggers late in 1918, and even more notably after peace was declared, with men refusing to drill in the manner of regular soldiers, added to the concerns of the authorities and of the leaders of society. Everywhere, from the establishment Union Club in Sydney to the Masonic lodges of Toorak, there was an expectation that something dire would happen in mid-1919. By mid-winter ex-servicemen were called together to form up in the gardens near Victoria Barracks in Melbourne, taking their place in their old platoons ready to be drilled by their former sergeants. They were addressed by six generals, three lieutenant-colonels and other officers. General Pompey Elliott declared, 'Forces of disorder were arising in this country ... they [the soldiers] must unite, as they had united before, to defend the Government and to maintain order.'

WESTERN FRONT MUTINY

In late September 1918 General John Monash and Major General John Gellibrand, Commander of the 3rd Division, had a passionate exchange, in which Gellibrand complained that battalions of only 200 men were being pushed into battle and the diggers were exhausted. Monash found it hard to believe that the troops were approaching the end of their strength. 'Six days' rest and a bath restores the elasticity of a division,' he said, even though he himself was exhausted.

On 21 September Australian soldiers of the 1st Battalion became restive. Three days before they had attacked the Hindenburg Line near Bellicourt and their brigade had taken over 4000 prisoners. They had been due to be relieved the day before but had been disappointed to have to stay on another night in the trenches and then to learn that the relief had been cancelled, and that they were to go back into the line to support an attack by the British to their north. This order was resented by the men, who complained that they were being called again to do 'other people's work'. There was a strong sense that they were being kept in the line because they were more effective than British units. Some men refused to draw their ammunition from stores and others

started walking back along a sunken road to the rear. Officers established a straggler post to round up those going absent, but the soldiers ordered to man it mysteriously reported that they had not encountered anyone leaving the line. When the 1st Battalion moved to its start tape on 21 September, more than half the battalion was missing. The assault was nevertheless a success.

One hundred and twenty-seven Australians were arrested and tried, and received sentences ranging from three to ten years, which they served in grim Dartmoor prison in England. Some accused Monash of being too soft on these men but, in any case, less than a year passed from the end of the war before their sentences were suspended. Peace brought with it no need to set an example any more.

It was apparent to Australian commanders that for the time being nothing more could be asked of the men of the AIF. This was a crisis for the Australian forces, as conscription had failed and recruitment was inadequate. No one knew that the war had only a short time left to run. The Armistice would come as a great relief to the commanders of the AIF.

SHRINKING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Australian Flying Corps flew a great number of operations in support of the British and Australian penetration of Palestine and Syria, and the Australian Number 1 Squadron was for a time intimately involved with the Arab force catalysed by T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) on the eastern or right flank of the Allied advance on Damascus. On 16 May 1918 the South Australian Ross Smith flew Lawrence from a conference at General Allenby's headquarters in southern Palestine to his base at El Kutrani on the famous Turkish Hejaz Railway in what is now Jordan, the railway the Arabs (perhaps too often called Lawrence's Arabs) continually blew up and ambushed. Smith and his squadron were overwhelmingly successful in shooting down German Rumpler and Albatross aircraft which attacked or drew near to Lawrence's column. The Australian Bristol Fighters also bombed Turkish railway repair work parties trying to restore the lines after Arab attacks. From the air, the Australians observed Arabs and Turks harvesting grain in the Jordan Valley but also saw the Turkish build-up at Amman, now the capital of Jordan, and so bombed that ancient city as well.

This activity in the air was part of the Australian involvement in the conflict with Turkey and of Turkey's Ottoman Empire, named after its first

sultan, Uthman. The Australians had encountered this threatened empire at Gallipoli, and it had rebuffed them in their attempt to clear the way to Istanbul. But the Ottoman Empire still stretched across the Turkish Peninsula, down through Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Arabia and modern Iraq, and westwards into Sinai, where it sat gazing at the British in Egypt. Having previously held all of Egypt, the Turks, often but not always led by German generals, had at the start of the war intended to capture the Suez and Egypt. Their troops were in the Sinai south-west of Jerusalem and had advanced as far as Romani. Over the winter of 1915–16 the Turks were using three traditional and ancient routes to cross the Sinai Peninsula, the triangular desolation between Palestine and the Suez Canal. Meanwhile the British were beginning to build a water pipeline and a railway to service their men on what would need to be an ultimate advance into Palestine.

Sinai was a place which from the time of the Hittites and then the Egyptians was to be briskly traversed before a fight could be staged. The systems and wells dug into the beds of wadis in Sinai had been reconditioned by the Turks for their advance on Egypt in 1915. But the water supply on this central route was too limited for an army. The coastal one was better, though the sand dunes and rocky earth were very hard on horses, guns and wheeled transportation. Anyone invading Egypt, or marching out of Egypt to invade Palestine, had to secure the wells at Katia, near the coast twenty miles east of the present Suez Canal. This was an eternal rule. Alexander had had to do it, and Napoleon had also seized them so that they could water ambitions which for him never came to fruition. By January 1916 the Turks had 25 000 men in Sinai. It was decided that they must be denied the Katia wells. If the Turks occupied Katia waters they were only a one- or two-day march from the Canal. The German aim in all this was that if the Turks could keep a permanent army around Katia, that in itself would tie up a lot of British troops guarding the Suez Canal.

Meanwhile, the two British Light Horse divisions had to contend with their own supply problems. While a day's ration for a man consisted of only 2 or 3 pounds, that of a horse weighed 20 pounds. The daily water ration for a man washing economically and drinking was at most 1 gallon, but horses required 5 gallons. In order to supply not only the Australians but the entire British force, it was essential to push a new railway out into the desert.

The Light Horse was made up chiefly of men from the bush. It was not a cavalry force because its members were not armed with sword or lance.

They were mounted riflemen, a few of whom had served in South Africa only twelve years earlier. Their Australian childhoods had tempered them, making them adept with horses and skilled with rifles. The horses they rode—though generally Walers—were not uniform in appearance. Some Australians rode on stocky, powerful ponies, and so did the New Zealanders, while others rode cross-breeds from draught Clydesdale mares to three-quarter thoroughbreds. The heat of Sinai was for most of the year—except in the peak of summer—no worse than the heat of many parts of Australia in summer, and both men and horses were used to such conditions.

Near Katia, the British Yeomanry and the Gloucesters of the British army were overrun by Turkish forces in April 1916 and attacked from the air by German aircraft. The British went reeling back through the village of Katia and the camp at Romani, and the Turks left the British wounded to their Bedouin militia, who circled them on horseback as they begged for water and cried, 'Finish British! Turks Cantara! Turks Port Said!'

The 2nd Light Horse Brigade of the Anzac Mounted Division, led by General Bull Ryrie, a Michelago grazier twice wounded at Gallipoli, rode up to Romani near Katia on 8 April, along with the New Zealand brigade and the headquarters unit of the Anzac Mounted Division, and covered the retreat of the British soldiers on the coast. 'The only entry into Egypt is by this desert,' Herodotus had written, and that entry was now about to be denied to the Turks by the undermanned Australian and New Zealand light horsemen.

At the Romani sand dunes on the furiously hot night of 3 August 1916, Light Horse regiments lay under a quarter-moon on white sand. North of them, closer to the coast, were a number of British infantry regiments. Ahead lay hilly country which gave good cover for the snipers or raiders of the Turkish army. To their south a ridge of stone dubbed Mount Meredith dominated the country and General Chauvel, the Grafton-born horseman and Australian regular soldier who commanded the Anzac Division, had been suggesting to his superiors that infantry posts be put on top, but had been ignored. The Turks themselves intended to occupy it and bombard the British railhead at Romani from it, a plan which was discovered by a light horse patrol.

About one o'clock in the morning, closer to the coast, the Turks attacked the main Australian line, crying, 'Finish Australia! Finish Australia!' By two they were within 30 or 40 yards of the light horsemen. They could not be

clearly seen and the Australians had to aim at rifle flashes. The Australians knew they could not hold this major Turkish attack that was now in progress because their own line was not continuous but ran in a series of posts over a number of sand dunes. If the Turks could outflank the Australians, they could destroy Romani and prepare, with a British-built railway in hand, for an expedition against the Canal.

At 2.30 a.m. there was a large-scale bayonet charge against the Australians at Mount Meredith. The Turks tried to climb the almost-perpendicular southern-most slope and were held back by a small group of men under a young man from Gunnedah named Lieutenant Edwards, who would survive that night but die of disease before the year was out. Many officers and men were killed and others were driven back to a sheltered dip in the rock between Mount Meredith and its neighbour, Mount Wellington, where their horses were. Survivors were now retreating, many of them on horseback, towards Romani. But an order was heard above the racket. It was obeyed, a new line was formed. The Anzac front stood, and a flanking route which would have given the Turks the Romani rail and perhaps the Canal was blocked. Anzac officers yelled out promises of reinforcements at dawn, and men scooped out holes in the sand and settled down with the intention to stop the Turks again.

There were further attacks and as dawn broke the light horsemen could see the massed Turkish attack, and the Turks could see the thinness of the Australian defences. They again attacked the right, inland side of the Australian line, firing on men and horses. A retreat was necessary, but it occurred according to drill, troop covering troop, withdrawing from those holes quickly dug in the sand. Chauvel realised that he could not let hand-to-hand fighting break out, because the Turkish numbers were so great. Some Australians had been driven to Wellington Ridge, however, which the Turkish artillery swept with shrapnel and high explosives. By 7 a.m. the Turks had gained the ridge. But it was six hours too late for the Turks. Instead of possessing these vantage points in the cool of night they possessed them in a furnace-like morning.

Chauvel sent a message back that if a British rifle brigade could come up—an infantry brigade was nearly double the rifles of a light-horse brigade because so many men had to be kept behind to guard the horses—the Australians could draw back, water their horses, and then swing round the left of the enemy to cooperate with the mounted New Zealanders and yeomanry brigade in an attack which would envelop the Turks.

The Turkish troops were beginning to suffer from the heat. They were exhausted by forced marching and hours of fighting in the heavy sand. Most of the prisoners the Australians and others took had been without water for some hours and the food in their haversacks consisted chiefly of green dates they had gathered in the date groves. Many of them were suffering from dysentery.

Ryrie's Light Horse had by afternoon been fighting for twenty hours. But by nightfall they were incomparably better off than the Turks, who as well as everything else had heard that many layers of defence would block their advance to the Canal. There was only intermittent rest for the Australians that night. Ammunition and water were issued, and the orders were that there would be a bayonet advance at dawn.

At dawn on 5 August, the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades routed the Turks with a bayonet charge and the Turkish retreat was disorderly, as Chauvel unleashed the 3rd Brigade to pursue and harry them. So began a Turkish retreat which would not finish until Damascus and the end of the war.

Two days before Christmas 1916, at Magdhaba, the Turks made a last stand to remain in Sinai. The Anzac Mounted Division, operating ahead of the infantry, were subjected to severe fire, but ended by driving the enemy off. The Australians set Magdhaba alight to prevent its use again and withdrew back to their camp at El Arish. The 1st Light Horse next captured Rafa, near the Sinai-Palestine border (now Ein Rafa), on the morning of 9 January 1917. The telegraph lines to Gaza were cut. Now the Anglo-Australian force could move to attack the main Turkish lines near Gaza on the coast. The first assault on Gaza on 26 March began well at 2.30 a.m. in a dense fog. Chauvel was given the Imperial Mounted Division as well as having his own men to attack Gaza from the north. But even as he was advancing and entering the outskirts of the town he heard to the east a battle to stop Turkish reinforcements arriving. Against his strongest protest he was ordered to withdraw. At campfires that evening, the light horsemen were furious.

Chauvel now became a lieutenant general in command of the Desert Mounted Corps, including the Camel Brigade. Of its nine horsed brigades, four were Australian, four British and one New Zealand. The artillery was mainly British. Another attack on Gaza was meant to distract the Turks while 9 miles (15 kilometres) inland at a junction named Beersheba the Mounted Corps was to make an enveloping attack from all sides. The future of the

advance in Palestine depended on the capture of the Beersheba wells. The Turkish Eighth Army garrisoned in Beersheba did not know that they, instead of Gaza, were the target. Chauvel's men made an assault on the height above Beersheba, Tel el Saba, at 3 p.m. on 31 October, ultimately capturing the hilly defence position. Then, in waning light, the famous incident of the day occurred, the entirely successful charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade.

Gaza fell in November and in December the British captured the ancient city of Jerusalem. The first Australians to ride in were from Western Australia, the 10th Light Horse. They were mud-splashed and unshaven and weary from their prolonged progress through the cold hills in the rain. The populace—Greek, Armenian, Jewish and Christian—had suffered under Turkish military rule and they were in a carnival mood by the time the Australians entered. The men were shocked by the dishevelled condition of the town. They had expected a golden city. They visited the sacred sites, the Church of the Nativity, the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as the Mosque of Omar and the Wailing Wall.

In Palestine the men were treated most cordially by the Jewish settlers, orange orchardists. At Wadi Hanein an entire brigade was entertained at a feast to celebrate the capture of Jerusalem. The Australians danced with the women. This was the best time they had had, said some of the light horsemen, since they'd landed in Egypt.

That winter of 1917–18 the British forces began to operate on the eastern side of the Jordan Valley, in terrain now part of the state of Jordan. That was the centre line of the advance. On the western side they were well and truly within what would be the modern state of Israel, for that was where Beersheba lay. To the east, T.E. Lawrence and the Arabs were operating. For the force in the valley, the rain in the winter of 1917–18, combined with severe cold, was a trial to light horsemen operating in the open, though firewood was found and bivouac sheets and extra blankets were issued.

Chauvel advanced on Derra from Amman, the present capital of Jordan, with his two divisions and the camel brigade. At a place named Es Salt the Australians ran into a massive Turkish force. By midnight on 4 May, Chauvel's mounted infantry, including the Light Horse, retreated back across the Jordan, having lost fifteen hundred men.

The high command were a little embarrassed by this failure, but it could be blamed on the inadequacy and tiredness of the Australian, New Zealand,

British and Indian troops engaged. Chauvel's corps was rested. When it set off again it overtook the Turks, and cut off their retreat through Nazareth. Otto Liman von Sanders, the German general who was now the enemy Commander-in-Chief, was very nearly captured in Nazareth, as Chauvel had planned. The supply situation became chaotic for von Sanders and the Hejaz railway was subject to attacks, not least by Lawrence. He also believed himself outnumbered and would not discover that he was wrong until the British and Australians captured more than 75 000 of his men in the late summer of 1918.

The Anzac Mounted Division was stationed by the Jordan River as a decoy. Many of its men were sick from bad water and sanitation, and exhausted. The division was supported by a composite body of Jewish infantry recruited in England and in Palestine itself, and the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade. Their job was to move around a lot and raise plenty of dust to keep Turkish forces arrayed in front of them.

New camps were built, 15 000 dummy horses were erected out of canvas, fake campfires were lit at night, and sleighs drawn by mules jogged about the sea of dust in the daytime. The Australian and British pilots were very active overhead and that helped the deception. While this was going on, T.E. Lawrence, with a strong Arab force, sent agents around the Amman district buying up all available horse feed, dropping hints that it was needed for the maintenance of British cavalry in the Jordan Valley. So in September 1918, while Allenby was massing his forces on the west, the enemy was kept in place in the Jordan Valley to the east by this display from Chauvel's corps. Most of the rest of the British force camped near the coast in the olive groves and orange orchards of Jaffa.

By 16 September 1918 Chauvel had secretly moved his headquarters 50 miles (80 kilometres) north, leaving the old camp standing, with a few men to keep the lights burning at night and kick up dust with dragged logs. Chauvel was to lead his corps to capture Nazareth and then cut off the Turkish army held in place by the men he had left over in the Jordan Valley. Beyond the Jordan Valley Lawrence and the Arabs were advancing. A column assisted by Arab tribes and the Druze blew up a bridge and destroyed a section of the Hejaz Railway and then demolished further sections north and west. So as the general assault on Damascus under the British general Allenby was about to begin, railway traffic moving south towards three Turkish armies

was suspended. Allenby sent a cable to the government in Melbourne which read in part, 'The completeness of our victory is due to the action of the Desert Mounted Corps under General Chauvel.'

The Arab Northern Army and Lawrence came under Chauvel's orders. The rest of his corps, with the Australian Mounted Division leading, would advance over the Golan Heights and make for Damascus. Despite facing a series of Turkish rearguards, Chauvel made the gates of Damascus by the evening of 30 September and cut the road on the other side through the Barada Gorge that led to Beirut. He entered Damascus next morning while the 3rd Light Horse Brigade continued to pursue the Turks northwards.

Chauvel now had to deal with the disorder in the city, which involved cracking down on the looting of the Arab militias, keeping order on the streets of a city of 300 000 people, securing food, cooperating with the police, and caring for a horde of sick and wounded Turks and the 20 000 prisoners his corps had taken in the city. His own troops were suffering from malaria and influenza at an appalling rate.

Various troops, including Australian Light Horse, pursued the Turks beyond Aleppo on the coast of modern Syria, which the Arab militias captured on 25 October. Five days later an armistice was signed with the Turks. Over six weeks, Chauvel's three divisions had marched and fought their way over 300 miles (480 kilometres) and taken well over 70 000 prisoners, all at a cost of only 533 battle casualties.

FLYING

During the campaign in Palestine and Syria, on the morning of 21 September 1918, British and Australian bombers had discovered the main Turkish column in retreat in a gorge on Wadi Fara Road. Wadi Fara, a tributary of the River Jordan, is to the east of Nablus, and in modern-day Jordan. Here they bombed the lead vehicles of a large Turkish column and filled the neck of the defile through which the road passed with gutted vehicles and splintered wagons and concussed and burned bodies of men and camels. The Wadi Fara had been reconnoitred by a number of Australian aircraft, including one in which Hudson Fysh was the observer. Within a few years Fysh would be entering into partnership with three Queensland graziers and a fellow war flyer to create Qantas. Already reconnaissance planes like Fysh's had machine gunned a Turkish train arriving from the west at nearby Bisan, and dropped

bombs on the airfields of Amman. Number 1 Squadron had sunk all Turkish vessels on the lake of Tiberias at the head of the Jordan River. At El Afule in Samaria, the land of the Samaritans, young Captain A.R. Brown, a draper from Tasmania, led a dawn patrol in which five machines dropped forty bombs and fired 4000 machine-gun rounds into retreating columns. Then at Burka and Jenin the Turks were similarly attacked—‘They were closely packed,’ wrote the official historian, ‘and nearly every bomb fell plum among them.’

L.W. Sutherland, an observer in one of the planes that day, recognised that on this battlefield the aircraft, which many still considered a novelty of military campaigning, was the dominant power. ‘For the first time in the war, we, the newest arm of the service, had the most onerous work in a major operation ... But oh, those killings! Only the lucky ones slept that night.’

Every day there were attacks on retreating Turks, organised to slow them down for capture by ground forces. Those who survived the air attacks and finished their march gave themselves up to the Light Horse in the hills on the southern fringe of the plain of Armageddon. British and Australian mounted divisions headed off these traumatised columns of the rearguard of the Turkish Seventh Army. They, like the Australians who had subjected them to a hellish day, knew that a new and lethal dimension had entered war. Aircraft were no longer a novelty.



On 14 and 15 June 1919, two officers of the Royal Flying Corps, Captain J.W. Alcock and Lieutenant A.W. Brown, flew across the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Ireland in a Vickers-Vimy aircraft, a non-stop flight of 17 hours and 27 minutes. Both airmen were almost instantly knighted, though it would not be long before the young Alcock would be killed in an aircraft crash in Rouen.

The Australian government, composed of men who tended to look upon the Atlantic as a small pool, were motivated to offer a prize of £10 000 for the first successful flight from Britain to Australia. They were required to land in Australia within the specified thirty days of taking off, and they would need to do so by midnight on 31 December 1920. The competing pilots must be Australian. The starting place was Hounslow aerodrome, and the landing place was to be ‘in the neighbourhood of Port Darwin’. The pilots of the Australian squadrons who had survived the war took up the challenge in numbers.

The first to take off, in a Sopwith Wallaby, on 21 October 1919 were Captain G.C. Matthews with Sergeant T.D. McKay. McKay was a mechanical engineer, Matthews a master mariner and a Scot who had flown with the 3rd Australian Squadron. These aviators, forgotten to history, flew across the world before crashing at Bali on 19 April 1920 and being forced to abandon their flight. On 12 November 1919, Captain Ross Smith with his brother Lieutenant Keith Smith of Adelaide, and Sergeants Bennett and Shears, took off in a Vickers-Vimy supplied by the manufacturer. Ross had taken part in the attacks on Wadi Fara as well as defending Lawrence's Arab columns on their eastern campaign against the Turks. He was twice decorated with the Military Cross and three times with the Distinguished Flying Cross. Keith had been rejected for service with the AIF, took passage to England and there enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps. He was fully trained but did not see active service.

On the day Ross Smith's successful flight from England to Australia began, the weather bureau forecast conditions unfit for flying, but at 8.30 they took off from the snow-covered aerodrome. At the French coast they had to climb above snow clouds—the cold in the open cockpit was savage, 25 degrees Fahrenheit of frost. For three hours their breath froze on their face masks and the sandwiches they had brought were frozen solid. It took five days to cross Europe to Taranto in Italy. The next leg was to Crete, to Suda Bay, then to Heliopolis in Egypt. On 19 November, they took off for Damascus. Their route lay over the old battlefields of Romani, El Arish, Gaza and Nazareth and thus possessed a quotient of nostalgia for Ross Smith, who had flown over all those sites as a combatant.

Taking off from Damascus the next morning, they kept on across India, landing briefly at Delhi, then at Allahabad, Calcutta and Rangoon. They had been advised to land at Singora in Thailand, which turned out to be a primitive aerodrome in the jungle not adequately cleared of stumps. But they survived it and reached Singapore on 4 December. At Surabaya, on an airstrip cleared especially for the race, their aircraft became deeply bogged as it rolled to a stop. 'At one time I feared it would be impossible ever to start off from that aerodrome again,' said Ross Smith. Bamboo mats were laid down for 350 yards and the machine was hauled from the bog by Indonesians. The take-off was of course dangerous, with bamboo flying up and splintering into spears that came lancing backwards to them. When they landed in Timor, last stop before Darwin, 'Excitement kept us all from sleep that night.'

The next day, 'A tiny speck upon the waters resolved itself into a warship, HMAS *Sydney*, in exactly the position we had asked her to be in, in case of need.' They arrived at Darwin on 10 December, beating the time limit of a month by two days, and won the prize. But even in their glory they knew something of the chanciness of aviation. Within eighteen months, former Sergeant, now Lieutenant, Bennett would be killed in a crash.

Both Ross and Keith were knighted after the flight and the sergeants immediately commissioned. Democratically, the prize money was split four ways.

Through these and other aviators, war aviation began to blend into civil aviation, and like the Overland Telegraph, into a creative assault on the challenges of time and size.

MAKING PEACE

Billy Hughes brought to the Peace Conference following the Armistice of 11 November 1918 a clear sense of Australian blood having been spilled on an altar at which world leaders could now strut and gesture. The conference was, in his eyes and with ironic inflection, the 'charmed circle [where] humanity but walked arm in arm and, defying the curse of the Confusion of Tongues, and the clash of colour, race and creed, held Communion one with the other on matters grave and gay'. Because of his increasing deafness, he brought his portable hearing machine to help him be party to discussion.

The British and French had huge delegations in Paris in 1919, and even the Germans had more than a hundred, while the American delegation numbered well over two hundred. When on 11 January 1919 Hughes travelled to Paris with Lloyd George and other British and Empire representatives, Hughes' party consisted of his secretary Percy Deane, Sir Robert Garran (his old friend from his attorney-general days and a senior public servant), Sir Joseph Cook and his private secretary, and the lawyer and politician John Greig Latham. On a less official footing, Melbourne barrister Sir Frederick Eggleston also accompanied the delegation, as did Henry Gullett, official war correspondent with the Australians in Palestine. Keith Murdoch was on hand to transmit news for his cable service.

The international intent was to make a new world which would be structured by two influences—British and French desire for vengeance, and President Woodrow Wilson's glowing Fourteen Points, which were to provide the basis for a new level of negotiation between aggrieved nations,

a new and peaceful mechanism for the resolution of warlike intentions, and self-determination for many minorities. The direction of the conference came under the Supreme Council, or the Council of Ten, a continuation of the Supreme Allied Council consisting of the presidents and foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Before it, representatives of the smaller countries would be called to state their case on matters of special concern to them. Later, more informal decisions were resolved by a Council of Four: Wilson, British Prime Minister Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and Vittorio Orlando, Prime Minister of Italy.

Before leaving London for Paris, Hughes summarised his aims at a luncheon of the Australia and New Zealand Club. 'We do not want to exact an indemnity in excess of the cost of war ... but up to her full capacity Germany must pay for the cost of the war.' Australia must also be given management of New Guinea and other South Sea islands. Hughes insisted that the Bismarck Archipelago and the German Solomons were inseparable from the Australian mainland strategically and administratively. Japanese infiltration of Rabaul, for example, would be just as serious as in New Guinea proper. All of them were 'necessary for our security, safety and freedom', he claimed.

In President Wilson's Fourteen Points, there were to be no annexations, no indemnities, and freedom of the seas. Freedom of the seas was defeated by the self-interest of the various maritime parties; no indemnities was overturned in favour of Germany paying reparations; and to avoid on a technical basis the problem of annexations, the system of 'mandates' and 'mandated territories' was put in place, these to be supervised by the proposed League of Nations. Even so, President Wilson did not want the New Guinea mandate to be given to Australia unless a plebiscite on the matter was held amongst the New Guinea population. Hughes's response, as related in his own narrative, was very much one of the time. 'Do you know, Mr President, that these natives eat one another?' Wilson, of course would have been offended by such an answer, and that would have been Hughes's genuine purpose. Lloyd George, however, held the alliance with America to be more important than Australia's desires, and therefore told Hughes that if he insisted on the mandate, the British Navy would take no part in supporting Australia's control of New Guinea. Hughes would later say that he made some biting remarks to his fellow Welshman about politicians who, after the huge sacrifice the British

peoples had made, now bowed in subservience before America, which had profited much and sacrificed little.

The conference was also made up of a number of committees and the most important was the Covenant Committee of which President Wilson was chairman, and to which was delegated the task of drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations. The committee included Lord Robert Cecil and General Smuts of South Africa. The Covenant Committee, whom Hughes called the 'elect', were billeted in the Hotel Majestic, 'a magnificent caravan-serai near the Arc de Triomphe where the food was excellent and the company even better'. (He should have known—he stayed there himself.) He became exercised by news from the Covenant Committee of a Racial Equality Clause designed to allow the members of any nation of the league free entry into any other nation of the league. 'Applied to Australia, it meant that Japanese might enter our country when and to the extent they desired. Our White Australia Policy would be a pricked bladder.' Hughes was again visited by Baron Nobuaki Makino, Japanese plenipotentiary and former foreign minister, who urged a recognition by Australia of the Equality Principle, and told him both Lord Cecil and General Smuts were in favour of the clause. Africa and England were different, said Hughes in reply. Africa was already a coloured man's country. 'Australia, on the other hand, is very much a white man's country, sparsely populated by white men.'

In the event, the unanimous vote President Wilson required to adopt the clause did not eventuate. In March there were direct talks between Hughes and the Japanese, and they seem to have been quite amicable, but Hughes had an immutable belief that the ultimate aim was Japanese immigration to Australia. Yet, 'he was not unsympathetic to the Japanese stand'. As the representative of Australia, Hughes claimed, he would 'give place to none in my respect, goodwill and esteem for the Japanese nation'. But as he did not ask the Japanese people to vary their domestic policy to suit Australia, he thought the Japanese would concede to Australia the same right. He hoped the two nations, the ancient one and the new one, could achieve their separate destinies and realise their ideals in their own way.

For part of Hughes's meetings with the Japanese, Wilson was absent in the United States, returning to Paris in mid-March 1919 with the intention of establishing the League of Nations as an integral part of the Treaty of Peace. He had been looking during his time at home at his chances of getting

the peace treaty as it was proposed, including the idea of a League of Nations, through Congress. This hope would never be fulfilled.

Hughes, who had spent part of this interval visiting Australian troops in Belgium, men anxious to be shipped home but for whom shipping had not been allocated, ultimately stated his chief objectives to the Governor-General in a letter of 13 May 1919. 'I want (1) to get those islands on a satisfactory tenure; (2) to get our share of an indemnity; (3) to get the boys home; (4) to sell our wheat, lead, copper etc.; (5) to establish markets for our produce in Europe. If I do all these things I shall certainly deserve something better than to be hit on the head with an egg as at Warwick.'

Lloyd George was aware of the problem inherent in reparations—they could only be paid by allowing German industry to function and export, and thus be in competition with British goods. The Germans could not pay indemnities and at the same time be denied raw materials. But in late 1918, with grief and loss still upon them, people wanted Germany to suffer. Hughes wanted to refuse to consider German capacity to pay reparations and simply concentrate on what she owed.

The debate over the issue in the Peace Conference's Commission on Reparations, of which Hughes was a member, was a gruelling fight between Billy and the young John Foster Dulles, Princeton dropout, New York lawyer and special counsel to the American delegation. For Hughes, reparation was a 'matter of compensation not a punishment'. The war had been a monstrous wrong inflicted by Germany. Dulles was willing to concede a certain obligation on Germany to compensate Belgium. Then what about the compensation of nations that came to Belgium's aid? Hughes declared, 'Those who have mortgaged their all to right Belgium's wrongs have suffered as much at Germany's hands as Belgium itself.'

The commission broke up with no decision and with Dulles' recommendation that it be referred to the Council of Four. Dulles had at least proposed the War Guilt Clause, an acknowledgement of guilt by Germany which would be a useful tool for extreme German politicians. In the end, reparations would be settled on, but Australia would receive only £5.5 million, made up principally of ships seized in Australian ports and the value of expropriated property in New Guinea. Her total claim was close to £100 million.

As for such places as New Guinea in Australia's case or the Caroline Islands in Japan's, Hughes addressed the council and told them that the

islands Australia had claim to 'encompassed Australia like fortresses.' New Guinea was only 80 miles (130 kilometres) from the mainland. Neighbouring islands could provide coaling and act as a submarine base to hostile powers unless Australia controlled them. Australia, he conceded, had no need for further territory, but these islands were essential to her peace, and Australia's sacrifices in the war entitled her to security. The US Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, would write, 'Hughes is a great bore.'

Hughes got the chance to demonstrate on a map to the members of the council 'the narrow strip of sea that separated Australia from these strategic bases', which included New Guinea, Rabaul, Nauru and the Solomons. According to Hughes, Baron Makino approached him and told him he had made a good case, not only for Australian control of New Guinea but ultimately for Japanese control of the Marshall and Caroline Islands. Hughes objected that the Japanese had already occupied these islands, and it was therefore all the more important that Australia control New Guinea.

At a meeting with Hughes, Lloyd George suggested that he could see the case for a mandate for the mainland of New Guinea but was doubtful whether it could be applied to the adjacent islands, the Bismarck Archipelago (which included New Britain and the port of Rabaul, and New Ireland) and the German Solomons. Hughes made the argument that Rabaul was just as much a matter of concern, and a Japanese arrival there would be just as dangerous as one on the New Guinea mainland. Lloyd George lost his temper and told Hughes that he 'would not quarrel with the United States for the Solomon Islands'. The meeting descended to Welsh cursing between Hughes and Lloyd George.

Finding the conference probably disinclined to agree upon the annexation of New Guinea by Australia and Samoa by New Zealand, Hughes and the New Zealanders agreed to Class C Mandates designed for claims on former German territories and areas that possessed 'remoteness from the centres of civilisation' or else had 'geographical contiguity to the mandatory state' and so could best be administered under the laws of the mandatory state, subject to safeguards for the native populations. Hughes realised that the C Mandate would not limit Australia's capacity to secure the Pacific Islands, and at the same time would put some limitation on Japan's right to fortify the northern Pacific islands to which they received a Class C Mandate as well. Hughes wanted the precise terms of the mandates settled before the treaty was signed,

and had written to Colonel House, Wilson's aide, that 'if peace was signed leaving Australia's position as regards the islands uncertain, there would be not only bitter disappointment, but grave misgivings ... that both the territorial integrity of their country and the White Australia Policy, which is the cornerstone of our national edifice, were in serious danger'. But that was the minimum Australia and New Zealand would accept, and if that was not conceded definitely now they would not take part in an agreement at all. The US President asked if Australia and New Zealand were giving the conference an ultimatum. Hughes, who was deaf and depending on his hearing instrument, seemed distracted and was asked again whether he was laying down an ultimatum to the conference. He said that that was about it, but some thought that he had not understood the question. The less turbulent New Zealand Prime Minister William Massey assured Wilson it was not the case. 'Then, am I to understand,' Wilson continued, 'that if the whole civilised world asks Australia to agree to a mandate for these islands, Australia is prepared to defy the opinion of the whole civilised world?'

Hughes agreed pleasantly, 'That's about the size of it, Mr President. That puts it very well.' But again those present thought it possible that he had not heard properly. It was only when Wilson again asked whether Hughes set 5 million people against the 1200 million represented by the conference that Hughes replied, knowing that American losses were far lower than Australia's, 'I represent 60 000 dead.'

When he later received the documentation of the Australian claims, President Wilson pencilled on it, 'My difficulty is with the demands of men like Hughes and certain difficulties with Japan. A line of islands in her possession would be very dangerous to the US.' On the one hand Wilson believed in self-determination and the equal dignity of all men. On the other he was concerned about American interests and concerned too that if the Japanese had control over the islands of the North Pacific they could turn them into military bases that were closer to Hawaii than Hawaii was to the US. America's peace and security would be imperilled. The apostles of the war to end all wars were thus already aware of the danger of further ones. And Hughes, the most pragmatic of them all, certainly was.

Hughes received a telegram from his cabinet expressing bitter disappointment over the Class C Mandate. It seemed to them (inaccurately as it turned out) that under it Australia would not have the authority to prevent

Asian immigration to New Guinea and thus to the mainland. But Hughes knew that New Guinea and the other mandated islands were a long way from Paris and Geneva, and that in practice the Australians would run the mandate according to their own principles. That Hughes had stood up to the president was common knowledge throughout Paris and caused amusement in some cases, and in others was seen as an example of a smaller man standing up to a moral bully. Still others were outraged. Secretly, the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir Robert Gordon, apologised to Colonel House, President Wilson's aide and US delegate, for Hughes's behaviour.

The mandate issue was not fully settled because the Japanese objected, wanting an 'open door' clause under the Class C Mandates. They would rule out the right to fortify the Marshalls and Carolines if Australia would institute the open door. It would be a year before their objections were withdrawn and the mandates issued on 17 December 1920.



By the first week in May 1919 the draft of the immense treaty with its 439 articles was ready for approval by the Plenary Session. It was a mass of compromise. On 7 May the treaty was given to the German plenipotentiaries summoned to Versailles. They were allowed three weeks to provide a written response. During the meeting, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau of Germany protested that the terms contravened the Fourteen Points. The Allied reply to the German objections to the treaty was delivered on 16 June with an ultimatum demanding acceptance within a week. The signing session was fixed for the following Saturday, 28 June, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

Clemenceau was in the position of honour, with Wilson on his right and Lloyd George on his left, and then the Dominion ministers, Hughes and his minister, colourless Joseph Cook, being seated between the Canadians and South Africans. Two German plenipotentiaries arrived at seven minutes past three and signed. That night there was a gala dinner and dance at the Hotel Majestic, and the British and Empire delegates returned the next morning to London. Billy met his wife and his daughter Helen at Victoria Station and their car was mobbed in the street by 500 Australian soldiers with shouts of 'Where's our Billy?' Hughes was pulled out of the car and hoisted shoulder-high by four of them. The car arrived at the Anzac Buffet in Horseferry Street and here Billy gave a speech, after which he was carried on a number of

shoulders back to his car, still wearing the Digger hat. After all, he was the Little Digger.

Australia's mandate over German New Guinea, including New Britain and New Ireland, would soon be officially confirmed, but Australia would need to share the mandate over Nauru with New Zealand and ultimately with Britain too, though Australia was in effective control. The Solomons remained with Britain.

Though Hitler would rise to power on the idea that the Allies had bled Germany white, the compensation for starting the war seemed small to Billy. 'All the indemnity we get will hardly pay for repatriation let alone the cost of the war and pensions. At least I fear so. It is *not* a good peace for Australia; nor indeed for Britain. It is a good peace for America.' His view was that Australia, with its five million people, had incurred a public debt of something like £300 million, which would need to be paid off by Australian taxpayers, while Germany, whose factories were unscathed, and the United States and Japan, who had made large profits out of the war, would all be at an unfair advantage.



In the trenches, men sealed together by the most extreme peril had dreamed of a peace in which they would apply the new level of brotherhood and cohesion they had achieved in war to Australian society in general. After all, this *was* the War to End All Wars and thus the war to bring about fraternity. Yet even the soldiers were divided—on conscription they had been split down the middle, as had been Australians at large. The strikes of 1917 had signalled to many of them that the Wobblies and others were fighting against them to shut down Australian ports and Australian mines. The idea was that what had happened in Russia that year, with the rise of the Bolsheviks, might now occur in Australia. The withdrawal of Russia from the battle, its signing of a peace treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in the early days of March 1918, had enabled the massive German outbreak on the Western Front, which the Australians had had a large part in driving back and in finally extinguishing at significant cost of flesh and blood throughout 1918. The Bolshevik revolution had a great impression, one way or another, on both sides of the trench lines.

Yet others of the Australian troops had relatives who were unionised, and they understood exactly, from their own pre-war experience of hardship

and food prices, what the people at home were upset about. And so the problem for the future was this: whether civilian or soldier, man or woman, some Australians wanted the war to transform society, put all the old pieties up for debate, and bring in a new era of social justice. Other Australians wanted to return to the same society which had existed before the war. These latter believed that the trade unions, the Wobblies and the socialists would try to deny them their Australia, and that therefore it would need to be defended by arms.

This division was potentially bitter. It was enhanced by the post-war slump, in which—as happens after every all-out war—prices of wheat and wool, metals and manufactures all fell, while food prices stayed high. Many Diggers who had been cheered home presented themselves for work at their old shop or factory and were told that times were too hard to re-employ them.

The common belief in a White Australia had nonetheless been validated by Billy Hughes amongst the international show ponies in Paris and Versailles. And within that White Australia, there were estimated to be a mere 60 000 Aboriginal Australians. The belief that they and their culture would soon disappear remained as strong as it had in 1901, and the idea that they should exercise political influence was countenanced only by a few informed whites.

For those with jobs, meanwhile, the decade ahead looked glittering and tranquil, lit up by the pulse of modern music, by the sounds created by radio and, through open windows in the city and bush, by the melodies sent forth by record players. Modern consumerism was about to be born. The automobile was the most desirable consumer item and the young made it a venue for sexual experimentation deplored from pulpits and by their elders. The young were also enchanted by the seducing flicker of the cinema screen, and the long-lashed screen sirens stared and glimmered down the barrel of the camera in the darkened cinemas of the remotest towns, raising new expectations in the young.

But in the privileged parts of cities and in the countryside, solemn elders, particularly those who owned great pastoral or commercial enterprises, were already discussing the need to recruit and equip armies to protect Australia from the political calamity which seemed to be in play. The crisis had emerged in many European countries, in defeated Germany, and even in Britain, victorious though she was. There was a belief that though the battle in Europe was over, the battle for Australia itself was just beginning. The War to End All Wars was giving way to the war to rescue society.

PART III
FLAPPERS TO
VIETNAM



The end of World War I brought to Australians not tranquillity but unrest and anxiety, political, economic, cultural (a sense of being swamped by alien influences) and moral. Bolshevism threatened all, and explained to the establishment nearly every act of working-class defiance. Many Diggers could not re-enter their old jobs, since peace—as ever—brought economic slowdown. Empire still existed and was still potent as a concept, and the World War had shaken it to its foundations yet also enlarged its possessions, especially in Africa. White Australia and its claims to an island fringe had prevailed in the Paris Peace Conference deliberations, to be affirmed at the signing of the peace treaty in Versailles.

Now that peace had arrived, sport and sporting attendance had become virtues again. The streets of suburbs and country towns were full of men maimed in limb, lung or mental stability by the frightful war. And it seemed to elders, in Britain and Australia both, that women were escaping the management of the tribe; new mediums were blamed, but above all film, particularly American films. At the same time the eternal question, ‘What is art?’, was being debated furiously amongst those classes who could afford to discuss it. And the other issue: what was society to be?

This divided citizens and drove them to extreme preparations. The indigenous peoples remained unbenefited by the recent war and still sought some status under the laws of the Commonwealth and the states. For them too, one war had closed and another begun.

WAR'S AFTER-SHADOWS



SECRET ARMIES TO SAVE AUSTRALIA

In the midst of all the arguments of artists, novelists and playwrights, 'the unacknowledged legislators' (to quote Shelley) of Australia, the world of mercantile and pastoral power reacted against Red and anarchist threats. The Irish nationalist party, Sinn Féin, the Irish uprising in 1916, and Australian–Irish resistance to conscription seemed also dangerous forces to be opposed. In the early 1920s, the forces of right continued to take a variety of forms. Most of these the Nationalist government of William Morris 'Billy' Hughes was willing to support or at least tolerate. They were a necessary manifestation of patriotic impulse in these new days of Bolshevik threat.

For example, at the Sydney Town Hall in August 1920, the King and Empire Alliance was launched by an enthusiastic crowd and quickly became a leading organisation to do with promoting loyalty to the Empire against Irish republican erosions on the one hand, and communistic elements on the other. Such was the alarm that the fabric of Australia might not hold that the Alliance had nearly ten thousand members by June 1922. It had a strong following in rural New South Wales and affiliations in other states. In March 1921, Prime Minister Hughes despatched a cache of arms and ammunition to Sydney from Melbourne, still the seat of the

Federal government, with the intention that such paramilitary forces as the King and Empire Alliance would store them in disused railway tunnels.

Fear about the future had derived from a May Day 1921 march and demonstration by trade unionists. The crowd, listening to Jack Kilburn of the Bricklayers' Union speaking in the Sydney Domain, was attacked by returned soldiers. With the Union Jack in hand, the soldiers had tried to make their way to the speaker's platform and pull down the unionists' red flag. Their own Union Jack was seized and torn up by the angry audience. This was seen by many as representing the depths to which unionists would sink in civic sacrilege. As a result, a 'Monster Loyalty Meeting' at the Sydney Town Hall in 1921 was followed by a march to the Domain of between a hundred thousand and a hundred and fifty thousand from all parts of the city, suburbs and country.

The Domain was a place, like London's Hyde Park Corner, for orators of all stripes, and what they said was more than mere entertainment. The platforms of the Socialist Labor Party, the Communist Party of Australia and even the Returned Soldiers' section of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) were rushed by loyalists. The broad mateship of the trenches had vanished in the great ideological conflict of the age.

THOSE IRISH AGAIN

World War I, instead of repelling Australians from the arms of the Empire, drove them more firmly into it. Apart from the undeniable convictions of the great majority, this was also for the sake of a White Australia. The prospect of an ever-ascendant Japan frightened the Commonwealth to various degrees throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and Australians believed their security was dependent on the Imperial connection. There was also a psychological drive in Imperial patriotism—if Australia had sacrificed its sons on behalf of the Empire, that fact consecrated the connection even more. If not, it was hard to justify the war and console the families of the fallen. The Empire gave meaning to the immolations of Gallipoli and France.

Irish Catholics were identified as dissenters from this holy nexus, though they had given plenty of sons to the war also. Their attitudes were more a matter of emphasis—their Australian self-definition had less of Britain in it. Immediately post-war, the Irish were still believers in Irish Home Rule, in the whole of Ireland becoming a dominion, a resolution Britain had

implicitly promised in 1914 in return for Irish involvement in the war. But at the higher levels of society and in Australia's Orange Lodges, Home Rule was abominated as if it were a bomb thrown at Empire. Home Rule would put the considerable Protestant, loyalist minority in Ireland under the power of the priest-ridden majority. These different views, even over such a modest proposal as that of Ireland becoming a dominion like New Zealand or Australia, created a society-wide rift. Indeed, the loyal majority in Australia believed that Australian Irish, despite their willingness to sing 'God Save the King' on Australia Day, secretly wanted a full-fledged Irish republic. Home Rule would be achieved for twenty-six counties (the Free State) in 1922, after half a century or more of activism and bloodshed, but six counties in Ulster remained British. Both sections remained under the Crown. (For the South of Ireland, the republic would come later.)

The majority of Irish Australians were happy with the new arrangement. Living in a Crown dominion had been no intrusion on them, and economic and trade union issues were closer to their hearts. It was true that some Irish republicans—those who would accept nothing but a republic for the whole of the island of Ireland—came to Australia escaping the new Irish Free State government. But despite suspicions to the contrary, republicanism would never be the majority position of Irish Catholics.

The divide remained, however. The sentiment, 'He's a Catholic but he's a good bloke', was echoed on the other side by 'He's a Protestant but . . .' There were, even before World War I, places Catholics could not get jobs. Sanitarium Health Foods had an overt no-Catholics policy. But in other places it was a matter of unspoken practice. The situation was not helped by the fact that the Catholic clergy, who wanted their flock to be accepted into the community, nonetheless came down hard on Catholic-Protestant 'mixed' marriage, requiring the Protestant partner to abandon the Protestant tradition for the children of the marriage, and allowing the ceremony to be performed only behind the church altar.

The old furies had a considerable time to burn yet, and the clergy, generally, were not helping.

THE FEARFUL AFTER-SHADOW

In late March 1921, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) ceased to exist and the responsibility for the treatment of the war's mental patients was taken up

by the Department of Repatriation. This department, not always generous in its attitudes to former Diggers, was to deal with the after-shadow of the war, the complaints of soldiers' women, the symptoms of the men. Government help was needed because civilian friends were not always understanding of the shell-shocked or men suffering from war neurosis.

Psychiatric symptoms had not vanished with the onset of peace. At the time of the outbreak of the war there were in Australia no specialist clinics or psychoanalytic institutes such as existed in Britain and on the continent. It was common at the start of the conflict for physicians to respond to symptoms of the shock of war by blaming the patient for moral inferiority in the face of modern battle. Even when war ended, some physicians on the home front still held the same views. Yet, as historian C.E.W. Bean said of young men coming out of the lines of Pozzières, 'They were like men recovering from a long illness.' They were not what people called 'mad' but many confess in their journals how close they came to it. Some of those faces Bean saw might carry the disease latently, only to explode years later, a bomb at the kitchen table.

Returned soldiers' groups and regimental associations exerted pressure to see that there would be no military stain attached to those Diggers who had become mental patients under the shock of battle. They did not want their former comrades either stuck with the labels of civic mental disease or certified and written off into the civilian mental health system.

At least the mental health problems of Australian ex-servicemen were not treated with the same contempt as they were in the United Kingdom. A post-war medical assembly held in Brisbane in 1920 and involving many psychological specialists, led by the remarkable, wiry Melburnian Dr Springthorpe, made sure of that. Springthorpe was, by this time, in his early vigorous sixties, a husky little physician who had had a fashionable practice in Collins Street. When he returned home in 1919 from his service in France, Belgium and the United Kingdom it was to continue his work with the shell-shocked, and he resumed his post of visitor to metropolitan asylums as well as recommencing private practice. (One of the panel's secondary aims was to get psychiatric instruction incorporated in the undergraduate medical curriculum. Thus psychiatry became a profession in Australia.) Dr Springthorpe complained that many medical boards appointed to look into the claims of returned soldiers for help had had no experience of

the Front, and had refused to grant some of the shell-shocked and disabled a pension, under suspicion that they were malingering. Springthorpe, by contrast, remained a potent voice for men whose wounds were not always visible.

A *War Pension Act* had been passed as early as 21 December 1919, and by 1924 there were nearly eighty thousand war pensioners in Australia, but only 4 per cent were 'mental cases'. In 1926, *Smith's Weekly*, a populist magazine considered to be the voice of the Digger, claimed that eight thousand veterans were dying each year, at an average age of forty-five, some as a result of mental illness. It nicknamed the Repatriation Commission the 'Cyanide Gang', since its rulings were strict, and rejection of disability claims led some former Diggers to suicide. The *Australian Worker* contrasted the praise for the Digger by public officials at their departure for war with the niggardly treatment afterwards.

An example of 'disability shell shock' was B.H. Wright, a law student who turned suddenly violent in late 1919 and received twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour in Grafton Gaol in New South Wales. He had been wounded in 1917, took four months to recuperate, returned to the Front, been blown up and buried alive, and, in March 1918, gassed. On his return to Australia in April 1919 he complained of loss of memory and started drinking. His family used the same phrase so many others did—he was 'not the same man'.

The mental state of returned soldiers was a crisis for their wives and families. In one case, a soldier, Charlie Clifton, broke a bottle over his wife's head. She then killed him by slitting his throat with a razor. She gave evidence of persistent attacks upon her, and her situation and that of her victim were so well understood by the court that she was found guilty of manslaughter, not murder. There were many reports of impotence and marriage breakdown, and also of crises arising from war experience but surfacing years after the war ended. 'James' was a thirty-five-year-old former soldier who was admitted to Broughton Hall psychiatric clinic in Sydney as late as April 1930 suffering from delusional melancholia. He had been beside an explosive blast in France in 1918 and was now obsessed with the memory and 'depressed, burst into tears easily'.

'Fred' was a former officer who had been wounded and concussed in a raid in France in 1916. He was unable to sleep, he had fits of rage, pains

throughout his body, regular lapses of memory and terrifying nightmares, and by 1923 was so depressed he could not work. A gunner, 'Jack', a former deep-sea diver, was admitted to Broughton Hall at the end of the war after being wounded at Passchendaele by fifty pieces of shell, with two wounds to the back of his head and the loss of both eyes, one of them knocked out by the explosion. By 1922, though blind, his rages were difficult to control.

In June 1920, a young returned officer named Eli Bugby hanged himself from the rafters of his home in the wealthy Sydney suburb of Double Bay. Bugby's wife told the coroner that her husband was 'gassed and sustained shell shock at the war and had been distressed because his employers would not reinstate him'. He was on a partial pension of two pounds, seventeen shillings and sixpence a week, barely more than half the average wage. Mrs Bugby was now left to raise their child without any pension at all, since the Repatriation Commission decided that her husband's suicide was not related to his war service.

Fred Jacoby, an entrepreneur in Perth after whom a famous city park is named, was a notable advocate for his soldier son, Fred junior, who lived through the 1920s in the military ward of Perth's Claremont Hospital for the Insane. Jacoby was the leader of the Mental Soldiers' Parents of Western Australia. He campaigned against the mixing of military patients with civilian asylum patients and advocated having a parent of a shell-shocked young man on the Board of Visitors, the body that assessed psychiatric hospitals. He was not intimidated by the public distaste for, and prejudices against, mental trauma.

In these and sundry other ways then, the Western and Eastern fronts resonated in the suburban kitchens and living rooms of Australia, and the Repatriation Board made the 1920s bitter for many heroes. The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSL) founded a Centre for Soldiers' Wives and Mothers in Sydney in 1921, the only one in the country, supervised by a single doctor and a formidable organiser, Katie Ardill Brice, daughter of an energetic Baptist social reformer. After graduating in medicine from Sydney University in 1913, she had been a one-woman volunteer medical corps in military hospitals in the Middle East, France and England during the war. As well, the Red Cross created in 1919 a holiday centre at Narrabeen, in northern Sydney, as a means of relieving the extreme stress on families.

As the children squealed in the Narrabeen surf, medical boards decided their families' futures. One of the saddest cases was that of Gordon Floyd, a father of a family, who had been initially reluctant to enlist because he had had rheumatic fever as a child, and its effects were lingering. He had finally enlisted, however, after being presented with a white feather, an accusation of cowardice often handed out by young women in the streets and even in the dance halls of Australian towns and cities, or else sent through the post. In 1919 he received a small disability pension for damage to his leg, his arthritis and heart problems. But he was denied a fuller pension because of a letter his brother had written to the Department of Defence during the war in an attempt to prevent Floyd's acceptance by the recruiting board. A letter written out of love was now used to prove that he had pre-existing health problems. Floyd's family was never able to regain the level of prosperity they had known before the war.

Even apart from the suspicions of the Repatriation Board, men of that war generation had a spiky pride and found it difficult to take help from charities such as the Red Cross. In the trenches and rest areas, the Red Cross parcels had been welcome, but post-war charity was different. When in 1926 George Goodwin applied to the Tubercular Soldiers' Aid Society asking for help, he wrote, 'God how the word "charity" stinks in my nostrils.'

KISS ME, YOU FOOL

For girls unburdened by the care of a damaged husband, the 1920s flickered with the promise of a new freedom. After the war there were complaints about a new stridency and boldness in young women, all under the influence of new entertainments, including the 'flicks' and the rise of public dancing. Even during the war, older folk and the press were appalled by the open way young women and soldiers met and talked in city streets. Soldiers were warned that there were Australian factory girls in the streets of the Australian cities, and around Australian military headquarters in Horseferry Road, London, who were not professional prostitutes but 'amateurs', and who would infect soldiers with venereal diseases (VD) picked up from earlier transactions. Many authorities were sure that the spread of VD in Australian society was a result of factory girls and other girl employees being on the streets after work. One commentator declared that too many

girls absorbed 'the moral tone of the man of the world and regarded sexual satisfaction as a right'.

And it was not only working-class girls. After the war, the middle-class single girl, who might have got ideas from working in voluntary bodies or in offices, and who had got used to the freedom of not being chaperoned, was now possibly that latest of creatures, a 'flapper'. The flapper, characterised by the arm-flapping motion of the dance named the Charleston, was an American creation, growing out of a background of prep schools and universities where educated girls chose to consider themselves men's equals, to drink like them, to smoke like them, to listen to jazz, and to display a blatant interest in flirtation and 'petting' (so asserting their own right to sexual pleasure). The flappers' inchoate declaration of liberty was reflected in their fashions. They often went bare-headed and wore their hair bobbed, their foreheads circled by Red Indian-style headbands, their dresses above the knee and their stockings rolled down, the tops visible on their thighs as they danced. They even drove cars.

Factory girls adopted the style of the flapper to the extent that they could afford it. The manifestation was seen as decadent by feminists such as the remarkable Edith Cowan, the first woman member of any Australian Parliament, in her case in Western Australia in 1921. She had been fighting for society to take women seriously since the 1890s. The flapper vulgarised women and was undermining what had been achieved, Edith Cowan believed.

Some could see benefits in the new woman, however. In Melbourne, the president of the Young Women's Christian Association, Nell Martyn, a therapeutic masseuse who had worked on soldiers' damaged limbs, had taken over her father's Melbourne steelworks and run them with great success. She reported in 1924 that girls were no longer 'fettered by traditions nor bound by conventionalities'. Martyn was a devout Methodist but knew women could not be brow-beaten out of what they were becoming: 'How can we hope to give an abundant life [to young women] by a process of restriction and prohibition . . . our girls have a right to the opportunities for meeting, knowing and understanding men . . . a Christian Association will fail in its purpose if it does not provide for this side of a girl's nature.'



Not all young women were flappers, but they were in one way or another influenced by the expression of freedom for which flappers stood. A girl from the bush trying to imitate the worldliness of the flapper might lack the sophistication to carry it off. Many ordinary girls, however, felt confused about where the boundaries of behaviour lay. Sometimes there were tragedies, and young women found the official world did not accept the new freedoms.

Molly Meadows, a twenty-two-year-old waitress who worked at the Bunbury Rose Hotel in Western Australia, was one who had seen the change in the behaviour of girls in Australian and American movies, and who clumsily tried to imitate the glib smartness of the new woman. In April 1922, Molly was sexually assaulted in the sand hills of the back beach of Bunbury. The young man accused of assaulting her was twenty-year-old circus employee Joseph McAuliffe from Perry Brothers' Circus, then performing in Bunbury. As the press report said, 'Her protests were unavailing', and she 'was treated in a most brutal fashion, a branch or root of tree being pressed across her neck'. A doctor later confirmed that she had been 'outraged'. McAuliffe was a large young man and it had taken two policemen to hold him once bystanders heard Molly's protests and calls for help. The matter of Molly Meadows would raise in Australia the new post-war, Jazz Age, Roaring Twenties question of whether a woman could behave with the new freedoms and still consider herself immune from assault.

Bunbury was a characteristic Australian coastal town, five hours' rail journey south of Perth, and had a population of about four thousand. Despite the remoteness of Bunbury in the scheme of the world, since coming to town from her parents' farm, Molly, like other girls at the time, must have seen the movies of Theda Bara, daughter of a Jewish immigrant to America from Poland. Bara was the original 'vamp' of the silver screen and her silent films have to this day an extraordinary voiceless eroticism. They were of great concern to civic leaders and clergymen when they appeared. In her 1915 film *A Fool There Was*, Bara whispered the famed line 'Kiss me, you fool!', an utterance that lodged in the imaginations of women and men across the world. Besides Bara's influence, through the newsreels, Molly had seen real-life flappers dancing the Charleston and the Black Bottom at the Palais de Danse in St Kilda.

Molly had been away from home for only three months when she first began working at the Rose Hotel. The circus arrived in mid-April 1922 and

set up at Queen's Gardens. Molly went to the circus with her friend and fellow waitress, Sybil Wickender. Wickender had met Mr Perry, the circus owner, and introduced him to Molly when the show ended. They met up with Joseph McAuliffe and the group of four left the circus tent. In the backyard of the hotel, Molly listened to McAuliffe's tales of the circus and permitted mutual caresses. After circus rehearsal the next day, by previous arrangement, Perry and McAuliffe took the two girls strolling to the beach. McAuliffe and Molly dawdled behind and she suggested that they sit down. That was when the assault was believed to have taken place.

Molly admitted that she had allowed McAuliffe to kiss her and—as she innocently confessed—had 'playfully' threatened that she would bite him. McAuliffe's argument was the classic sexual assault defence that she had led him on. He said, 'I thought this arrangement was as good as a promise.' As he rolled her onto her stomach and pulled down her drawers, she screamed, and even when a surfer and two fishermen came running to intervene, McAuliffe was so certain of his right to conquest that, when he was dragged off her, he called out, 'I'll meet you on the corner tonight, Molly.'

Just one week after the attack, the trial of Joseph McAuliffe opened in the Bunbury Court of Quarter Sessions before three police magistrates. The question was whether the judges would, in a new age, recognise Molly's 'modern' right to flirt, and then still say no. Molly gave her evidence. She said he had penetrated her twice: 'My head was down and covered with weeds . . . I was half unconscious from struggling and fright.'

McAuliffe said it was Molly who'd suggested they sit down on the sand hills. She had opened her legs freely. 'She was a consenting party up to the time I penetrated her.' He had told the police, 'I tried but whilst I was trying I shot my mutton . . . I could not stop, no man could then.' Howard S. Bath, McAuliffe's lawyer, must have hoped that McAuliffe's statement would mean something to male judges and jurors. Bath wanted to portray Molly—however unfairly—as a teasing, promiscuous young woman who went out at night unchaperoned. The Crown Prosecutor argued, however, that everything about the girl and her clothing indicated that she had fought to prove to McAuliffe that she had not given consent.

So were young women like 'modern' Molly Meadows entitled to set limits to their sexual adventures? It seemed as if a crucial issue of women's rights depended on what the Bunbury magistrates decided. In previous

similar cases, the girl's flirtatiousness could be relied on to acquit a man. But Magistrate Wood said the jury was to make a legal distinction between 'flirtation' and 'encouragement'. If Molly's spooning in the shadows of the hotel backyard the night before the rape constituted the former, then McAuliffe was a rapist, but if there were encouragement, then McAuliffe was a man 'legally' entitled to sexual release.

The twelve men of the jury retired at 8 p.m. and came back after only seventeen minutes with a verdict of guilty. Magistrate Wood sentenced the prisoner to five years' hard labour. McAuliffe, whose lawyer was astonished by this revolutionary verdict, spent the next months inside Western Australia's notorious maximum security gaol.

But there was a great deal of male sympathy for McAuliffe. A fund was set up to finance his appeal, which was heard on 1 September 1922 before three judges of the Supreme Court of Western Australia. The Crown Prosecutor argued what the magistrates' bench had decided: that women were entitled to call off an encounter when they wished. The defence pursued again the traditional line: women were either chaste, and hence any assault on them came without encouragement, or they were 'tough girls who were open territory', as Howard Bath the lawyer put it.

Three judges awarded McAuliffe a new trial. The case came up before a jury and the *bon vivant* Justice Burnside in October 1922. It went swiftly. Justice Burnside told the jury that if Joseph McAuliffe had extracted consent from Molly Meadows 'by intimidation, by force, or by fraud' there would be no justification for the sexual act. But there had been no necessity for McAuliffe to resort to such tactics. Burnside went to the length of saying he was deeply shocked by Molly's 'libidinous behaviour' and suggested that such women had no right to claim a lack of consent: 'For a young woman to be sitting in a backyard at midnight with a man whom she has met only a short time before, and kissing him; if that is innocence, then the word has changed its meaning.'

The jury came back two hours later to declare McAuliffe not guilty. What Burnside had decided was that the would-be flapper could not cry wolf without deserving to be devoured, and that the war had not changed the common-law definition of rape. It was not yet safe to experiment, however tentatively, at being a new kind of woman and at the same time expect immunity from sexual assault.

MORE BUSINESS WITH 'AVIATING'

In 1924, two military flyers, Wing Commander Stanley Goble and Flying Officer Ivor McIntyre, made the first aerial circumnavigation of Australia, and civil aviators such as Charles Kingsford Smith were beginning to emerge. Kingsford Smith had embarked for Gallipoli in February 1915 as a member of a signal company, served during that doomed campaign, and then became a despatch rider in England and France before transferring to the Australian Flying Corps. Shot down and wounded in August 1917, he was awarded the Military Cross. He had been barred from participating in the 1919 England-to-Australia air race, won by his namesakes Keith and Ross Smith, because it was believed he lacked navigational experience, but after piloting joy flights in England, he went to the United States to attract sponsors for a trans-Pacific flight, and was briefly a stunt and joy-ride flyer in California. Back in Australia in January 1921, he made a living with another joy-riding organisation, the Diggers' Aviation Company—a sign that, despite the missions he and others had flown in the Great War, society did not know whether flying was an enlargement of the world or merely a circus attraction.

Kingsford Smith acquired or leased Bristol Tourers and carried freight from Carnarvon in Western Australia to other remote towns. In 1927, with Charles Ulm, ardent and sportive flyer and fellow Gallipoli survivor, he founded the Interstate Flying Services, which tendered unsuccessfully for an Adelaide–Perth mail run. Even so, at least in Kingsford Smith's case, he performed long-distance flights for their inherent excitement. The first Kingsford Smith and Ulm demonstration flight occurred in June 1927 when they circuited Australia in ten days and five hours. For a trans-Pacific flight they planned, the New South Wales government subscribed £9000, and Sidney Myer, the Melbourne emporium owner, and a Californian oil magnate named G. Allan Hancock matched it.

In a three-engine Fokker plane, the *Southern Cross*, with Ulm and two American crewmen, Kingsford Smith took off from Oakland, California, on 31 May 1928, and flew via Hawaii and Suva to Brisbane in eighty-three and a half hours. Next they took on a non-stop flight from Point Cook in Melbourne to Perth, and then from Sydney to New Zealand to show the feasibility of passenger and mail services across the Tasman. Like Melbourne's Smith brothers, he was knighted.

Kingsford Smith, above all other Australians, seemed the risky harbinger of a potential future for civil aviation. His airline, Australian National Airways, began operations in January 1930. The standard, scheduled flight did not satisfy his needs, however. The age of exploration had ended elsewhere on earth and at sea, but not in the air. Even so, it offered a narrow window of glory. The more accustomed air services became, then the less derring-do remained in aviation. In June that year, he piloted the *Southern Cross* on an east–west crossing of the Atlantic from Ireland to Newfoundland, and received an enthusiastic welcome in New York. He had many an entrepreneur's fear of socialism, and had by now joined a not-so-secret, near-Fascist unofficial army, the New Guard. But the Depression drastically reduced the demand for air travel, and his airline came close to bankruptcy. One of its planes, the *Southern Cloud*, disappeared over the Australian Alps and would not be found until the 1950s.

In any case, Kingsford Smith was chronically restless and yearned for new challenges. It was the very nature of the aircraft that it covered very swiftly distances that would have taken classic ground-breakers like Lewis and Clark, Dr Livingston, and Burke and Wills years of peril and struggle. The risk of undertaking endeavours in the sky took place over days or even hours, and the available exploits to be entitled 'the first man to' were being grasped by a growing world of flyers. A fury to excel and be recognised drove Kingsford Smith, and all challenges were welcome, even as the Depression struck Australia. When in 1931 one of his planes had problems and was grounded in Malaya with a load of Christmas mail for Britain, he flew a replacement plane, and collected and delivered the mail in time. In October 1933, he flew solo in just over seven days from London to Wyndham, Western Australia, in a Percival Gull aircraft named *Miss Southern Cross*; the Commonwealth government awarded him £3000 for the achievement. In 1935, a trans-Tasman airmail service began, and on the first flight, aboard the *Lady Southern Cross*, one of the crewmen Bill Taylor had to climb out of the cockpit and transfer oil from the sump of a dead motor into the other. (This would be reproduced superbly in Ken Hall's classic 1946 film, *Smithy*.) Most of the cargo was jettisoned and Kingsford Smith brought the *Lady Southern Cross* back to Sydney.

He now had the *Lady Southern Cross* flown to England, and followed it by ship, since doctors had ordered that he must rest from his frenetic

schedule. From England he took off in November 1935 to make one more record-breaking flight to Australia. Kingsford Smith and his co-pilot J.T. Pethybridge disappeared on that flight. It is believed that they crashed into the sea somewhere off the coast of Burma while flying at night towards Singapore.

Kingsford Smith had an extraordinarily obsessive approach to aviation and to the urgency of its development. It would be an irony that four years after his death, when war began, Australia would be left with only the less advanced or obsolete aircraft, such as Ansons, and the Australian training fighter the Wirraway, to put into the sky. Aircraft would prove to be so scarce that the 7th Australian Squadron waited eighteen months from 1940 to 1941 to be equipped with them.

MANAGING THE NEW WOMAN

To part-manage and part-exploit the new freedoms of women, Charity Queen events, to honour girls who combined beauty and charitable endeavour, came into being. So did the beauty contest. During 1922 Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmanian newspapers held photographic competitions to find the most beautiful girl in their respective states. In September 1925, Sydney's Smith's Newspapers, of which Robert Clyde Packer was chief executive and managing editor, decided to initiate a swimsuit parade. Packer announced a Miss Australia contest, to be held in various picture theatres, the winner of which would be taken to the United States to compete in the Miss America quest, which had commenced in Atlantic City in 1921.

At the end of June 1926, Miss Beryl Mills of Western Australia was chosen as the first Miss Australia. The contest had provoked great resistance, and there was pressure for politicians to intervene. But in fact the selection events were well run, and so popular with such a range of women that the legislatures could see little reason for interfering. In both 1926 and 1927, the contestants who reached the finals in the Miss Australia quest were chaperoned by their mothers or another older woman, and the chaperone was paid to travel with the winner to the United States and, in later years, to Britain and Europe. Women doctors were present at the judges' interviews of finalists, and inspected the girls for healthy weight and general well-being. Contestants were not allowed to wear cosmetics, there were strict rules about the bathing costumes to be worn, and the judges were claimed to be artists,

sculptors and doctors. The organisers liked to point to the 'good stock' that made up their finalists.

In 1926, Beryl Mills, the first girl-triumphant, was a nineteen-year-old final-year art student at the University of Western Australia. She came from 'good pastoral stock', had won scholarships to Perth Modern School and the university, and was an accomplished pianist, swimmer, diver and hockey player. Miss Australia 1927 was similarly laudable: Phyllis van Alwyn, of Launceston in Tasmania, also of 'good pastoral stock', descended from the Scottish Highland Black family of Victoria's Western District. Her father managed MacRobertson's Confectionery in Tasmania. She had qualifications in shorthand and typing, and asserted her super-modernity by driving her own car. Such girls, though still condemned in some quarters for entering the contests, actually bespoke competence and confidence rather than degeneracy. The skills of dressmaking and cooking that both Mills and van Alwyn possessed allowed them to be depicted as future mothers, as solid subscribers to women's biological duty.

ART AND MAKING A LIVING

Beauty queens might have occupied the popular imagination, but the cusp of the 1920s was still a struggle for Australian artists. Paintings that embraced the Australian landscape and milieu were still of interest only to a minority. It had been so since the nineteenth century.

For a considerable number of notable artists, including Julian Ashton (who came to Australia in hopes of curing his asthma) and Max Meldrum, who had emigrated to Australia as a Scots-born adolescent travelling with parents, art was a crucial arena and—as elsewhere in the world—there was a hope that within that stadium the issues of 'What is art?' and 'What is Australian art?' would be settled. As always, there was no one finally to settle it, but there were plenty of contenders.

Australians, like the two Victorian-born gold rush artists, Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, were forced overseas, in part by curiosity but also by poor pickings in Australia. Charles Conder, the tall, personable English surveyor who had come to Australia to work in the Lands Department of New South Wales, and then shared a Melbourne studio with Tom Roberts, left for Europe after ten years in Australia, and quickly found his place in French artistic society. Conder had a gift for acquiring patrons, and in the early 1900s the

hard-working young Australian Will Longstaff, living close to the bone in squalid accommodation, saw him in the 'congenial society of young Frenchmen at Montmartre who speedily learned to idolise him'. Conder had been a friend of Toulouse-Lautrec's, who included his form in paintings of the Moulin Rouge.

This inside running evaded other artists in exile. Roberts was away from 1903 to 1923, part of that time spent working as a facial-restoration orderly at Wandsworth Hospital in London. He had taken his big unfinished painting of the opening of Federal Parliament to England with him. Lacking a patron during his long English years, Roberts made his living from portrait painting. Streeton, considered a quintessentially Australian artist, was absent from 1898 to 1924, George Lambert from 1900 to 1921, E. Phillips Fox from 1901 to 1915. John Russell, friend of the sculptor Rodin, and of Matisse and van Gogh, and Rupert Bunny, spent just on forty and fifty years respectively overseas before returning in their old age—Bunny returning in 1933, after the death of his French wife, to find that Russell had already died in Sydney in 1930.

Australian painters, like writers and others then and later, looked to the northern hemisphere to anoint them, and it rarely did. Like many travelling Australian artists and writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were looking for European success to underpin success in Australia. But such judgements often take little account of the force of economics upon hard-up artists such as Tom Roberts, and in any case, success and public acclaim evaded so many of the gifted, the British having their own talented artists to celebrate and the French theirs. But the pattern of the Australian artist having to go overseas for nurture and instruction and a key to success had become established, and would continue throughout the twentieth century.



Norman Lindsay's father had been a surgeon from Northern Ireland and his mother was the daughter of a Wesleyan missionary. Lindsay would inherit nothing of Wesleyism. During the summer of 1897 to 1898, he placed classical Greek and European figures in the landscape of Charterisville near Heidelberg outside Melbourne, and did line and wash drawings for Boccaccio's *Decameron*, for whose raunchiness any young bohemian had to

be an enthusiast. In Melbourne, he made a living as an illustrator and lived as a bohemian, a spirited member of the arts circle, the Prehistoric Order of Cannibals. The work that spoke most directly for what he believed at the time was *Crucified Venus*, in which a monk nails a naked woman to a tree while an ugly host of clerics and wowsers applaud.

Newly married, Lindsay came to Sydney from Melbourne in 1900, and he showed some of the *Decameron* drawings to A.G. Stephens, literary editor of the *Bulletin*, who said they were 'the finest example of pen-draughtsmanship of their kind yet produced in this country'. At the *Bulletin*, and through other forms of publication, Lindsay would become Australia's illustrator-in-chief. Offered a chance to study in Europe, Lindsay refused, believing it would be 'disastrous to every Australian who had submitted himself to the corrupting influence of [modern] European movements in art'. And his work for the *Bulletin* and for his brother Lionel's journal, *Lone Hand*, expressed irreverent nationalism and racial prejudices against Asians, Jews and Aborigines. He also continued to illustrate classic texts.

His wife Kathleen went to live in Brisbane because of Lindsay's intimate relationship with his young model Rose Soady. In 1909 he did go to England, trying unsuccessfully to find a publisher for new drawings he created for the memoirs of Casanova. While there, he saw post-Impressionist paintings and was appalled by them, calling the artists 'a mob of modern Hottentots'. He returned home gratefully in 1910 to work for the *Bulletin* again. In 1913, his first novel, *A Curate in Bohemia*, was published. Throughout World War I his feelings coincided with *Bulletin* policy, which was pro-war. He drew recruiting posters, drafted some ferocious anti-Irish drawings after the Dublin Easter Uprising of 1916, depicting the Irish as enemies of civilisation and supporters of Germany—not least, in the Australian case, for supposed Irish opposition to conscription. He depicted the Germans even more savagely, since his younger brother Reginald had been killed on the Somme and Norman had been given Reginald's blood-spattered notebook.

Because he was suspected to suffer from tuberculosis, Lindsay and Rose Soady moved to Springwood in the Blue Mountains, where he continued a high output through the post-war years. He had acquired a ouija board through which he tried to communicate not only with Reginald but with Shakespeare as well. In 1918 he published his children's classic, *The Magic Pudding*, but then, more crucially for artists, went on to restate

his Dionysian beliefs—that is, uninhibited and joyously sensual but above all anti-modernist bias—in two tracts, *Art in Australia* (1920) and *Creative Effort* (1924). Australian artists must react to the world, wrote Lindsay, by ‘a profound response to life, by the expression of a lyric gaiety, by a passionate sensuality, by the endless search for the image of beauty, the immortal body of desire that is Aphrodite’. As the young poet Judith Wright would complain, ‘It was all false, the dream of a place in which women had no part except as “the foil to a man’s physical robustness”’.

In 1931, he sailed with Rose for New York, where he found himself widely acclaimed because of the success of *Every Mother’s Son*, the American edition of his novel *Redheap*. A depiction of life in a country town in all its oddity and hypocrisy, *Redheap* had got him into trouble at home—the book, a British edition, was banned in Australia, and sixteen thousand copies were returned by bookshops to the publisher for pulping.

By April 1932, Lindsay was back in Sydney and nearly out of funds but rich still in opinions. So again he rejoined the *Bulletin* staff and talked the then editor, Samuel Prior, into establishing the Australian Book Publishing Company with, as the editor, Inky Stephensen, the eccentric man of letters from Queensland who would favour in his time a range of ideologies, from Communism while at Oxford, then Labor then extreme isolationism in the 1930s, the latter of which would see him publishing Hitler’s speeches with approval, and would ultimately land him in a World War II detention centre. The Australian Book Publishing Company published twenty highly significant titles, including Lindsay’s *Saturdee*, part of the *Redheap* trilogy, but then closed. Meanwhile *The Cautious Amorist*, Lindsay’s raunchy first novel written twenty years before, and concerning a girl on a desert island who happily has liaisons with three men, was published in New York, but again Australian customs seized copies entering the country in people’s luggage and saw it banned by the federal advisory board on literary matters.

This turbulent and talented man lived a long life that ended in 1969. By World War II, though, the new generation of artists, typified by the young Melbourne (Irish) working-class artist Sid Nolan, took little note of him. Nor indeed had Lindsay delayed the modern Australian painters of his own generation. These included Roy de Maistre, who had devised a system called ‘colour music’, which grew from experiments in treating shell-shock victims

of World War I with colour therapy; Grace Cossington Smith, who lived on the edges of Sydney but celebrated the city itself (and, in the early 1930s, the unfinished bridge growing from either shore of Sydney Harbour); and New Zealand-born Roland Wakelin, shy, amiable and given to amateur music evenings. They were all influenced by the Impressionists and Cézanne, and experimented with Cubism, to Lindsay the last word in barbarity.

THE WAR CLAIMS POMPEY ELLIOTT

One of the most notable post-war victims of war trauma was General Harold Edward Elliott, known to everyone by the nickname 'Pompey'. He was beloved by the men of the 15th Brigade AIF, even though some of them had tangled with him towards the war's end over the amalgamation of casualty-reduced battalions and various disciplinary matters. Because of Elliott's humanity and his willingness to be in the front line, his reputation was pervasive amongst the soldiers of the entire AIF. His capacity to speak his mind in graphic terms to senior officers might have damaged his chances of promotion, for he was sometimes the 15th's father and gang leader as well as its commander.

The son of a Victorian farmer, Elliott was tall, his spirit rugged, and he was the sort of young man upon whom, in terms of temperament, health, intellect and physical power, the gods had smiled. He had interrupted his law studies to serve in the Boer War, but returned to be called to the bar of Victoria and of the Commonwealth. Like his ultimate chief General Monash, he was a student of military texts and history.

Elliott had landed at Gallipoli on the first day, commanding the 7th Battalion. He was wounded and evacuated, then returned in early July, and was with his men in the fighting for German Officers' Trench. He fought at Lone Pine. Sensitive to the havoc, Elliott developed a dislike of and contempt for the fixed views of professional soldiers that would by war's end become an obsession. In March 1916, he was given the task of incorporating the 15th Victorian Brigade into the newly formed 5th Division, and promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. At the opening foray at Fromelles his two assaulting battalions suffered 1452 casualties in less than twenty-four hours. Elliott had protested against the uselessness of the assault before it had even occurred, and had taken a major of the British staff to show him the stretch of no-man's-land his men would have to cross if the assault went ahead.

He was in the front line at zero hour and later in the day went forward again to visit his front troops before they were pulled back. Arthur Bazley, who worked with C.E.W. Bean, saw him greeting the remnants of his brigade: 'No one who was present will ever forget the picture of him, the tears streaming down his face, as he shook hands with the returning survivors.'

Elliott's aim from then on was to preserve his soldiers. He visited his front line daily before dawn. He began to enjoy their achievements and to revel in the ground they captured in 1917 and 1918, and was astonished and humbled by the trust they put in him.

Yet, during his time in France, Elliott had received the grievous news that Glen Roberts, his partner in H.E. Elliott and Company, his firm of solicitors, had embezzled a considerable amount of money. 'Goodness knows what I am liable for,' he wrote to his wife. His business collapsed and he all at once had a debt of £5000. His brigade's counter attack in April 1918 at Villers-Bretonneux was triumphant, but by August 1918 he was wounded, and eroded by resentment that the 'professionals' would not give him a divisional command.

On his return home, Elliott revived his business, stood for the Senate as a Nationalist (that is, a conservative) in 1919, and was elected, then re-elected, and served in Parliament for the rest of his life to argue for the constituency of soldiers and their families. He was concerned by the fact that the grandiose wartime promises made to young men were not reflected in the way they were treated after. By 1921, unemployment rates had jumped to 11 per cent due to the lower demand for food and wool in Europe, and ex-Diggers were put off. Often, even in good times, the disabled soldier was the last to be employed—deafness and partial blindness often disqualified him, and so did disfigurements of the face. Men who had suffered shrapnel and gunshot wounds to the hands now found their capacity for being craftsmen reduced. Disabled Diggers found some income as lavatory attendants, street hawkers, buskers, dingo and buffalo shooters, and beggars. In the streets, blind soldiers sold their poetry printed on postcards. The Red Cross set up some sheltered factories in weaving, pottery and furniture. Blind soldiers were encouraged to repair boots but were replaced by machines by the end of the 1920s.

All such cases gnawed at Pompey Elliott. In 1920, the royal commission on the basic wage had recommended that a family of four required

five pounds, sixteen shillings (\$11.60) to live in a 'reasonable standard of comfort'. In that same year the *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act* set the full war disability pension rate at four pounds, two shillings and sixpence per week for a comparable household. But well over two-thirds of the disability pensioners received less than half the full amount, even if symptoms remained—loss of power over limbs, the 'dragging' pain of gunshot injury, and afflictions of the chest due to gassing.

In arguing these questions, Elliott did not show himself a natural politician. His feelings ran close to the surface, and like many former soldiers he was stunned by how quickly the world had moved on from the war. Convinced like many conservatives that Red revolution was a likelihood in the suburbs and the bush, he continued to serve in the militia but was still passed over for divisional command. He took to attacking the Australian professional soldiers, particularly generals Birdwood and Brudenell White, whom he saw as servants of the British High Command. In 1925, he was at last appointed a major-general, but his wife and children continued to listen to harangues about how belated this was. 'The injustice,' he wrote, 'has actually covered all my post-war life.'

The Depression brought a spiritual depression for Elliott. Once again, having been a Digger counted for nothing to employers, and veterans began to lose the jobs they had found so hard to get when they returned from the war. Elliott grieved for his men. 'I am at my wits' end at the present time in finding the opening for the man who gets out of a job,' he wrote. Nightmares and flashbacks, symptoms of damage done to him years before, plagued him. He also began to fret about the junior officers he had sent out on dangerous missions and who had perished. Acute depression, of the kind that had sometimes afflicted him during the war, now returned. In early 1931, still a member of Parliament, he had to be admitted to Melbourne's Alfred Hospital after what the press called a mental breakdown, but what was in reality an attempt at suicide by putting his head in front of an oven and turning on the gas. His wife and daughter had saved him.

In hospital, everything sharp was taken from him except, by some oversight, his shaving gear. He was found in the small hours of 23 March 1931 with a razor's blade embedded in an artery in his left elbow. Elliott's funeral attracted a massive crowd of former soldiers, who knew that he was also one of the fallen.

THE OGRE IS BORN

To the ultimate horror of the general populace, but without anyone particularly noticing at the time, the Australian Communist Party was founded by a modest group of radicals in Sydney on a Saturday in October 1920, while much of the city's populace was distracted by the spring racing season at Randwick.

Despite often tragic unemployment amongst returned soldiers, despite the slums, the landlords, the urban and industrial squalor, there was a gleam of consumerism in the eyes of young people. Only the Broken Hill miners were pursuing industrial action at the time. The Labor Party, out of office at the federal level, Hughes having become a National Party prime minister, was devoting itself to reform within the capitalist system, and the majority of workers were happy with that proposition and did not look beyond an improvement of wages and a guarantee of dignity, preferring that to the overthrow of the state.

So it was a small number of interested parties who gathered in a grim hall that October day. The Australian Socialist Party (ASP) of Liverpool Street, Sydney, sent out some sixty invitations to create a party that would be a home for all those 'who stand for the emancipation of the working masses'. Since the ASP would be playing on their home ground, they hoped they could dominate the strands of opinion and organisational concepts people would bring. The potential inner rebels came from the break-away Victorian Socialist Party, the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World, now in decline since some of them had set sabotaging fires in Sydney during the war), the Trades Hall Reds (radical trade unionists) from Sydney, and so on. The triumvirate who ran the Australian socialists, the chief bloc, were Arthur Reardon, a blacksmith intellectual who trained apprentices at Sydney's Clyde railway works; his wife Marcia Reardon, who could make vivid speeches full of outrage at specific examples of the human misery of Australian households; and the ASP's newspaper editor, Ray Everitt.

There were a number of other remarkable attendees, but none more so than Tom Walsh, Irish rebel, head of the seamen's union, whose followers were called 'the Walsheviks', and his gentrified wife, Adela Pankhurst Walsh, the five-foot-tall daughter of Emmeline, famous founder of the British suffragette movement.

Another notable attendee was a former clergyman of the Church of Christ, the Scots-born Jock Garden, teetotal and anti-gambling, who did not see Marxism as very different from the teachings of the 'lowly Nazarene', that is, Christ. He remained a deacon of the Church even after being elected to the Labor Council and becoming leader of the Trades Hall Reds. His style of oratory was as coruscating as that of John Knox, founder of Presbyterianism.

William Earsman, the eccentric Scot from Melbourne, was a member of the Victorian Socialist Party who attended the Sydney meeting that first day along with a notable group of Melbourne radicals. Within a short time he was already disparaging the ASP bloc within the party and saw its three members elected to the provisional executive as 'dangerous individuals'.

The ASP faction in the new party felt precisely the same way about Earsman and the Victorian Socialist Party. Earsman wanted to take over the ASP's weekly newspaper and make it into the organ of the new Communist Party. But the ASP owned the printing press, and did not want to hand control of its assets over to a new organisation represented by only three ASP members.

After the founding of the Australian Communist Party in October 1920, three years after the Bolsheviks had seized power in St Petersburg, branches were endorsed in Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Townsville, Newcastle, and Newtown and Balmain in Sydney.

One night in 1921 the ASP withdrew its representatives, denouncing Garden and the Trades Hall group, packed up the press and other property, and moved it all to new premises in Sussex Street. The tiny Communist movement now had rival newspapers and executives, each believing they were the genuine inheritors of Marxism, and that the other side did not have a proper grasp of Marxist doctrine. The ASP men and women in Sussex Street immediately adopted the title 'United Communist Party of Australia (the Australian Section of the Third International)', and printed on its own press a newspaper, the *International Communist*. From the office in Liverpool Street, Earsman produced a rival newspaper called *Australian Communist*. Would Liverpool Street or Sussex Street inherit the revolution and achieve anointment from Russia? It was no small question for the participants. World revolution was imminent, they were sure, and ultimate power over Australia's Marxist identity, and it was all happening for now in

the white-hot ardour of a small number of people in close-by streets in Sydney.



But in the meantime, in July 1922, the bitter unity conference, as ordered by Moscow, occurred in Sydney. Conference branch members were unruly. Moscow would write to the Communists of Australia: 'Your Party is still weak, your experience of class struggle as a Party still inadequate, your preparedness for taking a lead in the future intensified class fights is still deficient.'

At the national conferences of the trade unions, motions which called for one big union were put forward by the Wobblies, and motions for nationalisation of all industry were also tabled by the stricter socialists in the Labor Party—including, at that stage, James Scullin. There was a strong belief within Labor, however, that Communism was not the answer for Australia. E.J. Theodore, Queensland Labor premier, former miner, son of an Irish mother and Romanian father (Teodorescu was the true family name), had not gone to the Nationals with Hughes yet was one of the pragmatic Labor men. He complained at the 1921 ALP conference that some of the delegates were 'enamoured with the proletariat in Russia and with the sentiment of the IWW [the Wobblies]', and that they harboured 'ideals and dogmas that did not belong to Australia.' He spoke for a majority in arguing this way. There was something in Australian society that favoured practical reform over doctrinal revolution.

CENTRE AND NORTH

A new phase of the national argument arose, about whether northern Australia and the Centre could somehow be transformed by irrigation or population or both. It was not yet time to accept that, even with all that landmass, Australia might be destined to be inhabited by a modest population. The English geologist J.W. Gregory of the University of Melbourne wrote *The Dead Heart of Australia*, published in 1906, engraving the term 'Dead Heart' like a sentence of desolation and a mark of shame on the Australian imagination, but not on Billy Hughes' nor on Alfred Deakin's, the visionary early prime minister. In the 1890s, Deakin had predicted a populous hinterland, and a national population like America's, and so did Hughes in the 1920s.

A young Australian geographer, Griffith Taylor, who as an expeditionary team member had survived with honour the two winters on McMurdo Sound leading to the discovery of Scott's body on the Ross Ice Shelf, produced a thesis entitled *A Geography of Australasia* in 1916. It was considered so negative on future population that in Western Australia, to which its thesis particularly applied, it was banned from schools and the university. In 1923, Taylor compounded his sins against Australian hope by presenting a map that showed Central Australia labelled 'Useless', and much of Western Australia 'Almost Useless'. The words might have been more tactfully chosen, but again the map offended against much Australian aspiration. It was as if Taylor were guilty of environmental treason, and even at Sydney University, his place of work, he was snubbed. He attracted double opprobrium by arguing that the sooner Australians intermarried with Asians, and thus helped to neutralise the 'Asian threat', the better. Even Laborites had their grievances against poor Taylor, depicting him as a privileged fellow trying to keep small farmers out of the cattle kingdoms of the Northern Territory. His enemies called him an 'environmental determinist', prevented his promotion to full professor, and ultimately provoked him into accepting in 1928 a chair at the University of Chicago.

Even as Taylor left Sydney by steamer, people still believed that Australia would support at least one hundred million people if only the Centre and north were 'opened up'. It became a national obsessional pastime to dream of solutions to the dryness of the interior. Ion Idriess, a Gallipoli veteran and prolific writer, proposed that water should be conveyed by tunnels from the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range in Queensland and into the river system that ended in Lake Eyre. John Bradfield, the civil engineer who designed and built the Harbour Bridge in Sydney, agreed with this project. In 1938, he proposed a hydro scheme to the Queensland premier, Scots-born Forgan Smith, a believer in large public works. The plan would use the massive water supply from the coastal rivers by way of water tunnels and was capable, Bradfield claimed, of covering 80 square kilometres to a depth of twenty metres. Though the scheme would cost £30 million, Bradfield said the outlay could be recovered in water rates. Dealing in their various ways with the Depression, and the economic restraint they had promised the Bank of England, state and federal politicians both ultimately rebuffed the idea.

By now, some academics and humanitarians had a sense of what had happened to the indigenes since 1788, and believed that the North and Central regions should remain an Aboriginal zone. The University of Adelaide's Board of Anthropological Research consisted of many medical scientists, and its chairman was a professor of pathology, J.B. Cleland. Cleland, appointed in 1920, was an extraordinary Renaissance-style South Australian who was forensic scientist, botanist and anthropologist. Arguing for segregation of the remaining original Aboriginal groups of the north, Cleland proposed Australians recognise how admirably Central Australian Aborigines were adapted to the desert, and went so far as to declare that hunting and gathering were the best possible uses that could be made of Central Australia. Segregation, he said, was the only feasible means of ensuring indigenous survival: 'There can be no question that the native population—in our North West corner [of South Australia] alone probably numbering 500 or so—are making a much better use of this country than we ever can, and that the density of their population is many times that of any possible white one.'

Not all the indigenous commentators agreed with Cleland. They wanted to be included in the Australian nation, and already a cry for citizenship had begun, notably from the secretary of the Melbourne-based Australian Aborigines' League, William Cooper, a survivor of the Coranderrk Mission along the Murray, and self-educated, in part through his participation in the Australian Workers' Union. To him, northern development was not a disaster for his people but a platform for their elevation. Already in his sixties, he attacked the segregationist schemes promoted by Cleland and his fellow anthropologist Norman Tindale in the 1920s and 1930s, and declared, 'We don't want to be zoological specimens in Arnhem Land.' His view of progress for Aborigines accorded with that of the majority society, and he, too, was taken by the ideal of the yeoman farmer, but in his case a black yeoman rather than a white one. The region was 'unsuited to white labour, and particularly to white women', he declared, and many whites agreed with him on that point. Cooper believed that the main problem of the desert and the tropics was climatic; yet 'it is all the natives have ever known and from it . . . they have won their livelihood'. He asked why it had never occurred to white minds to link the Aboriginal question with the problem of the north and the Centre. Here was an Australian population already in place, already willing to remain and work.

Later, in early 1937, Cleland pursued his treatise with the Minister for the Interior, John 'Black Jack' McEwen, telling him that 'in the Aboriginal you have all the manpower required for the development of Australia's unsettled parts . . . and its peopling by a [Aboriginal] population not merely European in culture but British in sentiment and loyalty would be a bulwark of defence'. Cooper was still advising and lobbying Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1939 about amending legislation granting full rights to Aborigines 'who have attained civilised status', and asking that Aboriginal affairs be taken over by the federal government instead of being left to the patchwork of state legislations. He had more than earned the right to promote the idea of full Australian citizenship. His son Dan had been one of a number of Aborigines to serve in the AIF and had died in action in France.

When Cooper died in 1941, both the question of Aboriginal rights and the other issue on which he had campaigned—what to do with the north and Centre—were unresolved, and would remain so for some decades.

LABOR AND THE REDS

The Communist Party of Australia, a tribe of bitterly divided clans, whose numbers and influence would always be overestimated and endowed with satanic skills by the majority of its opponents, became the subject of bewildering shifts of doctrine and policy from Moscow. In 1923, in one of these policy changes, the Communists were ordered by Moscow to make friends with the Labor Party. In terms of Communist objectives this made some sense. The expected revolution had not occurred outside Russia. Now a certain level of collaboration would show Labor how limited its philosophy was.

H.E. Boote, the young Curtin's father figure, a man who had been involved in Labor politics since 1889 and had edited the *Gympie Truth* for early ALP Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, attacked the attempted Communist infiltration of Labor in the pages of the *Australian Worker*, saying that their obedience to the Central Committee in Moscow was not much different from the head-bowings of formal religion. The Labor Party, he said, repudiated 'with loathing the principles of terrorism when deliberately inculcated as a method of government'. By this stage the recently concluded Russian Civil War and the 'collectivisation' of Russian farms, which meant a

fall-off in the Russian harvest, had brought the famine that became fuel for anti-Communist opinion and shocked some Communists themselves.

To combat the Moscow directive, the ALP confirmed at state and federal conferences in 1924 that no individual who retained Communist Party membership could be a Labor member. The Communist from the Trades Hall, Jock Garden, attacked the decision, but his Labor friend Jack Lang was unrepentant. Garden declared that the 'loot men' of Labor chose corruption, ballot-rigging and intrigue over the betterment of working people.

Rebuffed by Labor, Communists began as small regional groups to penetrate the ranks of mining unions and other union executives, and there they would ultimately achieve a national significance. But for now, as one of the Communist unionists, the ideologue from Orange, New South Wales, Lawrence 'Lance' Sharkey, put it, the Marxist window of chance had passed: 'the Russian revolution had receded and capitalism had achieved its temporary relative stabilisation'. Sharkey had been raised a Catholic in the bush and claimed that it was by way of encountering Wobblies amongst itinerant bush workers (that is, swagmen) that he came to oppose the war and ultimately made his way into Communism.

After the poor performance of Communists in the 1925 New South Wales elections, Garden left the party, because he believed it had no future, and he and his Trades Hall Reds joined the Western Sydney real estate agent Jack Lang's faction of the Labor Party.

By December 1928, after attending the fourth congress of the Communist International (Comintern for short) in Soviet Russia, Esmonde Higgins, editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, came back with a new doctrine—that the party should openly struggle against *all* Labor Party reformism. The reason was, as Stalin confusingly announced, that the Third Period of Communism was imminent. It would involve increasing conflict between the nations of the West to hold on to power and crush colonial uprisings in such places as India, combined with an enlisting of all social democratic parties (in Australia, the Labor Party) by capitalism to crush workers and lower wages.

In the spirit of the Third Period, in 1929 the Communist Party of Australia changed leadership and got rid of 'right-wing deviationists' who had flirted with Labor. Sharkey, who had been expelled earlier, came back now to expel as rightists those who had expelled him. The Communist Party of Australia

looked forward to the opportunities of discontent that would arise from any global recession. Indeed, one monstrous recession was on its way.

SUCCESS IN THE WEST

*Hail, beauteous land! Hail bonzer west Australia;
Compared with you, all others are a failure.*

Boom times for Western Australia had begun in the 1890s, during the collapse of the economies of the eastern states. British investors were attracted to the west because of great mineral promise and a lack of strikes. Western Australian wheat became a more and more important business as a result of William Farrer's experiments in breeding new varieties for a low-rainfall country. The wheat of the world owed a great deal to that English-born agronomist who, on his farm at Lambrigg near the present site of Canberra, cross-pollinated and cross-bred wheat varieties. The Western Australian wheat lands were also heavily dosed with fertiliser to guarantee crops. As the visionary premier Sir James Mitchell put it, 'Gold brought these men to Western Australia, and superphosphate will keep them here.'

Between 1907 and 1910, many once-unemployed labourers and former public servants were settled on wheat-growing blocks in the area of Yorkrakine, east of Perth. They were supported by the Agricultural Bank, founded by Sir John Forrest in 1895 to help wheat farmers establish their farms. As neither gold nor timber looked as promising as they had earlier, the acreage under wheat trebled in the 1920s, and fed Premier Mitchell's optimism.

Under the Labor man Philip Collier's government, from 1924 to 1930, support for the wheat industry continued and state aid to farmers increased. Light narrow-gauge railways were pushed into country districts, and the interest bill on British capital borrowed for railway construction mounted. Agricultural investment attracted government funds, and the first group settlement for unemployed miners was opened near Manjimup in March 1921.

The belief in sturdy pioneer farmers would in the end contribute to the troubles of the 1930s, but in the meantime Mitchell and then Collier favoured immigration and were adherents to the principle of group

settlement, placing all arriving immigrants from the same convoy of steamers on farms located in the same region. The Queensland government had sponsored similar agricultural settlements in the 1890s.

Under the group settlement plan, immigrants would, on arrival, be selected in groups of twenty or thirty families to form a community. Six or seven members of the group were sent in advance to erect slab and iron huts, which in time would be replaced by cottages. Yet the 1923 plan to settle six thousand suitable immigrant families on group settlements had flaws. Too many migrants were sent out too quickly. Some were settled on places like the Peel Estate south of Fremantle—swampy, poorly drained, the soil leached of all nutriment. Most of the farmers sent to that area failed. In other areas of the south-west, the settler on timbered land was required to clear some of the hardest wood trees on earth—the jarrah, the karri, the tuart—invaluable timber which, once cut down, lay where it fell, for there was no means to lift and move the enormous trees. Again, the overworked immigrant farmer, often enough a former British city dweller, found that the timberlands did not always provide the wonderful pasture and agricultural land they had been promised.

The Group Settlement Board oversaw all the schemes but had to be informed of all livestock sales and purchases and any substantial change to the farm. They had power to evict the failing farmer, but came up against farmer solidarity. In 1925, a field supervisor from the Board discovered that whenever a settler was evicted from his holding for inefficiencies, the other ‘groupies’ threatened the evictors and ostracised any newcomer who took up the block.

Helen Woolmer, the wife of a British World War I veteran who had found it impossible to get work in post-war London, arrived with her husband in 1924. After they left the quarantine station at Albany they were sent to Northcliffe. They lived in a tin shack until land was cleared and cottages erected. Many cottages had to be shared. There were no toilets and the only water was from the creek. Women and children lay on the bare earth floor covered with sacks while the men slept out in the bush. No roads, only a bush track, led into Northcliffe. There were no doctors or hospitals, no beds or blankets, no milk and no fruit. The settlers dug rough latrines but the children became ill with dysentery. Woolmer also found that the family hut had been built over a stream that flooded in rain, and the shack had to

be dismantled, taken some distance off and re-erected. Her husband was ill for four months, and though there was a sickness benefit fund to which all the settlers contributed, there had been so much sickness that it was now used up and 'we were at starvation point, except for odds and ends donated by the [other] settlers'. She appealed to the Red Cross in Perth, and in the subsequent terrible months, she said, the Red Cross saved them with money and pharmaceuticals.

The typical immigrant woman in the bush, observer Frank Larter said, longed for simple British things such as the ringing of church bells, the cries of fishmongers and coal men, of cat-meat sellers and milk vendors, and the bells of the muffin and crumpet man. The men missed the warm local pubs, the factory sirens, the music halls and the football clubs. They even reminisced about the war with a kind of longing, since there had been greater hope then.

Mrs Reg Goldsmith and her family arrived in Western Australia in 1924, and after a hard start at Kendenup, during which they lived on a diet of wheat and carrots, found group settlement excellent. In Group 21 at Jardee, to which the Goldsmiths moved, the range of foodstuffs had expanded and social life was very strong. There was even a government hospital nearby, and cows and poultry were available, as well as apples and pears from the local orchard. This was a golden interlude, since the Goldsmith wheat farm failed in the Depression.

The scheme was temporarily suspended in 1924, and holdings were amalgamated as more and more settlers gave up under the economic hardship of their lives. But the government was still locked into financing the scheme, even though by 1929, Mitchell, on his way to returning to power, was beginning to question the cost of it all. 'We are drifting along,' he said, 'making some progress, but so little for the money we are borrowing.'

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THE GREAT CRASH AND FASCISM'S RISE



THE VILLAIN OF THREADNEEDLE STREET

After the nosedive of stocks on Wall Street in 1929, credit was almost impossible to get, goods did not sell, and workers were sacked in considerable numbers, leading to a climax of Australian neediness in 1932, when unemployment reached 32 per cent. But even before the 'Great Crash', as people would call it, there was over 10 per cent unemployment in Australia, the ultimate outfall from sinking prices for wool, wheat and minerals. In early 1930, at the height of the Australian summer, Labor Prime Minister James Scullin knew that he was facing 'a financial depression without parallel in the thirty years' life of the Commonwealth'. Unemployment was already at 13.1 per cent and increased to 14.6 per cent by midyear. There were clashes in Sydney between the police and those out of work, 'led by Communists', as the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 February 1930 said. Many wage cuts occurred, some accepted without protest. In Queensland the shearing rate per hundred was reduced by five shillings to forty shillings. But the coal miners would not accept lower wages, and went on strike.

Under Scullin's predecessor, Sir Stanley Bruce, roads and grain elevators had been built, but much of that was due to pressure from the Country Party rather than agreement with English economist John Maynard Keynes, whose

economic theories US President Roosevelt would put into operation in the New Deal to help mute the impact of the Depression in the United States during the 1930s. Scullin was elected to solve the unemployment problem, as it was a short-term lack of jobs that riveted people's attention. But one of Scullin's plans was to try to prove Australia's economic buoyancy by sending London the largest repayments on World War I and 1920s borrowings that federal and state governments could manage, and to do this as a means to encourage investment in Australia. It would be a hard act to pull off, and Jack Lang, Labor premier of the largest state, New South Wales, simply did not believe in Scullin's repayment plans.

Scullin's treasurer, the Queenslander Ted Theodore, saw 'big spending' on national projects as the answer. Scullin was sympathetic. On his journeys to and from Canberra, he looked out of the train and saw beggars in the streets of Sydney, harrowed-looking men tramping along roads. It was all complicated by the fact that the number of old-age and invalid pensioners rose by a larger number of people in 1930 than in any previous year because those who had until now been supported by relatives had to find other means of support when their family members lost their jobs.

Sir Granville Ryrie, Australian financial representative in London, and Treasurer Theodore made a statement to the British money market declaring that Australia would not postpone its interest payments and pointing out that the Commonwealth had never failed to meet its obligations. This caused a temporary rallying of Australian stock prices in London.

Scullin used radio to reach out and reassure the populace, and perhaps the most significant of his appeals was made on the evening of 4 March 1930, when he launched his 'Grow More Wheat' campaign. He said that Australians needed to increase their production of exportable goods, and the industry that could best do this was the wheat-growing industry. To growers who performed this 'urgent national service', he offered prospects of an increase in their prosperity, supported by government-guaranteed prices, and assurances of businesslike marketing through a wheat pool. By contrast, the Americans intended to reduce their sowings of wheat by 10 per cent as a means of maintaining the price. In answering his call, Australian wheat growers were taking a risk—what if their wheat wasn't bought after all? Some amongst them drove to town, asked banks for money to expand their crops, and found they did indeed suffer a loss, even under the government

guarantee. Though Scullin had never intended this result, it was a failed policy for which the country intended to punish him.

In the first third of the century, from 1900 to the Depression, the population had grown from 3.7 million to 6.5 million. There were far more people to feel the misery than there had been in the 1890s depression. As the catastrophe of 1929 extended its misery into 1930 and thereafter, some moralists took a dour satisfaction from these events. Younger Australian families of the 1920s had spent so much on consumer goods, they fulminated, from motor cars to player pianos to gramophones and refrigerators, that it was merely appropriate they should now see many of their treasures carried off by bailiffs. Lower wages would bring the economy back into balance, some experts believed, without thinking of the fact that lower wages meant fewer people to buy all those consumer goods. If the manufacturers could not sell enough of those goods, they would have to sack still more of their employees.

It struck many Australians powerfully now that in the Soviet Union every adult who wanted to work had a job. This hopeful view of Stalin's horrific Soviet Republics went uninformed by knowledge of the famine of the early 1920s or, during the 1930s, starvation in the Ukraine and elsewhere, which would lead to a combined loss of ten million people. In any case, the demand, whether from Communists, socialists or simply desperate men and women, was for the justice of a job. The appeal increased in the establishment of a belief that atheistic Communism was finding its voice on Australia's streets. For even a noted clergyman, the Reverend W.C. Chandler of Lithgow, a town now full of unemployed miners, declared that 'the present order of society has been tried and found wanting, and it must be replaced by evolution or revolution'.

As the Depression progressed it did indeed seem that the order of things was breaking down. The New South Wales Government Savings Bank closed down in 1931 after crowds of people gathered in Martin Place, Sydney, to withdraw their money. Since its closure seemed indefinite, many of its clients were forced to sell off their deposit books to speculators for half the value of what they had actually deposited in the bank. People now stormed the Commonwealth Bank in Castlereagh Street, and the bank governor had to stand on top of the counter and tell them there was no need to extract their money since the Commonwealth of Australia guaranteed their deposits. The Commonwealth Bank eventually amalgamated with the state savings

banks to cover further panics, but banks generally were in such bad odour for rebuffing depositors who tried to withdraw their deposits that it was common for people to throw bricks through their windows.

Despite the reassurances, there *was* a chance now that the Commonwealth Bank would collapse, because it held less and less export money. The bank pointed out to the amiable and hapless Scullin government that, considering all possible sources of funds, there would not be enough to fulfil the government's obligations to pay wages to public servants and the interest on its considerable overseas debts up to 30 June 1930. Out of its own reserves, the bank was able to finance only until 31 March 1930 those governments that banked with it, that is, the federal, South Australian and Tasmanian governments. (The other states had done their raising of funds through the Westminster Bank and the Bank of England, and would be faced with similar problems.) The Commonwealth Bank suggested that the British government be approached to postpone the half-yearly interest payment of £2.77 million due on Australia's world war debt on 31 March.

Britain itself was under pressure now to repay US banks the war loans it had taken out in America. The Westminster Bank was already alarmed at having to provide 'substantial accommodation' of repayments, as well as reluctantly lending the Australian states £9.75 million at the beginning of February. It said it could no longer agree to increases in overdrafts asked for by the suddenly hard-up New South Wales, Victorian and Western Australian governments, who were in the hopeless situation of trying to borrow money to meet their repayments.

Early in February 1930, Treasurer Theodore told a meeting of the Commonwealth Bank and the trading banks that £13 million would be needed before 30 June. The banks must help out all governments who defaulted, he said, because Australia could not depend on British bankers to help. The Australian trading banks refused. So now the Commonwealth Bank approached the British Chancellor of the Exchequer himself to arrange temporary deferment of the March war-debt payment. The chancellor referred the matter to the governor of the Bank of England, the institution whose nickname was 'the old lady of Threadneedle Street'. The Bank of England's financial controller, Sir Otto Niemeyer, asked for more information about the debtor, the Commonwealth of Australia, about the total value of the 1929–30 wool and wheat exports, and how much of both had been

sold. If he was satisfied that everything was being done in Australia to meet the emergency, Niemeyer could be prepared to help find the £25 million that would meet government commitments for nearly a year, up to 31 January 1931, and would recommend postponement of the war-debt payment. But when the Scullin government's answer came, Niemeyer declared himself unsatisfied with it. He was not comfortable dealing with a Labor government anyhow, and urged that someone must go to Australia and remind it of its obligations!

The Bank of England did not want to give the impression that whomever it sent there would be interfering with Australian domestic affairs. The emissary: Sir Otto Niemeyer himself! Scullin agreed to welcome Niemeyer, but to Scullin's battler constituency, *prim* Niemeyer would become one of the great Satans of Australian history, a banker robot who put loan repayment above the sufferings of the Australian populace. Niemeyer's own lack of human colouration would feed into the concept of his vampire-hood.

But the knowledge that Niemeyer was coming to Australia brought an immediate improvement in government bond prices in London and encouraged Scullin and Theodore greatly. Scullin hoped the idea that the great Niemeyer was coming to straighten out the Australians would also relieve the pressure on states who dealt with the Westminster Bank. But in fact the pressure only increased, and the Commonwealth Bank had to lend some Australian money to pay interest due to the Westminster Bank at the end of June 1930. This reduced to a dangerously low level the Commonwealth Bank's assets.

Niemeyer arrived in Perth in July 1930, accompanied by T.E. Gregory, Professor of Banking at the University of London, and R.N. Kershaw, an Australian on the staff of the Bank of England. Niemeyer had been in Australia barely a month when, at a meeting in Melbourne, he issued his judgement on the state of things to Scullin and the premiers. Between 1911 and 1927–28, per capita productivity had increased by a mere 1 per cent, he lectured them. Thus the country, with its borrowings by federal and state governments, was living beyond its means: the standard of living was too high. Its tariff levels, which protected the prices Australian manufacturers asked for their products, were also too high: 'There seems to me to be little escape from the conclusion that in recent years Australian standards have

been pushed too high relatively to Australian productivity and to general world conditions and tendencies.'

Chastened premiers (except for Lang of New South Wales) and Prime Minister Scullin agreed with Niemeyer's terms, and undertook to balance their budgets in 1930–31. In that room in Melbourne, Niemeyer was dragging a desperate set of politicians towards policies very different from Roosevelt's New Deal. Roosevelt was not only a force of nature but also had a vast manufacturing base, if presently in a flaccid condition, and was in a stronger position to deal with offshore banks through his borrowings from American ones and through bond issues. Australia was—and this proved it yet again—not America. In any case, the premiers who gave their pledge to Niemeyer secretly knew that their books could not be quickly balanced, and that to try to do it at the expense of all aid to the unemployed was political suicide. A pledge to balance budgets was a gesture they had to make to satisfy the overseas banks and perhaps encourage them to be more lenient and more forthcoming. And all this would be aimed at increasing Australia's bonafides and attracting British credit and investment.

MARMITE JAR YEARS

Before looking at Jack Lang's rebellion against the so-called Premiers' Plan, it is appropriate to see what this situation was doing to the mass of unemployed. If a person wanted a job then he had to accept lower wages. Phyllis Ackland and her husband would have willingly done so, and had—like many others—taken to the road looking for such ill-paid employment. They had gone to Temora in New South Wales where Phyllis's husband looked for work. Phyllis was six months pregnant and had a baby with bronchitis. The family slept in the park—'overcoats for blankets and nothing else. We didn't even have a spoon for the baby.' A man who had worked with her husband gave them a spare room, but they lay on the bare boards. And yet there was pride and necessity at work in that time. People, said Phyllis, 'made blankets out of corn bags which they would dye green, and curtains out of chaff bags, and the kids' clothes out of flour bags'. Phyllis said that after they moved to Port Kembla, her husband could get only occasional work and 'it took us seven years to pay off the grocer's bill'. 'We didn't recover from the Depression, ever! . . . we ended up drinking out of Marmite jars.'

Eddy Harmer of Wonthaggi in Victoria was laid off in 1932 with 480 other miners and became dependent on the state's dole: 'It was a terrific shock and humiliation for me to think I was lowered down so far that I had to form a queue, along with the missus, to put these dole tickets over the counter. At first, for a man, wife and a child, it was eleven and sixpence worth of docket [per week].' There was a three-shilling docket which could go to pay for groceries, another three-shilling docket for bread and another three shillings for meat, together with two and six for the child allowance.

The indignities of queuing and handing over tickets to storekeepers affected the Harmers, and Eddy helped form the Wonthaggi Workers' Unemployed Union and became its secretary. The Unemployed Union's aim was to do away with the docket system and get money in its place. They eventually won that concession from Victorian premier Sir Stanley Argyle. But the government also gave the power to distribute the money to councils, who were to allocate work to justify the handouts.

People like Harmer, the unemployed activists, were sent by the council to work at what he called Siberia, an area where night soil was buried. He believed he was put there to keep him from agitating amongst those working on the roads, since he was, like other former Wonthaggi miners, considered a Red, even though he was not a Communist. Hence there was tension between Harmer's need to be able to feed his family without molestation, and his desire at the same time to take part in the union and activate his fellow workers.

Lang meanwhile had made his own inroads into unemployment. Newly re-elected as premier in New South Wales in 1930, Lang was a workers' hero. He had set out, using steamrollers and machinery borrowed from councils, and picks and shovels borrowed from the army, to build what workers called 'Gallipoli'—the Parramatta Road between Homebush and Lidcombe. To pay for it, and also to raise the money to subsidise what hard-up farmers got from their wheat, he floated a loan within Australia with the help of journalists from the *Sun* and the *Evening News*.

Generally the Depression was hell for farmers too. Bill Entz was a soldier settler in Far North Queensland, on the Atherton Tablelands, where he had been given 69 acres (28 hectares). He and his family walked off the land without telling anyone, carrying their suitcases, the children trailing. 'Left everything, completely broke!' As his son, also Bill, remembered, his father had, like many, 'shot through' and left his debts. 'And he never forgave

Mother [that] she advised him to.' The children's mother came from Kent, 'a lovely, green, civilised area . . . [In Australia] she lived in bag humpies with dirt floors, and a dirt floor means that everything in sight is dirty too. She got a house with a floor in it when she was fifty.'

And after its great success, the west became an arena of tears. The state government involved itself in help for the unemployed only when the task became too great for private charitable organisations and municipal councils. The Lord Mayor of Perth's Fund, for example, had provided meal and bed tickets, but ran out of money by July 1930. Other voluntary organisations still operational included the Salvation Army, the Silver Chain and the Ugly Men's Association (a peculiarly Western Australian charity), along with the RSL. The RSL proposed a meeting for unemployed ex-servicemen, and over four hundred turned up, skilled workers who wanted not sustenance but jobs.

In Western Australia, the state's sustenance allowance was seven shillings a week for a single man, fourteen shillings for a married couple and seven shillings for each child under fourteen, up to a maximum of five children. For single men, two-sevenths was in the form of cash, and the rest came as orders or dockets for food, meals or accommodation. But no Western Australian male could claim this dole until he had sold all his assets apart from his home, if he owned one. People called going on welfare 'going on sus', and struggled to avoid it.

A few more fortunate individuals contributed some of their wealth to alleviate the suffering of many jobless in their state. Seventy-year-old Harry Boan was the owner of local department stores, a man who began by selling goods out of a suitcase on the goldfields. He now became a prodigiously generous provider to the unemployed. A similar story was that of Sir Charles McNess, a seventy-year-old Scots Presbyterian-cum-Anglican who had arrived in Western Australia in 1876 and opened a small hardware store, and made his fortune from there. Approached by the gifted state public servant Louis Edward Shapcott and asked to funnel money to the unemployed through one of the boards Shapcott ran under state government aegis, the State Gardens Board, McNess agreed. A great deal of McNess's money was in this way spent topping up the dole of men put to work on a town-building project at Yanchep, north of Perth, for which Shapcott acquired the machinery by borrowing it from various state government departments. The men

working for the dole at Yanchep found that they received three days' work at award wages, and were thus doing better than their fellows working elsewhere. Shapcott also received a further £5000 from McNess to help the state government build a number of new houses. This project became larger still when the state government threw in £15,000 given to it out of federal relief money. All these funds were stretched by Shapcott so that some men were able to be kept in work for a year. McNess, like his fellow septuagenarian Harry Boan, was also donating money to the Lord Mayor's Fund. He and his wife Annie lived frugally, honouring that great Scottish virtue, thrift. Simply through his housing trust, his ultimate donations amounted to £90,000, an unprecedented act of benevolence by any standards in that era. Before the Depression was over, Lady McNess died, and Sir Charles donated £11,500 to construct the Lady McNess Memorial Drive in the Darling Ranges—another project providing work for the unemployed.

At the start of his second stint in government in November 1930, New South Wales premier Jack Lang passed legislation in favour of those hit by the Depression. To the poor, Lang seemed to be the only person standing up for them, and they were willing to celebrate him for that fact. 'We are great Lang people here,' said Phyllis Ackland. 'Over our fireplace for years we had written up J.T.L.—Justice, Truth and Liberty. We called him Justice, Truth and Liberty Lang.' He had framed an Anti-Eviction Bill restraining landlords from auctioning tenants' possessions to recover rent. He planned to legislate to postpone the date for the repayment of the principal of mortgages and other loans, and to ensure that guarantors of loans were no longer held responsible for payment of defaulted loans. He put in place a state lottery to assist hospitals, and an increased unemployment relief tax. 'Should the men who had done the fighting,' he asked in his combative manner, 'now go without the necessities of life in order that the international money ring should have its pound of flesh?'

The Federal Labor Conference of May–June 1931 occurred in a land where unemployment was well on its way to the official 29 per cent it would achieve in the following year, higher than that of the United States, Britain and Canada. The impact on diminishing wages for workers and the income of small farmers and shop owners was massive. And now Jack Lang, returned to the premiership of New South Wales, wanted to destroy Scullin and Theodore, who had both succumbed to Niemeyer. The conference opened

in Canberra on 26 May, and Scullin's chief opponents were the inflationists like Lang, who wanted more money printed, and who favoured defaulting on loans. Theodore, Scullin and Tasmanian member of parliament Joseph Lyons spoke dutifully about the economies they had made in their spending, but their sense of social justice did not allow them to cut pensions and the program of child endowment. Yet by now, Scullin had had it reinforced by the Bank of England and the Commonwealth Bank that he really must cut his social justice program.

The conference knew that Lang had begun defaulting on state loans, and he was expelled with the entirety of 'Lang Labor' from the federal ALP. For, as civilised leaders, Scullin and most premiers believed, they would all have to honour debts. Lang in turn expelled from the New South Wales branch New South Wales members who supported Scullin. Labor was fatally torn apart. 'That was the basis of our dispute with the Scullin government,' said Lang. 'They were prepared to carry out the dictates of Sir Otto Niemeyer. We were not.' It would be five years before the branches were reunited under John Curtin.

At a Premiers' Conference in June 1931, the same fiscal and social pieties were invoked and a Premiers' Plan forged. There seemed no way out for Scullin. What he was trying to achieve could only be done by reducing the entitlements of the poor and the affluent, of both the pensioner (whose payment was reduced by 20 per cent) and the bondholder (22 per cent). Savings interest was also cut. The Premiers' Plan slogan was 'Equality of Sacrifice'.

Lang, the vinegary real-estate agent of Granville, was not willing to buy into the Premiers' Plan. He flayed the financial institutions like an Old Testament prophet, and Niemeyer was once more his target. Niemeyer was a bailiff sent by the British to garnish Australia's finances! He was aware that America had agreed to reduce interest rates payable by Britain on her World War I debts, and extend the repayment period to sixty-two years. Why could not Britain do likewise for Australian debt, particularly given their relationship and Australia's help in saving the Empire in World War I?

Lang attacked the other premiers' commitment to the cut in expenditure, and when an economist laughed at him, he said, 'The man who suffers doesn't laugh at all; he just suffers.' Lang urged that 'immediate steps be taken by the governments State and Federal to abandon the gold standard of currency,

and to set up in its place a currency based upon the wealth of Australia, to be termed "the Goods Standard". This would allow more printing of money without undermining its value, he argued. Above all, Lang's dissent from the Premiers' Plan was his intention to refuse to meet loan-interest payments.

Again, in the streets and around bare tables, Lang's fury was applauded.

UNHAPPY VALLEYS AND EVICTIONS

Evictions were occurring all over Australia. Tenants were in trouble everywhere, and some were allowed to stay by compassionate landlords, or else landlords who did not want their property damaged by organised supporters of evictees. Many of those evicted, however, lived in shanty camps, called 'happy valleys', at La Perouse, Milperra or Clontarf. The Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM) which, amongst other things, applied itself to the question of evictions, was founded on May Day 1930, in part through the activism of the Communist Party. It expanded beyond the control of the Communists, however, for men and women did not need to fall back on doctrine to work out that they could not pay the rent. Soon there were branches of the UWM all over Sydney, for it was an idea and a structure of brotherhood to which people could turn to soothe their sense of helplessness. In the year from May 1930, the UWM staged a series of what in a later generation would be called 'sit-ins', to prevent the eviction of out-of-work tenants.

The first of the UWM's anti-eviction sit-ins occurred in Glebe in Sydney on New Year's Day 1931. A widow living with her children in a one-room cottage owed three weeks' rent. The gas and electricity supply had been cut off by the time members of the Glebe UWM met with the owner outside the cottage. Whatever pressure the local UWM put on him, the landlord agreed to allow the woman and her children to remain there rent-free. It was a satisfactory and morale-raising success for the union, which considered any threats it might employ in its cause negligible when compared to the crimes of capital and landlordism.

In February 1931, a Greek family in Surry Hills was served with an eviction notice for £5 in arrears. The UWM moved in to occupy and guard the premises, and local shopkeepers and others kept them supplied with food throughout February. The little house became an occupied fortress, though the strikers were not armed. Several attempts by bailiffs to evict the

Greek family were repulsed by persuasion, forceful or otherwise. Eventually, magistrates gave police the power to remove trespassers from private rental property, and the house *was* reposessed peaceably by bailiffs and police.

During March and April 1931, UWM members averted an eviction in Donnelly Street, Balmain, and another in Booth Street, Annandale. Two eviction notices served in Rozelle were withdrawn when the UWM turned up. A UWM occupation of a rented house in Granville persuaded the landlord to retract his eviction order. Sixty UWM members resisted an eviction in Lakemba in May 1931; two of the family of eight who were renting the Lakemba house were a father and son who had served in World War I. Indeed, in many cases former Diggers cooperated with the UWM in preventing the evictions of veterans. In the Lakemba case, too, the family was permitted to stay.

The Brancourt Avenue, Bankstown, anti-eviction occupation by the UWM attracted special force from the authorities. Bankstown was at the limits of Sydney, and by 1930 more than 60 per cent of Bankstown males were out of work and 40 per cent of its houses were empty. Evicted homeless families were living on vacant land near the Chullora Railway Workshops in shacks made of hessian bags, kerosene tins and saplings. Life here was of the most rudimentary kind, says Tom Galvin, who lived in the original Happy Valley near Botany Bay. His family lived in a shanty six metres by three, on a sand floor covered with hessian bags. Cooking could be done on a primus stove or on a fire outside. Until a pipe was put in, the inhabitants walked a kilometre and back again to fetch their water from the golf course. Galvin remembered a councillor named Wilson who owned a store in Anzac Parade from which he dispensed furniture to the inhabitants; the Chinese market gardeners sold their less perfect fruit and vegetables very cheaply; and a woman named Mrs Herbert Field laboured like a modern-day aid worker in these internal refugee camps.

But in Bankstown, the house in contest was owned by a war widow, Isabelle McDonald, and was let to Alfred Parsons, an ex-Digger and itinerant labourer, married and with two young daughters. Parsons failed to pay the rent from April until mid-May. After a policeman delivered the eviction notice to him, Parsons invited the UWM to occupy the house, for he had been attending UWM meetings which were held outdoors on Friday nights near the Bankstown Railway Station. Now Parsons and his UWM friends

sandbagged the walls, surrounded it with barbed wire, and over the front door painted the words 'Remember Eureka!'

In the delay between eviction notice and the act itself, the UWM members and the Parsons family enjoyed each other's fraternal company. In the evenings, on a nearby vacant site, the UWM would hold sing-alongs. Seventeen men slept on the floor of the house and took their turn as sentry. On the morning of the eviction there was a UWM meeting at Bankstown Railway Station which was attended by more than three hundred people. One speaker said that what was happening in Bankstown 'was only the beginning of the revolution'.

At 6.45 on the morning of 17 June 1931, the police were sent to Brancourt Avenue to carry out the eviction order. A force of more than thirty police cars and three Black Marias (police vans) surrounded the house. Possibly as many as 120 police advanced from the vehicles, throwing stones at the windows and onto the tin roof. Pistols were turned on bystanders, who were warned to keep away. The seventeen defenders were arrested one by one at gunpoint. Only one of them had a record of activism. Nine of the seventeen were returned soldiers, survivors either of Gallipoli or of the Western Front.

After several similarly violent instances of resisting evictions, the UWM came to the conclusion that turning every house into a fortress of barbed wire and sandbags would not be as effective any more as bringing out the mass UWM membership in protest against the evictions. It was as a result of a UWM march, or certainly after it, that Premier Jack Lang froze rents; still an active estate agent himself, he hoped that this measure would cause the UWM's anti-eviction demonstrations to diminish in number.

NAMING AN AUSTRALIAN

Amidst the misery of the Great Depression in Australia, Labor Prime Minister James Scullin had one triumph. It occurred at the Imperial Conference London in 1930. The question had arisen of who was to replace Lord Stonehaven as Governor-General. Stonehaven—Johnny Baird—was an Etonian conservative, former British Minister for Transport and the first Governor-General to reside in Canberra instead of Melbourne. Scullin considered two men suitable to replace him, both from Melbourne and both of them, remarkably, given the attitudes of such journals as the *Bulletin*, Jewish. One was General Sir John Monash, who was in poor health

by then, and the other was Sir Isaac Isaacs, the energetic and outspoken Federationist, a man now in his mid-seventies who had been a justice of the High Court since 1906. The issue had arisen earlier than Scullin's arrival in Britain; indeed, before he left Australia. Towards the end of the fraught March of 1930, Scullin had advised King George V to appoint Isaacs. George objected to a sole Australian nominee being elevated to the post, and declared that the Australian government had no right to force a particular individual upon him. The British Labour government agreed. The appointment was stood over until Scullin reached London for the Imperial Conference.

Towards the end of the Imperial Conference the King made it clear that he would not accept the Australian government's recommendation for Governor-General, and that he was used to being given the courtesy of a choice between a number of names. For a man renowned for tact, Scullin now showed an unaccustomed stubbornness. He told MacDonald that 'he would be unable to return to Australia if the appointment of Sir Isaac Isaacs were refused'. He told the Palace that he was willing to hold a referendum on the matter and fight an election on the question of whether an Australian, because of his birth, was to be barred from the office of Governor-General.

At a meeting at the Palace, the King told Scullin, according to Scullin's own version of events, 'It is now thirty years since I opened the Commonwealth Parliament in Australia. Since then we have sent many Governors, Commonwealth and State, and I hope they have not all been failures.' Scullin replied that none of them had been failures (though in fact some had been) but that his desire was now to nominate an Australian. The King assured Scullin he did not want a referendum or public controversy. He said he had the highest regard personally for Sir Isaac Isaacs. The King's final declaration, according to Scullin, was, 'I've been for twenty years a monarch and I hope I have always been a constitutional one, and being a constitutional monarch I must, Mr Scullin, accept your advice which, I take it, you will tender me formally by letter.'

So, with George V's grudging consent and approval, Isaacs was installed as the first Australian to hold the governor-generalship. The *Labor Call* in Australia saw this as Scullin's triumph, in so far as he was able to 'show the world Australians are equal, if not superior to, any imported poo-bahs'. Lord Stamfordham minuted the King: 'It seems to me that this morning's

incident was one of the most important political and constitutional issues upon which Your Majesty has had to decide during Your twenty years of reign.'

THE END FOR SCULLIN

During Scullin's absence in England, Australian politics went into crisis. Not only was Jack Lang making defaulting noises in New South Wales, but at the same time the amiable, middle-of-the-road Tasmanian schoolteacher Joe Lyons was already considering leaving Labor and joining the opposition. Scullin and Lyons had been young radicals together, strong orators and socialists. For now Lyons was suspended, he would later say, like Muhammad's coffin, partway between heaven and earth, and lacking a true political home anywhere. He had assumed the duty of acting treasurer, replacing Theodore when Theodore had to face charges of fraud. Looking at the documents put before him, Lyons believed Australia would have to make more significant economies still, but he knew Labor would not let him. He defected, too, because of Scullin's restoration of Theodore to the Cabinet while the outcome of the investigation into his shareholding was still not issued. Labor would later depict Lyons as a rat, but it was not without some agony of soul that he would leave the Labor Party and join the opposition Nationals in January 1931, a fortnight after Scullin's return from Britain. He would soon become Opposition leader.

Theodore was acquitted of the criminal charges in August 1931, but Scullin had reappointed him treasurer the former January, outraging Acting Treasurer Lyons and giving the pro-Lang rebel group of seven led by teetotaller Lang's friend from New South Wales, Jack Beasley, yet more reason to be turbulent, since they considered Theodore one of Lang's chief enemies.

It was as Scullin's destruction was planned that Jack Lang was elected back into power in New South Wales at the end of 1930. Having fallen from office in 1927, he now won his way back by pillorying Niemeyer and those who had acceded to his diagnosis and cure.

In February–March 1931, Lang's plan on loans became the cause of a split between the New South Wales and federal executives. Federal Caucus expelled the Lang Labor faction, which included five sitting members of the House of Representatives. The Lang group were needed to keep Scullin in power, and for the moment they stuck with him, an internal opposition.

Theodore himself was expelled from the New South Wales branch of the ALP, but remained a member of the federal party. Now the federal government had to find the money to pay for Lang's defaults.

In Labor's rout in the federal elections of December 1931, which was precipitated by Beasley's pro-Lang group crossing the floor to vote with the United Australia Party, now led by Lyons, Theodore received only 20 per cent of the vote in his own Sydney electorate. He walked away from Parliament condemning Lang, the banks, and the reaction of Labor voters to it all. He went into business with huge success, but in a kinder era he might have made a prime minister, a Labor version of Robert Menzies—though without Menzies' flamboyance.

SACK JACK

When Lang did not meet the interest payment on his state's debt, the Commonwealth, in late April and early May 1932, took legal steps to garner New South Wales taxes and to access part of its transport revenues. By then New South Wales was in default to the Commonwealth for over £2 million.

Lang recruited unemployed members of the Timber Workers' Union to guard the state Treasury, and had begun recruiting potential special constables. To his enemies this meant that he was about to make 'a ruthless militaristic attempt at Sovietism'. While conservative commentators reminded the New South Wales police that their first loyalty was to the King and not to the state government, throughout April, large squads of workers drilled in the early morning at suburban parks and ovals, and on 29 April fifteen hundred of them marched, supposedly in support of Lang, through the streets of Sydney. Lang's rhetoric was that the police should defend New South Wales from 'Federal bushrangers'. In reaction to the formation of the secret conservative armies, a Workers' Defence Corps (WDC) was founded, and an Australian Labor Army, made up of members of various factions, including the Labor and Communist parties. Lang's army was larger than the secret conservative armies that had been drilling for some years, and indeed his was the only serious attempt in Australia to rally a leftist corps to face off with the conservative ranks. The Federal Intelligence Branch believed that the WDC was in communication with the Red Army Council in Moscow and had close relationships with the Sinn Féin Irish republican organisation.

But in fact the WDC did very little except fight evictions and take part in May Day rallies, and the Australian Labor Army was equally loud in its promises but frail in its performance. The conservative Old Guard's structure was a far more serious-minded thing, and its members were better drilled, by former World War I officers.

The Old Guard was rather less populist and less involved in gestures than the breakaway New Guard, led by the evangelistic Eric Campbell, a country lawyer who had left them to form the New Guard. The Old Guard's party of choice was the United Australia Party (UAP), which had been formed largely out of the old National Party and some Labor men, including the new prime minister, the Tasmanian schoolteacher and Catholic, Joe Lyons, who had left Scullin and gone to the conservative side. But some of the Old and particularly of the New Guard believed that parliamentary democracy had gone to seed and Australia needed a new order such as Mussolini had brought to Italy.

Philip Goldfinch, Chairman of Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR), ran the Sydney headquarters office of the Old Guard out of the CSR offices in O'Connell Street, and one of the company's warehouses in Pyrmont was used to stockpile arms and ammunition. Brigadier General George Macarthur-Onslow was a leader, as was James Heane, 'Cast-Iron Jimmy', Gallipoli veteran and leader of the Second Brigade in France, and who lived at an orchard he owned in West Pennant Hills.

The Old Guard in the bush was made up not only of pastoralists but also, in the country towns, by doctors, solicitors, accountants, bank managers, and stock and station agents. Jackaroos practised with Mauser pistols supplied by the management on many Riverina stations. The station hands were easily led by appeals to their patriotism, and by their fairly automatic allegiance to the station on which they worked.

In the country towns, the Old Guard made it uncomfortable for Labor-leaning people. In a rare display of its overreaching, two progressive-minded schoolteachers in Cowra—Charles Hanks and Hedley Gross—were targeted by the Old Guard-influenced Parents and Citizens' Association, and were transferred to other schools. There was a confrontation when former Communist Jock Garden, considered the *éminence grise* of Jack Lang, came to speak in Cowra at River Park. The Old Guard wanted to throw him in the Lachlan, but two hundred Labor Army men, made up of local Labor Party

branches in Cowra and Wyangala, turned up to protect him. Throughout the west of the state, vigilance committees, also known as Citizens' Committees or Citizens' Defence Committees, threatened working-class militants.

The Governor of New South Wales, Sir Philip Game, an establishment British officer with a passion for the Royal Air Force and himself a pilot, was under great pressure from that part of society represented by the Old and even the New Guard to remove Lang, whose refusal to pay interest on debts was seen as criminal. The Federal government was also one of Lang's enemies, since they had had to pay the loans he defaulted on.

Game was no Niemeyer; he was a flexible and likeable man who, like Scullin, would have preferred to hold his post in more amiable times. He received constant advice from newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and from nearly every conservative he met, to dismiss Lang. However, he was a British liberal and had sympathy for Lang's compassion. Under pressure, he yet decided to give Lang more time. He was in many ways less frightened of Lang's rebellion than he was of the way the near-fascist New Guard under the volatile Eric Campbell were becoming more dangerously militant, and by reports that the New Guard were planning measures—including Lang's kidnapping—which were in themselves criminal.

On 13 February 1932, seven hundred New Guardsmen drilled at Sydney's Belmore. At a Sydney Town Hall New Guard Monster Rally on 18 February, all the thousands present raised their right arm in a fascist salute, while taking a solemn oath of allegiance to the New Guard and its determination to crush Communism. Game refused to accept a petition to Jack Lang signed by thousands of New Guardsmen, though the rejection, it was feared by some, might have caused Campbell to plan and execute a *putsch*, an attempt at a takeover of New South Wales. At Chatswood in Sydney, Campbell told his guardsmen, 'It is anticipated your services will be required before the end of the month [May 1932].' Plans were finalised to arrest the state Cabinet and imprison them in Berrima Gaol, or else in disused hulks moored off Ku-ring-gai Chase. An alternate plan, designed for 19 March, the Harbour Bridge opening day, was to kidnap Lang, strip him naked and escort him to the Bridge opening ceremony dressed as a beggar. The plan was all blather.

Nonetheless, on 19 March, a north shore antiques dealer, Dublin-born Captain Francis de Groot, attended on horseback the opening of the Harbour Bridge, spurred his horse through the crowd, and cut the ribbon (which

was to have been cut by Lang) with his sword. Ken Hall of Cinesound News had heard that some such stunt was to occur and had cameras in place to catch the action. When de Groot's trial was held at Central Police Court on 1 April 1932, there was a violent encounter between the police and members of the New Guard's mobile unit. Campbell was sure that the New Guard's numerical superiority to the police would enable them to shoulder the police away. But on the morning of the trial, Police Commissioner Mackay urged his policemen to 'go out and belt their bloody heads off'. In fact that was what happened. On 21 April, there was further New Guard drilling at Killara, and on 6 May, Jock Garden was bashed at his home in Maroubra by eight members of the Fascist Legion, an elite group within the New Guard who wore Ku Klux Klan-like hoods and gowns. A more respectable member of Campbell's group, Philip Goldfinch, who blamed Campbell for the unnecessary violence, declared to businessman and notable figures of the Old Guard, the next day, 'No more **** New Guard for me.'

The new prime minister, Joe Lyons, was aware of how close to civil catastrophe New South Wales was. On 5 May 1932, naval personnel were armed and placed outside various federal establishments such as the GPO, the 2BL studios and the Commonwealth Bank in Martin Place. Were they guarding uprisings by the New Guard or by Lang's forces made up of his police force and supporters? It seemed that Lang loomed in Lyons' mind as the greater peril. Wing Commander W.D. Bostock at Richmond air base told his men that the prime minister had concerns 'about how the New South Wales Police Force might act in the event of an eyeball to eyeball confrontation between Commonwealth and State'. Improbably, tanks began to roll through the backstreets of Randwick. Earlier, in April, a direct military telephone link had been installed between Victoria Barracks, Garden Island and Customs House in Circular Quay to aid with troop deployments to sites of unrest. Now troops of the 7th Light Horse stationed in Bungendore and Canberra were detailed to exercise near Parliament House, Canberra, and, by implication, defend it. There were plans too that members of the Light Horse and of the Old Guard were to proceed to Sydney to take the money due to the federal government that Lang was retaining.

Game warned Lang by letter on 13 May 1932 that Lang would have to resign if he could not carry out essential services without taking illegal measures, such as refusing to pay debts. But Lang gave no undertaking to

change his policy, and that evening Game met with him, then dismissed him, and called on the leader of the Opposition, Bertram Stevens, to form government. 'You probably hardly realise what relief it has given to the whole of Australia,' wrote a supporter, 'and, if the election goes all right you will have definitely saved the country of Australia.'

Had Game received in time the advice drafted for him in London, he would have seen that the Secretary of State for the Dominions expected him to let the matter of Lang's alleged crimes be tested in the courts by the federal government. He might have waited. He was certainly conscious of working-class, and particularly Irish-Catholic, support for Lang and did not want to alienate an entire segment of the population. He later referred to 'my assassin's stroke' and was uncomfortable with the pats on the back that resulted from what he had done when he sacked Lang.

The state election that followed saw a swing to the United Australia and United Country parties. But around the kitchen tables of New South Wales, there was an assumption that Game acted on behalf of the banks, the bondholders and their economic and political tyranny, and it is obvious that he had other options. J.T. Tully, Lang's recent Minister for Lands, told an audience in Queanbeyan that the dismissal was unconstitutional and that the party had not been defeated on the floor of the House on any question. He said that Game's action was a challenge against democratic government.

In January 1935, Game left Sydney, probably with relief, and in the same year took over the commissionership of the London Metropolitan Police.

With Lang sacked, some members of Campbell's New Guard saw part of its duty as being to spy on possibly disloyal members of the New Guard organisation itself. This helped bring about many aggrieved resignations. It also became increasingly obvious that only a very small, radical proportion of the New Guardsmen would actually follow Campbell if he took on the police. Many of the membership wanted reunion with the Old Guard.

By May 1932, the New Guard was largely a spent force. Campbell's chief hope remained that when a clash came between state and federal forces he might be able to use the confusion to his advantage. It would prove inadequate. Campbell's army would diminish. He would write a pro-fascist tract, survive an attempt to take away his licence to practise law, and resume work as a solicitor in Young, surviving accusations of fraud and going on to practise law until 1971.

OUR ICE

By 1933, far across the Southern Ocean, lay the 'Australian claim', consisting of two vast wedges of Antarctica, the sole continent indifferent to the Depression. The two great Australian claim areas were separated from each other by the thin French slice of the Antarctic pie named Adelie Land. The Australian sectors added up to just under six million square kilometres of the Antarctic continent. It was (and remains) the biggest claim to that continent of any nation in the world.

The scale of the claim was largely the work of a Yorkshire-born geologist named Douglas Mawson, whose parents emigrated and settled at Rooty Hill outside Sydney when he was still an infant. As a student at Sydney University he would come under the influence of another remarkable geologist who would become associated with Antarctica, Welsh-born Edgeworth David.

David's work on the geological surveys of New South Wales coalfields had earned him in 1890 the Chair of Geology and Palaeontology at the University of Sydney. He was a world expert, particularly on the impact of ancient ice ages upon geology, and he visited the alpine regions of New South Wales for research purposes and learned to ski for the pure joy of it.

Ernest Shackleton, the Irish explorer, invited David to go to Antarctica with his expedition for the summer of 1907–08 in Shackleton's famous ship, *Nimrod*. David took with him two former students, Douglas Mawson (now a lecturer at the University of Adelaide) and Leo Cotton. The excitement of the task overcame them all and they decided they would stay in Antarctica longer than the summer if they could.

In McMurdo Sound, on Ross Island, cemented to the mainland by ice, stands the magnificent volcano Mount Erebus, a serious mountain of 3800 metres. In March 1908, David, Mawson and a few others first climbed it, a journey that looks easy in Antarctica's strangely foreshortening atmosphere but which involved serious mountaineering of some days. Beneath the volcano, David turned fifty, and winter struck and the Australian contingent settled down with the rest of the expedition in the prefabricated house Shackleton had built on volcanic earth and ice on Ross Island. Over the winter, Shackleton decided that come the spring, David would be sent out with Mawson and a young Scots physician named Forbes Mackay to locate the Magnetic—as distinct from the Geographic—South Pole. The geographic pole was the ultimate prize but was in fact arguably of less significance than the magnetic pole,

the place where the earth's electro-magnetic fields all coalesced, somewhere across McMurdo Sound.

When day returned and the time came, the party had to man-haul sledges from the sea level of the sound up crevassed ice to a height of over 2000 metres. They located the magnetic pole by using the latest electro-magnetic equipment, but on their way back towards McMurdo Sound and the ship *Nimrod*, David, exhausted and sick from man-hauling, had to hand over command to the twenty-six-year-old Mawson. The party was malnourished too, surviving on insufficient rations of hardtack biscuits and the compacted meat and lard called pemmican. By the time the magnetic pole party were all back to base, they had dragged their sledges over 2000 kilometres.

Though Shackleton's team failed to reach the South Geographic Pole, David returned to Sydney in March 1909 a hero. In World War I, despite his age, he would enlist and achieve the rank of major in the mining battalion. His work on the Western Front involved advising on groundwater and the siting and design of trenches and tunnels. He was seriously injured when he fell 24 metres down a well near Vimy Ridge in northern France. He never fully recovered from the injuries he sustained there, though he lived until 1934. Mawson took up the Antarctic momentum David had created.

In 1909, the young academic Mawson returned to Adelaide and his university work. After declining an invitation from Robert Falcon Scott to join his fatal 1910 South Pole expedition, Mawson launched an appeal for his own Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE). He stated he wanted to attend to some serious science along the coastline beyond Adare.

The Mawson expedition sailed in December 1911, and in the spirit of its scientific purpose it established three bases, one of them on Macquarie Island. This base was, amongst other things, to be a radio relay station—Mawson wanted to broadcast from mainland Antarctica. The main base, on that enormous coast of what would become Australian Antarctica, was at a place Mawson named Commonwealth Bay. The other party was put on the Shackleton Ice Shelf to the east. Mawson's expeditionary ship, the *Aurora*, was captained by the eccentric but experienced John King Davis, who approached Commonwealth Bay through ferocious seas and one of the densest ice packs he had ever seen, having made a number of Antarctic journeys. In all Mawson's parties there were meteorologists, geologists,

cartographers, students of the aurora and geomagnetism, and biologists, and Captain Davis himself conducted much marine-science exploration from *Aurora's* decks. This expedition was certainly a matter of serious inquiry rather than an Antarctic dog-and-pony act.

After the winter at Commonwealth Bay, Mawson took off to the west with a young British officer, Belgrave Ninnis of the Royal Fusiliers, and the Swiss Doctor of Law, mountaineer and dog handler Xavier Mertz. Only Ninnis had skis. Five hundred kilometres to the south-east of the hut at Commonwealth Bay, Ninnis with his entire sledge and dog team plunged through the ice lid of a crevasse and could not be seen or heard, let alone retrieved. With the provisions they had left, Mawson and Mertz began their return but had to shoot their dogs and use them for food. Professor J.B. Cleland would later suggest, the dogs' livers, however, were so overloaded with vitamin A that they were potentially not life-saving but toxic. Mertz died after twenty-five days.

Mawson now discarded all his geological specimens and records—for him, a gesture that betrayed the severest danger of imminent death. After cutting his sledge in two he dragged it the last 160 kilometres, over rough and dangerous ice, at an average of about five and a half kilometres a day. As he neared Commonwealth Bay he saw the *Aurora* departing through the ice, but a small party had stayed on to search for him, and they nursed him through the non-stop winds and blizzards of a further winter and, as Mawson recuperated, through an early summer, until the ice melted sufficiently for Captain Davis to return. Scientific work continued through that winter, and Mawson was able to broadcast an account of the previous summer's scientific work and begin writing *The Home of the Blizzard*, an Antarctic classic, published in 1915. The various parties of Mawson's expedition had done extraordinary work, having explored some 6500 kilometres in Adelie Land, George V Land and Queen Mary Land. They defined the geology of the country traversed and mapped the coast. They identified the contour of the Antarctic Continental Shelf. They were able to send weather information from Macquarie Island and Commonwealth Bay by radio.

For various reasons, including his debilitating experience in Antarctica, Mawson did not serve in World War I. He had been knighted in 1914, and during the war worked for the British Ministry of Munitions in London. Post-war, he continued his work on pre-Cambrian rocks in the

Flinders Ranges, travelling by horseback, truck or camel, taking fortunate students out there, who found him amiable company. At the 1926 Imperial Conference it was decided that Mawson be invited to lead a British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) over the summers of 1929–30 and 1930–31. The expedition intended to make researches at a number of sub-Antarctic islands and along 2500 kilometres of coastline between 43 and 179 degrees east longitude. For that purpose and for mapping, the expedition also made use of a light aircraft.

The mapping of the coast showed that it was continuous from the Ross Sea at Cape Adare around to Enderby Land and beyond. This work gave accurate geographic data for the creation of the full Australian Antarctic Territory, a region from just west of Cape Adare, the massive prong of land at the entrance to the Ross Sea, around to a point in line with the Horn of Africa. This huge sweep of desolation was legislated in Canberra by the *Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act 1933*, which came into force in 1936, and would later be given a dormant legitimacy by the International Antarctic Treaty in 1959.

FOR FEAR OF JAPAN

As the Depression approached the end of its second year, a resurgent Japan invaded Manchuria, a gesture of expansion that, given the times, people wanted to ignore. But there was, under all the want and sense of emergency, an awareness of Japanese peril.

Soon after World War I the British had appointed Lord Jellicoe to write a report on Australia's naval defence. When presented, it warned clearly that Australia could not depend on a British fleet for protection from a threat in the Pacific if there was war in Europe at the same time. Jellicoe's recommendation was that a Far Eastern fleet be jointly financed by Britain, Australia and New Zealand, and that it be permanently based at Singapore. Work began on the fortress and naval base at Singapore in 1923, but the pace was not hectic, even though in the Australian mind, Singapore became the golden guarantee of security.

Despite a high level of fear of Japan in the community, defence spending was not popular with Australian voters. Military works could well have been a fruitful source of labour for the unemployed, but that option was not considered. In any case, given Australia's massive coast, it could be argued

that a colossal expenditure would be needed to defend it, and so governments might as well underspend as otherwise.

Britain itself, also underspending on its forces, and also becoming wary of the Japanese after their invasion of China, felt that a heavy investment of its ships in the Pacific would stretch its navy, and began to look to the American Pacific fleet as its potential policeman in that ocean. The Americans would have been offended to be looked upon in that light, as Britain's mere henchmen, but the fact was that British sea power was on the wane. Britain could not afford to tell the Australians as much; and without exposing themselves to panic, neither could the Australians admit it. It would later become Australian mythology that Singapore was a British con job, but if so Australia fell for it willingly. Australians were anxious to see Singapore as the pledge that allowed them to progress as a white dominion. There was in fact in many Australian minds at the time an unfounded belief that the mind of the British government was focused upon their future. Of course, it had more important issues—one of them being to hold on to India if the Japanese should attack, or defending France and England if Germany did.

In his 1935 book, *Australia and War Today*, rambunctious seventy-three-year-old Billy Hughes warned the Australian people that they had been 'living for years in a world of dreams . . . The dove of peace has fled to regions unknown . . . Australia in an armed world is almost defenceless.' Australia, he argued, must provide for its own defence, and the best way to defend Australia, he said, was from the air. Because of its ability to consume distance, the aeroplane was to Australia a 'gift from the Gods'. Australia must have an aircraft industry, he shouted in vain.



Despite the adventurousness of Australian civil flying in the 1920s and 1930s, the RAAF continued to fly obsolescent planes during their extraordinary survey and rescue works around Australia. It was a force which, because of the immensity of the country, deserved better aircraft than the Wapitis and De Havilland Dragon Rapides often assigned it. The Wapitis were general-service biplanes, old-fashioned two-seaters. The Dragon Rapide was larger, enclosed, two-propeller, and generally used as an airliner. They would seem of another age, however, from the aircraft which, within a few years, would be required for survival in the air over Europe and Asia.

At the beginning of war in 1939, the permanent air force consisted of 246 aircraft, of which only 164 were operational. Australia would early in the war have on order Beaufighters, which Robert Menzies, having succeeded Joe Lyons, would divert to British defence, leaving Australia looking forward to the arrival in 1941 of an ill-omened plane named the Brewster Bermuda.

Civil aviation was in a much better situation. Already, in 1934, Qantas Empire Airways, using entirely appropriate Douglas aircraft, had begun flying the Brisbane-to-Singapore sector of the Australia-to-England air route. It initiated a weekly service in February 1935, and Lyons, characteristically for a politician of the day, saw this as a boon for Empire, not just for Australia: 'We can be proud that the Commonwealth, in assuming responsibility for the operation of the section of the Singapore–Australia section of the chain of Empire Air Services, is the first of the British Dominions to operate an international air transport service.' A Labor politician would not have put it any differently.

But no such impetus was reflected in funding for the RAAF.

ON THE AIR

When the first radio stations were licensed by the federal government in 1923, the scheme was that the broadcaster would make and sell their own receivers to the public. The earliest stations were commercial, Sydney's 2FC being the first, and 2SR (later 2BL) the second. The following year two stations were opened in Melbourne. The government's idea of people buying a 'sealed set' devoted to one station was a failure, only fourteen hundred such sets being purchased.

A new plan was devised, a system by which there were A-class stations that were supported by radio licence fees, and B-class, which would support themselves by advertising. By the end of the decade, stations had proliferated across Australia, and the populace had a huge taste for broadcasting.

The new prime minister, Joe Lyons, due to a number of influences (including the success of the BBC, founded ten years earlier), inaugurated the government-funded ABC on 1 July 1932. Coverage included Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Newcastle, Corowa, Rockhampton and Crystal Brook, a town north of Adelaide where an A-class station had been operating.

Opening-day programs included the first Children's Session with Bobby Bluegum (Frank Hatherley), a broadcast from the Randwick races, British wireless news received by cable from London, weather forecasts, stock-exchange reports and shipping news. There was also an inaugural ABC Women's Association session and a talk on goldfish and their care, as well as morning devotions and music.

Outside broadcasts were soon attempted but needed to confront tough conditions. The first outside broadcast in Perth was a concert for three hundred violins. Only one microphone was available and it was in use in the studio: the announcer told listeners that they would be crossing to the concert in the Exhibition Hall soon; he then took the studio microphone by way of tram to the hall, and so the broadcast began.

ABC News was taken from newspapers rather than gathered independently, although the first ABC journalist was appointed in 1934. In 1936, a news editor, Frank Dixon, was appointed and began to argue for an independent ABC news service. By the 1930s, women were on the air as announcers and were working in radio production. Such women as Queenie Ashton, Ethel Lang and Grace Gibson were getting renown as producers, directors, writers and performers.

It would not be until World War II that the independent news service was achieved. Although on the eve of World War II a Canberra correspondent was appointed, this was at the request of the government, who felt that the ABC was relying on inaccurate reporting by newspapers. Ray Denning, the appointee, was told to shadow the prime minister wherever he went.

In 1935, pre-recorded programs were laid down on gramophone records and copies sent from the major states to the remoter ones, particularly Tasmania. Sport was always a major part of ABC radio programming, and cricket Test matches in Britain were described, ball by ball, by reconstructing the information on cables telephoned through to the ABC studio after every over. The tapping of a pencil on the mike made a very convincing sound mimicry of bat on ball. Race commentaries were delivered via public telephone from the track to a studio presenter.

Programs such as the *Hospital Half Hour*, *Harry Pringle* and *Wilfred Thomas* were staples for the children and adults who heard them. Serials such as *Singapore Spy* were absorbed whole, without questioning or any critical distancing between the radio wave and utter belief. The *Children's*

Hour ran from 1935 and again possessed magical narrative power; school broadcasts were also immensely popular, particularly with teachers, whose curriculum they enriched.

During the Depression, not all families could afford to own a radio or pay the licence fee. The radio set itself was, after all, crafted and contained in beautifully wrought wooden cabinets, standing on legs, a glory of household furniture as well as a new voice, a companion, a modulator of culture and opinion. In 1934, Glebe Council in Sydney commissioned the construction of a 'wireless house', a public listening place in a park. It allowed large crowds to gather and listen to daily programs, and operated until the early 1950s. Department store chain Grace Brothers donated the radio to the wireless house.

An overseas short-wave program began in World War II, and *Australia Calling*, a tiny, two-kilowatt service that was called the 'tin whistle of the Pacific', became the forerunner to Radio Australia.

FASCIO

For Italian Australians, the uncertainty and torment of the Depression made Prime Minister Benito Mussolini's Italy look suddenly enviable. As well, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Mussolini's Fascist government of Italy had funded and promoted within Australia a network of business organisations and political-social clubs named *Fascio* and *dopolavoro* (after-work) societies, and Italian schools for first-generation Italian-Australian children. It has to be remembered that a number of Australian conservatives had, before the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, openly stated their admiration of Mussolini, and groups of Italian veterans of the Great War marched under Fascist banners in Anzac Day marches in towns such as Innisfail and Cairns.

The Australian Security Services would break up this infrastructure after Italy's declaration of war on Britain in 1940, but it is hard to assess how far the Italian Australians who used Italian social clubs in the 1930s were actually devoted to Mussolini and Fascism. Daria Burla, a Queensland wartime detainee protesting against his internment in February 1941, wrote: 'If I had made an application to belong to some Fascio it was for business reasons, because the Consul had promised to give some [business] consideration to the Italian community.' There was a measure of truth in such an argument.

For many in business in the cities and larger towns, to be a member of the local Fascio and wear its badge was to have preference in procuring import licences on Italian goods.

There were some genuine Fascisti or *camicie nere* (Blackshirts) in Australia, but with most Italian immigrants, there was confusion about what Fascism actually meant. Carlo Trucano, a foundation member of the Fascio in Cairns, believed that Fascism was anti-Communism. He had seen Communist riots in Turin at the end of World War I and did not like the idea that government could be overturned in that manner. To him, Mussolini and the Fascist Party had saved Italy from revolution and destruction. Dr Giovanni Battaglia, the founder of the Brisbane Fascio, saw Fascism in Australia as a benevolent movement, working in conjunction with the Italian consul to bring relief to poorer Italians. Others may even have joined Fascist groups because they saw the new Italy as giving credibility to themselves, their religion and their language, in the face of anti-Italian hostility. Fascist rhetoric, however, urged the Italians to resist assimilation, and this worsened the hostility directed at them by the Australian community.

The anti-Fascists included an anarchist named Francesco Carmagnola, born in Italy in 1901, a former Melbourne resident who had founded in Spring Street in 1927 the Matteotti Club to honour a young socialist member of the Italian Assembly who had been assassinated by Fascists. The club was a centre for anti-Fascist Italians, and pro-Fascists sometimes threw bricks through its windows. Italian immigrants would come in from the bush to the Matteotti, play cards, eat, and attend a Saturday-evening dance where one accordion supplied the music. The club was so popular it soon had to move to new premises near the Trades Hall where there was room for a thousand people and a courtyard for the playing of bocce. Italians of all political stripes—as long as they were anti-Mussolini—used the Matteotti Club.

In Melbourne, however, the Italian scene was intense. Italian anarchists started to visit clubs, restaurants and boarding houses, armed with knives and knuckle dusters and sometimes pistols, looking for fights with pro-Fascists. The anarchists would rip the Fascist badges from the coats of Italian supporters of Mussolini. Three thousand copies of the Melbourne Matteotti Club's newspaper, *La Riscossa*, came out every fortnight to meet the demand from anti-Fascist Italians. The newspaper advertised dance nights and rallies to raise money for political prisoners held in Mussolini's prisons and for

their families. On May Day 1931, Carmagnola addressed seven thousand workers by the banks of the Yarra and asked them to cry out with him, 'Death to Mussolini!' They did.

After the Depression wiped out the Matteotti Club, Carmagnola was himself involved in the cane cutters' strikes in Queensland which involved hundreds of Italian cane cutters. But after all his activism, Carmagnola found it difficult to get work. At the end of 1935 he went to Sydney where he found most anarchists either growing vegetables on the outskirts of the city or banished to various parts of the bush.

DEUTSCHTUM AND NAZISM

In 1926, Australian–German diplomatic relationships were opened again, and the first post-war consul-general, Hans Busing, was appointed. He found hostile opinions everywhere about German society, and had the job of reviving in the German–Australian community some pride in their nation of origin. In 1932, Dr Rudolf Asmis was appointed to Sydney, and during his consulate Hitler and his Nazi Party came to power. Asmis transformed himself from a spokesman for the democratic Weimar Republic to become a promoter of—or at least an apologist for—the 'new Germany' under Hitler. The German Australians, *Auslandsdeutschen*, had to be reminded of their racial purity and the successes of Hitler's Germany and were to be co-opted into the Nazi policy of *Volkstumpolitik*, a form of cultural politics. In this effort the Sydney-based Nazi newspaper, *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*), first published in 1934, was to be a potent instrument. Asmis, who remained German consul-general until 1939, and co-founded *Die Brücke*, was concerned by the 'entombment' of German–Australian *Deutschtum*, or Germanness, by Australianness. Though not necessarily a zealous Nazi himself, Asmis wanted to arouse a German sensibility even in the Germans of the remoter bush. He knew, however, that he must be careful in making direct appeals to Germanness of the kind that would render the authorities uneasy.

Nazi *Stützpunkten* (small party branches) were founded in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane between 1932 and 1934, some of them before Hitler even came to power. It was hard for the Australian Nazis to find committed members, and by 1937 the Australian party had recruited only 160 members. Amongst the fifty to a hundred thousand Australian

citizens of German birth or descent, there was apparently little enthusiasm for doctrinaire Nazism.

Asmis himself established the *Deutschtum* cultural organisations in Australia and New Zealand as umbrella organisations encompassing various German organisations and clubs. In *Die Brücke*, German Australians were urged to live in a suitably German home with German art on their walls, German books on their shelves, and German food on their plates. *Die Brücke* pushed German recipes in its editions—recipes for *Pfeffernüsse mit Guss* (iced honeyball cookies) and *Christbaum-feingebäck* (Christmas-tree biscuits). Following a movement initiated by Dr Goebbels in Germany in 1933, Australian women were encouraged to make *Eintopfessen*, or ‘one-pot meals’, for the poor. The *Eintopfessen* charity held a get-together in 1936 at the German Concordia Club in Sydney—an event which attracted, *Die Brücke* declared, probably the greatest number of Germans to have met in a hall in Australia. The audience, said *Die Brücke*, ‘delivered the best proof not only of this feeling of belonging together, not only in the German colony of Sydney, but also of the ties of the inner heart with the old homeland’. The donations offered by those who ate the one-pot meals would be used for suffering German *Volksgenossen*—needy folk—in Australia in the midst of the Depression. Three *Sieg-Heils* were raised to the Führer and the people in the Fatherland, and two German national hymns were sung.

News of Hitler’s treatment of the Jews and others later in the decade undermined Asmis in his endeavour to show Germany as a revitalised great power in which German Australians could take pride. By 1939, Nazi Party members would all be behind the wire of internment camps.

Far fewer Germans and German Australians were interned between 1939 and 1945—about eleven hundred—than Italians, five thousand of whom would be interned. Asmis himself escaped that fate, since he was on home leave when World War II broke out.

THE EAST IS TO BLAME

By mid-Depression, the idea of seceding from the whole Commonwealth mess had become an attractive one to Western Australians. They knew that Western Australia had joined the Federation mainly on the votes of ‘T’othersiders, easterners who had fled the depression of the 1890s in Victoria and New South Wales to work on the goldfields of Kalgoorlie and

Coolgardie. Now eastern Australia was again drawing Western Australia into grief. Shortly after the state election of May 1930, a meeting was called to re-establish a secessionist organisation, the Dominion League of Western Australia. The meeting was chaired by Premier Sir James Mitchell himself. The driving force became H.K. Watson, a thirty-year-old accountant who now managed the proposition skilfully and passionately. He pointed furiously at tariffs introduced by the federal government, which seemed to discriminate against Western Australian farmers and Perth merchants. The secessionists argued that Western Australia, as a primary-producing state dependent on export, was injured by Commonwealth policies designed to protect the factories of Melbourne and Sydney. The price of importing even state-government stock, locomotives for example, was rendered high by the Canberra-imposed tariffs.

The primary producers warmly supported secession, though the ALP was against it, as was the RSL, given that its membership had fought as Australians and were subject to the Federal Repatriation Board for any compensation for the damage they had suffered in that conflict.

The perceived need for secession attracted and absorbed much of the Western Australians' discontent. Canberra became a popular focus for blame. Feeling became so high that the Dominion League was able to ask the popular Western Australian premier Mitchell for a referendum on secession. Mitchell told them that he was an ardent secessionist and wore the badge of the Dominion League, but he hedged on a referendum. Cabinet was divided.

Premier Mitchell had indeed attempted to get a bill passed in August 1931 to empower a referendum, but the Legislative Council, both its Labor and conservative members, put on it conditions unacceptable to Mitchell. He tried with better success in December 1932, when the mess in the east was even more apparent. Once a referendum was decided on, two questions would appear on the ballot. First, 'Are you in favour of the state of Western Australia withdrawing from the Federal Commonwealth established under the Commonwealth of Australia Constitutional Act (Imperial)?' Second, 'Are you in favour of a convention of representatives of equal number from each of the Australian States being summoned for the purpose of proposing such alterations in the Constitution of the Commonwealth as may appear to such convention to be necessary?' This second, alternate question had been added to satisfy the Labor Party and to persuade them to pass the legislation.

On the day, 8 April 1933, almost two-thirds of the electorate voted for secession, that is, for question 1. The second proposal was rejected overwhelmingly. Only the gold-mining districts, with residual connection to the east, voted against secession. Ironically, the Labor Party, which had opposed secession, was elected at the next state ballot.

Faced with a popular voice favouring secession, the state government had to present a petition to the Imperial Parliament in Westminster to amend the *Constitution Act* and thus make Western Australia an independent dominion. The Dominion League was very confident that the Westminster petition would be kindly received and acted upon promptly after its presentation in November 1934. But it was February 1935 before a joint select committee of the British Parliament was formed to decide whether Western Australia could secede.

Since Federation, and after the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the United Kingdom wanted less and less to enact legislation regarding the affairs of dominions unless requested to do so by the dominion in question. Since 1931, indeed, no Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom could be passed affecting a dominion unless that dominion requested and consented to it.

The select committee did decide promptly, and the secessionists did not like what they decided. Even though Western Australia was not mentioned in the general preamble to the Constitution that referred to uniting 'in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown', it was mentioned in Preamble 3: 'after the passing of this Act, the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, and also, if Her Majesty is satisfied that the people of Western Australia have agreed thereto, of Western Australia, shall be united in a Federal Commonwealth'. Here, unlike the opening of the Preamble, that Commonwealth was not described as indissoluble. Western Australia had accepted the Commonwealth as a marriage of 1901, but had believed it could leave at will. They had 'agreed thereto', which was the only condition placed on them, and assumed they could later agree to the opposite. The select committee, however, decided that the word 'indissoluble' covered Section 3 of the Preamble. The bad news for Western Australia was that its entry into the Commonwealth was no different from that of the other states: Western Australia was as bound in as was, say, Victoria. Whereas the US Constitution had mentioned a voluntary union, the Australians had emphasised the term 'indissoluble union' as the

founding utterance of the Preamble. Therefore 'the [WA] petition was not receivable'. The committee did not have jurisdiction to recommend enacting the request unless it contained 'the clearly expressed wishes of the Australian people as a whole'. That is, there would need to be a federal referendum specifically to modify the indissoluble idea, and a majority of Australians and a majority in a majority of states would need to vote for them to be allowed to depart. The Western Australians knew this option was impossible.

APPEASEMENT AND WAR



ALOOF FROM THE WARS OF THE WORLD

When Mussolini invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October 1935, the world was so divided and hapless in its response that tyrants could take heart. The international reaction was a confession that the League of Nations in Geneva had become emasculated. The Italians, having acquired Eritrea in the Horn of Africa as part of the great European carve-up of the late nineteenth century, had always had an eye on Abyssinia, not yet allocated to any European power. On 2 November 1935, the League voted to prevent weapons exports to Italy and Abyssinia; to prohibit financial dealings with Italy on both an individual and an institutional level; and to ban imports from Italy and exports to it.

Britain was the chief driver of these sanctions, since the British public were offended by the sense of entitlement Mussolini demonstrated in invading the empire of Haile Selassie. Many Britons believed that there should be military retaliation, but their conviction was undermined by the fact that the French did not. In fear of Germany, the French had made a pact with Italy and professed themselves appalled by British talk of military sanctions against Mussolini, including the blockading of Italian ports. Mere trade sanctions seemed to the British government a far more desirable option than confronting Mussolini directly, and in that spirit Australia voted for them also. The Australian politicians of the 1930s, on both sides of politics, felt

that they had enough to deal with domestically and internationally and were dedicated appeasers. Joe Lyons had already been a strong advocate of the appeasement of Japanese in Manchukuo (Manchuria). He reported that he had reassured the Japanese of Australia's friendship and expressed hopes that nothing would upset the relationship between the two countries.

The Australian government, like many individual Australians, hoped that Britain under the Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin would not intervene, and were relieved to find Baldwin had no intention to. The courtly Stanley Melbourne Bruce, former Australian prime minister, was Australian high commissioner in London, and at that moment held the rotating position of president of the League of Nations Council. Lyons believed in the League, and in world and national government by consensus, but was, like other statesmen, unable to see that appeasement would destroy the League.

The weakness of the League was that, despite President Woodrow Wilson's early trumpeting of the organisation, America had never joined it, for fear that it had the power to undermine American sovereignty and neutrality and drag it into wars. It now seemed unlikely that the League had the required unity and moral strength to drag any country into armed conflict. By now, Japan had also walked out of the League, over criticism of its military activities in Manchuria—not that the League had taken any firm action. By 1933, Germany, under Hitler, had also departed. By letting the Japanese establish an empire in Manchuria, and standing by as Mussolini prepared his Ethiopian attack, the League of Nations, in its Palace of the Nations, looking out from its vast, inoffensively modernist headquarters across parkland to tranquil and neutral Lake Geneva, was reducing itself to irrelevance.

Lyons' government, in its fear of an advancing Japan, *had* by the time of the Abyssinian crisis begun a modest rearmament program; however, it was discussing not only how to appease Italy but even looking at establishing links with the other great Pacific nation, the United States, to balance any coming threat from Japan. The reason this latter radical—and to some heretical—idea had been even spoken in the little capital, Canberra, was the fear that any European war would take the attention of the British fleet, and might mean that the naval base at Singapore, commenced in 1923, could not be held. Lyons had met Roosevelt in mid-1935 and felt he could work with him. By contrast, the behaviour of British statesmen and generals in World War II would suggest that the Americans were considered by Britain,

after the official enemy Japan, as something of a sub-enemy—anti-Imperial, hungry to dominate the Pacific commercially, and particularly agitated about the need for Indian democracy and independence.

The League decided on sanctions which were to apply from mid-November 1935. The Abyssinian invasion, despite the tanks-against-spears nature of the war, was taking a little longer than Mussolini had hoped. The most effective sanctions would have been a ban on oil supplies to Italy, which had only three months' reserve to finish its campaign on. But in February 1936, the Standard Oil Company of New York totally undercut any idea of oil sanctions by making a contract with the Italian navy to supply it with oil via Germany and Brazil. Only Roosevelt's 'moral embargo' was left in place. As for coal, Germany was pleased to sell it to Mussolini.

On 5 May 1936, the Italians marched into Addis Ababa. Now that Abyssinia was lost, Lyons not only pushed Bruce to argue for the lifting of British sanctions, but also suggested informal talks between the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy to strengthen the League by attracting Germany back into the international family. 'We think it essential,' Lyons told Bruce, 'that action for reform of the League should be contemporaneous with removal of sanctions and that preliminary conversations be commenced now.'

On 18 June 1936, Lyons made a statement to the Australian press in which he said that the Italian victory had been too fast to allow sanctions to do any good. Yet to get fifty nations to agree to impose them, he argued, was nonetheless a 'great moral advance'.

Sanctions were lifted in July 1936. The world, despite its sentimental affection for the exiled Abyssinian emperor Haile Selassie, settled itself to regard Abyssinia as Italian, as were Eritrea and Libya. Lyons would be pleased to be able to acknowledge Italy's occupation of Abyssinia in late 1938. Many of his fellow Australian Catholics took a similar view to Lyons: Archbishop James Duhig in Brisbane argued that just as Australia had been 'black and barbaric' in 1788 but was now British and civilised, so Italy was only trying to achieve the same for Abyssinia.

Australian trade with Italy resumed in 1938. It was chiefly in wool—Italy was usually Australia's fourth or fifth best customer. The overall balance of trade was massively in Australia's favour, with £4.6 million worth of exports in 1934, which dropped to £1 million in 1935, but jumped back to

£5.3 million in 1937. For that reason, too, Australia did not want to be too severe on Mussolini.

JOE GOES

Joe Lyons' childhood had been influenced by Irish politics, the politics of want. Yet even as Tasmanian premier, he had consulted conservative economists and worked amiably with the Country Party and the Tasmanian Nationalists. As an orthodox fiscal manager, he was appalled by Jack Lang's behaviour. With Keith Murdoch's powerful support, Lyons became the leader of the new United Australia Party in 1931, the conservative coalition that included the former Nationalist Party, and in less than a year he would win the prime ministership, helped along by his wife Enid, who would in 1943 be the first woman to be elected to the House of Representatives. Lyons was immensely popular, and did whatever his economic principles and advisers allowed him—such as releasing money to allow the states to offer employment. The hard yakka of building the road to the top of Mount Wellington in Hobart was financed first by Scullin, then by Lyons. Throughout the Depression, though, there was never a coherent federal assistance agency to promote employment. And in terms of trade, he passed up other opportunities so that Australia could go on trading with Britain, sincerely believing that this was the best way out.

As prime minister, Lyons stood against inflation and defence spending, and for debt conversion and national service. This suited his Melbourne business backers, and the London bankers. Lyons' inability in the late 1930s to keep his government together meant he was unlikely to win another election. The stress on him had been prodigious, as he tried to retain the loyalty of the Country Party and of his ministry. He told Enid that in this third term he returned to Canberra with dread. He had won three elections—1931, 1934 and 1937—but his credit with his followers was running out. Mortality claimed him before his colleagues did. He died in Sydney Hospital in April 1939 of a coronary occlusion. The Melbourne lawyer Robert Menzies would be his successor.

THE ABORIGINAL FIGHT

The 1920s and 1930s would see an emergence of a new politics amongst Australia's indigenous peoples.

The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) was founded in Sydney in 1925 by Fred Maynard from western New South Wales, the child of an Aboriginal woman and an English labourer who lived and worked there, but its focus was the mid-north coast of New South Wales and Aboriginal communities in towns such as Kempsey and Bellbrook. Maynard had been influenced by his experience as a young drover and stockman, and later as a wharfie and an active member of the Waterside Workers' Union, as well as by members of his family who had lost land when it was leased to white farmers. He was assisted by the humanitarian Elizabeth McKenzie-Hatton, the only non-Aboriginal member of the organisation. McKenzie-Hatton took on the Aboriginal Protection Board over the issue of so-called 'incorrigible Aboriginal girls' who had absconded from employers, often for good cause, and for whom in 1924 she set up a house in Homebush, in defiance of the board. McKenzie-Hatton was subjected to considerable police harassment during the two years she ran the house.

Maynard also travelled, holding meetings of Aborigines in country towns and hearing in particular of the seizure of Aboriginal reserve lands. The AAPA was also concerned with the other large practical question: the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents. It sought citizenship rights for Aborigines but grounded these claims in their Aboriginality, asserting their status as Indigenous Australians and proclaiming a pride in being Aboriginal.

In 1937, another organisation, the almost identically named Aborigines' Progressive Association (APA), founded by William Ferguson and Jack Patten, two men from the far south-west of New South Wales, argued that Aborigines should have the same rights as other Australians, but rather than Aboriginality it emphasised the importance of integration to bring about change. Ferguson and Patten were sick at heart at the breaking up of many reserves and the crowding of Aborigines into remaining ones, the terrible conditions of water supply and housing on these reserves, the dictatorial control by white reserve managers, the poor schooling, the denial of social welfare benefits, the removal of children from their parents, and the colour bar in country towns.

There was little such political activity in Queensland, with its repressive state regime. Under the 'Queensland Act', the body of law governing Aborigines, they were powerless to form political organisations. The Protection

Board there was headed by Protector J.W. Bleakley, former boilermaker, a man whose compassion became apparent to many individual Aborigines but whose overall administrative manner was one of paternalistic authority. The board oversaw workers' wages through trust funds, controlled the large reserves or compounds, and removed Aboriginal children from their kin. Troublemakers were sent to the notorious Palm Island, off the coast of North Queensland.

Bleakley was obsessed with the 'half-caste question'. Like many others of the time he was concerned with categorising Aboriginal people according to their degree of native heritage, and drew distinctions between full-blooded Aboriginal people down to people who were only one-eighth Aboriginal, whom he called octoroons. The lighter the skin, the more civilised and intelligent the board considered the person to be.

In South Australia, the Aboriginal voice was represented by several mission-educated men, most notably David Unaipon, whose story will be told later. Various forms of protest, public meetings and concerts, petitions, deputations and testifying in government inquiries took place. The tone of these representations was, in the spirit of Unaipon's own temperament, extremely polite. There was a relationship between the Aborigines' Friends' Association, which was made up of politically conservative missionaries and their friends, and one of the mission stations, Point McLeay, where Unaipon had spent his boyhood. Aborigines on other reserves frequently appealed to Constance Cooke, the convenor of the Aboriginal Welfare Committee of the South Australian Women's Non-Party Association. Cooke was one of a number of white campaigners on issues such as loss of land, overcrowding on reserves, the right of Aboriginal representation on the bodies governing their lives, and the removal of children. One journalist reporting such an incident in 1924 used the term 'stolen children'.

In Western Australia one of the interwar leaders was William Harris, a farmer in the Morawa district who had denounced the treatment of his fellow Aborigines in the area since 1906. He had been educated at the Swan Native and Half-Caste Home in Perth, and while working on cattle stations in the north-west of the state had seen the misuse of his people. Now he attempted to form a Native Union, along with his nephew Norman. One of their platforms was opposition to the authority of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A.O. Neville, on whose orders a considerable number

of children were taken from their parents. They were also aggrieved at what they described as 'imprisonment' on reserves such as Moore River or Mogumber. Harris passionately protested against the massacres of Aborigines by punitive expeditions in the north of the state. His nephew noted that it was hard to maintain a political organisation 'under the Act', and the Native Union was short-lived, but Norman Harris and other members of the Harris clan continued to play a role in campaigning against Neville's regime, giving evidence to a 1934 royal commission about the removal of children from their parents.

'AS A RESULT'

On the first day of September 1939, late at night, news broadcasts and cables reached Australia that Polish cities had been bombed and that the German army had crossed the border. Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies—the young Melbourne lawyer who, by his force of personality and ambition, took the prime ministership after Joe Lyons' death—and the Cabinet met in the Commonwealth Offices in Melbourne. The date clicked over, for the first meeting ended at 3 a.m. Menzies recorded a cautious broadcast at the ABC studios saying there was no official confirmation of events being reported by radio from Europe—that Polish cities had been bombed by the Nazis, who had demanded the return of the Free City of Danzig, and that German armed forces had crossed into Poland.

There existed a War Book, created by a special section of the Department of Defence after the Imperial Conference in 1930. It covered the procedures to be followed if war broke out, and secretary of the Department of Defence Frederick Shedden and Menzies now studied the section dealing with precautionary stages. Included herein were the beginning of an intelligence plan for the war, the immediate warning of shipping, the placing of permanent naval forces and other forces 'on a war footing', and the assumption by government of extraordinary powers, under the Defence Acts, to conscript workers for the war effort—a process that would come to be called Manpower. The government would also be empowered to censor newspapers, intern aliens, and call on the citizen forces to be available for war service. Postal censorship would be immediately imposed.

Waiting for further intelligence, Cabinet members had a few hours' rest and met again at the Commonwealth Offices on Saturday morning,

2 September, where they were presented with the latest information from the British government. They finished their deliberations at 1 p.m.; as they dispersed, Menzies told them that they must be available for further meetings at short notice. They rested as best they could, and that afternoon they ordered Australia into precautionary mode, commanding all citizens' forces to be called out and made available for disposition by the military, air and naval boards. The Australians learned that Lord Halifax, British Foreign Minister, a former enthusiast for Hitler's suppression of the German Communists and a less than full-blooded enthusiast for the war, had been instructed by his prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, to order the British Ambassador in Berlin to deliver an ultimatum to Hitler, demanding he withdraw his forces from Poland by 8 p.m. eastern Australian time.

The trams that night ran as crowded as usual on their way to the city's dance halls and cinemas. The Caulfield Cup that year was much discussed in a nation in which horse-racing had a far more pervasive hold on society than it does now. Melbourne had won the footy that day and were on their way to grand final success over Collingwood later in the month, a game which, when it came, war or not, would be played before a crowd of seventy-eight thousand. In Sydney, Balmain and Eastern Suburbs were flexing muscles for their grand final, and the breath of war could not diminish the crowd one whit. Menzies and Cabinet and his secretariat, led by the public servant Shedden, were like an island of anxiety in a country in which many citizens were doing their best to forget international politics, and the bitter want, still not vanished, of the past decade. Poland was a long, long way from the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Not everyone was gallivanting that night. Many were at home, radio listening. But not everyone from the farms and suburbs possessed a radio or had the price of a restaurant meal or a jaunt to the flicks. Menzies and his government were in fact worried that the Australian harvest would earn inadequately in the world market that year, that prices would be low, shipping hard to come by, and unemployment figures likely to rise again to the pernicious levels of around 30 per cent. Mateship was at a low ebb. The secret armies were largely gone, but classes still looked at each other with a bitterness restrained only by the ethos of good manners that characterised Australia then.

The ultimatum would expire at 11 a.m. British time the next day, 3 September in Britain, but at 8 p.m. on Sunday night, 3 September, in Eastern Australia.

It was the shortwave-wireless listeners—Menzies and his staff amongst them—who picked up the broadcast from England that Chamberlain had declared war on Germany. The first official communication from London had in fact already arrived at the Navy Office in Melbourne—a cable from the British Admiralty announcing the commencement of operations against Germany—and an officer was sent with a copy to show Menzies.

At 9.15 p.m., Menzies sat before a microphone and announced, over every national and commercial broadcasting station in the Commonwealth, Australia's declaration of war. Menzies recounted the background of the onset of this conflict as he declared war on Australia's behalf. The form of his declaration has been a subject of debate ever since. 'In consequence of the persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and . . . as a result, Australia is also at war.'

In Canada and South Africa, the decision to go to war was first debated in the parliaments. The speed and almost automatic nature of Menzies' declaration left Australians of a later generation—and even some Australians then—convinced that his British reflex was stronger than his Australian. The defence for his summary decision to take Australia to war was inherent in that phrase 'as a result'—a phrase offensive to nationalists but understandable to constitutionalists. For to Menzies it was supremely evident that Australia's declaration of war was inherent in Britain's. Chamberlain had declared war on behalf of King George VI, George VI was head of state and sovereign of Australia, and 'as a result' Australia was obviously involved. Nor had the Australian government, unlike those of Canada and South Africa, yet ratified the Treaty of Westminster that had awarded the dominions self-governance in defence and foreign policy.

But if John Curtin, Labor opposition leader and former pacifist, had doubts about the matter, he did not express them, either because it would have been politically inadvisable or, as it actually seems, because it did not occur to him that Australia would not be at war. Western Australian, but son of an Irish-born policeman and later publican in Kyneton, Victoria, Curtin

had risen from an entirely different background and political heritage than Menzies, but declared in Parliament a few days later that there was 'no alternative but for this dreadful affliction to come to mankind'. Australia's prosperity had always depended on British control of the seas—the capacity of thousands of cargo ships laden with Australian produce to reach Britain across secure waters. Thus it was not only Hitler's ambitions in Europe that Australian politicians were reacting to, but his intentions perhaps in North Africa and eastwards, his Alexander the Great-like ambition to spread the boundaries of the Reich towards India. In the federal parliament there was no voice raised against going to war.

For the time being, even the Communist Party, given Hitler's savagery towards German Communists, gave support to the proposition. Poland fell rapidly to the German forces, and on 23 September, Stalin and Hitler surprised the world, and not least world Communist parties, by making a pact allowing Germany to continue to occupy Poland without Russian intervention. As a quid pro quo, Russia would receive back the parts of Eastern Poland that it considered traditionally its own. From that point, the Communist parties of the world, including the party in Australia, were told to oppose the war as an imperialist exercise, and to celebrate the liberation of a section of Poland by Soviet forces.

Japan was also undeniably an unnamed party to the Australian declaration of war against Germany. Across the Commonwealth, photographs of slaughtered children and women lying on steps, of decapitated Chinese heads arranged in ranks for the camera at some time during the weeks of horror that followed the capture of the city of Nanking (Nanjing) in central China by the Japanese army in late December 1937, had appeared as a warning of what the Japanese army might do after other victories. The images of smiling Japanese soldiers using living targets as bayonet practice and standing, gluttoned with vengeance, amidst piles of corpses, were harbingers for Australia. Any footage of Japanese advances in China brought to cinemas a hush that only Ronald Colman in *The Prisoner of Zenda* or Cary Grant in *The Awful Truth* could dispel. There were press reports of the rape of girls under ten and women up to and beyond the age of seventy, and of burials alive. 'They're on their way here, you know,' people said. It was this supposition that ironically made it more, not less, advisable that Australian troops should be immediately recruited and perhaps even sent to Europe.

The equation was that loyalty to Britain in a European war would earn loyalty from Britain to Australia in a war in East Asia.

Throughout Australia there was an extraordinary range of attitudes to the declaration of war. Margaret Maxwell, a schoolgirl in Swan Hill, Victoria, did not understand quite what was happening when Mr Menzies spoke on the radio but saw both her parents in tears. Margaret Holmes, a pacifist, who lived in Sydney, felt ‘absolutely terrible’. Ted Hartley, another pacifist, believed that this was ‘like the end of the world . . . it was as though the world had gone mad’. Bob Bahnsen, a farm labourer in New South Wales, was in bed in a shearer’s hut he shared with one of the farmer’s sons, and at 9.30 p.m. the boy came in and gave him the news: “‘They declared the bloody war.’” And I just couldn’t believe it—that Hitler would be such a maniac as to launch the world into war.’ For German-born Australians and Australian residents it was a frightening hour. On the coast north of Sydney, Irmhild Beinssen had German guests over that evening. The party broke up very soon after the declaration, and when the guests got back to their houses, the police and military were in some cases already there to send them to internment.

Some young Australians, after a restless Sunday night, rushed straight off to the main barracks in their cities to enlist. Merv Lilley, a rural labourer and bush poet, said that ‘thousands and thousands of characters on the dole and the breadline knew they’d get a job in the army . . . when you joined the army you met them all, and they were all in there for the three square meals . . . and five bob a day—big money’. A letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* read: ‘Today I am unemployed, and when the war broke out, like many another man in a similar position, I hoped that a chance of enlistment would arise and take me off food relief, and give me a chance to become a useful citizen again.’ The *Age* soon reported that on coming into the Army Pay Office for his first week’s pay as a recruit in what would become the 2nd Australian Imperial Force, one man took the envelope and made a Nazi salute while shouting, ‘Heil Hitler!’ Asked by the officer what he was doing, he said, ‘This is the first blinkin’ pay I’ve had in two blinkin’ years.’ It was a gift arising from Hitler’s aggression against Poland. Certainly Patsy Adam-Smith, a future author who as a child lived in Warragul, Victoria,

remembered that the boys of the town, including her future brother-in-law, were jumping on the trains, hiding themselves under the tarpaulins covering grain, to get to Melbourne to enlist and put an end to unemployment. But, she noticed, there was also a peculiar excitement in their eyes.

Handsome Russell Braddon, who was then at university in Sydney and who would ultimately write a famous memoir of his years as a prisoner of the Japanese, enlisted within days and for the traditional reasons. 'I joined the Army because the King was in danger and the Empire was in danger and the Nazis were unspeakably wicked and I wanted to go and kill Germans—it's as simple as that. Very schoolboyish.' A young man named Alan Lowe wrote, 'My mother had gone through the First World War with two young children while my father was away for four years, and he'd been hospitalised and wounded and she had a vivid memory of this . . . and she wasn't happy at all about me going in.' But even with their fathers to warn them off, men still enlisted. The horrors of 1914–18 could not be conveyed verbally. Young men were doomed to want to taste of those bloody springs for themselves.

GIRDING LOINS

On 13 November 1939, Menzies announced the appointment of Australia's first Minister for Air and Civil Aviation, James Valentine Fairbairn, a grazier from the western district of Victoria who had served in the Royal Flying Corps in World War I and had spent the last fourteen months of the war as a prisoner of the Germans. On his station, Mount Elephant, near Derrinallum, he built an airstrip at some time in the 1920s. He would be one of the initiators of the Empire Air Training Scheme, under which air crews were given their basic training in Australia and then sent to Canada to be trained en masse with flyers from all over the Commonwealth. By Menzies' consent, and without any complaint from Curtin, the Australians sent to defend Britain would come under the general aegis of the RAF, though still wearing their own national shoulder patches. Eventually some would find themselves flying in all-Australian squadrons, but many Australians also flew in mixed British, Polish, New Zealand, Canadian and South African squadrons.

Meanwhile, the serving chief of the Royal Australian Navy was the British admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin, diplomatic, approachable and a man of intelligence and wit. The ships were already at sea, guarding the proximate sea

routes off the New South Wales coast. Many had been out there since daylight on 3 September, when the war news was still indefinite.

Flight Lieutenant Brough of the RAAF, ultimately a squadron leader, was probably the first Australian combatant of the war. On 4 September 1939, he flew a bomber in 99 Squadron RAF, dropping leaflets over Germany. Other Australians in heavy bomber squadrons made winter flights from bases in Scotland looking for German ships in the North Atlantic. Flying Officer J.T. Lewis of Artarmon in Sydney was killed on his first sortie, on 18 December 1939, when six bombers from his squadron were intercepted by up to fifty German fighters, who shot down all but one of the planes in the formation. R.B. Lees was squadron leader of 72 Squadron of the RAF. On 7 December, he was in a group of five Spitfires that flew into the path of five Heinkel bombers over the Firth of Forth in Scotland. The Spitfires shot down two bombers and caused the others to flee.

Flying Officer L. Clisby of South Australia was flying in 1 Squadron of the RAF. He clung to his old RAAF uniform, which was in disrepair. 'It will see me out,' he argued. In it he shot down eight enemy planes in five days. He had the attitudes of a World War I pilot, and on 10 May 1940, having shot down a Heinkel bomber and forced it to land in a French field, he landed, chased a German crew member and tackled him. Four days later he himself was shot out of the sky by five German fighters. It was said over his grave that he had shot down sixteen of the enemy.

A number of Australian regular air force officers fought in the failed struggle for France and in the air battle for Britain. Flying Officer Charles Gordon Olive flew Spitfire missions during both the evacuation of Dunkirk, when the British were driven out of France in late May and early June 1940, and in the subsequent aerial Battle of Britain. He was a slightly built man but, as one of Australia's 495 airmen in England when war began, had broken the RAF javelin record in 1939. In September 1940, he won the Distinguished Flying Cross, and later, at just twenty-four years, became the leader of 456 Squadron, the RAAF's only night-fighter squadron.

It became increasingly axiomatic with air officers from wing commander down that fighter pilots never survived to grow old. Yet Olive escaped harm and went on to higher rank.

There were ultimately seventeen exclusively Australian squadrons, numbered 450 to 467. Number 450 Squadron, for which there were innumerable volunteers since so many Australian adolescents wanted to be flyers, came into existence at Williamstown in New South Wales, and its young men began training in April 1941 and would be shipped off to Canada in November that year. They were fretful to get there, those mothers' sons, most of whom had never flown and many of whom could not drive a car. 450 Squadron went into action flying Kittyhawk fighters in the Western Desert campaign in North Africa, and number 451 Squadron was sent into action in ageing Lysanders and then zippier Hurricanes. It had a high rate of loss from deaths, some of its flyers' crash-landings ending in capture by the Germans.

Number 452 Squadron would be the first Australian squadron to become operational in Britain, on 22 May 1941, flying Marine Spitfires. Eamonn Fergus 'Paddy' Finucane, an Irishman attached to the Australians, would achieve national glory in Australia, command the Australian squadron and become the youngest wing commander of his day before dying in the Channel at the age of twenty-one after an operation over Étables on the French coast in 1942.

Australia would suffer a quarter of its war dead in that long air conflict over Europe and Africa. Victoria's Keith 'Bluey' Truscott became, like Finucane, a national figure—indeed, he already was a name for having played for Melbourne all through the 1939 Australian rules football premier-ship season. He would return an ace to Australia in 1942 and play with Melbourne while he was at home, mustering further volunteers. Truscott had played for Melbourne in a winning grand final and thus in Australian terms represented the complete warrior. The names Bluey Truscott and Paddy Finucane became so famous in Australia that kids playing dogfights in backyards competed to assume them.

Truscott later crash-landed while strafing the Japanese at Milne Bay in New Guinea, and survived without substantial injury. He would die flying a training run over the ocean off Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia, doing a practice roll that proved fatal. He was proof—if one were needed—that aircraft were perilous to the health of young men even when no enemy shared the skies with them.

When seeing his father off from Sydney Central bound for Melbourne and a troopship, the author of this narrative saw a group of very young men

clustered together, jubilant, but surrounded by women who were close to keening. 'They're fighter pilots,' my mother said. 'Their mothers are scared they won't see them again.'

The Air minister Fairbairn would himself by now be an aeronautic victim. Fairbairn, dubious about so many pilots and aircrew leaving Australia, had shown great energy flying from airbase to airbase in Australia in his own Dragonfly aircraft to confer and advise. In August 1940, he travelled up from Melbourne in a bomber with his Cabinet colleagues Gullett, Menzies' polished and cultured Minister for Scientific Development; Geoffrey Street, Minister for the Army and Rehabilitation, a citizen-politician who was genuinely interested in the defence of the near north of Australia; and with admirable General Brudenell White, who had run the AIF under the often titular leadership of General Birdwood in World War I. The aircraft crashed and exploded on its approach to Canberra. For Menzies it was a frightful loss of talented and calm advisers, and for Australia it meant the death of men who might have seen more clearly through the artful Churchill's sleight of hand and the proposition that went: send your young men to protect British interests in Europe and the Middle East and then, should Japan strike, we will send forces to protect you and to hold Singapore.

SUCCESS AND TRAGEDY IN THE SHADOW OF THE ANCIENT



ACROSS CYRENAICA

The training of the first units of the new 2nd AIF into a division that would be named the 6th was proceeding according to the traditions and cultural habits that had given the 1st AIF such a bad name with British generals and senior officers. A restaurant in Melbourne put up a sign reading ‘Officers Only’, but Australian other ranks entered the premises and played two-up there until, as one of them, Charlie Robinson, put it later, the ‘apartheid’ ended. By June 1940 it was considered that the 6th was ready for the war front. The convoy set out without as much concern as had marked the first convoy of 1914. There were German raiders operating, but not on the scale of the threat posed by the German Pacific flotilla in the old days.

When the 6th Division first arrived in Egypt, and travelled up by truck to the military camp in Beit Jirja in Palestine, General Archibald Wavell, the British commander, addressed them in severe tones. He told them that he had found Australian troops undisciplined in World War I, and hoped that in this war they would be better behaved on leave and in their relationship with the local population. The sons of the ‘undisciplined’ Australians of the past certainly showed a sometimes loutish sense of entitlement in their behaviour towards Arabs. But so did the average Tommy. It might have been that, above all, the Australians lacked the parade-ground crispness of the British,

and did not go to great pains to acquire it. And then 'Officers Only' bars were a welcome challenge to Australians and provoked a gleeful and loud intrusion, again to the disapproval of professionals such as Wavell. Questions of liquor and sustenance had the capacity to bring out the egalitarian in Australian private soldiers, and they were unjustly considered bad soldiers because of this.

From Palestine, the Australians moved down to Egypt to the scenes they had heard of from uncles or fathers. To the west, in Libya, lay Mussolini's Italians. In the 1930s, Libya, made up of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, was touted as the new America for Italian immigrants and in 1934 it had been incorporated and united as a colony of Italy. By then good roads had been built and attempts at irrigation made. Sophisticated concrete fortifications for the Italian army were thrown up. There were over a hundred thousand Italian immigrants in Libya by the time World War II began, and many of them, having faith in the huge Italian military presence, were still in place at the time Italy decided to advance into Egypt in late 1940 to capture the Suez Canal and deprive the Empire of its great artery of trade. In that move across the Egyptian border, Italian generals drew parallels with ancient times, when Rome controlled the Lower Kingdom of Egypt. Such hopes as existed in the breasts of Mussolini and his generals would never quite be matched again as they were when the Italian infantry and mechanised units advanced along the coastal plain.

In September 1940, as the Italian invasion began, the troops of the Australian 6th Division were still enjoying the bars of Cairo. Now they were mustered, marched and convoyed out westwards to the Egyptian-Libyan border to take up the fight against the Italians. They passed through the coast port Sidi Barrani, where they found the Italians had already been repulsed by the British, and saw their first war dead. The desert weather was turning cold, and as the season wore on, newsreels of Australians advancing in overcoats would confuse Australian citizens watching in picture palaces at home, their ideas of North Africa being derived from the flicks, in which the desert was always sweltering.

The footage of the first Australian attack against the Italian fortress of Bardia (Bardiya) in Libya was taken by the young Australian cinematographer Damien Parer. Parer, a Melbourne boy and devout Catholic, had been appointed official cinematographer on the basis of his work with film director Charles Chauvel on the classic Australian Light Horse film *Forty*

Thousand Horsemen, shot in the Cronulla sand dunes. He intended to get as close to the combat as possible, and came up with the idea of filming from the front of advancing troops, a practice that many would come to think foredoomed him.

Late in December 1940, the 6th Division, under the much-admired General Iven Mackay, former headmaster of Cranbrook School in Sydney and called 'Mr Chips' by the troops, positioned themselves at the western end of the fortifications that ringed the town and the harbour of Bardia. Around Bardia the Australians got used to the *khamsin*, the dry, hot wind that blew grit into their stew, Libya itself becoming part of their diet. The town lay beneath a steep headland that then dropped off to the Mediterranean. The Italian defensive strongpoints that encircled the town and its harbour for 30 kilometres were of complicated design and armed with 47-millimetre guns and machine guns able to be fired from concrete emplacements connected to deep bunkers. From the high points, and running into the port itself, was a huge *wadi* or creek bed, usually dry. Above the west side of this, facing the Australians, the Italians had erected one of their strongest of strongpoints, Post 11. Six battalions of the 6th Division were allocated to attack posts 3 to 11.

On 3 January 1941, after a number of patrols, the Australians went forward, supported by machine gunners of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. The subsequent victory would be depicted by Australian propaganda as a walkover, and in some ways it was. Though better armed and supplied, the Italians were not willing to perish for Mussolini. The Australians suffered 130 casualties and captured some thousands of prisoners, and were delighted with the Italian equipment they found abandoned, so much more sophisticated than the gear with which they had been equipped.

The behaviour of the Italian prisoners and wounded was a matter of cultural mystification. They were not given to stoicism but to exuberant lament. 'They produced photographs of their families or holy pictures from their wallets which they kissed fervently,' remembered Charlie Robinson, a member of the Field Ambulance. 'As we dressed their wounds they would attempt to kiss our hands. Language presented difficulties, as when given water they would take their fill and then say "Basta" [Enough]. We thought they were calling us "bastards" and were getting very irate until an Italian who spoke English explained.'

Walking the town after the capture, the Australians particularly liked the Italian officers' quarters—'silk sheets, pomades, perfumes, gaudy dress uniforms and colourfully lined capes'. They also found cheese, canned delicacies, pasta and coffee, together with a supply of wine and cognac.

Tobruk (Tubruq), the next Italian fortress along the coast road, was surrounded by 48 kilometres of entanglements and tank traps. Tobruk needed to be captured so that Wavell's soldiers could be resupplied by way of its port. Its garrison was believed to be twenty-seven thousand in strength. As the Australians came forward in trucks fraternally provided by the New Zealanders, the road itself barely avoided falling away into the wadis running down to the coast from inland. The British divisions were to attack from the west, and a British armoured division also anchored the end of the Australian line to the south. The tanks hoped to exploit places where the anti-tank ditch was not yet finished. Number 3 Squadron RAAF was to give air support, along with British squadrons of bombers and one of fighters.

Patrolling into and beyond the tank ditch was a nightly affair. The night of 13 January was bright, and helped the Italians pour a fury of fire against the Australians' patrolling 4th Battalion. On these patrols men ran into Italian booby traps, explosives stuck on low stakes and connected by trip wires.

The Australians were to attack Post 57 on the eastern side of the port town and use the wire before it as the point of entry from which they would fan out. They deceived the Italians as to their intentions by setting Bangalore torpedoes to destroy the wire outside every other post but 57. On the night of 17 January, a party under Captain Hassett and Lieutenant Bamford, a baker from Bowral, trying to mark out the start line for the attack, set off the booby traps; Hassett, Bamford and three other men were badly wounded. The following night, Major Campbell, the brigade major of Brigadier General Tubby Allen, who would later taste glory, horror and military injustice in New Guinea, successfully felt out and cut the wires connecting the booby traps and set a starting line for the coming assault, marking it unobtrusively with bits of gun-cleaning flannel tied to the branches of neighbouring shrubs.

On the night of 21 January, the attack went in from a taped line Campbell had made with his earlier gun-flannelled shrubs for guidance. On the right

of the line soldiers blundered into the wire nonetheless. 'In the flash,' one soldier said, 'you could see twenty or more men peeling back like a flower opening.' Three men were killed. The picnic was over.

The Italians resisted and one of the posts fell only after every Italian had been killed. Australian brigades fanned out within the wire, and post after post fell to them. They were supported from behind by Australian guns and the Royal Horse Artillery, and a machine-gun regiment of the Cheshires. Italian tanks captured at Bardia and now sporting a kangaroo on their sides and crewed by the 6th Australian Cavalry Regiment took part in the assault against the inner fortress called Fort Pilistrano. Another fort, Fort Solaro, had fallen easily, with six hundred prisoners taken. Forty-nine Australians died, however, and there was, given the pace of the advance, a problem getting the wounded back to the hospitals.

By the morning of 22 January, the town was theirs. The Australians found Tobruk pleasant and full of delicacies, but the British, to the north-west, were still dealing with a determined stand by the Italians. Eight thousand prisoners at various posts had been taken. Dumps burned around the harbour. The following morning, the remaining outposts cracked and General della Mura, the Italian commander, surrendered to Australian Lieutenant Phelan and two of his men. All along the front the Italian outposts were also surrendering, so that there was no final bloodbath for possession of the harbour itself, as scattered Italian troops hiding in the wadis were rounded up. Major Eather, in a troop carrier, found three thousand Italians drawn up as if on parade, their officers' luggage packed and ready for movement. He accepted their surrender. At naval headquarters, Admiral Massimiliano Vietina and fifteen hundred officers and men surrendered. It was made clear to Vietina by the Australian brigade commander Horace Robertson that if a single Australian soldier died of booby traps in the town, there would be unspecified but serious punishment.

It became nearly impossible to provide proper medical care and blankets to the compounds of the nearly thirty thousand who had surrendered. Only five of the twelve proud Italian divisions stationed in Libya were now left. In late January, at Derna, a further coast fortress, a rearguard of Italian Bersaglieri were near-surrounded and pulled back towards the stronghold of Benghazi, the capital of Cyrenaica. Fifty-five Australians were buried here

after the Italians simply abandoned it. The Axis's grand strategy had been reduced to debacle.

And by now the 7th Division had arrived in Egypt. The 6th was withdrawn to pursue other, as yet undisclosed purposes.



Damien Parer dressed appallingly and was once barked at by a colonel, 'Tuck your shirt in, man, you look like a wog.' He had begun by filming the attack on Bardia and then raced to catch up with the advancing Australians with Frank Hurley, veteran cinematographer of Shackleton's endurance expedition to the Antarctic. Chester Wilmot, the broadcaster, found that when he arrived at the outskirts of Tobruk early one morning in this advance, Parer was already there, filming the breakthrough of the 7th Battalion near Post 65.

Parer and Hurley got many effective shots of shell fire, Italian prisoners, and burning oil installations around the harbour. Parer was there to film an Australian private hauling down the Italian flag over Tobruk and hoisting his own hat to the masthead. He shot his first material of advancing with infantry when he went along with the 11th Battalion in their attack on the airport at Derna. He blamed himself for missing the best footage by ducking whenever a shell came over. The men around him, however, yelled, 'Get down, you bloody fool!'

Parer always argued that his job was not to film the 'pretty-pretty stuff'—triumphant marches into a town already captured, troops' football matches, the cleaning of guns when the battle was over. He wanted to 'convey the moment of truth when a soldier charges, to kill or be killed'. Cameraman Ron Williams declared, 'There was no doubt that from then on Parer was doomed.'

A POET TO THE FRONT

Ken Slessor was both a practical working journalist and a major poet, born in the year of Federation in Orange, New South Wales, as Kenneth Adolf Slessor, son of a civil engineer of German descent, who had changed his name at the outbreak of World War I. In 1920, Slessor became a journalist, first for the Sydney tabloid *The Sun*, and then he jointly edited *Vision*, a literary magazine. In 1924, he published his first book of verse. His early poetry was illustrated by his mentor Norman Lindsay. Three years later,

in 1927, he joined the staff of *Smith's Weekly*, where he would remain for the next thirteen years, until the outbreak of World War II. He considered *Smith's Weekly* the Diggers' paper—it had fought for the rights of Diggers throughout the 1920s and 1930s. He combined being editor-in-chief of this hard-hitting, populist and irreverent magazine with the sophistication of his 1939 poem 'Five Bells', and all without becoming a man split asunder by his two tasks, but instead remaining a companionable and genial fellow.

Slessor seemed to find his own entirely modern voice, finding its fascinations in the loss of friends, the depths of the harbour, the mysteries of country towns and the strange contours of the Australian landscape. He was a devout city boy, and had written of William Street, Sydney, as a place of glorious squalors.

*Smells rich and rasping, smoke and fat and fish
and puffs of paraffin that crimp the nose,
of grease that blesses onions with a hiss;
You find it ugly, I find it lovely.*

*The dips and molls, with flip and shiny gaze
(death at their elbows, hunger at their heels)
Ranging the pavements of their pasturage;
You find this ugly, I find it lovely.*

His classic was the elegy 'Five Bells', the most eloquent, mourning evocation of a Sydney Harbour at that stage still full of moored ships and the clang of their bells.

*Deep and dissolving verticals of light
Ferry the falls of moonshine down. Five bells
Coldly rung out in a machine's voice. Night and water
Pour to one rip of darkness, the Harbour floats
In the air, the Cross hangs upside-down in water.*

He despised General Thomas Blamey—sensual, clever but unpopular with troops, a former aide to Monash and also a former Victorian police commissioner—whose appointment as Australian commander *Smith's Weekly*

had attacked. His dislike was perhaps reflected in his 'An Inscription for Dog River'. He describes troops as:

*Having bestowed on him all we had to give
In battles few can recollect,
Our strength, obedience and endurance,
Our wits, our bodies, our existence,
Even our descendants' right to live—
Having given him everything, in fact,
Except respect.*

Slessor was thirty-nine when appointed Australia's official war correspondent. The *Sydney Morning Herald* had always thought it had a mortgage on the official position, and Slessor would become very discontented with the way it and other dailies would butcher and rewrite his copy. Slessor was in England from July 1940, waiting for the troops he was to accompany to move off to the Middle East after training at Salisbury. Although at Salisbury he was a little removed from London, he saw something of the Blitz. His wife Noela, a Sydney girl of Catholic background who had married Slessor in the Methodist parsonage in Ashfield in 1922, also arrived in Britain. Their relationship was volatile.

In London, Slessor was shocked by English social and military stuffiness. The old complaint of Australians when visiting 'Home' was uttered by him when he said that English newspapers mentioned Australia 'about as frequently as Tierra del Fuego'. He met many Cabinet members, from Churchill to bluff Labour leader Ernest Bevin and Duff Cooper, writer and politician, who would later be a less than galvanising British Cabinet representative in Singapore before its fall.

On the way to Egypt from England in the *Franconia*, Slessor pleaded with the 9th Division troops aboard, who had been training in England and whom he was invited to address, in these terms: 'Please don't give me all the blame if you see one of my despatches that you don't like. I have to work through layers of censors, cable operators, sub editors and printers—and so far I've had to struggle only with small beer.' He concluded, 'As for warfare in general, I am infuriated by the knowledge that for no reason or motive of any kind, except at the command of blind authority . . . a Keats or Beethoven

or Pasteur can be dismissed from existence by the mere motion of a man pressing a piece of iron which releases 2000 volumes of gas, which drives another piece of iron 3000 yards which perforates the abdominal cavity of an utter stranger between the fourth and fifth ribs.'

In the Middle East from March 1941, Slessor was outraged when in a Cairo hotel lounge he heard 'two pompous old goats of English colonels talking in loud voices about disreputable doings by Australian and "colonial" troops . . . Good God, no wonder the English of a certain type are detested by Americans, Australians, South Africans and New Zealanders.' However, he disapproved of some Australian soldiers' loutish souveniring of goods, and their 'reckless mixing of liquor'. His dislike of Blamey was enhanced when he saw him in a Cairo cabaret 'jazzing fatuously with a blowsy Egyptian girl'.

TO CLASSIC LANDS

In early April 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was still dreaming of a great alliance between Britain, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey, which would altogether put up seventy divisions against the Axis. The technological shortcomings of all the equipment involved on the Allied side was one aspect that made the concept a fantasy—even if the Yugoslav front had not collapsed, and even if Turkey had consented to join. The Italians attempting to invade Greece from the direction of Serbia and Macedonia in October 1940 had been driven off by the Greek army, but on 5 April 1941 the Germans entered Greece, and now the Anzac Corps—the 6th Australian Division and the New Zealanders, commanded by Blamey—together with a number of British units, were to be committed to an operation that was hopeless, not least because they would have hardly any air cover.

There were certain undertakings the British had made to Greece, in spite of the fact that its prime minister, Iannos Metaxas, had been a dictator until his death in late January 1941, but these promises were not Churchill's total motivation. He wished by intervention in Greece to impress Roosevelt with a compelling, if doomed, British resistance, and brave and perhaps inevitable defeat, which would prove how desperately the Allies needed America to involve itself in the conflict. The soldiers shared the lack of faith in the operation—the Australian Charlie Robinson said that ordinary soldiers spoke of the futility of the coming campaign. For Churchill was weakening

the garrison in North Africa, including Australian and New Zealand components, to put men in the way of assured harm in Greece.

Churchill had worked hard on Menzies since February 1941, when intelligence said the Germans would soon invade, to persuade him to allow Australian participation in a Greek campaign. On the last weekend of the month, Menzies, visiting Britain to confer with the War Cabinet and pursue his ambition of belonging in it, was invited to Chequers, the prime ministerial country residence. He did not think that Churchill was a good listener, but he mentioned 'momentous discussion later with PM about defence of Greece, largely with Australian and New Zealand troops'. Churchill depicted the proposed Greek campaign 'as a rather hypothetical matter', as if it mightn't happen. Menzies did not know that the decision for Greece had already been made two days before.

When it occurred, the Greek campaign would take place against a background of continuing Australian obsession with Singapore, with offhand British assurances that, if necessary, the Mediterranean would be abandoned by the Royal Navy to protect Singapore, but with the refusal of Britain to send modern Hurricane fighters to that fortress. Where would the abandonment of the Mediterranean put the Australian troops in North Africa? Menzies reasonably enough asked. Nonetheless, in early May, two days before he left London to go home, he was even persuaded to approve a (successful) request to the United States government to move elements of its Pacific fleet to the Atlantic Ocean. Menzies assured his Cabinet in Canberra that America's increasing belligerence would in any case probably deter Japan from beginning a war in the Pacific. So Greece went ahead, and Menzies hoped it would really shake the American tree. Some historians believe that had Blamey and Menzies both objected strongly enough, the calamity could have been avoided.

The Anzac Corps then, along with some British units, was nonetheless committed to the saving of Greece. When the 19th Brigade AIF, having landed at Piraeus, later moved up beyond Thermopylae, where in 480 BC the three hundred Spartans under Leonidas had stood against the Persians, ensuring by their valour the ultimate defeat of the invader, the Australians intended to emulate them. The only problem was that, unlike the Spartans, the Allies would face superior (and more numerous) German aircraft that exercised utter dominance in the air.

Kenneth Slessor, who came to Greece to write despatches, was inevitably impressed to be in classic lands and under the shadow of the Acropolis. However, German propaganda was telling Greeks in the front line that the Australians were back in Athens dancing with their wives, and so all dancing in Athens was banned to the Australians. As sceptical as anyone about the hopes of the campaign, Slessor interviewed Blamey in that city. Blamey had arrived in Greece even before the German invasion, to inspect the terrain and the narrow passes the Australians would have to defend and, he was sure, retreat through. Lieutenant-Colonel Wells, commanding the Australian advance party, told Slessor he had been up to visit the northern defence line and saw little hope of holding it.

In the meantime, the Greeks were consoled by the presence of the Australians, New Zealanders and British. It is interesting to get a sense of the campaign from a unit diary, in this case that of the 19th Brigade. The diary keeper found as the brigade passed north through villages that the attitude of the Greek people was most amiable and grateful: 'Flowers were thrown into vehicles.' The 19th Brigade met up with the Greeks they were relieving and its general, George Vasey, and his staff inspected the portion of the line they were going to occupy. By 7.30 on the evening of 8 April, the Divisional Command told Vasey that he was to occupy a delaying position at Thermopylae to allow time for the Serbia Pass—one of the three passes through the northern mountains—to be garrisoned. The Australians took their position in front of the pass, on either side of the road, and their engineers blew up the bridges over which the Germans would have come. The only Allied plane they saw in the next two days was a Hurricane that crashed in front of their lines and whose pilot they rescued. They heard from their men posted forward that forty German tanks were now approaching, but the attack was beaten back by Australian artillery and small arms fire, and the German infantry and artillery began digging in as snow began to fall.

The British armoured brigade fighting with the 19th had been hard hit from the start with mechanical breakdowns and battle losses, and was soon as good as non-existent, and six of the British anti-tank regiments' guns had been knocked out. The under-equipped Greek divisions were perforce giving way in their thin uniforms and disintegrating boots.

Orders were received from divisional headquarters for the 19th Brigade to withdraw to a position on the Aliakmon River. The enemy, having broken

through the Serbia Pass, bloodily infiltrated the forward artillery observation posts. The British Rangers and the Australian 8th Battalion on their right were given a line to defend until that evening. At 5.30 on the gloomy afternoon of 12 April the First Battalion Rangers' front broke. As the Rangers moved back in disorder, in that terrible fear of the bewildered front-line soldier, the Germans got in behind one of Vasey's battalions and cut it off. The rest of the brigade was ordered to withdraw further. And so it went on.

At first light on 13 April at the Aliakmon River, 'a lively machine gun and small arms battle took place for three hours, involving the Australian 2nd/4th Battalion, the British Rangers and armour'. The line was joined by New Zealanders of the New Zealand 26th Battalion who had come back across the Aliakmon River by ferry. On about 18 April, when Vasey took up his Thermopylae command, he uttered sentiments that were in their way similar to those of the Spartan commander, Leonidas, in 480 BC: 'Here you bloody well are and here you bloody well stay. And if any bloody German gets between your post and the next, turn your bloody Bren around and shoot him up the arse.' To the west of the pass Vasey could see the Germans massing in the Brallos Valley, and it was while he held that position that he heard that Greece was to be evacuated, and that to cover the evacuation, the brigade was to hold this position until dark on 24 April.

With some of the Greek divisions in utter disarray, and Germans probing the Australian line by way of the Olympus Pass, as well as enemy aircraft strafing and bombing them, the Australians of both the 16th and 19th Brigades concluded they might be forced to retreat sooner than 24 April. In fact, on the evening of 15 April and on through the night, the orders reached the troops either side of the Aliakmon, and they began to move out in their overcoats, carrying on their backs the one-blanket-per-man that was their chief but inadequate protection against the high altitude air.

By that time most of the small forces of British tanks had been destroyed or were in imminent danger. The German armour dominated along the entire line. 'The feeling of helplessness against the tanks overcame the troops and they began to move back in small parties.'

From 18 April, the Anzac Corps began a retreat southwards in good order over five days. The passes they went south through held deep beds of snow and were impassable to trucks. So they were 'using donkeys as at Gallipoli'. They fought rearguard actions against highly mobile and better-equipped

German troops in the countryside south of the Aliakmon River. The Australians had been harassed day and night, and were completely defenceless, as no RAF planes appeared above them. The Luftwaffe over Greece had at first outnumbered British aircraft ten to one, and the number of British planes quickly destroyed had made things more uneven still. 'All along the road, at almost every mile,' wrote Australian Colonel Klein, there were 'scores of trucks and cars lying smashed or with wheels up at roadside.' 'Fenton convinced that we are to have another Dunkirk,' wrote Slessor of his former fellow journalist and now press censor, Major George Fenton. As the Australians retreated, villages did not want troops to stay for fear of attracting the Luftwaffe. Every movement along the road by daytime was subject to air attack.

For lack of men and armaments, there could not be any 'defence in depth'. On 24 April the enemy began to move down the south slope of the Thermopylae position about which Vasey had made his piquant speech. Though the brigade's guns heavily shelled the enemy when they came within range, the brigade had been given a front of twenty kilometres to hold. It was doomed to cave in. Because of the mountainous country, the heavier artillery was restricted to a range of just under three kilometres wide. Motor transport was unable to deal with mud and steep grades, and the troops had been issued with the wrong type of clothing and equipment. 'Had it been possible for us to take the offensive,' said Vasey, 'we would have found great difficulty because we had nothing similar to the mountain regiments of the German army capable of attacking in this type of country.' And last of all, the telling sentence: 'The Army was sent to GREECE well equipped to fight in LIBYA.' At last Vasey's brigade reached the olive groves of Megara, near Athens, and rested.

By then, on 22 April, Colonel A. Rogers, a haggard-looking intelligence officer, would tell Slessor and the other journalists, about sixteen kilometres east of Athens, 'Gentlemen, I have a statement for you. The AIF is to leave Greece . . . the fact of the matter is that we seem to have been left with a job which is too big for us.' Slessor knew the men of the 16th and 19th brigades were still engaged with the enemy.

Blamey had in the meantime impressed his staff by his capacity for work and clear thought. He was getting by on perhaps four hours' broken sleep a night, in an unsuccessful attempt to stop defeat becoming a rout.

Damien Parer had travelled to Greece for the campaign and had fallen in love with the place. On a hill above a town named Elasson, he filmed a raid by the Luftwaffe. Ron Williams and Parer both later said they were frightened, but Williams admitted he could not hold Parer down, and characteristically, as he would do on other battlefields, he prayed for the victims while he went on filming. Much of the footage of that campaign, of refugees and beaten Greek soldiers, is still used to illustrate the sadness of it all.

Parer and Williams filmed the evacuation before escaping on a tiny trawler carrying three hundred German POWs. They returned to Alexandria, Parer grief-stricken over Greece, reviving from depression only when he went with the 7th Division into Syria on 8 June. He was the only cameraman covering that campaign. He sailed in a destroyer that was shelling the coast, he shot footage of the RAF bombing the headquarters of the collaborating Vichy French in Beirut, he was with Australian gunners and engineers at work, and advanced with infantry attacks. Back in the desert he flew in RAF bombers because there was no room for a cameraman in single-seater fighters, but he was already working on the idea of how he might manage to film in the cramped space of a fighter cockpit by placing his camera on his head.



More than seventeen thousand Australians had marched up to northern Greece, along with New Zealanders and Britons, to face the Germans, and the total Australian casualties there were about three thousand men, of whom over two thousand were captured. One victim of failed policy and foredoomed military gesture, Barney Roberts, a Tasmanian bank clerk who suffered from asthma, had been cut off with other members of his unit and was without transport, ammunition and food. He had been bypassed by the German advance in the Brallos Pass area. Such men could do little by day but lie under the leaves of olive trees for protection from sun and aircraft, and wait for night so that they could go and get water. Ultimately they surrendered to a German officer who spoke English with an American drawl. By the time Roberts was captured, on 27 April, Blamey was three days gone from Greece—on the orders of his superior, General Henry ‘Jumbo’ Wilson. Notoriously, he took Tom Blamey, his son, a major in intelligence, aboard his plane.

Blamey, on the way to Alexandria, was able to read the British newspapers, which gave a glowing account of resistance in Greece. 'My God,' he said, 'we've been to the wrong war.' Blamey wrote in his report: 'The outstanding lesson of the Greek campaign is that no reasons whatever should outweigh military considerations when it is proposed to embark on a campaign.'

THE CRETAN FARCE

Slessor and his fellow press corps men would be bombed by 'big Dornier [German] bombers' during the retreat down the length of northern Greece. Like the retreating soldiers themselves, he and his colleagues sheltered from aircraft in small ditches by vineyards and olive groves. Every three kilometres or so, squadrons of German planes would pass over, bombing and machine-gunning with utter impunity.

Reaching the port of Piraeus, Slessor and fleeing civilians and soldiers coalesced on the chaotic Tromba wharf. They survived a bombing attack by five Junkers. At the dock was a ship named *Elsie*, and a crowd of people desperate to flee the German troops. Slessor's diary places us there, on that fragile margin between freedom and capture, in that crowd of frightened and impelled souls, soldiers, civilians, refugees, men, women and children pushing, running and weeping. Between air raids, as babies sat on baggage howling with shock, women appealed to officers to find lost suitcases for them. A number of the German legation—officials and typists and so on—were being loaded aboard by soldiers to be sent to internment, and so were 160 captured German soldiers, still jaunty and confident of their chances of being liberated by the unstoppable advance of the German army.

It seemed nearly a generation of gifted Australian journalists and writers were on the *Elsie* as she pulled out—as well as Slessor, there was Gavin Long, who would become an official war historian; Chester Wilmot, broadcaster now renowned in the English-speaking world; and the dangerously brave cinematographer Parer. On the two-day journey to Crete, Slessor and the other correspondents did duty creating a roster so that families below could come up on deck for a period to get some fresh air. At about 4 p.m. on 23 April, five German bombers appeared, and men with Bren guns and rifles lay down on the deck shooting as they passed over, while the civilians below screamed and children bellowed. As the ship put into Suda Bay on Crete the next afternoon, the Greek sailors heard that their government

had now independently surrendered, and—fearful of the Germans—had to be persuaded to work the ship any more.

Slessor and his fellow pressmen did get ashore, and rested overnight in a field along the road to Canea, the town adjoining Suda village, where ‘we spread out under groves of fruit trees, in a field almost knee high with white daisies, lit a fire for tea, ate mutton and veal stew, and slept’. In the morning they were ordered to leave the island. The troops strung out to defend the north coast of Crete—the remaining Australian, New Zealand and British—were damned to a repeat of the uneven battle for Greece, of campaigning beneath a sky owned by the enemy’s air force. The next day, Slessor and others boarded the ship to Alexandria, leaving a doomed force commanded not by Blamey but by the New Zealand General Freyberg.

The remains of the 19th Brigade under Vasey, part of an Australian remnant force of a little over seven thousand men in two brigades, and field and artillery regiments, had meanwhile arrived at Suda Bay and were marched to a refreshment camp where they were given tea, chocolate, fruit and cigarettes. They were part of a force made up of fourteen thousand British and nearly seven thousand New Zealanders, strung out along the north coast of the island, protecting airfields and coastline suitable for landings.

One battalion report on the day German paratroopers appeared in the sky above the crucial airfield of Retimo claimed that 102 planes were involved in the drop, all with little to fear from Allied aircraft. Elsewhere along the coast other planeloads were dropped. The orders were that the parachutists be fired on while still in the air, and a number were killed while still descending. But they were followed, once the airfields fell, by troops flown in or else landed in the ports.

At Retimo airport, one of Vasey’s battalions, made up of Western Australians, and another of New South Welshmen (the 2/1st) were cut off and captured. Yet they and the counter-attack battalions hung on until surrounded. On Crete, of the Australian units assaulted by understandably aggrieved German paratroopers and their infantry and artillery comrades who followed, the Australians lost nearly four thousand men, just over three thousand of them captured. The New Zealand toll was as high. The casualties were thus nearly 40 per cent of those committed to the entire Greek campaign, and this had all happened in merely a few weeks. The Anzac corps that was formed in Greece had lasted less than a fortnight and had now been

fatally diminished. Yet the German reports mention hand-to-hand fighting nearly everywhere. A number of men who had been taken prisoner on Crete were put on ships bound for Germany.

With the other forces, General Vasey's men, on General Freyberg's orders, withdrew through mountain defiles towards the port of Skiathos on the south coast of Crete. Near the beach the tracks were clogged by unarmed men so exhausted that officers had to harangue them to continue the trek to the beach as an alternative to imprisonment. In the dark, the beach was chaotic, but loading went ahead, Vasey himself at last boarding. Over five nights, the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy had evacuated fifty thousand men from Greek or Cretan ports. As at Gallipoli, the Allies had to be impressed not by victory but by the success of withdrawal. A number of ships were sunk in the process and the Australian cruiser *Perth* was heavily attacked while transporting troops back to Egypt.



On his way back to Egypt from his Greek and Cretan adventure, Slessor had written, 'At present I feel that a mere summary of the news and facts of the [Greek] campaign would be ridiculously beside the main and vital point, which is that either the British or Australian government or both was prepared callously and cynically to sacrifice a comparatively small force of Australian fighting men for the sake of a political gesture—that is, to gamble with Australian lives on a wild chance, wilder than Gallipoli.' He was determined to get the story back to Australia and expressed his opinions when he met Blamey in Egypt on 30 April. 'Blamey said that he deplored any adverse criticism of the campaign, since it would assist the German propaganda effort to drive a wedge between Britain and Australia.' The general frankly told Slessor he would not get the story past the censor, and thus the general felt free to give information he might never otherwise have done. Blamey declared, 'We went in with our eyes open, and the 6th Division was thoroughly well equipped. The guarantees were between Governments. We were told that the landing was tied with the Lease and Lend Act in the US—if we didn't come to the aid of Greece, the Act [which empowered the US government to supply the British with ships, planes and other equipment] would not be passed.' And indeed, in the middle of the offensive, Churchill had received a fillip to his hope, a very positive response from Roosevelt.

‘Having sent all men and equipment to Greece you could possibly spare,’ wrote Roosevelt, ‘you have fought a wholly justified delaying action.’ It was to attract such sentiments that the 6th Division were sacrificed in Greece and Crete.

Perhaps Slessor was influenced by such considerations into abstaining from writing his own account of the debacle for presentation to Menzies.

BOB’S BIG AMBITIONS

The Greek adventure was damaging to Menzies, not least because he had failed to consult the Advisory War Council, a body made up of both United Australia Party ministers and Labor representatives, including Curtin and the Bathurst engine-driver Ben Chifley. The idea ordinary people had then, and which has persisted, was that Menzies had been bamboozled into agreeing to Greece. So strong was the outcry in Australia, directed chiefly at Menzies but also at Britain, that some American newspapers thought that Australia was likely to withdraw from the war, and the Japanese newspapers declared that the Empire was crumbling. There was rage and grief in the eight thousand households whose sons had been killed or captured in Greece or Crete. And one further question arose: why were the Australians withdrawn to untenable Crete when Greece had been such a fiasco?

Blamey would argue later that the Royal Navy had advised him that it was vital to hold Greece if the situation in the eastern Mediterranean was not to be compromised. Menzies, under political pressure and at Churchill’s urging, gave a speech on the matter in which he tried to imply that it was the sort of disaster that would never occur again now that General Blamey had been appointed deputy commander-in-chief in the Middle East, as indeed had happened. To have abandoned the Greeks, said Menzies, pushing a Churchillian argument, would mean having been guilty of ‘one of the infamies of history’. Australia would have been subjected to criticism from all over the world if it had not agreed to sacrifice its troops.

Minister for the Army, Percy Spender, appealed for more men to enlist, but they did not do so in sufficient numbers to make up those lost. At the recruiting office in Martin Place, Sydney, 150 men per day enlisted in the first four days of the new recruitment drive, and the average age of these recruits was much higher than the military would have desired. The June recruiting quota fell short by three thousand men. With improved job opportunities

at home, and given Britain's hunger for steel and wool and wheat, men wondered why they should go so far away to be made fools of.



And there was a further crisis. A week before the German invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel had attacked in the Western Desert, in the region of Cyrenaica where the Australians and British had recently been so successful. Such was the pace of Rommel's advance now that the two senior British commanders, Sir Richard O'Connor and Lieutenant-General Philip Neame, were captured. The German attack in Cyrenaica also meant that there was no chance of reinforcements for Greece.

After Greece, and in view of the situation in the Middle East, Spender, a man not given to the same degree of Empire-centricism as Menzies, had been disappointed during a visit to Singapore to discover its indefensible condition. Along with much of the press, he began to urge an intensified war effort. Writing to Deputy Prime Minister Artie Fadden on 21 April, he had worried about the 'extreme gravity of the present situation'. There were anti-tank men from the 8th Division who had been sent overseas without even seeing an anti-tank gun. Young recruit Russell Braddon would later describe the absurdity of performing the motions of deploying and loading and then firing utterly non-existent guns. Spender and others were concerned that there was a possibility that with Rommel's attack in the desert, and with Greece and Crete thrown in, the three Australian divisions in the Mediterranean could be destroyed, and then what of Australia?

The emphasis should be on local rather than Imperial defence, Spender believed. Yet the old campaigner Billy Hughes had complained to the Englishman Admiral Colvin that no mining of Australian ports had taken place. The first mines were laid off Port Moresby in New Guinea, but the approaches to Newcastle, Australia's vital industrial city, remained unmined because the Australian navy lacked the materials to do it. After nearly two years of war, Australia possessed a total of ten light tanks to train its entire Armoured Division of close to twenty thousand men. Despite the inevitable complaints that those who criticise this stage of Menzies' career and performance are sour leftists, on absolute terms and objective criteria, the Menzies of 1941 must be declared a failure, and his policies an endangerment of his country.

Menzies had been distracted all along by a glittering prize—the chance of being appointed the dominion representative on the British War Cabinet. But for that to happen, he had now to survive as prime minister, and despite Fadden's hostility and disapproval. Thus he felt not only personally damaged by the catastrophes of 1941, but also oppressed by the possibility that Tobruk, as Rommel advanced, seeking a deep-water harbour to supply his troops, would fall and a great part of the Australian forces be consumed there. Hence Menzies' powerful sense of destiny was at a crisis.

Meanwhile, the new question arose of Syria and Lebanon. By late May there seemed to be the chance of a German attack on Syria, which would leave the Allies in the Middle East flanked on the north-east and south-west. Syria was occupied by the Vichy French, those French who had remained loyal to the collaborating Marshal Pétain and who had come to terms with the Germans. German squadrons had been operating from French airfields there, and if the Germans landed in force, the Vichy French would fight alongside them. The Allies did not know that Hitler had no ambitions there—he was concentrated on the as-yet secret invasion of Russia to occur the following month.

The Light Horse of the Mounted Anzac Division had been amongst the forces that had captured Damascus from the Turks in 1918. Now two brigades of the 7th Division (the other one was besieged at Tobruk) and one of the 6th, under the overall command of spiky but brilliant General John Lavarack, were slated to take on the Vichy French in Syria, in a campaign that—except for those who fought there, and for the relatives of those who died—achieves little visibility in popular Australian history. British and Indian troops would also be engaged in the operation, as well as a small Free French division that had trained in Palestine and was ready to take on the Vichyists. So, on the French side, something of a civil war was to be fought in Lebanon and Syria.

Lavarack himself had already organised the defence for Tobruk against the Germans before being called away to lead the force of Australians, Indians, Free French and British against the Vichy French in Syria and Lebanon. Lavarack was not one of Blamey's favourite men, although Blamey's own ascent would leave room for Lavarack's rise and rise as well.

The Vichy commander in chief in Syria was General Henri Dentz. Many wondered if the way to deal with Dentz was through diplomacy instead of

what a senior intelligence officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Rogers, would call 'this cruel campaign'. General Wavell had decided to initiate the assault only under pressure from the chiefs of staff in London, who were in turn under political pressure. Blamey himself was dubious about the operation. On the one hand the Vichy French might collapse, but on the other the campaign might become a slow, cumbrous business. In a letter to Menzies on 7 June he described what lay ahead as 'largely a gamble'.

The Australians were to move up through Palestine by truck and then push forward in three columns on a broad front—one column along the coast, one towards Merdjayoun in inland Lebanon, and one aimed at Damascus. For the first two days after the initial trip up from Palestine, the Australians found the going easy, but in the mountainous country away from the coast, the resistance set in at an area around Tzfah (Safed), north-west of the Sea of Galilee in present-day Israel. The Australians were told that they must move forward and attack.

The Australian soldiers would find that many of the troops they were to face were not metropolitan Frenchmen but Spahis—Algerian, Moroccan or Tunisian troops. Whether against Spahis or French, the Australians of the 21st Brigade on the coastal wing of the advance found the French resistance at the Litani River intense. The Australians had to fall back on their desert skills in outflanking, penetrating and—in that curious military term—'reducing'—machine-gun nests and strongpoints.

Lavarack's force knew by now that the Vichy troops were expert in using the rocky coastal spurs to site their machine guns and cannons, and their destroyers were bombarding the Australians from the sea. The troops on the coast were very impressed at last, after an advance that tested them greatly, to see the beautiful port of Sidon, and to discover that it had been abandoned by the French. But the Vichy troops had taken up position elsewhere. A platoon of the 14th Battalion attacked Hill 1248 north of Sidon, climbed 670 metres to the top of a spur, and sheltered behind boulders as machine guns fired down on them and grenades fell amongst them. 'Shit, they're bloody real,' Private Harry Saunders cried. The platoon was driven off after a third of them had been killed or wounded. The battle around Jezzine would last for a week.

Far inland, the thrust from the desert right-wing was only 40 kilometres from Damascus, but the advance had hardly made much progress at all.

Great boulders prevented trucks from leaving the road and the sharp-stoned plains cut up infantry boots. The planned route was through the Bekaa Valley and into a landscape of defiles and outcrops and watercourses designed for defence.

It is hard to assess how ambivalent the French and North African troops felt about Vichy France. Certainly the North African troops had little choice but to be there, and it is quite possible that many of the French were chiefly fighting from loyalty to commanders and for their honour rather than because of adherence to the Fascist propositions of Pétain and Hitler.

Lavarack had impressed on Blamey the difficulties of the thrust through the Bekaa Valley. On the far right the Free French and the Indians were closing in on Damascus, but the column in the middle, said Lavarack, including the Australian 25th Brigade, but others as well, needed all the help that could be rendered. Blamey was so filled with urgency that he drove that night to the British headquarters in Jerusalem and insisted that General Wilson be woken up.

‘All right,’ Wilson said to Blamey, ‘I’ll get hold of Lavarack and Rowell in the morning.’

‘Not in the morning,’ said Blamey. ‘Tonight. Men are dying in Syria.’

Within a few hours, Lavarack, with his orders revised, was authorised to send a British brigade and three Australian battalions from the coast to help the British, Indian and Free French forces inland, on the Central Bekaa thrust to Damascus. After Lavarack was able to release his new reserve troops, the central column had successes, and later in the month the Free French and Indian forces helped by emerging from Damascus and recapturing villages on Lavarack’s line of march. The 3rd Australian Battalion, meanwhile, came up to Syria from Palestine by rail in cattle trucks through the ferocious heat of the Jordan Valley, where the temperature at the town of Samarkh was later claimed to have been 54 degrees Celsius.

For the Australians beating their way to Damascus through the mountains, medical supplies at the village of Mezze, where the wounded were treated, gave out. The Australians were given the job of capturing a number of forts north of Mezze and west of Damascus. Fort Goybet proved testing and very dangerous to take, having steep approaches.

Further hills had to be attacked, and there were intimate Australian-to-French contests. The exchange at the Jebel Mazar summit between a

French officer and the Australian lieutenant-colonel A.C. Murchison was indicative of the strangeness of this campaign, and of a certain emotional reluctance on both sides.

‘There are no Germans here,’ the French officer called to Murchison.

Murchison said he knew that. ‘What of it?’

‘Then why are you fighting?’

‘Because I’ve been told to,’ said Murchison. It was only after a pause that he said, ‘Because you are collaborating with the Huns.’

There were continued attacks by Vichy aircraft, and nine Tomahawks of the Number 3 Australian Squadron shot down six French bombers and two German-manned Junkers bombers.

The Battle of Damour, between 5 and 12 July 1941, was the final operation. Wadi Damour, the valley of the Damour River, needed to be forded if Beirut was to fall. Major-General Tubby Allen outflanked Damour, attacked it from its north-eastern side, and encircled many French units as well as cutting the road to Beirut. By now British forces were descending from the direction of Iraq and, later in the month, neared Damascus and Homs and General Dentz sought an armistice. At Acre on the night of 12 July, Dentz, the Vichy French commander, came to terms with the Allies, and a ceasefire came into effect, one of the conditions of the armistice being that all Allied prisoners should be set free. The Allies were permitted to lobby the Vichy French military through pamphlets, loudspeakers and broadcasts to join the forces arrayed against Fascism. Lavarack was ‘most charming in his attitude’ towards Dentz, perhaps as part of that process. In September, Dentz and his senior officers were allowed to leave for France, another of the armistice conditions.

By then Australia had taken nearly sixteen thousand casualties in Syria, more than four hundred of them killed.



Earlier in the campaign, Merdjayoun had fallen to the Australians on 12 June. The Vichy French counter attacked the 25th Brigade and took back the town but the Australians took it conclusively on 18 June. Damascus fell to the Free French, Australian, British and Indians on 21 June. The day after, on 22 June, the German army advanced into Russia. It was obvious now that that was where their minds had been, and that they probably had no intention at all of occupying Syria.

The German invasion of Russia caused a shift of perception and behaviour in Australia. Margaret Holmes, a Sydney pacifist, declared, 'I can remember that overnight these Commo friends of mine, they changed—from saying that it was a phoney war and we shouldn't take part in it, to saying, oh no, it's really "workers and all unite"'. The Communist Laurie Aarons noticed that Frank Packer's *Sunday Telegraph* began to call the Russians 'our gallant allies'. Joyce Batterham, a Communist Party member who worked in Newcastle, received a letter from a friend who had joined the forces now that Russia was under attack and who was stationed in Darwin. When in the open-air cinema 'God Save the King' was played, many of the troops called out for Stalin: 'We want Uncle Joe, we want Uncle Joe'.

CYRENAICA RATS

The troops shipped back from Greece and Crete were sorely needed in North Africa, where a crisis had struck. On 8 March 1941, as the Australian veterans of the 6th Division were on their way to Greece, the assault of the German general Rommel and his Afrika Korps burst from the borderlands of Tunisia and, driving east along the Libyan desert coast, and in a little over three weeks, overwhelmed and outflanked the Allied forces garrisoned and dug in around the coastal towns—Benghazi, Cyrene, Tobruk, Derna—all captured in such style from the Italians in past months. Rommel was advancing against the 'minimum possible force' that the British commander Wavell mistakenly thought he had needed to hold the line in the desert, given all the forces committed elsewhere. The soldiers Wavell retained in Africa when Rommel surprised him included the 9th Australian Division troops, fresh to the desert and led by a vigorous and stubborn citizen-general named Leslie Morshead. It was thought that the British, Indians, South Africans and raw Australians could hold the line, but a Rommel attack had not been expected so early and Wavell's minimum possible force now proved cruelly inadequate.

On 4 April the first action in which the 9th Division's troops were involved occurred, when its 19th Battalion (ideally a thousand men, in reality some hundreds less) had to fight off three thousand Germans seeking to surround them near the coast. Morshead's men defending Benghazi lacked equipment to a degree close to scandalous. They were not equipped with anti-tank guns, transport, artillery ammunition or signals gear. There was a shortage of

field ambulances as well. The 17th Battalion diary confessed that they were 'alarmingly under-equipped' but that they 'fossicked' amongst the debris left behind earlier by retreating Italians and found three motorbikes and several Breda and Fiat guns.

One of Morshead's brigades was in reserve at Tobruk. The British general Neame, an incompetent fellow who to the delight of many would soon be captured by the Germans, wanted to take another of Morshead's brigades, but the forthright Morshead refused him in a way Neame thought unmilitary, appealing over his head to Wavell, the commander in chief, and to Blamey. It was just as well Morshead objected, because the British 2nd Armoured Division, bravely using captured Italian tanks, disintegrated under Rommel's initial attack.

Before Rommel captured him, Neame had been critical of the Australian troops' own looting and 'disorderly behaviour' in the towns along the coast—complaints that were a predictable British refrain by now. 'The Commander in Chief was accosted in the street by a drunken Australian soldier while visiting me here,' wrote Neame in protest. 'Without in any way condoning any offences,' commented Morshead in response, 'I fear it is the same old story of giving a dog a bad name.' Morshead called Neame's bluff by telling him that he was forwarding the insulting letter to Blamey and might forward it also to the Australian government.

The untrained Australian infantry, supported by limited British artillery and by 6 Squadron RAAF, who could not safely use their decrepit airfield at the nearby airstrip of Agadabia, were nonetheless able to fight an appropriate rearguard action. The Afrika Korps itself was beginning to find the going hard as it came eastwards—it often lacked fuel and supplies and the men suffered from exhaustion. Also Rommel decided to advance on three fronts, so that when his leading elements ran into the 9th Division there was not as much weight in their thrust. But if he took Tobruk, his men could be resupplied from that port, and even from the British fuel and other dumps located there, and so be renewed in effort and morale.

Tobruk with its defences and dumps lay in the path of Morshead's retreat. He had inspected its defences earlier in the year, so when the retreat arrived there, he decided that the port could be held. His 24th Brigade was already there, bringing up his division to something like full strength. Wavell visited Tobruk and affirmed that Tobruk must be held, which

seemed to stiffen them. The 24th Australian Battalion took up positions on the scree of the escarpment running south and west of Tobruk, with the port behind them. And when on Morshead's orders the 48th Battalion fell in on the ridge beside them, the Australian determination increased that they would not be moved except by retreat orders. Even to the individual soldiers, this struck them as a holdable position.

Far to their rear, people with an investment in the outcome—Egyptian elites, Greeks, French and British in Alexandria and Cairo—felt something very like panic. The general feeling was that Alexandria was as good as doomed, and if it went, so would Cairo and the Suez Canal, and God knew what degree of penetration eastwards. Slessor had already seen hundreds of lorries packed with Australian soldiers streaming through Cairo, heading desertward to take new positions on the threatened flank. Arrangements were made for getting the correspondents away if it were necessary, and all those who could find private transport were told to use it.

The battle offshore was lethal, involving German U-boats attacking supply ships and naval vessels running supplies into Tobruk under protection of British and Australian aircraft or attack from German ones. Slessor would write perhaps his finest poem, 'Beach Burial', about the corpses of young sailors, both enemy and ally, washed onto the North African beaches. As he wrote, 'The sand joins them together, enlisted on the other front.' The Allies' struggle to prevent supplies getting through to Rommel's men, and that of the Axis to stop supplies reaching the British in Malta and North Africa, was brutal.

During the Allied retreat, Morshead understood, first, that Tobruk, and Tripoli, far to the west, were the only viable ports to support Rommel, so that if the German general could take Tobruk his supply route would be simplified and shortened. Morshead understood further that the loss of Cairo and the Suez Canal would be catastrophic both for Australia's trade with Britain and for the Allied hold on the Mediterranean. He must do whatever could be done to slow the advance of the Nazi regime eastwards into an unlimited eastern version of the Reich beyond the Canal and as far as the oilfields of Iraq and into Persia.

Perhaps not quite understanding the Australian penchant for embracing negative epithets, William Joyce, the Irish Nazi who broadcast from Berlin under the nickname Lord Haw-Haw, gave the troops in the port their own

nickname, 'Rats of Tobruk'. Indeed, there would be a sort of rodent stubbornness in the way the men possessed the bunkers and half-ruined streets and shattered houses of the port, endured grit in their food and tea, and developed a close acquaintance with the walls of slit trenches and the earth, generally during near-cessless daytime attacks from the air.

The Tobruk area was a plateau surrounding a spacious east-west harbour. The Red Line—the defences built to protect it—ran in a semicircle across the desert from the coast thirteen kilometres east of the harbour to fourteen kilometres west of it. The defences were not continuous but consisted of many strongpoints protected by barbed wire and anti-tank ditches. Mines were laid down in the barren, stony ground beyond the perimeter. The 9th Division men and others had the Mediterranean at their backs, and it was a source of supply and an aid to hygiene. The Germans launched their first attack on Morshead's perimeter on 13 April 1941—the 'Easter Battle'. The Afrika Korps and their Italian allies expected to surge over the Tobruk plateau and capture the port in quick order. But the two-thirds Australian defenders collaborated with the one-third British with a wholeheartedness the Afrika Korps had not before encountered. Morshead had already warned his brigade commanders, 'There'll be no Dunkirk here. If we should have to get out, we shall fight our way out.' Chester Wilmot, transmitting from inside Tobruk and making it famous, was told by Morshead, 'I determine we should make no man's land our land.' In the Red Line, the front line, everyone was employed in regular patrols. The nightly patrols allowed the Australians to find where the enemy was most thickly bivouacked so that the artillery could shell their camps. Morshead later said, 'We set out to besiege the besiegers.' At night the wounded were taken out of the port by ship, and new men and food and ammunition came in. A Royal Artillery anti-aircraft brigade protected the port from the Luftwaffe. The 1st Royal Northumberland Fusiliers worked the machine guns, and there were men from the 18th Indian Cavalry and the 3rd Armoured Brigade deployed as part of the garrison.

When the enemy sent in the infantry on Easter Sunday, they broke the perimeter in only a few places. There were exchanges of the greatest savagery, involving bayonets and grenades, as young German men were met by similarly young Australians, crazed with proprietorial rage and ready to eject them. The next morning, 14 April, Rommel launched a tank attack with tactics used in the Blitzkrieg in France in 1940, methods that had

not yet failed the German army. Les Watkins, one of the Rats, yelling, 'Whop it up 'em, mate!', admired the sangfroid, the gameness, with which the British-manned and inadequate Matilda tanks rattled forth between Australian weapons pits, foxholes and strongpoints to take on the Panzers. On Morshead's orders, the German tanks were let through the perimeter, and it was the German infantry following the tanks on whom the soldiers on the perimeter turned their guns. The tanks were isolated and became targets for British anti-tank guns and for those impudent Matildas. At last, the enemy tanks retreated through the very gap they had made in the perimeter; as they exited, they were caught from both sides by mortars, cannon, Bren guns and rifles. In a communiqué to Roosevelt, Churchill said that this 'is the first time they [the Afrika Korps] have tasted defeat'.

Ships continued to bring in new men and took the mutilated and damaged out. At least sometimes they did: a transport that landed the 23rd Battalion one night was immediately attacked by Stuka dive bombers and blew up soon after the men landed. The town they moved through, a place of rubble now, smelled of dead bodies and excreta.

These new men were in place along the perimeter on 30 April to see Rommel's tanks and infantry transported by trucks churning up the desert to the west. This was the start of the next attack, which would grow in intensity to be named the Battle of the Salient. Rommel's spearhead fell on the 24th Battalion sector of the perimeter, concentrating his dive-bombing and artillery bombardments on those men. Morshead had laid down a new minefield in the path of what turned out to be Rommel's planned penetration, but it would not stop a penetration three kilometres deep and five wide. The Panzer tanks worked with assault troops, capturing post after post, killing or taking prisoner the Australians who garrisoned them before attempting an armoured drive on the port. By nine that night, forty German tanks were inside the perimeter and most of the perimeter posts had fallen. More tanks and artillery rushed into the gap and so, widening it, did German and Italian troops. Flamethrowers were directed at posts held by the 26th Battalion. Communication between Morshead's headquarters in the town and the posts on the Red Line had been lost from the start. It was impossible, therefore, to find out what posts still lay in Australian hands. Morshead moved supports up behind the 24th Battalion on the west side of the perimeter, though he did not yet know if the

24th had held on. In the afternoon, he ordered his 48th Battalion to counter attack and recapture before dark the perimeter strongpoints now held by the Afrika Korps. These were stretched out over four kilometres. Spread thin over so many kilometres, many of the battalion were killed, as their colonel had predicted to Morshead they would be.

The next morning there was fog from the sea, and its effects would be added to by dust storms. But though the hole in the defenders' line would never be repaired, the defences around the port held. Three months later, Morshead would try again to take back the perimeter. A battalion attacked at each end of the German salient to capture perimeter posts. This, too, failed, and the siege went on. It is hard to know if the young men defending the port understood that they had crucially delayed great German plans for conquests far to the east.

The British general Claude Auchinleck, now in charge in the Middle East, ordered that the 18th Australian Brigade be relieved and taken out of the port by sea in August. This withdrawal was due to Morshead's telling Blamey in July that the garrison's capacity to resist a sustained assault was diminishing. The men's health was poor. Blamey took up the cause of the relief of the Australians by other troops, and the Australian government demanded it too. Most of the remaining Australians were taken out in September and October, to be replaced by, amongst other units, a Polish brigade. The 13th Battalion AIF stayed until it fought its way out of the siege in December. By then there had been three thousand Australian dead and wounded, and just under a thousand taken prisoner.

The navies of Britain and Australia had kept the garrison supplied throughout—the soldiers called the supply ships the 'Tobruk ferry'. On 27 November, escorting a slow convoy from Alexandria, HMAS *Parramatta* was shepherding one of the fuel ships on the approaches to Tobruk, and travelling at only three knots. Her sailors had spent the day before protecting the ship and her convoy from a number of attacks from dive bombers. Such an exhausting day as that was standard for the crews while on convoy duty to Tobruk. *Parramatta* was torpedoed in the magazine by a U-boat, exploded and sank fast, with the loss of all her officers, and 138 men as well.

General Auchinleck said that Morshead's aggressive defence of Tobruk was responsible for 'freedom from embarrassment' of the weak force stationed on the Egyptian frontier. It kept 'the enemy constantly in a high

state of tension'. Cairo, Alexandria and the Canal were held by brave counter attacks, in part by troops rescued from the ports of Greece and Crete. Tobruk was Rommel's first failure, the viper at his flank.

CURTIN RISING

The brilliant young jurist and Labor member Herbert Vere Evatt understood that Hitler's assault on Russia in June 1941 would have a worldwide impact and an impact for Australia. It drew Russian divisions facing Japan away from the far-eastern borders, and so gave the Japanese army a windfall of divisions and aircraft for a potential thrust into the Pacific.

While most politicians who fancied themselves as lawyers went from politics to the High Court, Evatt had already been on the High Court; appointed at the age of thirty-six, he was the youngest High Court judge yet. He was East Maitland-born, son of an English publican, but—like many a brilliant boy—never fully a child. His attitudes were formed in part by the Maitland Irishmen and unionists who favoured his father's pub. Though a gifted all-round sportsman, he was rejected for military service in World War I because of astigmatism, and his thick glasses would become famous through press photographs. Once he was admitted to the bar, Evatt's work was often what people would now call human rights law—for example, representing trade unionists such as union leader Tom Walsh, who was threatened with deportation from Australia in 1925. Evatt also had time to publish three works of history. As a jurist Evatt was smart and contentious. He was passionate about rugby league and cricket, and a friend of artists and of the writers Kylie Tennant and Eleanor Dark.

In 1940, Evatt stood for the federal seat of Barton in New South Wales, won it and retired from the High Court. He chafed in opposition and longed for office. When his leader John Curtin became prime minister in 1941, Evatt was appointed Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs.

Now Evatt stated his convictions about Australia's danger most vocally at meetings of the Advisory War Council, of which he became a member in 1941. Evatt considered the gentlemanly Curtin too conciliatory in his manner towards the United Australia Party (UAP). But there is no doubt that Curtin understood the peril of the moment as well as Evatt did. At the Advisory War Council meeting on 12 June, Curtin urged that Australia put its own defence first, the way Britain had. He did not necessarily

want Australian forces withdrawn from the Middle East yet, but he complained that Britain had not given the Middle East priority in aircraft and equipment, and thus made the British and Australian forces there all the more vulnerable.

In part for fear of loss of identity and of an ability to represent their constituency—working people—Labor had been unwilling in mid-1941 to share power and form a combined government with the UAP. Partially this was because Menzies' hold on power was so slim and his view of the crisis so much at odds with Curtin's. Curtin told Menzies he was content to let Menzies' government make policy and refer it to the Advisory War Council for comment.

Many attacked Curtin, even some in his own party, for not joining a national government, while others like Evatt attacked him for being too amenable with Menzies and Menzies' amiable deputy Artie Fadden. But Curtin's relationship with Fadden was very close, and Fadden knew about Curtin's tendency to go on the occasional bender. Fadden, leader of the Country Party, was of Irish parentage too, and his father, as Curtin's had been earlier in life, was a policeman, another coincidence of background.

It is not to demean the two lawyers, Evatt and Menzies, or to question the genuineness of their highly contested visions, if we say that they had strong self-regard and a conviction of their ability—and even of their destiny—to lead. Curtin was a complex being by contrast. He was certainly a politician and knew the value of a vote, and how to work the press through his skilled pressman Don Rodgers. But Curtin possessed immense self-doubt as well. Though his political beliefs were strong, he made many apolitical friends and often trusted them better than he did his colleagues. He would say his best friend during World War II was Fred Southwell, brother of Curtin's mistress Belle Southwell, housekeeper of the Kurrajong Hotel. Whenever Curtin, a reformed alcoholic, lapsed, and went on a bender in Sydney or elsewhere, he depended on opposition members, not one of his own fraught party, to look after him. Lloyd Ross, a government PR man, would tell the story of a Country Party man once ushering a ruinously drunk Curtin onto a train from Sydney to Canberra, and into a compartment where the shades were pulled down so that no one could see in from the corridor. Years before, Curtin had managed to get so drunk while staying with his wife Elsie in a Melbourne temperance hotel that it took some days before he was fit to

travel to Canberra, and even then he tried to retain a whisky bottle in his pocket. Elsie extracted the bottle and hurled it out of the train window.

To what extent was Curtin's occasional lapse due to how difficult he found it to take adverse news? One biographer, David Day, argues that these days Curtin might have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, for he could be immobilised with depression which, if given the chance, he would medicate with liquor.

As he had from youth, Curtin took things hard, and hardest of all the misfortune and peril of others, and these days, of Australia. And he was a peacemaker: he brought the seven Lang Labor rebels, led by Jack Beasley—known as 'Stabber Jack' after he crossed the floor to bring Scullin down—back into Labor. Through his membership of the Advisory War Council he worked on improved social welfare payments and better pay for troops, but in a savage 1940 Caucus meeting he was accused of backing down, blamed for his sociability with Menzies and lack of bite, to the extent that he offered his resignation as party leader. It was not accepted.

Curtin recovered from the damage to him, physical and spiritual, over the Christmas of 1940. In the New Year of 1941, Menzies was gone to Britain, and Curtin could do business congenially with acting Prime Minister Fadden. He had pledged himself to honour Menzies' narrow mandate and continued to do so. The Australian people, he said, had differing politics, but they wanted the 'complete cooperation of those who are charged with the responsibility to ensure the safety of our country'. Such talk enraged his followers, and some asked what Menzies was doing for the country's safety anyhow.

Curtin was fully aware that Menzies was not only unpopular but had failed to provide an imperilled Australia with any form of sophisticated defence should the Japanese attack and thus had caused the electorate anxiety about the primitive state of Australian defences. Faced with the prospect of power, Curtin took advice from Scullin, the elder statesman, and from his unlikely friend, the Scots replacement for Sir Isaac Isaacs, Governor-General Lord Gowrie, whose curriculum vitae included Eton, Winchester, a good regiment, Tory parliamentarian, et cetera. After initial apprehension about a Labor government, Gowrie warmed to, and was warmed to by, Curtin. In an informal Canberra, Curtin, especially after he became prime minister, would stroll across from the Lodge to Government

House and, as Gowrie wrote, 'spend quiet afternoons and evenings with my wife and myself'. Gowrie liked Curtin for his perseverance and patience and lack of personal ambition: 'The most selfless man I have ever met,' he declared of Curtin.

Curtin's health was fragile, and he suffered pneumonia at the time military disasters occurred in Greece and North Africa. In the three weeks Curtin was in hospital in Melbourne, Crete fell, and Labor blamed Menzies—who had been in London the better part of six months—for the debacle. Events were indeed turning on Menzies that June. Besides his pre-war sympathy for Nazi Germany and for appeasement along the lines pursued by former British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, there was his export of pig iron (that is, iron with a high carbon content) to Japan against the unions' protests. All this told against him in public opinion. So did his anxiety to return to London in August 1941 when he had achieved so little on his first trip.

Menzies had recently told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that he would go to any lengths to keep the conduct of the war out of Labor hands. But in secrecy he offered Curtin the prime ministership in a national government if Curtin would select him to represent Australia on the War Cabinet in London. The Labor Caucus met to consider Menzies' astounding offer, and rejected it. Labor wanted to govern in its own right. If it joined a national government made up of all parties it would forgo its right to offer, as Curtin said, 'honest patriotic criticism without which a successful war effort is impossible'. To prevent rejection in the polls and still hold to his London ambition, Menzies resigned as prime minister on 28 August in favour of the Country Party's 'Affable Artie' Fadden. Arthur Coles now thought it time to leave the UAP and reverted to being an independent, though still supporting Fadden. Some of the Labor Party wanted to challenge right then for government, but the majority took Curtin's view and were against it. They wanted moral legitimacy, and felt it was close.

On 2 September 1941, two years since the beginning of the war, Curtin told the Australian people, 'We will govern when we are given a mandate by the people to do so.' The Fadden government lasted for just forty days with the support of the two independent MPs, Coles and Wilson, whose sympathies were increasingly with Curtin. When Fadden presented his budget to Parliament at the end of September, Labor decided to test the government support by opposing it, on the basis that the burden was not

shared amongst the community. In protest, Curtin moved to amend the budget, symbolically, by one pound, knowing that this gesture would test his friend Fadden's support. Friendship in politics only went so far.

In early October, Curtin came to Fadden's office in Parliament House. Curtin is said to have asked, 'Well, boy, have you got the numbers? I hope you have, but I don't think you have.' Fadden answered, 'No, John, I haven't got them. I have heard that Wilson spent the weekend at Evatt's home and I can't rely on Coles.'

'Well, there it is,' said Curtin sympathetically. 'Politics is a funny game.'

Late that afternoon the budget was voted down and Parliament adjourned. Fadden went to Lord Gowrie to resign, and soon after Curtin arrived by summons. 'You'll be prime minister against your will,' one of his critics inside the party had said. But there was no reluctance in the telegram Curtin had already sent to his wife Elsie on 3 October, the day before her birthday: 'This is your birthday gift. Coles and Wilson are providing it, they have announced their intention of voting for our amendment and the Government will be defeated. Love, John.'

Elsie Curtin chose not to live with him at the Lodge. It was a decision arrived at mutually, since Elsie had their daughter, also Elsie, and her own mother to look after in Cottesloe. At that time the Curtins' son John was stationed at a nearby RAAF camp. The pattern was that Elsie senior would come to Canberra twice a year and stay at the Lodge for two or so months. Although strongly versed in Labor doctrine, she was afflicted by acute shyness and a sense of unfitness for the bigger world. 'It was strange for me to have such a big place to run,' she unaffectedly later said, 'and well-meaning people confused me by telling me what I should wear.' Pattie Menzies, Robert's wife, daughter of a federal senator, had made a much more polished job of living at the Lodge, and in British society.

The press, including the *Melbourne Age*, applauded Curtin's accession, saying that Labor had shown it would be able to prosecute the war vigorously. At this crucial time, Curtin appointed Frank Forde as Minister for Defence and deputy leader. Forde, like Curtin, was the son of Irish immigrants. The vigorously self-educated former engine driver, Ben Chifley from Bathurst, became Treasurer. And Herbert Vere Evatt, as Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, could now set out to address the crisis he knew was calling to him and to Australia.

On taking office, Curtin sent a telegram to Churchill assuring him that Labor would 'co-operate fully' in bringing victory to the Empire and its Allies. Despite this, he insisted that the remainder of the 9th Division be relieved from the besieged town of Tobruk, for fear they would be overrun. Churchill complied reluctantly.

The idea that Curtin transformed the focus of Australia immediately from Europe to the Pacific is one that was applauded in many families, including my own. But in fact during the eight weeks Curtin was given before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Malaya and Hong Kong, many commitments to the Northern European theatre remained as they had been before. There was one great difference, though—while Menzies cold-shouldered the Americans for fear that British interests in the Pacific would be diminished, Curtin gave permission for American aircraft to land in Australia as long as the war lasted—this permission having been granted seven weeks before the Pearl Harbor attack. He also agreed that the United States could establish an air route between Hawaii and the Philippines, using bases in Australia and New Guinea, and though Britain was informed of these new arrangements, it was not consulted on them. Curtin still part-believed, however, the unlikely British promise that it would abandon the Mediterranean to hold Singapore. He did not yet fully see it as Churchill's desperate and even deceitful means of keeping the Australian divisions in the Middle East.

By October 1941, it seemed that war with Japan was inevitable—all intelligence indicated it. Despite this, Curtin did not yet initiate plans to withdraw the Australians from North Africa and bring them home. He was comforted to know that a great force of American B17 heavy bombers was being assembled in the Philippines (though most of them would be destroyed on the ground in Japanese bombing attacks during the second day of the Pacific War). Closer to home, in mid November 1941 the light cruiser *Sydney* had sighted the German ship *Kormoran*, a raider designed for sinking merchant shipping, south of Carnarvon off the coast of Western Australia, and set out to chase her. It asked *Kormoran* to show its secret Allied sign; since the German commander, Theodor Detmers, could not do so, he had no choice but to hoist the German flag, uncover his guns, open fire and send off torpedoes. *Sydney*'s answer to this fire was a shell to the *Kormoran*'s funnel. Within five minutes both ships were doomed. *Sydney* fired four torpedoes, which all missed, and as she struggled away, was further hit by *Kormoran*'s

guns. Detmers ordered the *Kormoran* abandoned, because the mines lying in its hold could explode. The crew abandoned ship after setting charges.

Of *Sydney*'s crew of 645, none survived. Receiving this news, Curtin said, 'I couldn't bring myself to make the announcement . . . so I went to Government House and talked to the Governor-General.' *Sydney*'s departure from the port it was named for had been delayed by industrial trouble, and Curtin felt that had he moved against the strikers, it could have left port on time and thus avoided *Kormoran*.

JAPAN ASCENDANT



JUMPY ABOUT INVASION

On 1 December 1941 in Canberra, the House adjourned for what was expected to be a period of three and a half months, but Curtin's War Cabinet was to hold an emergency meeting in Melbourne on 3 December with the Chiefs of Staff. Japanese convoys had by now been sighted leaving Indochina, present-day Vietnam, for destinations that could merely be guessed at.

On Monday, 8 December, Don Rodgers, Curtin's intimate and pressman, woke him up with the news that a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had been picked up by the Australian government's shortwave radio monitoring service. 'Well, it has come,' sighed Curtin.

The same day, but on the Australian side of the dateline, General Tomoyuki Yamashita's 25th Army began landing in Malaya. A War Cabinet meeting was held that morning. The farcical state of Australian defences seemed all the more obvious now: there were only sufficient machine guns and anti-tank guns to equip half the militia. Vickers machine guns were being manufactured in Australia at a rate of two hundred per month, but most were exported to other fronts under contract with the British and only twenty of these kept for Australian purposes. There were a few tanks available for training purposes. The fighters and heavy bombers were few in number and obsolescent. Despite the hysteria about Japan that reigned in Australia from

the mid-1890s, Australia found itself on the morning of 8 December 1941 utterly naked to an aggression that it believed was aimed at the South-West as well as the Northern Pacific.

In the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the invasion of Malaya, Curtin said that he did not intend to bring back the three AIF divisions from the Middle East yet, but he wondered whether air force trainees should continue to be sent to Britain. Above all, what was not known that morning of 8 December was that there existed an agreement between the United States and Britain that Anglo-American forces would concentrate on defeating Germany first. It was Frederick Shedden the public servant, even though he was as strong an Empire man as any, who suggested to Curtin that Britain could not be depended on in the Pacific and Indian oceans. He had not believed the promises Churchill had made to Menzies, and he urged Curtin to declare the war against Japan to be a 'new war' rather than a mere increment in hostilities. The government issued its own formal declaration of war against Japan, but not as an automatic reaction to British intentions, as had been the case with Menzies at the beginning of war in Europe.

That night Curtin broadcast to the nation from the ABC studios in Sydney. The country itself was now 'the stake in this conflict', he said. This was Australia's 'darkest hour'. The Australians must 'hold this country, and keep it as a citadel for the British-speaking race and as a place where civilisation will persist'.

Curtin's wife Elsie was going back to Western Australia by train to spend Christmas with her mother, and when ambushed by a journalist while changing trains in Adelaide, she said percipiently that the Japanese sinking of the British warships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* off Malaya on 10 December had vindicated her husband's belief in 'bombers before battleships'.

The two battleships had been sent to honour Churchill's promise to fortify Singapore. On the afternoon of 8 December 1941, they sailed with four destroyers, including HMAS *Vampire*, from Singapore to take on the Japanese invasion fleet off Kota Bharu on the Malayan east coast. With no air cover to protect them, they were attacked shortly after 11 a.m. on 10 December by two Japanese air flotillas. Both of the British ships were sunk by torpedo planes in mercilessly swift order, with the loss of over eight hundred men, and there were no longer any British capital ships in the region capable of taking on the Japanese. The next day, Curtin declared, 'For years

I have insisted that a maximum air defence was imperative to the efficiency of land and sea forces—however strong they might be. Now we are faced with the reality.’ He did not, however, cancel the transfer of air personnel through the Empire training scheme in Canada to British airfields. He was still a son of the Empire. But the War Cabinet approved a call-up of 114,000 men for the army and the sending of Australian troops to Darwin, Port Moresby and Timor.

Parliament was called back into session on 16 December. In the meantime, General Iven Mackay, ‘Mr Chips’, now Commander of the Home Forces, urged rather grimly that the public be warned that the Japanese were likely to enjoy early success in invading Australia, and that the population were to all stay level-headed, for they might well come out on top in the end. Curtin also heard from the urbane Vivian Bowden in Singapore, Australia’s representative on the War Council, that it was a matter of weeks before Singapore would fall. Bowden had been a good adviser from the start, a polished fellow who had worked many years in Shanghai and represented Australia’s trade interests there. He had moved to Singapore at the Australian government’s request when Australia closed its trade office in Shanghai in 1940. To read his cables and reports is to be convinced he was the clearest-headed official in Singapore.

As the Japanese advanced down the Malayan Peninsula, facing only a rare and minor loss and delay, Curtin feared that the troops in Singapore would be victims of the same sort of fiasco as those in Greece and Crete. In the midst of these fears, the Melbourne *Herald* asked Curtin to provide a New Year message for the Australian people, and it was published on 27 December. ‘I see 1942 as the year in which we shall know the answer,’ he said, and the Australians would need to provide it. Australia was now ‘within the fighting lines’. But amongst other things, Curtin hoped that Russia might take on Japan from the direction of Siberia, and attack her flank so that her southward drive might be thwarted. After all, said Curtin, innocent of knowledge of what Roosevelt and Churchill had already decided, no one front was any more important than another.

Churchill abominated Curtin’s suggestion about Russia taking on the Japanese. He wanted the entirety of the Russian army concentrated upon the Germans. But the sentence Churchill found particularly ‘insulting’ in Curtin’s broadcast was the sentiment: ‘Without any inhibition of any kind,

I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.'

Churchill sent a message of chastisement, which declared that Britain and the United States would have a primary role in deciding Pacific strategy—not, as Curtin had said, Australia and the United States. A number of Australian conservatives shared Churchill's fury. They had eaten their Christmas dinners still absolutely convinced that in Malaya—or at least Singapore—the 'racially inferior' Japanese would be defeated, and that Singapore would remain an unassailable rock.

Curtin declared that Australia went to war with Japan 'because our vital interests are imperilled and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are assailed'. But many people in the Pacific were not, in fact, free. There was Dutch repression in Indonesia and British overlordship in Malaya. In Indochina, rebellion brought severe repression from the French rulers, particularly in 1930 when the people tried to create Xo-viets (Soviets), committees of peasants and workers. The French hit back with air and ground attacks that caused ten thousand casualties.

Australia's own record in Papua and New Guinea before the war did not bespeak equality. The Native Regulations and Ordinances for Papua, according to former district commissioner David Marsh, decreed that 'a native wasn't allowed to drink'. He couldn't go into a picture show with Europeans. When walking along a footpath the native was expected to move aside for whites.

Curtin certainly described himself and his fellow countrymen as trying to secure 'the future of the *white* man in the Pacific' (emphasis added). He invoked White Australia as part of Australia's war aims. The drink-sodden General Blamey helped by calling the Japanese soldier 'a cross between the human being and the ape'. General Clowes, ultimately the commander at the historic battle of Milne Bay, said that defeating the enemy was 'a most effective way of demonstrating the superiority of the white race'.

FIFTH COLUMN

William Cooper, secretary of the Australian Aborigines' League, declared on the verge of war that 'the Aborigine has no status, no rights, no land . . . he has no country and nothing to fight for but the privilege of defending the land which was taken from him by a white race without compensation or

even kindness'. But in fact Aboriginal troops were not particularly welcomed into the armed forces.

In 1939, some in the establishment had been terrified that the Aborigines might become a fifth column, with sinister Lutheran missionaries turning them into a pro-German force. Army intelligence took control of the Beagle Bay mission in Western Australia and, in turn, of missionaries of German descent. The member for the Northern Territory accused Patrol Officer Strehlow, son of a pastor and known for his pro-Aboriginal sentiments, of being a Nazi and the sort of man who could influence Aborigines in the Third Reich's favour.

In 1940, the Melbourne *Sun* noted the protest of Pastor Doug Nicholls: 'Australians were raving about persecuted minorities in other parts of the world, but were they ready to voice their support for the unjustly treated Aboriginal minority in Australia?' In August 1942, the manager of a station at Lake Tyers, Victoria, where black soldiers had enlisted but had then been discharged out of the army, mentioned 'the generally expressed opinion of the youth of the Station . . . that they would get a "better spin" under Japanese rule'.

Patrol Officer Bob Darkin recalled that in the Cairns area 'what we had to do was raid their camps piccaninny daylight, just before dawn', for the purposes of moving disaffected Aborigines further inland where they could not act as a fifth column for the Japanese enemy. In Western Australia, a special force rounded up all unemployed Aborigines from the hinterland and interned them in the Moore River camp as 'possible potential enemies'. All Australian Aborigines over the age of fourteen were issued with a military permit listing where they lived, worked and travelled.



The first small squad of Americans to arrive in Australia was led by General George Brett of the US Army Air Forces, who flew into Brisbane with his staff on 28 December 1941, the day after Curtin's appeal to the United States in his New Year message. They had not come in response to Curtin's oratory, but rather to prepare Australia as a base for American forces, given that the surrender of the Philippines, like that of Singapore, was already thought by Washington to be inevitable. But even in the hour of peril the White Australia Policy overrode other considerations—the Advisory War Council

on 12 January voted that no black American troops should be accepted into Australia. Curtin vetoed the decision, but only after the assurance that the African Americans who were shipped to Australia would be used for construction in Far North Queensland.

Curtin, still receiving his regular and reliable messages from Bowden in Singapore, wrote to wife Elsie on 5 January: 'The war goes very badly and I have a cable fight with Churchill almost daily . . . The truth is that Britain never thought Japan would fight and made no preparations to meet the eventuality . . . Notwithstanding two years of Menzies we have to really start production. But enough, I love you, and that is all there is to say.'

Evatt expressed outrage to Curtin when the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced on 14 January 1942 that the US Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, had told an American audience that 'the battle of the Atlantic was still the most important struggle of the war'. He had warned Americans against expecting 'favourable' and triumphant naval engagements in the Pacific in the near future. Evatt cabled Richard Casey, the sage and highly experienced Australian representative recently appointed by Menzies to Washington, and ordered him to object to the unsuitability of Knox's statement, and also to declare that Australia's lack of an equal voice in the discussions between Britain and the United States was unacceptable.

But America had been worked on by the master, Churchill. In early January, while he rested in Florida after meetings with the Roosevelts, Churchill complained that the Australians were 'jumpy about invasion', and that their lack of a sturdy attitude towards it all was due to their being from 'bad stock'. Earle Page—Country Party politician, former deputy prime minister and flayer of Prime Minister Menzies for his poor performance in wartime—was now Australian representative to the British War Cabinet and high commissioner in London and there attended a British War Cabinet Defence Committee meeting at which he heard Churchill declare that Singapore might be lost but that the defence of Burma was what was important, since if Burma fell, the vital connection between India and an embattled Chinese Nationalist Army, fighting the Japanese, would be broken. Page then mistakenly reported to Curtin that Churchill was planning to evacuate Singapore. But the reality, which Curtin grasped, was that Singapore would now be left to its fate, as was the besieged British and Canadian garrison in Hong Kong. Whether the evacuation rumour was valid or

not, Curtin's resultant cable to Churchill was robust in its assertions and demands: 'After all the assurances we have been given, the evacuation of Singapore would be regarded here and elsewhere as an inexcusable betrayal.' He had other hard words for Churchill about the intended diversion of any Australian troops to Burma. Any Australian reinforcements available should go to the Netherlands East Indies, the fifteen hundred islands that make up present-day Indonesia. And the lack of aircraft in Australia and the region was critical, said Curtin: 'Our experiences at Ambon and Rabaul have emphasised the urgent necessity for fighter aircraft immediately . . . It is impossible to expect us to give effective resistance with the inadequate aircraft at our disposal and we desire the allotment of United States aircraft of suitable types.'

Further, said Curtin, 'The trend of the situation in Malaya and the attack on Rabaul are giving rise to a public feeling of grave uneasiness at Allied impotence to stem the Japanese advance . . . The Australian people, having volunteered for service overseas in large numbers, find it difficult to understand why they must wait so long for an improvement in the situation.'

THE MALAY BARRIER

In early 1942, Australia had small garrisons stationed on a series of islands in an arc across the north of the continent. This deployment, in Rabaul (New Britain), Ambon (in present-day Indonesia) and Timor, was known by the grand name of the 'Malay Barrier'. Those in Rabaul were Lark Force, those on Ambon Gull Force, and Sparrow Force had been committed to East Timor in December 1941. The Malay Barrier could not be anything like a barrier to the Japanese, and one wonders at the distractedness of the planners and politicians who left these three garrisons dangling in Japan's path.

While attention was fixed on Malaya and Singapore, by the end of January 1942, New Britain and Ambon would fall to Japanese landings. As when the Australians had captured it in 1914, Rabaul was a strategic port, a prize of empires, situated on the Gazelle Peninsula on the crescent-shaped island of New Britain. Along with the garrison there, an RAAF squadron of four Hudson bombers and eight Wirraways was in place to defend Rabaul from the air, but as in Singapore, the planes were overwhelmingly outnumbered and known to be easy meat for the Japanese air force. The Japanese, in one raid on a small position, were able to deploy sixty aircraft.

On 23 January, a Japanese force supported by battleships and aircraft carriers landed near Rabaul. From their entrenchments at Vulcan Beach, the Australian 22nd Battalion and local civilian militia staged a strong resistance, but in a number of other places the Japanese landed unopposed.

European and Australian women and children had already been evacuated to Australia, but again the White Australia Policy struck—the wives and children of the Chinese population, who were also the enemies of Japan, were not included in the evacuation, and now faced both the bombs from above and, more than anything, the chance of massacre of the kind that had occurred in many mainland Chinese cities. Once the Japanese occupation began, the men were reduced to coolie status, and many of the females became ‘comfort women’.

The order issued to the surviving Australian soldiers of the fight around Rabaul was to retreat as best they could. Small groups of soldiers began to head south through the jungle. A hundred and thirty Australian troops would be caught on the coast by a Japanese party coming ashore from landing craft near the plantation at Tol. They were lined up in fours with their hands tied behind their backs, and were marched off into the undergrowth at the edge of the plantation. Private A.L. Robinson, of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, a Queenslander by birth, would later write, ‘I decided that this was a shooting party and that if one were to be shot one might as well be shot trying to escape as be “done in” in cold blood.’ Robinson launched himself out of the line and hid in the undergrowth. He heard one of the doomed men still in the line call to him, ‘Lower, Sport.’ After three days’ wandering in the bush, his hands still tied, he was found by a group of civilians, and eventually escaped by boat. Private W.D. Collins would also escape from a line of men who were being bayoneted to death. Private T.B. Clissold of the Field Ambulance, a farm labourer wearing a Red Cross armband, had it torn from his arm. When he asked if he could be shot instead of bayoneted, the presiding Japanese officer obliged him.

Those who escaped into the jungle became exhausted, and a number were felled by malaria and other fevers. They were lucky to find taro roots to eat. The Japanese aircraft dropped leaflets that declared, ‘You can find neither food nor way of escape in this island and you will only die of hunger unless you surrender.’ On 9 February, a Japanese force landed at Gasmata

in the south, blocking the escape route, but nonetheless, in various parties, four hundred troops escaped to board small craft.

A few days after the fall of Rabaul at the end of January, Gull Force on Ambon Island faced a Japanese landing. They tried to defend the Laha airstrip, but were overrun. Over nearly a fortnight, three hundred prisoners were taken in small groups into the jungle around the airfield and killed, an even worse atrocity than Tol. Three-quarters of the remaining Australian prisoners taken on Ambon would die in captivity.

On Timor, Sparrow Force divided itself between Dutch and Portuguese Timor. Japanese air attacks began on Australia Day 1942. But Sparrow Force was still holding out and awaiting the inevitable Japanese invasion.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Even while the Japanese were bombing the Australian garrison at Rabaul, and their troops were about to land there, Curtin was already exhausted. Given that he possessed a strange compound of toughness and almost neurotic sensibility, and that he was the sort of person who saw himself as bearing the prime culpability should things go wrong, and hearing that he was so haunted at night that he walked out of the Lodge to talk to drovers in nearby camps, his Cabinet insisted he take a break to go home and see Elsie in Cottesloe. Meanwhile, to describe the situation, Curtin quoted from Lord Byron's 'The Eve of Waterloo': 'nearer, clearer, deadlier than before'.

As Singapore looked ready to fall in early February, Menzies, on the opposition benches, wrote to Curtin advising him against reinforcing the Netherlands East Indies against the Japanese, since the Australians would merely be gobbled up. The 6th and 7th divisions were now on their way back from the Middle East, sixty-four thousand troops in all, and were originally slated to help the Dutch on Java and Sumatra. It quickly became clear that they would indeed be thrown away, as Menzies argued, if they were sent to the East Indies. The idea was that the troops would go now either to Burma or Australia, and General Sturdee, the chief of staff in Melbourne, was insistent that it should be Australia. It was a fortunate insistence, given that the British and Indian forces in Burma were soon to be devoured whole by the Japanese.

FIGHTING THE TIGER

Once the Japanese invasion of Singapore began, it would be like Greece and Crete all over again: the enemy superior in the air, penetrating and outflanking so-called 'fixed lines'—tactics assuming that the Japanese would oblige the Allies by attacking them frontally and across open ground. Some Scottish, Gurkha (Nepalese) and Indian troops were holding up the Japanese in the north-west of Malaya. But in the end the mobile Japanese units encircled the prepared positions, captured bridges over Slim River and caused the British to retreat down the peninsula.

General Arthur Percival, the overall British commander on the ground, was certainly totally out-campaigned by the 'Tiger of Malaya,' Tomoyuki Yamashita. And above Percival, the Commander in Chief Far East was General Archibald Wavell, who had been surprised by Rommel the previous northern spring in Africa.

On 6 January 1942, the truculent Australian commander of the 8th Division AIF, Major-General Henry Gordon Bennett, reported to Curtin in Australia, 'Unless great changes in outlook take place withdrawal will continue, exposing my left flank [on Malaya's west coast] and ultimately creating impossible position for AIF.' Wavell, visiting Singapore the next day, expressed the unrealistic hope that the Australian corps might be brought in from the Middle East to launch a counter-offensive. But Singapore would fall long before the troops in North Africa could be loaded on ships. In the meantime, Wavell was confident in Bennett and the Westforce, of which Bennett took command on 10 January. It consisted of the 9th Indian Division, the 8th Australian Division (minus a brigade), and various artillery and other units. Their task was to stop the Japanese in Johore. In his prediction, Wavell expected air reinforcements—ambiguously promised by the War Cabinet in London, but which would never come.

Percival told Bennett that his forces, which were to be stretched westwards from Batu Anam, on the main north–south road through Johore, across to Muar, and the Muar River crossing, and then on to the west coast, must hold their line. 'If this position is lost, the battle of Singapore is lost,' said Percival. 'It is naturally disturbing to learn that the Japanese have been able to overrun the whole of Malaya except Johore,' Curtin cabled Churchill. 'It is observed that the 8th Australian Division is to be given the task of fighting the decisive battle.' He therefore urged Churchill to send reinforcements as soon as he could.

As Westforce, largely but not entirely Australians and Indians, went north into Johor, they did so against a tide of fleeing *tuans*, British plantation managers and bureaucrats, and trucks filled with British troops half-dead with exhaustion. 'Lorries bearing the names of half the rubber estates in Malaya' went past, said an Australian, and amongst them were also steam-rollers, fire engines, tin-dredging machinery, private motor cars, including Rolls-Royces, and Red Cross ambulances.

In disposing his troops along the line to be held in Johore, Bennett sought to ensure that the defence should be fluid, with as many men as possible held back ready for counter attacks and to deal with Japanese attempts to outflank them. Bennett planned to open hostilities by placing an ambush west of a village named Gemas on the main road south. He ordered that a wooden bridge over a small river at Gemas be wired for explosion. The ambushing soldiers, the 30th Battalion AIF under Frederick 'Black Jack' Gallegghan, waited in the jungle in high humidity through the ferocious heat of the midday hours. At about four o'clock in the afternoon, a long column of Japanese riding bicycles approached the bridge, relaxedly chatting, their rifles on their backs. Two to three hundred of the cyclists passed over the bridge and past the ambush, to be dealt with by the troops in the rear. Then the bridge was blown. Bicycles and men were hurled into the air, and the ambush began. A thousand Japanese were killed in this operation. After the ambush, the battalion retired to the main line.

Towards the coast, on the left flank of Westforce, the 45th Indian Brigade and Australian artillery were under pressure at Muar but managed to hold it. The Japanese military's (temporary) failure of this attack, in a campaign where their march had had a feeling of inevitability, would certainly have given them pause. The battle at Gemas, and the arrival of a reinforcement column in Singapore, gave the Allies great if transitory comfort. The tide of battle was surely on the turn with, as was said on Singapore Radio, 'The AIF as our seawall against the vicious flood.' But suddenly Japanese planes were bombing the Westforce troops.

The Indian units protecting Muar and the Australian guns were now surprised and nearly surrounded by numbers of the elite Japanese Guards Division, who had landed at various places either side of the ferry crossing and the town. Another veteran Japanese force got into the rear of the Indian line and repeatedly ambushed the Indians and a regiment of the Norfolks.

A withdrawal from the Muar area was ordered for one o'clock on 16 January. The new position Westforce were to take up ran along a cross-roads at a town named Bakri, and here armoured carriers and armoured cars operated with the infantry. On 18 January, the Japanese were beaten off.

The young university graduate/gunner Russell Braddon was part of a unit sent over the causeway to set up a mortar base on a hill named Bukit Langkap. They carried weapons and stores up its monsoon-slicked clay sides, dug trenches, established telephone lines and positioned the mortars, and were then ordered to abandon the place. After joining the retreat from the Muar River, they found the men of their supply column slaughtered. 'I moved a leg off a case of beef and tried to forget it belonged to the most cheerful driver in our regiment.'

Braddon and his Westforce comrades had suffered the puncture of all their illusions. They had been told before that the Japanese were very small and myopic 'and thus totally unsuited either physically or optically to tropical warfare . . . they had aeroplanes made from old kettles and kitchen utensils, guns salvaged from the war against Russia in 1905 and . . . were frightened of the dark'. But during the retreat from Muar, one of Braddon's friends declared, 'They can see—which we were told they couldn't. They can fight—which we were told they couldn't. And they're behind us for miles—which we were told they weren't.'

By the time Gunner Braddon and his comrades had been digging in in Johor, the southernmost Malayan state, it was apparent that the good road system in the states of Selangor and Malacca had favoured the supplying of the Japanese troops as they advanced. But the Japanese units, as Bowden pointed out in a cable to Canberra on 23 January, did not depend on the road for food but only for military supplies. They lived off the country and could travel fast in jungle where there were no roads—especially down the east coast.

During the Muar River retreat, Captain Curlewis was sent out frequently in the dark to search for Australian units with whom General Bennett's HQ had lost touch. By 22 January the retreat accelerated, and Curlewis wrote of 'wild drives at night that no nightmare could envisage, bombings, machine gunning from the air, telephoning, message writing, orders to go out and do a job at a moment's notice . . . Some day when the story of Malaya comes to be written some hard things will be said.'

Bowden was already saying them about the farcical and tragic air situation. Although fifty-two Hurricanes had arrived on 23 January, and thirty-two had been assembled, only thirteen were serviceable, because there were only a handful of pilots and ground crew available, and no spare parts.

Meanwhile, all down the length of Malaya there were many extraordinarily brave assaults at company or battalion level, and self-immolatory rearguard actions. On 19 January, Captain H.C. McDonald, a thirty-eight-year-old grazier from Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, wounded while leading a withdrawal, handed over control of his men to a sergeant and gave covering fire to allow them to escape, at least for the moment. He would not be seen again.

On 22 January, Lieutenant B.C. Hackney (who would survive the war) discussed with his friend Lieutenant A.H. Tibbetts, a young estate agent from Melbourne who would die that day, the desirability of having a wash, seeing that their clothes were covered in blood and filth. Appearing after a considerable time, the Japanese guards herded the wounded together with curses, kicks and blows from bayonets. The guardsmen were mothers' sons but conditioned by a particular code; they were disciplined in battle and savage in victory. The Japanese military culture was one that warranted the humiliation, torture and massacre of prisoners, and later events in Australia would demonstrate that they expected no better when they were captured. In the frenzy of their successes, Japanese treatment of soldiers, male civilians and women was beyond all justification. But madness is readily achieved when a system condones it, and when victory intoxicates young minds.

During their misuse of Australian troops that day, as Hackney's diary would claim and later testimony confirm, these Japanese troops deliberately targeted their kicks to the places where a wound lay open. One of the dead was placed in an upright position on a table top and treated as 'an object of ridicule'. A Japanese officer arrived and demanded that helmets and mugs be filled with water, and cigarettes be offered to the Australians. This scene was photographed, but the water was then thrown away by the conquerors and the cigarettes taken back, and a massacre began for which the divisional commander, General Nishimura, would one day be called to international account and hanged.

THE FORTRESS FALLS

It is believed that General Bennett was already planning his escape to Australia as his troops retreated back over the causeway to Singapore. In his subsequent book, *Why Singapore Fell*, he is quite frank in admitting this. His intention to escape is not generally thought to have been a matter of cowardice but more a symptom of his self-importance, and of his belief that he knew better than any other general officer on the island how to fight the Japanese—something impossible for him to do from a POW camp.

The Australians began the defence of Singapore on the night of 8 February 1942 at the extreme western end of Singapore, beyond the mouth of the Kranji River. Thinned out by the battles in Johor, they took up positions around the inlets and rivers with orders to rebuff Japanese landings. Only the most hopeful could have said their numbers were adequate.

As waves of Japanese got ashore, wearing compasses on their wrists to guide them, the Australians were obviously outnumbered. A Japanese commentator declared of the combat that night: 'Words cannot describe the glorious hand grenade and hand-to-hand fighting encountered.' In the meantime, Australian reinforcements moving up in the dark and amidst the jungles and marshes became disoriented and were reduced to small vulnerable parties, discussing in great anguish what to do and where to move. The lack of air cover for his troops was such that Percival wrote, 'Why, I ask myself, does Britain, our improvident Britain, with all her great resources, allow her sons to fight without air support?'

The Australians drew up in a new line in the morning, but that night, 9 February, the Japanese Guards Division landed in the north-west sector. In their retreat, the Australians blew up oil tanks at the mouth of a creek named Mendai Kechil. The burning fuel spread onto the water, and the screams of a battalion of Japanese guards who were still in boats added to the horrors of the night. To the east the Indians were driven away from the naval base that stood for the hollow promises of Britain and the hollow hopes of Australia. By the night of 10 February, the Indians, Australians, Scots and Malays were directly to the west of the city of Singapore, formed up along the northward-running Reformatory Road, and only six kilometres or so from the outskirts of the city. Over the next day and a half, enemy tanks pushed these forces, and the Scots of the 2nd Gordons, away from the town of Bukit Timah, virtually the geographic centre of the island, further eroding the situation.

The 26th Australian Battalion, which had been fighting the Japanese in plantations and jungles and was now being sent forward, was suddenly advancing amongst the elegant villas of Tyersall Park, an unreal venue for war. But these were the last habitations many of them saw, since they were soon victims of shelling and bombing. From Kallang airport, covered with bomb craters, only two Hurricane fighters had been operating, but now they were ordered to fly out to the Netherlands East Indies.

When the 13th Australian General Hospital fell to the Japanese, the wounded were taken prisoner in the face of the all-pervasive fears of massacre. But massacre did not occur. By daybreak on 14 February, the Australians occupied a salient centred on Tanglin Barracks. Bennett sent a message to Curtin that implied the possibility of surrendering: 'If enemy enters city behind us will take suitable action to avoid unnecessary sacrifices.' Indeed, by now the War Council in Singapore had ceased to function and many of its members were escaping or had already done so. Duff Cooper, Churchill's Cabinet representative, had flown to Java, and thence to safety.

The pressure on the perimeter continued through that and the next day, as did the bombing of the city. On 15 February, rumours of a ceasefire and even of surrender were exchanged amongst troops. At the conference of commanders, held in a tunnel under the city that day, Percival decided with unanimous support to seek a ceasefire and to invite a Japanese deputation to discuss the terms for capitulation.

So, on the afternoon of 15 February 1942, the Japanese were amazed to see a white flag appear in the line of forts outside Singapore. General Percival was seeking a truce. What astonished and delighted Yamashita was that, to that moment, the Japanese had been suffering casualties under bombardment from forts Changi and Canning. The defenders, however, were short of food, water and ammunition. The pumping of water from the reservoir feeding the city had ended when the reservoir was captured. In the devastated city, Chinese women sat in ruins howling for their dead children. Bennett, returning to his headquarters from a despairing conference at Fort Canning, could barely make his way through the rubble street: 'Beneath was a crushed mass of old men, women, young and old.'

A later British report would declare that behaviour by undisciplined Australian troops within the city was one of the factors that caused Percival to seek a truce. The same report did not emphasise that two-thirds of the

ten thousand dead and wounded in the campaign were Australians. Certainly, troops pooled in the besieged city in at best bewilderment, and at worst riot. British or Australian soldiers with rifles and Tommy guns had on 14 February tried to capture the launch on which Bowden, the Australian civilian representative, was escaping Singapore Harbour with others, even firing on it as it pulled out. All this while, to the west of the city, around Tanglin Barracks, the most pitiable acts of valour and hand-to-hand, eye-to-eye killing were taking place in the dark, one Australian soldier trying to beat off Japanese attackers with a machine-gun tripod.

At the Japanese 5th Division lines, Percival was told to go on with his staff to the Ford Motor Factory in Bukit Timah for a meeting with Yamashita. The surrender terms imposed in a small factory office by Yamashita, partly in bluff and on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, were severe—an unconditional surrender to occur at 8.30 p.m. Singapore time. Yamashita himself needed peace because of his resupply difficulties, but Percival was psychologically defeated anyhow and not fit to call the Tiger's bluff.

That afternoon Bennett ordered that his men should be supplied with new clothing and two days' rations, and went on a tour of the Australian lines. He handed over his command to Brigadier Black Jack Gallegan, and then left to plan his escape for that night. Captain Curlewis, invited to join the escape party, expressed doubts about the morality of leaving his men. Curlewis stayed, for honour's sake, and became a prisoner.



Over previous and subsequent days, the seas between Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies were crowded with small vessels full of civilians, soldiers and nurses making southwards. The nurses had been the staff of the 13th Australian Hospital and were under orders to leave. The vessel *Vyner Brooke*, which set out from Singapore on 12 February, included amongst its passengers sixty-four nurses. The vessel was bombed and sunk off the island of Bangka on the afternoon of 14 February. Two of the nurses were killed by the bombing, nine drifted off and were lost, and twenty-two landed with other military and civilian survivors on the north coast of Bangka. The other thirty-two were rounded up on various beaches and became prisoners. On 16 February, when it was found that the Japanese were in possession of the island, an officer walked into the nearby town of

Muntok to negotiate a surrender. Civilians, including children, also walked to the town, but the nurses stayed to care for wounded Australian and British soldiers.

Ten Japanese soldiers, led by an officer, came to take away the walking wounded, carried them into the jungle and returned wiping their bayonets and cleaning their rifles. The nurses were ordered to walk into the sea and, supporting two sisters already injured in the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*, were machined-gunned. All but one were killed. Sister Vivian Bullwinkel of Broken Hill, twenty-six years of age and tall, was shot not through the heart but through the diaphragm, the bullet continuing through her body and exiting. She emerged from the drifting heap of dead and for three days remained at large, hiding in a fisherman's hut and nursing a British soldier named Kingsley who had lost part of an arm and been bayoneted in the abdomen, and who died of his wounds. Now she was found and taken prisoner again. She concealed her wound as best she could for fear that if her captors knew what she had witnessed they would certainly execute her. The time would come when she would give evidence at the war crimes tribunals in Tokyo, but for the next three years or more her rights as a world citizen would be cancelled.

The *Mary Rose*, a launch carrying Bowden, Australia's good and wise servant, and his staff, left Singapore Harbour on the night of 14 February. Before dawn on 17 February, in the Bangka Strait between Bangka Island and Sumatra, searchlights from Japanese patrol boats detected the craft. Those on board *Mary Rose* were reduced to using a pair of spare underpants as a flag of surrender, and the prisoners were taken to Muntok Harbour, Bangka Island, where they were locked in a warehouse with other would-be escapees. The elderly, white-haired Bowden insisted to a guard that he be allowed to speak to an officer about his diplomatic status. An argument developed over Bowden's gold wristwatch. Another guard arrived and the two of them escorted Bowden outside. They made him dig his own grave and shot him at its edge.

On the night of the surrender, General Bennett and Major Moses commandeered a native craft and reached the east coast of Sumatra. They made their way across the island to Padang, were then flown south to Java and Batavia (Djakarta or Jakarta), and travelled by a Qantas plane to Australia. When Bennett reached Melbourne and reported to the

Chief of General Staff, General Sturdee, 'To my dismay, my reception was cold and hostile.' Sturdee told him that his escape was ill advised. The Chief of Staff, like the nation and like Curtin, was shocked at the scale of losses. In total, including killed and imprisoned, the Australian military losses came to eighteen thousand soldiers and innumerable civilians, all within a span of days.

The implications for Australia seemed illimitably horrifying.

DAYS OF BRAINS AND BRAWN

Australians had to accept some responsibility for their gullibility over many years in the matter of Singapore and its capacity to protect itself and Australia. Now, however, they needed to act. On 15 February, the day of Singapore's capitulation, General Sturdee again called Curtin to insist that troops urgently be brought home from the Middle East. Singapore was only hours away from falling. Roosevelt put some pressure on Churchill to agree to allow the Australians to leave North Africa: 'It seems to me that we must at all costs maintain our two flanks—the right based on Australia and New Zealand, and the left on Burma, India and China.' Churchill misemphasised this message of Roosevelt's to push the idea that Australia's first duty was not the defence of itself but of Burma, a front that would within a short time prove as futile as Singapore had.

It was early the next morning when confirmation of Singapore's surrender reached Canberra, where Curtin declared the event 'Australia's Dunkirk'. He immediately sat down to write to Churchill demanding the return of the Australian troops from the Mediterranean. Churchill would try everything to prevent it, enlisting the aid of Stanley Melbourne Bruce at Australia House and of Earle Page, Australia's representative on the British War Cabinet. Churchill was disgruntled that Curtin had talked him into sending the British 18th Division to Singapore just in time for it to be eaten whole, when it could have been sent to Burma (and thus ultimately eaten whole there); this increased Churchill's determination to fight Curtin over the return of Australian troops.

But Curtin, beneath a less thunderous exterior than Churchill's, had an equal if not greater determination in the matter. Though later historians would very much doubt that the Japanese intended to invade the huge continent of Australia, believing that they hoped instead to bomb

the crucial Australian cities in a manner that would destroy the war effort and sap Australia's enthusiasm for the American alliance, Curtin believed—as did his fellow Australians—that invasion was the Japanese plan, and that the harshness shown in other places by the Japanese army would descend on the Australian populace.

Australian troops serving overseas themselves felt an immediate need to return to the Pacific area. Thousands of Australian aircrewmen were campaigning far from home. Ordinary Seaman Roy Hall was training in Portsmouth Barracks, 'and there was a great deal of anxiety and agitation about the whole thing, and many of the men there volunteered to go back to Australia because that's where they felt they should be.' Niall Brennan, Melbourne Irish, had always doubted the Imperial proposition: 'A lot of us had felt for a long time that we had been misled, that the whole idea of supporting the Empire . . . because Britain would come to help us if we needed it, that that was hogwash.' Merv Lilley, a rural worker in Queensland, who had not thought of joining up to defend the Empire, now decided to do so for Australia's sake.

Australians at home went on shopping and seeking each other's society, but the reality—that the world had changed, and that Deakin's vision of Australia could well be gobbled up in a matter of days or weeks—riveted the country as never before, and filled the individual hearts of men and women with terror, and the communal heart with a chancy resolve. The great social laboratory that Australians believed their Commonwealth to be might now vanish within days. 'He would be a very dull person who could not discard all his preconceived ideas of strategy and war, and who does not accept the fall of Singapore as involving a completely new situation,' said Curtin in a press statement. 'The days of bets and beer are gone, the days of brains and brawn have come.'



When the Pacific War erupted there were two Australian armies: the volunteer AIF, 152,000 strong and mainly serving overseas, and the conscript Home Army of 213,000, only half of whom were serving full time because there wasn't enough military equipment to put the whole of the conscriptees under arms. Even fully manned units lacked transport or modern weapons, as did both the navy and the RAAF.

The Curtin government sought volunteers from the conscript militia for service in the territory of New Guinea, as the *Defence Act 1903* forbade the use of the conscript troops in an overseas conflict. By January 1942 a militia brigade had been deployed to Port Moresby but it still lacked basic equipment. A leavening of experienced AIF officers and non-commissioned officers were injected into the brigade. It was not until 21 March that an RAAF fighter squadron arrived, the 75th Squadron. It would be steadily worn down through attrition of aircraft and exhaustion of pilots. A further militia brigade was sent to Port Moresby, and another to Milne Bay at the eastern end of New Guinea. AIF brigades from the veteran 7th Division would follow later in the year. Now the 39th Militia Battalion was slated to begin the march along the track to Kokoda to occupy Buna, but the Japanese would get there first.

This Kokoda trail, soon to acquire its capital letter, was built in the New Guinean manner, in that it connected villages that were on high ground, one to the other, and was designed for the passage of one person at a time. Having reached a mountain, it then descended into a valley and climbed up the next ridge. And so it went, on and on. It was not good in the rain, yet most of the coming mountain campaign would be fought in the wet season.

Papuan carriers, conscripted and controlled by Papuan administration patrol officers now turned soldiers, were the lifeline for the troops struggling against an enemy superior in training, numbers and weapons.

BOMBING NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

On 19 February, just days after the fall of Singapore, Japanese bombers, fighter-bombers and fighters appeared in huge numbers over Darwin, bombing town and port. The naval task force was based on four aircraft carriers under Vice-Admiral Nagumo Chuichi, who had launched the attack on Pearl Harbor. After these aircraft had spread ruin and flown off, the Australian government did not dare tell citizens how many enemy planes were involved, how many bombs were dropped or how many casualties there were. But in the suburbs and country towns of Australia, the very fact that it had happened created a further sense of terror and of imminence.

The eleven fighters available on the day to defend Darwin were there by accident—nine Kittyhawks of the US 33rd Pursuit Squadron which had

taken off for Timor, on their way to join the fight against the Japanese in Java, but were being forced back to Darwin by adverse weather. Two had needed servicing and stayed behind. Coastwatchers on Bathurst and Melville islands were the first to see the Japanese air fleet on its way. But when the message was sent to Darwin, RAAF intelligence concluded that what was seen were the nine returning Kittyhawks. The intelligence staff officer, Lieutenant-Commander J.C.B. McManus, wanted to sound the alarm at once but was overruled by the RAAF. The nine American Kittyhawks were indeed returning to Darwin from the west, but at about the same time as the mass Zeros, 'Kates and Vals' were arriving. The Japanese raiders were led by Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, who had earlier led the raid on Pearl Harbor.

One of the returning US Kittyhawks, flown by Lieutenant Jack Peres, was shot down and crashed fifteen kilometres north of Darwin. Another pilot was forced to abandon his plane, and Lieutenant Oestreicher, who had taken off in his re-serviced Kittyhawk, was the lone Allied plane in the sky facing an enemy fleet that included thirty-six Zeros, seventy-one 'Val' dive bombers and eighty-one 'Kate' bombers, and would somehow survive being surrounded by those numbers.

Captain Fuchida had led this armada in over Adams Bay to the east of Darwin, circled over the land, and then attacked Darwin Harbour from the south. The American squadron leader, Floyd Pell, was already on the ground at the RAAF airfield and ordered the five Kittyhawks who had managed to land to take off again at once. He was only five and a half metres above the runway when he was attacked by three Zeros; he was forced to bail and survived the parachute descent. A Zero machine-gunned him to death when he landed. In total, nine Kittyhawks were blown out of the sky or destroyed when barely off the ground.

The heavy anti-aircraft guns manned by Australian soldiers opened fire. It was a new experience for them. In light of the acute national scarcity of all means of defence, they had fired only a few practice rounds in their entire military career. Lewis machine guns also came into largely ineffectual use, similarly .303 rifles. The first Japanese plane to be brought down was a Zero that crashed near the navy's shore base at Coonawarra, about ten kilometres east of the town, and the credit was given to a Lewis gunner, Darky Hudson. 'Up his arse! Up his arse!' cried a gunner in encouragement as another Zero was hit and exploded somewhat closer to town. At the RAAF field,

which served chiefly as a way station for planes going on to the Netherlands East Indies to deal with the Japanese, Wing Commander Archie Tindal sat on the edge of a trench firing a Vickers gun at the Vals and Zeros flying low. He and other defenders could see pilots smiling at the ease of their targets. The number of Japanese aircraft shot down was in the single digits.

One contingent of aircraft dropped their bombs along the Esplanade. A blast wrecked Darwin Post Office. The postmaster, Hurtle Bald, with the help of one of his postal workers, had dug a slit trench behind the post-office building. When the aircraft arrived, he took to the trench with his wife Alice, his daughter, two of his sisters, his clerk, and a number of young female telegraphers. A direct hit killed them all—as well as wiping out military communication—and police saw that the horrors of modern aerial bombing were exemplified by the naked body of one of the fatally concussed dead girls hanging in a tree.

Meg Ewart and her colleagues at Darwin's military hospital moved those patients who were able to walk out to the slit trenches in the hospital grounds. Those too ill to be moved were put under their beds, mattresses and all. Ewart shared that day the same apprehensions as Curtin's Cabinet: 'Another thing I think too that we did feel, was that there wouldn't have been a raid like that unless the Japanese were going to follow it on land, and that wasn't a very happy thought either.'

Bombs from one wave of Val dive bombers split the long Darwin Harbour wharf in two, killing at least twenty-one wharf labourers. Men were marooned on the harbour end of the wharf, with the ships they had been working on, the cargo ships *Neptuna*, which contained two hundred depth charges, and *Barossa*, similarly full of high explosive and oil. A bomb shattered *Neptuna's* bridge and entered the saloon where crew and some wharf labourers were waiting out the shock of the attack. Forty-five of them were killed. Many wharfies and ships' crew dived into the harbour for safety. Oil from punctured supply lines running ashore filled the water.

Also in the harbour were the seaplane tender USS *William D. Preston*, the destroyer USS *Peary*, the Australian corvettes HMAS *Deloraine* and *Katoomba*, the sloop HMAS *Swan*, the depot ship HMAS *Platypus* and the above-mentioned auxiliary minesweeper HMAS *Gunbar*, which were all armed, and the unarmed hospital ship *Manunda*. HMAS *Swan* was tied up beside *Neptuna* and quickly cast off and headed for open water. HMAS *Katoomba*

could not move since it was in the floating dock being refitted, but it had many machine guns on board which were now manned.

The USS *Peary* was a veteran of the early assaults on the Philippines, and its crew had already been attacked in the open Pacific earlier in 1942 with torpedoes and bombs. A number of bombs fell on the destroyer, including one that landed in the ammunitions store. A seaman on the nearby *William D. Preston* later remembered that his own flesh was seared by the fury of the fire aboard *Peary*.

The blazing and doomed *Peary* had got underway though, dragging herself towards open water, firing. She sank quickly, still in the harbour, and more than a hundred of the crew died of wounds and burns or were drowned. The *William D. Preston* was badly damaged too. Even now people were putting out into the harbour in rowboats to go out and rescue people.

It is not known whether or not Japanese aircraft deliberately hit the *Manunda*, a veteran hospital ship that had made four journeys to and from the Middle East to repatriate the wounded. It was true that *Manunda* was moored fairly close to *Peary*, yet it seemed to all witnesses that it was deliberately targeted. The ship's crew quarters and navigation instruments were destroyed by the impact. Thirty men had been blown into the harbour and were now retrieved, all with burns. A nurse, Margaret de Mestre, was killed, and thirty-three men died from wounds and burns either then or soon after. In the wards, as the damaged and burned were brought in to join the more than 260 military casualties already on board, Matron Shumack exercised a calm control over treatment.

The first raid over, Group Captain Scherger at the RAAF base ordered his three undamaged Hudsons to go out on a preliminary search to strike at the aircraft carriers from which the Japanese planes had come. But with telephonic communication wiped out there was no ground-to-air communication with the Hudsons. Scherger tried desperately to put communications in place but would not manage it before another raid began, this time by heavy bombers, sent out from the Celebes Islands and the airstrip on Ambon for whose sake a battalion of young Australians had been sacrificed.

By afternoon the raids were over, but people took the road south to Adelaide River by any means they could. The impulse to flee the town before the Japanese struck again seems reasonable enough, based on the number of planes, the volume of explosives, and the incapacity of the defence.

Two hundred and fifty-two Allied soldiers and civilians were killed that day. The two 19 February raids would be followed by sixty-two further raids on the town, in April, June, July and November that year and extending well into the following year. And it was not only Darwin that saw enemy planes. On 3 March 1942, Broome in Western Australia was attacked. The day before, a number of Dutch flying boats had landed in Broome with Dutch evacuees from Java and elsewhere. A flight of Zeros swept in across the tropical sky and sank every such aircraft in the bay. A Dutch pilot named Guy Winkel, waiting to refuel, discovered there was no RAAF plane at all in Broome to resist the Zeros overhead. During the attack he fired one of the machine guns on his aircraft, the sole riposte to the Japanese empire. Later he expressed the view that the Japanese could have taken Broome with twelve soldiers, and he was probably right.

Eighty-eight people were killed that day in Broome. Women and children had already moved out, but after the attack the remaining civil servants, including the police, took to the road. 'And you can understand the panic,' said Ralph Doig, a Western Australian public servant. 'Nobody then in Australia had previous experience of being bombed like that . . . there was no defence against [the Japanese].' Similar attacks occurred on Wyndham, Port Hedland and Derby in Western Australia, as well as Katherine in the Northern Territory, and Townsville and Mossman in Queensland.

These raids were not seen by Australians as a substitute for invasion, but as a prelude to it. But modern historians declare that Japan's aim was in fact to create a defensive rim around the region where all the riches lay—the raw materials of the Netherlands East Indies, Malaya and elsewhere. Thus the Japanese, like the Dutch in the seventeenth century, had an interest in the boundary lands of Australia but not in its complete possession.

IN THE WAKE OF BOMBS

After the washed-out and ailing Curtin received the news of shipping that had been destroyed during the Darwin raid, he issued a statement announcing the first battle on Australian soil. Again, the attack on Darwin was seen not merely as part of a containment policy that would keep the Australians and Americans busy on Australian soil, but as a sign of imminent invasion.

In backyards, men continued to work on their air-raid shelters. Arthur Martin of Leichhardt in Sydney wielded his shovel energetically to make a

shelter for his family. He, like other fathers, had no conception that ultimately these homemade bunkers would become cubbyhouses for his children.

Dorothy Hewett, later a nationally revered writer, then a university student, described girls threatening to take a cyanide pill if Perth were invaded, but no cyanide pills were being offered around. Joan Comer, a soldier's wife from Gulgong in New South Wales, was told by her doctor about the yellow contraceptive sponge sure to be issued women to prevent pregnancies from rapes committed by the invader. Mick Coyle, an engine driver on the north coast of New South Wales, was shown a revolver by his fireman, who explained that he would shoot his wife and daughters when the Japanese marched in. Young university student Niall Brennan in Melbourne was a pacifist and asked himself: 'What would I do if the Japanese invaded Australia? I was thinking of that all the time and I never came up with an answer. I don't know what I would have done . . . if a Japanese came at me with a bayonet or a Samurai sword. I suppose I'd have tried to hit him with a cricket bat—or something like that.'

When Japan had entered the war there were about 132 full-time officers and men running the part-time militia, and a further 35,000 AIF available in Australia, other than those in the Middle East. By February 1942 there were almost a quarter of a million militiamen, many of them 'called up' and thus not volunteers, on full-time duty—their mandate was to defend Australian territory, including New Guinea. By the end of March the total AIF troops available for fighting anywhere or in training reached over a hundred thousand. This two-tier system grew from the revulsion many Australians, including Curtin and his party, had for conscription for service *outside* Australia's immediate defence. But it was a cause of sometimes more than merely jovial derision directed by the volunteer AIF (or, as its members would argue, the true army) at the militia, who were seen as a home guard, a billet for the timid, the too young, the too old. In pubs and on the street, for sport or from malice, AIF members might throw scorn on the militia as 'chocolate soldiers' or 'chocos', and civilians would come to use the same term without any necessary ill-will but simply to distinguish one group from another. Previously, too, the militiamen had been prevented from volunteering for the AIF, but this rule was overturned in the 1942 emergency to allow a militia unit to become AIF if 75 per cent of its membership wanted to. Ultimately, for reasons of the militia's coming

valour, and America's insistence that the Australians should conscript for foreign service as the Americans had done, the militia would be committed to a larger sphere of the Pacific, though not to the northern hemisphere. The introduction of this limited conscription for overseas service in 1943 would create bitter divisions in Labor and, for Curtin, the contempt of many of his fellow anti-conscriptionists from World War I.

There had been faint omens of hope even in the phase between Malaya's invasion and the bombing of Darwin. After Pearl Harbor, some ships carrying American aircraft originally intended for US general MacArthur's use in the Philippines were diverted to Australia. The convoy had arrived in Brisbane on 22 December 1941 with some field artillery units and disassembled planes. Four more ships with artillery units arrived in January, but none of them carried infantry. So in February 1942, a few raw American artillery and pilots, and a quarter of a million untrained militia and thirty-five thousand half-trained and recently recruited AIF volunteers, swelling out to a further sixty-five thousand recruits, along with the token Australian naval and air forces then in Australia, were ill-equipped to hold Australia. None of this was adequate to soothe Curtin's concern.

A few days after the fall of Singapore, at a war bond rally in Martin Place, Curtin called on his audience: 'Australians! You are the sons and daughters of Britishers. You have come from England and Scotland and Wales and Ireland. There is, fused in you also, the best qualities of other races.'

He was near collapse as he uttered these words, and afterwards was immediately driven to St Vincent's Hospital with his daughter, Elsie the younger, at his side, and treated for severe gastritis. This was yet another instance of his vulnerability under the pressure of the war.

Meanwhile, anxiety for the safety of the troops returning from the Middle East, their survival in seas that were now dominated by the Japanese—for at this stage of the war the Japanese had penetrated the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific—devoured Curtin. At that moment, his wife Elsie observed, Curtin harboured the sincere fear that he would be captured by the Japanese when they invaded and that he would be 'crucified'.

Churchill remained determined that at least one of the Australian divisions should be sent off to Burma. In trying to persuade Curtin to commit a division to the Burmese capital, Rangoon, Churchill talked Stanley Melbourne Bruce and Earle Page into helping him, and also recruited Roosevelt. Churchill reminded Curtin that he owed him a favour, that Churchill had allowed a British division to reinforce Singapore rather than go to Burma, and that that division had now been gobbled up. If Curtin refused his request, said Churchill, 'a very grave effect will be produced upon the President and the Washington Circle, on which you are so largely dependent'.

But the fall of Singapore had brought out the steel in Curtin's soul. Churchill had urged the Greek campaign with similar eloquence, and it had been a disaster.

Curtin suspected that the British and Americans had made a secret commitment by which the Pacific theatre would be the poor relative of the European. In fact, the meeting at which this undisclosed agreement was forged in Washington was known as the Arcadia Conference on 14 January 1942, Arcadia being a code name. The agreement they came to bore the title WWI. It was never announced, but nonetheless Curtin planned to send the Foreign minister and lawyer Herbert Vere Evatt to Washington and London to argue the case for the Americans and British to support Australia in its need.

Before Evatt left, Curtin made a broadcast to the United States on 14 March. If the Japanese invaded, he said, 'there will still be Australians fighting on Australian soil until the turning point be reached, and we will advance over blackened ruins, through blasted and fire-swept cities, across scorched plains, until we drive the enemy into the sea'. He was, above all, trying to sedate any American suspicion that Australia would make a separate peace with Japan the way France had with Germany. In the struggle to defend themselves, he said, Australians recognised that America was now their leader. 'If Australia goes, the Americas are wide open,' he warned his American audience.

In the meantime, Evatt's weeks in Washington would be rendered partly futile by the existence of the secret WWI agreement, but as a result of his representations the Americans formed a Pacific War Council to keep him and Australia happy. During Evatt's visit in Washington, he pleaded that the

United States send to Australia six weeks' worth of Britain's allocation from the United States' war production of aircraft, tanks, guns and other material. This largesse, he argued to the Americans, would re-establish the position of the British government in the Australian mind implicitly damaged by Singapore to full flower and reignite affection for the old country.

It was not until London in May 1942 that Evatt found out about the strategic priority given to defeating the Nazi regime. His tendency would have been to accuse Churchill and his War Cabinet of treachery, but Evatt settled down to get what he could, including three Spitfire squadrons, though the crisis of a further Rommel advance in the Middle East delayed them. Evatt was also demanding the return of the 9th Division, and that Britain should give consent to the proposal he had already put to the Americans, that a part of American war production normally sent to Britain should go to Australia.

Altogether, Evatt's mission was not a success. In Churchill's mind, Australia's loss could be tolerated better than more strategic losses in Burma and India. What had changed everything, though, was the arrival of the defeated but grandiose American general MacArthur at the Pacific's last-chance saloon, Australia.

THE PROPHET AND THE HEROES, THE POLITICIANS AND PRISONERS

THE APPARITION

General MacArthur had arrived in Australia on 17 March 1942. He would sometimes express the thought that if the Japanese invaded Australia, it would be a strategic blunder on their part, but he still considered that they might take on Australia for symbolic reasons—to assert their superiority over the white race. In any case, Australians believed the onslaught would come within eight weeks of the fall of Singapore and the bombing of Darwin.

Douglas MacArthur, the general of an abandoned and defeated American army in the Philippines and a refugee from onslaught, was welcomed as an angel of victory, a manifestation. To get to Australia he had escaped by torpedo boat from the Philippine island of Corregidor. After flying south-east to Darwin with his young wife and little son and the remnants of his staff, he and his party caught a train southwards and arrived in Adelaide almost unexpectedly. It was more an indication of the psychological state of Australians and of the success of his own public-relations team that MacArthur was greeted as a messiah. Wise heads, however, knew that his arrival would at least bring American troops and arms to Australia. MacArthur declared to welcoming members of Parliament in Canberra's parliamentary dining room on 26 March and to the great comfort of the Australian people that 'all the resources of the almighty power of my country and all the blood of

my countrymen' were pledged to saving Australia and driving the Japanese back across the Pacific.

As soon as MacArthur landed, his publicity machine went into operation on a scale at that time abnormal in Australia. According to the general, he had been pursued closely by Japanese fighter planes and narrowly escaped Japanese bombers at Batchelor airfield in the Northern Territory (in fact there is no record of this occurring). The Australians accepted such fables because they wanted to believe that someone mythic had come to save them. MacArthur from then on controlled the news the outer world, including the United States, saw.

General Blamey was commander of Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific area, but he retained wide responsibility for the Australian forces. He deployed the 1st Army, made up chiefly of militia conscripts, in April 1942 to defend the east coast of Australia. The 2nd Army was based initially in Melbourne. One division, the 4th, was sent to Western Australia, where the 3rd Corps was to be formed. US anti-aircraft and engineering troops were also sent to Darwin, and a squadron of heavy bombers to Perth.

MacArthur was a conservative who did not get on with his own president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in turn believed that MacArthur would consider it appropriate in the right circumstances to overthrow the United States government and become a Caesar. Yet Curtin liked him more than he did Blamey. As his assistant spokesman on war policy, Curtin nominated not Blamey but defence secretary Frederick Shedden. From the time MacArthur arrived, Curtin and the public servant Shedden treated him as the redeemer and showed no doubt about his talent. Shedden even applauded MacArthur for his brilliant defence of the Philippines—the truth was that his campaign in the Philippines had been deplorable.

MacArthur was horrified to find on his arrival in Australia that Washington had so failed him that there were fewer than 26,000 American servicemen in the country and not a single infantryman. There were 104,000 members of the AIF, and nearly twice as many militia. They did not provide as much comfort to MacArthur as they did to Curtin. Curtin wanted to save Australia. MacArthur wanted to reconquer the Philippines, and he had other political ambitions too. To get as many American troops as possible, he would badmouth the quality of the Australians, doing so with such consistency that the Australians acquired a second general to hate.

As early as 25 April 1942, Australian intelligence in Melbourne had predicted a Japanese task force would sail across the Coral Sea towards Port Moresby both to win its own naval battle against the Americans and to shepherd eleven transports and naval vessels across the ocean and enable them to seize Port Moresby. The Japanese descended from the direction of the Solomons and Rabaul and were intercepted from the south and east by three Allied task forces, one of them partly made up of the Australian cruisers *Hobart* and *Australia*, which made a screen protecting Port Moresby. *Australia* was attacked by torpedo bombers from Rabaul but avoided damage by a weaving movement.

The battle was fought on seas east of Cape York. Reading the maps in the newspapers, Australians would be amazed at how close to home the Japanese fleet were. The Japanese withdrew after four days of aerial attack, shocked that their aircraft carrier *Shoho* was sunk so quickly, although that loss was of very little significance compared to the damage done to the aircraft carriers *Lexington* and *Yorktown*. However, the Japanese troop transports also withdrew to Rabaul, carrying with them the five thousand men of the invasion force. It was the first Japanese setback. The author remembers being told by his relieved mother about this phenomenal battle and the extent to which it made us all safer. Indeed, in Australia, the Battle of the Coral Sea was looked upon as a thorough victory, even though the Americans now had only two undamaged aircraft carriers, the *Hornet* and the *Enterprise*. But it would prove to be the case that no Japanese naval force again attempted to cross the Coral Sea and take Port Moresby.



On Friday, 29 May, five large Japanese submarines lay 56 kilometres off the New South Wales coast. At least one of these had a hatch large enough to contain a reconnaissance plane, which flew over Sydney at 3 a.m. on Saturday and confirmed that the harbour was full of warships, including the heavy cruiser USS *Chicago*, veteran of the Battle of the Coral Sea. The flotilla moved now to within eleven kilometres of Sydney Harbour. At 4.30 p.m., after appropriate ceremonies to honour the men willing to undertake such a hopeless task, three midget submarines set out to penetrate the harbour. The first midget entangled itself in the huge anti-submarine net laid across the north-facing entry to Sydney Harbour, and before HMAS *Yarroma*,

a patrol boat, could attack it, its crew of two men destroyed their craft and themselves with demolition charges. Towards 10 p.m., the second submarine penetrated the net and sailed up harbour. The alarms had sounded all over the city and people were advised to take shelter. Some American machine-gun emplacements near Garden Island had begun firing up harbour. Two hundred metres offshore, the second submarine was sighted by the *Chicago* crew, who opened fire. It released two torpedoes. The first torpedo ran aground at Garden Island, however, and the other ran under a Dutch submarine, K9, and hit the harbour bed beneath the depot ship HMAS *Kuttabul*, killing nineteen Australian naval ratings and two from the Royal Navy. This second Japanese submarine was able to escape the harbour and its fate became a matter of speculation.

The third submarine was sighted by HMAS *Yandra* at the harbour entrance and depth-charged, but after withdrawing, it returned and was attacked by a number of vessels. Both members of its crew committed suicide. The two submarines were recovered and displayed as captured marine beasts of prey. The weekend that had begun with such omens of threat had now been dealt with and the threat neutralised.

PARER AGAIN

After the Battle of the Coral Sea, Blamey reinforced Port Moresby with a militia brigade. There was an expectation that the Japanese, thwarted in the Coral Sea, would attack Port Moresby overland.

Indeed, the Japanese now intended to concentrate a considerable force on the north coast of New Guinea considering that it might one day be sent with reinforcements over the mountains to attempt to occupy Port Moresby. By June 1942, this possibility became more likely. Damien Parer, filled with more urgency than the Australian command, found his way from Townsville to a Port Moresby weakly garrisoned by semi-trained and often unruly militia battalions. Towards the end of 1941 he had tried to accompany a British military convoy to Tehran and so cross into Russia and film the Eastern Front. But he did not achieve it before the war with Japan began, and so returned to Australia with some of the 7th Division on the troopship *Sophocles*, arriving back in Melbourne in March 1942.

Once in Port Moresby, Parer established a camera position on a hill above the port. When Japanese bombers destroyed the new supply ship *Macdhu*,

Parer was on this height only two hundred metres away, taking spectacular footage of a full-scale bomber attack on a port, film he would incorporate in his 1942 film *Moresby Under the Blitz*.

Osmar White, a journalist for the Melbourne newspaper publishers Herald and Weekly Times and a spirited young man like Parer, wanted to accompany native bearers as they crossed the mountains to Wau to deliver supplies to a malaria-racked force of four hundred Australians, Kanga Force. Kanga's duties were to keep watch on the four thousand Japanese who had already landed, and to make guerrilla attacks on them. White's proposed journey would involve a round trip of more than a thousand kilometres, mostly on foot. Nonetheless, Parer wanted to go with him, and to observe the Japanese who were massing on the north coast and who would try to cross the intervening mountains.

Parer and White started overland from a position called Bulldog, along with ninety-three natives who were transporting more than a ton of ammunition, mail and supplies. Parer worked as unofficial medical officer to the group, nursing a bearer dying from pneumonia. He also amputated an infected toe. As the trail grew steeper, six more carriers were sent back suffering from pneumonia or exhaustion. 'These native carriers,' he wrote, 'with their heavy loads and extremely difficult walking conditions, would cause any of us to blush with shame when their war effort is compared to our own.' Mould and moisture began to affect Parer's cameras.

The group at last ran into Kanga Force, which had recently attacked Japanese-held Salamaua at 3 a.m. one morning. Parer filmed the bearers and a line of wounded members of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles trying to make their way back over the Owen Stanleys to safety.

Not satisfied with filming the base, Parer went forward to the advance scouts of Kanga Force. Some of the raids he filmed accompanying Kanga Force produced footage that has been used in nearly every documentary on the Pacific War ever since. He observed that Allied planes bombed not only Lae and Salamaua but also as-yet-unoccupied Gona, which signified, he thought, an expectation of a Japanese landing there. For nine days, Parer lived with three Kanga Force scouts manning the Salamaua lookout, a tall tree high on the hillside from which the port township and aerodrome could be observed.

Parer filmed the arrival and departure of enemy fighters and seaplanes, and a burning Japanese troopship drifting onto a reef. The Japanese he filmed

were digging in and camouflaging their weapon pits. 'No good tripod rest possible,' he wrote of his work, 'and tree with slight sway—these shots may be spoiled. Also visibility on most days was bad and it rained a hell of a lot.'

He returned ultimately with film of superb quality. But he could only find that out once he had marched over the mountains again to Moresby. By now White was stricken by fever. When the two of them left Wau on a July morning in 1942, Parer was about to begin a year of unrivalled camera work.

MANPOWER, PRISONER POWER

The Manpower Directorate was established during the invasion crisis of early 1942 and operated as a powerful section of the Department of Labour and National Service. Women, including some mothers of young children, were conscripted into national service in the form of compulsory and directed labour. Anglo-Australian men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were being conscripted into the Australian military forces and there was a desperate lack of farm labour.

At the very time that the vast majority of Italians from the sugar belt in north-east Queensland were being interned, public policy re-directions allowed those who were not Nazis, Fascists or of Japanese origin to be considered for work release under stringent restrictions and curfews. In early 1942, the Civil Alien Corps was established as a section of the Allied Works Council. Under this arrangement, Italians from strategically sensitive areas like the mining districts of Kalgoorlie and the sugar belt of Queensland were not permitted to return to work in those regions, but were allocated work elsewhere.

Aborigines from the reserves in Queensland who had been redeployed with soldiers from their normal jobs to harvest the crops the Italians no longer worked on were now either interned or released into Civil Alien Corps camps elsewhere in Australia. There had been some doubts about the loyalty of the Aborigines of Cape Bedford Mission in Cape York where George Schwarz was the pastor for nearly six decades. On 17 May 1942, trucks manned by police and army arrived to intern Schwarz and his wife and to take the more than 250 Guugu Yimidhirr Aborigines away. The elderly were sent to Palm Island, the others to a settlement near Rockhampton where they suffered sixty deaths in a year because of the cold winters. Thus, under wartime emergency regulations, Aborigines could be treated as enemy aliens in their own country.

In 1943, however, fifty Aboriginal women from the Cherbourg settlement in Queensland would dig the greater part of the Lockyer Valley potato crop. Other Aborigines in Cape York joined the Civil Construction Corps, building makeshift aerodromes in the area. In Victoria, meanwhile, five hundred released Italian internees formerly from Queensland were despatched to the saltworks at Underwood and Laverton in Victoria, as well as to the forestry camp at Werrimull. Three hundred and fifty civilian Italian internees were deployed on the Port Augusta–Kalgoorlie link of the Trans-Australian Railway to replace a group of dissatisfied Italian POWs.

By 1942, there were 18,500 Italian POWs in various camps in Australia, locked up in locations from Thompson Point in Queensland to Cowra and Hay in New South Wales, Tatura and Murchison in Victoria, and Northam in Western Australia. The camps tried to become farms in their own right. Pig, poultry and dairying enterprises were carried out by Italian labour at the Hay camp, where three thousand POWs were housed. By mid-year, nine hundred Japanese and two thousand Italian POWs were engaged in charcoal-burning, brick-making, wood-cutting, trench and irrigation canal-building, tailoring, boot repairs, sail-making, blacksmithing, market-gardening, and road and pavement works.

Italian POWs were permitted to work within fifty kilometres of a Prisoner of War Control Centre. They were to be provided with spartan but not unhealthy accommodation by the employer outside the house—in sheds or shearers' quarters—and were allowed to leave only on Sundays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., provided they wore their detested burgundy POW clothing.

Sometimes the knowledge that they were safe and well fed added to prisoners' depression and feelings of guilt about their families in Italy. And they would not see them again for some years. Though in 1943 Italy surrendered to the Allies and joined them in fighting the Axis, many Italian POWs were not returned home till 1947, in all cases because of the shortage of shipping.

WOMEN POWER

Women had been used during World War II in other ways than as industrial labour. In an attempt to free men for more essentially military roles, for the first time in history women were recruited into the services to fulfil support roles, separate from those of nursing. The aviator Nancy Bird Walton was the New South Wales head of the Women's Air Training Corp, which was founded

in 1939 and headed nationally by Mary Bell. Bell, wife of an air force pilot, had herself trained as a pilot in 1927. In March 1941, government, urged by many young female volunteers, authorised the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), the first women's service to be formed and the largest, with 27,000 women, though that figure included a minority of nurses, who were its only members eligible for service overseas. Figures of admiration amongst the populace generally, WAAAFs served in radar and signals, in operations rooms and messes and offices, drove vehicles and worked on ordnance.

By April 1941, there was a shortage of telegraphists in the navy, and the government authorised the recruitment of women into a Women's Royal Australian Navy Service (ANS). The Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) was founded in August. The women recruits worked as signalers, coders, wireless operators, cypher clerks, couriers, cooks and drivers. This latter corps of young women was led by a woman with the rank of colonel, Sybil Howie Irving, and was, amongst other things, employed on searchlight detachments on coastal cliff sides and in cities, and as artillery spotters for the Japanese invasion that seemed imminent soon after the start of the Pacific War. Notably, all these services were in place before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Malaya, and would grow in importance once that attack had occurred.

Over 36,000 women enlisted in the three women's services. Thousands more worked in volunteer roles in Nancy Bird Walton's organisation and the Women's Emergency Signalling Corp. Around 3500 army nurses were also recruited, although for purely medical rather than for manpower reasons, and it was amongst the nurses that the casualties would occur during the advance of Japan.

At a quasi-official and organised level there was also a Land Army recruited to work on harvests. The recruits were generally young urban women, some as young as sixteen, anxious to serve and acquire a uniform and a measure of freedom, and totally unaccustomed to hard manual labour. Nearly three thousand permanent members served in the Land Army, and over a thousand casuals, and they worked forty-eight hours a week for a mere thirty shillings. The women faced many crusty old farmers who disapproved of flighty young women doing farm work and living together in informal barracks far from home. As well as that, they suffered from toilsome and unglamorous labour, harvesting the peas and carrots considered essential to victory.

THE IMPRISONED

On 18 April 1942, Captain Adrian Curlewis, as an example of decent treatment from the Japanese, was given a lift into town by Okasaki, commandant of the POW camp at Changi in Singapore. Curlewis observed that 'Every dealing I've had with Japanese for four months has been [marked by] extreme courtesy. What is behind it I cannot make out, but the moment a Japanese knows you are Aussie then you are better off. They hate England.'

But Private Charles Watson, also in Changi, noticed that the Japanese had been driving groups of Chinese to the edge of the sea and machine-gunning them, 'mostly lads rounded up as Communist suspects'. One young wounded Chinese man was rescued—'he spoke English and we have a few Australian-Chinese in our ranks, so it was decided he would be smuggled back to camp, carrying a tin of water, and put into hospital until his slight wounds heal'. The Japanese themselves rarely visited the hospital, for fear of contagion.

By May, Curlewis noticed betting on what was the destination of a rumoured party that was being sent away from Changi. There were rumours that three thousand were going and the hopes were that it was a prisoner exchange and that they were going to Australia; in the betting, Australia was at short odds. The reality would be far more grievous. By now Curlewis realised how deficient the diet was, and that he and others were already in declining health. 'Blood pressure 90/70,' he wrote. 'Lack of proteins.' He had been passed the job by a superior officer of rewriting the 8th Division's war diary. 'I fear me some hard words will appear when the whole story is written.' Curlewis had also been told by his commanding officer on 19 February that he would be the Assistant Director of Education for the fourteen thousand men in and around Changi. He was to be Dean of the Faculty of Law, and indeed he gave lectures on contracts, criminal law, evidence and torts for forty-four law students and 120 interested others. Work parties were often sent out, however, and so classes were interrupted. Some of them worked on wharves and collected scrap iron and furniture for shipment to Japan, while others filled in bomb craters.

By contrast with the relatively comfortable conditions described by Curlewis, Private Edgar Wilkie, in the harsher prison in Kuala Lumpur, was already recording deaths from disease. Malnutrition weakened men as fever's opportunistic ally. 'Lunch of rice and pork, just enough to aggravate

my hunger.' Brigadier Arthur Blackburn, VC, was the senior officer in the POW camp in Batavia, the future Jakarta, in Java. In that camp there were 2600 POWs, of whom two thousand were Australians. The survivors from HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston*, sunk during the night of 28 February–1 March in an engagement known as the Battle of Sunda Strait, were amongst them too. When Blackburn requested clothing, boots, a canteen, pay, freedom to send letters and to receive books, he was told that the Japanese did not recognise these things since they did not recognise the Geneva Convention.

Ultimately, when the information became available, the Australian government kept good statistics on the fates of their men who became prisoners of war, and calculated that of over seven thousand men captured by the European Axis powers, just 242 died, while over seven thousand of more than 21,000 POW in Japanese camps perished—nearly one in three.

In 1942, though, information was scarce. For many families, to the fear of invasion was added anxiety about the thousands captured in Singapore, Java, Ambon, Rabaul and elsewhere. Little information was coming through about them from the Japanese, who had not signed the Geneva Convention on POWs. The Convention bound its signatories to see that the relatives of captives be quickly informed by way of the Red Cross.

The wives and mothers of POWs wrote to Curtin in the belief he was the sort of man who would take a personal interest in their anguish. The letters are poignant. Mrs Wallace of Glenbrook in New South Wales wrote to explain that one of her four soldier boys was now a prisoner of war: 'I am alone, and greatly worried about my son in Japanese hands, who is a good boy.' Mrs Grace Harrison of South Melbourne: 'My son is missing in Malaya and I am a very sad mother . . . please forgive me taking the liberty and may Our Lady of Good Counsel help you in a task that is very great.' Mrs Elsie Salter of Epping in Sydney even wrote to Elsie Curtin, asking her if she could use her good offices with her husband to find out what had happened to Mrs Salter's husband: 'I have a baby daughter who was born two months after the fall of Singapore.' The prisoner of war did not know their child's name. Could Elsie ask John Curtin to get that name to her husband?

In April 1942, Curtin wondered whether he should exercise 'reciprocity' in withdrawing privileges from the Japanese prisoners and internees Australia held until the lists of names arrived from the Japanese military by way of the Red Cross. The British wisely reminded him that there was a disproportion

between the small number of Japanese prisoners of war the Allies held and the great number of British, Australian and Indian prisoners the Japanese had taken. Up to that time only eight Australian names had been provided by the Japanese, and three of those were of dead soldiers.

As early as mid-March 1942, the Australian government felt it must send out telegrams that notified families only that the son, daughter or husband was missing. Gordon Bennett, the general who had fled Singapore, told the press that 'evidence so far is that Australians in Japanese hands have been treated quite well, and there does not seem to be any need for undue worry by relatives'. This was a true assessment for the period during which the Japanese worked out what to do with the masses of prisoners they had taken. Bennett's statement must have comforted the families of the lost.

Governments would never be certain how many Allied civilians were interned by the Japanese, since exact records would never be received or found. There may have been as many as 130,000 of them, mainly Dutch, British, Australian and American. They were missionaries, nurses, doctors, administrators, teachers and traders.

BRING THEM HOME

In February 1942, as Curtin's symptoms improved in St Vincent's Hospital, he was still plagued by concern for the safety of two Australian divisions, and also for the question of to which theatre of war Churchill and Roosevelt would try to bluster him into sending them. On the night of 20 February, after leaving hospital that morning, he sent a cable to Churchill—'the biggest and most important decision I have had to make since Japan entered the war', he later told Cabinet—further demanding an even more urgent return to Australia of the two divisions for fear of their being consumed in lost causes such as the fighting in Burma or in Java. His cable was not responded to. In fact, Earle Page told Churchill that he would try to change Curtin's mind.

Churchill cabled Roosevelt on 5 March that it was 'not easy to assign limits to the Japanese aggression. All can be retrieved in 1943 and 1944, but meanwhile there are very hard forfeits to pay.' The question was, was Australia to be one of those forfeits? The discussion on the Australian divisions thus rolled on and on.

So the 6th and 7th divisions were scattered across the Indian Ocean in poorly protected convoys between Suez and Fremantle while the 9th remained

in Palestine, and the 8th was in prison in Malaya and Singapore. The Armoured Division of the AIF was training with their less than a dozen tanks, and despite Washington accepting the strategic responsibility for Australia's defence, the first US division had still not arrived.

Despite the emergency of 1942 the Australian government continued to send young flyers to be trained in Canada for Bomber Command operations from Britain, both Page and Bruce felt they must apologise for the Curtin government's demands. Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner, argued that Anglo-American assistance would be increased by Australia adopting a compliant attitude since there was 'a vast difference between the help given because of necessity and that afforded out of gratitude and good feeling'. And yet there was little gratitude and good feeling from London's direction towards Australia. All this was unfortunate, but again it must be noted that Bruce and Page too lived in Britain, and had survived the seventy-one catastrophic air raids on London between late 1940 and mid-1941; they were also aware of the scale of British defeats thus far, and of Hitler's unbridled aggression. These matters weighed hugely on those in Westminster. South-west priorities weighed hugely on Curtin.

It was not as if Page was immune from the stress Curtin himself felt. This was partly from the task of mediating between an acerbic and aggrieved Churchill and a determined Curtin, and straining from within the European milieu to see where Australia's interests outweighed those of Empire. He would write to Curtin in April, 'I went through since January the worst period of acute mental distress of my whole life.' A severe attack of pneumonia would so undermine his health that he would return to Australia in June.

In any case, in early 1942, Churchill convinced Page that if Burma was lost, China might pull out of the war against the Japanese for lack of supplies. If the two Australian divisions were used to strengthen Burma, it would not only help save India to the west and China to the east, but also show the Americans that Australia was willing to do its part, and so cause America and Britain to do their part for Australia in turn.

On the night of Saturday, 21 February, Curtin slept soundly, but woke up to be presented with cables from Churchill and Roosevelt arguing that the Australians *must* go to Burma. Indeed, Churchill persisted with the idea of sending the Australians to Rangoon, the capital, even though the Japanese were only 64 kilometres from the city, and the port facilities needed to unload

the two Australian divisions had been blown to scrap iron by the Japanese air force, and all wharf labourers had fled.

Curtin lacked training in military strategy but was willing to be advised by his own chiefs of staff, all of whom said, 'Bring the boys home!' This advice echoed his instincts. General Vernon Sturdee, Chief of General Staff, who had never believed in the Singapore solution in the first place, said he would resign if the government ignored this advice. Curtin left the Lodge at night, often on his own, and wandered the hills, worried about the convoys of men on their way home. The first Australian formations to leave the Middle East at this time had begun to do so on 30 January, and the last was loaded on 12 March. By the middle of February, 17 800 men of the 6th and 7th divisions were in the port of Bombay and were re-embarked into smaller ships to avoid sending larger, vulnerable liners into the danger zone.

Lieutenant-General Sir John Lavarack, Commander of the 1st Australian Corps, had rushed from the Middle East to Java and was waiting for the troops to arrive there, but Allied forces in Sumatra were subjected to the same total dominance of the air and mobility on the ground of the Japanese forces and a Java landing was imminent.

The 3400 Australian veterans of the 7th Division that had landed on Java by 19 February faced capture. The Australian government became aware of this potential entrapment only in late February or early March, and it made Curtin more insistent that all the AIF be returned to Australia and the men in Java evacuated if possible, even if it was already too late. General Archie Wavell's deputy, General Henry Pownall, blasted the Australians for their 'damnable attitude' in demanding a withdrawal of their recently landed troops from the Netherlands East Indies. He wrote that they had been 'shown up in their true colours. Not so much the troops and commanders themselves . . . as their government, actuated presumably by a mixture of public opinion in Australia and common funk. Winston had little enough use for them before, especially after they demanded to be relieved at Tobruk, to everyone's great inconvenience. He'll be madder still now.' Pownall described Australians as 'the most egotistical, conceited people imaginable . . . so damn well pleased with themselves all the time and so highly critical of everyone else'.

When the Japanese landed on both the east and west coasts of Java, a force of some units of the 7th Division men, Blackforce, led by Brigadier

Arthur Blackburn, a lawyer and Victoria Cross winner from World War I, defended the Tjianten River crossings in Java, near Batavia (Djakata), the capital. When the Dutch on their flanks capitulated as a result of the Dutch signing a surrender in Bandung in West Java on 12 March, the senior British, Australian and American officers were forced to sign a formal surrender. Blackburn's three thousand Australians became prisoners of war. Many RAF and RAAF men had gathered at the unhealthy port of Tjilatjap (Cilacap) on the south coast of Java for evacuation, but Japanese bombers sank all the ships in the harbour, and a plan to evacuate Australians by flying boat fell through. Some, however, did manage to escape. On 7 March 1942, RAF Wing Commander J.R. Jeudwine took a ship's lifeboat with a maximum capacity of twelve, and in piled RAF and RAAF men more than twice that number. They hoped they would reach Australia in sixteen days, but it took them forty-four. There was just enough continuing supply of rainwater to keep everyone alive. For morale's sake games were played and debates held. On 18 April their lifeboat landed on Fraser Island off north-west Australia, where they were rescued by a flying boat.

Churchill had assured Curtin when MacArthur arrived that this did not mean that Britain no longer felt any responsibility. 'We shall do our utmost to divert British troops and British ships rounding the Cape, or already in the Indian Ocean, to your succour, albeit at the expense of India and the Middle East.' Curtin had heard that tune before. Amidst his fears, his struggles with morbidity of soul, manifold doubt and chronic ill health, Curtin was determined not to fall for it all again. When Roosevelt offered an untrained division of American troops to allow the Australians to go to Burma, Curtin sent a polite refusal. In the meantime, Churchill had already, on his own assumed authority, told the Australian convoy to veer towards Burma to defend 'the only white man's territory south of the equator'. In fact, Burma was north of the equator.

Curtin worked on the draft reply. It stated heatedly the conviction he had so firmly reached: to send the troops to Burma, he said, would be to repeat the follies of the Greek and Malaya debacles and bring the troops within range of sea and air attack by the Japanese. Churchill replied that the ships were actually steaming away from Australia and no longer had sufficient fuel to reach home without stopping at Ceylon. That reality would give the Australian government, said Churchill, another three or four days to

reconsider its decision. But there would be no reconsideration. Curtin was outraged at Churchill for diverting the convoy in the first place.

It was at this stage that the commander of the Home Forces, General Iven Mackay, urged on the Australian government what would become known as the 'Brisbane Line'—that the rest of Australia should be abandoned if necessary and the battle against the Japanese be waged by a concentration of Australian and other troops in the south-east corner of the continent. Just after the Great War, a committee was set up consisting of Generals Monash, Chauvel and Brudenell White to create a plan for the defence of Australia against future enemies—and it was Japan they had in mind. Since Australia had the longest coastline of any nation on earth and so many beaches, it seemed impossible to defend it all, particularly given the sparse population the further north one got. The three generals assumed that the invaders' main objective would be 'some compact vulnerable area, the resources of which are necessary to the economic life of Australia.' Thus Mackay, former headmaster of Cranbrook School in Sydney, had merely drawn on a plan devised years before. Hard-hitting Labor minister Eddie Ward would, however, make much of the turpitude of abandoning any part of Australia. Queenslanders would take generations to forgive the concept.

But even if all its forces reached home safely and were concentrated in this south-east sector, Australia had just five divisions in the Brisbane–Adelaide–Melbourne triangle, and their equipment was massively inferior to that of the Japanese, and their aircraft outmoded.

At a strategy meeting on 15 March 1942, at which the General Staffs of both the Japanese army and the Japanese navy were represented, an invasion of Australia had indeed been proposed. It was acknowledged it would require ten divisions or more. The army was nonetheless keener than the navy. Yamashita, the Tiger of Malaya, wrote: 'With even Sydney and Brisbane in my hands, it would have been comparatively simple to subdue Australia . . . although the Japanese general staff felt my supply lines would have been too long, so would the Australian or British lines. We could have been safe there forever.' Even Admiral Yamamoto, who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor, wanted to establish a substantial naval base on the east coast of Australia. He believed five divisions of troops stationed around the Sydney–Newcastle area would be sufficient.

But the Japanese naval staff thought their fleet would be too stretched in protecting the lines of communication with a Japanese army in south-east Australia. Instead, a scheme to take Port Moresby and isolate Australia and New Zealand by occupying Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia was adopted. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo's priority became an invasion of Port Moresby and the subjugation of New Guinea. Port Moresby could serve as a base from which Japanese planes could intercept the land and sea routes between Australia and the United States. The Allies knew the Japanese plans beforehand since they could crack their codes. But having the forces make use of the knowledge . . . that was the limitation.

Yamamoto turned his attention to Midway Atoll in the North Pacific Ocean, where he would land seven thousand Japanese soldiers once the combined fleet had destroyed the US aircraft base there. It was in this phase that Yamamoto decided to use diversionary tactics, ranging from the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian island chain in Alaska down to a midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour, and another on Madagascar.



Significantly, Curtin agreed now, as the Australian convoys turned their back on Burma and made for Ceylon, that two brigades of the 6th Division, whose ships were behind those of the 7th Division, could stay in Ceylon as a temporary garrison for four to six weeks. This was much better than their going to Burma—indeed, Rangoon would fall to the Japanese on 8 March. But Curtin's implied conditions were that the 7th Division, the third brigade of the 6th Division and the remaining fifty thousand Australian troops in the Middle East should all be returned to Australia as soon as possible. The Ceylon concession was a relatively small tribute paid to relentless determination and insistence from Churchill and others, but it does not figure in the popular legend of Curtin. The 6th Division men in Ceylon would be as exposed as their brethren had been in Singapore and in Greece and Crete. They would be without adequate air or naval support, since the Japanese controlled the Indian Ocean too and kept the British Pacific fleet hovering timidly around the east coast of Africa. The two brigades would not in fact arrive back in Australia until August 1942.

In return for his gesture, Curtin felt he had a clear understanding with Churchill that the 9th Division would be promptly returned to Australia.

Churchill would not honour that implied agreement, and the British government had control over the shipping necessary to take the 9th home. From a British point of view, the 9th Division was still needed in North Africa, and would indeed be crucial to the British success at El Alamein later in the year, the battle that ended German hopes of ever taking the Suez Canal.

This was the time of Curtin's nervous night rambles. Curtin confessed to the clerk of the House of Representatives, Frank Green, who met him one night while he stood alone in the moonlit garden of the Lodge, that he wasn't able to sleep 'while our transports are out in the Indian Ocean with the Jap submarines looking for them'. But he did not always sleep at the Lodge. He used a pull-down iron bed in his office and on it barely got two hours' sleep a night. The populace were partly aware of the strain on him, and were somehow comforted by the nervous energy he clearly expended. He was something like the national worrier, and took some of the burden off them.

When film was taken of Curtin returning to his house—typically described as 'modest'—in Cottesloe in Perth, carrying his own suitcase, troops who saw it in Darwin cheered. Many Australians felt he was living their sort of life, and was one with them.

AUSTERITY

Meanwhile, Australian citizens began to know true hardship when it was decided that everyone must carry an identity card and a ration book. The rationing of tea began on 20 March 1942, to be followed by rationing of clothing on 9 May, while sugar was not rationed until 31 August. Butter and meat followed. Suddenly goods cost not only money but coupons as well. In June 1942, each Australian received a coupon book with 118 coupons. Every purchasable item had a coupon value—a man's suit took thirty-eight coupons, a pair of socks four. If buying a particular piece of apparel for fashion (local dances) or necessity (school uniforms), a civilian needed enough coupons left in his or her book to cover it.

After receiving coupons from shoppers, shops passed them on to wholesalers, so that they could order more goods, and wholesalers passed them back to producers and the Rationing Commission. It was considered a great

mercy when a storekeeper supplied some under-the-counter delicacy, say, for a sick child, without demanding coupons, since that meant he was sacrificing a fragment of his own purchasing power.

Rationing was preceded by much panic buying and accompanied by the onset of the black market. Liquor became a fertile item of trade. Lucky young women had gin and nylons supplied by MacArthur's arriving Americans, who could buy them cheaply at the PX stores set up in American bases. Otherwise liquor was sold by sly grog dealers, selling their goods from premises in laneways, often to men who had missed out on their evening intake because of the newly enacted six o'clock closing of pubs.

Petrol rationing had already begun in June 1940, and increasingly people got used to the sight of charcoal gas bladders in frameworks on top of cars, or charcoal gas producer tanks welded to the rear of vehicles. Refuelling with charcoal was even then considered a dirty enough business that those who did it wore masks. Petrol rationing would in fact last until 1950, and in the post-war period, Australian drivers received only 50 per cent of the British ration. Rationing had been one of the chief issues in Menzies' near-loss of government in 1940, and would contribute to the discontent that brought down Ben Chifley's Labor government in 1949. But in World War II, most people accepted it with grumbling but a fundamental good grace, eroded only a little by the black marketeers and the exorbitant prices they charged for luxuries.

The austerity drive also involved the standardisation of clothing, including the introduction of a 'Victory' suit for men, much mocked by commentators. In an age when suits were much worn—even to football matches—it was a suit made with a minimum of cloth. The jacket was shorter in the tail than usual, and if it was double-breasted it lacked the vest, then normally part of any suit. It was matched, in the case of women, by the unavailability of stockings and by 'austerity dresses'. These used the minimum of cloth required for modesty and were made out of old, discarded clothes or even curtains, bedding or tablecloths. Young stockingless women put tan lotion on their legs and drew a seam down their calves to simulate the real thing. The sight of boys on the cusp of adolescence wearing too short and crotch-pinching pants was common.

THE PEOPLE AND POLICY, 1942

The growing public conviction of the rightness of returning the troops to Australia played in the Labor Party's favour. The United Australia Party (UAP), according to Paul Hasluck, suffered from 'ideological poverty'. The jovial and garrulous Queensland accountant Artie Fadden, who had left the Country Party for the UAP at the time of his brief prime ministership in 1941, had not appeared to be a credible alternative leader of an embattled Australia. The Labor Party and Curtin had come to be identified with the war effort, and Hasluck would complain later that there was an assumption that the Labor Party had won the war and saved Australia. Don Rodgers, Curtin's press secretary, was skilled at pushing the view of Curtin as saviour.

Curtin left it above all to his Treasurer, Ben Chifley, to assure Australians that the social justice program would be maintained during wartime. Invalid and old-age pensions were raised and these benefits were extended to at least some Aborigines. A Maternity Allowance Bill was passed and similarly extended to Aborigines, and a Child Endowment Bill and a Widows' Pension Bill were passed. The government linked the rise in the pension rate to the rise in the cost of living as war demand drove up prices. The Aboriginal entitlement to these benefits was limited to 'Aboriginal natives of Australia who are living under civilised conditions and whose character and intelligence qualify them to receive pensions'. Payment of the benefit could be made either to the pensioner or to 'a suitable authority or person for the benefit of pensioners'. This created the risk of corrupt withholding of money in the many cases in which Aborigines were wards of the state and were not entitled to receive money directly. Nonetheless, in the minds of Curtin and Chifley, to lower social-benefit standards during the war was to lose what Australia was. The only Australia worth fighting for was a just one. In fact, these social service measures received support from both sides of Parliament.

In 1941, Fadden had tried to persuade the states to surrender temporarily their power to impose income tax. The premiers had rejected the proposal. Now Chifley forced the issue. In May 1942, Chifley introduced four income-tax measures into the Commonwealth Parliament, the effect of which would be that for the duration of the war and for the financial year in which the war came to an end, the Commonwealth should be the sole authority to tax income. Chifley said that the Commonwealth had the task of mobilising the complete resources of the nation, and its financial obligations had increased

beyond anything imagined. The states would be reimbursed for their lost revenue. He declared in Parliament: 'Nothing short of complete control by the Commonwealth during the war will meet the huge demands that have to be faced . . . the rights of the sovereign people are paramount to the sovereign rights of the States.'

The reality Curtin and Chifley did not emphasise was that once the states dismantled the structure for collecting income tax, and gave the public servants who had previously collected and processed taxes other jobs, it would be hard for them ever to take over collection of taxes again. Indeed, there was not much doubt that Chifley saw this centralism as an objective desirable whether in peace or in war. Chifley's subtle argument was that the government did not seek to take away from the states their power to impose taxes upon incomes, but 'we say to the states: "If you impose income tax you will receive no compensation from us. On the other hand, if you vacate the income tax field, we shall give you the money that you would otherwise have raised for yourselves." I ask the States to accept that arrangement.' It was, in fact, the querulous young Melbourne Labor member Calwell who said he hoped the states would challenge the legislation in the High Court, for he predicted that having lost their right to impose income tax, they would become 'mendicants existing upon the bounty of the Commonwealth . . . and for practical purposes will cease to exist as States'.

Many opposition members voted with the government, while Curtin's friend and old mentor, the noble Maurice Blackburn, crossed the floor to vote against the legislation. In the Senate, four of the opposition voted with the government. Four states—South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia—decided to make a High Court challenge to the 'Federal grab'. Billy McKell, the Labor premier of New South Wales, wanted to join them in their cause but was overruled at the annual Labor State Conference in June when a massive majority decided to support the Commonwealth's intentions.

The High Court action began on 22 June and the judgment was delivered on 23 July. The four Commonwealth Acts were upheld. As historian David Day says, 'A major change in constitutional relationships and in the political structure of Australia had been made without any formal amendment of the Constitution.'

FOREIGN PARTS

In 1939, at war's outbreak, Eddie Ward, the 'Firebrand of East Sydney'—frightened of Menzies's tendency to favour conscription—was arguing that just as some citizens had the liberty to volunteer to fight beyond our shores, people 'should never surrender the right to decide whether or not they should go overseas to render military service'. The militia could be conscripted to fight in Australian territory, but beyond that defensive duty, no one should be compelled. Though he uttered these opinions in 1939 in opposition, he would maintain them after the ALP gained power and the Japanese entered the war. Menzies, in any case, declared himself to have no interest in introducing conscription.

Still in opposition in 1941, Curtin declared that there were too many volunteers in the militia being turned away for there to be a need of compulsory service. But towards the end of 1942 Curtin did reach the decision that the *Defence Act* should be amended to enable the militia to serve outside Australian territories. In effect, this would combine the militia and the AIF into one Australian armed force. He was under pressure from the Americans, who considered that if conscription was fair enough for them, it should operate in the case of the Australians too.

In Parliament in early 1943, Curtin would reiterate his chief arguments, including the one that said, 'The defence of Australia is not confined to its territorial limits.' But the American issue was strong too: 'Because of the debt of gratitude owed to the US, Australia should be able to say that Australian resources would go on with them and maintain supplies and bases to them from islands close to Australia which, if not held, could be bases for the enemy to attack the US forces.'

In his broadcast to the American people in March 1942, Curtin had brushed aside the difference between the militia and the AIF with his claim that Australia had a complete call-up. While he might have liked to merge the two forces, he realised the issue was weighed down with the emotional baggage of Labor Party anti-conscription for overseas service in 1916–17. But he sprang the matter on the unsuspecting delegates of the party conference held in Melbourne on 16 November 1942.

'The enemies of Labor are jubilant,' wrote the aggrieved *Labor Call* on 3 December 1942. 'They have always wanted conscription for military service beyond Australia and its adjacent territories, and now, at long last,

they think their dream is coming true. Labor's Prime Minister has proposed that the *Defence Act* be amended to permit the militia forces to be used anywhere in the Southwest Pacific, and Labor's enemies believe the proposal will be agreed to by a Special Federal Labor Conference to be held on January 4th next.'

Maurice Blackburn, Curtin's mentor when he first came into the House, and who had been expelled from the Labor Party in 1941 by the anti-Communist Victorian branch because of his participation in the campaign against Fascism in Spain and sympathy for Russia, produced, in January 1943, his tract entitled *Against Conscription, 40 Questions Answered*. Some of them were answered thus: 'Mr Hughes asked Power to compel Australians to fight anywhere, while Mr Curtin wishes to be able to send men to fight anywhere the Government chooses in the South West Pacific. Question: What is the South West Pacific area? Answer: No official definition has been published . . . Question: What do you say about America? She is helping us. Are not you anti-conscriptionists ungrateful to her? Answer: No question of gratitude arises. We value America's friendship, but friendship did not bring Americans to Australia. Without the surprise of Pearl Harbor and the loss of the Philippines, we might never have seen the Americans.'

Back in late October 1942, Curtin was still mulling it all over. He and Elsie went back to Western Australia to attend the wedding of their daughter, who was marrying a dentist from Cottesloe. Curtin then returned for the November Federal Labor Conference, but as he travelled back eastwards by train across the Nullarbor, he began to suffer acutely from neuritis. He had to have hospital treatment in Adelaide.

Although advised against travelling, Curtin joined the night train to Melbourne so he could address the Armistice Day commemoration. On the way, several servicemen and servicewomen forced their way enthusiastically into his reserved compartment and refused to leave; as a result he arrived in Melbourne without having had any sleep and needed to go again to doctors. Meanwhile, he had forewarned Chifley and his old friend Scullin of what was to happen, for he trusted them and knew they agreed with him.

At that November conference, Arthur Calwell tried to prevent Curtin being heard. Eddie Ward and Don Cameron attacked Curtin as expected. Ward denounced him for 'putting young men into the slaughterhouse,

although thirty years ago you wouldn't go into it yourself'. In return, Curtin produced an interesting variation on his argument: 'A man could be sent to Darwin, where he would be bombed, but not to Timor [which then belonged to the Dutch and the Portuguese, though occupied by the Japanese] to save Darwin from being bombed. The militia could be forced to fight in Papua but could not pursue the Japanese across the border into Dutch New Guinea.'

Though at one stage Curtin could be seen to weep, he was immovable. His tears were possibly for the lost idealism of 1916–17, and for the friends he would now offend by what he proposed, as well as being caused by stress. But there was a serious difference between the present idea and Hughes's ambitions in World War I. Under Curtin's proposal, the region to which conscripts could be sent was in the Pacific and did not go north of the equator.

The special Labor conference for 1943 approved the change to overseas service, by twenty-four votes to twelve. The AIF and militia were at one in where they might be committed.

SECOND- AND THIRD-PHASE PERIL

Although Allied success in the Coral Sea delayed Japanese plans, a victory for the Japanese at Midway Island in the mid-Pacific would have meant complete domination of the Pacific Ocean and weakened Australia and New Zealand's tenuous link with the United States geographically. At least one historian argues that Japanese victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea might have seen Australian cities heavily bombed and might even have seen Australia invaded. Victory at Midway, in waters off an atoll of that name just north of the equator, would have made both of these a certainty.

The battle began on 4 June 1942, almost exactly a month after the Battle of the Coral Sea. US fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, commanding from Hawaii, knew he could not fight the Japanese head-on, but he had accurate intelligence and other advantages—as it turned out, luck and the complicated deployment of the Japanese fleet were two of them. The Australians did not take part, but they had the excuse that their Pacific navy was fully preoccupied further south.

Midway saw four Japanese aircraft carriers sunk, and the number of young Japanese men consumed for the sake of their admiral's ambitions was nearly ten times that of American casualties.

The Battle of Midway was also a problem for General MacArthur. It wasn't his victory. He had been in Australia less than three months and had yet to strike a significant blow at the enemy. As a first step in getting engaged with the Japanese, he moved his headquarters from Brisbane and, to give himself an edge, without reference to Washington changed his own title to Commander in Chief, South West Pacific Area. By now he felt that he was able to inform Prime Minister Curtin, at a conference on 11 June, that the threat to Australia was over. Yet if Port Moresby were captured by the Japanese, there would be a third and climactic round of peril. Still, the publicity emphasis remained on MacArthur as the man *about* to save Australia, and he would manage to seize that mantle from the admirals Nimitz and Spruance (the latter had commanded the fleet at sea off Midway).



In Port Moresby General Basil Morris began to assemble Maroubra Force, organised around the 39th Militia Battalion, which had a few AIF reinforcements, including officers. With some reluctance and at Blamey's orders, he sent the 39th Militia Battalion up over the exhausting, rain-slicked and overgrown mountains to garrison Kokoda, a small village which had an airstrip and was situated on the far side of the Owen Stanley Ranges but on the lower northern slopes. A walking track and a road connected it to Buna 60 kilometres away on the coast. Morris had had a lot of trouble supplying Kanga Force outside Salamaua. He prophetically believed that the main Japanese invasion force *would* land at Buna, but also believed that no matter how many men it had, and how much equipment, on the way across the mountains the force would suffer such attrition and be so affected by disease that it could not reach Moresby. It would also need to move without heavy artillery, since these could not possibly be manhandled over the mountains. He saw that in being ordered to send troops forward to Kokoda he was creating for himself the very problems he foresaw for the Japanese. No wheeled vehicle could go more than a few kilometres towards Kokoda, and though it had an airstrip, there were not sufficient aircraft to supply it by air, even if the weather and the mountains were not such a challenge that pilots would need consummate skill to socket their aircraft safely onto the cramped airstrip surrounded by peaks. So native New Guinean carriers, each man carrying no more than twenty kilograms, would be the

main method used to provide for whatever troops were committed in an attempt to defend Kokoda.

On 2 July, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff upped the situation when they ordered MacArthur to seize and occupy those parts of New Guinea not already held by the Allies.

MacArthur's first plan was to attack New Britain and New Ireland, the long narrow islands off the north coast of New Guinea. The jewel of New Britain was Rabaul. He asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide him with a division of marines and two aircraft carriers. The navy said they would not commit their aircraft carriers without adequate land-based aircraft cover.

Two divisions of American infantry had by now arrived in Australia, the 32nd and the 41st. MacArthur ordered the 32nd to a camp west of Brisbane and the 41st to train between Rockhampton and Yeppoon. He issued an outline plan for the creation of airfields and other installations at Buna on the north coast of New Guinea to provide support for the planned recapture of Rabaul and New Britain. Australian infantry and American engineers were to cross the Kokoda Trail from Port Moresby to the north New Guinea coast before the Japanese grabbed it, and to 'seize an area suitable for the operation of all types of aircraft and secure a disembarkation point pending the arrival of sea parties'. He also ordered airfields constructed at Milne Bay at New Guinea's eastern extremity. By mid-July 1942, an Australian fighter squadron equipped with American Kittyhawks was operating from the Gili Gili airstrip at the extreme end of Milne Bay, and a brigade of Australians was sent to defend the area.

Before that could happen, a Japanese float plane machine-gunned the mission at Buna, and a Japanese cruiser and a destroyer escorting two troop transports appeared off the beach at Gona, fifteen kilometres to the west, on 21 July 1942. General Horii from Rabaul had gazumped the Allied plans, and the amphibious assault on the Buna–Gona coastline continued. It became apparent the Japanese *did* intend to march along the precipitous track to Port Moresby. The only Allied troops north of the ranges were the men of Kanga Force, and the 39th Battalion at Kokoda. Most of these militiamen, the choco soldiers, were boys of eighteen years of age. They were exhausted from their trek over the ranges, they were ill-supplied and hungry, and going down with malaria. By the end of August their commander would be an AIF man, Brigadier Arnold Potts.

Ninety-six kilometres north-east of them, more Japanese infantry and engineers were storming ashore, where they ran into small Australian squads, the priest and nuns from the mission, and a plantation manager and his staff. Many of the latter, including six women, were captured by New Guineans and handed over to the Japanese, who beheaded nearly all of them.

One can ask why no Allied army waited on the shore and why no navy opposed this landing. A few Allied planes inexpertly attacked the fleet, and the transport ship *Ayatozan Maru* ran aground. Pilot Officer Warren Cowan of 32 Squadron RAAF attacked the enemy ships leaving Buna in his old Hudson bomber. Nine Zeros pounced on him, one of them piloted by an ace, Saburo Sakai, and shot him down. He crashed into the jungle and was killed.

So General Horii came ashore in the Buna–Gona area with more than thirteen thousand men, well trained, many of them veterans of China and Malaya. The Kokoda campaign began on the afternoon of 21 July 1942 when James Benson looked out over his garden to see a Japanese transport ship flanked by warships approaching the beach at Gona. The Orokaiva and Binandere people had already disappeared into the bush, cognisant of what was about to happen. Horii landed his white horse, which he intended to ride over the mountains. The outnumbered 39th Battalion were ordered by Morris to fall back from Kokoda before they became trapped there.

This gave MacArthur welcome grounds to condemn the Australians. As members of the 7th Division AIF commanded by General Tubby Allen began to arrive on 11 August, New Guinea became a corps command under Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell, who took over from Morris. Rowell had served on Blamey's staff, but was not an admirer of his and had already made that clear in the Middle East. But it was MacArthur's orders that astounded him. Rowell was told by MacArthur's headquarters to reconnoitre the Kokoda Trail for a summit pass that might be readily blocked by demolition. MacArthur's people asked if The Gap at the peak of the Owen Stanleys could be defended by a small group of men like the Greeks at Thermopylae. The Gap was a twelve-kilometre-wide dip in the mountains; because it was less vegetated, it was one of the places where more open military operations could take place and small parties of Allied forces overrun. Rowell replied, 'The amount of explosive which could be carried by native porters for the ten days' trip . . . would hardly increase the present difficulties of the track [for the Japanese]. Some parts of the track have to be negotiated on hands

and knees and the use of tonnes of explosives would not increase these difficulties.' Then, he said, 'I sent [the order] back asking whether it was this week's funny story.' Nor had MacArthur seemingly heard of the fate of the Australians defending the *real* Thermopylae area in Greece in 1941.

Rowell made ready to defend Milne Bay and Gili Gili airstrip. Soon an AIF brigade arrived and Major-General Cyril Clowes took command of Milne Force, now more than six thousand strong. His headquarters was on relatively open ground in the north-west of the bay near Gili Gili. Milne Bay was a terrible place for malaria, a swampy environment below steep mountains. The Australians were equipped with shorts and often wore singlets, and with their exposed legs and arms they became victims of malaria in considerable numbers. Throughout 1942, malaria and other tropical diseases caused three times as many casualties in the New Guinea forces as the enemy did.

On 25 August 1942, the enemy arrived at Milne Bay—four Japanese transports escorted by cruisers and destroyers. They landed the first contingent of 2400 troops at Ahoima on the north shore of Milne Bay, less than ten kilometres from Gili Gili. Twenty-seven Japanese tanks came ashore as well. Over the next few days the supply barges of the Japanese force would be strafed and sunk by Australian Kittyhawks. Unable to move by barge, the Japanese took to the muddy road towards Gili Gili, an airstrip that would increase the range of their air force.

As they advanced, they were attacked by Australians, who sank to the ankles and sometimes to the knees in the claggy mud, and who had waited for them at an intermediate point named KB Mission. MacArthur's headquarters was not aware of any of this and placed pressure on Blamey, who in turn signalled a complaint to Rowell about Clowes' lack of movement. Rowell passionately defended Clowes. The Japanese could not be immediately hurled back into the sea because Clowes had to keep troops on the south shore as well, in case of a Japanese landing there.

On the night of 28 August, the Japanese attacked the Australian lines. Behind the tanks, the infantry began to sing melodically and solemnly, and then charged. The tanks floodlit each other's flanks to protect themselves from attacks by Australians running up with sticky bombs—anti-tank grenades packed with nitroglycerine—to attach to the sides. Damaged by damp, these either failed to explode or fell off. The tanks' lights also enabled them to see, encircle and destroy groups of Australian soldiers. Here one

knot of grappling bodies spilled into the sea, so narrow was the coastal plain. The Japanese forced the Australians back beyond the Gama River where militia units held the line.

Three days after the landing, MacArthur had just about made up his mind about the quality of the Australian troops and alerted Roosevelt to his doubts.

The 9th Battalion of the 7th Division fought its way into the Japanese base area at Milne Bay on the night of 6 September. That same night a small Allied merchant ship managed to sneak in from Port Moresby carrying ammunition and stores. As it unloaded alongside the wharf, a Japanese cruiser entered the bay and sank her with gunfire and heavily shelled the area around the airstrip. All the more, Clowes had no choice but to maintain an uncommitted reserve to deal with any new position the Japanese might take because 'they completely dominated the bay'.

Australian pilots strafed Japanese positions on the north shore as the infantry forced the Japanese back over their occupied ground towards KB Mission. There was a Japanese counter attack and prodigious slaughter—ninety-two Japanese killed and hundreds wounded in a few minutes. Clowes received a peremptory message from MacArthur's headquarters saying that the port would be attacked by new forces emerging from the west and north-west. So he halted his eastern offensive and all night the Australians waited for these attacks from the west and north-west to present themselves. Patrols found nothing of them. At dawn, Clowes swung his troops back from this useless exercise.

In the jungle the Australians found the burned-out Kittyhawk of Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull, who had flown dozens of air raids against Japanese positions. By now the Japanese tanks were bogged and Australian fighter aircraft had forced the Japanese to move entirely at night. Kittyhawk pilots even killed snipers waiting in trees.

A Japanese convoy sailed into Milne Bay on the night of 6 September to evacuate the troops, and some fourteen hundred of them escaped. The Japanese bombed and sank the *Anshun*, an Allied supply ship, but spared the hospital ship *Manunda*, veteran of war in the Mediterranean and of the bombing of Darwin, after they had examined it by searchlight. Clowes had suffered 161 dead. Though it was the first Japanese amphibious landing repulsed, MacArthur churlishly wrote, 'The enemy's defeat at Milne Bay

must not be accepted as a measure of the relative fighting capacity of the troops involved.' But though the ground troops were so poor in his estimation, the report of his own military wisdom his press office prepared was glowing. 'The decisive factor was the complete surprise obtained . . . by our preliminary concentration of superior forces.'

VIA DOLOROSA

The poorly equipped Australians retreated from Kokoda, with the Japanese both charging frontally and outflanking in the same manner as in Malaya. The confidence of the enemy, their screened closeness to the Australians, their taunts and cries and howls and sudden apparitions must have appalled the young Australians, whose desperate withdrawal nonetheless managed coherence.

General Tubby Allen, commander of the 7th Division AIF, arrived in Port Moresby in August. The 7th Division troops were suntanned, muscular, and justified in believing themselves an elite. But journalist Osmar White, seeing the battalions of the 21st Brigade set out on 15 August under General Arnold Potts, worried about their lack of jungle greens, the way their webbing would stand out in the jungle, and the impact of the malarial mosquito on their bare limbs. The altitude of the track at its highest point is 2590 metres. On the track up to Imita Ridge, Australian engineers had cut two thousand steps—the notorious Golden Stairs—on a track barely a metre wide. All this lay ahead of the 21st Brigade. Commander Potts, an amiable but very competent man, told his men they were to cross the Owen Stanley Ranges, take over command of the depleted 39th and 53rd battalions at Isurava, recapture Kokoda and drive the Japanese into the sea.

The packs of the men as they took off weighed about twenty kilograms, and held some of the Allies' leftover supply of quinine. As well as that the rifle and rounds brought the loads up to twenty-five kilograms. The Bren and Tommy guns were carried by the stronger men. Wirelasses, field telephones, three-inch mortars and medical gear were toted by support troops or native bearers. The 7th Division troops were quickly felled by the rigours of the track. Captain Phil Rhoden said, 'You slept in the open, you slept when you fell.' The difficulty these crack troops suffered made the performance of the militia all the more remarkable.

Potts found Myola, meant to be the horn of plenty from earlier air drops, barely supplied. He found eighty blankets, six thousand rations—about four days' worth—and a small amount of ammunition. The latter paucity was because of a Japanese raid on Moresby during which twenty-eight transports at Seven Mile airfield had been destroyed on the ground by enemy bombers, along with bomb-laden US Flying Fortresses. The transports were destroyed by the exploding bombs of the Fortresses as much as by the attack from above.

This meant that Rowell could not go forward and relieve the 39th at Isurava above Kokoda. Fortuitously, as Potts' brigade neared the front, the Japanese pressure on the boy soldiers of the militia itself slackened to wait for supplies to arrive from the coast. General Horii was running into the problems Tubby Allen, General Morris and others had predicted. Horii's supply chain was longer—from Rabaul to the north coast of New Guinea, and from there to Kokoda. His troops carried for the journey nine kilograms of rice to last fifteen days and no tinned meat. This appalling undersupply of food could not have been better designed to enhance desperate attack and savagery.

At the village of Efogi near Myola, the men of the 7th Division met the 39th Battalion's wounded militia coming back down the track. A man who had been shot through the skull had walked 180 kilometres in sixteen days to get as far as this. The 14th Battalion were shivering in their wet clothes and short pants. The men lit fires and sang as squalls of cold rain swept over the area.

Rowell and Tubby Allen began to organise the air drop for Potts' men—unparachuted loads of rations, ammunition and medical supplies that were pushed out of the rear doors of Dakota transports. At last some green (though not mottled) clothes were dropped to the khakied AIF. Broadcaster Chester Wilmot was on the trail with White and Parer. The latter had reached Moresby behind White and now began crossing the mountains again to film the reinforcement and—as it would turn out—retreat. Parer filmed the air raid that damaged the entire fleet of transports allocated to the Myola air drop. The following day he, Wilmot and White were given permission to advance up the Kokoda Trail to wherever the 21st Brigade headquarters was. They were to carry five days' rations and were not permitted to use native carriers.

Meanwhile, further down the track at the village of Kokoda, General Horii's troops were now beginning to take up their positions again in great numbers. Horii's patrols told him that only the remnants of one battalion, the 39th, were defending Isurava.

On his way to relieve the 39th and confront Horii, Potts continued along the track towards the crossing that would later be named for Captain Sam Templeton of the 39th Battalion, 'Uncle Sam' to his men, soon to die on the track. Here his men descended into the Eora Creek gorge, down which water cascaded, by an embankment where a field hospital stood. As the 7th Division troops approached Isurava they met files of wounded militiamen retreating, 'walking skeletons . . . their eyes . . . bright with fever'. On the banks of Eora Creek scores of wounded men stood about, said White, 'slimed from head to foot'. Captain Geoffrey Vernon, a fifty-nine-year-old doctor and a New Guinea resident, was here, unfazed, though he soon ran out of morphine. A cheerful army cook with a septic leg worked dishing out stew to the men who collapsed around the cookhouse.

At Isurava on the day before the 2/14th Battalion of the 7th Division arrived, a young sergeant, Bill Guest, a member of the 39th Battalion since the age of seventeen, found out by telephone that the 14th were arriving the next day and were at Templeton's Crossing. Guest, who like everyone of the 39th had been expecting to be overrun, whose clothes were foul and rotting and whose boots were held on by vines, was immensely fortified by the news. Guest saw his first 14th Battalion man as he went down to fill water bottles below the Isurava escarpment. He was astonished to see this creature, this forward scout from a different, more robust and less deprived world.

Horii became aware on Friday, 28 August, that the 39th had been reinforced, and the news dispirited him. By then the 39th Battalion had been holding Isurava for ten days under persistent Japanese attacks. The 53rd Militia Battalion's disgruntled and demoralised troops, who were untrained and had been used until now mainly as labour along the track, had arrived at Isurava a few days before Potts' men but had not caused the same degree of elation as the coming of the AIF men did.

When the first AIF platoons moved up to Isurava that evening, they presented themselves in the dugouts as if they belonged there. This was the first time the twin armies met together at war. 'I could have cried when I saw them, they looked terrible,' wrote Phil Rhoden of his first meeting with

the 39th. 'The divisions faded at once . . . We were Australians fighting for Australia. The mood was electric.'

Isurava was an excellent defensive position, Potts thought, a high spur that forced those who would outflank the Australians to climb mountain-sides to east and west and at massive effort. Here about six thousand Japanese troops confronted some eighteen hundred Australians, of whom six hundred were the militia of the 39th and the 53rd and twelve hundred were newly arrived and morale-enhancing AIF. There were more on their way too. But during the Isurava fight, from 28 to 30 August, there were perhaps three or four Japanese to every Australian.

Having now seen the condition of the 39th, Potts decided to let the battalion rest a while and to send in a fresh AIF battalion, the 14th, and to commit the militia's 53rd along a fork in the track towards Abuari, the village high up on the eastern ridge. If he did not secure this height and the Japanese did, he could be fired on from above. The 53rd had had a week's rest since crossing the Owen Stanleys. It was impossible to send in men—even the other AIF units—who had just survived the track, since a period of recuperation was essential.

Horii, still on his white horse, surveyed the battlefield and distributed sketches of the Australian position to his men. The next morning a detachment of the 53rd Battalion set off in the direction of Abuari on the eastern flank as they'd been ordered to. A forward patrol reached the village of Kaile; though attacked by two Japanese platoons by night, it held its position.

A mountain gun dragged this far by Horii's gunners fired into Isurava village as the Japanese infantry advanced through high grass. Two militia platoons a few hundred metres forward of Isurava were cut off. The Japanese jumped into their foxholes, and the horrifying intimacy of hand-to-hand combat began. The Japanese captured further high ground to the east and were deploying men along the ridges. It was, for four days, an inhuman affair, with the Australians positionally sound but undermanned. The attempt to advance on the right again was catastrophic for the 53rd; Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Ward, the 53rd's brave but inexperienced commander, and his entire headquarters staff were wiped out in an ambush. Potts ordered the 53rd back to Port Moresby and brought up the newly arrived 16th Battalion to recapture the eastern flank. The fittest of the 53rd were assigned to labour details at Myola and the rest ended up back in Moresby, through

no fault of their own—‘untrained, deeply stigmatised young men,’ as one historian puts it.

All the first day, the 39th held amidst mortar and machine-gun fire and mountain-gun shells. All day, waves of Japanese tore down narrow ridges to the west and attacked the Australian perimeter. The casualties were prodigious. All night, Japanese patrols tried to enter the Australian lines. Preliminary to these sorties would be cries from the blackness—‘You die tonight!’ The 39th were all but overrun. By the time a fresh batch of AIF troops arrived, only two hundred and fifty of their seven hundred men were left in the battle. It had been fighting with ‘fist and boot and rifle butt, the steel of crashing helmets and of struggling fingers,’ as Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Honner, a veteran of the Middle East and Greece and who had been commanding the 39th, described it.

Australians who were captured, such as Arthur Davis, were tortured. Davis’s body was dumped some hours later in a clearing to draw the Australian troops into the open. Potts himself declared, ‘We had to sit in the jungle listening to the screams of comrades tortured by Japanese in an attempt to provoke an attack.’ But Potts could not attack: he believed his line at Isurava was about to collapse. Across the valley, General Horii was shocked by the level of resistance and by his own casualties. His five-day march to Port Moresby was already three days late. At sunset on 29 August he ordered an attack by fresh units which was to last all night and continue into the next day. Japanese survivors would remember 30 August as the peak of the Kokoda campaign, with murderous point-blank hand-grenade exchanges.

Australians were amazed by the numbers of the enemy killed. Corporal ‘Teddy’ Bear, a plain die-cast operator from Moonee Ponds in Melbourne, killed fifteen Japanese, men driven forward by desperate officers, themselves responding to Horii’s orders and the growing urgency of their supply shortage. Lieutenant Butch Bisset’s platoon from the 7th Division fought off fourteen Japanese charges. The frontal assaults right up the middle to the lines on the heights of Isurava were demented. But there was frenzy and fury on all sides. Bruce Kingsbury, a twenty-four-year-old Melburnian who had survived Syria and Egypt, was killed by a sniper while rushing forward firing his Bren gun against machine-gun fire.

Butch Bisset received stomach wounds and died at 4 a.m. in his brother Stan’s arms. ‘I held him in my arms for four hours,’ said Stan. ‘We just talked

about our parents, and growing up.' It was unlikely that most died with such blessed composure.

In the late afternoon of 30 August it started to rain. The Australian survivors withdrew, knowing dispiritedly that capturing Kokoda itself, up ahead beyond Isurava, was impossible. Potts was reduced to ordering a hundred remaining troops of the 53rd to cover the retreat. But as an indication of what men bound by a common, unutterable and tribal experience can do, thirty men from the 39th, waiting at Eora Creek to be returned to Port Moresby, rose, all but three, and stumbled back into battle.

On 30 August Potts had at dawn sent three companies in to attack on the right flank, sensing that the Japanese could not sustain a toll of sixteen hundred casualties as they had the day before. Meanwhile Horii found out that the Australians had vacated their old positions at Isurava and ordered his troops to charge them in their new positions dug in further back. They attacked that morning with enthusiasm and an onerous sequence of orders from above. The Australian perimeter held, but the Japanese started to sidestep it by taking the high ground to the west. Potts made his headquarters at a place named Alola, high on the track. He became aware that the enemy had virtually flanked the battalion and that the pathway to Alola was almost cut. He ordered a break-out. Colonel Key and about five of his staff, including the adjutant, were killed on the retreat.

The Japanese eventually threatened brigade headquarters at Alola, and knowing that Alola was difficult to defend, Potts ordered his headquarters to pull back to another small clearing—as clearings were in New Guinea—named Eora. News of such withdrawals was neither understood nor much treasured as wise tactics at MacArthur's HQ.

Horii was by now a week late in his scheduled arrival at Port Moresby. It was a week that would prevent any Japanese ambition to capture Moresby and—from there—continue to bombard the Australian mainland and Allied positions there. The boy-soldiers had lost Horii an essential ration of time.



Many Australians wounded at Eora Creek behind Kokoda were operated on by torchlight under a canvas awning. The surgical tables were canvas stretchers soaked in disinfectant. Major Henry 'Blue' Steward and Captain Rupert Magarey performed amputations in this way, but when the Japanese

appeared above the field ambulance, the doctors were ordered to stop operating and to pack up urgently; they were to tarry to stem blood loss in cases only where it was absolutely necessary. Steward had the terrible job of deciding who would be carried and who could walk. The walking wounded hobbled along Eora Creek and towards Templeton's Crossing. Their bandages became blood-soaked. Three of the abdominal and thoracic wound cases of the kind called 'sucking', because they sucked air into the chest cavity, could not be moved. The medics could merely nurse these doomed youths, who lay whispering for their families before dying. Magarey calculated they had half an hour to live. Later a medical patrol returned and found one of these alive, who pleaded with them not to leave him. He was carried out by native bearers and lasted some days before expiring.

One private, John Blythe, was shot in the chest, the chin, the back, the right hand and leg. He was carried away from Eora. The journey took twelve days and he was half his normal weight when they got him back to Moresby. His arm was amputated but he lived. Russ Fairbairn, shot in the stomach, was able to claw his way back to Moresby by a seemingly impossible exercise of will. Osmar White saw a man whose leg had been blown off and who had ligatured the stump, applied two shell dressings and wrapped the remainder of the leg in an old copra sack. He refused White's offer of bearers. Many other wounded men, told frankly by Captain Magarey that there were no bearers, crawled their way up the mountain behind Eora Creek. Major Steward himself managed to gather a group of retreating men to carry some of the last stretcher cases out.

Medical supplies were still scarce. No salt tablets had been issued and so men were exhausted from salt loss by sweating, as much as by disease and wounds. Penicillin was a year in the future. There was a supply of morphine coming over the mountains from Moresby and Steward saved it for those in the most extreme pain. He made splints out of bayonet scabbards or branches from trees. Some sulfonamide (anti-bacterial) tablets for oral use began to arrive by porter, and sulfa powder for open wounds. Mental collapse of the kind that had occurred in trench warfare was less common.

Involved now in the retreat, the newsmen stopped at a native compound to enlist three rejected native bearers to carry Damien Parer's camera equipment and so reached Uberi. As they advanced they began to pass wounded young militiamen, the first two they met injured in the foot and the left eye.

Osmar White certainly got a sense of the battle. Having crossed the mountains with Parer and now retreating with him, he was called on by a travelling line of wounded to switch on a torch so that they could see the track. One of the men had been shot twice in the chest; while the others moved on towards an impossibly distant Moresby, this young man sat down saying, 'I'm pretty tired. I think I'll wait till daylight.' White wept as the boy fell asleep on a bank of arsenic weed. When the wounded men reached Myola, new stretchers were built and wounds were dressed, but White knew there was no chance of air evacuation because of the destruction by bombing of the transport planes in Moresby. So Captain Magarey herded the wounded on towards Efogi, with tiers of mountains between that and Owers' Corner, where the road turned right into Moresby. Magarey found the strength of soul of those walking with leg wounds astounding.

Out of Parer's footage of the withdrawal came again some of the classic shots of the campaign. To Parer's single-minded regret, however, many rear-guard actions and withdrawals were conducted at night when his camera was useless. Even by day he didn't know if the dimness of the jungle tracks would enable him to film or if rain and mould would get into his cameras. He shot in faith. And so he continued on, as fevered and exhausted as the young men around him, to Ioribaiwa Ridge, where the Australians stood and retreated no further.

Later that year, in the first week of October, Parer turned up in Townsville as what a friend, Alan Anderson, declared 'a living wreck'. He apologised that he wasn't able to get his gear up the stairs. In a few days' time he went to Sydney where Ken Hall and Cinesound wanted to film him introducing his Kokoda film. The film, *Kokoda Front Line!*, would receive an Academy Award for the Best Documentary Film of its year. The Academy was more ready to acknowledge the Australian contribution than MacArthur was, but Parer himself wasn't satisfied with *Kokoda Front Line!* The encounters had been hard to film and before that the quick raids and getaways of Kanga Force did not allow him quite the latitude that the desert had.



Myola was eventually overrun. More accurately, Potts told Allen in Port Moresby, he was withdrawing in good order while he could. By then the 2/14th that had left Port Moresby less than a month before with about

550 fighting men had been reduced to less than one hundred. Close behind them came the 2/16th, holding the track with only 250 men. Everyone was grey-faced. At that alpine height, Alan Avery of the 7th Division and others bayoneted all the tins of food in the hope that bacteria would affect them and the Japanese would eat (or at least be deprived of) them. Forty thousand rounds of ammunition were destroyed and Bren guns that there were no soldiers to carry were bent at the barrel. The three battalions moved into defensive positions on the spur of a ridge behind Efogi, and the 39th were at last due to be taken back to Moresby to the rear. There were 185 of them left and they lined up to pass over their automatic weapons, rations, signal stores and medical supplies.

At length a strong defensive line was set up on Imita Ridge. General Horii was able to use two full regiments alternatively to attack the Australians and push them back. By 12 September it was estimated he still had five thousand fit men under his command, including artillerymen who brought with them mountain guns that could be broken down into five two-men loads. Sickness and casualties cut their number down to two guns by the time Horii reached Ioribaiwa Ridge facing the Australians on Imita.

By now the Japanese had reached a position where they could hear the aircraft at Port Moresby and see the port's searchlights flashing in the sky. They were a few days' march away from the port they wanted. Their resources were at an end but they might succeed by desperate, literal hunger and raw desire. The Australians were on the last ridge, Imita, confident in the terrain but aware they could not retreat further. This was where Port Moresby would be won or lost. Fortunately, Imita Ridge was a natural rampart, and its cliffs rose steeply above the track. An entrenched Australian force could hold it, Potts was sure. The trouble was that the composite battalion made up of survivors waited for the Japanese attack in a state of suffering from sundry mosquito- and tick-borne fevers, and mentally afflicted by the weight of horrors undergone.

Of 546 men of the 2/14th Battalion who had come over the ridge four weeks earlier, there were only three officers and eighty-five other ranks left. But to answer the Japanese mountain guns the Australians had themselves moved two large guns to the top of the ridge. And by 21 September, there were newly arrived Australians on Imita Ridge. What the Australians did not know was that Horii had already received orders from his superiors to

withdraw to Gona and Buna, where he could be reinforced, supplied, and given the means to make his positions secure. The fact that the Japanese had been able to get two regiments in front of Imita Ridge was chiefly because of the supply problems of the Australians. If the Japanese happened to reach the outskirts of Port Moresby they would face the 26th Brigade of veteran Australians, the 16th Brigade which was on its way, two squadrons of light tanks, three field regiments of artillery and a mountain battery. As well as that, the first brigade of American-trained troops was about to arrive. The force the Japanese were facing would redouble within a few days. The army available to defend Port Moresby was almost twice that commanded by General Morshead when he held Tobruk for eight months against Rommel's Afrika Korps.

The Japanese retreat began, and the Australians were now the pursuers. They made contact with the Japanese at Templeton's Crossing. There were two days of Japanese defence before a flanking unit of Australians found the Japanese arms pits and muddy trenches empty. Along Eora Creek there were further rearguard actions by the Japanese, while from out of the jungle there still emerged stark-eyed Australians who had stayed at large all that time the Japanese owned the track.



What of the bearers, the 'fuzzy-wuzzy angels' so endearing, via Parer's news-reel and press photographs, to Australians? There seemed to be elements of coercion and elements of choice to their work, and there is little awareness that the Japanese also used native bearers, recruited from the north sectors of New Guinea. One of *our* fuzzy-wuzzy angels was Havala Laula, who lived in the village of Kagi along the Kokoda Trail in the high central province of Papua. Aged about fourteen, he carried his first wounded Australian back over the mountains as part of a team of eight. When wounded soldiers died, they would lower them to the ground and bury them on their stretchers. The bearers he worked with were reverent Seventh Day Adventists, and they gave each who died an appropriate burial. Nor were they beyond using bush remedies on the wounded, wrapping leaves around some wounds. 'That made them feel better,' Havala remembers.

When the Japanese reached his village on their advance towards Moresby, they destroyed it, ruining the gardens and killing the livestock. Since the

Australian troops formerly there had treated the people well, the loyalty of these colonised people went not to the self-proclaimed liberators, but to the representatives of Australian control. One must remember too that the conditions on the track left little room for men to think of ethnic or political difference. All were brothers in misery, fear and inhuman endeavour.

YOUNG BLOOD, OLD POLITICS

No sooner had the Japanese stalled on Imita Ridge than Curtin was called by a feverishly discontented MacArthur urging that Blamey be sent to New Guinea to 'energise the situation'. He wanted Rowell more motivated or sacked. Lieutenant General Henry 'Hap' Arnold, Chief of Staff of the US Army Air Corps, had visited Australia and reached the conclusion that the Japanese were better fighting men than the Germans, that they could take New Guinea at will, and that the newly arrived, fatherly-looking American Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger 'will put some pep into the Aussies'. As yet no American infantryman had fired a shot in New Guinea but Arnold believed that 'the Massachusetts soldiers know more about the New Guinea jungle in two days than the Australians in two years'.

All this discontent also showed that MacArthur, ravenous for victory, believed the Australians had stalled rather than that they were about to rebound. There was a chance Washington would sack *him* if he continued to promise much and deliver nothing (except perhaps Milne Bay). He was determined at the same time that his operations would be controlled by task-force commanders rather than by Blamey as Commander, Allied Land Forces. MacArthur asked Washington to send General Walter Krueger from America 'to give the US Army the next ranking officer below General Blamey'. But bringing in Krueger was a ploy to prevent Blamey from commanding American troops.

In any case, Blamey set out at MacArthur's orders to examine the deteriorating situation in New Guinea. It was obvious to Blamey that some members of the Advisory War Council were blaming him for the lack of success until now. One of his options was to sack General Rowell, overall director and careful planner of the campaign.

When the spiky and righteous-minded Rowell had first arrived in New Guinea in July 1942, he had visited Owers' Corner, the beginning of the track proper, and at once saw how hard it was going to be to supply the troops.

‘As far as I’m concerned,’ he told Osmar White, ‘I’m willing to pull back and let the enemy have the rough stuff if he wants it. I’m willing to present the Jap with the supply headache I’ve got.’ At the same time he knew this option was politically risky, and went on, ‘But there are those who think otherwise. We need a victory in the Pacific and a lot of poor bastards have got to get killed to provide it.’

On the evening of 23 September, Rowell and Blamey had a discussion about their respective roles that was ‘at times acrimonious’. Rowell had no wish to become merely Blamey’s Chief of Staff, and submitted that Blamey should establish an army headquarters in Moresby to control all New Guinea operations, including Milne Bay and elsewhere, leaving Rowell to concentrate on the operations in the Owen Stanley Ranges. But Blamey had no intention of staying in New Guinea indefinitely. Rowell said perceptively that if an Australian army headquarters wasn’t set up in New Guinea, then an American headquarters would be.

Acting on a suggestion from MacArthur, and without telling Rowell, on the morning of 25 September, Blamey flew to Milne Bay and ordered General Clowes to send a force by air to Wanigela in the north-east of Milne Bay. Rowell was angry that Blamey had given orders that should have come from him. ‘I fairly rose,’ Rowell wrote to Clowes later. ‘I then got off my chest what I’ve been storing up since April 1941.’ It must have been a scene, this after-dinner exchange!

That night, Blamey wrote to MacArthur and told him the defensive phase in New Guinea was finished. There was now a plan to advance on three axes. The first was along the Kokoda Trail via Ioribaiwa to Kokoda. The second route, to be taken by the American 32nd Division, was to be further east along the track through Juare, and the third was a sea-and-land route from the direction of Milne Bay. The 32nd Division would be the first full United States army division (as distinct from the Marines fighting on Guadalcanal to the east of New Guinea under ultimate control of the navy) to be committed to combat with the Japanese, and it would have successes in the Philippines later in the war. But here it was rushed into combat only partly trained and with little experience of jungles.

If Blamey had arrived five days later, it would have become obvious that the Japanese retreat had begun and there would have been less pressure on him. However, three days after Blamey arrived, Rowell was stripped of

his command. Edmund 'Ned' Herring, another regular soldier between the wars but one who was able to relate well to other people and was also a friend of Blamey's, took over the command. His successes in New Guinea would be considerable. But Major-General Richard Dewing, the British army representative in Australia, wrote that MacArthur was 'working steadily to exclude the Australians from any effective hand in the control of land or air operations or credit in them, except as a minor element in a US show'.

YOUR DOCTOR, MY DOCTOR

When one mentions the term 'prisoner of war' in an Australian World War II context, there is a tendency to think of prisoners of the Japanese, and the name 'Changi'—the large barracks that became the chief prison of Singapore—dominates the imagination.

It seems, however, that if one was a prisoner of the Japanese empire, Changi was the best of many bad places to be, although that is perhaps not saying a great deal, given that the Japanese had not signed the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war. But Australians at Changi were well organised in terms of their own administration, and lived to an extent under a normal military hierarchy. Captain Victor Brand stated, 'They talk about the "infamous Changi hospital"; well, that's nonsense. Changi was a very pleasant spot. The only trouble of course was the lack of food. But compared to other places it was a tremendous place.' This is a common theme in the journals and memories of men who survived the building of the Burma Railway in Thailand. Captain Colin Juttner, on returning to Changi, declared that the men still there 'just piled this good food into us . . . they looked so marvellous themselves . . . it was like coming home'.

Private Stan Arneil, who returned to Changi from the hellish railway in December 1943, had been stuck in one of the F Force camps on a section of the railway. F Force was a group of seven thousand men who suffered the greatest death rate—44 per cent—of all the alphabetically labelled 'forces' of prisoners and coolies the Japanese used to work on the project. On 8 April 1943, the Japanese had announced that, commencing on about 16 April, seven thousand medically fit British and Australian prisoners were to move from Singapore by rail. This group was dubbed F Force. Early rumours of this move had created excitement and a sense of possibilities, all of which was

soon to be tragically negated. Captain Adrian Curlewis heard that the force was to be distributed over seven camps, each accommodating a thousand men. The men were entrained in unutterably hot steel rice trucks into which twenty-seven or -eight men were crowded so that only a few could lie down at any time and practically none could even sit in comfort. There was, if they were lucky, one meal a day. There was no provision for sanitation. One Australian train was without water from midday of one day until nightfall on the next. The force detrained across the Malayan border in Ban Pong, Thailand.

The camp, when they arrived, consisted of four atap-thatched huts built on low-lying ground in a constricted area. From there, Curlewis's group was to walk 290 kilometres to a place called Nieke on the River Kwai, near the Burmese border. They set out at 10.30 p.m., stocked up on food purchased from the Thais. By three in the morning their gear and their boots were beginning to fall apart. At one of their stops on this *via dolorosa* there were no latrines and 'the ground was fouled in all directions, flies abounded, and the stench was particularly offensive'.

One day was spent in having cholera and malaria tests and smallpox vaccinations from Japanese doctors. Further into the march, troops were warned of the dangers of Thai bandits attacking men straggling behind. Warnings were also issued about tigers. Men began to wonder about the distance still to be covered, but they could find out nothing from the guards. They reached Barangali, which would in the end be seen as the halfway mark. By now every fit man was carrying a sick man's bundle as well as his own, and a suggestion from an officer that the sick be left in the camp there led to his being beaten and his hand broken.

It is impossible to describe the profound misery of the camps along the railway, and as much as can be described has been by the men who endured it. At the camp in Takanun in Thailand, Curlewis found the work of digging latrines gruelling for a forty-two year old. By the time his group were moved on to further wretchedness at Tamarumpat in June, he had suffered malaria and recurrent diarrhoea and mild beri-beri. Tropical ulcers, dengue fever and dysentery were already pervasive amongst his men and colleagues. Malnutrition made it easy for opportunistic diseases to strike, including cholera. Up and down the line, cholera visited again and again and compounded the level of fatality. Suddenly, before the end of

May, Curlew was reporting forty-nine deaths from cholera. Skeletal sick were driven out to work on the rail bed.

On 11 December 1943, there were seventeen hundred prisoners left in Stan Arneil's camp on the Burma railroad, and the deaths were unsustainable, seventeen having died in the past day. Suddenly they were all moved out, their work on the railroad finished; they were put in boxcars and railed south and were, as Arneil wrote, 'at the end of our physical resources when we arrived at Changi'. And there he found that the food was, unexpectedly, sufficient to halt the illness and weakness that had plagued him and his fellows. 'Ah Changi!' he later declared. 'You were heaven to us then.' He was able to shower and rid himself of lice. 'The food here is delicious but there is not enough of it for us although the quality is first rate. We even have fried shark which is very good. The menu for Xmas Day is colossal.'

The Burma Railway, not Changi, was the great killer of F Force. The rates of death were so great, Arneil remembered, that there was not time or sufficient men strong enough to dig graves, and so the dead were cremated on bamboo fires, and a handful of their ashes placed in bamboo containers.

Of the nearly eight thousand Australian prisoners of war who died in Japanese camps, Changi had the lowest death rate. The Burma Railway had more in common with other appalling camps in Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Manchuria, Formosa, Ambon and Hainan, and camps on the Japanese mainland. Borneo and Ambon were proportionately the most lethal camps, although the level of general suffering, physical and mental, amongst prisoners military and civilian was such as to make the numerical comparisons close to odious.

Weary Dunlop, the Victorian boxing star who played rugby for Australia in 1932 and 1934, became the best known of the medical heroes of the Burma Railway and the most renowned amongst the 106 Australian military doctors who worked in Japanese captivity. He deserved renown. He stood up to his captors, protected the desperately weak, and was well liked and heartily praised by his colleagues. By the time of his capture he had served in Jerusalem, Gaza, Alexandria, in the Greek and Crete campaigns, and as senior surgeon at Tobruk. Returned to the home front, he was captured in Java at Number 1 Allied General Hospital at Bandung, in early March 1942. On 20 January 1943, he left Singapore for Thailand in charge of

‘Dunlop Force’ to work on the railway. Many attributed the relatively lower death rate amongst Australians in the camps at Konyu River, Hintok Mountain and Hellfire Pass to his impact as a leader, surgeon and physician.

He was by no means the only Australian surgeon to behave impeccably. As one historian says, ‘Many prisoners in other places had their version of Weary Dunlop.’ Captain John Akeroyd cared for prisoners in Ichioka, in Osaka, Japan. This officer was, according to one prisoner, ‘repeatedly beaten and knocked about because of the strong stand he took regarding sick and ailing men . . . a great deal of credit goes to him for the few deaths recorded in this particular camp’. With no anaesthetic, he depended on his orderlies to hold patients down for necessary surgery. A number of Japanese officers and guards, including a man named Nosu, the so-called ‘Mad Butcher of Ichioka’, abused him for his direct protests about the health of the men and the plundering of Red Cross parcels by guards. By the end of the war he had tuberculosis, but recovered to lead a robust post-war life.

Dr Kevin Fagan was able to return to Australia when liberated and resume specialist surgical practice in Macquarie Street, Sydney. In his time in Thailand with H Force, Fagan’s efforts were spent on preventing a severe epidemic of cholera, rampant dysentery and tropical ulcers. Kanu Number 2, Fagan’s post, was a camp in which terrible casualties occurred. The party of 3500 troops with whom Fagan had first moved from Changi to Thailand travelled by freight car to Ban Pong, then marched 150 kilometres into the jungle, and was immediately put to work for twelve to fifteen hours a day, making a cutting in solid rock. Their rations were deficient in protein, fats and vitamins, particularly thiamine, B1 complex. Fagan wrote that: ‘Very soon our men were reduced to the status of a malarial, dysenteric, underfed and overworked slave gang. An epidemic of cholera killed 25 per cent of the camp strength in six weeks. With this classical background an epidemic of acute phagedenic ulcers appeared six weeks after our arrival.’ Sometimes chronic diarrhoea caused infection of the ulcers, and amputation was the only possible treatment. There were no adequate drugs after the operation, but ‘amputation enabled many of these unfortunate men to die in greater comfort and dignity’. Fagan’s operating theatre was at first open-air, later

under a tent fly, and later still, in the plains of Kamburi, 'a luxurious affair of palm leaf with a mud floor'. Sterilisation of instruments was done in a four-gallon 'dixie' on an open fire.

Towards the end of his ordeal on the Burma Railway, Fagan was ordered by the Japanese to detail one hundred men to remain and continue working, while the remainder were to be shipped south, probably back to Singapore. He would later say that it was the worst thing he had ever been ordered to do, and he knew the men he chose to stay must have hated him. But he remained with them himself, and they were sent by rail to a place named Konkoita, a hundred kilometres away.

By the time H Force was evacuated back to Singapore, Fagan was in a state of physical exhaustion and was mortally ill with cerebral malaria. One survivor, Lieutenant Don Lee, said that during Major Fagan's illness, half-hourly bulletins were issued on his condition, such was the interest his fellow prisoners had in him. He survived.

At the end of the war, Fagan would declare, against the normal suspicion to the contrary, 'that the returned prisoner of war is in most cases not only a normal man except for some temporary physical disability, but one who has had intellectual and emotional experiences which give him a decided advantage over his fellows. He has learned to appreciate the minor pleasures of life. He knows the essentials of existence. He has a high threshold for the pinpricks of ordinary life. He knows man for what he is—his courage, his cowardice, his limitless generosity, his gross selfishness, his nobility and his utter meanness.'

Ten Australian doctors died in captivity. One of them was Captain John Oakeshott, another medical officer on whom men depended not only for medical care but also for indefinable comfort. Tragically, Oakeshott was killed after the end of the war, along with another doctor, Captain Dominic Picone, under the supervision of a Sergeant-Major Beppu Yoichi, a man who, like his superiors who authorised the killing, criminally knew the war was already over. These two physicians were victims of the Sandakan death marches—the deadly march of prisoners away from the coast of Borneo into the interior. A number of men at inland Ranau, who had survived the march all the way from Sandakan, were similarly executed in another jungle clearing.

One of the reasons for Dunlop's deserved reputation is that after the war he was one of the first to recognise that the Repatriation Commission had made medical and psychological assessments of POWs too soon after liberation. He spearheaded campaigns to allow them to be assessed for their ongoing health problems, and brought attention to the continuing suffering of ex-prisoners of war.

IN THE BALANCE



THE GREAT DESERT BATTLE

Many Australian troops, the twenty thousand or more men of the 9th Division, were still in the Middle East, on garrison duty in Syria since the campaign against the Vichy French had ended. There was considerable boredom as fortifications were dug and drills were held, as well as concern about the Pacific War and, amongst married and engaged men, that their women were subject to new levels of temptation. One soldier wrote, 'Some of those bed warming, noble-hearted chaps still at home are carrying on for us ...'

Expecting to be sent home and then to the jungle, the 9th Division was moved out of the camp in Palestine where they had been retraining. In the first week of July they were trucked out to stop the Germans at a small railway village named El Alamein roughly halfway between the Nile Delta and the Libyan border. Here Rommel was halted by British, Indian, South African and New Zealand troops. He was disappointed to be held up here, in a narrow front between El Alamein on the coast and the unnegotiable sand trap to the south known as the Qattara Depression. The British commander, General Auchinleck, called it the 'El Alamein Box'.

As soon as the Australians had jumped down from their trucks, General Leslie Morshead, commander of the 9th Australian Division, was arguing

with the British almost as vigorously as he had before and during his defence of Tobruk. The British staff had devised a plan that infantry divisions be split up into tactical battle groups and the rest sent to the rear as a reserve. This would fragment his division, but Morshead forced them to give way on this tactical idea. Thus he could lead the entire 9th Division as a coherent unit.

When the Australians came up into the line in early July, they faced Rommel on the coastal end of the British line, between the Mediterranean and the railway station of El Alamein itself. It was a season of heat and dust in the desert, but having a purpose had cheered them. During that July, the Australians launched themselves on four operations against Rommel, creating great confusion behind the German lines at ridges along the coast. They captured the summits of various tors, lost them, yet consistently defeated German counter attacks in the terrain around them. In an assault of middling success on 17 July, Morshead's 24th Brigade captured over one thousand Italian soldiers and around one hundred Germans. Even so, the battles of July cost the 9th Division 2500 casualties in three weeks.

The July raids and attacks, named the First Battle of El Alamein, put paid to Rommel's hopes of advancing into Egypt in the near future—and, as it turned out, forever. During these operations, Morshead had been given the task of shepherding the newly arrived 51st Highland Division into desert fighting, and its commander, General Douglas Wimberley, said of him, 'He gave me a higher feeling of morale than anyone else I had met so far.' But Morshead also warned him in graphic idiom: 'The staff here are mad on breaking up divisions. They'll stuff you about for a dead cert.'

Rommel made an attempt in August to split this line near a ridge named Alam Halfa, east of Ruweisat and Ruin ridges. He had early success but then the British drove him away. An Australian attack at the coastal end of the line relieved some of the pressure on the British. By then, Auchinleck had been replaced as both theatre commander and commander of the 8th Army. General William 'Strafer' Gott was now to command the 8th Army but was almost at once killed when his aircraft was shot down. A commander named Bernard Montgomery was appointed in his place. Montgomery was a man to suit Morshead, an inscrutable character who believed absolutely in attack. After General Montgomery's accession, the divisions at the front were gradually and adequately equipped. The build-up lasted till autumn, during which there were many artillery exchanges.

On the eve of the battle, a new commander of the 30th Corps, to which the 9th Division was allocated, proposed that the men begin the advance from the start line at 9.30 p.m., but Morshead pointed out that the troops would have had to lie down in their slit trenches all day waiting. As well as that, said Morshead, they would have been 'ungettatable' during daylight hours for final instructions by the officers with whom they would be fighting. 'I cannot conceive anything psychologically worse than such a solitary confinement in a tight-fitting, grave-like pit.' When darkness fell, he argued, the men must have time for a relaxed dinner. 'They do not want to be rushed off as soon as they have eaten.'

It was decided the attack would begin on 23 October. The Australians were to advance on the northern, Mediterranean side of the line while the 51st Highlanders attacked to the south. The men would march three kilometres to the start line and then go in behind a screen of tanks in the flat area known as the Saucer. There the 30th Corps, it was planned, particularly the 9th Australian and the 51st Highland divisions, would make an advance of nearly fifteen kilometres against the German 164th Division and the 15th Panzers. Did many of them understand that this was to be one of those battles fought in desert places whose results would reverberate massively throughout more temperate zones?

It was a fierce business, young men killing each other in the vast night for control of Axis strongpoints. Morshead complained that lack of armoured support was holding up his men to the west. Because of what happened then, Morshead and the Australian 9th Division could be argued to have had a disproportionate part in the battle since, when they stalled in their direct westwards assault, Montgomery ordered them to wheel around and advance northwards towards the railway station and the coast beyond it. The German and Italian forces resisted ferociously, and there followed sanguinary days and nights of attack on mounds and strongpoints around the railway line and the road. The ruthless Australian advance saw Rommel rushing exceptional numbers of reinforcements into the area. Meanwhile, the Australian losses, dead and casualties, would reach six thousand. By the third night of the battle, two Australian battalions, the 24th and the 48th, had barely one company of 150 men left between them. At 1.05 a.m. on 2 November, when Operation Supercharge was launched, the last phase of El Alamein began. The 9th Division had, in military terms,

'rolled up' the German front after penetrating Tel el Eisa, far beyond the mountain to the west. The British to the south now burst through a line weakened by the rushing of German units north to deal with Australian incursions. By the night of 2 November, the Axis troops had to retreat to new ground.

Throughout the battle, Morshead visited the field ambulance stations and spoke to the too-plenteous wounded. German counter attacks were regular, since it was clear that if the Australians were dislodged from the coast the whole line would be. But by 4 November, Rommel knew he had failed, and began to withdraw. With him went so many German hopes of a link-up between Germans driving into Iran and by way of the Caucasus into Russia and territories beyond. On the Allied side, congratulations poured in, to Morshead in particular, for what could justly be called a crucial part of the entire scheme. Though it is normal for Australians to overexaggerate their impact in certain campaigns, there was no exaggeration in the case of the 9th Division. They had changed world history. They were too exhausted, however, and had suffered too many casualties, to take part in the pursuit of the Afrika Korps that now began. Even so, Morshead kept up drills, knowing that the 9th were going on to other battles, in the Pacific.

On 22 December, he held a parade of the 9th Division, still twelve thousand in strength, on the airfield at Gaza in Palestine. A month later, the division, less those in hospital in Egypt, embarked for Australia.

FLYERS

The Empire Air Training Scheme through which so many Australian airmen passed was established at the end of November 1939 by representatives of Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand at Ottawa. Nearly ten thousand Australians, after basic training in Australia, did their advanced training in Canada, often after crossing the United States by train, a stimulating experience for late adolescents from Murwillumbah, Quorn or Mandurah. Meanwhile, on home soil, the RAAF's flight-training schools, located throughout the bush, continued until March 1943, by which time they had trained nearly forty thousand air crew.

Seventeen entirely Australian squadrons served within the overarching structure of the RAF during the war, and in Bomber Command, the Australians were found in squadrons 460 to 467. There were also Australians scattered in other multinational crews throughout the air force. The first of

the Australian squadrons, 455, was formed at Swinderby, Lincolnshire, on 6 June 1941 but did not receive its first narrow-tailed Hampden bomber or adequate ground crew until 10 July. Young Australians looked at this vulnerable aircraft with the wonder and excitement of young men observing a miraculous—not an infernal—machine. They would escort a convoy to Russia, hand over their Hampdens to the Russian air force, return to England and be re-equipped with Beaufighters. A newer Australian squadron, 458, flew the plumper-bodied Wellington bombers. At a time when Churchill was damning Australians, especially Curtin, for their bloody-mindedness, 458 Squadron men took targets such as Berlin, Cologne, Mannheim, Essen, Dusseldorf and Hanover and were then stationed in the Mediterranean in a number of bases, including in Malta and Tunisia. A group of new Australian aviators from Driffield in Yorkshire were involved in Bomber Command's chief Arthur Harris's forty-two-squadron attack on Cologne. Of the 6500 casualties suffered by the RAAF in Europe, Bomber Command would account for nearly four thousand.

The bombers flew many missions throughout 1943 to Germany's Ruhr Valley—Happy Valley, the crews called it. They had to face night fighters equipped with the *Schräge Musik*—a twenty-millimetre cannon mounted at an angle behind the cockpit to enable attacks on the heavy bombers from below. The searchlight and anti-aircraft artillery defences of the Ruhr were very heavy. To be caught in that terrifying searchlight beam was considered the prelude to death. Some commentators claim the Ruhr was not as essential to the economy and the war effort as was depicted. But the bombing of Essen in early 1943 was highly applauded, since the great Krupp armament works dominated the centre of town. Such total successes were not necessarily common for the young aircrews.

The Australian crews were boys from the bush and the suburbs; young men, mostly unmarried, some of them not knowing how to drive a car. They were engaged in a strategy that has been controversial ever since; some even lived long enough to question the propositions of the head of Bomber Command, the appropriately named Bomber Harris, about the carpet-bombing of cities, and about the necessity of the copious deaths of young personnel and those on the ground. Harris's sincere belief was that he could beat Germany into submission before the Normandy landings by destroying German industry and morale. But we now know his campaign to achieve

this was a failure in its own right, in that German cities were destroyed and civilians suffered in the untold ways the British had in the Blitz, but not German war industries. Ultimately all the deceptive measures devised by the air forces, Empire and American, were countered by the Germans in a way that imposed casualties and horrifying death on young flyers.

The private agonies within a stricken bomber are impossible to convey. Flight Sergeant Rawdon Middleton was flying for 149 Squadron when it attacked Turin in northern Italy. A shell splinter lodged in the right side of his face, destroying his right eye and exposing the bones over his other eye. It is likely he was also wounded in the body and legs. He struggled to control his damaged aircraft as it flew across the Alps and Occupied France to England. Off the English coast Middleton ordered the surviving crew members to bail out. He flew his bomber parallel to the coast to enable five of them to escape. Two who stayed behind to help Middleton jumped too late and were drowned. Middleton's body was washed up at Shakespeare Beach at Dover. The honours that followed were public and of consolation to his family, and placed a skin of martial piety over the intimate terror of that barely controlled plane, full of frantic and valiant youths.

THE WAR OVER WOMEN

Back in Australian cities, which seemed to teem with American soldiers, airmen and sailors, the struggle was for the repute and moral uprightness of Australian women.

Advertising in the 1920s had promoted feminine daintiness and 'grace and refinement'. By the late 1930s, in time for the war, the idea of 'sex appeal' came to dominate advertising. By the 1940s, femininity was expressed not in breeding power but in sexual attractiveness.

The films to which young Australians and Americans flocked in Sydney and Melbourne were *Jane Eyre*, *Fantasia*, *Irene*, *Rebecca*, *Sandy Is a Lady*, *The Woman in the Window* and *The Valley of Decision*. Roughly one million American soldiers would pass through Australia in their pressed uniforms, seeming to have stepped straight out of the movies themselves, and displaying in many cases a more polished and polite approach to women and even their parents than most Australian soldiers could deploy.

But there was confusion in the community. Australian women and American men had to conduct their courtships in public places, where they

faced curfews, assaults by gangs of Australian soldiers, and even civilian 'sex patrols'. On the one hand, the Vice Squad tried to break up US–Australian couples in parks, and the girls were condemned from pulpits (the much-needed Allies themselves were never lambasted). Melbourne artist Albert Tucker, husband of that other fine painter Joy Hester, painted *Victory Girls* and *Images of Modern Evil*, condemnatory works showing Australian women offering themselves cheaply to what he saw in part as the occupier. The Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Irishman James Duhig, declared that decency had largely vanished due to the disgusting public conduct of girls and servicemen.

As well as the young Americans' charm and gleam, early in the war in particular they were seen as liberators. Private Ron Berry, a Rat of Tobruk, arriving back in Fremantle on 20 March to save Australia's bacon, found that none of it was available to him. 'The town is overrun with Yank soldiers, who swank around the streets, telling us that they had to come over here to win the war for us.' An Australian woman declared, 'Americans have the gift of making the girls they escort feel like the finest ladies in the land. Americans did not seem ill at ease with women as Australian men did and seemed genuinely to like them.' As for the Yanks, a Newcastle girl who ultimately married one gave her own explanation: 'They knew how to pleasure women.'

Gradually, however, they ceased to be such glamorous and novel presences, and came to be seen as predatory. The women's magazines began to emphasise loyalty to absent Australian husbands, fiancés and boyfriends. Dating an American could come to seem an act of betrayal. 'Stick to your digger boyfriend,' went a headline in *Woman*. 'Our boys overseas are doing a job that is made possible only by the knowledge that back home things are flowing smoothly.'

The question of venereal disease (VD) was one addressed by the US army and Australian civic bodies: the Christian Temperance Union, the Country Women's Association, the Mothercraft Association, the Queensland Trades and Labour Council, the Father and Son Welfare Movement, the Australian Natives' Association and various churches, and other groups raised the concern and urged chastity. Sir Raphael Cilento, Director-General of Health and Medical Services in Queensland, and Ned Hanlon, the Labor Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, began to wage a crusade against VD as early as 1942; reasonably enough they were concerned about the drain such diseases

constituted on medical services. The US authorities frankly blamed civilian Australian women for the spread of sexual diseases, 'stressing the cleanliness and patriotism of American women back home'.

In May 1943, Jessie Street, the fifty-four-year-old progressive and the president of the United Associations of Women, wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* deploring that Sydney was a 'cesspool of vice' and regretting that the authorities had opted to make 'sex indulgence' safe rather than preventing it, but calling for the punishment of seducers of young girls instead of those seduced. Her belief was that economic independence would free women from their attachment to sex. Female emancipation was economic, she believed, rather than sexual. Therefore, chastity was the necessary precondition for women's economic advancement in society. But such figures as Street were not listened to by the young women heading for the Friday night dance.

Some twelve thousand young Australian women married American servicemen for love but also, perhaps, in the hope of finding a new and less repressive milieu elsewhere. In the smaller towns and the suburbs of the United States, they would not always manage to discover it.

REBOUND

On the advance back across the mountains and to and along the New Guinea north coast beginning in September 1942, the Australians were now healthier and better supplied than their enemy. The common foe was the mosquito, who was able to breed in the millions even in pools caught in bootprints in the jungle mud. But the hungrier you were, the more susceptible you were to malaria. The great preventive was quinine, the world supply of which was held by the Japanese. However, earlier in the century, German chemists had synthesised a drug named Atabrine, and fortunately the American company Winthrop had acquired manufacturing rights to it. By the end of 1942, it was in the hands of the troops in New Guinea. Atabrine did not infallibly save you from malaria, but what was certain was that it turned your skin yellow.

Winning or losing, fevered or clear-headed, New Guinea was still hell. It was, in that old phrase, war to the knife. Men on both sides were unlikely to get quarter in battle. One of the reasons, says the historian Paul Ham, is that the plump and comfortable General Blamey had notoriously accused the 21st Brigade of the 7th Division, drawn up on parade on 9 November

1942 and willing to be sent back into the battle, of ‘running like rabbits’ before the Japanese. ‘Remember it is the rabbit that runs who gets shot, not the man with the gun,’ he counselled. He also mentioned that some of their officers had failed in the field. ‘These are the men who saved Australia despite your mistakes,’ the 16th Battalion’s padre told Blamey. The bitterness on the Port Moresby parade ground that day had been palpable, and Blamey and the Japanese would pay for it. Australian soldier Ken Clift writes that after a victory at Oivi near Kokoda in November 1942, ‘very few of the enemy escaped. Many surrendered and were exterminated.’ Major-General Paul Cullen confirmed in 2001 that Australians had bayoneted Japanese prisoners to death in New Guinea. Peter Medcalf of the 43rd Battalion writes simply of one battle on New Guinea’s north coast: ‘We took no prisoners, or wounded.’

Another commentator argued that the Australians knew they were fighting against a ‘truly merciless enemy . . . consequently they matched the Japanese with a savagery equal to their own, and like them would sooner die than surrender’. A perceptive veteran said that fighting the Japanese brought out something Australian commanders had previously found difficult to awaken—‘the killing instinct’.

An AIF soldier accurately described the New Guinea fighting as ‘an exercise in extermination’, and the idea of its being such came from the top, from General Vasey himself, whose directive to troops in Papua read: ‘One does not expect a live tiger to give himself up to capture so we must not expect a Japanese to surrender. He does not. He must be killed . . . truly jungle warfare is a game of kill or be killed.’



The new brigades chasing the Japanese back towards Kokoda were skilfully managed. The Australians occupied Ioribaiwa, the furthest ridge Horii had taken, and were surprised to reach Myola by 9 October. The Japanese were ghosts now, harrowed, abandoning equipment. Although there were what could be considered healthy garrisons on the north coast at swamp-girt Buna, Sanananda and Gona, and further west at Lae and Salamaua, Horii would lose four out of five of the men who had set out on the track to take Port Moresby. As the Australians pushed along the track, they waged war with rifles and grenades, fighting screens of sick men in slit trenches, ready to resist them to the limit, or more strictly, to the point of obliteration.

The casualties from illness were phenomenal. The 25th Brigade lost sixty-eight men killed and a further 135 wounded but nearly eight hundred felled by illness. The Papuan bearers collapsed on the track, sick, and some deserted, escaping that muscle-splitting, breath-sapping and health-depleting track. The 25th pushed the enemy back to Eora Creek, scene of desperate military options during the earlier retreat. Japanese mountain artillery and mortars poured in fire, and the Australian supply line suffered as bearers continued to collapse with fever and hunger.

Brigadier General Potts was called back to Port Moresby to report first-hand on 22 October, and was immediately told he would be replaced, unjustly, having fought one of the most meritorious—and perhaps the most remarkable—battles. He was philosophical, and told his wife he had known there had to be some sackings and it was just bad luck.

Now it was the 7th Division's Tubby Allen whom MacArthur and Blamey accused of dallying. MacArthur complained that the enemy seemed to be allowed to delay the Australians 'at will', and on 27 October, when the Japanese were pulling out of Eora Creek, General Allen paid the price, as had Rowell and Potts.

When on 22 November the 25th Brigade took Kokoda, transport planes were able to supply the men, and the Battle of Kokoda was at a close. The new general, Vasey, assembled the now resting native porters, thanked them for their efforts and awarded medals to a number of them. On 11 November, two of Vasey's battalions surrounded the Japanese main force at Oivi-Gorari near the Kumusi River and a few got away to Buna. Horii did not. While he and four of his officers were crossing the river near the bridge the Papua New Guineans called Wairopi (wire rope), a name which also attached to the location, their raft struck a tree. Horii and others took to a canoe, which was swept to the estuary of the river and overturned in the surf, where Horii, drained of strength, let go. The man who had sought to dominate Australia from Port Moresby drowned.

Roughly parallel and to the east of the Australians, Americans were crossing the mountains by the Jaure Trail on their way to attack Buna. Other American regiments were flown over the mountains for that purpose. The Australians from Milne Bay were also flown in, ready to attack the Japanese on the coast. The men of the 2/14th Battalion, veterans of the desert and Syria, retrained and rested, boarded planes on 25 November 1942

at the Seven Mile drome near Port Moresby to fly over the mountains to Popondetta, 32 kilometres from Gona on the coast. The unit consisted of just 341 men now.

The Japanese entrenchments at Buna, Sanananda and Gona were located on solid ground between the ocean and inland swamps. Blamey understood the peril of the situation and asked MacArthur for naval support to shell these strongholds. Any of the heavy cruisers deployed in the Solomons would have suited Blamey's needs. But MacArthur believed the Allies would quickly overrun the Japanese positions, even without much artillery to back them up.

On being landed, the men of the 14th Battalion marched thirteen kilometres on the Sanananda track towards Gona, through kunai grass, which gave way then to coastal swamps and, bunkered beyond them, between the wetland and the beach, the Japanese garrisons. Close to the coast and its black volcanic sand beach, the gun pits they came up against were reinforced with logs and covered with dirt that even mortars could not penetrate. Snipers sat in the coconut palms around the gun pits.

Here was a miserable place for the 14th Battalion's years of warriorhood to end, but it would be a grave to nearly three hundred of the attacking force, which was ordered forward at dusk on 29 November. The last three kilometres to their starting point lay through a chest-deep sago swamp, crossing which they had to hold their rifles above their heads. The instant the first soldier moved out of the swamp into the beach area he was shot down. Without having been given the time for a proper reconnaissance, the Australians were being thrown away.

The Australians withdrew at 11.30 p.m., after much carnage. The next day the mission was bombed to prepare it for assault. Again there had been no proper reconnaissance and the air attack did not cause as much damage as the Australians, moving forward, expected it to have. The attack by land predictably failed, and yet another one was hurriedly planned.

The next day, patrols began to locate the Japanese positions. A blasting of the gun posts with rifle brigades followed, and a coordinated attack on snipers in the trees. Australian units circled around the beachside and staged a bayonet attack. The Australians now held a kilometre of beach within the Buna–Gona area. But it would take time, and much pain, before the central Japanese fortifications fell.

By mid-December the Japanese blockhouse had been stormed. Defenders and attackers were cut to remnants of flesh, and young men with jungle fevers in their blood fought each other intimately in sweat and slime. The coastal town of Gona on the left flank fell to the Australians. The Australian 18th Brigade was sent to help the 32nd Division capture Buna. In total, there were nearly three thousand Allied soldiers killed and wounded in these attacks, a thousand of them Australians.

Sanananda held out in the middle. General George C. Kenney of the US Army Air Forces had told MacArthur that there were only a thousand of the enemy there. In fact, Australian and American forces killed more than fifteen hundred, and it is estimated that twelve hundred sick and wounded were taken off by sea at night, while more than a thousand escaped to the west of Gona. Six hundred Australians and three hundred Americans lost their lives taking Sanananda.

Just under four thousand Australian and American soldiers died in these terrible confrontations, seizing the north coast. In the fighting between Japanese and US forces on Guadalcanal in 1942–43, the casualties were lower—despite impressions to the contrary—than in these three savage coastal battles. But before the battle was over, MacArthur claimed it had been won (he needed an end-of-year announcement) with only some skirmishing left to attend to. Buna was the first great US army victory of the Pacific War, but he did not mention the name of his field commander, US General Eichelberger.

To the west along the coast, the Japanese still held Lae and Nadzab, at the base of the broad peninsula named the Huon, and Salamaua and Finschhafen (a name left over from the days Germany governed the area) near its tip. Further west still were the coastal towns and ports of Madang, Wewak and Aitape—all of them on the agenda of the Chiefs of Staff in Washington. Their capture would allow Kenney's bombers and the Australian air force squadrons to move further to the west and closer and closer to certain enemy targets.

The Japanese broke out of Salamaua and fought to the edges of the Australian garrison at Wau before being defeated. As battles, the capture of Lae and the attack on Salamaua were massively removed from the under-supplied and primal struggle on the Kokoda Trail. The military might describe them as a brilliant combination of sea, air and land resources. But they were

still bitter affairs. The campaign began in March 1943 and ended a year later with Australian forces advancing along the coast to Madang. Blamey rotated commanders and formations as troops became exhausted from battle, terrain and sickness. But he kept attacking with five divisions, three of whom were militia, trained on the Atherton Tablelands.

Early in 1943, Damien Parer flew back to Port Moresby and attached himself to 30 Squadron RAAF, flying Beaufighters from Port Moresby. The casualty level amongst Beaufighters was high, but that did not give him pause. The Beaufighters were attacking Japanese airstrips and installations from a low level on the far side of New Guinea, and that was filmic, but to get to them they needed to climb over the Owen Stanleys, and there was oxygen enough only for the pilot and the observer.

Parer stood behind Torchy Uren, the pilot who had volunteered to take him, with his legs braced on either side of the four-foot-by-two-foot (120 by 60 centimetres) well of the plane, his hands gripping the front spar above the pilot's head; when he wanted to film he leaned with his elbows on the spar, steadying his camera on Uren's head, and shot through the windshield. Uren thought him odd, doing things he didn't have to do, and on top of that, passing out for lack of oxygen in the well of the plane as they cleared the mountains. As they strafed a Japanese-held village near Finschhafen, Parer started shooting film. He didn't realise that when Uren pulled out of the dive, gravity would make the camera weigh five times as much as usual. Parer overbalanced and fell into the well. They repeated the strafing run and the same thing happened.

Intelligence reported that on 28 February 1943, a large Japanese convoy prepared to sail from Rabaul, eight transports carrying nearly ten thousand reinforcements for Lae and Salamaua, accompanied by eight destroyers and a fighter screen of Zeros. When a report came through that the convoy was within range of the Beaufighters, 'I had a funny feeling,' Parer said. 'Today it would be all or nothing. Either the greatest scoop in newsreel history, or Torchy . . . and I would be in the drink.'

Parer passed out again over the Owen Stanleys and revived by the time the Beaufighters reached their rendezvous point off Cape Ward Hunt. They found themselves circling above a squadron of US attack bombers, and

above them were Mitchells, and above that, Flying Fortresses; last of all, on top, was the fighter cover. 'It was the greatest show I'd ever seen.'

When the destroyers opened fire on the Allied aircraft and the Zeros descended, there was chaos. Uren swung away from the destroyers to take on the transports, whose decks were crammed with men. Parer filmed Uren's tracer as it hit the ships. There were Japanese soldiers crouching in a lifeboat on one of the ships' davits, and Parer the sensitive Catholic and Labor man cried, 'Poor bastards, you poor bastards!' as the Japanese on the decks and in the water were reaped by machine guns.

Uren pulled up into the sky, levelled off and made two more runs, both filmed by Parer. Nearby, a Zero shot down an American Flying Fortress. Uren dived down yet again on a burning transport. But Parer did not get the footage he wanted and began to swear and reload. 'Can you go in over those two burning ships again? I missed 'em.' And Uren did it, with a flight of Zeros above him. By now most of the ships were sinking or blazing. In this confrontation, which would become known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, the 51st Japanese Division lost almost three thousand men and most of its experienced officers.

Parer then joined the Australian assault on Salamaua. From June to August 1943, he lived with the troops. Once he lumped shells forward to a three-inch mortar that had run out of ammunition. He also worked as a stretcher bearer when a commando was shot through the chest and both arms. He handed his camera to the man next to him and joined three others who crawled out under fire to drag the wounded man out of danger. When a Japanese soldier charged a foxhole he was in Parer began frantically focusing on the man, yelling, 'Don't shoot the bastard yet!' The Australian soldier actually held his fire and allowed Parer to film the lethal shot.

This footage would all go into his film *Assault on Salamaua*. For the attack on Timbered Knoll, Parer filmed planning and the passing of orders down from the brigade to section leaders. He filmed the mortars and machine guns giving covering fire, then he accompanied a raid led by Lieutenant John Lewin up a narrow steep ridge to the top of the knoll, filming Lewin from a metre away. He was crouched close to Private H.W. Robins when Robins was wounded and two of the commandos applied field dressings and dragged him to cover. His footage follows Private W.H. Dawson dashing towards the Japanese weapon pits, hurling grenades and firing.

Parer was beside Sergeant Andrew 'Bonny' Muir when Muir was killed. And he was with the section that charged the top of Timbered Knoll, where he filmed the dead Japanese in their foxholes. He also filmed the drained faces of the attackers afterwards, the digging of graves, the burials of Sergeant Muir, Corporal Donald Buckingham and Corporal Percival Hooks while men stood with their heads bare in the rain.

After a stint with commandos on Timor, in August 1943 Parer received an invitation from Paramount News in New York offering him roughly eight times his Australian salary. He resigned from the Department of Information and accepted Paramount's offer. He was not happy thereafter. He covered the American invasions of Cape Gloucester on New Britain, the Admiralty Islands and Guam. Parer's method with the Americans was to follow close behind the tanks and thus film the most dramatic moments of the marine infantry's charge almost as if he were in the enemy foxholes.

On 17 September 1944, he was covering the landing of the Americans on Peleliu Island, Palau. A company attack on a set of Japanese bunkers had fallen off and the tanks were called in. Parer followed the left tank into the attack, filming the marines from the front again. He was on a mound of coral behind the tank, filming the advancing marines, when a Japanese machine gun concealed nearby opened up. He was shot in the chest, stomach and thighs and seemed to die at once. The tank wiped out the nest and the marines came on Parer's body and buried him that morning. In ignorance, someone opened his camera and exposed the film.

Parer was thirty-two years old.

MacArthur now had three American divisions under his command, but only two regimental combat teams were battle ready. So, if MacArthur wanted Lae and Finschhafen, he would have to depend upon the Australians again.

The 7th Australian Division was ready again for battle by mid-1943, despite its heavy casualties in 1942. One brigade of the 6th Division was also available after having taken part in the defeat of the Japanese at Milne Bay. The 9th Division was freshly arrived home from the Middle East.

Iven Mackay had the overall command in New Guinea now and estimated the Japanese had eleven thousand men at Wewak, to the west of Madang, six to eight thousand at Madang itself, and five to six thousand in the Lae–Salamaua area. The 5th US Air Force using Mitchell bombers bombed both the Japanese positions and the ships that supplied them, as did the Australian Beaufighters.

In the end in August and September 1943 a combined force of Australians and Americans exerted such pressure on Salamaua that Japanese forces were drawn away from Lae to reinforce them. In the meantime, the 7th Division advanced inland against Nadzab, at the base of the Huon Peninsula, and an amphibious landing by Major-General Morshead's 9th Division led to an advance on the Japanese forces in Lae from the west. Four destroyers had shelled the beach to make way for Morshead's men, and by midday there were over seven thousand troops and more than fifteen hundred tons of stores landed. There was no Japanese opposition and the Australians formed up and moved towards Nadzab.

On 4 September, 302 fighter, bomber and transport planes took off from airfields in Moresby and elsewhere to carry paratroopers of the American 503rd Parachute Regiment to the Nadzab airstrip, which had not previously been able to sustain a landing by so many planes. General MacArthur travelled in one of the transport planes, covered by fighters and B17s. On 16 September, patrols from the 7th Division entered the abandoned town of Lae and drove through to the seashore. Salamaua fell shortly afterwards. The 7th Division had suffered thirty-eight men killed and 104 wounded. The 9th Division lost seventy-seven men killed, and seventy-three were missing (a troubling statistic given that neither side was showing much mercy), while four hundred men were wounded. More than six thousand Japanese had escaped from the area to rejoin forces on the north coast of the Peninsula around Finschhafen.

The 9th Division's second amphibious operation was set for 22 September, only five days after the fall of Lae. The pre-dawn assault resulted in the town of Finschhafen being taken. The Japanese garrison was quickly overrun by the veteran Diggers. In little more than three months the Australians had given MacArthur total victory in New Guinea. Finschhafen provided MacArthur with the base he needed, the one from which he would return to Manila to retake the Philippines. Rabaul on New Britain was left alone except

by the air force. By the end of 1943, Rabaul, too, was no longer a Japanese naval base and the Japanese concentrated their aircraft in other areas. Meanwhile, four thousand Australians had lost their lives in the campaign.

On 19 January 1944, a party of 9th Division engineers found a metal box that had been dumped into a water-filled pit by the retreating Japanese at a furiously fought-for area named Sio. The box contained Japanese code books—with current cipher keys. This discovery was probably the most important of the war in the Pacific. For the remainder of the war, Allied intelligence used them to get the entire Japanese order of battle and to update it. MacArthur, and the Allies in general, benefited greatly from them.

The few weeks between the discovery of the codes and their delivery to the Joint Chiefs were seen by MacArthur as his ‘window of opportunity’. He knew from intercepts that Japanese troops in the Admiralty Islands, on Manus and Los Negros, which sat north of the eastern end of New Guinea, numbered only a little over four thousand. In bringing in two divisions to obliterate the Japanese in the Admiralties, he used three armed merchant cruisers of the Australian navy as landing ships. Each of them was equipped with twenty-five landing craft. MacArthur also had four cruisers, including the *Australia* and the *Shropshire* (the two heaviest Australian cruisers), and two American light cruisers. Amongst officers and troops on the ships there was some questioning about the necessity of the landing. Since MacArthur had enunciated the arguments for bypassing islands and instead cutting off the garrisons manning them, why the Admiralties? For a quick and spectacular PR coup for the general—that was why!

MacArthur travelled with Admiral Kincaid aboard the US cruiser *Phoenix*, and inspected Los Negros on 28 September, after an American battalion had landed there and taken it. He permitted himself to be decorated on the beach, an event covered by the press corps just before filing time for the morning editions of American east coast newspapers. Then he returned to the *Phoenix* and departed the region. That evening the Japanese counter attacked the young Americans, who lacked all heavy equipment. They suffered horribly but held. So Douglas MacArthur was as willing to claim a victory off the backs of young men he had as good as abandoned on Los Negros as he was to gainsay the fibre of the Australians while claiming credit for their victories.

MAKING THE GOLDEN SOCIETY

Soon after the Japanese had been driven out of Kokoda again, on a hot 22 December 1942, Curtin created a Department of Post-war Reconstruction. Herbert 'Nugget' Coombs was its secretary, a man who came from a less privileged family, though a scholarship boy par excellence. Beginning as a schoolteacher, he went on in 1931 to study Keynes at the London School of Economics. In 1933, Coombs was awarded a PhD for a thesis on central banking.

John Maynard Keynes was, above all, the economist who appealed to those like Coombs who saw the state as a welcome intervener in the sphere of economics, and as a guarantor of minimum human dignity through policy. Coombs was a rebel against the classical economic theory that dominated Treasury at the time. When the Australian Labor Party under John Curtin came to power in 1941, Coombs found himself in a political environment that suited him, and Coombs was the sort of thinker Treasurer Ben Chifley wanted as secretary of his new department.

In proposing a great post-war society that was at a polar remove from the horrors of the Depression, newly brought-in economists and planners knew that their work, trying to forge a new relationship between citizens and government, was taken seriously by Chifley. An important ally of Coombs and his friends was the energetic economist from the University of Melbourne and wartime Prices Commissioner, Douglas Copland, who introduced price ceilings on goods and subsidised industries so that they could manufacture enough items to keep prices level.

Coombs would later declare that he 'was attempting to express in general terms what I believe to be the hopes and aspirations of the people of Australia in the post-war period'. He argued there was universal agreement that ordinary Australians wanted stable employment, rising living standards, and security against the risks of sickness, unemployment and old age—everything the Depression had deprived them of. To him, relying on the decisions and preferences of consumers and investors was not enough; it exposed Commonwealth economies to booms and busts and so to waves of sackings during crisis periods until uncontrolled capitalism created the next boom. Coombs and his department wanted to represent the interests of 'the male breadwinner' rather than those of the holders of political, bureaucratic and financial power.

But he also wanted men's lives to take on 'new colour, new intensity and new dramatic quality'. That could not be achieved merely by the consumption of 'things which are bought and sold in the market'. It was provided by collective goods: schools, libraries, parks and playgrounds, museums, picture galleries, public health services, roads, and opportunities for political activity and sport. Coombs saw community facilities as equal to capital equipment in industry. The public facilities were where 'the essential business of human life is carried on', where men met their friends, lovers, rivals, and even enemies, and pursued the personal relationships that constitute a fulfilling life.

In an election far ahead, in 1949, Australians would ultimately reject Coombs's and Chifley's formulas. For already, in 1942, the young planners knew that consumers' desires were not always rational and, as the war proceeded and became more hopeful, were being worked on and distorted by advertising and marketing. In other words, as Coombs's opponents might argue, he believed that housewives who to keep food fresh had had to await the regular delivery of ice, toted to back doors by a man with a sack on his shoulder and a block of ice resting on it and held in place by tongs, might in too many cases lust after refrigerators. Yet despite his worries about irrational consumerism, Coombs's post-war vision for women—at this stage, mid-war—was not concerned with their employment or equal pay, but involved very much labour-saving devices 'to provide respite from the strain of being isolated at home with young children . . . It is probably true that nothing could contribute so much to the well-being of so large a number of people as provision which would make it possible for every mother to have four hours a day, one night a week and three weeks every year free from her children.'



Men of their time, the planners of post-war reconstruction, failed to give much attention to women as more than 'the working man's wife'. In winning the vote in 1902, women's organisations had campaigned for the franchise specifically on women's place as mothers. Feminists in the 1930s made some progress not only in advancing health services for women and children, and achieving the maternity allowance and child endowment allowance, but also in the appointment of some women as police and health inspectors. The concept of woman as worker began to compete with the idea of the woman

as mother in the minds of the women of the suburbs, not just in feminist politics. The 1933 Census had shown that three out of ten women workers *were* sole breadwinners, generally working for low wages in dressmaking, millinery and the textile industry. But unions fought to have married women, sole breadwinners or not, rejected by employers.

World War II was changing all. There were thousands of young women volunteering for military service. Fifty-five thousand would be in the ranks by 1945, and these women—and others outside the military—did the jobs of men. Many other girls, such as eighteen-year-old Marie Coyle of Kempsey, came to the city and learned to be welders. Between 1939 and 1941, nearly a hundred thousand additional women entered the workforce, mainly in munitions factories and other war supplies. Industry and the women's military services gave young women a taste of freedom from parental control; this of course helped stoke the 'moral panic' depicted earlier in this chapter, and raise the fear girls would never 'settle down'. Lady Gowrie, wife of the wartime Governor-General and Curtin's friend and passionate promoter of the Australian diva Joan Hammond, told the mainly young women who had enlisted in the women's military forces, 'We do not want our service-women to become hard-faced and tough. After the war we want them to remain women and set up homes just as they would have done had there been no war.'

In 1942, the same year as Coombs's new department was established, the government set up the Women's Employment Board to decide on women's wages, which were set at about 90 per cent of the male rate—on the grounds of women's lesser physical strength and supposed greater absenteeism. But employers would not comply. E.C. McGrath, Federal Secretary of the Printing Industry Employees' Union, writes of women playing a magnificent part in the war industries, but he believed that when the war was over, any woman expecting her employment to continue was likely to suffer 'unfortunate disillusionment'. Employers would always prefer men, he said, because 'a woman, whether trained or untrained, is unstable in industry by reason of her marriage . . . or by reason of physiological and domestic complications which are not the common lot of man'.

AUSTRALIA WILL BE THERE?

In July 1944, MacArthur blithely told Blamey that he intended that an Australian division should be used in a landing at Leyte in the Philippines

and in another one at Lingayen Gulf. They would each fight in an American corps. This was a problem Blamey's World War II commanders had experienced with the British in World War I—the question of independence. Blamey wrote to MacArthur, 'There is no adequate reason why the Australian corps should not be employed [in the Philippines] as a corps under its own commander.'

But MacArthur's plans for Australians seemed vague, and the government began to worry that their place in post-war negotiations would be undermined if they did not continue to assault the enemy. Curtin had said in 1943 that Australia's 'military effort should be on a scale to guarantee her an effective voice in the peace settlement'.

Curtin knew that to be heard he must take up the persistent invitations from Roosevelt and Churchill and visit them. As ever, his health was not good. Going to the United States and Britain was not advisable in medical terms, but Curtin believed he must.

In early April, Blamey, Shedden, Don Rodgers the press secretary, Curtin and wife Elsie joined the *Lurline*, a troopship full of American troops being transferred to the American west coast and to other duties. Curtin had asked Elsie to travel with him for emotional support and to sustain him. On 31 March, just before Curtin's departure, his friend Maurice Blackburn, twice expelled from the Labor Party and opponent of conscription, died in Melbourne. It was Blackburn's condemnations of Curtin's conscription policies that had hurt Curtin far more than did the lashing he received in the House from Ward and Calwell.

Above all, though, Curtin faced continual obstruction from unions. These organisations had been founded after great struggles against the misuse of miners and wharf labourers during the Depression and earlier. Now, maintaining and displaying their power over employers remained a stronger and more enduring matter than were the supposed urgencies of the war. Curtin told one group of striking waterside workers, 'I am fed up. I can't satisfy you. I grant you conditions you have been demanding over the years . . . What will satisfy you? There's a war on.'

During the trip to Washington in 1944, Elsie was sick on board the troopship—a reaction to a smallpox injection—and Curtin nursed her. This journey marked a decline in Blamey's influence as chief military adviser. Previously Curtin had dealt with Blamey only on a professional basis but they

were now thrown together socially. Curtin disapproved of Blamey's raucous parties on board the supposedly 'dry' ship, while Shedden commented about him, 'though good as a commander-in-chief, he is not suitable as a member of a Prime Minister's party'.

In Washington at last, Curtin was feted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Elsie was entertained by Eleanor Roosevelt, then Curtin flew down and visited President Roosevelt in South Carolina, where FDR went for his health (and to spend time with his mistress, Lucy Mercer Rutherford). The president complimented Australia and said it was pulling its weight. Earlier, Roosevelt had suggested they spend time at the White House discussing Australia's security and role in the Pacific, but then he was briefed about an Anzac Conference held in Canberra between the Australians and New Zealanders in which both countries resolved that the sovereignty of Pacific nations (over such areas as New Guinea) should not be changed without their agreement. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, urged Roosevelt to tell Curtin that the United States was affronted by the Anzac Conference and its implications that America could not quite be trusted. Curtin made peace and returned to the White House, where he had further talks with officials, but then fell ill with neuritis and high blood pressure. He next needed to get to his meeting with Churchill and other dominion prime ministers in London on 1 May. He left Elsie in Washington and with his party caught a flying boat. It flew them to Bermuda and then Ireland, where he took a Dakota to London.

In Britain, Curtin avoided cosy meetings with the British Labour Party, believing his main task was to make peace with Churchill, which he tried to do at events at Downing Street, Buckingham Palace and elsewhere. He proposed a reduction in what was now an Australian army of nearly half a million, to free men for the production of food and other goods, and Churchill agreed it was a good idea.

Perhaps unexpectedly, Curtin proposed greater imperial cooperation. His motives at the time were much surmised at. Did he really dream of real and renewed defence connections between the United Kingdom and Australia instead of the sham ones of 1941–42? With Blamey in tow he proposed an invasion of the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) and Malaya involving the AIF divisions *and* British troops. Would MacArthur go along with these ideas? In any case, Curtin's journey bespoke uncertainty about Australia in

an Empire under challenge and in a renewing world. Indeed, he was at the Ritz Carlton in New York on his way home when the D-Day invasion fleets left southern England for Normandy.

Back from London, Curtin pleaded with MacArthur to make one last attempt to include the Australians in the Philippine campaign, and in due course the complete takeover of the New Guinea, Rabaul and Bougainville fronts by Australia occurred as planned by MacArthur. There were two divisions of Americans at Aitape in New Guinea, two on New Britain, and two at Torokina on Bougainville, each with a small defensive perimeter. On 18 October 1944, the Australians took these over; Blamey's instructions to General Sturdee, Chief of the General Staff, required that 1st Army should destroy enemy resistance without committing major forces.

There were three main concentrations of Japanese left by October 1944—the remnants of three divisions on the north coast of New Guinea, thirty-five thousand strong, concentrated in particular at Wewak and led by General Hatazo Adachi, who would survive the war but then be tried and commit suicide with a paring knife. By now Adachi's losses made those of Horii seem small—by the end, 110,000 of his men would have died. There were also thirty thousand enemy soldiers on Bougainville in addition to twenty thousand Japanese naval personnel; and at Rabaul on New Britain, Japan's 8th Area Army consisted of more than ninety thousand soldiers, sailors and marines.

The 6th Australian Division was sent to Aitape to face the remnants of Adachi's men at Wewak, while militia divisions were deployed elsewhere in New Guinea and on Bougainville. Some call this the 'backyard war', but Adachi had been ordered to hold the Americans by any means. There, two Australian divisions remained on the Atherton Tablelands, and MacArthur wanted them for amphibious landings in Borneo and Java.

These 'backyard' battles were disproportionate in casualties. Wewak was captured after the 6th Division relieved the Americans at Aitape and advanced. Ten thousand Japanese were killed in its defence, and by war's end there were only 13,500 Japanese troops left in New Guinea. By contrast, the Australians had suffered the deaths of 442 men and a little over a thousand wounded. For these young men and their families these figures were a disaster, but on the Japanese side, a crisis in supply and military conviction meant that their men, far from home yet still responsible for holding

the line, had lost all expectation of success and gained an expectation of unavoidable death.

On their approach to Japan and in the Philippines, the Americans had to deploy massively and fight hard, but their ultimate death casualties, though fourteen thousand, would be less than 5 per cent of those suffered by the Japanese in the same conflicts. The 5th Australian Division took over in Jacquinot Bay on the south coast of New Britain, and it fanned out to expel the Japanese from all of the island except the Gazelle Peninsula, the extreme eastern end of the island on which the fortress of Rabaul stood. Here the Australians were able to hold a line, one division against five. Air cover and total control of the waters around Rabaul helped the equation. Rabaul became in effect a vast POW camp. The 5th Division would lose fifty-three men killed and 150 wounded in the campaign. That obscene term 'light casualties' flickers at the lip; if you are one of them, nothing is 'light'.

In early 1945, the 3rd Australian Division began a campaign to clear Bougainville of the Japanese. Here the total Australian casualties were over two thousand, but an extraordinary 23,500 Japanese surrendered, an indication that in the last months of the war, surrender no longer carried quite the burden of guilt and dishonour it had.

No Australian achievement in Bougainville or elsewhere appeared in the American press—it was filtered out by MacArthur's publicity screen. The Australians waited another five months before they received their orders for the Borneo campaign.



In mid-November 1945, Blamey would be pushed aside as the government's chief military adviser, such was the depth of feeling he had aroused in Labor ranks, and Vernon Sturdee replaced him. Shedden wanted to establish the primacy of the Department of Defence and Blamey had intruded on that ambition.

What to make of Blamey? For some he was a narcissist general pursuing his own interests at every turn, and thus a reflection of MacArthur. To others he was Australia's wisest and most gifted general in terms of administration and politics. Like Monash, his chief in the past, he certainly fought strenuously to maintain Australian independence in military matters. He is said to

have worried about the welfare of his troops, even if so many of them and the public didn't believe it.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN

The Japanese had invaded Borneo in 1941, and before the close of January 1942 they had reached the south coast and taken the Dutch oilfields of Tarakan and Balikpapan.

In 1945, the task of retaking from the Japanese the former British Borneo territories of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (Sabah) was assigned to the Australian military forces. Borneo did not really figure high on MacArthur's plans. He meant to commit no US troops there. He had the Philippines to attend to, and he certainly did not wish to share Philippine glory with the Australians. He had brokered a deal with the Dutch government in exile that to facilitate his reconquest of the Philippines he would have 'complete authority in the East Indies during any military operation'; in return, he promised to restore Dutch authority over their colonies as rapidly as possible after recapture. Dutch imperialism, it seemed, could help justify and balance American. It was for that reason that retaking Borneo became part of MacArthur's plans. The seizure of Borneo would also offer bases from which to launch an offensive against Java. And the Borneo oilfields would be able to be used by the Allies.



To prepare for the invasion in May 1945, members of the Australian Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD), directly responsible to Blamey, were dropped off ashore in Sarawak and at Labuk Bay in North Borneo. They had two main objectives: the gathering of intelligence, and the training and arming of local inhabitants into resistance groups to wage guerrilla warfare. Drop zones were established on nearby Jambongan Island, on Borneo's east coast, in late April and early May. A signal station was established, and a hospital for native inhabitants. In Sarawak on the north coast there were plans for SRD groups to be parachuted into the mountainous hinterland of Brunei Bay. Before 10 June 1945, D-Day for Oboe 6—the code name for the Australian invasion of that sector—SRD operatives in North Borneo and Sarawak were relaying intelligence to Blamey's advance land headquarters on the island of Morotai north-west of New Guinea. Four days before the

launch of Oboe 6, one of the groups, Semut 2, had captured the Japanese wireless station at Longalama, and on the eve of D-Day Semut 1 attacked small Japanese garrisons in the Brunei Bay area. They were able to identify the infantry battalion defending Kuching, and report on enemy defences and troop movements.

The 9th Division was on record as being very happy with the information the SRD operatives sent and the preparations they made before the Oboe 6 landing. There was one major issue unattended to, however. Between 1942 and 1943, some 2750 Allied prisoners of war, mainly Australian and British, had been shipped from Singapore to Sandakan on the east coast of Borneo and used as hard-driven labour for the construction of an airfield. Captain Hoshijima Susumi, the Sandakan camp commandant, overworked, underfed and brutalised the men he held prisoner. For example, a hidden radio was found in the camp in mid-1943, and those adjudged responsible were turned over to the Kempeitai, moved back to Singapore and executed. As a security measure, the Japanese despatched most of the Australian and British officers to the main POW and internment camp near Kuching. Only eight officers remained behind at Sandakan with the mostly enlisted men, where the death rate was obscene: between December 1943 and May 1945, eleven hundred prisoners died.

To avoid recurring Allied bombings of the airstrip and the camp, which began early in 1945, the Japanese decided to move the surviving POWs in forced marches inland, the first group in January, the second in May. Only those so sick as to be immovable were left in Sandakan, and all of these would die or be massacred. Out of the approximately two thousand who participated in the two marches, less than half reached Ranau, 260 kilometres into the jungle, the others falling down on the track, expiring or being bayoneted.

Albert Cleary, twenty-two years old (and thus only nineteen when Singapore fell), tried to escape from Ranau. He was beaten and otherwise abused, and then his friends were permitted to wash him and take him to die amongst them. By May 1945, only thirty or so prisoners were still alive there. Richard Murray and Keith Botterill stole rice to accumulate it for an escape, and when Murray was caught, he took full blame and was bayoneted to death in a bomb crater. Botterill was one of the four who did somehow escape from Ranau, and one of the six survivors of the tragedy. Two Australians managed to escape during the second march, and another

four survivors (including Botterill) succeeded in escaping from Ranau into the jungle. No one else survived at Ranau, and there were no survivors from the three hundred who still remained at Sandakan after the second march.

SRD operatives in the field possessed detailed and accurate information on the movement of POWs at Sandakan in groups to Ranau. The question is asked why there was no attempt to liberate the Sandakan POWs by a paratroop or other unit. Blamey's speech at the Second Annual Conference of the Australian Armoured Corps Association in Melbourne on 1 November 1947 concerned Lieutenant-Colonel John Overall's paratroop battalion, which had been training at the Atherton Tablelands for a covert operation that never eventuated. These soldiers knew nothing of the details of their mission until Blamey's address. 'We had complete plans for them,' he claimed. 'Our spies were in Japanese-held territory. We had established the necessary contacts with prisoners at Sandakan, and our parachute troops were going to relieve them . . . but at the moment we wanted to act, we couldn't get the necessary aircraft to take them in.'

Some historians, including Lynette Ramsay Silver, have denounced Blamey's claim about 'getting the necessary aircraft' as utter nonsense. No request for aircraft was made to MacArthur. If the Americans were reluctant, as was claimed, the RAAF had its own pool of seventy-one transport planes, and had the plans been followed, only thirty-four aircraft were needed.

Altogether, the failure to save the POWs seems to have been not a work of malice on the part of Blamey and the SRD but merely one of incompetence. John Overall believed the story of the lack of air transport, and so did Athol Moffitt, the Allied prosecutor at the Labuan War Crimes trials. Overall declared, 'Yes, there had been a plan to rescue the Sandakan prisoners . . . General Morshead pressed the plan, and I understood General Blamey wanted it, but the US would not release the planes to make the drop.' Denis Emerson-Elliott, a member of the UK Special Operations Executive Far East, said of the SRD operations in Borneo: 'It was a mess from beginning to end. The intelligence was a disaster. The bungling on the planning side was dreadful, so Blamey decided to blame MacArthur.'

The Australian troops of the 1st Australian Corps, the 7th and 9th AIF divisions under the command of Leslie Morshead, were the troops allotted to retake Borneo. They were to land on 1 May at Tarakan Island in the south-east (Oboe 1); at Brunei Bay and Labuan Island on 10 June (Oboe 6), these being

located along the north-east coast in the former enclave of British North Borneo; and at Balikpapan on 1 July (Oboe 2). There would be American naval and air support. On Tarakan Island there was close fighting, to the extent that the electric wiring of the 12th Field Ambulance post delivering the light by which surgeons operated was shot through continuously, and an orderly declared that they were, at 150 metres, the closest any field post had ever been to the front line. The fighting on Tarakan would continue until the end of the war, in August.

The Australian 9th Division was also involved in the Oboe 6 landing in the Brunei Bay area and Labuan Island. The prime objective was to secure the vicinity for a naval base as well as to give access to oil and rubber in the area. By contrast with the Tarakan landing, within four days of the 10 June D-Day, all the initial targets were attained. By mid-July the AIF was greatly involved in civic action, and their military role was increasingly becoming redundant.

AIR WAR AND POLITICS

A future Australian prime minister flew at Milne Bay, one of many whose work MacArthur considered supernumerary or inadequate—John Grey Gorton, the illegitimate son of a wealthy orchardist and entrepreneur and of a handsome mother named Alice Sinn (sometimes history is too cruel). In England during the 1930s he learned to fly aircraft and married twenty-nine-year-old Bettina Brown, an American Fine Arts student at the Sorbonne. Having completed an MA at Oxford, jovial Gorton served in Britain before being posted to Singapore with 232 Squadron RAF. Before the fall of that fortress, his Hawker Hurricane, which had only been uncrated the week before, was shot down, and when he crash-landed and was thrown against his instrument panels he suffered severe facial injuries. Evacuated from Singapore by ship, which was then torpedoed, he was photographed by a crew member of an Australian corvette that rescued him with other men on a wallowing, near-sinking dinghy, a photograph which in its terrible informality indicates the perils of getting away from Singapore. Gorton would never trumpet his wartime experience, and MacArthur's press office was unlikely to trumpet such men either.

Gorton began flying Kittyhawks of 77 Squadron from Darwin with the RAAF and engaged in operations against the Japanese at Milne Bay. In 1943,

Gorton's aircraft crashed at Milne Bay during take-off—such accidents were sadly common and took their toll of young pilots. He was considered a proficient pilot and came back to Australia to become a flying instructor before being discharged in December 1944. He underwent only partially successful facial reconstruction at Heidelberg Hospital in Melbourne.

A most eccentric aviator was the young lawyer Gough Whitlam, in that few flyers had such a sense of the urgencies of politics and the Constitution as he. He was married to Margaret Dovey, daughter of a lawyer and, ultimately, judge. She was tall, eloquent and intelligent. She was also a notable swimmer, Australian breaststroke champion in 1937, and had qualified for the Commonwealth Games in Sydney in 1938, designed to celebrate 150 years of European settlement. But by the time of the games, Margaret had contracted a debilitating streptococcal infection and missed her events.

On leave from the air force, Whitlam proposed to Margaret as Singapore was falling in 1942. He wrote, 'Sleeping at the College on the night of 21st April and being married next day . . . at St Michael's Vacluse, to the most admired student of SCEGGS, Darlinghurst.' Whitlam received his call-up papers and joined the 13th Squadron, soon to be equipped with navy Venturas and flying out of Darwin and Gove in the Northern Territory.

The demands of war, and the necessity for national instead of state-based planning for any ultimate peace, would highlight for the young aviator Whitlam the crucial flaws in the Australian Constitution. Home on leave during the Curtin government's election campaign of 1943, Gough attended with Margaret a crowded rally addressed by the local Labor member, the East Sydney firebrand Eddie Ward, and the Minister for Information, Arthur Calwell. Further to the young flyer's political development, Whitlam was granted a period of leave early in 1944 for the birth of a son, Tony. While still on leave, Whitlam and his father, Fred, Crown Solicitor, attended the Australian Institute of Political Science summer school in Canberra on post-war reconstruction in Australia. At this meeting, Whitlam met Nugget Coombs, the renowned Keynesian economist appointed by Curtin as Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction. This encounter increased Whitlam's enthusiasm to extend federal power, as the coming Post-War Reconstruction and Democratic Rights Referendum proposed. He favoured

making permanent the until now purely temporary emergency powers of the Commonwealth.

Evatt drove the referendum legislation, crying that 'if democracy is to live . . . it must show itself in bold and imaginative action . . . if there are constitutional limitations on such bold and imaginative action, then the Constitution has become the instrument of reaction. Let us not fear to change it.'

In August 1944, 13th Squadron was operating from Merauke in Dutch New Guinea. Flying Officer Lex Goudie and his navigator Whitlam undertook extensive raids on Japanese positions, supply dumps and installations. Then the squadron moved back to the mainland at Gove, a mining town beside the Aboriginal settlement of Yirrkala. Whitlam encountered the usual race attitudes of the Australians of the era when the Fijian pastor in charge of the mission was not permitted to read the Methodist rite over a dead airman. 'The CO designated me to do it because he didn't see fit for a Fijian to conduct funerals over Australian . . . officers and sergeants who'd been killed.'

Whitlam was still at Gove when the referendum on post-war reconstruction was put to the Australian people in August 1944. It was designed to override the states by centralising economic power in Canberra. On this small stage of a squadron on the edge of an Aboriginal settlement, Whitlam was vocal on the subject that if there was a return to the conditions of the Great Depression of the 1930s, without centralised powers the Federal government would be powerless in the face of inevitable post-war shortages and unemployment.

And without centralised powers, Aborigines would remain in the shadows. From living at Yirrkala and from reading, Whitlam believed that power over Aboriginal issues should be centralised. Before serving in the RAAF, he had met no indigenous Australians. But in Cooktown and the Gove-Yirrkala area, he witnessed the habitual forms of discrimination. He disliked missionaries, and was pleased that the indigenous people at Gove had only had them for the past ten years, because missionaries, he argued, 'destroyed Aborigines' self-respect. Now these are strong words. But I knew, I saw it.' It was at Yirrkala too that Whitlam first met the Yunupingu family, whose members would play a crucial role in the agitation for Aboriginal civic recognition and land rights.

But the referendum proposal failed to gain a majority vote nationally. The young navigator was appalled by the result: 'The campaign had an immediate and lasting effect on my attitudes and career.' The Labor defeat in the referendum meant that 'reform would be protracted and piecemeal', and Menzies's opposition to the constitutional change seemed to Whitlam like vulgar opportunism.

Far away in the New South Wales country town of Albury, before the Union Jack, the Liberal Party of Australia was inaugurated in December 1944 by the leader of the UAP opposition, Robert Menzies, a new definition of the conservative political impulse in Australia. Though it did not seem so then, and despite the fumbling of the early war years, Menzies was on his way back.

From its base in Gove the 13th Squadron carried out anti-submarine patrols and bombing raids on Japanese targets in Timor and the Netherlands East Indies. With Goudie at the controls, Whitlam's aircraft flew seventy-six missions in September 1944, eighty-seven in October, and eighty-six in November. They were, by comparison with the European theatre, short-range missions, but each one involved a potentially dangerous take-off and landing, and an encounter with the enemy in between.

Whitlam's crew did not continue with 13th Squadron when it left Gove in 1945. Whitlam and his pilot, Goudie, became the flyers of the only RAAF aircraft flying for MacArthur's headquarters at Leyte and then Manila. His crew flew generals from the Australian, British, Indian, Canadian and New Zealand forces from Australia to the Philippine headquarters and back again. In June, Whitlam attended the opening of the Philippine Congress, getting a seat amongst the press. Whitlam would later claim that from his experience of the Philippines he got a sense of Dutch, Spanish, German, Japanese and American imperialism, and thus of Australia's pretensions to imperialism in New Guinea and elsewhere. 'I was convinced the European, as well as the Japanese, empires in the Pacific and Indian Oceans had no future.' On the death of John Curtin while he was home on leave, Whitlam applied to join the Australian Labor Party.

PEACE AND ITS DISCONTENTS



NUCLEAR ENDING

In June 1944, a detachment of some hundreds of American and Australian prisoners of war were brought to Japan in a cargo of sugar and pumpkins on the *Tamahoku Maru*. Off the coast of the island of Kyushu it was torpedoed. Two Tasmanians, Peter McGrath-Kerr and Allan Chick, were amongst the minority of seventy-two Australian survivors. Of the nearly eight hundred prisoners, 213 in all were rescued. Picked up in their drenched rags, they were trucked to an enclosure in Nagasaki that had once been a cotton factory, and worked in the foundry next door to the camp on propellers and cylinder blocks for marine diesel engines.

Chick wielded a mallet, and McGrath-Kerr cleaned out the sandy cores in preparation for a new casting. If there was a weakness in the casting, prisoners often took the opportunity to widen it. They were surprised to find, amongst the scrap metal prisoners had to deliver to the furnace, a number of pieces marked NSWGR (New South Wales Government Railways), part of a notorious and controversial pig-iron shipment to Japan before the war.

Sometimes they worked with elderly Japanese and women, and volunteer schoolboys and schoolgirls, so reduced was the labour force. The prisoners would also often see American bombers overhead, B29s and A36s, their

bomb bays opening and spewing incendiaries. Prisoners were no more immune from the detonations and fires than anyone else.

Vague rumours of a bomb used on the city of Hiroshima, an explosive of a new order, reached the POW camp in Nagasaki. Australian POWs Les Prendergast, Bert Miller and Murray Jobling therefore started to run hard for the camp dugouts when on 9 August 1945 they heard a plane drone over and recognised it as American. McGrath-Kerr took his time, putting down his book on his mat and standing. In the next instant he was buried in the ruins of the former cotton factory. Chick, working on the roof of a storehouse, was aware of the huge flash of light before he passed out. When he came back to consciousness, he lay on the ground and the storehouse was gone. Dust from the bomb was blocking out the sky. Another prisoner, Jack Johnson of the RAAF, was sure he had seen three white parachutes—the ones from which the bomb was suspended—moments before the dazzling light. Johnson now pulled the injured McGrath-Kerr out of the wreckage. After the sinking of the *Tamahoku Maru*, Johnson had pulled McGrath-Kerr onto an upturned lifeboat, so there was a pattern.

In the aftermath and in a blasted and vacant landscape, bemused Japanese guards cried, 'Go, go, go!' The Australians headed towards the Inasa Bridge, on which some of them had been working, and on towards Inasa Mountain to the west. Astoundingly, Chick found on the far side of the bridge a horse and cart, and loaded it up with Red Cross parcels lying about as thick drops of black water began to rain down from the heavens. The road up into the hills was blocked by fallen trees, and new guards turned up and joined them to a larger group of POWs making their way up the slopes. Below them lay the flattened city.

The prisoners sat in a bamboo grove that night watching fires burning in the city. Army trucks turned up from the less damaged southern part of the city, took away the wounded and rounded up the prisoners to take them back down to their camp. The scope of destruction astonished them. Their position was much altered but different—no longer prisoners, but not free either. They themselves set up their makeshift camp in the ashes of the onset of the nuclear age, in a world transformed by physics.

On 14 August, the POWs were moved to a dormitory south of the city that they shared with Mitsubishi workers and mobilised students. They saw that some of the Dutch prisoners who had been working out of doors

on the day of the bomb and whose chests were terribly burned were now mortally sick. By 29 August, a number of the Dutch had died.

The remaining prisoners were now put on parade and told that from this time on, Japan was joined with the rest of the world in the pursuit of peace. The war was over and they could all go home. There were no cheers. American planes began to drop relief supplies. US reporter George Weller arrived at the camp with a Red Cross representative and suggested that the men get to Kanoya in the south where there was a great airbase now being used by the Americans. He said that planes were coming in every day with equipment and supplies and leaving empty.

The Australians, including McGrath-Kerr and Chick, found their way to Nagasaki station and caught the train to Kanoya. They carried in their satchels and on their laps containers with the ashes of their comrades, retrieved from the foreigners' section of the Sakamoto cemetery. They were airlifted to Okinawa and Manila, and after treatment in hospital, were put aboard the aircraft carrier *Formidable* with other Australians, and began their journey home. McGrath-Kerr would return to Japan with the Australian contingent of the occupation force. He served at Kure, the Australian occupation zone not far from Hiroshima. There he married a Japanese wife, Haruko, and took her back to live in St Helens in Tasmania. For Haruko, it must have been like a journey to Mars, its reference points hard to grasp. But her husband had lived through the same bewilderment.

REMAKING THE WORLD

There were meetings in mid-April 1945 in London to do with the Commonwealth countries' stance at a world-renewing meeting to occur in San Francisco later that month. The party that set out from Australia included Chifley, who would not continue to San Francisco after discussions in London but would return via Asia to Australia. Frank Forde and Herbert Vere Evatt were to be Australia's delegates in San Francisco.

The great meeting of the world powers and states, attracting amongst others forty-four Foreign ministers, occurred on Anzac Day 1945. By then Berlin was encircled, the position of Germany and of its people grievous, and Japan was not yet defeated but its fast-won, fast-lost empire was dwindling before massive enemy forces. The most alluring prospects for humanity glimmered in San Francisco, where the attendees included Vyacheslav Molotov,

Stalin's Foreign minister, and Andrei Gromyko, Russian Ambassador to the United States; Cordell Hull of the United States, and Edward Stettinius, who had succeeded him as Secretary of State; Anthony Eden, Lord Halifax and the Labour leader Clement Attlee of Britain; Mackenzie King of Canada; Field Marshal Jan Smuts of South Africa; the representatives of Nationalist China; and the Australian delegates, Forde and Evatt.

Field Marshal Smuts had the highly visible matter of anti-black discrimination to deal with, and Evatt too sought universal dignity and fraternity but not domestically in Australia, which—it was taken for granted—would remain unapologetically white. The British were embarrassed by both these issues, but had the unresolved question of having reclaimed Asian colonies, of still holding India, and of resistance to African desires for independence to hamper them in their utterances about the ideal coming world.

Evatt had great visions to deploy. If Billy Hughes had gone to the Paris Peace Conference at the end of World War I as the profound cynic, Evatt went to San Francisco as an ardent visionary. The Soviet delegation was shut up in their hotel suites and said little, and the delegates of other nations were wary too. It was Evatt, representing a small nation and thus with everything to gain, who was willing to speak to press conferences, not least about the balance of decision-making between the Big Five, who he suspected would want to own the game totally.

At this stage Evatt was admired by pressmen of every country for his conviction concerning the new organisation. He advocated a system of international law, a permanent Court of International Justice, a connection between world peace and economic justice, and an assertion that the dominions would speak in their own, not Britain's, interest. He declared on radio, 'The nations must not fumble this second chance to create a system of international cooperation within which they can live together as friends.' Some questions he answered so forcefully that he received rounds of applause. About the power of veto Russia sought, he said, 'There is no reason why one great power should be able to veto an attempt to settle a dispute through negotiation and arbitration, particularly when that dispute might be in an area outside the power's sphere of influence.'

For ten weeks Evatt pounded away at the idea that Australia and other smaller nations should be able to decide international issues with the same vigour and rights as the larger powers. 'General MacArthur told

correspondents in Manila the other day that by winning the first land victories of the war over the Japanese, Australian troops turned the tide of Japanese aggression and made possible the Allied triumphs in the Philippines.' (This was an echo of the past World War I Billy Hughes argument.)

But then Evatt stated on behalf of Australia a new principle that many Australians had not thought of or countenanced: 'We in Australia believe that the social conditions of the millions of people living in South-east Asia and the neighbouring islands should be such that they can have the benefit of the goods they need but in their present economic condition cannot buy . . . Depression or reduced purchasing power in any area is felt everywhere.' He celebrated the fact that the smaller nations were now emerging as the spokespersons for social and economic progress. 'Australia is raising the question of full employment from which the big nations are shuddering away.'

At the closed sessions on the United Nations Charter, he proposed that the charter be amended 'to lay down the principle that the purpose of administration of all dependent territories is the welfare and development of native people' and that this involved a duty on the part of trustee nations to report to the United Nations on their own behaviour. To traditional diplomats, this sounded either presumptuous or naïve. It also made Australia's mandate over New Guinea look justifiable. But above all, his reason for arguing that there should be a reporting and justifying process was that he knew the Dutch would take over Indonesia again—even MacArthur had as good as promised that. He supported his argument by his oratory. 'For more than three years the peoples of South-East Asia and Indonesia have been under Japanese military overlordship . . . they will need help and guidance for their material and moral rehabilitation . . . their goodwill must be fostered, not only because their cooperation is essential to good administration and their own interests, but because they inhabit a vital strategic area.'

But the truth was that the great powers had come to trade the earth with each other to create some kind of liveable balance, not to make the new world Evatt envisaged. Lord Cranborne of Britain scorned the idea of formal international oversight of territories, particularly in territories of the British Empire. Evatt argued in return that those with mandatory powers (Australia, Britain, but especially Japan) had done pretty much as they pleased with the peoples under their control since the mandates and dependencies had been

confirmed or handed out at the Peace Treaty in Paris in 1920, and now they should be accountable.



The European war ended at midnight on 8 May 1945, which was 9 May in Australia. Curtin had had a wretched time with his health over past months. Shocks rattled him profoundly. When in October 1944 HMAS *Australia* became what was said to be the first warship to be hit by a *kamikaze*, killing the captain and others and wounding Vice-Admiral Collins, a Labor member of parliament found Curtin in his Perth office weeping. A heart attack followed. He was delayed in Melbourne by ill health for nearly two months and was not released from Melbourne's Mercy Hospital until 27 December 1944.

In March, Curtin was kept at home in the Lodge by a throat infection. His heart condition was declining. Roosevelt died on 12 April, a few weeks before the war in Europe ended. Parliament reopened on 18 April, and Curtin made a speech of condolence to the American people, having written personally to Eleanor Roosevelt. On 21 April, he was forced into hospital with congestion of the lungs. He was thus still in hospital when Chifley announced the end of the war in Europe.

Curtin returned to the Lodge on 22 May. He read the horse-racing pages of newspapers to fill in the time. In late June it became apparent Curtin might not recover, and Elsie asked Reverend Hector Harrison whether he would conduct the funeral when the time came. Curtin wanted no intervening church service, just a burial in Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth.

Given his bad health prospects, should he resign? Chifley for one was against it. In any case, Curtin's deputy, Forde, was in San Francisco now, at the United Nations Charter meetings with Evatt. As he lay dying, there was no guarantee that the Pacific War would end in 1945. Japan still held Malaya, Indochina, much of China, and the Japanese mainland. Yet visitors assured Curtin that his work was done. Harrison held his hand on the night of 4 July, then went home to his wife and said, 'He'll die tonight . . . his hand was ice cold.' Before Curtin was given his sedative for the night he told Elsie, 'I'm ready now.' Four hours later, on 5 July, she was called back to the room for his final moments.

His memorial service at Parliament House on 16 July saw Chifley, his successor and former Treasurer, weeping above the coffin. The service

was broadcast by ABC radio, and the casket was taken by gun carriage to Canberra airport where it was loaded onto a Dakota for the flight to Perth. In Cottesloe it proceeded through streets where twenty thousand people wept for its passing. Chifley declared, 'I simply couldn't go,' and so stayed away.

EVATT FIGHTS ON

What did Evatt achieve in San Francisco? As the *Christian Science Monitor* reported, Australia submitted thirty-eight amendments but Evatt's favourite was probably the enshrining of the right to work, that is, of full employment. To him, his most satisfactory achievement was the chapters on trusteeships which gave non-self-governing countries protection against abuses and imposed on the governing powers an obligation to report regularly on the economic, social and educational development of the subject peoples.

Twenty of the amendments, some of them procedural and concerning the process of Security Council and General Assembly debates, were wholly or partly incorporated in the new United Nations Charter. To achieve this, Evatt fought and kicked against and argued with everyone who stood in his way. But here again, the shadow of White Australia made the Australian delegation vulnerable. Speaking to Wellington Koo, the representative of Nationalist China, on immigration, Evatt used the same argument against explicit racial equality clauses Billy Hughes had on racial matters: 'You have always insisted on the right to determine the composition of your own people. Australia wants that right now. What you are attempting to do now, Japan attempted after the last war and was prevented by Australia. Had we opened New Guinea and Australia to Japanese immigration, then the Pacific War by now might have ended disastrously and we might have had another shambles like that experienced in Malaya.'

Even so, as a reward for his efforts, Australia was made a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Evatt was made head of the International Atomic Commission, and at the second session he chaired the committee on the future of Palestine. He was thus instrumental in creating settlements that allowed for the emergence of Israel, but Israel did not like the carving up of Jerusalem into sectors, which was Evatt's idea to honour the diverse sacredness of the city. He would be in time (1948) president of the Security Council and in that role would persuade Britain to let Ireland leave the Commonwealth without any penalty or vengeance operating. (Britain already felt

rancour towards Ireland for its neutrality in the war, even if tens of thousands of citizens of the Irish Free State had served in the British forces.)

But to return to the framing of the United Nations Charter, and its acceptance in June 1945, the *New York Times* said on 27 June: 'When Dr Evatt came here he was a virtually unknown second-string delegate, with the background of a professor and Labor politician. He leaves, recognized as the most brilliant and effective voice of the Small Powers, a leading statesman for the world's conscience, the man who was not afraid to force liberalization of the League charter, and who had sense enough not to press his threat so far as to break up the conference.' In the last session of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Charter, a special resolution was moved thanking Dr Evatt. It was passed by acclamation and with applause.

Evatt had at least established, in his role of champion of small nations, the idea that great and small powers might face international judgment for their crimes against the human race.

AFTER THE SKY FELL IN: AUSTRALIA AND THE BOMB

Professor Mark Oliphant, an Australian-born physicist based in England, in 1941 advised the Australian Minister in Washington, Richard Casey, about British work on uranium, and the potential of nuclear energy for military use. But the imminence of nuclear destruction did not become evident until May 1944, when the British government, acting on advice from Oliphant, asked the Australian government to contribute uranium for military purposes. Uranium had been mined since 1906 at Radium Hill and since 1910 at Mount Painter, both in South Australia. But the amounts yielded were not adequate for Britain's needs.

At Potsdam on 26 July 1945, the leaders of the three great powers, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, issued an ultimatum to Japan, calling on it to surrender or suffer 'utter destruction of the Japanese homeland', but also promising an ultimate place for a renewed and democratic Japan amongst the nations of the world. On 28 July, Japan rejected the ultimatum, and the next day Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Evatt, launched the first of several verbal attacks on the Allies' decision-making process. Some peace terms outlined in the ultimatum did not reflect Australia's wishes, as they appeared to be more lenient than those imposed on Germany, despite what Evatt described as the 'outrageous cruelties and barbarities

systematically practised' by the Japanese authorities. He did not know what horror was about to be unleashed.

On 6 August, the first atomic bomb was dropped, on Hiroshima. On 8 August, the Soviet Union at last honoured the Yalta agreement by declaring war on Japan, and on 9 August a second bomb was dropped, this time at Nagasaki. The following day, Japan announced that she would accept the Potsdam ultimatum on the understanding that the prerogatives of the Emperor were preserved. In response to a request for its views, the Australian government stressed that the Emperor should assume full responsibility for Japan's aggression and war crimes. By the time these views were communicated by the Australian mission in Washington, however, the United States government had already decided on the terms of surrender. The Japanese Emperor was to be subject to the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, Douglas MacArthur.

On 14 August, the Japanese accepted the terms, and the next day the Emperor broadcast to the Japanese people the decision to surrender. Evatt again deplored the tendency of the great powers to 'relegate Australia to a subordinate status, allowed no consultation at all, only ratification after the fact'. For the next two years, Evatt would continue to assert his view that the Emperor should be tried as a war criminal, despite the argument that the Emperor's execution would lead to instability within Japan itself and within the Asian region.

While Evatt was anxious that the United Nations take up responsibility for the control of the new and devastating bombs, he seemed to have very little doubt as to whether they should have been dropped on Japan. Chifley made the point that Evatt's position was endorsed by the Australian government, influenced as all Australia was by the first newsreel and press images of the liberation of the Asian POW camps, the skeletal young soldiers and civilians who had endured Japanese imprisonment. None of this was calculated to evoke compassion in Australian hearts for the Japanese nation.

For a brief and ecstatic season, with servicemen and civilians celebrating the end of conflict in squares and streets all over Australia, it was hard to see that the phenomenon that had struck the Japanese would soon enough—and perhaps forever after—come to dominate the imaginations and concerns of all humans. On 9 August, three prominent members of the

Methodist Church in New South Wales had issued a statement warning that if the United Nations persisted in using the atomic bomb, they would 'inflict a devastating blow on their claim to the moral leadership of the world'. But at first hardly anyone disapproved of the dropping of the Hiroshima and then the Nagasaki bombs. News of the bombings tended to take second place in the press behind the Soviet Union's declaration of war and new invasion of Manchuria. An Australian Gallup poll taken in September 1945 showed that 83 per cent of Australians thought the use of the bomb against Japan was justified.

For the *hibakusha* themselves (the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings), their experience seemed to be completely outside the limits of others' understanding and imagining. A number of journals, including the Melbourne *Sun News-Pictorial*, declared the bomb 'as difficult for the imagination to envisage as it is for the unscientific mind to comprehend'. *Argus* correspondent and novelist-in-waiting George Johnston visited Hiroshima a month after the bombing and stated that the city bore no resemblance to other war-destroyed areas. The *Sydney Morning Herald* declared in an editorial that 'the impulse to rejoice over the prospective shortening of the Pacific War is tempered at once by consciousness of what this epochal and affrighting discovery must mean to the future of mankind'.



At the end of the war Australians were still only beginning to hear of atrocities against prisoners and assess the survival rate amongst them. The provisional United Nations had set up a War Crimes Commission in August 1943, even while the organisation itself was a mere concept. Even earlier, in 1942, the Australians had founded a Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees to collect evidence on atrocities. A section of the directorate was established specifically to bring Japanese responsible for war crimes to justice. Those Australian POWs repatriated from the European theatre would ultimately give evidence of German atrocities, evidence the Australian directorate sent on to the UN War Crimes Commission. Interestingly, no such commission, Australian or international, had been founded to deal with World War I atrocities.

Sir William Webb, a much-respected and genuinely august Queenslander, another of those scholarship boys who became a Supreme Court of

Queensland judge, was appointed to begin investigation in June 1944 as War Crimes Commissioner, and General MacArthur agreed to make US army witnesses available to the Australians. Webb began his work in Brisbane, where he examined information made available from army sources. Then, in Newcastle, Townsville, Rockhampton and New Guinea, he began to interview survivors and escapees, and thus witnesses of crimes.

With the collapse of the Japanese empire in August 1945, investigations expanded enormously, and commanders in the field were asked to make preliminary interviews of freed Allied personnel. All records found in Japanese POW and internee camps were retrieved and examined. A team of investigating army officers was created to inquire further into war crimes, and a *War Crimes Act* was passed by the Federal government.

On 26 November 1945, the first trial of a Japanese suspected war criminal was held before an Australian military court at Wewak in New Guinea. Trials were also ready to commence at Rabaul, at Labuan in North Borneo and at Morotai, where the 2nd Japanese Army had surrendered to General Blamey and war atrocities were reported to have been committed. On Morotai, 148 war criminals were tried, of whom sixty-seven were acquitted. Twenty-five sentences of death by firing squad were imposed. At this stage, 1045 Japanese suspected war criminals had been arrested by the Australian military forces, and administrative and investigative war crimes sections were created at army headquarters in Singapore and in Tokyo, at the headquarters of the 8th Military District, and elsewhere in Japan.

The evidence presented against those who faced the military courts were war crimes questionnaires, statements, affidavits, diaries and reports from recovered prisoners of war and internees. Further evidence came from war graves personnel, who were exhuming headless bodies; from the RAAF, who were looking into crimes against their own personnel; and from captured official and private enemy documents. Sometimes there was photographic evidence as well. A great number of Japanese were named and accused of war crimes by various parties. In many farms and suburban houses across Australia, returned POWs signed their affidavits of witnessed atrocity for investigating officers.

So the extent of investigations covered Malaya, the Burma–Thailand Railway and the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesian) areas. In Singapore alone the Australians tried sixty-two men accused of war crimes, of whom

eleven were acquitted. Fifty-one were convicted, and death by hanging was imposed on eighteen of those.

The work continued for years. In 1950, Cabinet gave approval for an Australian War Crimes section to be set up on Manus Island, and ninety-three Japanese suspected war criminals, together with a Japanese defence team and a number of Japanese witnesses, were moved from Japan to Manus, where trials would run for ten months.

In all, just under a thousand Japanese were tracked down by investigators. Many of them were passed over to the British-led Army of India or, when Britons themselves were involved, to the British authorities. At Labuan, seven Japanese were condemned to death amongst the 128 sentenced. At Rabaul, eighty-seven out of 266 convicted were executed by shooting or hanging. In Darwin, one convicted war criminal was shot. In all, 644 Japanese were sentenced by Australian military forces courts.

THE RETREAT OF WOMEN

Australia's participation in World War II led to a wide-scale mobilisation of 'manpower' with an effort to woo and then conscript women into industrial labour. To deal with the grudging attitude of trade unions about suitable levels of wages for women, the Curtin Labor government had established the Women's Employment Board in 1942 to regulate the wages and conditions of those women doing work for 'the duration' only.

A number of women benefited under the new guidelines and received double the income of those who were stuck in traditional female jobs in the textile or clothing industry. With higher wages, and fulfilling men's work while male relatives were away at the war, young women felt a new sense of independence and self-governance. Clarice, a writer in the *Labor Digest* in 1945, likened these women to 'the lion that tasted blood'.

Judge Alfred Foster, chairman of the Women's Employment Board, wrote, 'To all of us it was an amazing revelation to see women who were yesterday working in beauty salons or had not previously worked outside their own homes or who had come from the counters of retail stores or a dozen other industries . . . who now stood behind mighty machines operating with a skill and mastery that was little short of marvellous!'

It is generally taken as a given that, the war over, women were pressured to return to traditional roles, just as advertising was offering them a new

kind of domesticity, one far removed from either the misery of the Depression or the dourness of continuing post-war rationing and—in the case of loyal wives of absent soldiers—enforced celibacy.

Advertising was by now in its frank modern phase in which men and women were promised consumer goods as a path to sexual attractiveness and pleasure. So, if women were to yield the factory floor to returning soldiers, they were not going home to become quite the same women their mothers had been. The *Women's Weekly* close to explicitly instructed them on how not to be. The movies also promoted this image of the woman who is mother, wife and temptress and who is never a frump. Myzone, for example, was a pill marketed as 'beauty tablets', but its purpose was to prevent menstrual cramps. The chirpy girl got the job and then the man. Femininity was synonymous with youth and the Helena Rubinstein cosmetics company ran a sinister slogan that went, 'Pretty women die twice. The rose dies in its fading, as well as in its fall.' Even as early as the end of the 1930s, Stay-Blonde shampoo advertisements claimed, 'Recent scientific tests show that light fair-haired girls have 47 per cent more sex appeal than the dark "fairs".'

By war's end, women were concerned to limit the number of children they had. An invitation from the National Health and Medical Research Council asked girls to say why they wanted it thus. One answer cited 'the desire to retain the companionship of their husband and the happiness of married life, and the desire to see that the two children are properly equipped for their later life'. One woman frankly declared, 'I believe a happy marriage is based on a happy sexual life between husband and wife.' Some young women feared 'the disfigurement' that came with pregnancy.

Dame Enid Lyons, in a radio debate in 1944, regretted that sex had become the objective, not the child. But young women saw the feminism of Dame Enid, of those who campaigned for the government provision of childcare, and the Women for Canberra movement whose aim was to increase women's numbers in the parliament—all of these being superbly motivated movements—as old-fashioned and unglamorous. These young women who had once 'made love' to Yanks for the novelty of it were now seeking to found an Australian home. Young married people who had been promised such fulfilment in the women's magazines often had to live with parents, or occupy a tent or shed on their land while the building materials slowly became available to make an occupiable house.

WHO WILL TAKE THE JEWS?

In 1933 there were only twenty-five thousand Jews in Australia. About nine thousand refugees from the Third Reich arrived between 1938 and 1940, and seventeen thousand survivors, many of them Holocaust victims, arrived between 1946 and 1954 from Europe and Shanghai. The pre-war community nearly trebled to over sixty thousand. But Jews constituted only 0.5 per cent of the overall population.

Nonetheless, the record of acceptance of Jews showed robust anti-Semitism. It was feared that Jewish immigrants would form ghettos in Sydney, especially in Kings Cross and Bondi, and in Melbourne, especially in Carlton.

After the war, the struggle between Jewish settlers in Palestine and the British Mandate forces provided further fuel for those who were against Jewish immigration. The bombing in June 1946 of the King David Hotel—the British administrative and military headquarters in Palestine—an act of Zionist extremists, was used to paint all Jewish immigrants as associated with terror.

One of the most vocal opponents of Jewish refugees was Henry Gullett, Liberal member for Henty, Victoria. Gullett astoundingly declared, 'Neither should Australia be a dumping ground for people whom Europe itself, in the course of 2000 years, has not been able to absorb.' He alleged that Jewish immigrants were setting up sweatshops, cornering housing and evading income tax. Oblivious to the liberties for which the Allies claimed to have fought, Ken Bolton, president of the New South Wales branch of the RSL, advocated an end to Jewish immigration from 1946 onwards. The *Bulletin* and *Smith's Weekly* depicted Jews as incapable of assimilating, of creating sweatshops, of being moneylenders, and as controllers of the banks and the media.

All this influenced the government to introduce quotas restricting Jewish immigration to Australia both before and after the war. After the Anschluss, the union of Germany and Austria under Hitler in April 1938, a further 180,000 Jews came under Nazi rule, and the Australian High Commissioner in London, Stanley Bruce, recommended the quota be doubled to thirty thousand over three years. The government decided against his recommendation and on 1 December 1938 reconfirmed that Australia would admit just fifteen thousand refugees over the next three years.

When news reached Australia of the years-long massacre of Jews in Poland, the United Jewish Emergency Committee was formed in Sydney by Dr Jonah M. Machover, while in Melbourne the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund was formed under the presidency of Polish-born textile manufacturer Leo Fink (who would lobby Arthur Calwell with great patience) to raise funds and collect goods to assist Jews in Europe.

Jewish refugees reaching Australia from Austria or Germany in the late 1930s were interned when war broke out, initially at Hay in New South Wales and later at Tatura in Victoria. Here they joined 2400 young male Jewish refugees who had been sent from Britain on the ship *Dunera*, and other internees from Singapore and parts of Asia. The *Dunera* had been despatched from England with, as well as the group who would call themselves the 'Dunera Boys', two hundred former Italian Fascists and about two hundred German prisoners of war, mostly seamen. The majority of the passengers were C-class aliens; that is, classified as the least dangerous. Since the *Dunera* had been built for only sixteen hundred passengers, it was an appalling journey with impossible sanitary arrangements and inedible food. The Jewish refugees distracted themselves with lectures, Torah studies, and writing a constitution for their group. About one thousand of the *Dunera* internees remained after the war. Most of them, released towards the end of hostilities, had volunteered for service in the Australian military forces.

In Australia House, London, after the war, the Immigration Subcommittee had actually recommended an end to the pre-war plan for admitting fifteen thousand Jewish refugees over three years. It was felt that those already admitted were not desirable, since as much as 80 per cent of them 'settled in Sydney and Melbourne and soon became conspicuous by a tendency to acquire property and to settle in particular districts, such as Kings Cross, Sydney'. In addition it felt that the Polish Jews who had arrived before 1938 and who mainly worked in the textile industry in Melbourne 'could not be regarded as desirable types of migrants'.

Calwell had been appointed Australia's first Minister for Immigration in July 1945, and for the first time in Australian history non-British immigrants were considered viable and welcome as potential labour. The first secretary of the department was Tasman Heyes, who shared the anti-Semitism expressed by the Melbourne Club, of which he was a member and

from which Jews were excluded. After Calwell's appointment, Heyes met with Jewish community leaders Alec Masel and Paul Morawetz to discuss a memorandum on humanitarian Jewish immigration. The formula arrived at was that two thousand survivors of the concentration camps with family sponsors in Australia would be admitted in the twelve months from August 1945. The announcement of this agreement caused an outcry, and Calwell introduced measures to limit the proposed numbers.

There was as well a 25 per cent limitation on Jewish passengers on all ships, and in 1948 the quota was extended to planes. Only a few hundred Jews were permitted to emigrate to Australia from Shanghai after July 1947, following a top-secret report of the Australian consul-general, Major-General O.C.W. Fuhrman, painting Jews as the criminal element of Shanghai.

In January 1949, the quota for Jewish immigrants was set at a mere three thousand per annum and the quota system on ships and planes was eased. But an Iron Curtain embargo in December 1949 excluded Jews who originated from countries under Soviet rule. There were also special discriminations against Jews of Middle Eastern and Indian origins, considered less desirable than the Ashkenazian Jews of Europe.

Under the International Refugee Organization Agreement of July 1947, Calwell consented to admitting workers from the displaced persons' camps in Europe on a two-year work contract, and 170,000 displaced persons arrived in the next four years from 1947, with a further 29,000 under personal sponsorship. Married Jews were virtually excluded from the program—only young, single Jews were permitted and they needed to sign an undertaking to work in remote areas of Australia. The definition for being a Jew was based on racial and not religious grounds, and as a Jewish member of the selection team commented at the time, 'Hitler could not have done better.'

In a community atmosphere of hostility which—for once—united Catholic and Protestant, employees and leaders of Jewish welfare in both Sydney and Melbourne were thus themselves edgy about the newcomers. No government funds were to be spent on Jews because of the fear of political repercussions. Boats were nonetheless met by Jewish stalwarts, immigrants were helped with finding employment or set up in business through interest-free loans, and there were two schemes, Save the Children and the Jewish Welfare Guardian Scheme, to assist orphan survivors of the Holocaust.

Melbourne Jewry, with its stronger Eastern European origins (Sydney's Jews having historically come in the main from Germany), was more proactive in assisting survivors.

The businessman Leo Fink of Melbourne, who had come from Poland in 1928 with nothing and by the beginning of World War II was a textile and carpet manufacturer, as president of the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund established to receive Jewish survivors of the European mayhem, persuaded Calwell to set aside the 25 per cent Jewish quota in the case of the *Johan de Witt*, which put into various Australian ports to off-load the six hundred sponsored Jewish survivors amongst its seven hundred passengers. In Sydney, the young Jewish politician and gifted organiser, Sid Einfeld, arranged the reception of the Sydney contingent. Einfeld was a champion to the arrivals. He travelled from suburb to suburb visiting individual families, looking to their wants and regularly going to Canberra to persuade ministers he knew from his prominence in the New South Wales Labor Party to ease the restrictions placed on Jewish immigration. He had the benefit of being a most amiable figure in the Jewish and wider community, including the gritty fraternity of the ALP.

The bulk of Holocaust survivors, six out of ten, settled in Melbourne, while Sydney became home to the majority of the others. Indeed, the leaders of the Perth Jewish community, meeting ships with Jewish immigrants aboard, often persuaded the newcomers to travel on to Melbourne or Sydney, cities more accustomed to a Jewish presence, offering greater opportunities and established Jewish institutions.

COMMUNISTS: FRIENDS? ENEMIES?

Throughout the war and in the early days of the peace, there were shifts in Australia's attitude to its Communist Party. After the fall of France in 1940, at a time when Stalin's pact with Hitler was still in place, Menzies banned the Communist Party of Australia under a *National Security Act* regulation. The states had done their best to quash the Communist Party too, as in the case of New South Wales banning the display of Communist flags in the Domain, the open ground behind state parliament where public orators spoke on rostrums on Sundays. A number of local councils prohibited Communist meetings. Arrests and prosecutions for Communists gathering illegally increased for a time.

By 1942, however, when the Soviet Union was a cherished ally absorbing a massive amount of the shock of Germany's assault on Europe, and when in Australia all help was welcome, Labor saw that the war effort could benefit in terms of production and military numbers from the cooperation of Communists, and the Communist Party ban was lifted by Curtin's government in 1942. Evatt insisted, however, that lifting the ban did not mean the Labor Party supported Communism: 'The Communists are often our bitterest critics.'

The war ended, and the June 1945 Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Congress voted that five out of ten members on the executive should be elected by the Congress itself and its heavy Communist membership. The *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that Communists had taken control of the ACTU. By 1945, the Victorian Industrial Groups believed that Communists 'controlled practically every key trade union in Australia'. Communist influence was undeniably substantial, but it was often exaggerated by both Communists and their opponents as a means of rallying their respective forces.

The New South Wales Trades and Labour Council was very worried about the power of the Communists, and in 1945 the New South Wales ALP agreed to form what became known as the ALP Industrial Groups. The ALP gave party authorisation to contest infiltration of the labour movement and provided a militant role to Catholic anti-Communist groups of unionists. B.A. Santamaria, the Italian grocer's son from Melbourne and leader of the Catholic Action Movement, later insisted that the Groups were his idea and that he discussed the proposal with the Victorian premier Jack Cain, who helped organise ALP approval for them in 1947.

With ASIO's establishment in 1949, the Labor government had put in place all the major policies that the Menzies government was to use in its Cold/Class War.

THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

Ben Chifley was a man of great national ambitions. But his capacity to spend the dollars we earned was limited by the agreement Commonwealth countries observed through their membership of the 'sterling bloc' that traded in pounds sterling. In the sterling bloc crisis beginning in 1947, the value of the pound sterling fell against the American dollar by 30 per cent or

more, and since our currency was tied to sterling through commerce and in other ways, our currency also fell. This would have been good for exporting farmers and miners, except that seasons of lower production began and the price of imports rose over 9 per cent in 1947–48.

Chifley had to meet some of the demands of the labour movement. The unions believed there would be a depression of the kind that had followed World War I and they felt they had to make their gains before the economy dipped. For the moment the shortage of workers to manufacture the goods people wanted and to process bumper crops meant that in any direct conflict with Chifley the unions would win.

Chifley had a tough, measured, calm and determined soul. His parents were Irish immigrants, and poverty and mental conflict meant that he lived with his grandparents at Limekilns near Bathurst, sleeping on a hessian bed and attending school two days one week and three the next. Yet he'd read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by the time he was a teenager and went on to George Bernard Shaw and, of course, Keynes. He had taught himself economics, not the first or last Treasurer to do so. His wife, Lizzie, was shy in the manner of Elsie Curtin, and made the care of her ninety-three-year-old mother the reason for her continuing to stay in South Bathurst. So rather than moving to the Lodge, Chifley stayed on at the Hotel Kurrajong, in the company of his secretary and lover Phyllis Donnelly. Unlike the frailties of politicians in later eras, no one pointed a finger at this alliance. He was not as good an orator as Curtin, but would produce one of Labor's rallying symbols, 'the light on the hill', in 1949: 'We have a great objective, the light on the hill, which we aim to reach by working [for] the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we can give a helping hand.' He had none of Curtin's bipolar extremes of being a bastion of the nation one week and an invalid the next. But he did fret that inflation from both the sterling bloc problems and the demands of unions would result in a falling off of investment and so in the end a lack of jobs. He had failed in his attempt to make state and local governments shift their banking to the Commonwealth, which would have given him greater financial support for his projects.

Cold War and conservative rhetoric depicted the high incidence of strikes at this time as part of a Moscow-organised Communist conspiracy to wreck the economy. The Australian Communist Party believed that capitalism was

on the brink of crisis and that the time had arrived for the party to take leadership of the labour movement away from the ALP. By now Communist Party officials controlled the Australian Miners' Federation (unlike when Curtin had pleaded with the same union), the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the Federated Ironworkers' Association, and they were seen as traitors not only by Coalition—Liberal and Country Party—voters but by Labor voters too, and in particular by those from the Catholic tradition. Punitive measures aimed at these unions were presented by Chifley as a crucial aspect of the war against Communism. Because coal mining was essential for electricity and stevedoring industries to commerce, strikes took on a desperate character, and most people saw them as part of the worldwide Communist plot.

Chifley was handicapped by the lack of constitutional powers to regulate wages after the wartime emergency regulations lapsed, and the 1948 price control referendum, in which he asked the people to give him control over prices and rents, was defeated by a clever, anti-socialist, 'What will they try to control next?' campaign.

Ted Roach, assistant general secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation since 1942, would become a casualty of the trade union war against Communism. As poster boy for Communism, Roach was going to receive a twelve-month gaol sentence. Roach had a place already in Australian history as the leader of the Port Kembla pig-iron dispute in 1938, when unionists tried to stop a cargo of pig iron the Lyons government wanted consigned to Japan (hence the nickname Pig Iron Bob given to Menzies, who was Minister for Industry at the time). The wharf labourers believed it would be converted into bombs and bullets to kill Chinese in Japan's invasion of China. They had seen in their local cinema the footage of what the Japanese had done to the population of Nanking.

In 1947, Chifley gave new powers to Conciliation and Arbitration commissioners, who were to help parties in industrial disputes to reach settlements. Employers feared that appointments would be biased towards Labor and even include Communists. Some moderate unionists were appointed to the commission, but so was the RSL president in South Australia. As for matters the commissioners did not manage to settle, these were referred to the Arbitration Court, which could enforce anti-strike ban clauses in arbitration awards.

In 1949, a Communist unionist, L.J. McPhillips, assistant secretary of the Federated Ironworkers' Association and a member of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, was gaoled for trying to bypass the court and give employers an ultimatum he would negotiate only outside it. McPhillips's argument was, 'This issue will be determined outside the Arbitration Court. We do not trust the people in charge of the court to play the game.' He was charged with contempt and after a two-day hearing was found guilty and sentenced to one month in Long Bay Gaol.

More significant was the 1949 trial of Lance Sharkey, hardline general secretary of the Communist Party, who said that if Soviet troops entered Australia the Australian workers would welcome them. He was subject to continual surveillance from the newly formed Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), and the stress of that was believed to have added to his drinking binges. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for sedition, a harsh sentence that nonetheless reflected the life-and-death feelings of the time. On appeal the term was reduced to thirteen months, and when it ended he went on a national speaking tour and visited Russia, where he sought treatment for heart problems.

Wharfies had a long tradition of taking action on political issues, and held a two-hour stop-work meeting to protest against Sharkey's trial for sedition. The federal executive of the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) also called on members to strike for twenty-four hours to protest against the gaoling of McPhillips. Chifley declared that he was not against a union's right to strike but was against wharfies being misled by Communists with ulterior motives.

In June 1949, volatile elements of the Cold/Class War interacted to produce the momentous coal strike, which was seen as a war between Communism and the nation. In fact, the union shared the widespread fear that the present favourable conditions would not last, so they would now pursue claims for a thirty-five-hour week (which made considerable sense in terms of miners' health) and long service leave. Negotiations stalled before the Coal Industry Tribunal, and the Miners' Federation decided to call stop-work meetings that would consider a recommendation to strike on 27 June. The chairman of the tribunal issued a no-strike order and threatened to prosecute the officials, while the president of the Miners' Federation, Idris Williams, warned that

‘we will never sell out the right to strike . . . the trade union would become non-existent if we sold that right’.

The strike began, and the Labor government, through Chifley, vowed to fight them ‘Boots and All’. On 29 June, ministers rushed through Parliament the *National Emergency (Coal Strike) Act*. Its purpose was to deny financial support for the miners and their families, and it gave the Arbitration Court power to issue injunctions to ensure compliance with the Act. On Saturday, 2 July, in a special session of the Arbitration Court, Chief Judge R.C. Kelly, one of the founders of the National Catholic Rural Movement and thus also a devout anti-Communist, issued an injunction prohibiting four unions from disposing of funds withdrawn from banks for strike purposes, including support for strikers’ families, and on 5 July he followed up with an order requiring the unions to pay the monies to the court’s registrar. Kelly himself fell ill and was replaced by A.W. Foster. Foster sentenced seven officials to twelve months’ gaol and McPhillips to six months, and also fined five officials and three unions—the fines for the Miners’ and the WWF were £2000 for each union.

When Healy and Roach appeared before Foster, Roach defended his refusal to pay over the funds to the court, declaring, ‘I’m not prepared to accept the right of anybody to interfere in the domestic affairs of a trade union.’ He said that unions were the fighting organisations of the workers who, throughout history, had had to resist bad laws. Foster cut this short—he wasn’t interested in whether it was a bad law or not. ‘It is the law,’ he said, to which Roach answered, ‘It is a law to starve miners into submission.’

Foster sentenced him and Healy to twelve months with ‘light labour’. In Long Bay Gaol the unionists were treated as normal criminals, not political prisoners.

The coal strike continued, and produced unemployment widely in factories that could not depend on power and brought social and economic disruption. In hospital for pneumonia at the end of the war, the author made the acquaintance of a young man who had contracted polio in childhood, now studying for the Leaving Certificate while encased permanently in an ‘iron lung’, a coffin-like, electrically driven ventilator from which only the head protruded and in which changes of pressure enabled his lungs to inhale and exhale. The long power failures associated with the coal strike killed him. This tragedy was but one small corner of the strike’s impact. Chifley, the man

who as punishment for being a striker had been demoted from locomotive driver to fireman, sent in troops on 1 August to work in open-cut mines. Coerced by the government and with division spreading within their ranks, the miners capitulated and agreed to resume work on 15 August. Applications were made to the Arbitration Court so that the gaoled union leaders could be released, which occurred on 24 August.

Roach and the others, to get out of gaol, had to affirm their acceptance of the orders Foster had made as in accordance with the *Coal Strike Act*, which had supremacy over union rules. They accepted that large proposition. The miners' defeat was a success for Chifley. But remarkably it had been Evatt, with his record of upholding democratic rights, who as Attorney-General had enacted the *Coal Strike Act* and crafted the formula by which the troops were brought in.

It was under pressure from these emergencies, and from the Americans who told him they would no longer be sharing intelligence with him, that Chifley founded ASIO, whose work was to locate Soviet spies and to advise on Communist ambitions for upheaval and influence in Australia. He refused, though the Liberal Party urged him, to winnow supposed Communists out of the public service. ASIO was an organisation Menzies would soon make extensive use of.

SNOWY

In her famed history and ABC Radio series 'The Snowy: The People Behind the Power', the social historian Siobhán McHugh has given us stories and memories of those who created and constructed the Snowy River Scheme, beginning with Nelson Lemmon, the crusty minister appointed by Ben Chifley as Minister for Works and Housing to oversee the building of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric scheme between 1946 and 1949. It was 'the largest public works undertaking ever conceived in the history of our country'.

Under the scheme, the Snowy River and a number of other eastern water-courses were to be channelled westwards by means of tunnels to ungate the interior and generate electricity on the way. The scheme was envisaged as having two distinct sections—the Snowy–Tumut development in the north of the mountains, and the Snowy–Murray development to the south. The Snowy–Tumut section entailed the diversion of the Eucumbene, the

Upper Murrumbidgee and the Tooma rivers to the Tumut River—itsself a tributary of the Murrumbidgee. The Snowy–Murray development involved the diversion of the Snowy River to the Swampy Plain River, a tributary that then flowed into the Murray.

The scheme, developed in rough and precipitous terrain, would require two main water storages, Jindabyne and Adaminaby dams (Adaminaby Dam would later become Eucumbene Dam), and from them accumulated waters would pass through a system of tunnels and reservoirs, and by falling from higher to lower levels, would generate energy to be tapped by power stations built at various stages of the scheme. In all, it was estimated that the scheme would require the construction of 225 kilometres of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts, sixteen smaller dams, seven major dams and seven power stations (most of them underground), and 800 kilometres of race lines to intercept subsidiary mountain streams.

Prime Minister Chifley predicted that Cooma or Tumut would be transformed into ‘a Quebec arising in the south eastern corner of our Continent’. He emphasised the defence aspects, for the Snowy Mountains scheme would be less vulnerable to attack than the industrial plants on the coast. The official ceremony to mark the beginning of the scheme took place on 17 October 1949, before invited guests in a deep gorge on the Eucumbene River. The entire population of nearby and soon-to-be-drowned Adaminaby turned out for the occasion. No member of the parliamentary Liberal Party attended the opening, but a few months later Menzies would inherit it. Lemmon, who would lose his Western Australian seat, would be so depressed that he ‘was in bed for a month later . . . I’d worked too damned hard pushing it [the scheme] through’.

The scheme in itself was extraordinary in scope, but would not fulfil Chifley’s or Lemmon’s predictions of utterly transforming the interior. However, as an adventure in absorbing newcomers into a nation of eight million Anglo-Saxon/Celts, it would have a startling impact.



In May 1950, Roy Robinson, a young engineer with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority, was sent to Europe with instructions to select over six hundred tradesmen and as much of the top engineering and surveying talent as he could muster. The bulk labour needs were being met from

three areas—displaced persons from the refugee camps of post-war Europe, assisted migrants from Europe, and Australians. In a refugee camp in Italy, where he had lived for three years, Ivan Kobal, a Slovenian, rushed with others to sign a two-year contract to work on the scheme: ‘We were so wrapped up in the desire to get away, it wouldn’t have mattered [what it was]. We were prepared to agree to anything.’

Kobal owed his chance to the remarkable Sir Robert Jackson, former Australian naval officer and, from 1945 to 1947, the senior deputy director-general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the body that looked after the displaced persons’ camps and futures. Jackson was one of the most influential and noble-hearted Australians of his generation.

Born in Melbourne on 8 November 1911, Jackson had served in the Australian navy from 1929 to 1937, when he transferred to the Royal Navy in Malta. He planned the Malta Combined Defence Scheme and was involved in planning the delivery of food supplies to the civilian population. Then he was appointed director-general of the Middle East Supply Centre and principal assistant to the UK Minister of State from 1942 to 1945, coordinating civilian supply operations as well as military ones. He helped the British organise their aid supplies to Russia. By 1945, still only in his early thirties, he was in charge of UNRRA’s operations in Europe, including care for 8.5 million displaced persons.

Henry van Zile Hyde, an American official, worked for Jackson at the headquarters of the Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo. He described the director of the supply scheme as ‘a very remarkable 35-year-old Australian . . . He was able to keep on top of every detail of that vast operation, while at the same time concerning himself with its impact upon the post war economy in Europe, America and the rest of the world.’ The general commanding the Middle East at the end of the war had received a cable saying, ‘Do anything Jackson asks. Signed Churchill.’ Van Zile Hyde wrote, ‘I had the opportunity of working under a man I consider a great man.’

Jackson later recalled the chaos in Europe at the time. ‘At the end of the war, apart from the tragic survivors of the concentration camps in Germany, we had eight and a half million Displaced Persons—you know, flotsam and jetsam of the war. We managed to get about six million of them back to their homes in Europe and the Middle East, but we had the best part of

three million who did not want to return, and no government would take them. So I went to see Mr Chifley.' Chifley asked how many they wanted Australia to have and Jackson said, 'Well, Sir, can you take 100,000?' Chifley asked why Australia should take a hundred thousand and was told that whoever took them would get the cream of the crop. Chifley said he would have to convince Calwell, the Immigration minister.

In fact, 170,000 displaced persons came to Australia between 1947 and 1952, bearing their United Nations displaced persons/refugee identity cards. According to Jackson, Chifley's alacrity in accepting displaced persons had global repercussions. Jackson attributes the eventual solution of the refugee crisis in part to 'Mr Chifley's immense contribution at that point'.

Though by the mid-1950s the 'Populate or Perish!' principle honoured by Calwell had attracted a further two million assisted migrants, they all ran the risk of being spoken of as displaced persons (DD). Few people could say exactly how many of the new ethnic arrivals, considered by many traditional Australians to be threats, belonged to the 'displaced'.

But the displacement was real. Some of them had been drafted to Germany as forced labour during the war and did not want to return to the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Some were ex-POWs, and there were even some who were afraid to return to their homelands because of possible retaliation for supposed or real collaboration with the Germans. To be welcomed by Australia, the displaced had to be healthy and politically acceptable. The year 1948 was one in which a lot of people arriving at Australian ports had either lost or discarded the names they were born with. Some had chosen to anglicise their Eastern European names, while others gave false names deliberately, shedding old identities to slip into the camps in war's chaotic aftermath.

Immigration minister Calwell received bitter complaints from working-class refugees, including liberated slave labourers, that they had discovered Nazis on their refugee ships and in their migrant camps. Mark Aarons, a writer who would become chief adviser to a future Labor premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, has argued that there were significant numbers of displaced persons who had sided with the Nazis—such as Ukrainians, anti-Communist Balts, Poles, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Scandinavian Quislings (Nazi collaborators)—and not a few demobbed German soldiers and their families. Konrads Kalejs of Latvia was one of the Nazi

collaborators allowed into Australia at the end of World War II. Kalejs, it was claimed much later, belonged to the Latvian SAS and was the commander of a Latvian killing unit that murdered at least thirty thousand Jews, gypsies and Communists between 1941 and 1945. He would take Australian citizenship in 1957.

But overall the displaced were genuine cases and often came from a number of European countries that had been subsumed into the Soviet Union through Russia's military successes in the east. Some of them came from Estonia, a country of 1.25 million; one of the Estonian refugees, Ksenia Nasielski, lamented, 'On the new maps, it doesn't exist anymore.' She had a fairly characteristic displaced-persons background and reason to escape the Soviets—both her parents had been sent to Siberia. Latvia and Lithuania were subsumed also. Many Latvians were shipped out to other Western countries by the Soviet Union as early as 1939 and replaced within their former countries with Russians.

Joe Morgan was an assisted migrant to Australia, a Pole whose name had previously been Joseph Blyszczuk. He and his family had been taken to the Soviet Union forcibly in 1939. Following the invasion of Russia in 1941, Morgan was able to get out and join the Free Polish Army, and he fought in the Middle East and at the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy. He spent fourteen months as part of an Allied occupation force in Italy and then went to Britain where he worked for a year in a coal mine. One Sunday morning, a friend saw an ad in the paper stating that single men were wanted for Australia. 'We applied for immigration, and two weeks later got our papers to go.' He was a migrant rather than a displaced person, but the contract was about the same for both.

Stephanie Stajkoff came from an ethnic German family in Silesia, a province then in eastern Germany that at various times before the war had belonged to Poland. When the Red Army invaded Silesia and began taking frightful vengeance against the Germans, 'we had to leave everything and just run'. In Germany, they lived in one room. 'It was tough in the beginning, but maybe it was a good schooling for us: when we came to Australia and found we had to start from nothing it wasn't quite as hard, because we'd been living on the black market for a few years, exchanging a linen tablecloth maybe for two pounds of butter . . . even our German people weren't very nice to us . . . My mother never wanted me to go [to Australia]. She said,

“You’ll be the coolie for the people there.” I wouldn’t believe her—you see all Germany was in ruins—what future did we have?”

They waited in Bremen for a ship to Australia with two other families, in one living room with blankets as partitions.

Once in Australia, her father, Wassil Stajkoff, served some time in a butter and then a tiling factory. He was then given a job as a draughtsman in the Snowy Mountain scheme instead. Within eight months he was approved as a member of the Institution of Engineers and was upgraded to Engineer Grade One.

Miroslav Svelha recalls that escaped Czechs like himself were subjected to rigorous questioning by the Americans to see if they were actually Communists intending to infiltrate Western countries. Other refugees who worked on the Snowy also observed that the political screening in the West was aimed more at protecting Australia from Communists than at detaining Fascists. Hans Fisher and Otto Blank were two of the plant operators selected by Roy Robinson without reference to their having been enemy soldiers. Another former German soldier was carpenter Heinz Jeromin from East Germany. ‘The Snowy sounded funny to us,’ said Jeromin, ‘because in Australia we expected sun.’ He had lost his father, mother and brothers in the war and didn’t care where he went as long as it was away from the disaster of Germany.

The scale of devastation in Italy too was prodigious. Pino Frezza, who was from the south of Rome, wrote, ‘Italy was in a state of panic, not work, and there was a lot of damage after the war, so it was hard to find a job.’ Although Ireland had remained neutral during the war, the late 1940s and early 1950s brought a severe economic depression. Malta, meanwhile, was still a place of rubble when Paul Gresh and his three brothers left for Australia in 1949 to become diamond drillers on the Snowy. Greece was also a ruin; Michael Vgengopoulos had a brother in Australia who sponsored his passage and got him a job in the tunnels of the Snowy.

On the SS *Skaubryn* from Bremerhaven in May 1951, there were twelve hundred people. Their composition was characteristic of the ships bringing migrants and displaced persons to Australia: 302 Germans, 274 Yugoslavs, 186 Polish, 103 Russians, seventy-four Latvians, seventy-three Hungarians, fifty-six Czechs, eighteen Lithuanians, fourteen Estonians, fourteen Ukrainians, twelve Romanians, nine Bulgarians, nine Spanish, eight Polish/Ukrainian,

five Austrian and ten described as 'stateless', and others. The tradesmen going to work on the Snowy were required to repay their passage—about £160—out of their earnings of ten pounds per week. Some immigrants resented the fact that they had to put up with the same food and conditions as the displaced persons, who were travelling for free.

The displaced persons and the migrants arrived at the holding camps of Bathurst, Bonegilla and Greta—though the German recruits for the Snowy were bussed straight off to Cooma. Ulick O'Boyle, an Irishman, wrote, 'Living in the [work] camps—I loved it, because you met people from all over Europe—German counts and ex-SS men, one Italian commander who'd been fighting in the 8th Army in North Africa, Poles, Yugoslavs—all kinds of fascinating bloody characters.'

Australian Albury Hosking had been a POW of the Japanese and despite his sufferings had become interested in the scale of some projects and gave up the law degree he'd been studying towards before the war to become an engineer. 'The Snowy was just starting then—it was the biggest thing in Australia and I thought "I'll be in that!"'

And Ivan Kobal spoke for many migrants when he said, 'War was destructive and the [military] camps were without sense . . . as soon as we saw a project like the Snowy, we started to live.'

Many newly engaged young men went 'down the Snowy' for six months or a year to build up a deposit for a house. So did students raising money for university. But 'old' Australians consisted of only about a third of the overall workforce, and so the Australian workers experienced what it was to be a minority. Yet they set the tone; as a young journalist named George Johnston would say, the newcomers were accepted by the Australians if they were willing to try to honour Australian mores, including standing their shout like a man.

To the long-established Australians in whose suburbs and towns these displaced persons appeared, there was no interest in the story of their extraordinary escapes. It was their strangeness that occupied and outraged the locals. Stephanie Stajkoff said that some Australians tended to think every German was a Nazi, but noticed that antipathy towards Germans died out in two to three years.

The death rate from the scheme would prove significant. The cost from loneliness and suicide was high, and the scheme's economic and

environmental costs would ultimately be argued to have outweighed its benefits. The irrigation it enhanced would greatly damage the Murrumbidgee and Murray river systems. But at the time it was praised as a supreme national engineering accomplishment. And ever since, the Snowy scheme has been seen as the cockpit in which Australia became multicultural.

More than a hundred thousand men and women from thirty countries worked on the scheme. The scheme's Bill Hudson declared, 'You'll be neither Slavs nor Balts but men of the Snowy.' 'You're Australians now!' cried a peacemaking overseer to former World War II enemies, Polish and German, brawling in a pub.

WELCOME TO THE 1950s



WAR AND RUMOURS OF MORE

The author remembers looking in 1950 at the war maps from Korea in the *Daily Mirror*, the household tabloid of choice. The city of Seoul fell to the North Korean army a week after Northern soldiers crossed the border in June 1950 in an attempt to unify the country under Communism. The Americans, however, offered South Korea military forces, and the United Nations voted and the Security Council asked members to repel the aggression. Australia offered the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) and Number 77 Squadron flying Mustangs, as well as naval support.

After their initial success, the North Koreans were driven by forces led by Douglas MacArthur back across the 38th parallel, the agreed-on border between the South, a client state of the West, and the North, a client of China. The Australian infantry fought its first battle near Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. The United Nations forces (South Korean, American, British and others) in what people in the West saw as a holy war, drove the North Koreans nearly back to Yalu River on the Chinese border. The weather in those northern mountains was colder than most of the RAR had ever experienced before. And then eighteen divisions of the Chinese Red Army joined the battle, and the maps in the *Daily Mirror* and other papers became calamitous. Suddenly the Allies were disastrously driven southwards again,

suffering appalling casualties to the cold; Seoul fell to the Chinese, and the Southerners and the Allies occupied only a small slice of beachhead in the south-east of the country. There was certainly a sense that, if that beachhead fell, the result might be equivalent to if not worse than the fall of Singapore.

MacArthur was never more applauded in a lifetime of plaudits than when he organised a flanking movement with an amphibious landing far to the north-east, of the beachhead at Inchon. Seoul fell again as the Chinese and North Koreans were driven back or retreated back across the border. On the way, in the spring of 1951, the Australians efficiently stopped a retreat by United Nations forces at a place named Kapyong. The Chinese were advancing amidst fleeing South Koreans, and the all-night engagement involved a line in which Australians held strongpoints and Chinese others—a formula for infiltration, bayonet-work and terror. The battle brought a hundred Australian casualties and thirty-two deaths.

Further north, at the Imjin River, which crossed the border, with the Commonwealth Division, the Australians fought for five nights and suffered one hundred dead or wounded. The border now secure, the question was whether to cross the 38th parallel again. MacArthur wanted to, and wanted to use nuclear weapons, but was dismissed by President Harry S. Truman. From that summer on, trench lines were dug and the war became one of sniping and patrols. By mid-1953, when an armistice was signed and a demilitarised zone created along the border, one heavily patrolled to this day, three million civilians had died, half a million soldiers from both the North and South, possibly three-quarters of a million Chinese, and some thirty-four thousand Allied troops, including 278 [some sources say 291] Australians.

To most Australians, the Korean conflict was a just war. They feared, however, it was the start of something worse. Returning from a trip to Britain and the United States in September 1950, Prime Minister Menzies had warned Australians to prepare for the possibility of a third world war. Two in three Australians believed that peace could not last beyond 1958.

All this explained the wide support the government enjoyed when, on 26 July 1950, External Affairs minister Percy Spender announced Australian troops would join the Americans in Korea. If Korea was the spark for world war, then the spark must be stamped out early, without appeasement. In December 1950, when asked to name their chief dread or worry, 57 per cent identified the possibility of another world war. In March 1951, in a

pre-election speech, Menzies said that Australia must expect the outbreak of war within three years. Even though this was electoral scaremongering, many Australians agreed with him. In mid-1950, the new government had introduced legislation requiring all eighteen-year-old men to register for national service and to undertake training in one of the services. There had been little public protest.

BEN CHIFLEY DIES

Chifley had not been a particularly strident leader of the Opposition. He had, he said, borne 'responsibility far too long ever to be a destructive oppositionist'. He held the party together despite the growth of right-wing Catholic Labor men in Parliament. 'Those new Melbourne fellows,' he claimed, 'have a bug . . . that's what's wrong with them . . . the religious fanatic is worse than the political fanatic.' This new Labor Party supported Menzies' 1950 Communist Party Dissolution Bill through the Senate without asking for any of the protections of rights of individuals over whom the shadow of the bill might fall.

On 19 March 1951, the Governor-General, Sir William McKell, an old Labor man from Sydney, granted Menzies' request for a double dissolution on the grounds of Parliament's failure to pass his Commonwealth Bank Bill. In 1951, Menzies tried to dismantle the status Chifley had endowed on the Commonwealth Bank, and he was surprised an election was granted on the issue. The elections of 28 April 1951 gave a few gains to Chifley in the House of Representatives, but he lost control of the Senate.

On 26 November 1950, while driving an American Buick, Chifley had had a coronary occlusion. He had been driving around visiting his country constituents in the Bathurst area—Oberon, Baraga, Rockley—and was on his way back home to his wife Lizzie. This meant four to six weeks in hospital followed by two additional recuperation months. Don Rodgers, Curtin's old press secretary, had to cover up the fact that Chifley had also been visiting Nell Donnelly, Phyllis's much younger sister, whose company he frequently sought on his weekends back in Bathurst, thus creating rumours that he was conducting affairs with both sisters.

Chifley was released from hospital on Christmas Eve and was photographed getting into his Buick, pipe in hand, for a short drive to his home in Busby Street. Chifley was nonetheless aware that he was failing, and his

distress was that the Labor Party was showing its first signs of fissure as well. He knew that the fervent anti-Communists in Caucus were closer to Menzies than they were to him.

If Labor held together, there was a chance of winning the next election, and on that basis the Labor Party voted for the Communist Party Dissolution Bill and the National Service Training Bill and thus deprived Menzies of some ammunition. But the young politician Fred Daly recalled that Chifley was an increasingly lonely figure within the ALP.

After that 1951 election, Chifley was re-elected leader of the party nevertheless. On 12 June there was a ceremonial reopening of Parliament, but Chifley did not go down to the steps of the House for the march past. The Jubilee Banquet to mark fifty years of Federation was held at Parliament House that night, and Chifley attended and made a brief toast to the federal phenomenon. The following night there was to be a Jubilee Ball, but Chifley told Daly before the event that he would not be attending: 'I'm going to read a couple of bloody Westerns.'

The night of the ball, across at the Hotel Kurrajong, Chifley settled down in the company of Phyllis Donnelly in his first-floor room. The couple listened to a radio debate over whether people were happier now than they had been fifty years before. He made a call to Bathurst to his wife Lizzie at 7 p.m., telling her he was feeling all right. Some time later, lying in bed, he was struck by the familiar agony of a heart attack. Chifley had lost consciousness, and as the ambulance approached Canberra Hospital, he was already dead.

The news came to Menzies while he was celebrating at the Commonwealth Jubilee Ball in King's Hall at Parliament House. Menzies, who always rose to such occasions with courtliness and sincerity, solemnly announced the news and called an end to the evening's celebrations.

THE GOLDEN 1950s

The 1950s, synonymous with the name Menzies, are looked back on as a time of suburban happiness, of stupor and, depending on the commentator involved, of high employment and stability. But those about to enter the 1950s did not do so without concern, domestic or planetary. For them, there seemed to be no guarantees. Many had been raised, as we've seen, in families devastated by World War I and the wounds their fathers brought home with them. They had then been through the Depression, in which one-third

of Australians were unemployed, and in which children were forced to leave school prematurely. World War II had involved the conscription of the workforce, the conscription of soldiers, and the terror of foreign bombing and potential invasion.

The late 1940s had been fraught with strikes that reduced families to cooking meals over fires in the backyards of blacked-out houses. A person in their early thirties in 1950 looked forward to a future of dark possibilities. Nuclear obliteration of the human race and a conviction that World War III would inevitably break out between the Communist world, which now included China, and the West, deprived people of sleep.

In December 1949, an election took place that would introduce a quarter of a century of conservative rule. People were sick of the hardships and shortages that continued post war. They felt overregulated and underprovided-for. The time for Menzies's 'forgotten people', the honest earning middle class, had come. The election occurred in the year of the triumph of Communism in China, and the threat of international Communism had produced a great political shift, well exploited by Menzies and his party.

This author can remember that, for the first time in his experience, classmates ran around the playground extolling Menzies. The interesting thing was that this was a Christian Brothers school, and the children came from forebears who had been solidly Labor. The year 1949 seemed to be the end of the automatic marriage between Catholics and the Labor Party. The 1950s were certainly an era in which the number of middle-class occupations expanded; Catholics were part of that movement and many of them wanted the offered security of a Menzies government. Menzies was ready to be harder on Communism than Chifley or Evatt seemed to be, and so a new Catholic–Coalition alliance was born. After all that hectic industrial unrest, they had no doubt their champion had come.

Yet there were still the shortages and high prices for goods that had helped end Chifley's prime ministership. By 1956 a quarter of homes in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane still had no refrigerator, two-thirds had no hot running water, and three-quarters did not have hot water in the laundry. Twenty per cent fewer people were attending the races, which in those days of horse-racing mania was a genuine indicator of economic hardship.

By the time of the election in May 1954, the economy had been through a low period. There was a chronic shortage of investment capital as a result of Australians' habitual reluctance to save in forms other than home ownership. This meant more borrowing from and trading with the United States, but greater economic integration with the US had implications for foreign policy, reducing Australia's room for independent action from America just as greater independence from Britain was possible (though the latter was not very popular with Menzies).

Menzies showed the strain of these economic problems—to lay eyes, very much like those which had alienated people from Chifley. But the comfort was that he knew the ALP was deeply divided over sectarian and political conflicts that would lead to its fatal schism (the Split) in 1955. Labor's hopes were high, in view of a coming 'horror budget' and Menzies' defeat in the referendum seeking to ban the Communist Party. Between late 1951 and June 1953, most opinion polls had Labor with a sufficient lead to win the coming election. Then, in 1954, people began to buy again and the economy started to revive. Cars, refrigerators, washing machines and carpets were bought by the enthusiastic but thrifty household acquirers of Menzies's Australia.

The Liberal Party won the May 1954 election and there was a view that the victory was created by the Petrov affair, which will be explored in more detail later. There is no evidence that the defection was stage-managed or that in 1954 the electorate voted on the issue of espionage. The *Age* however wrote, 'The Petrov affair has been responsible for the restoration of the government's morale.'

Though Menzies had behaved with some delicacy, Artie Fadden had cranked the 'Reds are everywhere' paranoia shamelessly, asking, 'Could you trust the destiny of Australia in the hands of Dr Evatt [who had become leader after Chifley's death] . . . Can you afford to make Dr Evatt the nation's trustee after his association with Communists and communism over the years?' Billy McMahon, a rising minister from Sydney's eastern suburbs, speaking at a Brisbane rally, declared, 'the Socialist has always been closely identified with Communism . . . the Labor Party actively affiliated with Communists during the Red referendum campaign'. Evatt could protest that 'the theory and practice of communism are alien and opposed to Labor'. But the Liberals won the rhetoric battle.

Lord Casey, Menzies's Minister for Foreign Affairs, declared, 'International communism could be right at Australia's northern gateway in eighteen months to two years.' With the fall of Vietnam would come Thailand, Burma and Indonesia. Certainly the fact that the French had been driven out of Vietnam in early May 1954 helped this sort of argument. The fear of a new world war rose again as it had in 1950–51, now with Indochina rather than Korea as its focus.

So, in his election launch, Evatt concentrated on social policies, abolition of the means test on the pension, increases in child endowment and maternity allowances, and the release of housing funds through the Commonwealth Bank. However, it was easy for the Liberals to mock these policies as inflationary.

In the final ballot the two-party-preferred vote was 49.5 per cent for the Coalition and 50.5 per cent for Labor. Labor gained five seats but needed eight to win government. In any case, although people mentioned domestic issues as their primary concern, it did not mean that the fear of international Communism, and a belief that Evatt was somehow associated with it, was not a factor in the voting pattern. It was apparent that the election occurred at the right time for Bob Menzies.

VLADIMIR ENTERS

Understandably enough, Menzies would attack the idea that the 1954 defection of Vladimir Petrov and his wife from the Soviet Embassy in Canberra, and their seeking and securing of political asylum in Australia, was an electoral stratagem as Dr Evatt claimed. The defection was a triumph for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the security establishment created by Chifley and Evatt in March 1949, at a time when so many unions were controlled by Communist executives. In 1950, Menzies had appointed ASIO's second, influential leader, Brigadier Charles Spry, a polished Australian intelligence officer who would develop a reputation amongst the left of politics for saturnine power similar to that of Hoover in the United States.

On 3 April, Petrov, a dumpy, bald little man, son of Central Siberian peasants, left the Soviet service and sought political asylum. A member of the Soviet Ministry of State Security, he would claim disillusionment with the Soviet system, which had collectivised his home village and imprisoned

many of the good Communists he had known in his childhood. This was a more important issue to him, he said, than the fact that he was due to be sent home very soon. But the truth was also that he had seen colleagues purged in the 1930s, and may well have been traumatised by that experience. In his later book, *Empire of Fear*, co-written with his wife, Petrov explained, 'I had an inside view of the great internal purges; I lived through the most fantastic reign of terror imposed by a modern government on its people, and a bloodbath almost too fearful to be believed. Those years can only be described as a nightmare, in the blind, inexplicable, capricious terror they unleashed.'

Menzies approved directly of the granting of the application for asylum. Nearly two weeks later, the Department of External Affairs informed the Soviet Embassy of the fact. The Soviet Embassy declared that the documents Petrov had handed over to the Australians were forged, and soon began depicting him as an embezzler of Soviet funds. In response, Petrov would declare, 'The Soviet Embassy in Canberra, whose doors we [he and his wife] entered for the first time on 5 February 1951 was to a unique degree among foreign embassies, a microcosm of its parent. It was a Soviet fortress on alien territory, a little Moscow on Australian soil.'

On 15 April, Menzies told the Parliament, 'Mr Petrov, who has been carrying out the functions of the Russian Ministry of State Security—the MVD [the Ministry of Internal Affairs]—has disclosed a complete willingness and capacity to convey to our own security people a large number of documents and what may turn out to be much oral information and explanation.' In fact, as well as being Third Secretary at the Russian Embassy in Canberra, Petrov was a colonel in the Soviet secret police, and had originally been appointed by the notorious Lavrentiy Beria, Stalin's murderous security chief. Stalin having died in 1953, Beria had recently been executed under orders of Stalin's successor, Nikita Krushchev, and some would ask if Petrov feared he too might be purged, like his former master, if he returned to Russia.

Petrov occupied a number of safe houses to begin with, but the government meanwhile paid him a sum of £5000 towards his future maintenance. Petrov's handsome wife, Evdokia, worked as an intelligence officer for the MVD. As of April, she had not yet asked for asylum. What Petrov's plans were in that regard is a mystery, but it seems he might have been willing to sacrifice his marriage if necessary.

In any case, enough information had been turned up to justify judicial investigation into names thrown up by the documents, said Menzies. He added that while 'it would have been agreeable for all of us' to defer the investigation until after the new Parliament had met, the emergence of 'systematic espionage' demanded action as quickly as it could be organised.

Evatt said he would support a royal commission and that an Australian Labor government would see that any person guilty of espionage would be prosecuted. On the last sitting day before the election, Menzies introduced a bill to set up the foreshadowed royal commission.

Menzies claimed that when he got news of Petrov's defection, he asked for advice on whether he should conceal it until after election day, 29 May. 'Should I, in breach of all diplomatic courtesy, have concealed it (I don't know how) from the Soviet Embassy?' That phrase 'diplomatic courtesy' rings strange given the anti-Soviet passions of the time, and thoughts of electoral etiquette probably did not delay Menzies long.



Petrov was well known in Canberra, had many friends and an extensive social life. He had a taste for Kings Cross in Sydney, and as Menzies said, 'Enjoyed the freedom of Australian habits and had developed a real attachment to the country.' He had also failed at building up a spy ring in Australia. And he was under notice of recall to Moscow and was due to leave with his wife in a couple of weeks' time (he met his MVD successor in Sydney on 3 April, the day he defected). On 1 April 1954, the ambassador had officially accused Petrov of dealing with a secret document 'in a manner contrary to the administrative regulations'.

Petrov's wife was unaware of her husband's defection until the Soviet ambassador dismissed her from her post and also ordered her to leave her home in Canberra and come to the embassy, where she would be placed under guard. She came not entirely against her will. She was still a Russian, still a Communist, an accomplished linguist who was a member of Soviet military intelligence and worked for it as a cipher clerk. Her expertise was in Japanese, English and Swedish. She had married Petrov in 1940 and gone with him to serve in the Russian Embassy in Sweden. In 1951 she accompanied her husband to Australia. Members of her family still lived in Russia.

When the news of Petrov's defection first reached her, she believed that it must have been a form of kidnap by the Australians.

On 16 April, the Department of External Affairs sent a note to the ambassador enclosing a letter to Mrs Petrov from her husband in which he denied he had been forcibly seized and said that he was being treated well. The Soviet ambassador compelled Mrs Petrov to write to her husband, refusing to see him. On 19 April, she was driven to the airport in Sydney to catch a plane for Darwin en route for Moscow. She was escorted by two armed couriers.

News of her removal had got out and there was a demonstration by a crowd at Sydney airport to prevent the boarding of the plane. But it was decided she did not yet seem to be under coercion. Overnight she flew across Australia with her escorts in a state of increasing inner turmoil. ASIO spoke to Menzies and it was decided to get in touch with the captain of the aircraft and ask him to find out whether she was going to Moscow against her will.

From the report, the captain got the impression she wanted to stay in Australia but was afraid. She told her questioner that her guards were armed. When the plane arrived in Darwin the acting administrator interviewed her, and the guards were told it was unlawful to carry arms on an aircraft. Asked if they were armed, her escorts assaulted their questioners. After a tussle, their weapons were taken from them. Evdokia Petrov saw dangers in both going and staying—if she remained in Australia her relatives in Russia would be in trouble. She also doubted whether her husband was alive and well.

But before the plane took off from Darwin, Petrov spoke to her from Sydney. He told her why he had defected, and that he was well and free. He also said that when she arrived in Russia she would not be allowed to cross the threshold of her house and would never see her relatives. After this conversation she said to the administrator, 'I will stay.'

The plane resumed its flight without her and the guards went with it—to what chastisements we do not know.



The money Vladimir Petrov had expected to make from publishing a book of his story did not eventuate, since sales were poor. The Petrovs became Australian citizens in 1956 and with the grant of £5000 they received from the Australian government, bought a house in Benthleigh in Melbourne and

lived under the protection of a D notice, a prohibition on the press revealing anything about them. Petrov's new name was Sven Allyson. He found work developing film for Ilford Photographics—he had previously processed instructions from Moscow from undeveloped film. Petrov's life after defection was fraught. He remembered Leon Trotsky, whom the Stalinists had chased to Mexico and assassinated, and did not leave the house except to go hunting or fishing. His dog Jack was eventually returned to him but was taken away again after it bit Evdokia. 'No friends, no future. I wish I was dead. No one could dream of our misery,' Petrov would write in 1967.

But the information the Petrovs supplied about other Soviet spies throughout the West was of great value—they were said to have identified over five hundred Soviet agents. And even if he were unhappy, Vladimir Petrov would live to a considerable age, dying in 1991 aged eighty-four.

Evdokia was haunted by thoughts of the fate of her family in Moscow. She believed they had been punished or killed because of her defection. In 1960 she was able to reconnect with them through the Red Cross. Her father, she discovered, had, in the manner of defectors' families, been sacked from his job, and had died three years later. She and her mother corresponded until her mother's death in 1965, but her sister Tamara emigrated to Australia. Still, Evdokia felt sometimes that she was nothing but a defector. The media still occasionally pursued her. She was known as Anna Allyson and worked as a typist with William Adams Tractors. She would live to see the fall of the Soviets and die in Melbourne in 2002.

Many believed that Menzies won the election of 1954 on the backs of the Petrovs and the extent to which they enhanced the fears of the electorate. Until Petrov had seen the light, he had been just one integer in the great sum of Soviet infiltration. His defection proved the depth of the problem.

ASSIMILATION AND ITS REWARDS

The Minister for Territories from 1951, Paul Hasluck, who at that stage of history had management over Aboriginal affairs in the federal territories but not over those living in states, was an advocate of the assimilation of Aborigines, which he saw as a new regime of equality, distinguished from the paternalism of 'protection' that had existed up until then. Hasluck hoped that Aborigines would be moved off the old reserves by Territory officials and encouraged to participate in the wider society. Yet many Aborigines

experienced the destruction of the reserves as loss and displacement, and when they moved to town, ran into the hostility of some who refused them all but the most marginal of places.

As with the emergence of the Good Neighbour Movement, an organisation whose aim was to welcome but also to achieve the rapid assimilation of immigrants, there were in the mid to late 1950s substantial groups of both white and black activists who argued for an end to discriminatory practices. That many of these also believed in assimilation was one of the ironies. Many Australians thought in terms of a new beginning, forgetting the land wars, the poisoned flour, the punitive expeditions and the 'dispersal' of Aborigines. For many Aborigines, assimilation did not seem as new a beginning as it did a continuation of old bullying.

Hasluck's vision had a charm nonetheless: 'Full assimilation will mean that the Aboriginal shares the hopes, the fears, the ambitions and the loyalties of all other Australians and draws from the Australian community all his social needs, spiritual as well as material.' This equality of citizenship was based on the loss of Aboriginal identity. Hasluck believed that Aboriginal society could not hope to be preserved or left unchanged: 'If a person of Aboriginal descent is to be accepted as a full member of the Australian society, he has to cease to be a primitive Aboriginal and change in outlook and habit.' Hasluck created a Welfare Ordinance for the Northern Territory which was not, he insisted, to be defined in terms of race. Instead, those who were deemed to need 'special assistance' were now to be classified as 'wards', as were abandoned children and persons of unsound mind, and placed under the control of the director of the Welfare Branch. He called it the Welfare Branch because he sincerely wanted to avoid the appearance of racial discrimination. When the ordinance was passed, however, its effect was legally to separate people of full Aboriginal descent from those of mixed descent, and to split families in two by making some members into wards.

Even the 'assimilated' could feel adrift. Ruby Langford Ginibi, writing of living as a member of a community in rural New South Wales in the 1940s and 1950s, said, 'I felt like I was living tribal but with no tribe around me, no close-knit family—the food gathering, the laws and songs were broken up, and my generation at this time wandered around as if we were tribal but in fact living worse than the poorest of poor whites, and in the case of women living hard because it seemed like the men loved you for a while, and then

more kids came along and the men drank and gambled and disappeared.' Though Ginibi did endure, she could reflect on her father's pronouncement, 'All the protection they've done so far is to take people from their land and split up families.'

Some commentators raised the fact that the traditional Aborigines were too hard to classify because of their proliferation of names. As well as personal names there were secret names, nicknames, totemic or Dreaming names, section or sub-section names, local group names, tribal or language-group names, and European names. R.K. McCaffery, Acting Director of Native Affairs in the early 1950s, pointed out that Aboriginal naming systems were incompatible with the demands of a bureaucratic state. McCaffery argued that one name from the ensemble of names an Aboriginal person already possessed should be selected as a surname. His personal preference was for a local group or horde name to become the equivalent of a Western surname. The selection of the surname should be acceptable to the entire group who would bear it. Two examples given by McCaffery were Namatjira and Pareroulja.

Although citizenship for Aborigines was a principal aspiration of Hasluck's legislation, the Welfare Ordinance did not act as an instrument conferring citizenship upon Aborigines. Its central premise was that citizens had to be made before citizenship was granted. By his own choice of the word 'ward', which bespoke incompetence and a need for regulatory help, Hasluck undermined his ambition to inaugurate a new era of Aboriginal citizenship.

OLD CULTURE, NEW WEAPONS

Amongst the Aborigines in remote Australia, such as the Walpiri of the Northern Territory, anthropologists found that in the 1950s, kinship, totemism, burial customs and belief in sorcery were all still intact amongst cattle workers. Aboriginal women came to depend on European food, however, because it relieved them of the consuming daily task of finding and grinding seeds to make native damper. Polygamy declined in the cattle camps, and the tasks of being a stockman intruded upon traditional ceremonial activity. The number of initiations dwindled but did not stop. Fewer children were being born, and some thought that this was explained by spiritual loss and ill-health.

During World War II, a thousand Aborigines in the Northern Territory worked in construction and motor maintenance shops as part of the army and air force labour corps. They received ten pence a day, and their dependants were maintained on full army rations. The army found their work very satisfactory and they mixed well with the regular troops. Given their success and achievements, in January 1947 the Northern Territory administration held a conference with the pastoralists on Aboriginal wages. This recommended a wage scale between twelve and a half and twenty shillings (one pound) per week, far below the rate of European wages. A planned strike by the Aborigines in the Pilbara region of Western Australia would open the long struggle of Aborigines for equal wages. The strike had been mooted as early as 1945 at Skull Spring, where the elders of the region had gathered to discuss how their traditional life could be protected and their living conditions on the cattle stations improved. The spark may have come from a man the elders invited to these discussions, Don McLeod, a forty-year-old white Australian born in the area and who had been fighting for Aboriginal rights in Port Hedland. McLeod, who had participated in radical strikes in the early 1940s, suggested a strike for better wages. Sacred boards, traditionally inscribed by the elders, were sent to all the Aboriginal communities in the area to inform them of the plan. Dooley Bin Bin and Clancy McKenna were to be McLeod's Aboriginal co-organisers. These three talked secretly to Aboriginal communities on stations throughout the following year. They stressed that the strikers and their communities could live off the land or by running cattle and prospecting for minerals. So the vision of 'Naraweda', a land of promise for the Aborigines, was born. By 5 May 1946, twenty of twenty-two Pilbara station properties had strikes, stockmen demanding thirty shillings a week plus keep, and better conditions.

The Perth press declared that Aborigines were being used by Communist agitators. Dooley was arrested at Marble Bar in the Pilbara, where he had been 'yandying' for minerals. The Aboriginal child-carrying device was a *yandi*, and Aborigines used a similarly shaped cradle for soil washing for metals. Dooley's charge was that he had been enticing other Aborigines away from their work, and he was taken away in neck chains to Port Hedland, calling, 'It was in the yandi that our mothers carried us. Now the yandi carries us again—keep working!'

McKenna and McLeod were also arrested, and McLeod was placed on a bail of £300, a year's wage in 1946. Dooley and McLeod were sentenced to three months' gaol. In Perth a campaign in support of the black strikers was waged by ministers of religion, women's groups, trade unions and Communists. Despite police harassment, the strikers held out; soon the gaols were full, and the police began to tire of the whole business, and of the task they had been set.

After three years of industrial action, the pastoralists gave ground, and in the Mount Edgar Agreement of 1949 they offered the Aboriginal workers three pounds a week plus keep. However, many did not return to work, since during the strike they had formed a mining company in which six hundred of them grossed £50,000 in 1951 alone. The company then paid a deposit on three pastoral properties in the Pilbara. Sadly, a fall in metal prices, a lawsuit by another mining company, and bad management forced the community into bankruptcy. The Western Australian government hoped that they would now return to the stations, but the Aborigines reacted by forming in 1955 another mineral company, the Pindan Company (*pindan* being the name for the red earth of the Pilbara). All the company's leaders were Aborigines, and the six hundred members drew on traditional yandying skills again. In 1959, the group would split, one of the sections purchasing Yandeyarra Station in the Pilbara and operating it successfully for many years. The other section, led by McLeod, purchased Strelley and Warralong stations, and other leases as well, which they tried to operate as an independent cooperative community. They were not a great economic success, but in cultural terms they showed all Aborigines that it was possible to be your own man in the white world.

Meanwhile, both factions of the Pindan mob adopted many aspects of European law, favouring traditional marriage and trying to suppress fighting and traditional revenge ceremonies. Part of the Pindan mob would continue to live on Strelley Station with considerable dignity and the liberty to pursue their traditional life.

In the late 1950s, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (later the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) began to campaign for equal pay, lobbying the ACTU congresses in 1959, 1961 and again in 1963. The application for an award wage for Aborigines in the pastoral industry was presented to the Arbitration Court

in 1965. John Kerr, the Sydney barrister who would later be Governor-General, presented a carefully prepared case on behalf of the pastoralists which argued that the Aboriginal workers were less efficient than the white. The Arbitration Commission ruling seemed to favour equal pay by declaring, 'There must be one industrial law, similarly applied to all Australians, Aboriginal or not.' But due to Kerr's work, a Slow Workers' Clause was inserted into the award. Workers considered inefficient by a committee were to be paid less. The Commission did not consult any Aborigines on this issue. It also accepted the pastoralists' application to have the implementation of the equal wage delayed for three years. The Aborigines were enraged. One of them said, 'We bin starvin' since we first learned to ride a horse.' He did not intend to wait three years. 'I bin want them legal wages now—this year.'

Stockmen at Newcastle Waters in the Northern Territory walked off the job in June 1966, and soon after, two hundred Gurindji people left the Vestey's Wave Hill Station, also in the Territory, and squatted on traditional land at Wattie Creek. The Wave Hill walk-off now escalated into a land claim, and a petition was drawn up and sent to Governor-General Lord Richard Casey.

Tribal leader and former head stockman Vincent Lingiari, a wiry little man who seemed to have been carved by desert wind, declared, 'The issue on which we are protesting is neither purely economic nor political but moral . . . on August 22 1966, the Gurindji tribe decided to cease to live like dogs.'

In the short term, the Gurindji lost their jobs. But ultimately their wages were raised to the same level as white Australians'. It was an ambiguous victory in many ways, in that pastoralists tended to employ white stockmen or began to use fencing and helicopters to replace drovers. But this battle endured through the 1960s, in parallel to the one being fought in Vietnam.

THE WOMAN LABOURS

On the weather page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* throughout the 1940s and 1950s there ran a series of columns for women, and in 1941 the cry was, 'As Housewives, We Are Worms'. The columnist contributing to the page declared she was sick of water and food shortages, electricity and gas rationing, tram and bus strikes. She proposed a sit-down strike of her own.

The drudgery of the housewife became a frequent point of discussion in the late 1940s and 1950s, not least amongst women themselves. Housework

was still unmechanised drudgery, trying to keep food fresh by means of the ventilated meat safe and the ice chest, and then the intense labour of the weekly laundry—the lighting of the copper, the stirring of the clothes in boiling water, the wringing, the transfer of it all to clothes lines provided by the clothes-prop man, who went through the suburbs selling the tall sturdy saplings he had harvested in the bush and now provided to keep the clothes of Australia aloft in drying air, usually on Mondays. Only the rich had vacuum cleaners. In 1944, Mrs Mary Quirk, member for Balmain in the New South Wales Parliament, made a speech which remained for the rest of the decade a valid image of the way many working-class women and soldiers' wives lived. She talks about women 'going from shop to shop to make the money spin out, being exploited at every turn and sometimes being compelled to buy on the black market . . . she sees to it that the children have sufficient to eat even though she may have none. She needs light, space and playing areas for her children, modern equipment to save her poor tired limbs, and above all a kitchen where work will be a pleasure rather than drudgery'.

The truth was that sewerage in inner-city houses was faulty, and in outer suburbs non-existent. Many young working-class housewives and their husbands couldn't get accommodation at all, given the shortage of three hundred thousand houses at the end of World War II. The gap was still not fully addressed by 1950. Many young couples needed to live in one bedroom of their parents' house, and single women often slept on sleep-out verandahs. At the same time, ideas of perfect houses pervaded the air and the minds of Australian women, who often lived in squalor, in a shed on a suburban block or even in a tent, waiting for a house to be built. They saw what they desired depicted in the women's magazines.

Menzies both enlisted and sought to reshape the desires of women in his political crusade of the 1940s and 1950s. In his famous 1942 speech 'The Forgotten People', he claimed the family house to be the central and defining commitment of the middle class. 'The real life of the nation is to be found in the homes of people who are nameless and unadvertised and who . . . see in their children their greatest contribution to the immortality of the race.' Menzies appealed to women as housewives, knowing that was a middle-class idyll, and, by intuition rather than cunning, he made it a form of identification for women of every class. On the other hand, he depicted home ownership as a marker of manhood and citizenship. In the face of atheistic

Communism, there stood this independent sturdiness of the family on its quarter-acre block, indomitably held.

The Federated Housewives' Association was a consumer cooperative in Victoria. It campaigned against rising prices during World War II and ran housewives' tearooms. Fuelled by post-war discontent in the late 1940s, it carried its campaign into the failure of governments to address the management of the modern household, and inflation and price rises in the economy. To the premier of Victoria, Tom Holloway, it presented a Bill of Rights for the Home in 1948: 'It is felt that the time is right for a Victorian Bill of Rights for the Home, since the maintenance of the British Empire depends on the happiness and solvency of the homes of its citizens.' The rights of women at home should be their ability to retain savings from housekeeping allowances, to be insured against accident, to share in the deceased husband's estate, as well as access to child endowment and to comfortable and convenient homes with labour-saving appliances. Better preparation for marriage was called for: compulsory homecraft training for at least one year for all girls.

By 1954 the New South Wales branch of the Housewives' Association was assuring women, 'Your problem is ours.' One of the objectives was to give advice, and expose all existing evils that caused the housewife worry and discomfort, and even to organise the boycotting of unsympathetic or unethical businesses.

The rival Progressive Housewives' Association was formed in Sydney in June 1946 by a group of women linked to the Australian Communist Party and who had marched as housewives alongside trade unionists in the 1946 May Day march. It pointed out that it took £12 a week to maintain a decent living standard for a family and 'yet the basic wage is only £7 2 shillings'.

By 1950 so many women had joined the workforce that the Housewives' Association became the Union of Australian Women. The woman was now caught between the kitchen and the workplace.

OCCUPATION

In 1949, General MacArthur lifted the ban on the fraternisation of US troops with civilians in Japan and advocated a policy of friendly interest and guidance towards the Japanese people. The decision was a reaction to the advance of Communism in the world and not least in China. When asked if

Australia would follow MacArthur, the Minister for Defence, Jack Dedman, replied that there would be no change in Australia's policy.

'Fraternisation' of a most intimate form occurred nonetheless on the Australian base. Almost all the women whom Australian soldiers courted worked at the Australian base. Some were secretarial and accounting staff, others were employed as cleaners, one worked in the occupation forces dance hall, and another was a naval nurse. One Japanese woman who worked as a cleaner at the Australian base spoke bitterly of the demeaning nature of this employment and recalled how unwilling she had been to work for the enemy, but pride had to be put aside in the face of starvation.

From February 1946, there were twelve thousand Australian troops stationed in Kure as members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), and their task was seen as that of demilitarising the Japanese. Indeed, the BCOF would be largely composed of Australian troops under an Australian commander throughout the occupation period, which ended in 1952. The military authorities issued instructions that 'fraternisation' with the Japanese should not occur. Military police supervised the women to prevent relationships being started. In the early years of occupation, suspicions of a relationship with a Japanese woman guaranteed trouble with one's superior officers and, unless the soldier foreswore her, a shipment home. Some Japanese women would later speak of carefully managed relationships with their future husbands in the 1946–49 period, of secret meetings, arrests by military police and hours spent in police stations on charges of consorting and even of prostitution. One of the women felt she spent more time in the police station than with her husband. Later in the occupation period, after 1951, women were no longer hounded by the military police and courting could be done in public. Still, the families of the Japanese women were often opposed to a permanent relationship with a foreigner.

Since the Australians initially were not allowed to marry, at first these were 'Japanese-style' ceremonies. The wives and children were in a risky situation. If the husband were killed or injured there would be no widow's pension nor any entitlement to the husband's property. If their husbands were transferred back to Australia, neither they nor their children could accompany them. In 1948, in answer to a question about the problem of Japanese wives of occupation forces, Arthur Calwell said: 'There is particular objection to the presence of Japanese in this country. I believe I express the opinion of

ninety per cent of Australians when I say that as long as there continues to live in this country any relative of any person who suffered at the hand of the Japanese, no Japanese, man or woman, will be welcome here.'

By 1952, with a peace treaty signed and Australia keen to develop a trade relationship with Japan, Harold Holt lifted the ban on marriage. Japanese wives were initially permitted to enter Australia under a Certificate of Exemption for a period of five years, provided that the Australian husband be of good character and maintain and accommodate his wife and children, and that the wife be a type who would readily be accepted by the Australian community. As the first significant group of non-Europeans permitted to settle in Australia, they represented a chip, even if a tiny one, in the enamel of the White Australia Policy.

Not all pregnancies ended in marriage. After the occupation of Japan by Australian servicemen in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a small group of Japanese–Australian children living in the Kure district where the troops had been stationed. In the late 1950s, there were calls from some members of the public for the children to be brought to Australia. But they were never to be admitted. Moves made in 1962 to have the government acknowledge the plight of children of Australian servicemen and to allow their migration to Australia met with little official response. B.A. Santamaria wrote in outrage in 1962 that to maintain the sacred cow of the White Australia Policy, 'we as a nation refuse to recognise our responsibility to children of our nationals'. Government discussions about providing help to these Japanese–Australian children took place at a time when immigration was slowly opening up to non-British people. Over the next two decades after the war, activist groups would start to challenge the restrictive immigration policies of the White Australia Policy.

THE ATOMIC YEARS



THE LONG SHADOW OF MENZIES

Menzies's attitude to foreign relations, said Donald Horne in his 1964 classic, *The Lucky Country*, was to a large extent nostalgic, for he was nostalgic for the past and regretted the direction Australia took in the 1960s. Menzies failed to have a massive impact on Australia's foreign relations, though he served for two years, 1960–61, while prime minister, as Minister for External Affairs.

The growing importance of Australia's relationship with the United States and therefore of the Washington embassy after 1939 shifted the centre of gravity in Australian foreign policy away from Menzies, who was so frankly and intensely a statesman of Empire. Horne, who was also the *Bulletin's* editor, argued that Menzies was more a witness than a participant in his long-running government's decisions in foreign and defence policy—from the commitment of troops to Korea to the formulation and development of the Colombo Plan, under which Asian students, as a means of winning them over to the West rather than Communism, were brought to White Australia to study. Surprisingly, at first Menzies saw the invasion of South Korea by the North as a sideshow, and Australia's commitment of troops to Korea was engineered by External Affairs minister Percy Spender after he learned that the United Kingdom was about to announce its own military commitment. Menzies was on a ship in the Atlantic at the time and learned

of the decision when he arrived in the United States. He quickly recognised the political and diplomatic advantages flowing from Spender's initiative.

In June 1950, Menzies had sent a squadron of Canberra bombers to Singapore because Chinese Communist guerrillas were operating in Malaya, and he saw this as another wing of Communist advance in Asia, one affecting Britain's place in Malaya, which he considered crucial to Australia's security. But he was not enthusiastic for the ANZUS Treaty. He believed that the United States was most unlikely to allow itself to become entangled in such a pact, and commented in a cable to Artie Fadden from Washington in 1950: 'Tell Percy Spender that the Pacific Pact is not at present on the map because the Americans are uneasy about the stability of most Asiatic countries. We do not need a pact with America. They are already overwhelmingly friendly to us.' Menzies was surprised at Spender's ultimate success in getting the Americans to sign.

Britain's collaboration on nuclear matters with the United States in 1957 brought an end to the sharing of British and Australian nuclear ambitions. Britain's attempt to enter the European Economic Community in 1961–63 raised questions about the future of the Commonwealth and sparked a debate in Australia about relations with Britain and about national identity generally. Menzies adopted a very disgruntled attitude towards Britain's attempt to enter Europe. He was also disturbed at the speed with which Britain was relinquishing its imperial responsibilities. He did not like a new Commonwealth that included both republics and dark faces. Menzies was appalled and offended when British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan asked India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, rather than Menzies to occupy the chair at the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference.

It was at this conference that South Africa was forced to resign from the Commonwealth, a process that Menzies opposed. The formal question asked at the conference was, now that South Africa had at referendum voted to become a republic, was its application to stay in the Commonwealth acceptable? But the sub-question was whether the nation could stay in the Commonwealth while pursuing its racial policy of apartheid. Menzies worked with Macmillan on a series of drafts to find the acceptable formula that would keep the Commonwealth intact. The final statement expressed 'deep concern' about the effect of South Africa's racist policies on the Commonwealth, 'which is itself a multi-racial association of peoples'.

South Africa in any case withdrew its application to stay and Menzies regretted that South Africa had been, in his opinion, 'pushed out'. He began to feel that the balance of power had changed so much that his own views were becoming irrelevant.

A year later, though, he sanctioned the commitment of troops to Vietnam, a conflict in which Britain was not involved, and in 1965 appointed an Australian, his former Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, as Governor-General. He purchased the American F-111A jet on the grounds that although he was British 'to the bootheels' his main duty was to 'the safety of my country'.

So it seems true that Menzies was emotionally uncertain about where the world was now, and the questions of world power, and anxious that it should remain in the hands of the British Empire. In the Australian Parliament in 1948 he said, 'If we can in some ways—not, of course, in all ways—learn to think of the British Empire as a unit, and plan its development so that there will be the maximum encouragement and use of all its resources, the possibilities are still enormous.' He opposed both Indian independence (achieved in 1947) and its membership of the Commonwealth as a republic. George VI seemed more willing to accommodate the Indian arrangement than Menzies, and the King complained to the Canadian External Affairs minister, Lester Pearson, about the then Australian Opposition leader's criticisms of the independence of India. What Menzies professed to find offensive about the so-called London Declaration by the prime ministers of the Commonwealth in 1949, which had permitted non-dominion members to remain in the Commonwealth, was the idea that membership of the Commonwealth required no personal allegiance to the King.

He was not embarrassed to be frank about race. Broken Hill-born Sir Walter Crocker, who served as High Commissioner and ambassador to countries as diverse as India, Indonesia, Italy, Uganda and Kenya, wrote in 1955, 'Menzies is anti-Asian; particularly anti-Indian . . . he just can't help it.' In that same year, the External Affairs minister, Casey, entertained the idea of Australian participation in the Bandung Conference of African and Asian nations. Of Egyptians, who would give the British Empire some trouble, Menzies asserted that they were 'a dangerous lot of backward adolescents'. After a clash with Nehru in the United Nations in 1960, Menzies wrote to his wife that, 'All the primitive came out in him [Nehru].' Deakin's mental and

spiritual openness to Asia was far removed from Menzies's dismissiveness. Many members of his Cabinet, however, were aware of the need to foster a productive relationship with Asia, even though they saw Asian–Australian relationships almost exclusively within the parameters of the Cold War.

Throughout the 1950s, Spender and Casey, not Menzies, were the architects of the diplomatic engagement in Asia. Menzies was more interested in planning for World War III, and he consequently focused in the early 1950s on the military commitment that Australia might make to the Middle East in the event of a global conflict with the Soviet Union. For he believed that the war with the USSR would be won or lost in Europe and the Middle East, not in Asia.

It was Liberals such as Casey and Spender who, as well as recognising the geopolitical reality of where Australia was located, led the process to the signing of the ANZUS Treaty. Meanwhile Black Jack McEwen, leader of the Country Party, was the champion of the 1957 trade agreement with Japan. Sydney lawyer Garfield Barwick and his Department of External Affairs were the drivers of Australia's restrained and successful response to Indonesia's 'confrontation' of Malaysia in 1963–66, when Indonesian troops captured and were then driven out of Brunei by Australian and New Zealand forces.

Perhaps Menzies's most important contribution to Australian foreign policy was to allow ministers such as Spender, McEwen and Barwick, as well as Casey and Hasluck, to exercise their own talents while he remained open to reasonable argument. Where he exerted greatest influence was in the British relationship, which became less important to Australia in the last years of his prime ministership, 1963–66. 'All I need say,' Menzies had said in 1949, delineating the twin and in some cases divided loyalties of Australia, 'is that Australia is British. It has a great and tried and common family allegiance under the Crown. But Australia knows, and so do the Communists, that the closest concert between the United States and the Commonwealth is vital to the common defence. We will work incessantly to strengthen this great association, just as the Communist powers and their overseas friends will work incessantly to divide and destroy us.'



Through his prime ministerships and afterwards, Menzies remained what one writer called 'an important figure in Labor demonology'. He was seen as

appeaser of Mussolini and of Hitler, of both of whose early regimes he was on record as being an admirer, and left-wing complaints continued with the 'Pig Iron Bob' affair in 1938 that delivered ore to Japan. His enemies depicted him as being the likely head of a Vichy-style regime in the event of a Japanese occupation of Australia. Again—according to this depiction of Menzies—he had neglected Japanese threats to Australia by sending Australian forces to the northern hemisphere to defend British interests.

In the 1950s, runs the argument of those who abhorred him, he sought to turn Australia into a police state by attempting to ban the Communist Party. Though he avoided World War I service, he was a warmonger during the Cold War. In 1954 he engineered the defection of the Soviet spy Vladimir Petrov, and thus stole the subsequent federal election. He allowed the British government to drop atomic bombs in Australia, an expression of his subservience to the Empire, and a peril to Australian servicemen, desert Aboriginal people, and even to the Australian populace.

While continuing to profess loyalty to Britain, he hypocritically signed the ANZUS Treaty, framed in late 1951, coming into force in 1952. Then—to glide into another decade—in 1965 he lied about having received a request from South Vietnam for support, and committed troops to Vietnam to appease his American masters. Yet when the new monarch, Elizabeth II, had visited Australia in 1954 she had shed some of her own glamour and augustness on Menzies as well, and he stood praising her as a subject should, the very incarnation of British Australianness.

What cannot be argued by his detractors is Menzies's resounding electoral success in 1957. On 22 November he was returned with a nineteen-seat majority in the House of Representatives, helped by Democratic Labor Party preferences, the emerged anti-Labor party in the Australian polity. It was the largest majority any government had commanded since Federation.

THE CANAL

The Australians had received news of the plan for a British nuclear capability in the Far East two days before Colonel Gamal Nasser, President of Egypt, nationalised the Suez Canal in 1956 and took control of it away from France and Britain. But Nasser did not close the Canal to shipping, rather waiting for a resolution by way of an international London Conference. Menzies was summoned to London and asked by the British Prime Minister,

Anthony Eden, to go to Egypt as chairman of a five-nation committee, and to talk sense into Nasser. The invitation appealed not only to Menzies's vanity as a statesman but also as a mission of global importance. He declared before leaving for Egypt that Colonel Nasser's actions had created the most serious crisis since World War II, exacerbated by the fact that the Soviet Union was ready to align itself with Egypt. When he arrived in Egypt, Menzies told a young journalist that military action against Nasser would split the Western world, and the journalist, Keith Kyle, thought the observation very sensible. But before he left for Egypt, Menzies had made a speech about ultimate military force being deployed, and Eden, to the great resentment of the BBC, had forced the broadcaster to transmit the interview as part of his own campaign for a British invasion of Egypt. The speech made Menzies's Minister for External Affairs, Casey, who had some knowledge of Arab countries, very unhappy, as it did another leading Liberal, Billy McMahon. McMahon declared he could not see why it was wrong for Egypt to take the canal back as long as Nasser didn't close it. In a telephone hook-up, Menzies's ministers advised him not to lead the mission. Their dissent was leaked to the media and embarrassed British Prime Minister Eden.

Menzies's mission landed at Cairo airport late on 2 September. He was greeted at the bottom of the plane's stairs by a scrum of press, foreign and Egyptian. As he landed and made his press statement, throughout Cairo there had been demonstrations against the British. Houses were burned and a Canadian trade commissioner had been killed, and the cry that raged through the streets was 'Get out, British!' Western attitudes such as Menzies's earlier statement that the Egyptians were not capable of running their own country fed into the sense of grievance. Again, Menzies himself wrote, 'These Gyppos are a dangerous lot of backward adolescents, mouthing the slogans of democracy.' In that atmosphere, he and his commission were driven to Nasser's headquarters.

Nasser was a charismatic leader with visionary plans for Egypt. On the evening of their first meeting, Nasser impressed Menzies, but when Menzies asked that the canal be placed in the hands of an international body, Nasser ultimately refused, seeing such a body as continuing 'collective imperialism'. He referred to Menzies privately as 'that Australian mule', and over the next few days would often leave Menzies confused as to his manners and intentions. He did not guess anything regarding Menzies's desire for nuclear weaponry.

Even though Casey had warned Menzies his mission to Cairo would fail, Menzies always felt President Dwight D. Eisenhower undermined him during the meetings by saying the United States would not go to war over the issue, thus making it easier for Nasser to reject his proposal. Eisenhower, said Menzies, had undermined British prestige. 'The fact remains that peace in the world and the whole authority of the charter of the United Nations alike require that the British Commonwealth and in particular its greatest and most experienced member, the United Kingdom, should retain power, prestige and moral influence.'

There is some evidence that Nasser's refusal was the result Eden wanted, for that made it possible for France, Britain and Israel to invade Egypt—in late October in Israel's case, followed by France and Britain in early November, supposedly as peacekeepers but in fact as canal reacquirers. The RAF bombed Egyptian airfields, and Britain and France sent troops into Egypt. Under torrents of international outrage, including from the United Nations and America, an armistice was signed within days, despite the success of the Israelis, French and the British. The canal reopened under Egyptian control in March 1957. This was a sign that Britain could use its force only conditionally, that what Menzies called the 'prestige' had passed to the United States. By overreaching, Eden had helped make this happen.



Menzies had no doubt that Armageddon was coming, but Australia's spending on national security (as by governments before World War II and in more modern times) was nowhere near as fulsome as the rhetoric. Curtin and Chifley had mobilised the economy in a way that left the electorate ultimately disgruntled, and had affronted Menzies's 'forgotten people', his constituency. Such mobilisation and the dourness it introduced into life was what Menzies had promised to put an end to when elected in 1949. The desires of manufacturers and the public were not to be dragged away from the purchase of goods into the building of a large army, air force or navy.

Despite that, Menzies was haunted by Australia's lack of preparation for World War II. As a result, from 1951, nearly all eighteen-year-old males were required to register for national service training of fourteen weeks and to serve a further forty-two days in the citizen military forces over three years. It was a universal scheme but there were exemptions. University students

were expected to serve during a designated period between the first and second years of their study, but ministers of religion, priests and theological students and the medically unfit were entitled to exemption.

There were, however, many other claims for exemption. In 1953, for example, a Tasmanian widow pleaded, 'My husband died in 1948, and this boy is my only son. He has had a call to enter camp January 4 1954 with no further deferment. We have twenty-five acres of potatoes to work and some soon to dig, also twenty-two cows to milk and harvest to attend to, besides other stock and work. I have one other man working at present but it's almost impossible to get labour . . . will you please help me?'

Harold Holt, the Minister for Defence, initially brushed aside concerns about rural labour shortages, but in late December 1954, deferral criteria were broadened to include rural workers. The Victorian Anti-Conscription Council pointed out the problems young men had trying to put a case in front of a magistrate's court and the injustice 'that youths who cannot help being eighteen years old should be denied a right allowed to convicted criminals'.

A principle was put in place that there would be no naturalisation of those immigrants of an age appropriate for national service unless they fulfilled National Service. Meanwhile, Aborigines exempted included full Aborigines, half-castes, and persons of Aboriginal extraction living as Aborigines. Chinese Australians were eligible for call-up, an explicit contradiction of the White Australia Policy. The navy was quite definite though in its unwillingness to recruit naturalised Australians of non-European descent. Similar caution was exercised with Maltese immigrants. In 1964, Menzies answered the complaint by his Immigration minister, Hubert Opperman, that the existing policy was racially discriminatory by saying, 'Good thing too—right sort of discrimination.'

The imperial baubles that Menzies received at the end of his career, with their arcane references to the Order of the Thistles and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports (an honorary remnant of the medieval job of looking after the crucial English ports of Dover, New Romney, Sandwich, Hastings and Hythe), seemed a reward and culmination for this last great imperial loyalist, and seemed also to some to show the irrelevance of his convictions to the sort of pragmatic politics pursued by Sir Percy Spender. Menzies's grudging acceptance of the end of the old Empire and his attachment to old-fashioned

Britishness allowed Labor, despite the work of Spender, Casey and Barwick in creating Asian and American contacts, to be seen as the party best suited to place Australia in a post-colonial world.

AUSTRALIAN ART AND ITS FRIENDS

In 1937, Menzies, then Attorney-General, had declared he found ‘nothing but absurdity in much so-called modern art with its evasion of real problems and its cross-eyed drawing’. Labor politicians probably harboured the same attitudes, if indeed they had any—perhaps ‘Doc’ Evatt was the Parliament’s sole aficionado.

Menzies’s views were expressed during the much-publicised disputes generated by his proposal to establish an Australian Academy of Art, an Australian version of London’s Royal Academy. Its purpose was hard to define, but Menzies wanted it to ward off decadent modern trends. A number of painters associated with George Lambert joined by invitation, and so did many of those influenced by the Impressionists, including Thea Proctor, Margaret Preston, Grace Cossington Smith and Roland Wakelin, who were considered ‘sane modernists’. Generally, modernists were not welcome. The fifty foundation members came from the various art societies around Australia. They included W.B. McGuinness, the doctrinaire Max Meldrum and John Longstaff, who were personal friends of Menzies. Yet the academy did not contain even leading conservative artists like Arthur Streeton and Norman Lindsay. Rupert Bunny was one of five invitees who declined to join. Streeton was also ambiguous about its credibility.

The academy’s inaugural exhibition was in Sydney in 1937, and a year later a second was held at the State Gallery of Victoria. In opening an exhibition of the Victorian Artists’ Society, Menzies declared with all the confidence of his ignorance that ‘Experiment is necessary in establishing an Academy, but certain principles must apply to this business of art as will any other business which affects the artistic sense of the community. Great art speaks a language which every intelligent person can understand. The people who call themselves modernists today talk in different language.’ In the exhibition there was a wall devoted to modernist painting—surrealism, for example, and post-cubism, futurism, those influenced by Picasso. These artists, members of the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), raised eyebrows at each other. James Quinn, curator of the exhibition, though not a modernist

himself, immediately distanced himself from Menzies's statement. George Bell, founder of the CAS, a respected Melbourne artist and teacher who had nurtured Russell Drysdale and the immigrant Sali Herman, amongst others, though he would later himself denigrate artists such as Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan and Albert Tucker, nonetheless sought to set Menzies right over his remarks and his intention for the academy. 'Just as it would be ludicrous for an artist to argue a knotty point of law, so it is ludicrous for Mr Menzies to lay down what is good drawing and what good art is . . . Academies have been, throughout history, reactionary influences.'

The Australian Academy reinforced the position of the late-nineteenth-century, Melbourne-based Heidelberg landscape tradition, with shearers and bushrangers and other iconic figures, as the national art form. From the 1920s to the 1940s, Arthur Streeton's works were promoted as perfect examples of fine art, and as somehow an encapsulation of the Australian nation.

Modernism was attacked on moral grounds, and as a suspect foreign influence. Art critic and personal friend of Menzies, Lionel Lindsay, wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'The Australian public is perhaps yet unaware that modernism was organised in Paris by the Jew dealers, whose first care was to corrupt criticism, originate propaganda and undermine accepted standards.' In his 1942 book *Addled Art*, Lindsay argued that the pure tradition of Australian painting, represented by Streeton, [Tom] Roberts, Lambert and [Hans] Heysen, was vulnerable to attack from 'the same aliens, the same corrupting influences that undermine French art, both supported by powerful propaganda . . . forced on a defenceless public'. Matisse could not draw, said Lindsay, and so he needed to mess around with surfaces. Chagall was plagued by morbid passions. Klee was mad from meningitis. Miró and Dalí were sexual obsessives (an interesting label for the brother of lusty Norman Lindsay to apply to others) and sadists. Modigliani's figures were negroid and arose from his alcoholism. And so on. Like many art conservatives, and like his friend Menzies, Lindsay did not see modern art as just bad art but as viral. And behind the virus lay the Jews.

The modern-art defenders were from CAS, founded in Victoria in 1938, with Evatt and his American wife significant allies of the society and its founder. Evatt encouraged CAS's endeavour to make international connections and to show work from overseas within Australia and to export Australian works overseas. He commented at an art launch in 1936 that 'our

national galleries are controlled by men who suffer from an intense abhorrence of anything that has been done since 1880'.

Evatt's interest in Australia's place in all international affairs, including art, was consolidated when he became president of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1948. He and a fellow Australian, Peter Bellew, were instrumental in organising Nolan's first overseas exhibition, held at UNESCO in Paris in 1948. He supported radical painters such as Tucker, who argued that Australian painting should not be restricted by the pastoral landscape tradition. Artists who drew upon European modernist ideas, said Tucker, produced art that was uniquely Australian but also engaged with the rest of the world.

It was a debate that would not soon be finished. Historians have argued that once the Australian Academy collapsed in 1946, the conservative old guard of which Menzies was part lost their power and influence in the arts. However, since the government had a monopoly over artwork selection for official overseas exhibitions, Menzies's view on art continued to have a profound impact on Australia's modernist artists after his return as prime minister in 1949.

In 1958, the issue of Australia's first official representation at the Venice Biennale caused a second split between modernists and conservatives. A few Australians, including Sidney Nolan and Russell Drysdale, had been seen already at the Biennale, but this was the first time Australia as a country and an artistic community had been asked to exhibit. What was to be chosen for Venice proved so inappropriate that in a sort of embarrassment, Australia rejected an invitation to exhibit at the 1960 Biennale and would not show in Venice again until 1978. Australia thus would begin, from 1958, a twenty-year absence from the world's premier exhibition of international artists.

The Commonwealth Arts Advisory Board still existed, after being formed in 1911 to advise on *what* artists should be allotted to paint *which* prominent Australians. Gradually, the board took on the responsibility of choosing artworks for the national collection, and from 1955 was responsible for choosing works for embassies, as well as for official exhibitions of Australian art overseas. Now they became the selectors for the work to be sent to Venice in 1958. The board's members included the highly sympathetic and popular portraitist William Dargie, former Victorian schoolteacher and multiple winner of the Archibald Prize; watercolourist, Douglas Pratt; Daryl Lindsay,

artist and director of the National Gallery of Victoria; watercolourist Robert Campbell; and the chairman of the board, Sir William (Will) Ashton, a Sydney painter.

The Biennale was designed to show new, contemporary art. However, the prime minister, whom the board advised and could be overruled by, was still set against modernist painting. So were many Australian artists, and one of them, H.R. Krohl, said: 'The bright young things of the studios boast that their works reflect their minds. By God they do! They blaspheme the Olympians—the Streetons and the Lamberts—and sacrifice filth upon the altars of the new gods they serve.' In any case, Menzies believed his middle class, his 'forgotten people', had the right to see the Heidelberg vision presented to the world as an expression of the true Australia and its real values. On the other hand, Bernard Smith, Sydney art critic and historian, considered the Biennale as 'the most important international exhibition in the world', where artists exhibited had the chance to enter the *new* pantheon. New art should be sent.

In the end, however, the board chose fourteen Streeton landscapes and eight early Arthur Boyd landscapes, one of them—*The Hot Road*, painted in 1896—belonging to R.G. Menzies. None of Boyd's works of the 1940s or early 1950s were chosen. The inclusion of contemporary figurative painter Robert Dickerson was successfully opposed because, as one of the board said, 'his figures looked like moronic monsters . . . and I can imagine people saying Australians are like these'.

America's pavilion at the 1958 Biennale exhibited Mark Rothko alongside the works of thirty-four other artists. Seen against that background, the Australian selection was mocked as contrary to the very meaning of the Biennale. Paul McGuire, the Australian ambassador, concluded sadly that 'it was felt that the exclusion of *avant-garde* artists gave an impression of backwardness, and unflattering comparisons were made between Australia and the Soviet pavilions', which were also stuck in traditional though more propaganda-based art of booming industrial and agricultural scenes.

The board did consider the possibility of Australia's representation at the Venice Biennale of 1960, but decided that by now even the newly popular Drysdale, Nolas, Bracks and Dobells would be flayed as the last offering had been. This denied a chance for new artists such as John Howley, John Passmore and John Olsen, who had already been exhibited overseas and

would benefit further from the Biennale. But Menzies still argued 'against the sending out abroad of modernistic stuff that meant nothing and was, in many cases, painted by New Australians like Michael Kmit. This is not Australian art. It could have been painted anywhere.'

Ironically, Kmit, born in Ukraine, had become, through World War II's mercy, a stateless person and then an Australian, and he had won the Sulman Prize in 1957. His experience as someone without a community and his training under Fernand Léger were factors that made him incapable of painting in the traditions of Australian landscape. And the idea that someone whose soul had been formed anywhere outside Britain or Australia was fit to represent Australia overseas was felt to be deeply undesirable. In reply, CAS pointed out that the Americans were proud of Rothko, who was of Russian Jewish descent, even though Rothko's work was not in any way identifiably American.

Another Australian ambassador to Italy, H.A. McClure-Smith, was horrified at the board's rejection of the Biennale invitation in 1960. He wrote to them that Australia would be 'probably the only country with a vigorous contemporary school of artists that will be absent from the Biennale . . . in Italy, particularly, where countries are perhaps judged more by their cultural standards than is the case in other parts of the world, the effect upon our prestige can hardly be other than deplorable'.

FISSION, FUSION AND AUSTRALIA

Australia's participation in the struggle against Communist guerrillas in South-east Asia was based on Canberra's belief in future atomic conflict. Australian planning provided for professional RAAF personnel to fly missions with high-technology weaponry in a war that would be over in hours.

In June 1946, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee said he was most anxious to have the 'fullest possible cooperation' between Commonwealth members on the construction of large-scale plants for the production of fissile material. Attlee recommended that dominion scientists should work at Britain's first experimental reactor at Harwell in Oxfordshire, which was to begin research and development in atomic energy in 1947. An Anglo-Australian Joint Project began developing rockets at Woomera in South Australia in 1946. The problem with the Empire atomic program was that the United States was not prepared to lend its support. The

US Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (known as the McMahon Act) banned American assistance of the British atomic effort.

The US State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee graded countries according to their capacity to serve the United States's national interest. Group 1 was those nations most closely allied with US national interest and included Canada and Great Britain. Group 2 was composed of 'potential allies'. Australia and New Zealand were listed in Group 3, along with fifteen other nations, including Afghanistan, Yemen, Estonia, Burma and Liberia. So when in July 1947 the Australians requested information from Britain about an experimental reactor, the Americans strongly resisted the idea that Australia be allowed into the nuclear club.

Menzies was confident that he could alter this arrangement once he was elected, but Attlee made it clear that Britain 'had difficulties' as a result of the 'tripartite agreement', that is, its agreement with the United States and Canada that progress in the field of atomic energy could be patented only in those three countries; hence if an Australian scientist made a discovery in nuclear energy, it would have to be patented in the United Kingdom.

In March 1954, the Australians secured an exchange of notes that would allow scientists to work in British atomic establishments with a view to subsequent possible operation in Australia, especially with regard to work on plutonium, heavy water and fission products. Menzies was scared that the elimination of nuclear weapons in Asia would leave the West exposed to the Chinese: 'Pre-occupation of the major powers with Europe and the defence of the American continent may cause less than due attention to be given to the growing significance of Chinese manpower in the strategic balance of forces.'

Australia had wanted to have its own nuclear arsenal to use in its defence of Malaya 'in the event of nuclear weapons being employed' by China, which was supporting the Chinese guerrillas in Malaya. Canberra wished to produce these bombs in Australia with the idea they could be used against Communist China, as it believed the Chinese insurgents encamped in the Malayan forests were the forerunners of renewed Communist advances south of Bangkok.

But the problem was to enlist American support for Australia's nuclear ambitions. After they were rebuffed by the Americans, the Australians, including the Joint Intelligence Committee, came to believe that they would

get more help from their Empire partners, deciding on 1 March 1956 that the US would not commit land forces to the Far East and that 'we are wasting our time trying to find out from the Americans their inner secret plans'.

Mark Oliphant, the suburban South Australian prodigy and a sensitive agnostic, had just finished his Cambridge PhD in 1929 on the impact of positive ions on metal surfaces as Ernest Rutherford and other nuclear pioneers at the Cavendish Laboratory, also at Cambridge, were achieving a great deal of notability for their experiments with uranium. Even as a brilliant young scientist working in Cambridge, Oliphant had noticed the release of energy from the reaction between hydrogen and tritium particles. Then, sitting as a member of a British organisation named the MAUD (Military Application of Uranium Detonation) Committee, which had declared an atomic bomb feasible by 1943, he promoted the concept to the United States and was one of the midwives of the Trinity test, which led to the first explosion of an atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert.

In 1950, about to take up a chair at the Australian National University, Oliphant suggested to the Labor government the possibility of building an atomic reactor in Australia to pursue atomic nuclear energy for domestic power. The government agreed, but also saw the proposal as possibly being used to produce plutonium for some future Commonwealth defence program. The idea was taken up by the Menzies Liberal government, with the proposed Australian atomic reactor to be fuelled by Australian uranium. By early 1951, uranium deposits had been discovered at Radium Hill in South Australia and at Rum Jungle in the Northern Territory.

In August 1949, the Russians exploded their first atomic bomb, and fear, urgency and abomination gripped Australians. Attlee asked Menzies if Australia would agree in principle to a British test being held in the Montebello Islands, 80 kilometres off the north-west coast of Australia. The British had originally wanted to use Nevada, but by now the United States was sharing less and less with the British. The Americans did not want the British in the nuclear club, and had frozen British scientists out of collaboration on atomic weapons. The British, however, believed they were entitled to nuclear power status because of, amongst other things, their key role in the bomb's invention. The Australians were excited at the prospect

of this atomic collaboration, and hoped they would get the nuclear recipe from the British in return for their acting as host to the tests. In the end, though, Australia's chief contribution was to provide the testing ground.

It was not even certain that Australia owned the islands named Montebello, since no one had ever laid direct claim to them. Attlee asked for Australian help in preparing the site, but he warned that the area around the islands was likely to be contaminated with radioactivity for at least three years afterwards, during which it could not even be visited by pearl fishermen. In May 1951, once his government was reelected, Menzies cabled the agreement.

The announcement of the test was made in Britain and Australia in February 1952, but the site was not mentioned and the Australian press was not invited to attend the test. The weapon to be detonated was a plutonium bomb, in which two masses of plutonium would be imploded to detonate the device. This triggering method had been developed by the British during the development of the American bombs at Los Alamos in New Mexico.

The British scientist in charge of the test on Montebello, William Penney, son of a sergeant-major in the Royal Ordnance Corps, was anxious to simulate the effects of a weapon carried up the Thames on a ship and detonated in the city. This first test, named Hurricane, occurred in October 1952 in a Montebello lagoon, with the plutonium bomb (slightly stronger than each of the bombs that had fallen on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) located inside the hull of an expendable frigate, HMS *Plym*. The ship was vaporised. Seven RAAF Lincoln bombers, stationed at Broome, took off to take samples of airborne radioactivity. Contamination did drift over the Australian mainland in areas occupied by the Aborigines, but the bomb cloud was not properly monitored. The Australian air and ground crews of the Lincolns involved in tracking the bomb cloud were also given no dosimeters to record contamination inside their aircraft.

After the explosion, Penney got news that he was knighted, and Australians heard a broadcast in which he assured them that he backed Mr Churchill's opinion that 'the results of our atomic weapons program should be beneficial to public safety'. Now Penney wanted to examine a range of detonations at various heights above the ground, at ground level, and beneath the ground. As chief scientist, he was under great pressure from Whitehall to advance such tests, and took an optimistic attitude

towards issues such as where the wind would spread radiation. None of the generals involved in the tests were scientists, but they were under pressure too—the pressure of their conviction that nuclear war would occur, and relatively soon. This conviction was shared by the Australian nuclear scientists appointed by Menzies to work with Penney. In his mind and in those of his colleagues was an urgency to get on with the task. For these were virtually war times, a war with a long fuse that had already been lit. Penney had been asked by the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, how many nuclear bombs Russia would need to destroy Britain. He had answered, ‘Five, I would say, Prime Minister. Just to be on the safe side, let’s say eight.’ Such a sense of the flimsiness of British defences drove Penney. ‘I thought we were going to have a nuclear war,’ he would later tell an Australian inquiry into the tests in Australia. ‘The only hope I saw was that there should be a balance between East and West.’



After the first explosion at Montebello in October 1952, arguments were made for nuclear tests on the Australian mainland. Menzies declared that no ‘conceivable injury to life, limb or property could emerge’. When asked by a backbencher about the spread of radioactivity, Menzies replied, ‘I should like to say that it would be unfortunate if we in Australia began to display some unreal nervousness at this point. The tests are conducted in the vast spaces in the centre of Australia, and if it is said, however groundlessly, that there are risks, what will be said in other countries?’ He meant, of course, countries of more restricted geography.

For the first two mainland plutonium tests (Operation Totem), in October 1953, Emu Field in the Great Victoria Desert of South Australia had been used, chiefly for its remoteness. Allowed to participate in the American explosion at Bikini Atoll in 1946, Penney had placed petrol drums full of water around the island to register the impact of the bomb at various distances from the point where it fell. He used a variation on that for the tests at Emu Field, setting up in special frames thousands of empty toothpaste tubes which had been flown out from England. During the search for yet another site, even Somalia was assessed, but it was decided that the winds were not right, and the nomadic population was far denser than the population of Central Australia.

One thing the British did not tell Menzies was that the Australians at Montebello would not in any case be allowed close enough to the actual trial to be able to draw any scientific conclusions from it. The British explained that given that certain weapons information was almost totally of American origin they were under a very strict promise not to let others get too close to it.



Len Beadell, famous bushman and surveyor of the Gunbarrel, a dirt track running 1400 kilometres from south of Alice Springs, skirting the Gibson Desert, and ending at another road near Carnegie Station in Western Australia, was sent out to reconnoitre the country south of Emu Field and find a place closer to the Transcontinental Railway than Emu Field for new tests. Beadell's party came upon sites where native totems were stored, an indication that Aborigines considered this country unlikely to be visited by whites. But, 'I am given to understand that this area is no longer used by Aborigines,' wrote the scientist Alan Butement of the Australian safety committee. Having decided that the plains around Maralinga were suitable, Beadell and his men built a runway for Penney, who was flown in in a Bristol air freighter.

Looking at the apparent desolation around him, Penney said when he landed at Maralinga, 'It's the cat's whiskers.' The local Aborigines would use a different metaphor. They would call Maralinga 'Field of Thunder'. Over the next three years, from 1953 to 1956, a township grew up in Maralinga to accommodate thousands of troops and other personnel. Water was pumped up from the ground and desalinated, or else brought in by train.

Menzies had an intense relationship with Ernest Titterton, an eminent English nuclear physicist, a student and disciple of Mark Oliphant, and the first professor of nuclear physics at the Australian National University. Together, Titterton and Oliphant were seen as heroes and authoritative figures by the public, as well as Menzies. Oliphant saw atomic energy as a chance for Australia to become an industrial powerhouse. He also hoped atomic power would address the 'dead heart' problem by driving desalination plants in the Australian interior.

There was no opposition to the tests from the Labor Party. Evatt was interested in atomic energy. He had been appointed first chairman of the

United Nations Atomic Energy Commission in 1946 as part of the United Nations's plan to try to control the spread of atomic weapons, and would not utter any criticism of British nuclear testing for some time. Menzies's Minister for Supply and Development, Howard Beale, nicknamed 'Paddles', son of a clergyman, and himself a Sydney barrister, would be involved enthusiastically in Australia's role in the British atomic tests over the entire period they ran. He had a calm air of self-possession and inspired confidence in people. Menzies, who had the same magisterial demeanour, did not like him and so kept important information from him. (Thus Beale had been betrayed into assuring Parliament in June 1951 that reports that Britain was to use Australia as a testing ground for atomic weapons were 'utterly without foundation'.)

Much later it would be judged that the Australian scientists at the original Hurricane trial at Montebello lacked sufficient information to advise the Australian government whether there would be any fallout on the Australian mainland from the tests. The Australian government was forced to accept the United Kingdom's assurances on the safety aspects of the trial. It was enough guarantee of safety for all parties that Montebello and Emu Field were very remote.

Yet there was enough pressure on the matter for the government to create the Atomic Weapons Test Safety Committee, commonly called the Australian Safety Committee, which was designed to give the Australian government the opportunity to obtain independent scientific advice on the tests' safety. This committee was set up in July 1955, and was made up of Ernest Titterton, New Zealand-born Alan Butement and Leslie Martin, all respected enthusiastic advocates of the nuclear proposition.

A much later royal commission into British nuclear tests in Australia, sitting in the 1980s, would decide that sometimes the safety committee was deceitful, and failed in its own protocols and allowed unsafe firing to occur. Professor Titterton was accused by the royal commission of being prepared to conceal information from the Australian government and his fellow committee members if he believed that to do so would suit the interests of the British government and the testing schedule. In his sincere worldview, however, Australian interests were best served by British interests, so that if he were at fault it was for the sake of both countries. If he lied, it was as children are lied to for their own good.

In fact, the protection of military and civilian people against exposure would be found to be inadequate, since the limits of safe radiation would be more strictly drawn, on good evidence, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Royal Commission of the 1980s would assert, 'By reasons of the detonation of the major trials and the deposition of fallout across Australia, it is probable that cancers which would not otherwise have occurred have been caused in the Australian population.'

The impact of the Montebello tests in 1952 on Aborigines on the Western Australian mainland is hard to estimate, since no radiation tests occurred at the time. Fallout reached the mainland thirty hours after the burst. Measured fallout from Totem One on inhabited regions exceeded the levels proposed in the official British report on the tests.

The firing of Totem One also failed to notice the existence of Aboriginal people at Wallatinna and Welbourn Hill Station downwind of the test site. An outbreak of vomiting amongst the Aborigines at Wallatinna may have resulted from radiation, or it could have been a physical reaction to an overwhelming and a towering explosion they saw and felt. James Yami Lester was an Aborigine of that area who believed that the Black Mist had caused or contributed to his blindness. In one affidavit to the royal commission he described how Aborigines drank milk from the goats at Wallatinna which had been rendered unsafe by the dust cloud on the prevailing wind from the direction of Emu Field.

When that notorious first atomic test at Emu Field was held, a couple named the Landers were living in a caravan at a place named Never Never, about 200 kilometres to the north-east of the detonation site, near Welbourn Hill Station. The Landers had a job building a windmill and a yard in this desert country. The Landers looked up to see a cloud coming towards them from the south-west, the direction of Emu Field. Mrs Almerta Lander remembered that although 'it was the colour of a rain cloud, darkish, it did not have the compact, rolling look that a rain cloud would have. It was just a sort of mass . . . there were not any other clouds in the sky. None whatsoever.' As it got closer to the Landers, it seemed to stretch from horizon to horizon and down to the top of the low mulga trees. It passed directly over the caravan, and by lunchtime it was gone. Dark trails of dust trickled down from the

cloud. The dust was very fine and sticky, said Almerita. It deposited itself in the pots and billies on the outside stove. The Giles family at Welbourn Hill Station said they had experienced the same cloud, the same dust.

Yami Lester said he had heard an explosion away to the south, and everyone in the camp began talking about it. He saw the cloud later in the day. Lester remembered the old people in the camp being frightened: 'They reckoned it was Mamu—something that could be a bad spirit or evil spirit. Some people brandished their woomeras to try to make the cloud change direction. Others dug a hole for people to climb into.' Lester's mother believed the cloud was the work of Wanambi, the water serpent, making a noise as it created waterholes. She would say that one thousand people died after the Black Mist, although an interpreter at the ultimate royal commission declared that the word 'thousand' was not to be taken literally but as meaning 'many people'.

The camp was moved twice, Lester remembered, as always happened after a death. Soon after the event he became blind. Later in his life, Lester and his wife travelled to London on behalf of the Pitjantjatjara Council to campaign for a hearing into the results of the Black Mist.



William Bovill was a young Australian navigator in a Lincoln aircraft whose job was to find and track the fast-moving Totem One cloud from Emu Field. He had already been involved in the same task after the Montebello explosion. He was aware of a dust canister under each wing, but he and the bomber crew were not issued with protective clothing, film badges or dosimeters. Bovill sat in his normal position in the nose of the plane during the operation; as well as flying into the cloud, he was on the cleaning parties which, either at Woomera or at Amberley in Queensland, washed down the Lincolns after their dangerous flights. He could not remember if it was after the first or second test that his crew were given film badges, and all men were required to shower—but then donned their contaminated uniforms again.

By contrast, a British Canberra bomber, totally sealed off from the dust cloud, and its three-man aircrew wearing protective suits and using oxygen masks, also flew through the cloud, encountering darkness and turbulence. On landing the Canberra was parked to allow radioactivity to disperse, and the crews were decontaminated. Their gear was taken away and monitored.

The question was whether the difference demonstrated greater care of its crews on the part of a wise RAF leadership or a form of discrimination against the RAAF. Much later, the royal commission would decide it was the latter.

Bovill's Lincoln crew tracked the Totem Two cloud to west of Charleville in Queensland. Landing at Williamtown in New South Wales, they were required to remain in the plane for two hours and guards were placed around it. When they went back to the plane the next day it was with an American airman from one of the two B29s sent to Australia to observe the test. The American walked around the aircraft with his Geiger counter, saying periodically, 'Oh, shit . . . oh, shit.' Bovill's crew asked the American as they boarded if he wanted to catch a lift with them back to Richmond near Sydney. 'Christ no!' he told them. 'That bloody machine is hot.'

The Australian bomber crews were anxious enough to approach the Americans to find out the degree of contamination they had suffered. Ultimately the shock of the truth penetrated the RAAF and bureaucratic circles, and the Australian authorities insisted that two members of the British radiation hazard teams from Emu Field go to Amberley, which was the Lincolns's home base, to check out all their planes. The worst-affected plane was the one that had so horrified the American airman.

There was one small mercy: although live troops had been deployed in American atomic tests, the British and Australians at Emu Field used dummies in army uniforms and placed Centurion tanks, jet aircraft, aircraft frames, concrete shelters, specially built girder bridges and railway tracks, mines, food, jerry cans filled with water, sacks filled with earth and even live animals, near the explosion site.



Generally the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* supported the tests, but the *Daily Mirror* in Sydney frequently raised questions of safety. By 1956, trade unionists in Adelaide and Brisbane were holding protests against further British tests, and nine scientists in Adelaide wrote to the *Advertiser* challenging Titterton's assurances that there was no risk to public health. Perhaps the majority of Australians were, even by 1956, opposed to the tests.

By the mid-1950s, hydrogen bomb tests had occurred in the United States. These involved the fusion of lighter hydrogen isotopes into heavier ones, and

thus released energy classified as thermonuclear. There was growing public opposition in Australia to the testing of hydrogen bombs on Australian territory. When challenged in Parliament Menzies and Beale insisted that there would be no hydrogen bombs exploded in Australia.

Professor Titterton wrote a series of articles to bolster faith in the tests, and the headline on the final instalment read, 'Our A bomb tests are a MUST. They can't harm us.' But many Australians believed they could. The Australian Atomic Energy Commission plant was nevertheless opened at Lucas Heights in New South Wales in that year of horrors and glories, 1956.



British Prime Minister Eden suddenly declared that he wanted to experiment with a hydrogen bomb at the Montebellos in April 1956 since Maralinga would not be ready until September. The two Mosaic tests in the Montebellos were therefore to be in the nature of a thermonuclear explosion. One Australian interdepartmental cable in June 1955 warned: 'Any mention of thermo-nuclear is political dynamite (in Australia) and must be avoided in announcements of trials.'

Five weeks after Eden's request, Menzies replied that Australia agreed in principle to the proposed test but said that Australia might not be able to provide all the logistical help Britain would like because the Australian army was stretched by being in Malaya, at Woomera and at preparations for tests at Maralinga itself. In April 1956, the Montebello tests were announced as imminent.

The British authorities drew up a list of likely questions that would arise and the answers that should be given to them. 'Question: Have any of these tests any connection with the H-bomb? A: There will be no explosion of an H-bomb nor any explosion of the character of magnitude of that bomb . . .' This was of course utterly misleading to the point of being a heinous lie. Perhaps those who told it believed it could be justified at this stage of the Cold War.

On 16 May 1956, a fifteen-kiloton thermonuclear weapon attached to a specially constructed steel tower was fired just before midday. The Australian Safety Committee was on board the HMS *Narvik*, the headquarters's ship stationed offshore for the firing. The Safety Committee's chairman, Melbourne physicist Leslie Martin, had built the particle accelerators at

Melbourne University, and clashed with the biochemist Hedley Marston, who believed radiation levels from the tests were much higher and more dangerous than Martin did.

On the day of the explosion, Martin sent a message to Menzies that there had been no danger whatsoever to life on the mainland, ships at sea or to aircraft, since the cloud had drifted harmlessly out over the ocean. In fact, however, parts of it swung back and dropped radioactive fallout in northern Australia.

Even though the fallout on the mainland might be low, there were a number of British and Australian safety officers who were surprised by how high in fact the reading was. One such safety officer, James Hole, packed a laundry basket full of radiation detection equipment and two boiler suits and took a helicopter across from the Montebellos to Onslow on the Western Australian coast. He deliberately avoided wearing formal contamination gear for fear of causing alarm. Hole himself ended up receiving a bigger dose of radiation than anyone in Onslow because he had gone into the bomb crater soon after the explosion. He described it as looking like a skating rink—the sands in the crater had become as smooth as glass. ‘There were lots of colours in it. One of the problems in standing in this crater was you could get fascinated and forget you were receiving a dose.’

The second firing on Montebello occurred on 19 June. The yield of the bomb was 60 kilotons, a fact that was kept secret for decades. Immediately after the detonation, a mushroom cloud rose 1600 metres into the air. Buildings at Onslow, 100 kilometres across the sea, were jolted. Windows and roofs rattled at Marble Bar, 400 kilometres inland, where radioactive rain was later reported. Throughout Australia, there were rumours that the G2 Mosaic bomb had created serious problems and had somehow gone wrong. Beale was pursued on the matter, but one of his officials, with or without his orders, closed the Woomera telephone exchange so that reports could not be phoned through. The minister in any case assured the press that from a cloud at a height of 1600 to 3300 metres all significant particles would have gone into the sea. The Australian Safety Committee had already assured Beale that the cloud was 160 kilometres out to sea.

This test came to be seen by the public and press as one too many and support began to fade even further. It was decided by the government that the yield from the two bombs should be kept secret. Meteorological data

should have shown from the beginning that the Montebello Islands were an unreliable site for thermonuclear explosions—the weather was erratic, cyclones could hit it. In every case, radioactive fallout had occurred on the mainland in some instances as far away as Charleville in Queensland.

Neither the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston in England nor the Australian Safety Committee took any account of the Aboriginal presence on the mainland a little east of the Montebellos. The question of acceptable dose levels for Aborigines was stated as a problem at the Buffalo tests at Maralinga in September–October 1956 but had been ignored in the Mosaic tests three to four months earlier.

It turned out that early Maralinga firings occurred in weather conditions that would violate standards laid down by the Australian Safety Committee itself. The fallout exceeded acceptable limits at Coober Pedy and for Aboriginal people in surrounding country. The second series, Antler, in 1957, violated the rule that there should be no forecast of rain in the detonation period except in areas more than 800 kilometres from Ground Zero.

At the time of Mosaic, some seventeen hundred Aborigines were recorded as being in the Pilbara region, the closest stretch of Australian land to the Montebellos. When asked later about these Aborigines, the British scientist Penney said, 'All right, but let me tell you the other end of the story. The top priority job was thermonuclear.' It had to be done, the implication was, whatever the cost, and he had mentioned that if they had waited until Maralinga was ready, the Australians would probably have refused to allow a bomb of 50 kilotons to be exploded there.



Penney was back in Australia in August 1956 to direct the first bomb trials to be held at the new Maralinga testing ground—the Buffalo series, beginning in September. These tests really had to be not only a scientific but a public-relations exercise as well. By now Evatt was attacking Menzies for not telling the British to go away. Evatt's plan was that Australia should take the lead in persuading the three major powers to abandon all future tests.

Everyone involved in the program was aware that if something went wrong at Maralinga it would be disastrous in terms of public opinion and would bring an end to the tests. The many technical delays before the firing increased speculation about potential dangers. Beale blamed the press for spreading

such rumours. But Labor's Eddie Ward, Curtin's old nemesis, called for the abandoning of the tests.

At last the first bomb in the Buffalo series at Maralinga, the one code-named One Tree, set in a tower, was exploded on 27 September. A group of officers, Australian, New Zealand and British, intended to become vocal champions of the bomb, were distributed around the site. Four were put inside a Centurion tank one and a half kilometres from the blast, twenty-four watched from a series of covered trenches in the ground nearby, and the rest stood in the open, three kilometres from Ground Zero. At the end of the test they all declared they were more ready in purely military terms to accept a nuclear missile as a tactical weapon than they had been before. They were despatched back to their various units in Britain, Australia and New Zealand to ginger up their fellow officers on the matter.

Meanwhile, the fallout from One Tree drifted east directly across Coober Pedy. This was predicted and had been allowed for as safe for whites—a much higher level of radiation than that considered safe for any tribal Aborigines in the area. Now that the tests had moved back to Maralinga, some attention was given by the Australian Safety Committee about fallout from atomic bombs on Aborigines, moving naked and with bare feet across the fallout area. The report the British and Australians came up with indicated that Aborigines should not be closer than 240 miles (386 kilometres) from the blast site, but a number of sites where Aborigines lived were well within this distance of Maralinga, including Ernabella, Commonwealth Hill, Coober Pedy and Granite Downs. The Australian Safety Committee conscientiously tried to fix contamination levels at a lower level for Aborigines who lacked clothing, would be likely to sleep on contaminated ground and eat contaminated food, and were unlikely to wash contamination from their bodies. Thus acceptable Aboriginal levels of contamination were made one-fifth of that for whites, who did wear clothing and who did have showers.



The second Buffalo bomb, Marcoo, was exploded on the ground a week later with the lowest yield so far, one and a half kilotons. The third bomb, Kite, was released from a RAF Valiant bomber. It exploded 165 metres above the ground, with a yield of three kilotons. It was believed that the cloud would

drift north-east into the desert. Instead, it travelled south-east and low-level contamination occurred on the edges of Adelaide.

Twenty-five politicians, including Beale and deputy Labor leader Calwell, and a corps of journalists visited Maralinga in 1956. Beale presented Penney with an inscribed cigarette case on behalf of the Australian government. Calwell and John Armstrong, a Labor senator and former Chifley minister, said that they were both sure the tests must continue. This put them at a pole removed from their leader Evatt's position.

When in September 1956 a request had arrived in Canberra for Australia to agree to a further program of nuclear trials for 1957, codenamed Antler, the Menzies government refused to give its assent straight off and Australia asked for more details. When Britain finally responded to Australia's request for more information, in April 1957, it came in the form of a personal message to Menzies from the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. It revealed that Britain was preparing to explode six bombs at the new trials and that the maximum likely yields would range from three to 80 kilotons, the latter larger even than the biggest bomb in the Mosaic program.

The delay in approving Antler was based on the fact that Menzies knew that Britain had not been frank in the past about the nature of earlier trials. One clause of the memorandum of arrangements between Britain and Australia for setting up the Maralinga range stated that no thermonuclear or hydrogen weapons should be tested on the site. The question was now asked whether Britain was violating this clause. Professor Leslie Martin of the Safety Committee also proposed that the committee's functions be divided into two bodies—one in charge of weapons safety at Maralinga itself, another to assess the radiological dangers and fallout on a national level. He felt an imperative akin to Penney's to keep the tests going, but at the same time was aware that public unease must be addressed.

EXPOSURE

The most remarkable case of Aborigines wandering into the bomb zones involved a family called the Milpuddies. They lived near the Ernabella Mission Station in the north of South Australia and were what the Aborigines themselves called spinifex people—nomadic bush natives, the father a spear-bearing hunter. In May 1957, about midway between Buffalo and the start of the Antler trials in September, the Milpuddies had gone south

of Maralinga, following the waterholes towards Ooldea to visit relatives. They had not seen their relatives for so long that they did not know that Ooldea had already been closed down as a settlement, because of the tests, in 1952. The family consisted of Charlie Milpuddie, his wife Edie, a little boy, Henry, and Rosie, a girl of four. Charlie also carried twelve dingo pelts which he had intended to sell in Ooldea. Their journey took them directly into the path of a crater at Marcoo near Maralinga where seven months earlier, on 4 October 1956, an atomic bomb had been exploded at ground level, the only one set off on the Australian continent as a ground-burst, and designed so that the scientists could observe radioactive fallout should a street-level bomb explode in a city.

The Milpuddies camped near Marcoo crater, where they lit a fire and dined on a kangaroo Charlie had killed. The next morning, a military officer leading a patrol from Maralinga was surprised to see the Milpuddies wandering towards a site near Pom Pom, where a caravan was stationed for the health physics team, the experts monitoring radiation exposures. Frank Smith, then a member of the Radiation Detection Unit at Maralinga, got an urgent call to rush to Pom Pom and assess the Milpuddies. When he got there he persuaded the family to go to the health physics caravan, but kindly decided not to put on his white protective clothing and head gear because the sight might frighten them. Edie Milpuddie would tell an Australian royal commission in Maralinga that her family were naked when the soldiers picked them up at Marcoo. She had never seen a motor car or a shower before. The showers were necessary because the boy proved to have a high reading. When Edie went to the shower in the caravan she thought there was another Aboriginal woman there too, but then realised it was herself in a mirror. After the shower, the soldiers held something near Charlie and his son that made a clicking noise. Crazily, Edie and her daughter had not been checked with the radiation counter.

The whole family was now loaded with their four hunting dogs into a Land Rover and driven to Yalata, 320 kilometres south. Edie Milpuddie had been pregnant when they camped at Marcoo crater. She would give birth out in the bush to a stillborn child. She buried the child there. Her next child died of a brain tumour at two years old. Sarah, her next child, weighed under a kilogram at birth. The Edie Milpuddie story is not necessarily conclusive of a connection with radiation, but the succession of natal problems and the

fact that her daughter Rosie and her grandchildren were plagued by illness is indicative. The royal commission would declare, 'Her family and indeed, her grandchildren since that time seemed to have suffered extraordinary ill health and numerous deaths.'

John Hutton, a nineteen-year-old soldier in the Australian army at the time, recalled the men being mustered together and addressed by a colonel who told them they had not seen the Milpuddie incident, because the British and Australian governments had poured a lot of money into managing the press and if the story got into the newspapers that money would be wasted. The colonel reminded them that they were bound by the *Official Secrets Act*.

So imminent did the threat of war seem at the time that not only was the potential harm caused to outback whites and Aborigines considered an irrelevance, but so was the impact on the environment and on animal species, native and introduced. Rabbits killed by radiation were eaten by eagles, who then began to suffer the symptoms. There was no evident impact yet on kangaroos and dingoes.



A number of workers were employed to go into the Ground Zero areas in Maralinga and retrieve battle dress and boots from experimental dummies. The workers wore no protective clothing themselves. The bombs had not been hydrogen devices, but the Australian Safety Committee did not tell Menzies that a highly radioactive component, Cobalt 60, had been secretly included in the first Antler test. The information emerged a year later when Doug Rickard, a young Australian member of a health physics team at Maralinga, came across radiation levels so high that his instruments could not measure them. He collected metallic particles, put them in a tobacco tin and drove them 48 kilometres back to the health physics laboratory at Maralinga. As he approached the laboratory, the instruments there became confused by the radioactive levels.

Rickard was interviewed by a British security officer who ordered him not to speak to anyone, particularly any Australians. 'I was under the distinct impression that the British authorities did not want the Australian Government to know anything at all about what happened.' Over the next four months, similar segments were found; these were put in lead cases

that were buried in concrete pits near the Maralinga airfield. Some of the cobalt fragments were however too dangerous to handle and were left lying at the site. Rickard himself received higher radiation doses during the time he spent at Maralinga from October 1957 to June 1959 than any other member of the health physics team. He suffered permanent bone marrow damage and other physical disabilities that doctors told him were consistent with high exposure. Rickard would ultimately launch a claim for compensation from the Australian government, and his right to compensation would be acknowledged.

Britain continued to test hydrogen weapons in the Pacific during 1958, but the Antler trials at Maralinga turned out to be the last of the most notable series of bomb tests conducted in Australia. The moratorium on nuclear tests between Britain, America and the Soviet Union came into operation in late 1958. It ended in 1961, but by then Britain's nuclear estrangement from the United States was no more. Australia was dealt out of the game. After 1961, Britain conducted her nuclear tests jointly with the United States underground in Nevada. Minor trials at Maralinga continued until 1963. Technically, Britain considered these not a breach of the nuclear-testing ban it had entered into.

A MILLION IMMIGRANTS AND THE ADVANCE TOWARDS VIETNAM



WARDS: HASLUCK AND NAMATJIRA

The 1953 Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance, whose principal advocate was Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck, was subtitled 'An Ordinance to Provide for the Care and Assistance of Certain Persons'. The 1953 ordinance gave priority to education, vocational training and the 'social, economic and political' advancement of 'certain persons' who came within its ambit. Until they could take their place as members of the community of the Commonwealth, these persons were to be treated as 'wards of the state' in 'need of guardianship and tutelage'. The persons in question were Aborigines.

Hasluck, who had power to legislate only for the Northern and other territories, with the states maintaining control still over their own Aboriginal populations, had announced his ambition to abolish race as a legal category. Legislative use of the term 'Aborigines' was, apart from being racially odious, beset by problems of definition. In any case, the problems of the Aboriginal people were 'problems of "coming together" with white society, and they could never be overcome by the methods of "keeping apart"'. Rigorous definitions of Aborigines had always diminished the rights of those so defined, and devalued their social responsibilities.

Hasluck disapproved of the system of 'exemption certificates', which Aborigines could be called on by police to display to show that they were

entitled to be in town or to apply for jobs, and which Aborigines themselves called 'dog licences' and 'dog tags'. Any Aborigine not carrying one came under severe restrictions, not least on his freedom to travel. Under the old system, said Hasluck, it was taken for granted that every Aboriginal came under restrictive legislation unless he applied for and was granted the dog tags: 'Under the new system it is assumed that every British subject has citizenship as a birthright.'

The birthright, however, could be withheld specifically because a person stood 'in need of special care and assistance'. Hasluck's special legislation would still hold a number of Aborigines as wards of the state. 'Ward' would not be a racial designation but a legal one, applying also to those of the European race who needed special care (the mentally ill, orphans, et cetera). Aborigines would cease to be wards when they were able to assume the full citizenship to which they were entitled, though Hasluck admitted that deciding when the moment of assimilation had arrived would be difficult.

Hasluck faced some resistance from the Territory's Legislative Council. Frank Wise, the Northern Territory administrator, recommended that the Aborigines Ordinances of the Northern Territory be amended to exclude all persons of mixed Aboriginal and European and other descent from its provisions. Even the North Australian Workers' Union and the part-Aborigines themselves were in favour of this. The Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association lobbied for the complete lifting of all Aboriginal ordinances exerting control over their lives. It was only from these half-castes, Wise declared, that the significant local demands for citizenship came, because most of them lived in circumstances 'approximating to European standards'.

The amended relevant Aborigines Ordinance was passed unanimously by the Legislative Council in January 1953, and the 'half-castes' of the Northern Territory thereby acquired full citizenship. Hasluck's assimilation program continued and numerous new government settlements were established, older settlements and missions revitalised, and government expenditure on Aboriginal affairs increased. But the delay in implementing the legislation slowed his plan to use welfare as a means of helping Aborigines live an 'assimilated' life.

When the welfare ordinance was eventually gazetted, in 1957, only six of the estimated 15,700 'full bloods' of the Northern Territory escaped being wards. Hasluck had not expected such a majority to remain stuck in

the ward-of-the-state classification. He told a new Territory administrator, Roger Nott, that he should abstain from declaring people wards 'if it can possibly be avoided . . . we should regard the declaration of a person as a ward as a last resort'.

Protests against Hasluck's legislation came from as far afield as the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society in London, which demanded that citizenship be granted to all Aborigines. The Labor member for Darwin, Dick Ward, persistently attacked the ordinance, accusing Hasluck of 'racial arrogance' and maintaining that the 'government had been too hasty in trying to turn the Aborigine into the white man's image'. But Hasluck admitted that he was seeking other means to identify and widen the class of people 'who cannot be declared wards'.



Namatjira was born on 28 July 1902 at Ntaria on the Finke River, country that was part of the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission in the Northern Territory. His parents were Western Aranda people but moved from the bush into the mission where his birth was registered. His Aboriginal name was Elia but he was baptised Albert on Christmas Day 1905. He signed his early paintings by that single name and occasionally called himself Namatjira Albert. Namatjira was the name of a flying white ant who had made the land belonging to his father's people.

In the mission, as well as the Western Aranda, there were Southern, Northern and Central Aranda, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara, and other peoples. They lived in their own separate traditional groups on the outskirts of the mission. The mission school children, however, occupied dormitories together and were sometimes permitted to visit their parents' camp. Namatjira was educated by Pastor Carl Strehlow, and his education was based on the German classical curriculum but was delivered in English. In the 1920s and 1930s, the people on the mission endured poverty, bad droughts and white hostility. They lacked employment and their traditional lands had been taken up by pastoralists. Their physical conditions were affected by drought, heat, savage desert cold on winter nights, and occasional floodings of the generally dry Finke River.

Namatjira was initiated at thirteen, and at the age of eighteen married a woman named Rubina—she was a Luritja woman whose tribal name

was Ilkalita. The couple would have ten children. Early in their marriage, Namatjira worked as a camel driver for Afghan entrepreneurs on the transport run to Oodnadatta in South Australia, a distance of 480 kilometres. He then worked as a ringer on cattle stations on which he and his family lived. He and his wife came back to the mission in 1923. At Hermannsburg, Namatjira worked decorating pieces of mulga with heated wire to create poker-work images, making objects for the mission's craft trade, decorating boomerangs, woomeras and shields for sale in the city. Police Constable William McKinnon commissioned a number of mulga-wood plaques of this nature to depict his mounted camel patrol. Then Namatjira began painting watercolour landscapes on the curved surfaces of woomeras and on wooden panels. By 1929 the railway had come to Alice Springs, and tourist coaches began to visit the mission.

The artist Rex Battarbee, a frequent visitor to Central Australia, was one of these visitors, and in 1934 he returned with his fellow artist John Gardner. Battarbee had been wounded in the chest, face and both arms at Bullecourt in May 1917. Unable to pursue normal trades, he studied commercial art. The Gardner and Battarbee versions of places familiar to the Aranda people had a great impact on those Aborigines who saw them, and not least on Namatjira, who asked for materials to paint similar work himself. At the time, Namatjira was living with his wife on mission lands in wurlies built of scraps of iron, canvas, sacking and bushes.

In Melbourne, the Battarbee–Gardner exhibition raised funds of £2000 to build a water supply to the mission. Namatjira thus saw that painting could have beneficial results. Pastor Albrecht, the Lutheran head of the mission, ordered water paints and brushes for him by mail order. Back in the Centre in 1936, Battarbee took Namatjira on a painting trip in return for the Aranda man acting as his camel driver. Battarbee was struck by the pace at which Namatjira learned landscape painting.

It has been estimated that Namatjira received only eight weeks of informal tuition before he began to paint independently. Battarbee was Namatjira's first customer, purchasing a watercolour landscape from him in 1936 for five shillings. Namatjira became a prolific painter. He took visitors and relatives by camel to Ntaria, his birthplace, and camped there to paint in the open air. Pastor Albrecht supported Namatjira's painting; he took ten of his works to the Lutheran Synod in South Australia in 1937 and sold six of them.

Battarbee included three of Namatjira's paintings in an exhibition of his own work in Adelaide.

In 1938, Lady Huntingfield, wife of the governor of Victoria, organised the first exhibition of Namatjira's paintings at the Melbourne Town Hall. His first solo exhibition occurred at Melbourne's Fine Arts Gallery. These were the first works to be signed 'Albert Namatjira' instead of simply 'Albert'. An advisory council was formed to supervise the sale and standard of Namatjira's work on exhibition, as he became so prolific during the 1940s that there was a concern that some of his paintings would fall too far below the standard of his best. In 1942, Namatjira was quoted in the *Aborigines' Friends Association Quarterly Review* as saying that '[you] cannot do much painting, if you have to live on paddymelons and an occasional rabbit'. The article claimed that his friends who had helped him through giving him art supplies went home and left him to work on the basis of a diet of bush tucker mainly collected by his wife.

In 1944, the advisory council organised a solo exhibition of Namatjira's work at the Myer Emporium in Melbourne, and a book on Namatjira's art was published. Then, in 1946, he had his first Sydney solo exhibition. He was by now a national celebrity. From then on there were regular exhibitions in state capitals.

Namatjira applied for a Northern Territory grazing lease in 1949, and it was rejected because he was a ward of the state. Battarbee had by now established his own gallery in his home in Alice Springs as a venue for the exhibition in 1951 of Aboriginal artists. In 1953, Namatjira received the Queen's Coronation Medal along with a small number of other prominent Aborigines, including David Unaipon. In 1954, he met the Queen on her tour of Australia, yet he was still a ward of the state. In 1956, Namatjira and his son Keith travelled to Sydney to collect a truck donated by the Ampol Oil Company to enable him to get around Central Australia. While in Sydney, Namatjira sat for a portrait by William Dargie that later won the Archibald. By now his name was so well known that in 1957, Namatjira and his wife were awarded full Australian citizenship by the federal government. The complication would prove to be that the other members of his family were not.

He shared his wealth with family members, in accordance with tribal practice, but in 1958 he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment related

to supplying alcohol to his relatives who were wards of the state. After much public protest and two appeals, the sentence was reduced. Namatjira served open detention at the Papunya settlement from March to May 1959, and died of heart failure on 8 August at Alice Springs hospital.

Another injustice awaited Namatjira—after the new, ancestral and Dreaming-based paintings emerged from Central Australia in the 1960s, it would become fashionable for people with an interest in art to dismiss him as a water-colourist. Yet for the millions who had never seen the supposed Dead Heart, his work, hung in so many living rooms, allayed the dread we had of the country's core, and commenced our familiarisation with our own continent.

DAVID UNAIPON: MORE THAN A BANKNOTE

A similar restlessness had operated in the mind of David Unaipon, a desert Aborigine from Point McLeay, South Australia, who was a man in his seventies at the height of Namatjira's own career. Unaipon had been throughout his life Australia's closest approximation to a Renaissance man, and no dilettante at anything he took up. In 1909 he had applied a new technology to shears, designing a device that cut in a forward motion, not in a circular one. Though he patented the invention—the first of ten patents he would take out in a lifetime—he lacked the resources to police the matter, the capital to manufacture his invention on his own terms, and access to patent lawyers. So others had benefited.

Unaipon had a desert mentor, whose talents are not an explanation for Unaipon's brilliance but show why he became interested in some of the issues he chased all his life. This person was the Reverend George Taplin of the Aborigines' Friends Association, a rare man who made bridges between the two sides. Taplin tried to produce at Point McLeay a self-sufficient community with vegetable gardens, cattle and sheep, fruit trees, and a shop that taught blacksmithing, carpentry and shoe-making. Taplin would invite in science and agricultural lecturers, and Unaipon was thus fascinated from an early age by scientific matters.

He left the mission at the age of thirteen to live in the home of C.B. Young, a gentleman with a library and varied interests, at Walkerville in Adelaide, and received a significant and scholarly input from Young. Unaipon's aptitude for music was obvious and he was given training, and ultimately became church

organist at the Mission Church at Point McLeay. He learned to play the music of Mendelssohn and Handel in an accomplished way. He read mechanics and theology and memorised passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

By 1917, Unaipon was working on another idea to do away with the 'crank motion on steam and internal combustion engines'. That remained a lifelong endeavour, but meantime he had moved back to Adelaide, where he made much use of the university library. He frequently gave organ recitals in Adelaide churches to appreciative white audiences. At a Methodist gathering he declared, 'I am here to plead with you on behalf of my countrymen, the Australian aborigines. It has been said they cannot be Christianised and uplifted. I am here to prove the contrary.'

His earliest publication in 1930 was the work entitled *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*, a book to which a mystery attaches, given that it carried the name of the anthropologist William Ramsay Smith. Was the book plagiarised by Smith? Republished decades later in 2001 and after Unaipon's death as *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, it validates Unaipon's claim that his prose style was influenced by John Bunyan and John Milton.

One contrivance Unaipon turned his mind to was the means by which aeroplanes could rise vertically without having to occupy a large distance to take off. He applied for the patent rights for this vertical take-off machine but it was never tested due to an obvious lack of capital. Unaipon also studied natural history and Newton's Law. Experiments with gravitation moved him to believe that perpetual motion was a grail that would not be found within the current knowledge of mechanics. The outcome of his research, however, was a discovery that enabled lateral motion in a sheep-shearing machine. He had found how to bring about 'the parabolic motion by which means I overcome the centre of gravity, doing away with crank motion in steam and combustible engines'.

Unaipon died in 1967 at Tailem Bend in South Australia at the age of ninety-four, just before the so-called Aboriginal Referendum. He had always had a measured understanding of the factors that had led to Aboriginal dispossession by interracial conflict. The white man's superior weapons had a deadly effect on native peoples, he said, but the white man's purpose in taking over the land was not explained adequately to the indigenous people and 'neither side had the grasp of language necessary for a proper

understanding between them'. Thus he seemed to think that the sense of dispossession might have been strongly allayed by greater understanding.

THE MOVEMENT

Ed Campion was a seventeen-year-old Catholic from Enmore, a future Catholic priest and historian, who joined Santamaria's Catholic 'Movement', a grand crusade to defeat atheistic Communism in the unions and elsewhere, in 1951. Campion found it very exciting for an Irish–Australia juvenile to be asked to join a secret organisation with codes, passwords, pledges of secrecy, combined with the concept that the world was on the edge of its final peril. In Catholic schools like the one Campion attended, Riverview in Sydney, the young were told about what had happened to priests and Catholicism in confrontation with Communism in Spain, Mexico, China and Eastern Europe. God and the Devil were engaged in battle in geographical terms.

The young Movement recruit was expected not to concentrate merely on the threat of Communism, however, but on the excuse for Communism that unfettered capitalism provided as well. Social justice was the great enemy of Marxism, and on that ground the young member of the movement espoused a quasi-socialist program far to the left of that which any political party today would dare embrace. He would be in favour not only of rural living and family life, but also of worker participation in industry's management and rewards, decentralisation, broader ownership in production, friendship with Asia, and the beginnings of what came to be called the multicultural society.

Sometimes members of the Movement working in industry or mining or on the wharfs formed 'industrial groups' to take on the Communist and fellow traveller elements in the unions, and thus were asked to become frontline soldiers on the shop floor in the fight between Catholic social justice and Communism. Campion, a Catholic star at Sydney University and editor of *Honi Soit*, had by the early fifties come to believe that the days of this 'emergency bushfire brigade' he had joined were over. The Movement was becoming just another political apparatus, another political faction. Campion was not alone in that perception. All across Australia Catholics were beginning to suspect Santamaria's Movement. Nonetheless it remained a force and in early 1954 Evatt, aware of its capacity to divide the ALP, since many of its members were also ALP men and women, phoned and asked Santamaria to fly to Canberra to help draft his policy speech.

But Santamaria suspected Evatt as something close to a closet Communist, and rejected the approach.

Santamaria had the support of some bishops. One of them was Archbishop Matthew Beovich of Adelaide, a cleric not of Irish but of Croatian origins. Above all, his greatest supporter was Daniel Mannix, archbishop of Melbourne. Archbishop Francis Carroll of Canberra–Goulburn, by contrast, was opposed to the Movement's entry into politics. Mannix and Santamaria got comfort from the support of Archbishop Romolo Carboni, the new Apostolic Delegate from 1953 onwards.

Generally, Catholics were divided, and for many, the imperatives of the Movement seemed more important than those of the ALP. This was the climate when, on 5 October 1954, Dr Evatt made his attack on 'disloyal elements' in the Labor Party. At Morgan's Bookshop in Sydney, he blamed the recent electoral defeat of Labor on disloyal Victorians and claimed that Santamaria's organisations were trying to take over the Victorian Labor Party. He continued his own version of a witch hunt in Caucus and an investigation into the Victorian Branch, where the 'groupers' were strong. The split, which happened inside the Movement as well as in the Labor Party itself, was more strongly a Victorian than a New South Wales phenomenon.

New South Wales had had experience of what it was like to have a Catholic-based political party in the field. In 1920 when the great majority of Catholics were Labor voters, some middle-class Catholics tried to win support for their schools by setting up their own political party. This brought the combined opposition of Protestants and led, via organised Protestantism, to the 1922 election of George Fuller's government with implied promises from some of his ministers of putting the Catholics in their place.

In response to the Vatican's claim by way of the decree *Ne Temari* claiming that only the Church had the right to marry Catholics, a Marriage Act was passed to assert the state's right, but, to his honour, Fuller did nothing to stoke the sectarian rhetoric for which the debate, public and parliamentary, became notorious. Catholics realised the lesson that if they were ever again to go on their own into politics they would be not only pilloried but defeated by pluralism. The Catholics in New South Wales therefore decided in the 1950s to stay with the Labor Party and do the ordinary, humdrum street

work of a political party—hospitals, schools, roads, housing, job protection, libraries, even an opera house.



The Victorian elections of 9 December 1952 returned the Labor government under John Cain, but opposed to the old-style Labor men was a more militant Movement-style group, about one-third of the cabinet. Santamaria felt he could write to Mannix on 11 December that the Movement had helped moderates win back the Australian Council of Trade Unions, all but one of the Trades and Labour Councils, and most of the key unions. Within five or six years it should 'be able to completely transform the leadership of the Labor government'. With acrimony growing in Labor circles, in January 1954 Melbourne's new Archbishop Justin Simonds surprised everyone by making a thinly disguised public attack on the Movement at the installation of Eris O'Brien as Archbishop of Canberra–Goulburn in January 1954. Simons bluntly declared that he was sure O'Brien 'will set his face sternly against any attempt to involve the Church in underground political intrigue'. Catholic Action and the Movement were, in Simmons's view, becoming politicised.

Asked to write a report for Cardinal Norman Gilroy on movement activities at the university in February 1954, the young Edmund Campion considered the Movement was either 'a mandated *Catholic Action* body' involved in politics without the Bishops's knowledge; or 'simply a Catholic party-political machine working with the full approval of the hierarchy, to gain political control of the nation's important institutions for the Church'. Obviously, he did not think it was or should be the latter.

News Weekly, Santamaria's newspaper, surprisingly rejected Senator McCarthy's extremism and criticised him as 'hot-tempered, vulgar and abusive'. And *News Weekly*, early in 1954, cautiously endorsed the ALP leader Dr Evatt for the prime ministership. But Evatt was convinced that the Petrov defections were part of a conspiracy against him, and performed poorly during the election campaign, making extravagant promises for social welfare. Compared with the 1951 elections the Catholic vote for Labor had increased markedly from 72.7 per cent to 77.8 per cent in Victoria, where Labor won 50.3 per cent of the overall votes and from 55.3 per cent to 64.4 per cent of Catholics in New South Wales. In Queensland the

percentage of Catholics voting for Labor dropped slightly from 59.5 per cent to 59.1 per cent.

But the election was lost.



Many Catholics now read Evatt's attacks on the Movement and the groupers as attacks on Catholicism itself, and this alienated the old alliance between Labor and Catholic. As well as that, Catholics were entering the business and professions which had previously not been occupied by them in vast numbers, and so that at the social level many Catholics were becoming more conservative than their working class parents, and were willing to see Evatt as at least one version of the anti-Christ.

The wisdom of Evatt's attack was thus questioned by many Labor people, and even members said they had not heard of the Movement before Evatt's statement gave it its new level of prominence. On 12 and 13 October Labor's Federal Caucus was in turmoil, and Tasmania Senator George Cole moved that all positions be declared vacant so that Calwell, a Catholic, a vocal anti-Communist (who was indeed vocal about all things) and thus a potential fence-mender, could stand for the leadership. But Evatt ruled that the motion be deferred for a week to give him time to organise support. Evatt accused the group associated with *News Weekly* of MacCarthyism, and Santamaria and others of wanting 'to set up a separate party within the party'. The National Movement held an emergency meeting at Point Piper and it was not only over Evatt, but concerned with rumours that the Church was withdrawing its support from the Groups. The Sydney branch, more loyal to Labor, was so angry at the outcome of the meeting that it threatened no longer to distribute *News Weekly*.

On 20 October Evatt was re-elected leader by fifty-two votes to twenty-eight—the latter went to Arthur Calwell. Meanwhile the personal nature of some attacks on Santamaria were enhanced by general anti-Italian bigotry, with overtones however of his relationship to Spanish Fascism and the whole matter of priestly control. The *Catholic Weekly* complained that 'in the secular newspapers, in some Protestant pulpits, in the Labor Party itself, men are talking of the Catholic Action Movement as if it were a conspiracy to overthrow the existing order and impose some sort of clerical dictatorship on the Australian people'. It also accurately foretold that if Labor fell apart

over the issue, it would spend a great time in political exile, and that a Labor split could give the Communists a chance to launch a coup, as had happened in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

The Communist Party of Australia's industrial successes were already in decline by then and yet had been enormously greater than its minimal electoral success. By the end of the war the Communist Party of Australia had a membership estimated at 23,000 and it was committed and militant to producing industrial results. But Australian Communism in the 1950s was confused by the competing claims of Moscow and Peking, by a conflict of personalities, by the relative roles of Sydney and Melbourne in the struggle, and in the evolution of a new Communist Party policy to do with what its relationship should be politically and industrially with the Labor movement.



The ALP Federal Executive held a crisis meeting in Canberra on 27 and 28 October 1954 and voted, by seven votes to five, for a Labor Party inquiry into the Movement's intrusion into the party. Evatt had warned the National Executive as it convened on 27 October that if the Movement faction united, it could seize control of the Party. Even so, he declared, 'As I understand it the "Movement" as such is not at all identical with Catholic Action . . . it has nothing to do with the Lay Apostolate which all Catholics and Christians honour.' Nonetheless he was still perceived as an anti-Catholic sectarian.

In January 1955, Santamaria wrote that in the coming special conference of the ALP in Hobart, the pro-Grouper delegates would have a majority of twenty-four to fourteen enabling them to achieve 'quite drastic solutions'. But before that could happen, the Federal Executive in effect 'stacked' the election of Victorian delegates by waiving the two-year membership rule for those electing delegates. So the ALP Federal Executive was able to ensure that at the Victorian ALP Conference on 14 January, fourteen of its delegates were elected against seven of the Movement's. However, the old and the new set of delegates both intended to turn up for the conference in Hobart.

The Federal Executive decided nine votes to three not to restore the original delegates with their pro-Grouper majority. The conference also endorsed the disbanding of the Groups in Victoria and asked other state executives to disband Groups affiliated with them. It re-indorsed the ALP's 'complete opposition to Communism and all forms of totalitarianism'.

Seventeen delegates left and formed an Anti-Communist Labor Party. They knew that their candidates would lose their seats but that they could punish Evatt and the Labor Party through giving their preferences to the Liberal–Country parties. The Split, which would curse Labor electorally, had been born in a plain twin-gabled Anglican hall on that suburban slope in Tasmania, not so much by these policy decisions but by grievous expulsions.

Feeling was now intense. *The Catholic Worker*, anti-Movement, pro-ALP, was banned from sale by fiat of Daniel Mannix at parish churches, though five parish priests in the entire Archdiocese of Melbourne permitted it. In a few weeks its circulation dropped from thirty-five thousand to fewer than fifteen thousand. In Victoria, Catholic Labor loyalist Senator Pat Kennelly urged all parties to show moderation.

The Victorian election of May 1955 was a bitter contest, and again Catholic ALP loyalists were condemned as Communists and were often willing to answer in kind. New South Wales Premier Joe Cahill and his deputy R.J. Heffron, both Catholics, along with Evatt, helped launch Victorian Premier John Cain's campaign. But the Liberal Party under Henry Bolte was elected—on the preferences extended by the break-away party, which now called itself the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Santamaria admitted that the election result was a 'negative victory', but that it at least showed that Labor could not win while it was seen as accommodating Communism. He forgave himself for his own huge contributions to that perception.

The DLP would, into the 1960s, hold the balance of power in the Senate. It can be at least debated whether the DLP kept Labor out of office. Many of its former supporters were members of a rising Catholic middle class and might have voted Liberal anyhow. The reuniting of the DLP and the Labor Party awaited a creative hand and would receive it in the person of Gough Whitlam.

Until then, Calwell grew increasingly disgruntled with his party, his deputy leader, Gough Whitlam (elected to that post in 1960), and with the Catholic Church, of which he remained an observant member. As his electoral failures grew he became particularly angry with Archbishop Mannix, who would die in the midst of Calwell's travails in 1963, and with many other clerical and lay leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Victoria. He would write, 'The Mannix inheritance of the 1950s still hangs like a pall over the Catholic Church in Australia and continues to poison the relations of the

Church with citizens of other faiths, and with many Labor-minded Catholics as well.'

PURE SPORT IN A FRAUGHT WORLD

For Australians, sport was a joy unalloyed by politics or long-running history. Certainly a post-colonial desire to thrash England cricket teams had been enhanced by the Bodyline series of 1932–33 when Douglas Jardine, who went to some trouble to imitate the Australians' idea of an Oxford University hyper-Pom, led an MCC (England) team to Australia. Jardine set Harold Larwood, the working class bowler from Nottingham, the task of bowling aggressively at the bodies of the Australian batsmen while he himself grotesquely stacked the leg side with fielders to take catches deflected in terror away from the body by bats of (in those days) the un-helmeted victims. To Australians, Bodyline bespoke British mere lip service to the concept of fair play, and when Australian batsman and wicket-keeper Bert Oldfield suffered a broken skull, the relations between the Australian Cricket Board and the MCC soured, and the damage Bodyline was doing to relations between Britain and Australia was even seriously discussed at the Dominion Office itself.

A generation later, however, the damage done through the unconscionable Bodyline stratagem had been largely forgotten, even if never forgiven. By 1956, Bradman and other Australian cricketers had taken devastating revenge on England before and after World War II. The author remembers the utter outclassing of an England team led by Wally Hammond (who as a member of Jardine's team had opposed Bodyline) in Australia in 1946–47. Children twelve and under had never seen Ashes cricket before, and now beheld Bradman and his men triumph, it seemed, without raising a sweat. The Australians made the most runs, took the most wickets and won the series 3–0. Bradman scored 680 runs in the series for an average of 97.14. Three other batsmen had series averages over 70, and Ray Lindwall, Col McCool and the former fighter pilot Keith Miller massacred the England batting line-up. The First Test in Brisbane told the tale of easeful dominance: Australia, 645, England 141 and 172. The proposition fathers brought back from the war that one Aussie was worth three Poms seemed nearly proven mathematically in such figures. It was confirmed again when Bradman's 'Invincibles' toured and routed England in the summer of 1948. By 1954–55, when Australians generally were preparing for the Melbourne

Olympics, their cricket side lost the Ashes 3–1 against a stellar England, but such defeats were considered interludes to Australia's inevitable position as winners. Sport was that: an assertion of Australian fibre, a compensation for our Antipodean roughness and lack of cultivation. Australian claims went no further than: Australia made us; it made us very good; and we can give any bugger a shake.

By the time the Olympics were mooted for Melbourne, the southern and western states were still in utter rapture to that uniquely national game about to celebrate its centennial, Australian Rules Football. In 1956, the year of the Olympics, the grand final record crowd of 114,000 people saw Melbourne, with the young Ron Barassi, defeat Collingwood, as it had also done the year before.

The eastern states' passion, Rugby League, had been dominated since World War II by the same desire to defeat England as had characterised Australian cricket. On his journey to England in 1945, an interlude in his work on the United Nations, H.V. Evatt visited the Rugby League authorities in the north and asked them could they send a team to Australia for the Australian winter of 1946. Rugby League had been played only intermittently during the war and chiefly amongst British teams from the various armed forces. But the British held trials, selected a team and despatched it aboard the aircraft carrier HMS *Indomitable*. The other passengers were war brides coming to Australia to be united with their former or serving RAAF husbands.

It is said that when a crowd watched the England team and its monumental forwards leave a bus at the Sydney Cricket Ground, an Australian cried, 'No more bloody Bundles for Britain', a reference to the food hampers many Australians had regularly sent to the United Kingdom during the war. Led by the dazzling Welsh centre-three-quarter, Gus Risman, the English won the test series 3–0. The Australians toured England and France in 1948–49 and again the England team won all three games and then went to meet the French in Marseilles and Bordeaux. At last, in 1950, the touring Great Britain team was beaten 2–1, and a sense of God-ordained appropriateness was restored.

There were other ways in which Australian self-mythology was at least marginally challenged. Rugby Union, with its small player base, generally in the east, performed creditably against European teams, but found conquering the All Blacks of New Zealand generally too hard a task. Australians

did not feel as challenged by New Zealand, however, as by what they saw as the former Imperial masters. And in any case Australians looked to their swimmers, runners and cyclists to assert their God-given sporting claims.

Television was a little over a month old when the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games began, initiated with an announcement by the broadcaster Bruce Gyngell, who faced the cameras and proclaimed, 'Good evening, and welcome to television.' By the time of the Games, less than 1 per cent of Sydney households owned one of the expensive sets, and perhaps 5 per cent of Melbourne residents. However, the old classic film houses became deserted. For some years to come, the fortunate owners of television sets invited neighbours and relatives in for TV evenings.

On the track at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Betty Cuthbert won the 100- and 200-metre gold medals and, with Shirley Strickland, 110-metre hurdles gold medallist, took the four-by-100-metres gold medal as well. In the pool, the clean-cut, movie-star-handsome Murray Rose and the indomitable larrikin Dawn Fraser became national heroes.

Australian athletes, however, would become aware of the use of synthetic testosterone by nations in the Soviet bloc, by team managements anxious to assert the obvious vigour imbued in their young athletes by Communism. Under Cold War pressure, the Americans themselves began experimentation, not least with anabolic steroids provided by their team physician John B. Ziegler.

The Melbourne Games were, in a sense, a validation of the Soviets, who won thirty-nine gold medals. The United States was next, and Australia was third with thirteen gold. But Australia lacked the sophisticated sporting facilities of the United States and Eastern Bloc countries; Betty Cuthbert trained on fields little better than cow pastures, and Murray Rose in a surf pool at a Sydney beach. The Olympics thus reinforced the fact that to be a small country of massive sporting ability was one of the planks of Australia's identity.

ANZAC: QUESTIONED AND ENDURING

Australia's focus on the Anzac campaign became diffused by opposition to the Vietnam War in the 1960s, but it was not unseated from its central place in the historiography of the ordinary Australian.

Anzac commemoration became, in Alan Seymour's ironic term and highly acclaimed yet controversial play, *The One Day of the Year*. And yet there were many who quietly abstained—soldiers with bitter memories of bungled campaigns, soldiers simply fed up with military life, soldiers who had seen too much horror.

Is Gallipoli central or not? It became common, and particularly after World War II, to say that Australia was born at Gallipoli. If so, it was born on Turkish beaches, a proposition some found absurd. It was of interest to observers that Australia was not a militarist nation in the sense of expanding its territory—its thinking was defensive, and its control of the Pacific islands was based on Australia's defensive reflex, a sense that the islands were the castle moat. Except for during World Wars I and II, Australian defence spending has generally been about 5 per cent of budget allocations. And yet the country defines its history in terms of military engagement. The extra irony is that the military engagements of the world wars were undertaken by young men who were citizen recruits, and often by generals who were citizen soldiers too, and that, according to a cherished myth, what they lacked in formal discipline they made up for in initiative and dash. By the 1960s, Australia remained a militaristic yet under-militarised and—unless distressed by what it saw as the advance of Communism—peace-loving community.

Yet, the belief remained that Australia was formed not at Federation but on the brutal Gallipoli peninsula. To what extent did the peacefulness of Federation start it all off, the yearning deep in the blood, for some war or revolution, an outlaying of young men's valour? In World War I, Banjo Paterson saw blood-letting as a maturing process:

*The mettle that a race can show
Is proved with shot and steel,
And now we know what nations know
And feel what nations feel.*

THE MILLIONTH

The Good Neighbour, the monthly bulletin issued by the Australian Department of Immigration, announced in October 1955 that the millionth post-war migrant was due in November aboard the *Oronsay*. The migrant was identified

as Mrs Barbara Ann Porritt (née Wood), a twenty-one-year-old former stenographer of Redcar, Yorkshire, only sixteen kilometres from the birthplace of Captain Cook. A welcome dinner was planned for her by the Australian Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt. Her journey would be a romantic holiday trip, said the bulletin, because she had married Dennis Porritt, an electrical fitter, on 17 September. It was quite possible that the Porritts had seen the 1954 advertisement that declared, 'the Australian way of life as seen by Her Majesty the Queen can be yours . . . as the Modern Emigrant'. Dennis Porritt would go directly to employment as a skilled tradesman with the State Electricity Commission (SEC) in Yallourn, in Gippsland, Victoria. It was announced that Mrs Porritt would work as a stenographer for the SEC. The couple would be amongst a total of between three and four thousand assisted migrants to arrive from the United Kingdom in November 1955.

When the *Oronsay* docked, a telegram from Holt welcomed her 'on behalf of nine million prospective good neighbours', and declared that she had 'been *chosen* to carry the title of Australia's millionth migrant' (emphasis added). It was so appropriate that the millionth migrant should be a young English girl that later it would be wondered if a young Calabrian or Polish woman would have been given the distinction. The selection had occurred, said Holt, because 'you typify the kind of migrant we hope will follow you in ever greater numbers'.

There was a notion that British migrants required little help in the way of settlement and assimilation. 'Britons were less migrants than transplants to British settlements overseas,' said Prime Minister Menzies, who liked to think that moving from England to Australia was no different to moving from Yorkshire to Somerset. Mrs Porritt was quickly pressed into service to greet newly arriving immigrants. The *Australian Women's Weekly* dwelt on her 'English-rose complexion'.

Mrs Porritt's name appeared in the papers again in the 2000s with the arrival in Sydney of Australia's six millionth migrant, Christina Jurado from the Philippines. Mrs Porritt was invoked as a means of charting the cultural and social differences between the 1950s and the present.

UNNUMBERED OTHERS

In the three decades after the war, Australian immigration was always linked to the Australian labour-market needs, with intakes increasing during

economic booms and declining during periods of economic downfall. Immigration from southern Europe involved people with little formal education and poor language skills. On most projects, workers born in Australia and English-language immigrants were heavily concentrated in the best jobs.

Before the beginning of the mass post-war immigration program, 85 per cent of the first-generation Greeks in Sydney owned or worked in cafés, milk bars, fish-and-chip shops and other small businesses. Similarly, before 1947 (the date often given for the beginning of the implementation of Arthur Calwell's post-war vision) more than half the immigrants born in Greece, Poland and Italy, and more than a third of those born in Germany, Malta and the former Yugoslavia, were self-employed or small employers—and this compared to only one-fifth of Australian born.

But with the post-war period, the rate of immigrant entrepreneurs fell. Calwell and the government he represented did not seek men and women who would be creators of their own enterprises, shops and small businesses. They sought muscle. A number of immigrants entered the clothing, footwear and textile industries, because these required less start-up capital. These included the Anglo-Indian Basil Sellers, who would one day finance the statues of heroes in the Sydney Cricket Ground precinct, and the Pole Abe Goldberg. The Smorgon family, originally from Russia, founded a financial empire on new forms of continental meats. The Greek Andronicus family imported coffee and helped make it fashionable in tea-drinking Australia. Peter Manettas and Theo Carlis both emigrated from the Greek island of Kastellorizo and made their fortunes selling seafood. Franco Belgiorino Nettis, an engineer in the Snowy, founded a powerful engineering and construction company, and Sir Peter Abeles from Budapest bought two trucks he dubbed *Samson* and *Delilah* and built the vast Alltrans group from them. Other Hungarians included small businessmen Frank Lowy and his friend John Saunders; Lowy, having begun as a deli/milk-bar owner in Sydney's Blacktown, developed the giant Westfield Corporation.

The Good Neighbour Council spread amongst the newcomers the idea that a quick Australian assimilation was the way to be accepted as a mate. It advised the newcomer to avoid behaving in any way that would attract attention. Assimilation for a Greek, Italian, Eastern European would be complete when nobody noticed the immigrant as a newcomer. The fear

of Italians as an ethnic component was almost as vivid as it had been thirty-five years or more past, when the *Bulletin* published its outrageous race-poem ‘The Dago Menace’:

*He’s both ignorant and slow
And we often tell him so!
And his anger is the rage of a virago—
For he’ll maim or take a life,
With his swift and sudden knife.
But you’ll have to take your hat off to the dago!*

The Ferry Report on immigration to North Queensland in 1924 had declared that ‘it was the swarthier Southern Italians who were dubbed “the Chinese of Europe” and execrated as “scum and refuse” while the lighter-skinned, ‘thriving, highly paid and long haired Piedmontese—the Scotsmen of Italy—were distinctly preferred’.

British and European immigration peaked in the 1960s, the decade in which 875,000 British immigrants arrived. Immigration agreements were in place with nearly all Western and Eastern European states, and were extended into Asia Minor when Turkey signed an agreement with Australia in 1968. These agreements not only stated the conditions under which assisted passages would be given, but also obliged the Australian government to provide acceptable levels of settlement services and employment. Many of the mixed-race immigrants coming from Asia in the 1960s did not receive assisted passages, nor were they subject to official agreements between governments. They were almost invariably English-speaking Christians and were often assimilated very quickly. It is significant that the agreement with Turkey was signed the year after the retirement of the two old race guardians, Calwell and Bob Menzies.

Assisted passages had, from colonial days, been used as a means of competing for immigrants against the attractions of North America. Canada competed with Australia, and the US quota for British and Irish immigrants was itself rarely filled. In 1965, the Australian national quota system was abolished and family reunion was given priority. This made migration to Australia from Europe more uncertain, unless the migrant already had family members in Australia. The beginning of the functioning

of the European Community (EC) in 1968 meant that migration between EC members became more common as an alternative to migration to ‘the new world’—Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

Dr Thomas Barnardo began his work among destitute people in the United Kingdom in the 1860s. A convert to evangelical Christianity, he created a ‘Ragged School’ in Stepney and founded homes for street children. Overcrowding and lack of opportunity for his wards prompted Barnardo to find places for them overseas. He had sent off seven thousand children to various parts of the British Commonwealth by the end of the nineteenth century, but from the early twentieth century onwards Australia became the popular destination for poor British children. A hundred and fifty thousand children were shipped from British children’s homes or by well-meaning impoverished families through Barnardo’s and other schemes, notably the Fairbridge scheme.

The first post-war shipment of 150 boys and girls arrived on the SS *Asturias* in 1947. The boys ended at the ultimately notorious Catholic Boys’ Town at Bindoon outside Perth, where they were pressed into the work of building three two-storey extensions, on a diet of porridge mixed with bran for breakfast. The abuse at Bindoon was of every variety. Nigel Fitzgibbon found himself here as a child, transported to Australia without his parents’ consent. He remembers becoming emaciated and brutalised, subject to prods in the genital and anal areas by a sadistic brother who used for the purpose a rod tipped with a .303 bullet.

It was common for children sent abroad to be told they were orphans even if they weren’t—a means of making them commit to their new environment. David Hill and his brothers were told so on their arrival in New South Wales in 1959, after their mother reluctantly gave the boys up in the hope they would have a chance in Australia. But she pursued them to Australia, where she was appalled at the conditions in their Fairbridge School at Molong and extricated them. The children at Fairbridge rose as early as 2 a.m. to do the milking, and at other times worked from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., ploughing, crutching sheep, driving tractors and so on. The physical and mental abuse there rivalled that of Bindoon, and Hill, who would later become chairman of the Board of the ABC, chairman of the Board of Australian Railways and an

author, remembered that amongst his fellow transportees were children as young as three or four who were never hugged.

ABORIGINAL VOTING

There had long been agitation by Aboriginal leaders such as William Cooper for the Aboriginal federal franchise. Throughout the Commonwealth, since their names did not appear on the Commonwealth electoral rolls, and Commonwealth rolls were used in the states, many Aborigines were effectively disenfranchised in their states. From 1940 until six months after the war, Aborigines serving in the military had been enfranchised. It was not until 1949 that the government enfranchised any Aborigine who had fought for Australia. But 1949 also saw a more far-reaching reform—legislation to enfranchise all Aborigines entitled at that time to vote in their state. Even so, most Aborigines—those in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory—remained disenfranchised, for they were not entitled to vote in their state. Had Labor been re-elected in 1949 it is possible that Aborigines ‘educated to the point of understanding’, as Labor’s Minister for the Interior put it, and who lived ‘a respectable white man’s code of life’ would have been ‘given citizenship and allowed to vote at the next election’.

Meanwhile in Western Australia from 1944, Aborigines could gain the vote through a Certificate of Citizenship—a ‘dog tag’ or ‘dog licence’, as it was dubbed. To obtain a certificate, applicants had to furnish two references from ‘reputable’ citizens and satisfy a magistrate that, amongst other things, they had ‘adopted industrious habits’ and were of ‘good reputation’.

In 1961, a Select Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament concluded that far from ‘dying out’ as surmised at Federation, Aboriginal people were increasing in numbers and had become a ‘permanent part of the Australian community’, and that ‘the majority’ of those who five years earlier had lived as nomads had now chosen to join settlements and missions. The right to enrol and vote, the committee recommended, was to be extended to all Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. While acknowledging it was recommending the enfranchisement of ‘people who had no history of exercising a franchise and who had no knowledge of electoral and political rights’, the committee rejected the view that the franchise should be withheld from Aborigines until the state first made them ready. The committee dismissed the idea of subjecting Aborigines to such indices of assimilation

as reading tests, housing inspections, investigations of job records, or the necessity to have deposits in a bank. In this way the committee implicitly endorsed the anthropologist clergyman Augustus Elkin's position that 'in Australia the franchise is not a reward to be earned by good conduct or by proficiency in literacy or in anything else'. The committee recommended that enrolment was to be compulsory in New South Wales and Victoria as it was in state elections. In other jurisdictions where Aborigines had just recently emerged from a tribal state, enrolments were to be—at least for the time being—non-compulsory.

To what extent were the committee's recommendations the result of Aboriginal pressure? For most of Australia's post-settlement history, Aborigines, according to one historian, were 'a silent and apparently unreacting mass of passive objects', although he acknowledged that any Aborigine who tried to take an active posture towards society was smacked down for getting out of his place. Indeed, black leadership was dismissed by the authorities on the ground that it was not truly representative of its people, or else that it was the result of Aborigines being 'stirred up' by white left-wing agitators. Even so, protest from the 1920s onwards took the form of petitions, delegations and strikes, and from the late 1950s Aborigines campaigned for and won a number of important rights, such as access to unemployment benefits, pensions and maternity allowances.

In all this the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, founded in 1958, acquired enough of a voice that Menzies became worried about the publicity it might generate internationally, and thus cause other Commonwealth prime ministers to bracket Australia with South Africa. The Minister for the Interior and future Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gordon Freeth, introducing the legislation to extend the franchise to Aborigines in 1962, expressed the hope that it would proclaim to the world 'that the Aboriginal people of Australia enjoy complete political equality with the rest of the community'. But it would be wrong to accuse Menzies's government of pandering to world opinion rather than responding to conviction in passing the new laws.

After 1962, Queensland officials did little to encourage indigenes to enrol or to prepare them for the electoral process. The election of Aboriginal councillors on settlements and reserves, or the setting up of Aboriginal courts of summary jurisdiction, could have been used as an introduction to

voting, but in most cases was not taken up. But in the Northern Territory, the effect of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act of 1962* was dramatic. Now, under the new Act, no person entitled to vote for the House of Representatives could be declared a ward of the state. It was true that 'in more remote areas', as Professor Ann McGrath says, 'Aboriginals did not consider the vote as importantly as the Civil Rights campaigners in the cities.' One commentator, Colin Tatz, says that federal enfranchisement offered nothing more than a 'mildly meaningless sense of participation'. Whites continued unilaterally to define the problems and enact the legislation that spelled out what were the Aborigines' best interests.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S COFFIN

John Fitzgerald Kennedy's presidential victory in 1960 was narrow, with only a little over one hundred votes separating him from Richard Nixon. His glamorous style, the nature of his family, his war record and his courageous approach to foreign policy, as well as his youth, made him attractive to Australians in general. But for Australian Irish Catholics he seemed—just as sectarianism was on the decline in Australia—to validate their identity. Australian and American experiences of Catholicism had been similar, with at first a heavy Irish component and social contempt developing into acceptance and a more diverse Catholic population from Italy, Lebanon, Malta, and Central and Eastern Europe. This parallel history made Australian Catholics feel that American Catholicism's success was theirs as well. With perhaps a majority of urban homes in Australia now possessing a television, Kennedy's assassination in Dallas in November 1963 was unique, in that Australians felt intimately connected to the event and all its developments, including the assassination of the perpetrator, Lee Harvey Oswald.

At their meetings in 1962, when Menzies was invited to give the Monticello Lecture—Monticello being the estate of Thomas Jefferson—Menzies and Kennedy had not warmed to each other. But he knew Kennedy was beloved in Australia. After his first personal encounter with Kennedy, Menzies had declared, 'Nobody can fail to be impressed by the liveliness of mind, vigour of approach, energy and desire for results, and forceful personality of the new President.' And Menzies believed that American support was necessary to address Australia's political and military vulnerability, to help it defend its 66,000-kilometre-long coastline (if one includes New Guinea). In that spirit

of vulnerability, in May 1963 Australia agreed to the establishment of an American communications base at North West Cape.

When Kennedy was shot on Houston Street, Menzies was preparing for a 30 November election (which he would win) and did not attend the funeral, a decision that was, said the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'a national disgrace'. Menzies's electoral prospects were enhanced by Kennedy's assassination, since commentators believed that feelings of 'dismay and uncertainty' would favour the incumbent government. Arthur Calwell complained that within twelve hours of his death, references to Kennedy were inserted into the Liberal campaign material. Calwell accused Menzies of 'trying to smear the Labor Party over President Kennedy's coffin'. There was a perception, fostered by Menzies, that the Labor Party was guilty of anti-American feeling, and the Coalition could make much of Labor's desire to recognise Communist China and support China's entry into the United Nations. On 26 November, in a television broadcast, Menzies identified the Chinese as 'looking right down through South-east Asia. Right down to Australia', and said that the late President Kennedy 'did a wonderful job when he helped to keep them quiet'. The Democratic Labor Party was potent in influencing the result as well, winning 7 per cent of the vote. But because so many of the Catholic schools had, with the help of university scholarships introduced by Menzies, brought more Catholics into business and the professions, many of them voted directly for Menzies anyhow. It was often in the Catholic skilled working class and lower middle class that the DLP got its chief support, and the more radical economic policies of the Labor Party had lost their appeal. One Strathfield woman wrote to Jacqueline Kennedy, 'Well, with the disclosure of Lee Harvey Oswald's Communist sympathies, there was a great swing to Liberal and they won with the amazing majority of twenty-two seats.'

None of the cultural and political suspicion of America applied to President Kennedy and his exquisite wife. At that stage most Australians approved of American actions in Vietnam, and did not know that Kennedy was not quite the 'family man' Cardinal James Freeman of Sydney declared him to be. Television made people feel that they knew the couple, and Jacqueline was a fixture in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, with its circulation of 800,000. 'If only you lived near here,' an Australian (initials H.H.) wrote to Mrs Kennedy, 'I could help you, perhaps looking after the kiddies or doing

something practical.' John Kennedy's Catholicism was a sort of catalyst for these impulses. A Victorian woman saw Kennedy as 'a great Western leader' and 'a fine Catholic man'. Condolence material sent to Jacqueline Kennedy often contained details about decades of the Rosary said in suburban homes and prayers offered. 'We heard the news before Mass and a gasp of horror went through the Church,' wrote a young woman from Marryatville, South Australia. 'I am sure that there were more masses and prayers said for you both than for Pope John.'

Behind the grief lay a sense that a sure leader in the Cold War chaos had been lost. Australian Catholics too had a grieving sense that their chief champion had gone. And all were shocked, given the comparative innocence of the time, and the lack of knowledge of other coming assassinations, that a democratic leader could be so suddenly erased.

WHITE AUSTRALIA'S LAST DECADE

It was after Menzies's retirement in January 1966, and the departure the following year of Arthur 'Cocky' Calwell, Chifley's Minister for Immigration, that politicians on both sides began to think practically of easing restrictions on immigrants. New Prime Minister Harold Holt reduced the barriers to the entry of non-European migrants and reduced the qualifying period for citizenship from fifteen to five years. He saw this as necessary under the pressure of Asian trade and diplomatic relationships. It was the sort of legislation Calwell had opposed on trade union grounds, that Asians undermined Australian working and social conditions. Calwell believed that if '9000 or 10,000 coloured migrants [start] coming into Australia each year . . . we will have the same terrible insoluble problems to face in the future, similar to those they face in England and America today'. But thanks to air travel and widespread peace, Australian travellers, officials and diplomats were now trying to make apologies for or explain away White Australia to their counterparts in Asia. In any case, the entry of increasing numbers of Asian students into Australia made a mockery of the policy. White Australia was being invoked to drive Indians and other Asians, as Holt said, 'away from the British Commonwealth and into the arms of Communism'.

Menzies's many achievements had included a banking system that provided stability yet encouraged initiative; a two-airline policy that ensured a high degree of safety as well as competitive efficiency; a system of social

security, including a medical benefits scheme; and a modified arrangement for non-European immigration that won a high degree of bipartisan support. But White Australia was still in place.

Calwell, so opposed to Asian immigration, nonetheless had a strong and early belief that Australia had to protect Aborigines against exploitation by squatters and other plutocrats and that they merited 'equal benefits as the white race'. In 1964, he began with others to attempt to remove from the Constitution racially discriminatory clauses towards Aborigines. In defending White Australia, however, he uttered sentiments that were like those of Deakin earlier in the century and Hughes at the Paris Peace Conference—that none of it was motivated by feelings of racial superiority. Calwell declared in 1959: 'We have no pretensions to racial superiority and we have never been colour-conscious in our treatment of the people of other lands.'

Menzies and Calwell both opposed any immigration from Asia under a quota scheme. It would be of its nature either so small that it would insult Asian countries or so large that it would threaten the all-holy homogeneity of the Australian race. Gestures of democracy, friendship and anti-Communism such as the Colombo Plan, by which Asian students were invited to study in Australia and take home a positive view of the country after they had graduated, were considered a better option. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, it was the ALP who rejected motions to overturn its traditional commitment to White Australia. In 1958, the infamous dictation test, by which those considered unwelcome could be given a dictation test in any European language—a method that had been used to exclude the anti-Fascist campaigner Egon Kisch in the 1930s—was dropped. It had frequently been used to exclude Asians, and Kisch himself was notoriously given a dictation test in Erse, Scottish Gaelic.

There is no doubt that many British immigrants to Australia were attracted by White Australia. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 17 October 1968 claimed that six British immigrant families out of ten gave fear of a colour problem as a major reason for leaving Britain.

FALLEN GIRLS

In Australia in the 1950s, Homes for Fallen Girls operated by Sisters of the Good Shepherd existed in every state, for example, at Abbotsford in Melbourne, Ashfield in Sydney, and Leederville in Perth. These were often

country girls who had become pregnant and whose offspring had been delivered and put up for adoption. The 'fallen girls' themselves now worked in the home's laundry, and it was said that 'bad girls do the best sheets'.

Meanwhile, an American biologist named Gregory Pincus was one of many scientists working on a contraceptive pill. It was passed for use in the United States in 1960, and by 1963 over a million American women were taking it, despite its side-effects. The impact of the pill, for good or ill, could not be overstated. It made it possible for young women to treat sex as a recreation rather than a potential pregnancy. Women knew well, in every community, what unwanted pregnancy could bring: undesired marriage, running away to have the child, heinous methods of illegal abortion, medical peril, and the tag engraved over the door of the Ashfield Home—'Fallen'.

In America the pill was not available to married women in all states until a decisive court judgment in 1965, and it would be longer still—1972—before it was available to unmarried women, who had nonetheless long since managed to get hold of it. Australia, in 1961, was the second country in the world to authorise prescription of the pill, for married women only. With the first prescription written, the pill became a focus of moral panic, gossip and ambition. Young feminist Anne Summers later wrote, 'The word would go round and we'd flock to the medico who we'd heard would not give us a hard time for daring to ask for a script.' (If university students became pregnant, said Summers, they would go to the university library and look up the telephone directory for the listings under medical practitioners. The names that were underlined—everyone knew this—would do abortions.) In 1961 a woman about to be married was given a prescription for a year's supply of the pill, even though the quantities of hormones in the preparation were likely to cause nausea. Though usage of the pill grew during the 1960s, many girls who *were* taking it could not tell anyone they were. Pharmacology could not change age-old reticence.

Through the 1960s in Australia and elsewhere there was a heady season when the Vatican had not yet forbidden the pill outright; even though some Catholic clergy condemned it as permitting 'public licence', others allowed Catholic mothers to follow their conscience on it, and conscience was often taken by these women as code for common sense.

When, in 1968, Pope Paul VI brought down the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, condemning all contraception in all circumstances, many Australian

Catholics abandoned the faith of their fathers. Even within Catholicism, many had already resolved the issue. The rigidly homogeneous church of the 1950s, in which the bishop was God's voice and even more so the Papacy, was gone, and the proposition that conscience came before Papal magisterium was uttered widely by younger Catholics. By the time of *Humanae Vitae*, too, a young woman from Melbourne, Germaine Greer studying at Newnham College at Cambridge, was writing a thesis about feminism that would become a bestseller when published in 1970 as *The Female Eunuch*. Greer's book would make an excoriating tract and confirm thoughts many women had been harbouring throughout the past decade.

The term 'women's liberation' had already been let loose into the world's discourse. Trade union activist Zelda D'Aprano, a former machinist and dental nurse who campaigned for equal pay throughout the 1960s, would draw attention to unequal pay and status by chaining herself to the doors of the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne after the proposition was again rejected by the Arbitration and Conciliation Commission. R.J. Hawke, a young Rhodes scholar and larrikin orator, speaking on behalf of meat-workers, declared that the difference in men's and women's wages was a relic of ideas that existed at the beginning of the century. A few years later, Neville Wran QC would declare that 'our society is now geared to a participation of women at all levels'.

In so far as that was true, the pill had been instrumental.

FREEDOM RIDES

In 1965, Charlie Perkins, a young Sydney Aboriginal student of Central Australian origins, son of an Aranda man and a Kalkadoon woman, and soon to be Australia's first Aboriginal university graduate, an Australian representative soccer player, and chairman of Student Action for Aborigines, initiated the idea of an Aboriginal Freedom Ride, inspired by the Freedom Rides of the civil rights movement in the US. A bus was chartered to carry forty-five young Aboriginal passengers through the west and north coast regions of New South Wales. Wellington, Dubbo, Walgett, Moree, Lismore and all communities southwards down the coast to Sydney, and an assessment was to be made by the riders as to Aboriginal housing, education, employment, health, and both European and Aboriginal attitudes. 'We hope to visit, with the [Welfare] Board's permission, all reserves plus

missions, and town homes of Aboriginal people. We wish to view all facets of Aboriginal assimilation and accumulate statistical data on the same. We will be directed in this survey by the Reverend T.D. (Ted) Noffs, who did a similar survey in America.' They proposed to integrate theatres, swimming pools and other venues that discriminated against Aboriginal people, and to do so along the moral suasion lines advocated by the Reverend Martin Luther King. 'We merely wish to stimulate *both* Aboriginal and European townspeople into doing something practical themselves about the situation.'

One of the major stops on the Freedom Ride was Moree, where Perkins and his group, which included future Supreme Court judge Jim Spigelman, had come to point out discrimination that was both blatant and subtle. The school bus in Moree picked up white children first and delivered them to school, before then going out to the mission, collecting the Aboriginal kids and getting them late to their classrooms. In the afternoon the Aboriginal children left school early so that they could be dropped home before the end of classes. To a man like Perkins who cherished his education, this seemed indicative of coast-to-coast disadvantage for Aboriginal children.

The students' group sought to persuade people to end discriminatory action of any kind, but especially at the swimming pool, where Aborigines were not admitted, even those who paid rates. The students caused the pool in Moree to be desegregated, but the visit had proved to be a bemusing and alienating experience for some townspeople. The day after the bus left, the segregation commenced again by order of the mayor. The students returned to town. It was a Saturday, and locals stoked their anger in the Moree pubs. Perkins later declared that the driver, a man named Pakenham, had been the subject of threats, both personally and in relation to the bus itself, in a number of towns. (He would ultimately walk away from the bus at Grafton.) His bus was pelted with eggs and rotten fruit as it pulled up outside the pool to pick up the students, who had blocked the entrance to the pool after they were refused permission to bring in nine Aboriginal children. A crowd of five hundred gathered around the students, shouting insults and throwing fruit, and the mayor, William Lloyd, grabbed three of the students by their shirts to present them to police. The crowd blockading the students who were in turn blockading the pool became sufficiently volatile for the police to need to escort the bus out of town.

The women members of the Freedom Party were generally put up by sympathetic residents in the towns they passed through, and so it was in Walgett in August, where the students attempted to break the colour bar in the luxury theatre. A number of students were arrested over the demonstration. They were released after four hours, and young non-Aboriginal people waiting outside the police station fed them hot Bonox and biscuits.

That night Aborigines were admitted into the cinema. But a crowd outside argued the issue for and against. The local head of the Aboriginal Progressive Association, Harry Hall, thanked the police for protecting various students. The crowd dispersed and the colour bar in the luxury theatre was over.

An Aboriginal man in Walgett was emboldened by the breaking of the colour bar to make a speech to the crowd which exposed an issue that blighted every town with a reserve close at hand. 'Listen! You whites come down to our camp and chase our young girls around at night! You were down there last night. I know you! I saw you last night . . . why don't you go back and tell your wives where you've been. They're over there in the crowd! Go on, go tell 'em. You there. You're nothing but a gin jockey—yes you! And you! You were there a week ago! You have been going with my sister for two years in the dark! . . . Tell her about the little black baby boy you've given her.'

FAITH

Faith (Mussing) Bandler was a woman born at Tumbulgum on the far northern coastal strip of New South Wales, and she would become a potent advocate of the 1967 referendum to change two clauses of the Constitution: one which prevented Aborigines being counted in the census, and the other allowing the Federal government to legislate for Aborigines. To some these could seem modest changes, but Bandler and others saw them as the gateway to full rights.

Bandler's father had been one of the imported 'Kanakas', indentured labourers brought from Vanuatu in the nineteenth century to work on sugar plantations. Subject to expulsion under the race legislation passed in the first session of the Federal Parliament, some hid and stayed on. Bandler's father was one who did so, eventually marrying a woman of Scots-Indian background. Contrary to common belief, Bandler was thus not an Aborigine but suffered from the same attitudes as they did. During World War II, after schooling in Murwillumbah, she joined the Australian Women's Land Army,

driving tractors, digging irrigation trenches, and fruit picking. After the war, by eloquence and force of character, she was given a job as a dressmaker at David Jones department store and became part of Sydney's artistic and political circles.

In the 1949 federal election Bandler had campaigned for the feminist Jessie Street, who stood for the Labor Party in Wentworth. Street campaigned for equal pay for women, married or not, as a right as fundamental as that of men to sell their labour. Street was a formidable exemplar for any young woman. Bandler was also inspired by the strength of Pearl Gibbs, an Aboriginal woman from La Perouse. Born in 1901, the year of a Federation in which Aboriginal peoples were dealt out of the equation, Gibbs had founded the Aboriginal Progressive Association, had organised a strike by Aboriginal pea-pickers, and had been the first Aboriginal to speak on radio—about thwarted Aboriginal hopes.

Bandler worked with Jessie Street again in 1950 when she represented the supposed Communist-front Eureka Youth League at the Australian Peace Congress in Melbourne. Bandler also danced with the Unity Dance Group at the International Youth Festival in Berlin. On Bandler's arrival home early in 1952, not only were her recordings of the African-American basso Paul Robeson, who was a target of the McCarthyists, seized, but she and the dancer and science student Shirley Andrews had their passports confiscated, preventing them from leaving Australia for the next ten years. Bandler's boss at David Jones told her that he was not allowed to employ her again—a fine example of McCarthyism at work in Australia.

In 1956, Gibbs and Bandler founded the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship. In March 1957, Street for the first time suggested to them that they might change the Australian Constitution. A petition of ten thousand signatures was necessary to require Parliament to hold a referendum.

The ten thousand signatures were gathered promptly and presented to Canberra, and Bandler's immediate task in 1958 was to help establish a national organisation to promote the referendum for the campaign, the Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. She had a suspicion of the word 'advancement', however. 'I am rather sorry that it has been used in various committees established to assist the Aboriginal people. I am not convinced that it is advancement for the indigenous Australians to become like the European Australians.'

Bandler was an effective champion of the referendum idea. She was softly spoken but highly determined and eloquent. In cranky cars given to breakdowns, she travelled around New South Wales fundraising, and presented frequent petitions in the Senate chamber. She led a final deputation to Sir Robert Menzies on 11 November 1965, to protest the government's failure to respond, and in such meetings, she was capable of matching Menzies's flintiness. When Menzies retired two months later, the delegation was repeated with his successor, Harold Holt.

By now, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had acquired from the Menzies government the right to vote, the same right Menzies had been unwilling to move on in his first phase as prime minister in 1938. In 1962, the Commonwealth granted the franchise for federal elections in 1962, and states fell into line, with the last state to confirm the indigenous right to vote being Queensland in 1965.

But anomalies ran on. One of Bandler's motivations to achieve a referendum was that until now each state had made its own laws about Aborigines and the state laws needed to be overridden precisely because they created a patchwork of justice and injustice. Bandler argued that if as a Victorian Aborigine you crossed the New South Wales border you were required by law to go to Bridge Street in Sydney to get permission to visit any aunt and uncle on a reserve. A New South Wales Aborigine crossing into Queensland could be arrested without any other cause than his being at large. With a smile, she argued that migrants who had come to Australia recently had all the privileges and protections of federal law, but not Aborigines.

Indeed, Bandler and others were aware that Queensland was a conundrum. The Queensland reserves generally had the best housing and health facilities, but the state's Aboriginal Acts were generally the most restrictive, and the Queensland administrators generally the most authoritarian and bureaucratic. Reserve dwellers in Queensland were subject to the dictate of superintendents, and the level of permitted control was like that found in gaols and mental asylums. The superintendent could prevent card games, dances and native practices that might give offence. He could order medical inspections or confiscate possessions that were 'likely to be the subject or cause of a disturbance of the harmony, good order, or discipline of the reserve'. The use of alcohol and threatening or abusive language were prohibited, as was any act interpreted by the superintendent as 'being subversive of good order

and discipline'. The superintendent could also open mail and inflict corporal punishment. He could impose thirty-two hours of work without payment, and those who refused were locked up or fined. The reserves's superintendents were thus policemen, judge and jury.

At Woorabinda Reserve in Queensland, of the 177 persons tried in 1956, and of the ninety-eight tried in 1962, all were found guilty by the presiding superintendent—a phenomenal conviction rate. Children under sixteen were imprisoned, and acts such as adultery and adult sexual intercourse, which were not offences in the outside world, were tried and punished on the reserves.

The first of the sections of the Constitution under scrutiny in the 1967 referendum was Section 51: 'The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: . . . the people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any state, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.' The second was Section 127: 'In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.'

It was a referendum in which, as the Cabinet acknowledged, television would play a large part. The referendum on 27 May saw the highest 'Yes' vote ever recorded in a federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent voting nationally for changing Section 51 and annulling Section 127, with a majority success in each state and in the Federation as a whole.

After 1967's success, for the first time Aboriginal people were counted as part of the Australian community. All seemed possible—not only the nullification of oppressive state laws, but also the enactment of liberating federal ones. It was promised that the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs would be appointed. It turned out to be William Charles Wentworth, a direct descendant of the original W.C. Wentworth. He was an eccentric and likeable man who nonetheless was as much concerned with the infiltration of Aboriginal groups by Communists as with changing the equation between black and white. Yet by the end of the 1960s, few civil rights restrictions on Aborigines remained, although reserve dwellers in the Northern Territory and especially in Queensland were still controlled by special Acts.

As another result of the success of the referendum under the Liberal Prime Minister Harold Holt, a Queensland Aborigine named Neville Bonner

joined the Liberal Party, and would be chosen to fill a vacancy as a senator in 1971.

There was one benefit the referendum would not deliver to Aboriginal people, and that was to alter the common-law proposition that at occupation by Europeans and their institutions, Australia was *terra nullius*, no man's or woman's land, up for grabs. With *terra nullius* undermining their position at every turn, Aboriginal communities were in a position where their only weapons to ensure just treatment were verbal and moral. For they did not own the earth beneath their feet.

THE GOOD LIFE

Between 1945 and 1965, real average weekly earnings increased by more than 50 per cent, and the five-day working week was standard along with three weeks of paid annual leave. By the early 1960s, a modern detached home on a quarter-acre block had become the norm; 70 per cent of city dwellers lived that way, which was amongst the highest urban home-ownership rates in the world. For decades to come, house ownership would remain the expectation of Australian people, and where it could not be achieved, it seemed like a denial of a personal right. Contrary to common belief, between 1947 and 1961 the number of married women in the workforce increased fourfold, and in 1950 the Arbitration Court had increased women's pay to 75 per cent of the male basic wage. Australian affluence and jobs were further enlarged by a new mineral boom coming to a head throughout the 1960s.

The Good family, immigrants from Britain, saw themselves as fortunate parties to Australian prosperity and sent audio letters to relatives and friends in the early 1960s to celebrate it. In September 1963, Cliff and Gwen and their children, Robert (thirteen years), Andrew (six) and Malcolm (one), left London and emigrated to Perth. They had been influenced by television images of Australia and of athletes in cotton shirts at the sun-drenched 1962 Commonwealth Games in Perth. They had sent for literature and attended an evening of talks and films for potential migrants in which they felt, as Gwen Good said, 'the warmth of Australia'. The Goods sailed on the *Fairsky* from London.

The Goods had subscribed to their new life totally. Part of the purpose of the tapes was to get Gwen's parents to join them in 'this wonderful country'

with its 'wonderful climate'. In 1965, young Andrew whistled the tune of 'Click Go the Shears' for his grandparents. When the family bought its first car—which we couldn't afford in London—they recorded the sound of the engine. Cliff praised the climate, and the treat it was to work in sunshine, but declared he must stay fit and thus had learned to body-surf. His first job was in a factory which had old-fashioned machinery and he thought the Australian manufacturer needed a bit of 'geeing up'. By March 1965, Cliff was happier in a new job setting up and coordinating shop fitting. To show that not even Australia was immune from outside influence, Gwen recorded that 'the kids have gone next door to watch The Beatles on television. You've probably heard of The Beatles. I think they made a bit of a stir when they came back from America.' Soon the family itself had a television, with shows from the BBC.

Gwen told her relatives, 'I swell with pride each morning when I open my large automatic refrigerator. The memories of food rationing have not conditioned me to the bulk-buying of food here. In the butcher's shop yesterday my request for a quarter pound of liver for the cat was repeated loudly and incredulously, thus labelling me forever as a "Pommy" to the crowded shop, no doubt all of whom were waiting to buy at least a dozen steaks and half a sheep or both.' Watching the rotary hoist clothesline spin around in the sunshine was a delightful contrast to the limpness and drizzle of the English Monday morning.

Unlike many other immigrants she was able to balance the poignant differences from home with the idea of the antipodean possibilities. 'The crescent [moon] may have looked the wrong way up and the gum trees and palms seem strangely exotic, but the basic bond of understanding was there, and we knew that we were with people who, although they lived on the other side of the earth, had the same outlook and set of values as ourselves.'

AUSTRALIA'S FRONTLINE

From 1962, as an ally of the United States, Australia provided military advisers to South Vietnam to prevent the Viet Cong from uniting it with the Communist North. The Australian government had introduced military conscription in 1964, even before it became directly involved in South Vietnam. Names of twenty-year-olds were drawn by lottery, and those called up would serve for two years and could be sent overseas to fight. It was not known at the time

that US president Lyndon Johnson had lobbied the Menzies government to conscript Australian men for Vietnam, just as MacArthur had urged Curtin to conscript Australians for overseas service. One dissenter was surprisingly the Australian army, which doubted its capacity to train reluctant conscripts.

From the early winter of 1965, young Australians began to be conscripted for the Vietnamese endeavour. Every few months, a politician or sporting hero drew a series of numbered wooden balls from a ballot box. If a young man's birth date corresponded with the number on the balls drawn out, he was automatically conscripted. University students, married men, theological students and conscientious objectors could seek a deferral. Then those who passed their army interview and medical examination were called into the ranks. Two-thirds of those whose numbers were drawn did in fact end up serving in the army as conscripts. The first annual call-up, in mid-1965, drafted 4200 men. The next year two draws generated 6900 recruits, raising the army's strength to 37,500. At its peak the lottery drafted four intakes of over two thousand twenty-year-olds per year. From 1967 to 1971 there would be about sixteen thousand national servicemen in the army, a little over a third of the total strength.

As soon as President Johnson made the fateful decision to introduce ground troops in 1965, Australia answered his request for support enthusiastically. In late 1968, America had half a million troops in Vietnam to Australia's eight thousand. As in many post-1945 American adventures, the fact that Australia was an ally was perhaps more significant for Johnson than the numbers of troops. Newly appointed American ambassador to Australia, Bill Crook, would describe Australia as 'our most respectable ally', since he was more ambiguous about troops from the Republic of Korea. Vietnam for Australia was an interesting instance of a post-World War II pattern of token support for American military policy, though of course it would prove to be more than a token for Australian casualties, physical and mental.

Even as early as 1954, the issue of how Vietnam was going to be divided was about to be settled by a Geneva Conference attended by the Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey. He declared that 'with the black cloud of Communist China hanging to the north, we must make sure that our children do not end up pulling rickshaws with hammer and sickle signs on their sides'. The federal Parliament agreed with his diagnosis of the threat. Paul Hasluck, who became Minister for External Affairs in 1964 after Garfield Barwick left

to take a seat on the High Court, saw the border of China as the beginning of Australia's frontline. Until now the concentration of foreign policy had been on Malaya and Indonesia as the line of forward defence for Australia. But now the great danger existed at the parallel where North Vietnam met the American-supported republic of South Vietnam, into which some hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese Catholics had moved when Ho Chi Minh, North Vietnamese leader, proscribed religion and massacred any merely progressive nationalists.

The president of South Vietnam from 1954 was Ngo Dinh Diem, who was much boosted in the Australian press in general, and in the Catholic press in particular. Diem had lived for the two years up to May 1954 in Catholic seminaries in the south, from which base he lobbied Vietnamese in the United States and made useful contacts with important Americans such as Cardinal Francis Spellman. He lobbied Belgian support and that of the Vietnamese community in Paris.

In 1954, when he took government, he was reminded by President Eisenhower that his political future depended upon reform. Diem was an austere Catholic leader but believed in nepotism and appointed his brother as head of the armed forces, and passed his sister-in-law Madam Nhu's moral code as law. This law suppressed prostitution, but also Buddhism and Taoism. Despite that, Diem remained the darling of the West; the *Sydney Morning Herald* described him as 'one of the most remarkable men in the new Asia . . . authoritarian in approach but liberal in principle'.

The Liberal Party backed Diem out of conviction but also to guarantee the support of the DLP, many of whom uncritically considered Diem a saint. The reality was that, as his power continued, Diem's land-distribution policies impoverished peasants, and his 'Denounce Communism' campaign meant that the peasants were rounded up and the supposed Communists amongst them were arrested, beaten and, not infrequently, shot. Murder and torture were not uncommon, including wrapping barbed wire around the body, stripping skin off with pincers, or making people sit on the blade end of an entrenching tool. The final act was often to shoot the suspect through the ear. As one observer said, 'His mentality was that of a Spanish inquisitor.'

In Australia, people heard little of these reports, but rather the very real atrocities of Soviet-educated Ho Chi Minh and the North's brilliant General Vo Nguyen Giap, a doctor of economics and a master of both

conventional and guerrilla war. But the reaction to Diem's tyranny in the South was that many young peasants, nationalist and Communist both, and former fighters against the Japanese and the French, joined a new organisation, the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, otherwise known as the Viet Cong, a resistance group fighting in the South with the total support of the North.



In May 1955, the United States went deeper into Vietnam by taking over responsibility from France for training Vietnamese forces. It struggled with the reality that Diem had no wide popular support. It had to deal with three religious sects, each with its own private army, and Diem had a refugee crisis of people from the North. Plus he was Catholic in a largely Buddhist country. Yet by July 1956 with help from the West, he had by severe repression of opposition installed himself firmly. In his first two years he created South Vietnam and broke the powers of the sects, got the army under control, settled 850,000 refugees from the North, and deposed the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai. He created a non-Communist alternative to the Viet Minh.

One hundred and twenty thousand of the Viet Minh, the old nationalist force that had fought the wars against Japan and France, were ordered north by Ho Chi Minh for further training and indoctrination, and to take part in a bloody land reform. A new South Vietnamese rebel force, the Viet Cong, was also emerging and would contribute both guerrilla and regular units to the struggle. But five to ten thousand were left behind in the South to continue the campaign. According to the Geneva Conference, there had been an agreement that Vietnam would hold elections, North and South, in 1955, but Diem refused on the grounds that to think that anything like free elections could be held in North Vietnam was naïveté. The United States agreed with him. This denied to North Vietnam what had been explicitly promised in 1954—reunification within two years. The decision was depicted in the North as a betrayal, and many sincerely felt it to be one. It also denied to North Vietnamese capital Hanoi the rice from the South it had assumed would become available with reunification and which was needed because Stalin-style collectivisation had grievously reduced the North's harvest.

Diem's concentration camps continued in operation, and special military tribunals judged any opponent of Diem to be Communist. Diem

made a gesture towards land reform, but by 1960, 75 per cent of the land still remained in the hands of 15 per cent of the people, another trigger for Communist recruiting. From 1957 the Viet Cong insurgency in the South grew, supplied from the North along a path through the foothills called the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Diem placed his forces in static positions along the border, as if he were facing a conventional invasion, which never happened. It was a guerrilla infiltration that occurred nearly everywhere.

Though the United States was by now edgy about Diem, Australia thought that a non-Communist despot was preferable to a Communist one. President Kennedy believed in the Vietnamese imperative and the domino theory, and so did most Australians. Kennedy felt compelled to halt Communist aggression, and proposed paying to expand the South Vietnamese army to 170,000 men and the Civil Guard to 68,000. In return, Diem was to take reform measures and hold inquiries into corruption. Diem took the aid but did not attend to the reforms. In 1961, Kennedy secretly sent four hundred special forces into the country and one hundred more military advisers, and on 11 May 1961 ordered a clandestine operation against North Vietnam by South Vietnamese trained by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and using American civilian pilots to provide air transport.

Now Vietnam was becoming a large enough part of American policy that if it pulled out, credibility would be lost. Kennedy sent his deputy Johnson to South Vietnam in May 1961. Johnson was greatly impressed by Diem, and returned to Washington with the message that Diem needed more American assistance. If the Americans would not stand in South Vietnam, said Johnson, they might as well pull back to San Francisco.

In mid-1961, General Maxwell Taylor was sent from Washington to southern capital Saigon to examine the position. He reported back that the Communists were well on the way to capturing South Vietnam. He doubted that Diem could stop them. He recommended that the United States move more aggressively into administration and take up a more militant role for American advisers. More American advisers were sent, along with helicopters. Still Diem refused to undertake reforms. But he did build special villages into which people would withdraw at night, supposedly safe from Viet Cong infiltration.

The system of safe villages, like any uprooting of populations, in fact worked best as a recruiting system for the Viet Cong, who soon infiltrated

them even while they were being praised by Western politicians. In August 1963, a group of South Vietnamese generals approached the United States for its support to kill Diem and was told that a stable non-Communist government would be welcome. At that time monks were dousing themselves with petrol and setting themselves alight in protest against Diem. Australians watched these suicidal self-immolations on television with bafflement. In October 1963, the United States cut off funding to Diem's Palace Guard. The rebellious generals, with whom the CIA maintained secret contact, now rose, and when Diem tried to flee, he was murdered.

THE VIETNAM DIVIDE

The first request for Australian assistance reached Canberra in late 1961. It was to satisfy Kennedy that the Australians supplied counterinsurgency advisers and small arms. It was a niggardly opening. At an ANZUS council meeting in May 1962, Menzies said that his government would also supply military instructors. The American request was disguised as an invitation from South Vietnam to fellow member Australia in SEATO. The thirty military instructors were told to avoid combat.

Early in 1963, the United States asked Australia to send a squadron of transport aircraft and sixteen additional pilots. The request was rejected because the government thought that such an enlargement could not be explained to the Australian people. On 6 May 1964, the Americans asked for an increased Australian presence. The request was for more instructors, counterinsurgency personnel, RAAF units and army medical teams. The Australian ambassador in Washington, the Sir Howard Beale so prominent in the desert nuclear tests, urged a positive answer, for it would put Australia in a strong position if it should ever need America's help. The Australian Defence Committee recommended that a further thirty instructors should be employed in the field at battalion level, even though this could lead to casualties. Ultimately eighty-three further instructors and an RAAF transport unit of six aircraft were sent. The first Australian was killed in combat on 6 June 1964. Some of the early casualties were mere tragedy, as when Private Billy Carroll jumped off a truck in a rush to get a cold drink and a shower and somehow a pin on one of his grenades was caught and so released. The explosion blew his stomach away, and two other men, privates Mick Bourke and Arie Van Valen, suffered wounds of which they died.

During a visit to Washington in November 1964, Paul Hasluck was told that if the bombing of North Vietnam had to be intensified, the United States would want Australian aircraft to participate, or at least stand by to protect South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. On 11 December 1964, the Defence Committee suggested that Australia send an infantry battalion, a squadron of the Special Air Service (SAS) regiment and ten more instructors. Three days later, Johnson asked Menzies to provide a further two hundred advisers, minesweepers, and other items the Australian forces did not in fact possess. All that was sent was a further seventeen advisers. The government was very apprehensive of what America would think of such a meagre gesture.

The escalation of the war came in early 1965 when General William Westmoreland, the American commander, asked for troops to guard the US air base at Da Nang. On 17 March, Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes against the North and full-scale air war on thirty days' notice. But America's ally, Australia, was not informed of this move.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident, involving a supposed attack by North Vietnamese naval boats on the USS *Maddox*, occurred then. In the light of this perceived and very welcome aggression, Johnson sought a congressional resolution for full military engagement, even though by now there were twenty-three thousand American advisers in South Vietnam, a virtual army in any case. Operation Rolling Thunder, the systematic bombing of the North, began.

The bombing escalated dissent in Australia, but Hasluck argued, 'The US could not withdraw without necessarily considering the worldwide impact of such a withdrawal . . . if the US did withdraw, the same conflict would be renewed elsewhere. Within a brief period the struggle . . . would be shifted to Thailand. If there was abandonment in Thailand, it would shift to Malaysia—to Indonesia, to Burma, to India and further.' The dominos would be under assault. For that reason, on 4 April 1965 Menzies told a British audience that the US intervention in Vietnam was 'the greatest act of moral courage since Britain stood alone in the Second World War', and that this was 'one of the greatest ever manifestations of justice and principle'.

Two days later he openly opposed negotiations with the North as a way to a solution. In this, Menzies showed himself to be more fervent for action in Vietnam than many of the American officials. He held out the bait of a

possible Australian battalion's involvement to encourage them. But a battalion could only be provided by way of the ritual of a request from South Vietnam, to show that Australia was operating not on the bidding of the United States but as a SEATO member.

In August 1964, the Australians in Vietnam were built up to a battalion; in March 1966 it was replaced by a taskforce of two battalions with its own logistic support, and a squadron of helicopters and transport planes. In December 1966, a guided missile destroyer was attached to the US 7th Fleet, the army strength was augmented by more than a third, and another squadron of bombers was sent off. In October 1967, another army battalion was sent off. By that month, there were more than eight thousand Australian troops engaged in Vietnam. Ultimately sixty thousand Australians served in Vietnam, and the casualties numbered just under four thousand, of whom 521 died.



Given that the 1960s were the 'counter-culture' decade, an era characterised on one side by Johnson's sleight of hand in infiltrating Cambodia and ultimately secretly bombing it (a secret that inevitably got out), and on the other by the rebelliousness of a vivid tribe of the young, generally students, and the overturning of sexual and social beliefs, there was bound to be conflict on the streets.

Combined with the counter-culture was a number of claims that were sometimes percipient and sometimes daft. The university sit-ins had much to do with ending the war but also with student demands to be able to have a hand in their own education. The true criminals were not in prison but in Washington and Canberra; the sane people were confined to asylums and the mad walked abroad; and above all that idea of drugs as a portal. Illicit drugs, including cannabis, became an issue as American soldiers arrived in Australian cities from Vietnam for Rest and Recreation. And the licit drug, the contraceptive pill, and the fact that sexually transmitted diseases were more easily curable than at any time in human history, made it possible for the young rebels at least to think of universal love, body and soul.

Not all opponents to the war were subscribers to the New Age. The Reverend Alan Walker of the Methodist Church in Sydney was opposed to

the war, and so was the Seamen's Union, which refused to accept cargoes for Vietnam. Jim Cairns of the Labor Party and devout Catholic author Morris West were opponents, and a group of mothers of the organisation Save Our Sons. Amongst high-school students, protests and 'teach-ins' (a group of students commandeering a space to discuss Vietnam) were not unknown—Camden High School in New South Wales saw a number of such events. Some young men whose numbers had come up at the draft burned their draft cards in public.

The cry that Australia's involvement was at base a means of improving trade with the United States, a 'blood for dollars' or 'Diggers for dollars' affair, outraged Menzies. But the ACTU, with its broad membership, was ambivalent. The Labor Party was in a bind. Calwell opposed the war, but many Caucus members were ambiguous or in favour. Early in the war, Calwell knew that disloyalty to America was electoral poison, so though he opposed the war he urged the United States to negotiate with the South and the North. Menzies tried to push Calwell to say harsh things about the United States and its unwillingness to try to settle things peaceably, not to know that by the end of the decade what was political poison in 1965 would take on a more golden hue. It was still possible, but not reliable, by mid-decade to depict opposition to the war as left wing and as exhibiting ingratitude for Australia's perceived salvation by the United States in World War II. At the start of the Australian commitment, 72 per cent of Australians believed China and its proxy Vietnam endangered Australia.

The war was visited nightly on television, and Australian journalists such as Mike Carlton, Peter Luck and Iain Finlay reported events with a high degree of professional dispassion, letting the images speak for themselves. The flesh-consuming chemical napalm was an image that increasingly spoke for itself as a begetter of horror. Its use in World War II had not been particularly noticed by the Western public. Now, however, they saw women and children burned by it, and the name of Dow Chemical, which made it, became increasingly accursed.



Menzies's retirement at the beginning of 1966 was a case of an Australian prime minister at the apogee of his renown choosing the moment of his going. He intended to travel and write, rather in the manner of his

World War II Svengali, Churchill. Though his books could inevitably not quite have the same pulse of urgent history that characterised Churchill's writing, *Afternoon Light* and *The Measure of the Years* are smooth and engaging, and stylistically would be matched by few after him except for the as yet relatively obscure rising man of the opposition, Gough Whitlam. Menzies had his successor chosen—the efficient and loyal Harold Holt, who would inherit a party in fine electoral form. Holt was at the height of his vigour, and was photographed in his swimming gear. He would relax some restrictions on Asian immigrants. He had a problem, though, in that the oratory of Whitlam, the Labor deputy leader (about to become leader in 1967), seemed to leave him struggling for a clear line of response.

On the night of 21 June 1966, a rally on the Vietnam War was held at Mosman Town Hall in Sydney. Calwell, who had spoken at the event, was getting into the front seat of his Commonwealth car afterwards when a young man approached with a sawn-off rifle and fired, close up, at him. The shot broke the partly unwound window and Calwell's jaw was covered with blood. It seems that the damage to Calwell was done by the broken glass, and the bullet was found, spent, in his lapel. Things could have been more lethal if luck had not favoured the nineteen-year-old who fired, Peter Kocan, and Calwell himself. Kocan, homeless, a victim of violence in his childhood, seems not to have been driven by attitudes to the war but was, as one doctor described, a 'borderline schizophrenic'. He received a life sentence and was sent to prisons for the criminally insane. To his credit, Calwell wrote to Kocan a number of times, offering help with his rehabilitation. The poet Michael Dransfield, a brilliant young writer with his own problems of ill health and addiction, and who would die at the age of twenty-four, corresponded with Kocan and fuelled his interest in writing. Kocan would eventually be released and write poetry and novels, one of which won a New South Wales Premier's Literary Award.

It was six years before Labor would return to power, although even under Holt, the first of Menzies's successors, discontent about Vietnam, previously suppressed by Menzies but tolerated by the easygoing Holt, was growing. On a visit to the White House in 1966, however, Holt declared that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ', a brand of effusiveness that even some of his party found exorbitant. Holt's fashionable wife Zara always claimed that there was more than mere politics between Johnson and Holt, that over

Holt's Washington trip and Johnson's turbulent three-day visit to Australia in October 1966 they became friends. When Holt disappeared in late 1967, Johnson continually called the Australian Embassy in Washington for news.

THE GOLDEN BOY

The urbane Holt had grown up in the world of theatre and radio stations. He had graduated as a lawyer and opened a practice dealing with theatrical, film and performance industrial matters. He had been in Parliament since the mid-Depression. He had always been a Robert Menzies protégé and had held a number of portfolios in Liberal governments, including Immigration and Treasury. When he came to the prime ministership in 1966, the conservatives were in power in four out of six states, and he held a comfortable majority in Canberra with the DLP holding the balance of power in the Senate and so ensuring Coalition control. Labor was still led by Arthur Calwell, a man increasingly cranky and unpredictable. Calwell had lost two elections to Menzies since coming to the leadership. His deputy, the polished forty-eight-year-old Gough Whitlam, had managed to get White Australia removed from the party's platform in 1965, a move Calwell opposed. Whitlam expressed the opinion that he did not look forward to being deputy to a seventy-year-old prime minister—Calwell was born in 1896—or of being led into an election by one. Whitlam nonetheless had an affectionate relationship with Calwell, for all the latter's flaws and his espousal of old ideas.

Holt, delighted that he had come to lead the country without stepping over a single dead body, had no reason not to expect a long prime ministership. He won the 1966 election with a record majority despite the protests that had blocked the way of LBJ's motorcades. In the 1966 half-Senate election, however, the primary vote shrank to forty-three senators compared to Labor's forty-five.

In his second year of government, Vietnam was losing its popularity as a cause. And now Whitlam replaced Calwell.

It was the weekend before Christmas 1967, and while Zara stayed at the Lodge, Holt went to the family holiday home at Portsea on the Mornington Peninsula. On 17 December, the Sunday, he took his next-door neighbour and mistress, Marjorie Gillespie, and her daughter and some friends and his two bodyguards to see a solo yachtsman, Alec Rose, pass through the

outer heads into Melbourne. Then the party went back along the coast to an unspoilt but treacherous beach named Cheviot. Holt stripped to his trunks to swim. His party advised him it was too rough, but he insisted. He ran and dived in. His head was seen amidst rolling surf and then the roughness of the sea obscured him. They did not see him again. The search for the body would not be called off until 5 January in the new year.

The tragic end of an individual and the civic loss of a prime minister stood almost as a time division between the Australia that accepted Vietnam and the Australia that did not. His death represented a division between the certainty of the Menzies age and the approach by degrees towards that different definition of Australia which Holt himself had helped make, not least with the 1967 referendum and the new immigration laws. It brought to the prime ministership for twenty-nine days the Country Party leader Black Jack McEwen, with whom Holt had quarrelled, who had wanted the Australian dollar devalued for the sake of farmers, but whom Holt had successfully opposed. After that interlude would come the ascent of the fascinating John Grey Gorton, a former fighter pilot who would lead a conservative rearguard while himself being philosophically ready to yield some of the principles Menzies held sacred. Even in the Liberal Party, which in the imaginations of Laborites and the discontented and the young seemed stuck in glue, the times, they were changing.

NOTES



In nearly all cases of individually mentioned Australians, the admirable online *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, founded and maintained by the Australian National University, was a most valuable resource throughout the writing of this history, though for the vast majority of Australians dealt with in this narrative other sources were also consulted. I acknowledge my enthusiastic thanks for it once and for all here.

Another highly appreciated reference which I acknowledge is Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (South Melbourne 2001).

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