IN SEARCH OF RESPECTABILITY

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON SOCIETY IN
SOUTH EAST NEW SOUTH WALES, 1863-1900

by

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This is a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University.

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This thesis is my own original work.

Ian T. Matheson
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SYNOPSIS

In 1863 white settlement in south east New South Wales was little over forty years old. In this large region, about sixty thousand people lived and worked, almost all of them in tiny settlements or on sheep stations. There were few roads, no railways and few other services. During the next four decades, the population more than doubled, future urban and economic patterns were settled, and almost all of the services necessary to a contemporary community were introduced. This thesis examines separately several important aspects of community life during these years, and evaluates their importance in determining the character of the society of the region.

Some of the institutions which became important in this period were intended to foster the adoption by society as a whole of the values of a certain limited section of that society, the "respectable" classes, which were represented in the countryside by the squatters and the more prosperous farmers, in the towns by the commercial classes and the professions. This was true of the churches, which made great material gains in this period, but which never managed to claim the sympathy of the majority of the population. It was also true of the schools, the control of which was the subject of one of the most serious controversies of the nineteenth century. Schools, whether run by the state or by the churches, were intended to produce moral, respectable citizens.

The expansion of communications to and within the south east had ambivalent effects on society. Their greatest impact was economic; the south east was integrated with the colonial economy, and prospered and suffered with the colony as a whole. The people of the south east, served by local newspapers which were more than local in outlook, also
became increasingly aware of external events, an awareness fostered by direct contact with national and international figures, both in politics and entertainment, who visited the region during the period.

Between 1863 and 1900 a variety of institutions appeared, most of them dominated by the respectable classes, which tended to regulate the life of the growing population of the south east. Pastoral and agricultural societies, trade unions, political organizations involving squatters and selectors, friendly societies all evolved out of economic growth and social uncertainty. At the same time municipal councils and local progress associations began to order the growth of towns and villages, while more general public order was established, after the bushranging of the 1860s had been suppressed, by a reformed police force. Many of these institutions, like the schools and churches, were intended to promote order and respectable social behaviour; in most cases this was their effect, intended or not.

If in the conduct of public affairs, the values of the more powerful classes prevailed, in recreational pursuits the demands of working class people were more apparent. Mechanics' Institutes, established to bring culture to the lower orders, were often transformed into billiard clubs; sport, although providing opportunities for social contact between the classes, often lost respectability through its connection with gambling; theatres were devoted almost exclusively to the popular music hall shows rather than to serious music and drama; and the public house was the most popular recreational haunt of all.

By 1900 the efforts of the respectable classes to civilize society had succeeded in removing some of the roughness of the sixties, but these efforts had not succeeded in confirming respectable values as those of the whole community. Although the working classes did make
some compromises over public conduct, beyond this they were not as yet prepared to go. They did not conform to middle class standards of cultural and recreational taste; they formed a subculture which existed beside that of the respectable group, but which had only limited contact with the members of that group.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first and greatest debt is to the Australian National University, whose kindness in awarding me a research scholarship has made possible my visiting Australia and writing this thesis. More personally, I am grateful to my supervisor, Don Baker, for his patience, assistance and valuable criticisms.

For assistance in locating primary material, and for permission to use it, I should like to thank many people. Among these the following deserve special mention: Mr Frank Roberts, Archdeacon A.W. Harris and the staff of the Anglican diocesan registry; Mr Stan Davies and Dr John Nurser of St. Mark's Institute of Theology; Mrs Norma Hart of the Presbyterian library, Sydney; the Rev. J.W. Spencer of the Methodist Historical Society, Sydney; Msgr. C.J. Duffy, archivist of St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney; Father N.M. Cook of the Roman Catholic Education Office in Canberra; Mr E. Slater of Hughes, A.C.T.; Mr G. Ferguson of Merimbula, N.S.W.; Mrs Jean Fielding of the A.N.U.; and the staffs of the Australian National Library, the Mitchell Library, the Archives Office of New South Wales and the archives section of the New South Wales Department of Railways. In the production of the thesis I have received fine co-operation from an excellent typist, Mrs Julie Barton, and a gifted cartographer, Mr Erwin Feeken.

Many other people have given me help and encouragement. Members of staff and other post-graduate students in the History Department, School of General Studies, A.N.U., and workers on the Australian Dictionary of Biography have suggested sources of information, argued with me in seminars, criticized pieces of writing, and allowed me to talk out evolving ideas in, I am afraid, too one sided conversations. Among these I should be ungrateful indeed if I permitted John Atchison,
Chris Cunneen, Jim Docherty, Jim Gibbney, Frances Glass (of the English Department) and Nan Phillips to remain anonymous.

Finally, my thanks to my wife Betty for her unfailing sympathy and support, for reading the thesis and attacking it where necessary for lack of clarity and dullness of presentation. As I believe that history, even thesis history, should be entertaining to read as well as academically accurate, this is perhaps the most important contribution of all.

Of course, although the help of all these people and others has made this a better piece of work than it would otherwise have been, all responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation which remain is my own.

Ian Matheson.
ABBREVIATIONS

ANL  National Library of Australia, Canberra.
AONSW  Archives Office of New South Wales.
ML  Mitchell Library, Sydney.
St. Mary's  Archives of St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.
ANU  Australian National University.
UNSW  University of New South Wales.

PLACE NAMES

In the thesis I have preferred to use the nineteenth century names and spellings for these places, as I felt more comfortable with them after encountering them regularly in my sources.

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Chapter 1

"Almost without the bounds of civilization"

"The inhabitants appear to me to live almost without the bounds of civilization, and the children of the place are running about almost naked, and growing up without any education for good".

I

On his arrival in New South Wales in 1864 to take up his appointment as first bishop of the new Anglican diocese of Goulburn, Mesac Thomas entered a new world. Having spent his previous twelve years in the busy city of London, at the age of forty eight he had left Great Britain during a period of prosperity unequalled in its history, a land of factories and busy cities, of neat fields and enclosed farms, the England of the "Golden Age". And he had come to a frontier country reminiscent in some ways of the American west. In his diocese were no factories in the Manchester sense of the term, no great cities and few towns of any size (the population of Goulburn itself hardly exceeded three thousand in 1861\(^1\)), few enclosed farms.\(^2\) Here was a land of vast extent, thinly peopled, for the most part unfenced. A large part of the population earned their living, directly or indirectly, through sheep

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\(^1\) Memorandum, Inspector W. McIntyre, Goulburn District, to the Council of Education, 4 March 1869. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 58 (AONSW 1/792). The inspector was referring to the small Tuena gold field to the north of Goulburn.

\(^2\) Census of New South Wales, 1861.

\(^3\) A few attempts were made to establish estates on the English model, the most notable being that begun by Robert Lucas Tooth at Kameruka on the south coast in 1864. (See Bruce Ryan, "Kameruka Estate, New South Wales, 1864-1964", in the New Zealand Geographer, vol. 20, 1964.)
farming, though the diocese also contained several important gold fields, and in some areas dairying and arable cultivation were practised. A greater contrast to the England with which Mesac Thomas was familiar could hardly be imagined.

On its formation the diocese of Goulburn extended as far west as the South Australian border, but in 1884 its size was considerably reduced by the separation of the western part which became the diocese of Riverina. It is this reduced area¹ which I intend to examine. In the north the thirty fourth parallel of latitude and in the south the colonial border with Victoria served as the boundaries of the diocese, while in the south east the coastline of the Pacific Ocean was the obvious choice. The western and north eastern limits were more obscure; these followed "an arbitrary selection of county boundaries, apparently designed in each case to preserve to the senior diocese certain established centres of population".² Thus in 1863, when the diocese of Goulburn was founded, Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong remained under the control of the Bishop of Sydney, and in 1884, on the formation of the diocese of Riverina, the Goulburn diocese retained both Albury and Wagga Wagga, by then the second and third largest towns respectively within the south eastern region.

The south eastern region thus defined was geographically very diverse as well as very large. At the one extreme were the Snowy Mountains, the highest mountains in Australia, almost uninhabited in the 1860s and covered with snow on the higher slopes for much of the year; at the other extreme were the fertile Pacific coastal belt and the huge flat Riverina grazing country. Between these extremes were the rich

¹See map 1.

pastoral tablelands of the Monaro and, in the north, the hills and plains stretching from Goulburn in the east through the Yass and Young districts to Cootamundra, Temora and Wagga Wagga. The region contained not only the largest inland lake in New South Wales, Lake George, but also the sources of two of Australia's greatest rivers, the Murray and the Murrumbidgee. Most of the land was grassland suitable for the pasture of sheep, but the Bega and Albury districts and the northern plains had rich enough soil to support arable cultivation; around Albury a wine growing industry was also in process of establishment in the sixties. In addition, the region was rich in mineral wealth. By the 1860s gold had been mined in places as far apart as Braidwood, Araluen and Major's Creek in the east, Burrangong in the north, Tumut and Adelong in the west, and Kiandra in the Snowy Mountains. During the last decades of the century further discoveries were made at Delegate in the far south east, Captain's Flat (south of Queanbeyan), Temora in the extreme north west of the region, and elsewhere, the Temora field promising for a time to be the most productive of them all. The riches in minerals were not confined to gold. There was lead and copper near Bombala, in the Braidwood district and around Tumut, copper at Burrowa in the north, iron and silver at Braidwood, and tin, limestone and marble between Tumut and Gundagai. This list is not exhaustive, but gives an impression of the variety of opportunities presented by the south east to the pioneers of the nineteenth century.¹

In 1861 the total population of south east New South Wales was approximately sixty two thousand; by 1871 this figure had increased

¹For the geographical features of the region I have relied mainly upon Sands's Country Directory & Gazetteer of New South Wales, 1889-90 (Sydney, 1889).
to about seventy eight thousand. Of these, only thirteen thousand in 1861 and twenty four thousand in 1871 lived in towns and villages large enough to be separately identified in the census. The rest were scattered thinly across the countryside living on sheep stations, on farms or on small gold fields. In the whole of the south east in 1861 there were only three towns with a population greater than one thousand: Albury (1,587), Goulburn (3,241) and Yass (1,123); only twenty one other centres were mentioned in the census returns. By 1871 the town of Wagga Wagga and the gold fields of Braidwood, Araluen and Major's Creek had reached one thousand, and a total of forty three towns and villages now had over one hundred people within their boundaries. But the great majority still lived outside these settlements.

The types of economic activity carried on during the 1860s were of course largely determined by the resources available to the pioneer inhabitants. Sheep farming had already become the dominant industry years before, especially in the Monaro, where large properties had been built up by squatters like William Bradley, who by 1859-1860 had acquired the leases of land to a total of 334,000 acres. Bradley was the greatest of these men, but many others held huge acreages as sheep runs. Despite this early growth in the pastoral industry, there were already signs that the south east had potential in other directions.

1 These and other population statistics are my own calculations from census returns. I have added together the returns for each town and pastoral or county district known to me to be within the south east. As these boundaries did not always coincide there will clearly be small errors in my calculations, but I believe these to be very small indeed, for my figures agree very closely with contemporary estimates of diocesan population.

2 That is, towns and villages of one hundred people or more.

Around Albury demand from gold diggings both in Victoria and in New South Wales had created a buoyant beef fattening industry in the fifties, though this industry was largely replaced by sheep farming after a severe epidemic of pleuro-pneumonia in 1861. In the northern, earliest settled, parts of the region near Goulburn and Yass arable farming was in competition with sheep farming as men like those of the Shumack family of Ginninderra, near Canberra, left their jobs on larger properties to begin cultivation on their own account. The increased population of the sixties was largely due to the expansion of the Braidwood and Araluen gold fields, which promised more permanent employment than did the boom fields such as Kiandra and Burrangong, which were quickly relieved of their most valuable seams. Araluen in particular was a field which required the use of machinery for the extraction of the metal, therefore hired labour was more usual there than individual fossicking, and the "certainty of regular employment...had the effect of retaining a fixed and settled mining population". The potential of the south eastern region was the greater in view of its geographical situation on the direct route between Sydney and Melbourne, a position which implied a high trading potential with both of these cities. Trade between New South Wales and Victoria was clearly likely to be a factor in the prosperity of Albury and Wagga, both close to the border and on the main routes for stock droving between the colonies. However, these openings

2 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
3 Samuel Shumack, An Autobiography, or Tales and Legends of Canberra Pioneers (Canberra, 1967) especially chapter V.
could not be fully realized in the sixties due to the grossly inadequate transport system. Not until the building of the railway between 1869 and 1883, resulting in cheaper and quicker transport of commodities to and from the great centres, could the south east develop its potential properly.

By the sixties the people of south east New South Wales still lived, on the whole, in primitive conditions. This is not to suggest that their actual homes were primitive, though many of them undoubtedly were. It was their way of life that was primitive. The people had arrived, though not yet in great numbers; houses had been built; some properties had been secured. But few of the comforts of long established settlements had been added to these bare necessities — even the road system was unsatisfactory, most roads (where they existed at all) being little more than tracks. Where settlement had been advanced to some extent a few refinements had begun to emerge; there were some churches and schools, shops and hotels, post offices and court houses. In general, however, life remained severe.

For those in the land life was still a matter of work and little else. Even the owners of land whose diaries survive were preoccupied with the daily running of affairs to an extent which left relatively little time for other activities. Similarly their employees did not have much free time. Samuel Shumack records that his father's hours of work at Duntroon were from six o'clock in the morning until the

1 For discussion of the development of communications see chapter 6.

2 Such as those of the Faithfull family of Springfield, near Goulburn, and of Edward Pratt of Myalla, near Cooma.

3 Shumack, op. cit., p. 6.
same hour in the afternoon, with a half day on Saturday. As he had also
to make household furniture for his family and make their boots, he, at
least, had little time for other pursuits. Other employers also specified
extensive duties for their hands. Henry Edwards, manager of Bibbenluke
station near Bombala, wanted a groom and gardener whose duties included
the grooming of horses, the care of saddle, harness and buggies, and
some driving.¹ Some years earlier he had asked for help in finding

a married couple without any incumbrances [sic],
as House Servants. The man to cook, cut wood,
bring water, clean my bit and stirrups, and assist
with a Horse occasionally, if required, and to
obey all lawful and reasonable commands. The woman
to do the washing and house work.²

Those who had small farms of their own were also kept busy.

Henry Hargreaves, who leased twenty acres at Tumut from the government,
described his farm to his nephew in 1870:

My Wife Myself & My youngest Son does [sic] all the
Work. We have a Large Orchard & that keeps us at
work, besides a Vegetable Garden which My Wife keeps
well stocked with Peas, Beans, Cabages [sic] & Pot
Herbs. We Milk our own Cows, fatten our own Bacon.
We have plenty of Dried Fruit such as Peaches & Grapes.³

Even had country people had free time, there were few places
outside the home for them to go. Entertainment had to be very much
home made. This was true even in some towns in the sixties, for there
was as yet little advance in the supply of entertainment beyond a
scattering of often disreputable pubs. Judge Alfred McFarland noted the
attractions of the villages of Nimitybelle and Adaminaby in the Monaro:

¹Henry Edwards to W.C. Belbridge, Sydney, 8 November 1877. Bibbenluke
Papers, Letterbook 1877-1883, ANL MS 1154/8/3.

²Henry Edwards to Thomas Dawson, Auctioneer and Commission Agent, Sydney,

³Henry Hargreaves to Richard Hargreaves, 11 and 14 June 1870. ML DOC 949.
These Villages are both of the usual Australian type — a smithy, a post-office, and a police barrack, with two public houses for every store; they therefore require no further description.

Of course, the few towns of some substance already displayed some of the refinements of civilization: newspapers, hospitals, business associations in connection with the pastoral interest, and banks. In 1871 Yass, for example, had all of these, and in addition "a flourishing Mechanics' Institute" (complete with library and reading room), three denominational and several private schools and four churches. More typical was the township of Gunning, about mid-way between Yass and Goulburn. It was, said the Yass Courier, "a thriving little township, with hotels, stores, police barracks, churches (3), flour mill, schoolhouse, and all the usual features of a prospering centre of population". This population was, at two hundred and seventy two, more typical than that of Yass; it is doubtful if the "usual features" of such a settlement made it exciting to live in. The only places which could be fairly so described were the gold field centres, whose volatility and evanescence attracted excitement. This excitement was attendant on the adventurers who moved from one gold field to another in the wake of the most recent and most promising discoveries. With them came the bars, race tracks and dance halls; with their passing the settlement, if it survived at all, did so more quietly and with the loss

1 A. McFarland, Illawarra and Manaro (Sydney, 1872) pp. 103-104.

2 Editorial, Yass Courier, 13 January 1871, p. 2.

3 Ibid.

4 Census of 1871.

5 The Courier described Yass itself as "Sleepy Hollow" on more than one occasion.
of the liveliness of the rush days.¹

The lives of most of the inhabitants of south east New South Wales were in the 1860s very harsh and unattractive by later standards. The main preoccupation of the majority of people was the daily conduct of their business; work was by far the most important single feature of their lives. This must be remembered constantly when studying the progress of spiritual, material and mental comforts. It explains very largely the indifference towards religion, education and culture shown by so many of these people during the later nineteenth century, despite the best efforts of the enthusiasts in the middle classes to cultivate these and other manifestations of the "respectable" way of life they sought to promote.

II

My intention in this thesis is to examine separately several important aspects of community life, and to evaluate their importance in creating the society which was evolving in south east New South Wales between 1863 and 1900.²

The body of my thesis may be divided into four main parts, each of which deals with one of these aspects of life. The first of these, comprising chapters two and three, examines the place of religion in the region. Although I am concerned with the area of the Anglican


²I have chosen 1863 as the starting date for my study because the Anglican diocese of Goulburn, whose boundaries are those with which I am dealing, was founded in that year. This therefore seemed a convenient date to begin, just as the achievement of Federation at the end of the century provided a suitable finishing date.
dioce se, I do not wish to deal exclusively with that denomination; on the contrary it is important to look at the rôles of all four major churches present in the south east during the period, namely, the Church of England, the Roman Catholic church, the Presbyterian church and the Wesleyan Methodist church. The speed of population increase in the country districts of New South Wales in the early years of settlement was so great that the Christian churches faced a very difficult task if they were to provide the opportunity for these pioneers to attend Christian services. As the scattered nature of the population precluded the establishment of compact parishes, their initial response was to send itinerant clergymen into the bush to provide ordinances of religion to such settlers as they encountered during their wanderings through very extensive tracts of country; as more settled centres of population developed, they endeavoured to use these as centres for the traditional type of parish. Obviously, such efforts required substantial financial support from the settlers, a support which was often difficult to obtain. In the first of these chapters I shall narrate the history of the expansion in the south east of the various churches, showing the very great problems they faced, and the methods they used to overcome them. I shall examine the extent of co-operation between the churches, and the organization of each in a country devoid of the kinds of religious tradition to which they had been accustomed in Great Britain and in Ireland. This will be followed by an attempt to assess the attitudes of the inhabitants of the south east towards the churches, and to estimate the success of the missionary clergy in their efforts to create a Christian community in the region.

The second part of the thesis, chapters four and five, will deal with education, surely one of the most important potential influences on the life of any society. The twenty five years between 1860 and 1885
were critical in the history of education in New South Wales. During that period an angry controversy over the place of the churches in the colony's educational system reached its climax in the acts of 1866 and 1880 which effectively secularized public education despite bitter opposition from the Roman Catholic church, led by Archbishop Vaughan, and from certain sections of the Church of England. I shall describe the controversy as it was carried on in the south east, the decline of the Protestant Denominational schools, and the Roman Catholic reaction to the Act of 1880. In the second of these chapters I shall examine the actual state of education in the schools of the region, in an attempt to evaluate the education provided for those children who bothered to attend school (which many did not). The school inspectors were active in attempting to improve the conditions in schools and the quality of the teaching throughout the period; this chapter will also assess the value of the improvements which were made.

Religion and education were obvious areas for action by those who hoped to order the new society of the south east in a way acceptable to themselves. Their notions of "respectable" behaviour could only be advanced by the progress of church and school, as both of these tended to be run by people of similar persuasions to themselves. The other aspects of life I shall deal with were often less obviously favourable to the same end.

One influence on social development which might have had mixed results was the progress of communications, which I shall discuss in chapter six. Although most places of any size in the south east were already served by the electric telegraph in 1863, all other communications were in a very primitive state. This was still the age of the bullock dray, the horse and the coach for those who possessed such luxuries; many people had to walk. In the remaining years of the nineteenth century
the south east witnessed its own transport revolution. The roads underwent vast improvements (even the Great Southern Road was not completely metalled in the sixties), the railway network was built, mostly during the seventies and eighties, and the postal system was expanded to cover the entire region. Sydney, Melbourne and the outside world were thus brought much closer to the country districts of the colony, a process assisted by the proliferation of local newspapers. While these events favoured the spread of knowledge, they also permitted greater contact with influences not conducive to the growth of the "respectable" society.

The fourth part of the thesis will deal with the leisure time activities of the people. The first of the two chapters will be concerned with the growth of institutions in the country, most of which were themselves aimed at the promotion of the vision of "respectability". Among the earliest to appear were associations of farmers and graziers, such as agricultural and pastoral societies, which were intended to publicize and to encourage improvements in farming and stock breeding techniques. Other societies deriving their existence from rural affairs arose from the differences and rivalries between squatters and selectors, employers and employees, but even these had as their objectives the improvement of the way of life of at least one sector of society. These objectives were shared by local councils and progress committees, by friendly societies (whose importance historians have consistently ignored), and by the Law. The police, upholders of the law, were held in contempt during the sixties for the ease with which the more notorious bushrangers evaded them, but gradually achieved through increasing efficiency a position of esteem in the public eye.

In the second of these chapters I shall examine recreational activities, some of which tended to reinforce the trend towards
"respectability", others of which tended to do precisely the reverse. The Mechanics' Institute and School of Arts movement was intended to improve the minds of the working classes, but on the whole they failed to do so; wholesome physical recreation sometimes deteriorated into an excuse for gambling and drinking; the theatre was often a mere music hall. This chapter attempts to show the importance of these and other forms of recreation, and their effect on the efforts of the "respectable" classes to extend their code of conduct to those below them on the social scale.

The society of south east New South Wales during the period from 1863 to 1900 was a young society. It was also a society growing at a rapid rate, and therefore are subject to constant change. The increase in population from sixty two thousand in 1861 to 144,000 in 1901, and the concurrent changes in the composition and distribution of that population, were themselves major influences on the development of the community during these formative years. Their importance must never be forgotten when considering these other influences that I have chosen to deal with in this thesis.¹

¹For details of changes in population size and structure, see chapter 9.
Chapter 2

"Lighting Fires in the Bush": The Organization of Church Work

I

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, 29 October 1820, on the shore of Lake Bathurst, Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his retinue formed the congregation for the first religious service to be held in south east New South Wales. The service was conducted by the Rev. Robert Cartwright \(^1\) in the Governor's large tent as the party made their way back to Sydney after visiting the recently discovered great lake, named Lake George by the Governor only the day before in honour of King George III. \(^2\)

After this brief encounter with religion when white settlement of the area had barely begun it was seven years before further ecclesiastical contact was made. In the interim the first tentative steps towards settlement had been taken as far south as the Monaro, though the Riverina end of the diocesan area was not settled until the thirties.

The first church to make permanent arrangements for the provision of religious ordinances was the Church of England, when the Rev. Thomas Hassall was appointed to the charge often referred to as "Australia beyond Liverpool", part of which extended into the Goulburn

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\(^1\) The chaplain at Liverpool.

\(^2\) Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales: Journals of his Tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1810-1822 (Sydney, 1956) p. 160. The first exploration of the northern part of the region had been accomplished in 1818 by Charles Throsby, who was a member of Governor Macquarie's party.
district, in 1827.¹ Not until ten years later was there an effort to establish a base for religious organization within the south east. It was in 1837 that the Anglicans at Goulburn requested Bishop Broughton to appoint a clergyman to minister to them,² and in the same year that the Presbyterians of the town called the Rev. William Hamilton to be their first pastor.³

The next few years were busy ones for church people as their missions were established, consolidated and expanded. By 1843 there were Anglican churches at Goulburn, Bungonia, Canberra, Jacqua and Marulan;⁴ a Roman Catholic church had been completed at Yass and another begun at Goulburn;⁵ the Goulburn Presbyterians had erected a church for Mr Hamilton; and Wesleyan worship had begun in the town.⁶ In addition, a Presbyterian missionary tour had passed through Albury in 1842,⁷ and the first clergyman appointed to the Monaro, the Anglican Edward Gifford Pryce, had begun his ministry in 1843.⁸ Hence by that year all of the

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³Rev. C.A. White, The Challenge of the Years (Sydney, 1951) p. 289.

⁴Card index of churches, Diocesan Archives, Jamieson House, Canberra.


⁶James Colwell, The Illustrated History of Methodism (Sydney, 1904) p. 275; Eric G. Clancy, Methodism in the Lilac City (Goulburn, 1958) p. 5.

⁷St. David's Parish, Albury, Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Church, 1851-1931 (Albury, 1931).

⁸R.T. Wyatt, op. cit., p. 23.
major denominations had found representation in Goulburn, and had begun to spread their activities both west and south. The age of total isolation from religious life was already passing, even in the far outback.

In the early years of Christian missions to south east New South Wales some of the difficulties which were to prove intractable in later years already manifested themselves. Parish organization advanced only at a very slow rate, for the scattered nature of the population rendered bush life unsuitable for the operation of the type of parish traditional in Britain. For many years those among the bush population who cared about religious matters could do no more than support a very few missionaries who might be seen by them as rarely as once a year. Services were by no means confined to places where church buildings had been erected; the itinerant clergy held services in houses, on river banks, in barns and in any other place which proved convenient for the moment. During his early years in the Monaro the Rev. E.G. Pryce had no permanent residence, as he rarely remained in one place for more than three days,¹ and even in the Goulburn district in the 1850s the Irish immigrants competed with each other for the privilege of entertaining any priest who happened by.²

In spite of the difficulties, the presence of the churches became more widespread as the years passed by. From the early, more populous, centres of Goulburn and Yass missions went out to the south, into the Monaro and along the south coast, and to the west, towards the Riverina. The Anglicans and Roman Catholics were the earliest established

¹Ven. A.W. Harris, loc. cit., p. 3.

1. Mesac Thomas, First Bishop of Goulburn.

*Burmann Collection,
National Library.*
in the Monaro, the Presbyterians at Albury. By the end of the fifties all four major denominations were well established in most important towns.

This expansion of church work, and the increase in population in the south east, partly consequent upon the gold discoveries of the fifties and early sixties, made it plain that it was no longer satisfactory for ecclesiastical control to be exercised from far off Sydney. The growing importance of the south east was therefore recognized in the sixties by the increased status acquired by the local ecclesiastical bodies. In that decade the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian communities all achieved considerable independence from Sydney, while for the Presbyterians the decade was particularly auspicious in that it saw the unification in 1865 of the various branches of that church, which had been fragmented since the 1840s.¹

The first denomination to enjoy a measure of local autonomy was the Church of England. On 14 March 1863 the diocese of Goulburn was established, and eleven days later Mesac Thomas was consecrated in Canterbury Cathedral, the last colonial bishop to be appointed by Letters Patent granted by the Crown.² He arrived in Goulburn on 8 April 1864 to begin the mission which lasted until his death in 1892. In 1865 the Presbytery of Goulburn came into existence along with the united church.³ This was even more important to the Presbyterians than the foundation of

¹ In 1843 the Church of Scotland suffered the schism known as the Disruption, which resulted in the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. The effects of this schism were felt in New South Wales about three years later.

² For details see Ross Border, The Founding of the See of Goulburn (Canberra, 1956); Ven. A.W. Harris, loc. cit., pp. 4-5; Barbara Thorn (ed.), Letters From Goulburn (Canberra, 1964) p. 8.

of their diocese had been to the Anglicans, since the nine ministers active in the south east had, before the unification, served no less than five distinct church organizations. Third, on 9 June 1867 the Roman Catholic diocese of Goulburn came into effective operation with the consecration of William Lanigan, though the diocese had been established on paper since 1862.

There were in the 1860s about thirty five clergymen of all denominations at work in south east New South Wales. Their labours extended over a huge area of territory whose predominantly rural population was rapidly expanding. Two features of the demographic pattern of the region largely explain the difficulties the missionaries encountered in organizing parishes. First, in the pastoral districts, which comprised much of the south east, the people were so scattered that there were rarely sufficient numbers in any one place to justify its selection as a parish centre. Second, until the seventies, several of the main population centres which might have been capable of supporting

1These were: the Synod of Australia, which was the orthodox Church of Scotland body in the colony; the Synod of New South Wales, comprising the followers of Dr John Dunmore Lang; the Synod of Eastern Australia, which represented the Free Church; the United Presbyterian Church, the result of a union in Scotland in 1847 between two groups of seceders from the eighteenth century; and the United Presbyterian Church of Victoria, which supplied Albury until that congregation left the Presbytery of Beechworth to join the new Presbytery of Wagga Wagga in 1885.

2Father M. Quinn, loc. cit., p. 1. The first bishop to be appointed had died in Ireland without taking charge of his diocese, and the next nominee, Dean Hanly of Yass, declined to accept the position.

3See above, pp. 3-4.

4Until the sixties fencing on sheep runs was rare, therefore there was a need to keep stations about eight miles apart to separate neighbouring flocks. By 1861 cattle stations in the Riverina were often fenced, though, so that near Albury this reason for the spread of population was already less valid. (G.L. Buxton, The Riverina, 1861-1891 [Melbourne, 1967] pp. 37-39.)
a parish organization were gold fields such as Braidwood and Young. In these places the high turnover of people reduced the possibility of forming a core around which to gather a congregation. The early strength of the churches was therefore to be found in the few settled country towns like Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Yass and Bega.

Of the 65,000 people who inhabited the region in 1861 roughly forty three per cent declared themselves on the census forms to be members of the Church of England, thirty five per cent to be Roman Catholics, nine per cent to be Presbyterians and four per cent to be Methodists, leaving almost one tenth who claimed adherence to other churches, Christian or pagan, or to no church at all.¹

A more detailed analysis of the returns for the towns and villages reveals that each denomination had its particular areas of strength. The Presbyterian church was strongest in the Twofold Bay district of the far south coast; the Roman Catholic church in the southern Monaro, especially in Cooma, Candelo and Nimitybelle, and in the northern plains between Burrowa and Cootamundra; and the Methodist church in the Goulburn district. It is more difficult to trace areas of Anglican dominance, and more likely that such findings are misleading when they are discovered, for people with no strong religious ties were often reluctant to say so, finding it more convenient to profess an attachment to the Church of England if pressed. The returns for some towns, such as Bega, Bombala and Wagga Wagga did suggest that the Church of England was stronger in these centres than elsewhere, but there was no obvious concentration of Anglicans in the same sense as there was of

¹This high figure who were not Christians merely reflects the temporary presence of many Chinese at the gold fields of Araluen, Braidwood, Burrangong, Kiandra and Adelong.
Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. Conversely, there were no obvious places in which the Anglican church was noticeably weak, though such places could be found quite easily in regard to the other denominations.

The likely explanation for the existence of local concentrations of Roman Catholics and Presbyterians is that many immigrants were coming to the south east from Ireland and from Scotland. The national groups tended to congregate together, and, as the Scots were usually Presbyterians and the Presbyterians Scots, the Irish normally Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholics Irish, the religious enclaves were a logical result of the settlement patterns. Anglicanism, on the other hand, was less tightly bound to a minority national group, therefore adherents of that creed were to be found more widely scattered throughout the region. For the same reasons Roman Catholics tended to be more numerous in country districts, having come from a rural land, Methodists and Anglicans, being in the main from urban England, were stronger in the towns, and the Presbyterians, coming from a Scotland mid-way through its industrial revolution, were fairly evenly divided between town and country.

The scattered nature of the population, together with the rugged nature of much of the countryside, imposed severe physical burdens upon the first missionaries. In 1864 Mesac Thomas calculated\(^1\) that his clergy were obliged to ride an average of three thousand miles a year, some travelling as many as five thousand. The first Presbyterian minister appointed to the Moruya district, the Rev. Patrick Fitzgerald, found his parish stretching a hundred miles down the coast from Ulladulla.

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in the north to Nerrigundah in the south; and in 1877 the Roman Catholic priest at Cooma estimated the size of his district at eighty five miles in length by fifty miles in width. It was thus very difficult for the clergy to care properly for their congregations.

Geographical considerations and the primitive state of transport facilities compelled the clergymen to spread the ordinances of religion much more thinly than they would have wished. They coped by dividing their time as best they could between the various centres of population within each parish. In 1857 the Rev. William Ross of Goulburn wrote warning the Convenor of the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland what newcomers to the colony might expect:

The Ministers coming out, ought to understand distinctly, that they will have to work hard. From the scattered nature of our bush population, there can be no large congregation at any particular spot. Our congregations are small gatherings, several miles apart, and accordingly, the Minister having to undertake, at least, two of these gatherings on a Sabbath-day, he has not much time to devote to other matters.

Typically this was achieved by holding Sunday morning service at the main parish church and by travelling to hold services in outlying centres in the afternoon and evening. Often it was impossible to visit all parts of a parish on the one day. In 1870 there were three churches and ten preaching stations in the Roman Catholic district of Twofold Bay, one

1 Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly, September [?] 1898, p. 7.

2 State of the Mission return, 28 December 1877. St. Mary's Cathedral Archives, Sydney. (Hereafter referred to as St. Mary's.)


church and more than twenty stations in the Cooma district,¹ and three churches and three stations in the Queanbeyan district.² In the latter district the churches at Bungendore and Michelago were sixteen and twenty six miles respectively from Queanbeyan.³ The service arrangements for the Anglican parish of Queanbeyan, in a relatively well populated area of the south east, demonstrate the complexity of the problems facing the clergy.⁴ Services were held by the rector, the Rev. A.D. Soares, in Queanbeyan every Sunday evening and on two Sunday mornings in each month; the other two Sunday mornings saw him at Bungendore. Sunday afternoons were spent preaching either at Molonglo, Burra or Hoskingtown, Molonglo also having four morning services in the year, while Molonglo, Hoskingtown and Foxlow were also visited on occasional weekdays, and "Micalago, Creekboro, and other places, by special appointment". In more outlying parts services would be held even less frequently. Fortunate indeed was the clergyman who, like the Presbyterian minister of Yass, the Rev. John Gibson, could rely on local aid. He was able to preach in the important village of Gundaroo only once a month, yet was secure in the knowledge that regular services were held there by William Affleck, proprietor of the Royal Hotel, who read appropriate sermons on the other Sundays.⁵

¹Book of the Mission, Cooma, 1870. St. Mary's.
²Book of the Mission, Queanbeyan, 3 December 1870. St. Mary's.
³State of the Mission return, Queanbeyan, 18 October 1877. St. Mary's.
⁴Calendar of Public Worship, in Rev. A.D. Soares, A New Year's Pastoral Address to the Parishioners of Queanbeyan and District Annexed (Queanbeyan, 1872) p. 15. Most of these small settlements were situated in the area between Queanbeyan, Bungendore and Captain's Flat.
⁵Rev. Dr Steel, reporting on a visit to the Goulburn Presbytery, Christian Herald, August 1868, p. 99; William Affleck, Reminiscences of William Affleck from Infancy to Present Date (Sydney, 1916) p. 27.
The value of holding occasional services in isolated places was sometimes doubtful. The Anglican clergyman at Braidwood thought them to be "productive of no perceptible good; they merely light fires in the bush, as it were, which go out again".\(^1\)

The state of transport facilities in the sixties made matters even worse for the clergy. Most of the south east lacked even the suggestion of roads, such coach travel as was available was expensive, and the railway had not yet penetrated the region. In these circumstances visitations were often exceedingly gruelling, for the clergy had to travel by buggy where they could, on horse back or on foot elsewhere, across very difficult terrain. Plainly, this was a hard task for clergy who, whether Scots, Irish, English or (like Mesac Thomas) Welsh, were usually new arrivals to the colony, were often fresh to the ministry, and were almost always unused to riding long distances even occasionally, let alone regularly. As the bishop commented, it was all very well for young, fit men to ride forty miles and preach five times of a Sunday, but "the continuance of this is beyond endurance; and, as age advances, they find themselves unequal to the task".\(^2\)

As the population increased, and as the encouraging effects of the establishment of local control were felt, advances were made by the churches. In the first eight years of the existence of the Anglican diocese the number of clergy active within its boundaries increased by twenty four, the number of churches by twenty five and that of parsonages by ten.\(^3\) Between 1863 and 1870 five new Presbyterian charges were

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\(^{2}\) Speech to the Church Society, 28 July 1864, loc. cit.

\(^{3}\) Rt. Rev. Mesac Thomas, D.D., Thoughts on the Census of 1871 (Goulburn, 1871) p. 22.
created and five new churches built; in the sixties Methodist circuits increased in number from four to eleven, and in the same decade the Roman Catholic diocese gained two ecclesiastical districts and eight churches. The 1860s were therefore years of considerable material progress for the churches, yet the advances made barely touched the problem. In 1876, after still further progress had been made, the Anglican incumbent of Tumut reckoned that in the previous year he had walked 147 miles, driven 360 and ridden 1,996 in the conduct of his duties. Four years earlier his bishop had painted a melancholy picture of affairs in a letter to England:

Reduce the whole of England, Scotland & Wales to a population of 95,000; divide them into thirty parishes or districts; place a missionary in each of them with herculean toils, & very scanty resources; and you have a very accurate picture of our position.

If the head of the largest denomination felt obliged to state his case in such terms, how much more difficult must conditions have been for the less numerous Presbyterians and Methodists, and even for the relatively large group of Roman Catholics?

In addition to the physical trials with which they were confronted the missionaries also faced serious financial difficulties. Unavoidable in a newly settled country, these were compounded by the withdrawal of government assistance to religion in 1863, just as the advances of the churches into south east New South Wales were gathering

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1 Presbyterian and Wesleyan information from individual church records, Roman Catholic information from the Almanac of the Diocese of Goulburn, 1903 (Maitland, 1903). Roman Catholic churches on the south coast and in the Monaro were in the Archdiocese of Sydney, so are not included in these figures.


3 Mesac Thomas to the Secretary, S.P.G., 2 December 1872. Letterbooks, vol. 4.
pace. As a result very few of the clergy benefited from the lucrative state stipends after that date; the burden of supporting the churches and ministers had to be borne by the people of the bush, with such assistance as could be begged from outside bodies and individuals.

Unfortunately, bush society was very ill equipped to assume that burden. The church people were not aided by endowments, common in England, or by the patronage which had caused so much trouble in Scotland. Further, the demands made on their own scanty resources as they attempted to establish other necessary institutions in the bush reduced their ability to respond to the appeals of the churches, despite the exhortations of the church leaders.

From the beginning, therefore, most congregations found themselves in debt, facing as they did the need to build churches and parsonages (and often schools) as well as the more elementary one of supporting the local clergymen. The Moruya Presbyterians had a debt of £88-2-10 a year after the opening of their church in 1863.\(^1\) Though they quickly reduced this, the spending of another £300 on a manse in 1864 led the congregation back into debt.\(^2\) By 1868 the treasurer reported "a very depressed and low condition of affairs" regarding the payment of the stipend,\(^3\) and in 1870 the manse debt was still £125.\(^4\) Similar problems were experienced by churches of all denominations. For example, the Methodist circuit at Young reported deficits, ranging from two

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\(^1\) *Presbyterian Magazine*, August 1864, pp. 241-242.


\(^3\) Ibid. Congregational meeting of 20 December 1868 (wrongly dated 1869).

\(^4\) Ibid. Meeting of 16 February 1870.
shillings and threepence to £67-8-2, each year from 1865 to 1872;¹ the Roman Catholic district at Bombala had a debt of £240 between its three churches in 1877;² and in the 1860s only one Anglican parish in the diocese raised sufficient funds to pay its own clergyman.

Although by the close of the sixties the churches in the south east had consolidated their position, they still faced many problems. In the following decades they required to tackle the obstacles of whose presence they had become aware in their first years of relative autonomy.

II

If the period before 1870 had been one of establishment and consolidation, that from 1870 until the end of the century was for the churches one of rapid material expansion. The building of still more churches, especially in areas whose population only began to increase rapidly after the sixties, necessitated further subdivision of control. The Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses set up new deaneries, the Presbyterian church created new Presbyteries.

These changes in church organization occurred directly in response to the continuing rapid growth in the population of the region. By 1901 there were 145,482 people within the boundaries of the Anglican diocese; the number of adherents of the Church of England alone in that year slightly exceeded the entire population of the south east forty years before.³

¹Account Book, Methodist Circuit, Young, 1864-1872.
³R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, p. 116. Wyatt's figure and that I arrived at by analyzing the census returns differ by considerably less than one per cent.
As the censuses of 1891 and 1901 did not give detailed figures for the smaller towns and villages, it is not possible to analyze denominational strengths in the same way as I have done for 1861 and 1871. But it is possible to make a few general comments on the subject. During the last thirty years of the century the proportions of those claiming adherence to the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches all increased, though the Roman Catholic representation in the community declined, as did "others", in the latter case due to the departure of the Chinese.

Table 1

Division of Religious Adherence in south east New South Wales, 1861-1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Church of England</th>
<th>Roman Catholics</th>
<th>Presbyterians</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table it is clear that the only consistent trends are the increase in the proportion of Methodists and the decline in minority groups. Other variations are almost all within the range of statistical error.

Whatever the proportions of people claiming attachment to each denomination, the absolute numbers of course increased greatly. The churches had therefore two tasks facing them during these years: first, they had to continue to extend their ministrations into the more isolated
districts; second, they had to cope with the growth of the centres in
which their work had already begun. Both of these tasks demanded that the
churches undertake substantial programmes of expansion in the construction
of church buildings and in the supply of missionaries. One consequence
of this was the subdivision of existing parochial districts and the
creation of many new ones, particularly in the newer centres of habitation.

By the close of the century the Methodist church, which had had
only five circuits in operation in 1863, had increased this number to
thirteen, in addition to three Home Mission Stations. Other
denominations achieved still more progress. The Church of England
diocese, despite the loss of churches, clergy and territory to the
diocese of Riverina on the latter's foundation in 1884, increased its
parish organizations from fourteen in 1863 to thirty six in 1900, all
but one of the new parishes coming into being during the episcopate of
Mesac Thomas. In 1900 these parishes contained about a hundred and fifty
church buildings. Likewise, the Presbyterian church expanded its
activities. In 1900 it had twenty one parishes and two Home Mission
Stations, most of the new charges, like those of other denominations,
being in outlying areas or in railway towns such as Junee and Cootamundra,
where new charges came into existence in the eighties. In the Roman
Catholic diocese of Goulburn there were by 1900 fourteen separate

1 Adelong, Braidwood, Goulburn, Moruya and Yass.

2 Information on foundation dates from F.R. Swynny, New South Wales
Methodist Church Circuit Index (Sydney, 1936).

3 Calculated from parish records, from a card index of churches at the
diocesan registry and from R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, Part II,
passim.

4 Statistics from parish and Presbytery records and from Rev. C.A. White,
The Challenge of the Years, passim.
missions containing about sixty churches and twenty convents,\(^1\) and in the relevant parts of the Archdiocese of Sydney a further eleven missions containing forty churches and nine convents.\(^2\)

Therefore the last thirty years of the century were years of great expansion in the operations of the Christian churches, as their members endeavoured to meet the task of bringing the opportunity of religious participation to an increasing population still spread relatively thinly over a large area. They were years of material progress, for the most obvious manifestations of the energies of the church people were the churches and related buildings which appeared in all of the larger centres and many of the smaller ones. Whether those who built these often impressive structures were wise to utilize their limited resources in this way is easy to question with the advantages of hindsight; but nobody would have argued in this way at the time.\(^3\)

To provide for a proper witness of the faith it was felt necessary to have good church buildings, therefore they were raised, often at great cost, wherever sufficient funds could be obtained.

Naturally these achievements were not accomplished without difficulty. Indeed, the spread of church activity created as many problems as it solved. First, the local organizations established in the sixties had become unwieldy by the eighties, therefore further devolution of responsibility occurred by the creation of new Presbyteries

\(^1\) Almanac of the Diocese of Goulburn, 1903 (Maitland, 1903).

\(^2\) Compiled from the Catholic Home Annual and Directory of Australasia (Sydney, 1892-1900).

\(^3\) It was thought to be unfortunate that only one church in the Anglican diocese, that at Yass, had acquired a peal of bells. (Australian Churchman, 22 November 1877, p. 245.) If such luxuries were considered desirable, the church buildings themselves were seen as essential.
and deaneries. Second, and more difficult to deal with, was the problem of financing these new ventures. From the earliest days individual parishes had burdened themselves heavily with debts through their efforts at church building. As the work of the churches expanded more rapidly after the 1860s it was natural that their financial needs should grow also.

In an attempt to solve this problem several efforts were made to establish systems of financial co-operation. Almost at once on his arrival in Goulburn Mesac Thomas established the diocesan Church Society. The official objects of this society were very worthy. Apart from the centralization of stipend payments to existing clergy and the acquisition of new missionaries for unsupplied districts, the society concerned itself with assisting parishes in the erection and repair of essential buildings and in obtaining church endowments. The society was also responsible for the provision of lay or clerical missionaries to outlying places and to the aborigines "or other heathen races"; for circulating the Scriptures and other religious books; and for encouraging the establishment of church schools (before the passing of the Public Instruction Act).

To run the society, local auxiliaries were established in the parishes in order to collect local subscriptions for its funds. The intended effect of the society, the redistribution of the wealth of the

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2 It was intended that all local stipend subscriptions should be forwarded to the society in Goulburn, where any grant from the society would be added before the whole amount was paid, quarterly, to the clergymen. Some parishes never co-operated, others did so only occasionally, some did so regularly, though from the 1880s the number of co-operating parishes declined sharply.
diocese in the most useful manner possible, was never accomplished, despite these efforts. Even some of the richer parishes contributed little, and by 1877 almost half of the entire sum raised in the diocese was collected in the Goulburn district.\(^1\) In 1882 lack of funds forced the society to suspend payment of its contributions towards some stipends,\(^2\) and by 1890 the organizers had to confess that, of the eight objects intended to be assisted by the society, only two or three had ever received aid.\(^3\) Three years later the practice of using the society as an agent for stipend payments finally ceased, and the society became simply a Home Mission Fund, whose objects were effectively confined to the provision of assistance to outlying districts.\(^4\) Yet, though in the long term the aims of the society were not achieved, in the short term the society was successful. During the seventies and early eighties in particular it was instrumental in enabling many parishes to build churches and parsonages, and even to maintain clergymen, where such tasks would have been beyond their own resources. Although many congregations failed to co-operate the society collected and dispensed large quantities of money; it was claimed in 1886 that it had raised over £150,000 in twenty one years.\(^5\) Anglican efforts at co-operation therefore did meet with some success, even if that success was confined


4 Annual reports for 1893 and 1895.

to the early years when, of course, need was greatest.

Both the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Methodist churches also had co-operative schemes, though these operated at the colonial level rather than at the local one. From the first the Presbyterian charges were expected to contribute towards the various schemes of the General Assembly, from the church extension fund to the funds for missions to the heathen and for clergy widows and orphans. As in the Anglican church, it was intended that congregations forward stipend contributions to the fund in Sydney for payment to their ministers rather than pay direct; as in the Anglican church, may refrained from doing so. In addition, each Presbyterian church had a General Assembly assessment to pay towards the cost of running the colonial administration. Often these payments, like the others, fell into arrears. After the General Agent had complained in 1889 to the Goulburn Presbytery over the failure of congregations to meet their obligations, the Presbytery resolved that under existing circumstances it could not urge the matter, though it did "strongly advise" the charges to pay off their Assembly debts as best they could.2

The expansion of religious provision thus gave rise to financial and administrative problems at both regional and colonial levels. The churches responded sensibly by setting up bodies to help the weaker districts and to use the wealth which did exist within the

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1Minutes of the Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, Fifth Session (Sydney, 1869) Appendix G.

2Minute Book, Presbytery of Goulburn, vol. I, 1865-1899, p. 266. In 1886 the charges in the Presbytery were assessed for the Assembly Fund at the rate of £60-9-4; only £16-9-1 were paid. (From financial returns, Minutes of the Proceedings of the General Assembly..., Twenty first Session [Sydney, 1886] p. 97.)
churches in the most efficient manner possible. If these schemes were not totally successful, that was due to the lack of charity on the part of some congregations, to the lack of ability to help on the part of others, and to changes in the pattern of life, which reduced the need for such organizations as the century neared its end.

More obvious than these problems were those which confronted the individual churches. It was at the local level that most funds to pay for specific projects had to be raised; it was at the local level that the effects of economic changes were earliest and most keenly felt.

Before 1870, although several congregations were already in debt through building churches, the actual number of churches in existence was still relatively small. The period from 1870 to 1900 saw a great increase in this number, and a great increase in the financial burden incurred as a consequence of their erection. It quickly became more common for a congregation to be in debt than for it to be solvent. Occasionally enough money was raised during the construction of a new building to enable a church to open free from debt or, more often, with a small enough debt to be cleared in a short time. Usually, though, there was a debt of some magnitude to be faced. For example, in 1882 the Roman Catholic church at North Goulburn opened with a debt of £660, and twelve years earlier the Bega Presbyterian church had faced a debt of slightly over £100 at its opening day.

The initial demands on new parochial districts were often on

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1 The Eden Presbyterian church was free from debt when opened by Dr Lang on 24 May 1866. (Presbyterian Magazine, July 1866, pp. 211-212.)

2 Express, 28 January 1882, pp. 5-6.

3 Christian Herald, April 1870, p. 35.
such a scale that they ensnared the congregations in obligations, from
which they escaped, if ever, only after strenuous efforts made over
many years. That the expansion of church work was not the only cause
of financial crises is undeniable,¹ but it was one of the major causes.
Mesac Thomas, always a stern critic of his flock, recognized as much
when, in his address to the Church Society's annual meeting in 1881, he
acknowledged that the current economic troubles had arisen "not from
failure of income so much as from the growing demands arising from the
progress of the diocese".²

These "growing demands" did elicit a considerable response
from the churches at the local level as much as in the administrative
centres. The church people proved most ingenious in inventing new ways
of persuading their friends and others to part with their money. The
basic methods of taking collections and opening subscription lists were
often highly productive, but they were supplemented by a variety of
other devices. Also important were bazaars and tea meetings, which
were common throughout the period, as were "improving" lectures, given
by the clergyman himself or by some other personage of repute. Flower
shows, art unions and parish concerts also raised funds for many churches,
but the most intriguing device of all was the "Bruce auction", a highly
popular and highly lucrative activity all over the region. The Bruce
auction was the nineteenth century equivalent of the White Elephant
stall; often, though not always, only livestock and farm implements
were sold. Each item might be sold several times as it was redonated
by its original purchaser, thus bringing in sums far in excess of its

¹See below, chapter 3.
²Report of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting... (Goulburn, 1881) p. 17.
value.¹

These efforts often raised quite remarkable sums of money, even in defiance of general economic conditions. In the middle of the depression of the early 1890s, which had almost brought commercial life in the town to a complete stop, the Anglican church at Cooma raised £110 from a bazaar, "which considering bad times & the fact that we had not more than £40 worth of goods to dispose of may be considered satisfactory".² Successes such as these notwithstanding, churches of all denominations continued to suffer heavily from debts throughout the period. In 1891 the Methodist circuit of Adelong had accumulated a debt of £283;³ in the same year the Roman Catholic district at Bungendore was indebted to the extent of £704, mostly due to the construction of a new convent,⁴ and at Cooma the debt was a massive £3,000.⁵ There were, of course, a few churches free from such encumbrances, but they were very few.

Over the thirty years from 1870 to the end of the century the churches in the south east responded to the challenge of the rising population and to that of expanding settlement by maintaining missionaries

¹The system was originated by Mr Bruce, of the Melbourne firm of Cornish and Bruce, probably early in the 1860s. (Launceston Examiner, 5 February 1870, p. 7.) The firm was one of railway engineers, but Mr Bruce was an active philanthropist. (Information from Mrs Jean Fielding, Australian National University, and Miss N. Howlett, National Library.)

²Comment by the incumbent, Service Register, St. Paul's Church, Cooma, 8 March 1894.

³Adelong Circuit, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1868-1924. Meeting of 1 April 1891.


⁵Synod returns, District of Cooma, 1891. St. Mary's.
and building churches to such an extent that there were, by 1900, no longer huge areas of country which rarely saw a clergyman. The initial structure of church organization was altered where necessary to take account of changing circumstances. Not all of the problems were solved, as the desperate financial conditions of many parishes showed, but in their efforts to solve them the Christians of the south east displayed an inventiveness and a willingness to adapt which reflected great credit upon them. They made the period, despite the difficulties, one of marked achievement and growth.

III

In 1863, when the first step towards regional autonomy was taken, the Christian religion was represented in south east New South Wales by only three dozen clergymen working from a handful of important population centres. In 1900 there were two dioceses based on Goulburn, each with its own system of regional devolution of responsibility; four Presbyteries; and thirteen active Methodist circuits. ¹ Parish organization was so well advanced that no important town or village lacked the services of at least the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, and few were without a Presbyterian church. Most parishes still included sizeable rural districts, but improvements in transport and a general reduction in the size of parishes made the provision of services in these parts less of an imposition for the clergy.

Though all this was so, at the end of the century circumstances were still far from perfect. Some places still had parishes larger in area than some British counties:

¹In the eighties the Salvation Army also began work in several towns, including Goulburn, Crookwell and Wagga.
In existing circumstances, the congregations united in...the Presbytery [of Monaro] were almost as strange to each other, and had as little knowledge of each other's doings, as if they were separated by wide seas. There are congregations in the same charge thirty, forty, and fifty miles apart.1

This comment serves as a useful reminder that the south east was, despite the progress of the previous years, still a region in which the role of the churches was a missionary one.

By the nineties the formal presence of the churches had been established, even if the problems involved in that establishment remained far from a solution. The depression of the early 1890s intensified the financial troubles of many parishes. In 1896 the Presbyterian congregation at Burrowa lost charge status, and even ceased services until 1901, through financial hardship,2 while the charge of Goulburn Trinity (South Goulburn), formed with high hopes in 1885, disappeared in the mid nineties in economic chaos.3 Although no Anglican parishes actually disappeared during these years, they were not free from trouble. The parish of Cootamundra was one which was heavily in debt, the limit on the overdraft to the bank actually being exceeded in 1894,4 and others were similarly burdened.5 At the close of the century congregations of all denominations were still trying to pay off debts incurred in church building many years before.

1Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly, September [?] 1898, p. 1.
4Christ Church, Cootamundra, Minute Book, 1892-1908.
5See accounts of stipend difficulties, chapter 3.
In assessing the material progress made by the churches it is important to remember the tangible assets which had been built up over the period as well as the cries of financial hardship. In 1863 there had been one Christian clergyman in the region for every two thousand people; in 1900, despite a population increase of more than a hundred per cent, this ratio had been reduced to about one clergyman for every twelve hundred people. Most parts of the south east, except the wilder parts of the Snowy Mountains, were well served by churches. The achievement, in material terms, had been a mighty one.

As Australians began to think in federal terms at the turn of the century, so did the churches. In 1901 the state Presbyterian churches joined together as the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Long before this both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches had held national conferences of bishops, but for all Federation reminded them of a wider world than their own locality. Within the south east these two churches entered the new century under new leaders. The second Anglican bishop, William Chalmers, died in 1901, and was succeeded by Christopher George Barlow, whose whole clerical life had been spent in North Queensland. William Lanigan, who died in 1900, was replaced as Roman Catholic bishop by a man of great experience in the Goulburn area, John Gallagher, who had been the first principal of St. Patrick's

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1 One tangible asset was the real estate that the churches held and on which they built churches and schools. The value of this must have risen considerably as towns grew in size, for most churches were situated near town centres. Despite the economic difficulties, Anglican church records show that very few parishes had attempted to sell or lease church land by 1900.

2 Rev. C.A. White, The Challenge of the Years, p. 55.

3 R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, pp. 64-65.
College, Goulburn, in the seventies, and had been coadjutor to Lanigan since 1895. These men, unlike their predecessors, took their places at the head of well established churches.

The prospect for the future was in many ways a bright one. The basic work was largely completed; some of the debts of earlier years were being reduced; the great Anglican issue of the past twenty years, the Goulburn Cathedral Dispute, had been resolved. The organization of church work was almost in its final form, the only major change since 1900 being the formation of the Roman Catholic diocese of Wagga Wagga in 1917. Therefore the energies of church workers could be devoted to building up the human material of the church.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the Christian churches succeeded in offering the chance to hear the Word of God to all the people of south east New South Wales, wherever they lived. The more difficult task was to persuade them to take advantage of the opportunity offered to them.

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1 See chapter 3.
Chapter 3

"An Arm of Flesh": The Influence of Christianity

I

The love of the world gains such an ascendancy over the minds of the persons who spend months & even years without any ministrations of the Gospel in their midst.  

In these words Mesac Thomas explained to a friend the root cause of many of the problems faced by the first Christian missionaries in his diocese. Until the 1860s, and in some places even later, those who lived in the bush away from an established centre of population had little or no contact with the Christian church. Bishop Thomas saw this lack of contact with religion as the crucial factor in creating by the time of his arrival in the colony a degraded secular society. Two years after his arrival he left no doubt as to his opinion of the colony to which he had come, in a letter to another English friend:

*Christians are few: a worldly spirit overruns the country: our faithful friends, whom we have brought to the oversight of parishes here, are in too many instances regarded as enthusiasts & narrow minded, because they preach the same doctrines, wh. you are accustomed to hear every Sunday, & to prize. All this indifference and opposition to the truth is the fruit of long years of neglect; & of forgetfulness of God.*

Such sentiments were common in letters from the bishop and in his speeches, and in those of others, to the annual meetings of the diocesan Church Society. The clergy of the sixties and seventies had no

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illusions as to the nature of their task. They spoke of themselves as missionaries in a harsh and heathen land, and they meant every word.

The indifference to religion discovered by these men persisted as a major obstacle to their endeavours throughout the entire period. It is not easy to reintroduce disciplined religious habits to men who have had a taste of freedom from such discipline, and who have enjoyed that freedom, some of them for as much as twenty years. The failure of the Christian churches to achieve the impossible and keep in touch with the spreading population in the early years of settlement became a serious handicap to their efforts in later years. By the time of the general expansion of church work in the sixties much of the damage had been done.

If apathy and indifference to religion were consequences of the nature of bush settlements, so too was a remarkable degree of interdenominational co-operation, particularly between the Protestant churches but often involving the Roman Catholic church as well. When Joseph Westwood, a travelling evangelist, passed through the south east in 1863, he saw no inconsistency in attending the Church of England in Wagga and in preaching at the Methodist and Independent chapels in Young and at the Presbyterian churches in Goulburn (where he stayed with a Baptist family) and in Yass.¹ Again, Charles Hutchings, a young Wesleyan farmer living near Bodalla, sometimes went to the Presbyterian and Anglican churches at nearby Coila, where he heard Mesac Thomas preach on one occasion, and his marriage was performed by the Anglican clergyman of Moruya.²

Co-operation often went further. Bateman's Bay was only one of many small centres where church buildings served more than one denomination. There the Presbyterian church was available for Wesleyan services and for "any Protestant minister or missionary who may desire the use of the church for Divine Service".

Members of all churches freely supported functions organized by the others, usually with their money and often with their time. Thus in Moruya in 1868 Mrs Puddicombe, wife of the Anglican clergyman, supervised a stall at the Presbyterian bazaar, and in the same place eight years later all denominations were reported as displaying "cheerful co-operation and kindly sympathy" towards a Bruce auction run by the Wesleyan church. Meetings in celebration of Presbyterian union in 1865 were attended by members of other denominations at Yass, Moruya, Braidwood and Goulburn, when the Anglican and Wesleyan clergy usually spoke in favour of a greater union of all the Christian churches. These cordial relations persisted throughout the period; friendly habits, like indifference, were not passing phenomena. In 1887 the Roman Catholics at Burrowa were delighted with Protestant response to a bazaar held by the Convent of Mercy:

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1 Due to Mesac Thomas's strict interpretation of canon law, "union" arrangements rarely involved the Church of England.

2 Moruya Examiner, 1 October 1881, p. 2.

3 Christian Herald, June 1868, p. 74.


5 Presbyterian Magazine, January 1866, pp. 20-33.

It was gratifying in the extreme to witness the cordial interchange of feeling between Catholic and Protestant.... Many of the leading non-Catholics of Burrowa not only were present at the bazaar, but spent freely of their money, showing that they fully appreciate the excellence of the work done by the good nuns.

A year earlier the priest at Germanton estimated that of the £380 raised by a bazaar in aid of the church less than £100 had come from Roman Catholics, and in the same decade Protestant ladies were prominent at Roman Catholic bazaars held at centres as far separated as Bombala and Gundagai, almost half of the ladies selling goods at Gundagai being Protestants.

Co-operation was not limited to social events; subscriptions to new church buildings at, for example, Wagga and Bega were non-denominational in character. Individuals such as George Campbell and W. Fane de Salis, both members of the Church of England and liberal contributors towards the stipend of the Presbyterian minister at Queanbeyan, or Thomas Laidlaw, a Roman Catholic from Yass who bequeathed £500 each to the building funds of the local Presbyterian and Anglican churches as well as his own, were not alone in their generosity. The

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1 Illustrated Express, 2 March 1887, p. 17.
2 Rev. E.J. Fallon to Bishop Lanigan, 10 March 1886. Lanigan Papers.
3 Express, 22 March 1884, p. 6.
4 Express, 24 March 1883, p. 2. (Quoting the Gundagai Times.)
6 Australian Witness, 11 March 1876, p. 6.
7 Yass Courier, 20 June 1876, p. 2.
Roman Catholic church at Wolumla and convent at Eden were dependent on Protestant support, to the chagrin of the local priest, who wrote in 1890 to Cardinal Moran:

All Saints looks down most benignly and mercy fully on all Sinners beneath — (Orangemen). However they are not so bad. Since they have given the most money towards the building of this Church. Some of them have given £3 = 3 = 0. The holy Romans there are few and poor but so long as the Orangemen stand to us, we are safe.¹

But the most impressive example of interdenominational co-operation was not financial. It occurred at Yass in the mid 1870s, when the Protestant ministers of the town took turns to lead a combined prayer meeting on Thursday evenings.² In at least one town something was being done to bring Christian unity a little closer.

These instances do not mean that relations between the denominations were perfect; that was far from the truth. There were many issues on which churchmen could not agree,³ and many occasions when denominational rivalries became quite fierce. The Rev. W.H. Pownall, writing from Wagga to Bishop Thomas in 1874 during a visit by the latter to England, complained that the Wesleyans were making strenuous efforts to attain the ascendancy in the area around "Cootamundra station".⁴ He therefore arranged for the Church of England minister at Gundagai, the Rev. H.E. Thomson, to visit the district once


²Australian Witness, 1, 8 January, 12 February 1876. Reports by the Rev. Andrew Gardiner (January), "A Minister's Holiday", and by Dr J.D. Lang.

³The most important of these issues was the Education Question, for which see chapter 4.

a week, in an effort to confound their endeavours which, Pownall alleged, included the proselytization of the local Anglicans.

Such incidents were rare between Protestants, although a series of articles in the *Christian Herald* in 1869 entitled "Why Presbyterians Leave Their Own Church" amounted to an attack on the Church of England.¹ The author maintained that Presbyterians became members of other churches, especially the Anglican, in an attempt to gain social advancement. The Anglican church was described as more fashionable than the Presbyterian, drawing those who wished to gain entrance to a better "set" of people by conducting a campaign of systematic allurement which was meeting with considerable success. These claims were almost certainly without foundation as far as the south east was concerned, for there relations between Protestant churches were generally good. Certainly few echoes of this argument are to be found in the pronouncements of Christians in the region.

Relations between Protestants and Roman Catholics were not always so friendly. W.H. Pownall wrote to his bishop in 1874 that he was encountering "hellish opposition" from the Roman Catholics, especially from Dr Morgan O'Connor, "the greatest plotter I have yet met".² His suspicion of the Roman Catholic church was shared by other Anglicans. In 1865 Bishop Thomas wrote of the need "to fear the stealthy march of the Church of Rome",³ and an appeal for funds in 1868 from the Synod of the diocese to the Colonial and Continental Church Society demanded to

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¹ Especially the issues of January and March 1869. The articles were signed "G".


know if the Australian colonies were to become "Popish, infidel, or schismatical in their religious tendencies, or [to] adhere to the Church of their forefathers".¹

That the unease was not all on the side of the Protestants is shown by the nature of the Roman Catholic attacks on the Public schools, which they feared would undermine the faith and morals of their children, and by their claims that elections for County Argyle in 1880² and Murrumburrah in 1887³ were won for the Free Trade party as part of an Orange conspiracy.

There was, therefore, some religious friction in south east New South Wales as well as a measure of interdenominational co-operation. But the friction, mainly between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant denominations, was largely political in nature, its incidence mainly confined to election times. For the most part the people of all churches were cordial in their encounters with each other.

The pattern of population expansion in the years up to the sixties thus created two distinct features of religious life in the region. First, the early lack of contact with religion fostered apathy and even disdain for religion in the minds of many settlers; second, the scarcity of religious ordinances provoked believers into interdenominational co-operation on a scale far beyond that practised in the United Kingdom. The pioneers in the bush brought some sectarian jealousies with them, but these generally remained under the surface.

¹Minutes of the Proceedings of the Second Session of the First Synod ... of the Diocese of Goulburn (Goulburn, 1868) Appendix D, p. 31.

²Express, 4 December 1880, p. 7.

³Illustrated Express, 2 March 1887, p. 17.
As the presence of the churches became more common from the 1860s, those who inhabited the outback often established only a slender contact with the new church organizations. Although only a tiny minority returned themselves as atheists or agnostics in the censuses, the nominal membership of the remainder was, for many of them, nominal indeed. Not that their introduction to the bush church was always calculated to encourage active involvement; often it took the form of a plea for financial assistance towards the building of a church, parsonage or schoolroom.

It is arguable that the more moderate, and perhaps more fashionable, churches such as the Anglican suffer more from nominalism than the actively evangelical churches like the Methodist, especially in a pioneering society like that of nineteenth century outback New South Wales. Unfortunately, the scanty nature of surviving local Methodist records makes this conjecture difficult to test, but the available evidence lends support to it. Because the Methodists insisted on a high level of personal commitment and on the regular performance of religious duties in excess of simple church attendance for full membership, full members represented a lower proportion of their adherents than in the other Protestant churches. For example, in 1875 the circuit of Young (which extended to Grenfell and Cootamundra) had seventy six full members, five more on trial, and 550 "attendants at public worship". This was fairly typical throughout the colony, in 1880 full members (including members of other denominations communicating in Methodist churches) represented only 17.2 per cent of Wesleyan church attenders. Other circuits in the south east did not enumerate attenders at church as well as full members in their records, but a rough comparison between the membership

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1Burrangong Chronicle, 7 August 1875, p. 2. Figures supplied by the Rev. W.J. Davis, then minister of the Young circuit.

figures and census returns usually reveals a similar proportion of full members to adherents. It is impossible to be certain about the loyalty of the Methodist church people, for little concrete evidence remains. Yet, although almost all circuits were perpetually in debt (that at Albury usually ran up a deficit of over £100 each year in the eighties and nineties), it was almost unknown for the minute books to contain disparaging remarks regarding the efforts of the people. The only such complaint I have found was made at Goulburn in 1868, when country places were said to be failing to contribute their fair share of circuit income. The general absence of complaints of this nature suggests that the adherents of Methodism were taking their part in the work of their circuits.

If Methodist sources were normally silent about any shortcomings among their adherents, quite the reverse was true elsewhere. Like the Wesleyans, the Roman Catholic church might be expected to have a greater hold upon those people professing her faith than the Anglican and Presbyterian churches, particularly in view of the homogeneous national as well as religious character of her members. But, despite occasional praise for individual congregations, Roman Catholic priests persistently sent back reports which revealed their frustration at the lack of co-operation they encountered. In 1877 Father John Joseph Carroll at Bombala reckoned that only about 120 of his total flock of 1,050 rendered him "substantial aid"; his brother priest at Bega calculated that "nearly one eighth" of his 1,252

1 Such comparisons are of necessity very tentative, since circuit and census districts were quite different.

2 Minute Book, Quarterly Meetings, Methodist Circuit, Albury, July 1885-September 1898.


4 For example, Rev. P. Dunne to Bishop Lanigan, 12 January 1876, 28 January 1878, both letters referring to Gundagai. Lanigan Papers.

parishioners aided him;\(^1\) and the incumbent at Cooma, blaming land hunger for preventing many "from doing their duty for Religion", stated that the wealthy Catholics could not be influenced to subscribe regularly.\(^2\) Even at Cootamundra the strength of faith detected by Father Patrick Dunne did not seem to affect the conduct of life by the locals, for he also found that "drinking and dissipation" were so common that they could "only be checked by the vigilance of a resident priest".\(^3\) By the close of the century the same priest was despondent enough to write to his bishop:

The priests will have to stir themselves and stir up the spirit of Catholicity amongst the people else the Catholic spirit will die out. God help the Church in the near future.\(^4\)

Father Dunne had been in the diocese since the seventies, and had attained the rank of Vicar-General. Such pessimism on the part of one so experienced suggests that many who were, on paper, members of the Roman Catholic church were less than enthusiastic about their membership.

Neither the Presbyterians nor the Anglicans were more fortunate in their experience. From the outset of his work in the colony Mesac Thomas was dismayed at the indifference he encountered. In his speech on the occasion of the Primary Visitation he warned his clergy that they were facing "an amount of spiritual destitution which is lamentable",\(^5\) and fifteen years later he wrote to England that "the worldliness of the Colony has not diminished!"\(^6\) Others in the diocese agreed. The Rev. A.D. Soares, while

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\(^1\)State of the Mission returns, Bega, 29 January 1878. St. Mary's.

\(^2\)State of the Mission returns, Cooma, 28 December 1877. St. Mary's.

\(^3\)Rev. P. Dunne, writing from Gundagai to Bishop Lanigan, 6 October 1877. Lanigan Papers.


\(^5\)Mesac Thomas, A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Goulburn... (Goulburn, 1868) p. 9.

he rejoiced that the spiritual condition of his charge at Queanbeyan was improving, deplored that the improvement was not more widespread; too many were still "walking according to the course of this world — still trifling with their eternal interests". In 1890 the committee at Marulan regretted "a great want of interest and sympathy in Church work [which] might well dishearten any clergyman". Both in 1886 and in 1891 they remarked on the paucity of the attendance at church services, their clergyman adding on the former occasion that this "manifested the indifference of his people in the service & worship of God".

Throughout the diocese many people, even among those who regarded themselves as members of the Church of England on a more than casual basis, neglected to perform this simple duty of regular attendance at church services. Large numbers were quick to excuse absences on grounds of inclement weather or poor travelling conditions, and given transport conditions at the time many of these excuses were certainly justified. However, the incumbent of St. John's, Bega, felt he had the nub of the matter when he wrote in his annual report of 1881, with reference to "scanty attendance at church":

It is not a little remarkable that the townspeople, who are within easy distance, are more irregular and more easily deterred by weather than those who come long distances from the country. If the effort is made I am sure many of the alleged hindrances may be overcome and our attendance largely increased.

If his congregation was typical in this respect it was so also in its, to him painful, lack of participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Indeed, of the 476 adults on his parochial register, only seventy were communicant members of the church.

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1 Rev. A.D. Soares, A New Year's Pastoral Address to the Parishioners of Queanbeyan and District Annexed (Queanbeyan, 1872) p. 8.
2 All Saints' Church, Marulan, Minute Book, 1888-1892. Easter Meeting, 8 April 1890.
3 Ibid., Easter Meetings of 27 April 1886 and 31 March 1891.
4 Minutes of Annual Vestry Meeting, St. John's Church, Bega, 19 April 1881.
5 Ibid., Walter Phillips (loc. cit., p. 395) states that in 1880 only twenty one per cent of Anglican and 23.8 per cent of Presbyterian churchgoers were communicant members.
Another example of the same problem was at West Goulburn, where at the Easter services between 1885 and 1900 only on five occasions did more than one quarter of those present take the sacrament. At Moruya in 1889 the Presbyterian committee noted their disappointment that "so many in our congregation refuse to become members". This unwillingness to accept the implications of full membership, taken together with the reluctance of all classes to donate money to their church or in many cases even to attend it regularly, suggests that the clergy did not exaggerate greatly their complaints of indifference among the nominal adherents of their churches.

Adults were not the only ones to attend religious meetings. Churchmen of all denominations were enthusiastic about the value of Sunday Schools for their children. If their contemporaries were apathetic towards religion, then their children were the only ones who could sustain their endeavours in the future, hence it was of great importance that the Sunday Schools should flourish. Most churches had such an organization attached to them, but information on their work is scanty. There were in the Anglican diocese seventy Sunday Schools in 1878, with an average attendance of nearly three thousand; between 1880 and 1900 the Wesleyan Sunday School at Goulburn never had less than four hundred scholars; and even in the relatively small centre of Tumut in 1874 the Anglican school's average attendance was 108, while at Young in the following year the Methodist circuit's seven schools had twenty seven teachers and 210 scholars.

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1 My calculations from the Service Register of Christ Church, West Goulburn.
4 E.G. Clancy, Methodism in the Lilac City (Goulburn, 1958) p. 59.
6 Burrangong Chronicle, 7 August 1875, p. 2.
Many of the Sunday Schools had the further function of improving the literacy of the children by the use of a library attached to the institution, though of course parents who sent their children to Sunday School were also likely to be those who were conscientious about their attendance at day school, so this aspect of the Sunday Schools' work should not be overestimated. Nonetheless, the work of these Sunday Schools was assisted by quite large libraries in some cases: the Methodist school at Goulburn had 672 "carefully selected" books in 1899, the circulation for the year being 1,850,¹ and as early as 1868 Presbyterian church libraries in the Presbytery of Goulburn had a total of six hundred volumes.² In 1880 the Church of England at Bega spent £10 on S.P.C.K. books for its Sunday School library. It is clear that a good number of children did attend Sunday School, and that they received the opportunity of using well chosen scriptural material when they did attend. But the effects of their attendance are less clear; the only clue to the effectiveness of Sunday Schools is the attendance at church as years passed, and that did not improve. The conclusion must be that the Sunday Schools probably helped to retain in the church the children of confirmed Christian families, but that that was as far as their influence went.

Although most of the bush population had little interest in religion, there were many who did take an active part in church work. The picture of a heathen community can easily be overdrawn. One guide to the importance of religion in the minds of some may be found in the history of the Goulburn Cathedral Dispute, a cause célèbre in the

¹Goulburn Herald, 19 April 1899, p. 2.
²Christian Herald, October 1868, p. 124.
eighties and early nineties, when the entire Anglican population of the city was in a ferment over an intricate legal tangle involving questions of the status of the Cathedral within the parish of Goulburn, the position of the Rev. A.T. Puddicombe, the incumbent of St. Saviour's parish in regard to the Cathedral, the rights of the trustees of ground given to the parish and upon which the Cathedral had been built, and the right of local personality F.R.L. Rossi (later Comte de Rossi) to erect a memorial tablet to his parents in the Cathedral. The sensational steps taken by the protagonists made newspaper headlines for years as the battle dragged on in the courts until the issues were settled in court and in Parliament between 1893 and 1896. It is significant that so many people cared enough about the church in Goulburn, and indeed in the diocese at large, for the dispute attracted attention in the minute books of some of the country parishes, to permit the dispute to continue for so long. In the words of the official historian of the diocese, writing in 1937:

One wonders whether nowadays 500 people could be assembled one day to protest against any church order and if they did if 200 others could be assembled a day or two later to voice the other side.

The outstanding names among church people are, not unnaturally, those of the richer members, who were more easily able to give substantial support to their church, whether financially or by giving land for church building from their estates. These included people like the Campbell family of Duntroon, who provided the basis for the establishment of the

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1 For an account of this quarrel see R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, chapter XI. Bishop Thomas's Commonplace Book, held at St. Mark's Institute of Theology, contains many newscuttings relevant to the issue.

2 R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, p. 92.
Anglican church in the Canberra-Queanbeyan district as well as a substantial sum towards the endowments of the dioceses of Goulburn and Riverina. Other important benefactors of the Anglican church were the Mort family at Bodalla, the Faithfuls of Springfield, near Goulburn, Robert Maddrell of Bedervale, Braidwood, and Sir Robert Lucas-Tooth of Kameruka estate, while among the Presbyterians prominent names were those of the Jardines of Curry Flat, near Nimitybelle, and Alexander Davidson and James McLaurin, both owners of properties in the eastern Riverina. These few rich men were so outstanding as religious benefactors because they were exceptions to the general rule, that the rich do not appear to have been concerned with religion.

In 1866 Mesac Thomas complained that the major landowners in his diocese were absentee, most of whom lived in Sydney or Melbourne and spent their money in those places. He could not look to them for help, especially as many of them were Presbyterian or Roman Catholic. Although this was partly true, there were sufficient Anglicans among the landowners to have given that church very material assistance had they felt so inclined. That most of them did not do so is evident, not only from the speeches and letters of Mesac Thomas and others, but also from the surviving subscription lists to church funds, both local and diocesan. These lists record large numbers of small subscriptions from all parts of the diocese, but very few large ones. A subscription of £50 to the General Fund of the Church Society conferred the status of Vice President upon the donor for that year, a status which might be


2 See especially the speech of the Rev. W.H.H. Yarrington to the Church Society, 23 January 1877, Report of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Church Society... (Goulburn, 1877) p. 23.
regarded as prestigious if the rich were closely involved with the church. Yet it was rare for more than one person to qualify for the position. By the 1890s the only holder of the position was the Rev. Ernest Mort, then resident in England. It is plain that many rich men were included in the nominal membership of the Church of England; it is equally plain that, as a rule, they cared little for it.¹

Other churches were equally affected by apathy among their richer adherents. The Presbytery's tribute to Alexander Davidson of Bullenbong station, an elder of St. Andrew's Church, Wagga, on his death in 1892 made the point that he had been "one of the very few" to encourage the first Presbyterian minister in the area.² But the Presbyterian church was, much more than the Church of England, a church for those above the lowest classes. Perhaps the richest of families were not conspicuous in the service of the church, but neither were the common labourers or clerks. Reports of Presbyterian meetings in particular often described those in attendance as "respectable", sometimes emphasizing that aspect of their character.³

These conclusions are supported by an analysis of the occupations of Presbyterian trustees of church property and of the church elders, where these have survived. Such lists contain a

¹The reservation must be made that it is possible that some of them preferred to work quietly for the church. Dr David Denholm has discussed with me his theory that the really important people in colonial society were able to maintain an anonymity which has persisted into history by keeping their names out of official lists and even of the newspapers.


³For example, the laying of the foundation stone at Round Plain, near Cooma, in 1869. (Christian Herald, April 1869, p. 30.) This also occurred in a similar report in connection with the Anglican church at Nimitybelle in 1878. (Australian Churchman, 17 October 1878, p. 213.)
remarkable preponderance of farmers and graziers, even in most town parishes, where of course the local commercial interests were also well represented. Occasionally smiths and carpenters appear on the lists, but town trustees were usually saddlers, storekeepers and schoolteachers. Of a list of 152 trustees of Presbyterian church properties, compiled from Presbytery and local minute books, no less than ninety six were described as farmers, graziers or squatters. Only at Young (1867), Cootamundra (1888), Braidwood (1894), Batlow (1897), Albury (1898) and Queanbeyan (1900) were none of these categories represented. It is noteworthy that most of these instances occurred at the end of the century, by which time town life was becoming more important in its own right rather than simply as an adjunct to that of the surrounding countryside. Both in town and country the most common occupations of the trustees were those of middling rank. In towns the storekeepers and blacksmiths were best represented, in most country districts farmers far outnumbered their richer neighbours in the lists, but there were few shepherds or labourers.

A good example of the composition of a Presbyterian congregation is to be found in the communicants' roll of Round Plain and Nimitybelle, east of Cooma. Of those whose occupations can be traced, graziers, squatters, professional people and their families numbered fifteen; labourers, shepherds and their families ten; and the respectable group of farmers, tradesmen and storekeepers, together with their families, made up a total of forty six people, nearly twice the other categories

1The strongly Presbyterian Riverina parishes of Wagga, Temora and Germanton were the exceptions, graziers and squatters slightly outnumbering the farmers.

2Minute Book, Session and Congregational Meetings, Parish of Cooma, 1865-1883.
combined. Together with the other information already cited, this is impressive evidence that the Scots Church represented neither extreme in social class, but it did represent the solid "respectable" classes.

Unlike the Presbyterian church, the Anglican tended to be stronger in the towns, and within them to have its greatest support from among the poorer members of society.¹ Mesac Thomas claimed in 1871 that Goulburn itself did not "possess a single wealthy resident, who is a member of our Church".² This was certainly an exaggeration, since only a few months earlier a committee of the church had been formed which included the manager of the Commercial Bank and the Police Magistrate of the city. But whether the support came from rich or poor, it was essentially urban; although most parishes were large in area, often containing two or more villages in addition to the parish centre, the greater proportion of funds raised by the churches almost always came from inhabitants of that centre. In the parish of Albury around 1870 between three quarters and seven eighths of the minister's stipend was collected in the town,³ while even in the rural parish of Gunning over half the amount collected in any year came from the village, the proportion steadily rising to three quarters by the later 1880s.⁴

It is less easy to make generalizations about the supporters of the Roman Catholic church, other than that they were mostly expatriate

¹This is less certain than the essentially urban nature of Anglican support. My suggestion is largely subjective, based on impressions gained from subscription lists and a variety of incidental comments.


³Appendices of the Church Society reports, giving subscription lists.

⁴Ibid.
Irish. Many of these were poor, as might be expected coming from that background; and the Irish were very prominent on the gold fields. Many were employed on the land, both in the Monaro and in the Yass Plains district, again not surprisingly given their Irish origins. There were, though, several Irish Catholics of substance, such as the Harnett family of Rosebrook, north of Cooma, and the Dawsons of Bombala, Robert Dawson being an Inspector of Stock in the 1890s.¹ Before the arrival of Bishop Lanigan people like Cornelius O'Brien, the O'Mara family, James McEvoy and Michael Bourke were rich enough to donate £40 or more towards the building funds of churches at Yass, Tumut, Gundagai and Burrowa,² and in Moruya in 1883 five people gave £100 each towards the building of a convent for the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.³ Active membership of the Roman Catholic church was probably more broadly spread over the population than was that of the other churches.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century the contact desired by the early pioneers of church work had been established. But the proportion of the people actively involved in their work was small. The Methodist statistics already quoted⁴ suggest that in that church only from one tenth to one third of the nominal membership was active;

¹Diaries exist of Eleanor Mary Bowler, later Mrs Dawson, written while living at Rose Valley, near Cooma, in 1875, and of her daughter, Ida Francis Dawson, written at Bombala in the nineties. Both of these demonstrate that the family was by no means poor.

²[Dr Morgan O'Connor], A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Yass Mission... (Goulburn, 1861). Subscription lists attached.

³Express, 2 June 1883, p. 6. The five were E. Heffernan, Mr Bracken, J. McKeon, J.P., W. Felicia and J. Ellison. There were twenty five donations of £10 and over.

⁴See above, pp. 47-48.
in the Presbyterian and Anglican churches the proportions were below at least the larger Methodist figure. In the nineties at Burrowa the average Anglican congregation was from forty to fifty five of a professed Anglican population in the village alone of 250. Over the eight year period 1892-1899 the congregation at Murrumburrah averaged about eighty; according to the census the number of Anglicans in the town in 1891 had been almost five hundred. In these places, therefore, fewer than one Anglican in five attended church. Because these congregations included people from outside the parochial centres, these proportions ought to be even lower. It is probably no exaggeration to estimate that only about one in ten of the population of the south east was an active Christian. Taking average family sizes as five, this probably means that perhaps one quarter of the adults were genuine, as opposed to nominal, church members. Walter Phillips has calculated that attendances at church services were generally lower in country districts than in Sydney, and that they averaged thirty two per cent of total population in 1870 and twenty eight per cent in 1890. Over the whole colony he reckons that the Church of England could rely on only about one fifth of its total adherents at any date from 1860 to 1900, that the Presbyterian attendances declined from one third of total adherents in 1860 to one fifth in 1900, and that Roman Catholic

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1 St. John's Church, Burrowa, Service Register, 1886-1900.

2 St. Paul's Church, Murrumburrah, Service Register, 1892-1900.

3 This was the figure taken by the Friendly Societies Act Inquiry Commission in 1883. See chapter 8 below.

attendances, after increasing from one fifth to two fifths between 1860 and 1870, fell to one third by 1880, after which they remained fairly constant until the end of the century. He concludes that Nonconformist and Roman Catholic churchmen were less prone to nominalism than were Anglicans, though all denominations suffered from it. He cautions that even the indifferent probably had some inclinations towards the church they professed to belong to; "their persistent profession of Christianity should not be dismissed as meaningless".¹

In south east New South Wales, even if the indifferent did have some beliefs, this was no comfort to those who were faced with the difficulties of establishing their churches in an often hostile environment. Nominalism remained the curse of all the churches throughout the period. Anthony Trollope had seen on his tour of Australia in the seventies that Australians disliked paying for the services of their clergymen, and that they were largely indifferent towards the church.² Over twenty years later an article in the Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly sadly concluded:

While here and there we can see signs of life and devotion, there is much lamentable indifference. There are enough Presbyterians to fill all the churches in the district [of Bombala], but for some reason or other there are whole families who would say they are of this denomination in the census, but the church knows them not, except it be by an occasional entry in the baptismal register. We are not singular in this respect. Other churches are alike burdened...³

Every word was true.

¹Ibid., p. 400.

²Anthony Trollope, Australia (P.D. Edwards and R.B. Joyce, eds.) (St. Lucia, Qld., 1967) pp. 238-239.

³Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly, September [?] 1898, p. 4.
II

The individuals upon whom the fate of Christian missions in south east New South Wales ultimately depended were not the great donors of cash or the humble parishioners who sat in the pews but the local clergymen. It was they who had to take the initiative in organizing church work, to provide the religious services, to stir up a spirit of Christianity among the reluctant people of the bush.

Most of the ministers and priests in the Australian bush in the nineteenth century were not themselves Australian born. Among the Roman Catholics almost all of the lower clergy were Irish, though some of the bishops were English or Italian. In the south east, however, even the hierarchy was Irish under the leadership of Bishop Lanigan, himself proud of his Irish birth. Even in the eighties new priests were recruited from Ireland rather than in Australia, though by then the bishop recognized the desirability of altering this pattern in the future.¹

Similarly, the Church of England clergy were, in the main, English, the Presbyterian clergy usually Scottish. Of fifty seven Presbyterian ministers whose origins can be traced with reasonable certainty, forty were trained and ordained in Scotland, five more in Ireland,² and although a few Australian trained Anglican clergy were present in the Goulburn diocese towards the end of the century, for

¹In 1887 all of Bishop Lanigan's thirty three priests were Irish. (MS in the bishop's own handwriting, "Diocese of Goulburn". St. Mary's.) In his Lenten Pastoral of 1882 he expressed the hope that "vocations to the religious state will become numerous amongst our Australian youth". (Express, 25 February 1882, p. 3.)

²Calculated from a list of clergy in Rev. C.A. White, The Challenge of the Years, pp. 552-568. About five of the fifty seven were definitely Australian trained. Of some fifteen others whose origins are less clear, it is likely that some were also trained in the colonies.
most of the period the diocese was staffed almost entirely by Englishmen, though led until 1892 by a Welshman. The clergy were therefore even more strangers to the land in which they worked than were those to whom they ministered.

Not all young men were suitable for mission work in Australia. The physical hardships of living in the country were unlike any known to contemporary Englishmen, though some of the Irish and Highland Scots might have been able to relate them to their own experiences. Disappointments were many, the work hard, and temptations, especially towards alcohol, ubiquitous and persuasive. Bishop Thomas was troubled on several occasions by complaints from parishioners about the behaviour of some clergymen, and one or two Presbyterian ministers also fell into one or other of the financial or alcoholic traps. In 1873 the congregation of Adelong petitioned Bishop Thomas about the conduct of their incumbent, the Rev. Adam Likely, accusing him of persistent indulgence in strong drink. The bishop appointed three senior clergy to investigate the case, which was found sustained, and he was obliged to withdraw Mr Likely's licence.\(^1\) Again, the Rev. John Maitland Ware, who had given staunch service to the church in the Riverina, proved to be incapable of maintaining good relations with his congregation after moving to Young.\(^2\) He was accused of a variety of misdemeanours including untruthfulness, misappropriation of funds and even misuse of sacramental wine.\(^3\) The bishop's investigation showed Mr Ware to have been less than tactful in

\(^1\) Various letters from the fourth volume of Mesac Thomas's letterbooks.

\(^2\) Mesac Thomas to the Rev. J.M. Ware, Young, 6 June 1881. Letterbooks, vol. 5.

\(^3\) Mesac Thomas to the Hon. Charles Campbell, 10 June 1881. Ibid.
dealing with his parishioners, but to have been innocent of any punishable offence, therefore he admonished Mr Ware and recommended that he leave the parish.¹ He refused, and stayed, despite deteriorating relations with leading members of his congregation, until 1885, when he resigned, claiming to have been starved out. Many parishioners had refused to contribute to his stipend for the preceding three years.²

The most serious case involving financial matters was that of the Rev. James Martin, Presbyterian minister at Queanbeyan, who was asked to resign by the Presbytery in 1866 when its investigation into his affairs proved that he had been a bad debtor on at least three occasions, buying goods "for which he could have no reasonable prospect of being able to pay".³

Recognizing as he did the temptations which would be placed in the way of missionary priests in his extensive diocese as well as the fatiguing labour to which they would be subjected, Mesac Thomas was exacting in the qualifications he required in those sent to work under his command. Suitable men for this work had to be:

- Holy devoted men, who are also competent in education, training, & ability, as well as in experience & in physical power. To succeed in a Diocese like ours,

¹ Mesac Thomas to the Rev. J.M. Ware, 20 August 1881. Ibid.
² Mesac Thomas to Archdeacon Pownall, November 1882. Letterbooks, vol. 8; further letters to Mr Ware and to the churchwardens at Young, 1882-1885. Letterbooks, vols. 8-10. In the 1870s the Presbyterian minister at Yass, the Rev. John Gibson, also failed to maintain cordial relations with his flock, and eventually left after much recrimination. See J.R. Mallyon, "Presbyterian Church at Yass", 2 vols. MS, ML B 1066/7, pp. 151-152; also Minute Book, Presbytery of Goulburn, vol. I, 1865-1899. Meetings at Yass, 17 September, Goulburn, 24 October, and Sydney, 5 November, 1874.
men must have pulpit power, love for souls, & indefatigable zeal in searching out the people in their homes, together with tact & discretion in dealing with a mixed population gathered from all parts of the world, & from all denominations."

Previously he had written that country curates from England were thoroughly inadequate for activity in a land of "shrewd intelligent vigorous people",2 complaining that recent clerical arrivals had been weak both in the pulpit and in health. Truly it was difficult to adjust to a society so different from that of the British Isles.

The hardships of outback life were not alleviated by the severe economic strain placed upon the individual clergyman. He was expected to live as a gentleman, though insufficiently paid, and to act as a social leader, as well as a hard working pastor, to his flock. He was expected to eat and dress well, to entertain in a style befitting a gentleman, even if one of modest means, and he and his wife were expected to have both the clothes and the manners "for an occasional dinner party".3 This was true of all churches, at least in the larger centres. Bishop Thomas asked about every applicant for work in his diocese whether he was a gentleman and if his wife were a lady. "On one occasion he words it, 'will his wife pass muster as a lady?'".4

Although those ministers already in receipt of state stipends continued to receive them after state aid to religion was abolished in 1863, most of the clergy, with their families and their social position

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4 R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, p. 54.
to maintain, were heavily dependent on their people for their sustenance, and their people very often let them down. In the 1860s only one Anglican parish sustained its own minister; twenty years later, despite population increase and a measure of prosperity, still only fourteen of the thirty-five then in existence did so, three of these being in Goulburn itself.\footnote{Twenty-sixth Annual Church Society Report (Goulburn, 1890) pp. 14-15.} In some cases the position became so serious that the incumbent offered to accept a reduction in the official amount of the stipend as his contribution towards a balancing of the accounts,\footnote{This happened officially at Cootamundra, Murrumburrah and Braidwood, and in practice almost everywhere.} yet even this drastic step rarely proved successful, in at least two cases (Murrumburrah and Braidwood) the clergymen accepting second reductions in the nominal figures. It was not uncommon for stipend payments to fall as much as nine months in arrears, so that eventually threats were made, by the bishop or by the incumbents themselves, that the ministers would be withdrawn if the arrears were not paid off.\footnote{This occurred at least at Moruya (1870), Taralga (1887, 1898), Marulan (1888) and Cobargo (1895). In 1880 Araluen was deprived of its parochial status and reunited with Braidwood.} The decision of the parish council at Braidwood in 1882 to increase the value of the stipend to £350 from the (official) minimum of £300\footnote{Braidwood District Report in Nineteenth Annual Church Society Report (Goulburn, 1883) p. 90.} is remarkable as a complete contrast to the experience in most parishes. Yet even in Braidwood the minister accepted a reduction in the nominal value of his stipend, to £275, in 1896, and again, to £240, in the following year.\footnote{Minute Book, Parish of Braidwood, 1863-1904.}
Perpetual debt was also the lot of other denominations. The Methodist circuit at Adelong made repeated applications to the Sustentation Society in Sydney to make up the deficiencies in stipend payment there. The stipend promised declined from £50 a quarter in the 1870s to only £28 a quarter in 1895, by which date the total stipend arrears were £63-12-6;¹ nor was this the worst of the trouble, for in 1891 the circuit debt had reached £283-10-6, the circuit then regretting "that financial difficulties have necessitated the removal of the Rev. H. Allen from this circuit".² Albury also faced continual financial trouble, the circuit being nearly £80 in debt within a year of its foundation,³ as did the congregations at Cootamundra, Temora and Young, with peak deficits of £162-1-10,⁴ £370⁵ and £67-8-2⁶ respectively.

Roman Catholic arrangements were naturally different, as their priests were not married, but they often fared no better than their Protestant counterparts. A typical arrangement was that the bishop's rate and the expenses of the house and stable would be paid first, any remaining money being divided between the priest in charge and his assistant in the ratio of five to three.⁷ Bishop Lanigan expected that

¹Adelong Circuit, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1868-1924. Meeting of 8 April 1895.

²Ibid. Meeting of 1 April 1891.

³Albury Circuit, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1885-1898. Meeting of 2 July 1886.


⁵In 1895. Temora Wesleyan Church, Home Mission Minute Book, 1891-1918. Meeting of 5 June 1895.

⁶In 1865. Account Book, Methodist Circuit, Young, 1864-1872.

⁷Bishop Lanigan to the Rev. J. Laffan, 5 October 1867. Lanigan Papers.
the expenses of two priests, including the wages of a housekeeper, ought not to be greater than £300 a year, but this figure was easily exceeded. The establishment at Yass cost £418 to run in 1868, which the bishop felt was extravagant, and over a six month period from August 1882 that at Young cost £251-6-7. The priests at Young were fairly fortunate, for during the year 1882-1883 they received dividends of £181 and £127 respectively after the payment of these expenses. Father P. Dunne reported in 1878 that the priests at Gundagai would receive only £33 each for seven months' work, despite a "very moderate" house expenditure. Like the Protestant clergy, the priests found little support from many of their flock. At Araluen in 1878 the priest reckoned that only one sixth of the Catholic population were assisting him in a substantial manner; that at Queanbeyan got nothing at all from about a third of his people.

In the Presbyterian church, as in the others, it seems to have been easier to persuade people to part with their money if some tangible edifice such as a church or a manse was to be erected with it

1Bishop Lanigan to the Rev. M. McAlroy, Albury, 25 February 1869 (Copy). Lanigan Papers.

2Ibid.


4Ibid.


7State of the Mission returns, Queanbeyan, 18 October 1877. St. Mary's.
than if the minister was to be the beneficiary of the collection. In 1866 the new General Assembly fixed the minimum stipend at the optimistic level of £250 per annum, or £200 if a manse were available. In the same year, and within twelve months of its elevation to the status of a charge, the Cooma congregation requested the Presbytery of Goulburn to apply on its behalf to the Supplementary Stipend Fund Committee for a grant of £50, as it was unable to raise more than £150 per annum for the stipend. The confession of failure was genuine, since the congregation managed to raise only £280 over the next two years for the purpose. Arrears and failures were reported during the 1860s and 1870s from Taralga, Moruya, Queanbeyan and Yass. Only at Goulburn and Wagga could the minister count himself rich, with £300 or more being provided at these places in the early seventies. Until 1869 the incumbent at Wagga was one of the few entitled to a government salary of £150 a year in addition.

The stipend difficulties of the sixties and seventies were symptomatic of the general problems facing the churches in a frontier society. The causes were also those of their other financial troubles. The heavy demands on incomes dependent on the fickle prosperity of the land were often too burdensome; more important was the lack of interest in church work. The effects were to reduce the situation of many ministers to what the Rev. A.C. Geikie, who served the Presbyterian church at Bombala from 1861 to 1864, described as "genteel

1Rev. C.A. White, The Challenge of the Years, p. 25.


3Minute Book, Session and Congregational Meetings, Cooma Presbyterian Church, 1865-1883. Meeting on 13 April 1868.
beggary", pointing his warning that the likely consequence of a failure to improve matters was a sharp drop in the quality of the clergy.

Although in the late seventies and early eighties there were fewer complaints from the clergy than before, by the end of the latter decade, and especially during the depression years in the nineties, their situation deteriorated again. It was during the last decade of the century that most of the official reductions in stipend were made, as depression added inability to unwillingness to give. Bad though the situation was for Anglicans and Roman Catholics, the latter having the additional self-imposed burden of an education system to support, it was worse for the smaller denominations. Even the rich Presbyterian church at Wagga was compelled to reduce the stipend to £250 in 1894, and again to £225 in 1899, when arrears were running at the level of £22-10-0 per quarter.

Therefore the clergy were often the ones who suffered most from the apathy towards religion in south east New South Wales, and from the depressions which affected those who would have given if they could. Although conditions in the region were very much improved by the end of the century, in that transport facilities were much better and there was more chance of obtaining the little luxuries of life in the developing towns, the clergy had even then little chance to acquire

1 Rev. A.C. Geekie [sic], "Paltry Stipends", Christian Herald, February 1868, pp. 16-17.


3 Ibid. At a meeting on 7 June 1899 the congregation asked permission to reduce the official stipend to £200, but on 22 June a joint meeting of the congregation and Presbytery agreed on the compromise. In May 1900 a call to a new minister included an offer of a stipend of £250.
these. The average stipend was no higher than it had been in the sixties and seventies,¹ but the clergy were still expected to be leaders of society. That they continued to work so enthusiastically for their beliefs in the face of so many disappointments is one tribute to their dedication; that they achieved so much in bringing religion to the people of the south east is another.

III

Paradoxically, the financial troubles which beset all denominations created the conditions for an expansion of church influence in society at large. The basis of the influence of the churches outside the ranks of their most devoted members was to be found, not in the pulpit or even in the church building itself, but in the community spirit stimulated by the efforts of the churches to raise funds. It has already been shown² that these efforts involved considerable contact between members of different churches; they also provided the opportunity for contact between practising churchmen and the other inhabitants of their localities. As well as the very common bazaars and tea meetings, there were also fairs, flower shows, concerts and theatrical performances, all intended as essentially fund raising activities, but with less tangible side effects at the same time.

Apart from events organized from purely financial motives, many churches held functions with quite different aims, though these

¹During the same period the average salary for a schoolmaster had risen by about £50. In 1876 the average in the region varied from £152 in the Goulburn inspection district to £174 in that centred on Albury; in 1893, despite a reduction due to the depression, it was still about £200.

²See above, pp. 42-44.
often proved financially lucrative as well. The Christian church was interested in promoting, not only the Christian beliefs, but also a way of life based on Christian virtues, which in practice meant those recognized by the solid respectable classes from which so much of their strength was drawn. That is to say, the churches supported the development of respectable morality in the growing society of the south east. To this end there were quite conscious attempts to provide through the churches opportunities for respectable cultural and social pursuits. The ordinary fund raising meetings gave the opportunity for sermons, speeches and moralizing, opportunities which the clergy were not slow to grasp, but these occasions were generally less serious than those devoted, for example, to the "improving" lecture. These lectures ranged over a very wide variety of topics, including such diverse titles as "Greece, the cradle of Patriotism, Literature, and the Arts"\(^1\) and "Characteristics of Shakespeare's Fools",\(^2\) and were usually well attended. Cultural activities within the churches were not confined to these lectures, for in some places societies were formed with the aim of improving their members as well as providing them with social contact. These were nowhere more evident than in the Roman Catholic church, in almost every district of which were established, in addition to branches of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, sodalities and guilds for religious fellowship; and at least in Goulburn\(^3\) and Yass\(^4\)

\(^1\) Delivered by Dr Bermingham to the Roman Catholics at Wagga on 31 August 1882. (Express, 9 September 1882, p. 3.)

\(^2\) Delivered by the Rev. George Spencer to the Anglican congregation at Tumut on 24 August 1877. (Australian Churchman, 6 September 1877, p. 114.)

\(^3\) In 1885. Express, 2 July 1885, p. 14.

\(^4\) In 1859. [Dr Morgan O'Connor], A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Yass Mission..., pp. 21-22.
Catholic Literary Societies were formed. That at Yass had a library of three hundred volumes of "the most standard works, scientific and literary"; activities included lectures and the reading of literary masterpieces. The correspondent of the Express was of the opinion that the business of the Young Men's Literary Association in Goulburn was confined too much to reading and reciting, not enough essay writing and debating taking place. Activities of this type were also to be found deeper in the interior, for in 1882 there was a Literary Debating Class at Wagga.

The Roman Catholic church was by no means alone in these endeavours. The church of St. John the Baptist, in Canberra, enjoyed the benefits of a lending library as early as 1856. The books were changed after morning service every Sunday, and were mainly of the type which might be expected: travel, biography and S.P.C.K. publications, all of which were intended to help mould the characters of those fortunate enough to have the chance to read them. During his episcopate Bishop Thomas actively encouraged the establishment of such parish libraries, making application on their behalf for the granting of concession prices to enable them to expand their holdings of books. He also set up a Church of England Book Depot in Goulburn, and for some years operated a

1 Formed in 1879. Express, 3 July 1880, p. 7.

2 Express, 1 July 1882, p. 3.

3 L.F. Fitzhardinge, St. John's Church and Canberra (2nd edn., Canberra, 1959) pp. 45-46.

4 F.W. Robinson, Canberra's First Hundred Years (Sydney, 1924) p. 52.

5 Mesac Thomas to the Secretary, S.P.C.K., 31 August 1882, making such an application for Canon Druitt at Cooma. Letterbooks, vol. 8.
diocesan colportage, 1 which was so successful that Mr Hempton, the
colporteur, was able to continue the work on his own account when the
diocese no longer required his services. 2 Another "improving"
institution within the Anglican church was the Church Union at Goulburn,
whose members met in 1899 each Tuesday evening to hear lectures, discuss
papers prepared by members, and on one occasion to take parts in a
reading of Twelfth Night. 3 Thirty years earlier a similar society had
existed in connection with the Wesleyan church at Kiora, near Moruya. 4

The more specifically social functions organized by the churches
were often intended to do more than simply entertain and raise money.
They were often used as incentives to attract larger attendances than
might otherwise be forthcoming to the annual congregational meetings,
with which they were frequently linked. The Presbyterian church at Yass
held its annual meeting and annual soiree on the same night, on one
occasion at least the Church of England clergyman being present and
making a speech. 5 Even when not connected with a regular congregational
meeting, tea meetings were usually interrupted by a series of speeches,
whether exhorting those present to assist the good work of the church
or on other topics.

1 Mesac Thomas to the Secretary, Sunday School Institute, London, 27
March 1883; to R.C.L. Bevan, Lombard Street, London, 20 August 1883.
Letterbooks, vol. 9.

2 Speech by Mesac Thomas to the Church Society, 16 February 1886, Report
of the Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the Church Society... (Goulburn,
1886) pp. 24-25.


4 Extracts of Diary of Thomas Edward Walter, entries for 21 June, 6
September 1870.

Some other events lent themselves less easily to such interruptions. The Roman Catholic community, for example, met for very social purposes in celebration of St. Patrick's Day each year. Typical arrangements for these celebrations might include marches by the Juvenile Guild Fife and Drum Band, athletics sports and a banquet, as they did at Goulburn in 1880,¹ or merely the sports, as at Taralga in the same year.² Before the end of the century the church picnic had become an annual event for the Presbyterians at Moruya,³ while various parishes of all denominations had annual concerts or flower shows. Not all chose a specific event to celebrate, but many Protestant churches used the Prince of Wales' birthday as their equivalent of St. Patrick's Day.⁴

Some of the social gatherings were less conventional than were tea meetings or picnics. Athletics sports, while too energetic to involve very large numbers of people, were popular attractions.⁵ In 1876 the Goulburn Presbyterians were bold enough to organize an excursion to Sydney, which was successful in raising £284 for church funds;⁶ as

¹Express, 20 March 1880, p. 7.
²Express, 27 March 1880, p. 6.
⁴For example, the Anglican congregation at Tumut held their Sunday School picnic and a concert on that date in 1877 (Australian Churchman, 22 November 1877, p. 246), while Moruya Presbyterians held concerts on the corresponding dates in 1890 and 1892 (Minute Book, Committee of Management, vol. III, 1885-1895. Meetings of 8 January 1891, 22 November 1892).
⁵They were held, for example, at the laying of the foundation stone of the Church of England at Bungonia. (Australian Churchman, 23 August 1877, p. 89.)
early as 1865 the Presbyterian minister of Cooma held a magic lantern show for children at his home, a ploy enlarged upon by the Methodist minister of Cootamundra in 1900 when he undertook a "lanthren lecture" tour of his circuit on the subject of the Boer War; and a hare drive was held by Presbyterians at Maffra, near Cooma, in August 1899. Clearly the Christians of south east New South Wales had among their number people capable of original thought.

It is very difficult to gauge the success of these activities other than in financial terms. Even in the simple matter of attendance, it is not easy to be precise. Reports of events commonly described the numbers present simply as "large" or "small", "satisfactory" or "disappointing". But it is certain that very large numbers were sometimes involved. In 1877 over three hundred people attended a public luncheon in aid of the vicarage building fund of the Anglican church at Tarago, well in excess of six hundred were present at an entertainment performed by members of the Roman Catholic Literary Society in Goulburn in 1885, and a Presbyterian tea meeting at Red Hill, near Taralga, in 1868 brought together about two hundred people, some of whom had travelled sixteen miles from Goulburn, others from even further afield, for the occasion. It was therefore the case that the churches were able to attract many more people to their social gatherings than to the

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2. Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly, 25 November 1899, p. 3.
3. Australian Churchman, 1 November 1877, p. 209.
5. Christian Herald, May 1868, p. 64.
formal church services. In the lonely life of outback New South Wales the churches fulfilled for many people a social as well as a spiritual need, for others only the social need. Through the contact thus engendered between practising Christians and the indifferent, a measure of influence must have been exerted on the latter, and the values of the churches spread beyond their own members, especially as the clergy and others often took advantage of the unusually large captive audiences to deliver talks and lectures.

It is of course impossible to assess the results of this contact. It is possible that a few conversions to Christianity may have occurred by this means, and that in other cases, in which conversion did not occur, the lives followed by the persons concerned were lived more closely in accordance with Christian values. Such cases, if they existed at all, must have been extremely rare, though. The most the churches could hope for was that through the provision of social activities they could prevent or limit the spread of less desirable ones. The rôle of the church in providing a social centre for the surrounding neighbourhood must not be ignored. There was often no alternative organization to promote community activities, especially in thinly peopled districts, thus the churches' efforts were filling an important social function. This may have been the most important rôle of the Christian churches in south east New South Wales, as the functions they organized may have diverted the attention of some people from less respectable pursuits during their leisure hours. ¹

The churches saw themselves as guardians of respectable

¹Churches were not, of course, the only social centres in most places. For a discussion of other institutions which filled this rôle see chapters 7 and 8.
morality, particularly opposing the corrupting influence of drink and gambling. The temptation towards the abuse of strong drink was very great, as was shown by the failure of some of the clergy themselves to avoid its attractions. The churches also tried to combat gambling and other evils, sometimes found in progress even amongst their own members. In 1868 Mesac Thomas complained to the incumbent at Braidwood about a newspaper report that a lottery had been held in his Church of England schoolroom, a proceeding "not in harmony with the purposes for which the building was erected".¹ Lotteries and art unions were the most frequently used forms of gambling in church circles. The Moruya Presbyterian congregation held an art union in conjunction with a bazaar in 1889;² and another occurred in connection with a concert held by the Anglican church at Craigie, near Bombala, in 1888,³ though in both cases it was specified that there were to be no blank tickets. Thirty years after Bishop Thomas's annoyance with the people of Braidwood, charges were still being made about the corrupting effect on the young of the use of lotteries and raffles at church bazaars, the very mildness of the character of the gambling and the small amounts at risk being their most insidious features. Through these, the churches were themselves introducing their young members to dangerous habits.⁴

Of course, there was a conflict of interest between the churches and the horse racing fraternity, though many prominent churchmen were


³Advertisement, Bombala Herald, 20 April 1888, p. 3.

⁴Cutting in Bishop Chalmers' Commonplace Book, 1892-1895, pp. 50-51.
themselves horse breeders and racing men. The Presbyterian church was the most outspoken against the track, one report of festive season activities in County Argyle rejoicing that attendances at local race meetings had been lower than usual, as races "unquestionably conduce to the demoralisation of the community". It was argued that various vices were concomitant with race meetings, "but who can assert that virtue has ever been benefitted by them?" Probably because so many leading churchmen enjoyed racing, such sweeping condemnations were rare, though at Yass in 1868 the Roman Catholic priest forbade his flock to attend races or any other amusements during Lent, while at the same time complaints were made about the holding of unofficial races at a nearby course on Sundays. The race committee promptly forbade the holding of races or practices on Sundays. So great was the hold of racing in Queanbeyan that a possible clash between a visit of Archbishop Vaughan and the annual race meeting caused "considerable disappointment" to many in the town. The clash did not, however, materialize.

Both Bishop Lanigan and Bishop Thomas disapproved of overindulgence in amusing pastimes. In 1877 Bishop Lanigan reprimanded Father Denis O'Dwyer of Young for playing a game of handball with laymen, warning him under threat of suspension against a repetition.


2 Letter, "A.O." to the Editor, Yass Courier, 11 March 1868, p. 3. One race meeting was postponed as a result of the priest's action.

3 Letter, Rev. F.A.C. Lillingston (Church of England) to the Editor, Yass Courier, 11 March 1868, p. 3; letter, "Fair Play", to the Editor, 14 March 1868, p. 3.

4 *Express*, 10 February 1883, p. 3. (Quoting the Queanbeyan Age.)

5 Bishop Lanigan to the Rev. D. O'Dwyer, Young, 4 April 1877. Lanigan Papers.
Thomas, too, criticized a clergyman for playing cards, painting scenes for theatricals and attending a dance. He considered it unseemly for a clergyman "even to seem a willing spectator of a Ball".¹ In the last years of his life he was saddened by the undue attention being given to light relief from serious matters,² and he felt that the worldliness he had discovered on his arrival had increased rather than diminished during the intervening years. He believed the people to be too concerned with amusements when he wrote home to Wales in 1888:

Skating rinks, prize fights, — Balls, racings, prize shooting, theatricals fill the Columns of our Newspapers to the exclusion of profitable reading.³

In such a worldly society, it might be expected that the social standing of church membership would be low. This was not in fact entirely true; not only active participation in church affairs, but also simple church membership, was synonymous with a certain respectability.

This perhaps helps to explain why there was such a limited amount of interdenominational friction in the south east. The absence from membership of the churches of the rougher elements of society made it easier for the respectable members, despite their occasional disagreements, to live in relative harmony.⁴ This harmony was most often demonstrated in the social aspect of church work, when people of all

¹ R.T. Wyatt, Diocese of Goulburn, p. 51.
² Mesac Thomas to the Dean of Sydney, 18 April 1888. Letterbooks, vol. 11.
⁴ It is worth noting, though, that intermarriage between Protestants and Roman Catholics was strongly opposed by the clergy of the latter church, who were convinced that women in particular were lost to the faith on marriage with a Protestant. See the priests' comments in the State of the Mission returns from Queanbeyan and Bombala in 1877, both men stating that the children of such marriages were kept from the church.
denominations attended the bazaars and concerts organized by each. Most cases of co-operation thus took the form of social gatherings involving the "respectable" classes of society, who were most evident in the lives of the churches both individually and collectively. These activities were typical of the major rôle of the churches in the society of south east New South Wales, that rôle being most positively played outside rather than inside the church walls.

IV

In the 1860s the pioneer Christian missionaries were shocked by the indifference they encountered towards the message of the Gospel. They found it difficult to obtain finance to support their families or to build their churches. They did not feel that the Christian church had more than a marginal influence upon the conduct of the lives of the inhabitants of the south east; thirty years later their successors could see little improvement, if any, in the attitude of the people towards religion.

The clergy of the nineties worked in a very different environment to that which had confronted their predecessors. They had many more people to serve; a larger proportion of these lived in towns and villages; and the pattern of economic activity had altered radically. Gold and other mining had declined in importance, a little local industry and a great deal of commercial business had arisen, as had dairy farming on the south coast and grain farming in the north and west of the region. Conditions for the clergy had become much easier through the dramatic transformation of the transport system, which reduced the hazards of travel.

But the nineties had their own problems. The south east suffered, as did the rest of the colony, from the depression following
2. Cooma, 1891.

National Library.
the financial crises of the early years of that decade. And of course the churches suffered with their members. It is possible to trace in the history of some churches a connection between the welfare of the locality and that of the church. Thus in the Presbyterian church the financial strains on the early settlers limited their ability to support new parishes, and in the 1870s no new charges at all were created within the south east. The economic prosperity of the eighties was reflected in the fortunes of churches, new charges being formed at Burrowa, Cootamundra, Germanton, Junee, Temora, Tumbarumba and Goulburn South (Trinity), the charge of Twofold Bay being divided into the separate ones of Bega and Eden. Similarly, it was in 1884 that the Anglican Cathedral in Goulburn was at last opened, and in the same year that the diocese of Riverina was separated from that of Goulburn. It was also in the eighties that the Roman Catholic church reacted to the final withdrawal of state aid to Denominational schools by erecting a full scale alternative system of their own. Had the crisis come ten years earlier or later it is doubtful if they would have been capable of doing so.

If churchmen hoped in the eighties that the worst of their troubles had passed, their optimism soon proved to be premature. In the nineties the depression which gripped the major financial centres of Australia also took hold of the bush communities, and the churches suffered correspondingly. The Anglican minister at Cooma recorded the progress of the depression there in his service register:

The want and misery are indescribable, affairs are complicated by the suspension of almost all the banking institutions entailing great loss and bitterness: nor have labor troubles ceased while the struggle of the laborer should be not so much for victory as for mere existence.²

¹ As Father Noel Cook has remarked to me, the Roman Catholics themselves have never accepted the withdrawal as in any way final.

² St. Paul's, Cooma, Service Register, 1862-1906. Entry for April 1893.
The fortunes of all churches reached their nadir during that decade. It was then that the worst cases of default in stipend payments occurred, then that ministers were forced to leave their congregations and one or two congregations even compelled to cease holding services, then that the Anglican Church Society had to alter both its official aims and its attitude towards methods of paying stipends.

Beyond any doubt society in south east New South Wales was at no stage a religious one. It was not a matter of the churches losing touch with the people; they never managed to overcome the impossible odds against their gaining touch in the first place. The most that the church people could hope to do was to establish solid foundations on which growth might be achieved in the future. They had to make compromises with nature and with each other in bush conditions that they would never have considered in the "civilization" of the industrial cities of the British Isles, or even in the great cities of Australia, where there were sufficient Christians to pay the stipends and build the churches without the kinds of sacrifices necessary in the bush. These missionaries, lay as well as clerical, knew the adventure of genuine mission, and occasionally the glory of success. But theirs was a bitter struggle against the temper of the age and against the materialism of an optimistic society at a time when religious belief was being challenged throughout the world, and not least in Australia.

Despite the trauma of the nineties, in the last years of that decade there were signs that the material situation was improving. In

1 Compare Walter Phillips’ conclusion in his article in Historical Studies, October 1972. Dealing with the whole of New South Wales, he states (p. 400) that this was "no story of a general decline in religion or of a mass defection from Christianity. The greater part of the population had been outside the churches throughout the whole period", that is from 1850 to 1901.
the years from 1896 to 1899 the Presbyterians at Bombala cleared £150 of debt and raised £99 for charity despite poor seasons, those at Moruya and Wagga managed to increase the stipends offered. In September 1898 the debt of the Methodist church at Albury fell to £11-2-2, the lowest amount yet recorded; in 1899 the Cootamundra circuit showed a positive balance in its annual accounts for the first time; and in Temora the deficit in 1897 was less than one pound, the bank overdraft two years earlier having been £370. Nor was the improvement only a financial one, for at Adelong the membership roll increased from sixty in January 1898 to one hundred and two three years later. The Roman Catholic church also experienced improved conditions, for new districts were formed at Murrumburrah in 1901 and at Koorawatha in 1902, while during the last five years of the nineteenth century no fewer than four wooden and seven more permanent churches, six schools, a monastery and two convents were constructed in the Goulburn diocese alone; further, the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Goulburn was consecrated on 21 April 1898. The Anglicans, in the same decade, resolved the contentious

1 Monaro and South Coast Presbyterian Quarterly, 25 November 1899, p. 2.

2 Minute Book, Quarterly Meetings, Methodist Circuit, Albury, 1885-1898. Meeting of 30 September 1898.


4 Temora Wesleyan Church, Home Mission Minute Book, 1891-1918. Meeting of 14 October 1897.

5 Ibid. Meeting of 5 June 1895.

6 Adelong Circuit, Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1868-1924. Meetings of 10 January 1898, 16 January 1901.

7 Almanac of the Diocese of Goulburn, 1903 (Maitland, 1903).
Cathedral dispute, almost removed the debt on the Cathedral, and undertook the erection of several small churches in outlying areas. Therefore the situation was far from hopeless at the end of the century. Although Christianity was not yet the dominant influence in the society of southeast New South Wales, the missionaries of the nineteenth century had at least created the material foundations upon which their successors could attempt to construct a more Christian society.
A Question of Conscience: The Decline of Denominational Education

Chapter 4

I

Given that the adults of the 1860s were not greatly concerned with Christianity, the main hope of the churches for the future might have lain in the rising generation, to which access could be obtained much more readily through their attendance at school. Obviously, the churches would first look to the Sunday Schools for the training of youth in Christian belief, but most of those who attended Sunday Schools were already members of active Christian families. The main work of conversion would presumably have to be carried out in the day schools, which were attended more frequently than were the churches or Sunday Schools by members of merely nominal Christian families.

Any such hopes held by members of the Protestant churches at least were not to be realized. They were swept away completely in the twenty years after 1860, which saw the bitter climax of the long debate on the place of the churches in education, and the resolution of that debate in the Public Instruction Act of 1880. As in the rest of New South Wales, the south east's main educational concern in the period up to the passing of that Act was bound up in that debate.

The debate originated in the outraged reactions of the non-Anglican churches to the establishment in 1825 of the Church and School Corporation, which had the short lived effect (it was dissolved in 1833) of making the provision of primary education a monopoly of the Church of England.¹ The dissolution of the Corporation did not, however, decide

the main issue of who should run the schools. Throughout the 1830s and much of the 1840s the arguments continued between the Anglicans and Roman Catholics, both in favour of a completely Denominational system, and the other Protestant denominations who, along with the government, advocated the introduction of the Irish National system of basically secular education with a leaven of non sectarian Christianity. During this early stage the active presence of the government in education was confined to the financial assistance it gave to existing Denominational schools. It was the increasing need for such support with the growth in numbers of these schools that was largely instrumental in providing the government with the opportunity to take some more positive action.

This came in 1848 with the establishment of the dual system of education, a compromise consisting of two part time boards to supervise the working of parallel educational systems. The National School Board was given the oversight of newly created state, or National, schools, while the Denominational School Board had the task of providing a central organization for the various types of church schools already in existence, as well as that of distributing the funds allotted from time to time by the government for their upkeep.

From the beginning, it was no part of the policy of the Commissioners of National Education to come into conflict with the

1 The Anglicans sided with the Presbyterians, though, in opposing Governor Bourke's proposal to give state aid to schools of all denominations, for fear of Roman Catholic domination of the colony.

2 Even Dr John Dunmore Lang, who had been opposed to the Irish system, changed his mind after visiting Ireland in 1837.

3 Detailed discussion of the establishment of the dual system, and of the early work of the agents of the National Board may be found in Austin, Australian Education, pp. 49-63.
Denominational schools, their avowed intention being only to set up National schools where no church schools already existed. Nevertheless, by the mid sixties the Board had control over approximately three hundred schools throughout the colony, thanks to the energies of its agents and inspectors under the leadership of William Wilkins. Of these, thirty seven were in the south east region, their total roll in 1865 of 1,810 comparing with the 2,151 pupils enrolled in the forty three Denominational schools in the area at the same date. The success of their policy of avoiding conflict is attested to by the fact that National schools and non Catholic Denominational schools were in competition only in Bega, Gundaroo, Gunning, Queanbeyan and Yass, in each of which Anglican schools existed, there also being a Presbyterian school in Yass. In the major centre of Goulburn there were no fewer than five Denominational schools (two Church of England, one Presbyterian, one Wesleyan and one Roman Catholic); but there was no National school. Like most compromises, the dual system never seemed likely to provide a final solution to the problem, and it came under increasing criticism during the period of its existence. Two factors pointed

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2 K. Cable, "Presbyterian Primary Education in New South Wales in the Nineteenth Century", typescript, ANL MS 2835, p. 2.

3 Fourteen Anglican, two Presbyterian, two Wesleyan and twenty five Roman Catholic. Reports of the National and Denominational School Boards for 1865. NSW:LA V&P, Session 1866, vol. II.

4 Of these, the Anglican school in Bega was opened in July, the National schools at Gundaroo and Yass North opened in October and September respectively, and the National school at Gunning closed at the end of April. National and Roman Catholic schools existed together in ten centres.
towards the probability that the eventual solution would come in the form of secular domination of the educational system. The first was the practical one that the denominational element in the system was wasteful; it was unjustifiable to continue to subsidize several schools in competition in places where the existence of one school would have been ample. For example, Goulburn's five schools in 1865 were serving a total population little over 3,500; Queanbeyan had three schools with a population of under six hundred. In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that conditions in the schools, whether National or Denominational, were far from pleasing. The Select Committee on Education appointed in 1854 with Wilkins at its head reported that the material conditions in schools were shocking to say the least. Apart from structural defects in the buildings, it was not uncommon for schools to be without basic equipment such as books, slates and even tables and chairs. As late as 1864 the Denominational School Board noted with distaste that there were still schools in which the teacher was not provided with a desk, table or chair. It can hardly be wondered that Wilkins and his associates recommended the adoption of a single educational system to eliminate at least some of the waste.

The second factor was simply that the temper of the age was not on the side of the religious. Even before the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species there were many, within Australia as elsewhere, who called in question the validity of traditional religious beliefs. The Christian churches were on the defensive against science. But intellectual scepticism was less important in this context than the

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1 For discussion of this report see Austin, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

general indifference towards religion exhibited by the population at large. The clerical resistance to the triumph of secular education was brave but doomed to failure through lack of support, and often direct opposition, from the parents of the children who would attend the schools.¹

In any case, the churches themselves were far from unanimous on the desirability of maintaining the Denominational system. There were clear divisions not only between the different churches, but within, especially, the Church of England.

The only church which was steadfast in its support of the church schools was the Roman Catholic. It is significant that the majority of petitions received by Parliament in their defence came from Roman Catholics, lay and clergy, or from Anglicans, mainly clergy.² The Catholic position was quite clear; it was intolerable to them to send their children to schools other than those in which they would receive a Catholic education. Since a proper Catholic education required, in theory at least, the permeation of the work of the school with a religious spirit it was obvious that a system which strictly separated the secular and religious aspects of education could never prove acceptable to them.³

The attitudes of the other major denominations were more

¹ It is only necessary to scan the abstracts of petitions printed in the Parliamentary Papers of the early 1860s to discover the large scale public support for the secularists.

² Roman Catholic petitions against the Act of 1866 contained 8,459 signatures, Anglican ones only 3,939. Austin, op. cit., p. 124.

³ This was even more certain after the publication of the Syllabus of Errors by Pius IX in 1864. See Decrees on Education adopted by the Archbishop and Bishops...in April, 1869, in Pastorals and Speeches by Archbishop Vaughan (Sydney, 1880) Appendix, Paragraphs 2, 7.
confused, although the smaller Protestant sects were always strongly behind a state system which would remove sectarian education from the curriculum. The Presbyterians, divided for years over the relationship between church and state, would probably have preferred to maintain their own schools, but certainly favoured a non sectarian state system over one in which the state would support, hence have influence over, Denominational schools. Therefore they supported the Public Schools Bill of 1866.¹

The Church of England, numerically the largest body, held the key to the situation. And it was divided.² The Evangelical wing regarded Denominational schools as unnecessary,³ as Bible study at church would provide an adequate religious education, while the High Church group took a stand close to that of the Roman Catholics, maintaining that the essential doctrines of the church ought to be taught to Anglican children in order to ensure their preservation. The situation was further obscured by the fact that educational policy was only one aspect of the power struggle between these groups in the 1850s and 1860s, a struggle in which the Evangelicals, mainly comprising laity and the lower clergy, proved successful in forcing the more High Church clergy and bishops to give ground to their demands. By the time of the passing of the 1866 Act, though many Anglicans remained intransigent, a sufficient number were willing to accept the measure for it to pass without serious

¹For elaboration of this point, see Austin, op. cit., pp. 118-119; Cable, loc. cit., pp. 2-3.

²Austin, op. cit., pp. 120-122.

³Though Bishop Thomas, a strong Evangelical, was a supporter of the Denominational system, regarding Public schools as injurious to religion. For example, Mesac Thomas, A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Goulburn... (Goulburn, 1868) pp. 20-21.
opposition in the House.¹

The Public Schools Act of 1866 abolished the two School Boards, replacing them with a single body, the Council of Education, which had control over all schools receiving state aid, be they National (renamed Public) or Denominational in nature. The policy of avoiding competition between them was abandoned,² and conditions made much more difficult for the opening of new Denominational schools, or their survival if already existing.³ Public schools were so favoured by the provisions of the Act that it was certain the following years would see a relative, and indeed an absolute, decline in the importance of the Denominational element in the system. From a situation of rough parity between Public and church schools in 1866, each totalling about three hundred schools, by the date of final abolition of state aid, 1882, the numbers of Denominational schools in receipt of such assistance⁴ had fallen to 109,⁵ while the Public schools had increased in number by over five times.

By the 1870s the issue had become that of whether all state aid to Denominational schools ought to be removed. The Protestant attitude became progressively more unfavourable to these schools, the

¹Austin, op. cit., p. 124.

²Or at least altered to give Public schools priority in an area where no schools yet existed, by the regulation which forbade the establishment of a Denominational school within two miles of a Public school unless the two schools had a joint attendance of 120.


⁴There were in addition a number of schools maintained entirely by the church concerned (usually the Roman Catholic). How many of these there were is uncertain.

⁵Cable, loc. cit., p. 2.
more so as the Protestant, and especially the Presbyterian, schools were the ones to close in the greatest numbers. Between 1866 and 1880 the numbers of Anglican, Presbyterian and Wesleyan schools in New South Wales fell by between sixty (Anglican) and ninety (Presbyterian) per cent; the Roman Catholics, on the other hand, lost less than a fifth of their schools. The main support for the Public schools had come from the Protestants, so it was natural that they should be filled principally by Protestant children; the Roman Catholics believed they had more to lose, and sent fewer children to the Public schools. Many Protestants came to argue, therefore, that the Roman Catholics were receiving an unfair advantage by having their specialized education subsidized by Protestant taxpayers whose children were not in receipt of similar benefits. This was, ironically, an exact reversal of the Catholic argument both at the same time and in the years following the withdrawal of state aid. Protestant suspicion of Catholics and their schools became so great that even some, particularly Anglicans, who in their hearts were proponents of the Denominational system, chose to accept its demise rather than appear to side with Romanism. In the 1870s there was, therefore, a considerable pressure from church people to concentrate educational provision in the hands of the state, such education to include an element of religious instruction of a non controversial character.


3 See Bishop Lanigan's comments below, part II.

In addition, the practical considerations of providing educational opportunity to a rapidly expanding but still widely scattered population dictated the terms of such a project. The state simply had to undertake almost all of the fresh expenditure required if any schools were to be built at all. It was thus unthinkable that any other body should have control over the type and quality of the instruction to be given in these schools. It also followed that the instruction had to reflect the same religious bias as the state, namely, a vague Christianity shorn of sectarian dogma.

The coincident nature of the conclusions of both sectarian controversy and pragmatic necessity made the kind of solution embodied in the Public Instruction Act of 1880 almost inevitable, despite the valiant efforts of Archbishop Vaughan and others to save the Denominational system.

The Public Instruction Act marked both the climax and the end of the debate. Despite the bitter sense of injustice which led Catholics to protest for years afterwards, there was no serious prospect that the decision of 1880 would be reversed. The fates of the Catholic and Protestant Denominational schools followed predictably different courses; the Protestant schools almost vanished as their pupils increasingly moved into the Public schools, while the Catholic schools developed into an independent rival to the state system.

1 Austin, op. cit., chapter 6, especially pp. 180-184.

2 Obviously this is much too simple, but a full discussion of the origins of the 1880 Act would be impracticable in this context. Fuller analyses of the situation may be found in the works of Austin and Fogarty already cited.
Although the high drama of the educational debate of necessity took place in Sydney, where the main combatants were assembled, echoes of the debate are not difficult to discern in the south east. As early as 19 August 1863, 246 Roman Catholics of Queanbeyan petitioned the Legislative Council, fearing the likely consequences of the passing of the "Bill to promote Elementary Education", then under consideration, would be a threat to their liberty of conscience in religious matters.¹ That these feelings were shared by their co-religionists elsewhere in the south east is evident from the presence in the Journal of the Legislative Council of further petitions, seeking safeguards for Roman Catholics, from Nimitybelle, Cooma, Albury and Braidwood.² A total of 558 people signed these four petitions, striking evidence that there was concern in well separated districts about the future of Catholic schools.

When the Bill of 1866 was before Parliament petitioning activity increased sharply. During the session of 1866 the Legislative Assembly received no fewer than thirty three petitions from south east New South Wales on the subject.³ Fifteen of these, with a total of 1,907 signatures, stated general or unqualified support for the Bill; eighteen, with a total of 2,364 signatures, indicated opposition.

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² Ibid., pp. 214-215.
³ NSW:LA V&P, Session 1866, vol. II, pp. 715-1143 passim. The Legislative Council also received similar petitions, though these, with one exception, contained fewer signatures than those sent to the Assembly.
Table 2

Petitions against the Public Schools Bill of 1866

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Number of Petitions</th>
<th>Total Signatures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>2364</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unanimity of the Roman Catholics is well illustrated by the fact that all of their petitions were emphatically against the Bill; at least they possessed the virtue of consistency. One of these, that from 182 inhabitants of the Braidwood district to the Legislative Council, stated concisely both the fears and the sense of grievance felt by members of that denomination. They were afraid that, without state assistance, the schools erected by themselves might have to be closed, and the children sent to the potentially subversive Public schools. They were aggrieved that, at the same time as they were removed from the sphere of state assistance, they were still to be compelled, through the taxation system, "to contribute to the maintenance and support" of these same Public schools. Their argument had a ring of justice to it; yet to hear the Protestant argument in similar isolation gives the same impression. This was no easy problem to solve in the interests of the whole community. Whatever the decision, someone was sure to feel he had been unfairly treated.

Curiously, despite the strongly Evangelical inclinations of both clergy and laity in the Goulburn diocese, the Anglicans were equally

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unanimous in their opposition to the Bill; at least, none of the petitions in favour of the Bill were described as coming from members of the Church of England, whereas several petitions against it were clearly Anglican in nature. One in particular was signed by the Bishop of Goulburn and twenty three of his clergy.\(^1\) Although he was but a recent arrival in the colony, Bishop Thomas was not afraid to take a firm stand on matters of principle. After the measure had passed, he expressed to his clergy his conviction that the reform could only lead to a decline in the religious character of the youth of the colony.\(^2\) He protested that in secular education the church schools were every bit as sound as the Public schools, while they alone could impart that "higher instruction which alone gives its value to secular knowledge".

In the years leading up to the final withdrawal of state aid it is possible to trace, in south east New South Wales, all of the elements which confused the situation in Sydney. On the one hand, there was no doubt where stood the Presbyterians. The editorial demand of the Australian Witness\(^3\) at the end of 1872, that there should be no denominationalism, but only pure Bible teaching, in schools, found an echo at the end of the decade in the resolution adopted by the Goulburn Presbytery, and forwarded to the General Assembly in the form of an "Overture anent Education".\(^4\) The Overture summed up all of the secularist

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1. NSW:LA V&P, Session 1866, vol. II, p. 1109. This number corresponds closely with the total number of Anglican clergy active in the diocese at the time, therefore probably all of them signed the petition.

2. Mesac Thomas, A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Goulburn... (Goulburn, 1868) pp. 20-21.

3. Australian Witness, 7 December 1872, p. 4.

desires and fears. The fear of the Roman Catholics is evident in the reference to the "desperate attempt" which was in progress "under foreign influence" to replace the existing educational system by one which was not only "at variance with the best interests of the community", but also, significantly, "contrary to the tendency of the age", a clear indication of Presbyterian endorsement of current thought. The desire of the Protestants to further that tendency, and at the same time to make matters more difficult for the Romanists, was also present in the Overture in the recommendation that the denominational element in the educational system be speedily expunged. In the presence of a similar Overture from the Presbytery of Sydney, it is not surprising that the General Assembly resolved unanimously that state aid to Denominational schools was "inconsistent with a National System of Education". The Assembly supported the new Bill.

This logical, if one sided, viewpoint found its counterpart on the opposite side in the pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Goulburn, William Lanigan, who was a whole hearted supporter of Archbishop Vaughan in the latter's fight to save some state aid for Catholic schools. In Bishop Lanigan's opinion, the Syllabus of Errors was correct to declare false the assumption that non sectarian Scripture readings were harmless to faith. He asserted that, although there

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1 Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, Session Fifteenth (Sydney, 1879) minute 85, p. 22.

2 Ibid., minute 88, p. 23.

3 He was in close consultation with the Archbishop on the matter. Archbishop Vaughan to Bishop Lanigan, 22 February 1876, 13 February 1878 (Lanigan Papers).

4 For example, Lenten Pastoral of 1882, in the Express, 25 February 1882, p. 3; Pastoral Letter, in the Express, 12 August 1882, p. 3.
were many interpretations of the Scriptures, the only true interpretation was found when they were used according to the Catholic rule; in the Public schools the Bible readings were used, even if with no particular denominational bias, in a Protestant manner.¹ Such lessons were unfit for Catholic children; they could even be used by Protestant teachers for purposes of proselytization. The bishop warned his flock:

We have a fixed defined faith, which we believe to be divine, and the effort made by the Public School system to harmonise conflicting religious opinions by some kind of common Christianity, or by the exclusion of Christianity altogether, is antagonistic to a defined faith. To educate youth after such a system is of itself well suited either to destroy, in the minds of children, respect for religion altogether, or at least to make them indifferent about it.²

Public schools were therefore dangerous to the faith and morals of Catholic children, who ought not to attend them save in cases of dire necessity.³

While he did not go to these lengths in condemning the Public schools, Mesac Thomas at least agreed with Lanigan's conclusion, that the church schools ought to remain, and with state assistance. Like Lanigan, he did believe that the outcome of a secular school system, "from which the Bible is excluded",⁴ would be a decline in the status of the church. It was not enough, he argued, for religious instruction

¹ February.

² August.

³ The bishop's opinions were also expressed in a circular letter to his priests on 27 October 1874 (Lanigan Papers) and in his Lenten Pastoral of 1880 (Yass Courier, 17 February 1880, p. 4).

to be confined to the Sunday Schools; the Bible was the basis of a
Christian life, and ought to be present in daily instruction. He was,
therefore, most indignant at the prospect of the removal of such
government aid as still remained.

Nor was the bishop alone in his indignation, as was shown by
two new series of petitions reaching Parliament, the first in 1875, the
second during the heat of debate in 1879-1880. Apart from their fears
of the effects of secular education on religious life, the primary
characteristic of both Anglican and Catholic reactions to the proposals
was a deep and bitter sense of injustice, even of persecution (particularly,
of course, among Roman Catholics). This is evident both in the
pronouncements of the bishops and in the phrasing of these petitions.
In 1875 five petitions from the area were received by Parliament, with
a total of 1,918 signatures. During the 1879-1880 session the
Legislative Assembly received fifteen further petitions from the area,
five (with 1,400 signatures) supporting the Bill, ten (with 2,987 signatures)
against.

The depth of feeling of the petitioners was obvious; that sent
by "Residents of Tumut" in 1875 was typical. After pointing out the bias
of the existing regulations in favour of the Public schools, the
petitioners claimed that to intensify the disabilities of the
Denominational schools would be grossly unjust, as the Roman Catholics

denominations of the petitioners were not stated, but the terms of the
petitions suggest both Anglican and Roman Catholic participation.

six of the opposing petitions were clearly Roman Catholic and one
Anglican; the others were probably Roman Catholic.

3 P. 147. There were 138 signatures.
and "the majority in the Church of England", alleged to support the church schools, represented a very large sector of the total population. They did not, they continued, wish to withhold a fair proportion of the available funds from the Public schools, as they, too, enjoyed widespread public support. They only desired equal treatment for themselves. They concluded, plaintively, "the intolerance and sectarianism are all on the side of the Secularists". Bishop Thomas would probably have agreed.

He was most certainly shocked by the revelation that the original unanimity of his followers on the issue was breaking up by the end of the seventies, notably in parts of the diocese where no Church of England schools existed to inspire feelings of loyalty. He must have been horrified to discover that two of his senior clergy, the Rev. A.D. (later Canon) Acocks and his personal friend, the Rev. W.H. (later Dean) Pownall, were among those who had publicly stated their support for the Bill. Pownall had almost certainly signed the petition of 1866 against reform; now he was accepting a more radical reform by far. Such action was symptomatic of changing times. By 1880 Bishop Thomas was probably in the minority among the Anglicans. He recognized as much, writing to Bishop Barker that the temper of Parliament and that of the country were both against Denominational schools.

Therefore most of the factors involved in the secular controversy in Sydney were also visible in the south east. Predictably, country Presbyterians supported the plans for reform, country Catholics opposed them. Predictably, the Church of England, united at first

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1Mesac Thomas to Bishop Barker, 6 January 1880, in Barbara Thorn (ed.), Letters From Goulburn (Canberra, 1964) p. 60.

2Ibid.
behind their new bishop, later found room for disagreement, especially when questions of local interest became involved. The other main theme in the decision to opt for secular schools, the practical, was also present in the area. This was a very fast growing outback region, one in which a rapid increase in school provision was essential. The people of the region were thus aware of the practical considerations involved, and must have been influenced by them. Further, as the majority of the people were unenthusiastic about religion, there was likely to be a strong feeling in favour of secular education quite apart from that engendered by denominational rivalries.

Perhaps the main action in the movement towards free, secular and compulsory education took place in Sydney and in the capitals of the other colonies, but it should not be forgotten that the elements of the debate were present outside these centres, not least in south east New South Wales. It is against this background that the history of the Denominational schools in the region must be examined.

III

In 1863 there were in the south east ten Church of England, one Presbyterian, two Wesleyan and twenty four Roman Catholic schools. They enrolled at the end of that year 492, 55, 137 and 1,180 pupils respectively. Enrolments at individual schools ranged from below

1For the actual extent of the increase achieved, see chapter 5.

2This may have been the deciding factor which changed the attitude of, for example, Dean Pownall, living in the expanding town of Wagga Wagga, which had no Church of England school.

3Denominational School Board Report for 1863, Appendix D, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1865, vol. II. Average attendances were, of course, much smaller than the enrolment figures.
thirty in the cases of the Anglican schools at Bungendore and Kippilaw and the Roman Catholic schools at Collector and Gunning to over a hundred at the Yass Church of England and Lambing Flat Roman Catholic schools. The average attendance at these schools varied from fourteen to seventy three.

During the remaining years of the School Boards the number of Denominational schools in the area increased until the peak figure of fifty six was reached in 1867, the first full year of operation of the Council of Education, almost all of the increase from 1863 being in the ranks of the Church of England schools. In these four years the total enrolment rose from 1,864 to 3,286, an expansion of 76.3 per cent. Yet in 1867 there were in the region only thirty six Public schools, with a combined roll of 1,846, an advance of only eight schools and 325 pupils (or 21.4 per cent) on the 1863 figure. Therefore the Denominational schools were, when the Council of Education began its work, not only greater in number than the Public schools, but also growing more quickly both in quantity and in attendance.

1. This school's average attendance was 32. As the return for the year's aggregate enrolment was identical to that of the current roll on 31 December it seems likely that the teacher had not troubled to erase the names of children leaving during the year.

2. Roman Catholic school, Collector.

3. Wesleyan school, Goulburn.


Table 3
The Denominational Schools, 1863-1882

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
<th>Percentage Attendance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>492</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wesleyan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38*</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>1864</td>
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<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>1367</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>294</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>809</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>1545</td>
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<td>971</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>1732</td>
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<tr>
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<td>205</td>
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<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>2344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>116</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1210</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>2139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Including one school from which no return was received.

1 Constructed from the reports of the successive central bodies.
It is beyond question that the remarkable increase in the number of Anglican schools was due in large measure to the foundation of the Goulburn diocese. For one thing, control from Goulburn implied a greater local participation in church projects, as well as facilitating a greater central interest in local affairs. For another, the enthusiasm of Mesac Thomas was, at least in the early years of his episcopate, infectious. The building of schools as well as churches was an immediate product of his fresh vigour; when the novelty of the presence of a more accessible bishop wore off, this proved to be a contributory cause of a decline in interest in the activities of the church, in the field of education as elsewhere.

In the course of the next fifteen years there was a dramatic decline in the number of church schools within the state system. By 31 December 1882, when Denominational schools ceased to qualify for state aid, the twenty seven Church of England schools of 1867 had all disappeared from the list except those at Moruya, Yass and Young; all of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan schools had gone; and the Roman Catholic schools had been reduced in number from twenty five to nineteen. Only twenty two Denominational schools were left, therefore, their total enrolment of 2,139 showing a decrease of 1,147 from the 1867 figure.

Of the several causes combining to give this result, easily the most important was the change in policy occasioned by the establishment of the Council of Education as the governing body in

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1 From ten to fourteen, 1863-1865, fourteen to twenty seven, 1865-1867.

place of the old School Boards. In fairness, this change of policy was largely pressed on the Council by the regulations it was appointed to enforce, regulations which appeared specifically designed to make things awkward for the denominationalists. Apparently the reformers did not feel strong enough in 1866 to press for the complete abolition of state aid, but their Act ensured the decline of Denominational schools from that date.

The regulations demanded that, in order to obtain financial assistance, all Denominational schools acquire a certificate of recognition from the Council. To satisfy the conditions for certification was easier for existing schools than for new ones. An existing school was required to maintain an enrolment of thirty, accept inspection by the nominee of the Council, offer a course of instruction including four hours of secular instruction daily, and accept children from other denominations. The only requirement likely to cause much difficulty in these schools was that referring to enrolment. In 1865, of the forty three Denominational schools in the area, seventeen reported average attendances of under thirty, and a further five just exceeded that number. These would all be in danger if the Council applied the regulations strictly, but in general it was not difficult for an existing Denominational school to obtain a certificate; the difficulty was to


2 This meant an effective enrolment; in other words, an average attendance of thirty.

3 In practice this was common even before 1866, particularly in Protestant schools. These regulations from the Public Schools Act, NSW 30 Vic. no. 22, 1866, Paragraphs 9, 20, 28.

Much more difficult was the task facing anyone attempting to gain recognition for a new Denominational school. The Act laid down that, in addition to satisfying these requirements, a new Denominational school had to be not more than five miles from a Public school whose attendance was seventy or more, the church school having a regular attendance of at least thirty. If within two miles of a Public school, then the combined attendances had to reach 120. Naturally, it was very hard for the sponsors of a new school to guarantee these points in a manner which would convince the Council, especially in sparsely populated districts such as were found in many parts of the Monaro. It took great skill and determination to carry through a successful application, so much so that in the whole of New South Wales only fourteen new schools were certificated by the Council during its entire existence, an average of one for each year of its operation. Only the Roman Catholics were sufficiently motivated to make the effort; the other denominations gradually lost the schools they already had as more and more parents chose to send their children to the Public schools rather than contribute to the upkeep of the Denominational schools.

The attitude of the men appointed to the Council of Education was therefore of major importance. Yet their practical task of organizing an efficient and economical educational service limited their freedom of

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1 Public Schools Act, Paragraph 9.

2 See below, case of the Roman Catholic school at Adelong. Paragraph 13 of the Act empowered the Council to grant aid to schools in remote areas not satisfying the requirements, but only as private, not Certified Denominational, schools.

3 Twelve Roman Catholic, one Anglican and one Jewish. Compare Cable, loc. cit., pp. 3-4.
action. From harsh necessity they were bound to apply the regulations fairly rigidly, and withdraw certificates, and with them finance, from the small schools which the Denominational Board had permitted to continue. The Council did not begin to do so immediately, but waited for a year to give an opportunity for improvement before implementing the law.¹ Thereafter the process of closing the inefficient and uneconomical schools started in earnest. In the two years between 1867 and 1869 seventeen Denominational schools within the south east were closed or transferred to the Public school system, ten of these belonging to the Church of England.² By 1875 a further thirteen had gone the way of the others,³ including the last of the Presbyterian schools (the Wesleyan schools had disappeared by 1869). Most of the closures, then, occurred during the early years of the Council's work. Not all of the schools were closed through withdrawal of their certificates by the Council; the initiative sometimes came from the local board if they felt unable to maintain the school any longer, but the Council was not slow to take action where they felt it to be necessary.

There were several reasons why it was necessary to close so many of these schools, most of them being economic. First, prior to the 1866 Act the Denominational School Board had made grants towards the building and upkeep of these schools; after 1866 the Council of Education

¹Cable, loc. cit., p. 6. Paragraph 28 of the Act laid down that no certificate would be withdrawn until 1 January 1868. This helps to understand why 1867 was the year in which the maximum number of Denominational schools was achieved.


was empowered only to pay the teachers' salaries,\(^1\) the responsibility for maintenance lying entirely with the local boards. This provision naturally made the task of the local boards and ecclesiastical authorities more difficult, especially in a time of expansion in other church activities in these bush districts. It was hard enough to procure funds to build churches and pay stipends without providing the cash to keep schools in good order. For the Protestants, it was easier to give up many of their schools and send their children to the Public schools. In any case, by the sixties the easy attitude of the Denominational Board had resulted in the construction of a wasteful number of church schools. In the presence of alternative Public schools, there was, for example, no need to have six Church of England schools within a short radius, as at Bungendore, Canberra, Collector, Ginninderra, Gundaroo and Queanbeyan, with an aggregate average attendance of 129, only the school at Queanbeyan (32.6) satisfying the regulations of the Council.\(^2\)

The limited resources of the churches were stretched far enough without such prodigality. Even at Yass, where as late as 1882 the Anglican school had an average attendance of over fifty, there was grave difficulty in keeping the school open. In 1873 the local board estimated that, in order to repair the school house and erect desperately needed outbuildings they would require a sum of £600. Being of the opinion that it would be "utterly impossible to raise within this town and district even one half" of that amount, the board unanimously

\(^1\)Cable, loc. cit., p. 4; Fogarty, op. cit., pp. 70-71; Public Schools Act, Paragraph 23.

recommended the transfer of the school to the Council.¹ This recommendation was forwarded for his approval to Bishop Thomas. It was not forthcoming. The bishop's reply² of a few days later denied the right of the board to transfer the school, as by doing so they would contravene a trust. In any case, the bishop argued, to transfer the school to the Council would entail its loss to the Anglican community for all church purposes, such as the holding of the Sunday School or parish meetings. This he was not prepared to countenance. He suggested that the board could raise the money to improve the school building, postponing the improvement of the residence to a later date. The board were not convinced but, despite a general feeling among the congregation that the school ought to be handed over to the Council, without the bishop's consent they were powerless.³ The school remained officially a Church of England school until the withdrawal of state aid nine years later. The report on the school by Inspector J.H. Murray in 1875 suggests, however, that the board had made some compromises in their efforts to permit the school to continue. After noting the "disgraceful" material condition of the school, to which "no improvement is expected", he reported that:

In order to meet the constant and increasing cry of the people here for a Public School, the Denominational character of the school is wholly abandoned in [its] actual working...⁴ no religious instruction of any kind being given.

¹Minute Book of the Certified Denominational School Board, St. Clement's, Yass, 1873-1878. Meeting of 26 August 1873.


³Minute of a meeting of 11 September 1873.

Of the total roll of 135, 108 were present at inspection. By 1879 the attendance had fallen from the 1875 average of 100.5 to 26.6, while the Public school built in the interim had an average of 115.8. Early in 1880 the Council asked the board to show cause why, in view of the low attendance, the certificate should not be withdrawn, but the attendance revived, and Bishop Thomas was able to plead successfully for its retention. Similar circumstances, with less determined resistance, led to the closing of many Denominational schools. The laws of economics are not easy to challenge.

Although many of the closures were enforced by economic pressure, it was not difficult for supporters of the Denominational schools to feel themselves the victims of oppression and persecution by the Council. In truth, by some of its actions the Council, no doubt unintentionally, fostered such beliefs. Two applications for the granting of a certificate were made on behalf of a Roman Catholic school at Adelong, in 1869 and 1871; both were rejected. The Legislative Assembly duly received a petition signed by 205 "citizens of every class and creed" claiming that on both occasions the provisions of the Act had been met, that competent teachers were in charge of the school (including

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4 E.g. the Anglican school at Marulan had its certificate withdrawn in 1871 due to its premises being "not fit for occupation". Report on Denominational Schools, 1871, p. 3, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1872, vol. II.

one who had passed a Public school teacher's examination), that there were more than 120 pupils attending the Public and Catholic schools, and that they were at a loss to explain the refusal. There is no report that these claims were investigated, the only mention of the application recording its rejection on the grounds of non compliance with the attendance clause of the Act. The Council may have been justified in its actions, but its public relations were not assisted by the case. The school did eventually receive a certificate, but not until the last years of operation of the Council.

It was not only in the matter of recognizing new schools that the Council gave cause for questioning its intentions. As early as 1867 Mesac Thomas thought he had discovered one of its methods of damaging the Denominational schools. He wrote that the Council was slack in appointing teachers to vacancies at Braidwood, Queanbeyan, South Gundagai and Crookwell, "in order to weaken our cause I fear", at the same time opening schools at Braidwood and Queanbeyan "on the Bible-less system". In January he had written to the Council informing it of the resignation of the Queanbeyan teacher and offering to recommend someone to replace him. Later in the year he made known to the Council his dissatisfaction with its actions in several specific cases, requesting justice. Mr


2Mesac Thomas to the Rev. Ware, Corowa, 29 June 1867. Letterbooks, vol. 2.


4Mesac Thomas to the Council of Education, 8 November 1867, Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 8. (AONSW 1/742.)
T. Harris, the inspector of the Goulburn district, duly reported that the bishop appeared to think that any teacher who resigned did so at the instigation of the Council; the inspector had verbally assured him there had been no interference with the teachers.¹ Four years later the bishop complained that the Council had deliberately brought about the closure of "a flourishing Church of England school" at Marulan, by transferring the teacher during a lengthy tour of visitation by the bishop, and omitting to appoint a replacement.² Several months later, "when the Children had been scattered, or drawn away to another school which the Council had opened in the neighbourhood", he was asked to nominate a suitable schoolmaster. The Council was now requesting his acquiescence in the closure of the school. In spite of his indignant refusal the certificate was still withdrawn.³ Perhaps some of these incidents were the result of mishandling by the Council, but there is little doubt that the denominationalists were correct when they accused that body of being more interested in the welfare of the Public schools than of theirs. Father Dunne, of the Roman Catholic church in Goulburn, published in 1869 some letters he had written to the Colonial Secretary personally, because he had "no confidence in the leading members" of the Council, who, he was sure, had as their object "to utterly uproot all Christian teaching in our schools, and to make the rising generation of New South Wales materialists and atheists".⁴ In this accusation the priest surely

¹Undated memorandum, ibid.


³See above, p. 110, note 4.

⁴Southern Argus, 15 September 1869. Copy of the letter in Lanigan Papers.
knew he was exaggerating, but it is true that the members of the Council probably had little love for the Denominational schools, and were quite happy to see their numbers decline. Anyway, it is less important to know whether or not this was the case than to realize that people thought it was so.

Even allowing for his bias, Mesac Thomas did not exaggerate the position very greatly when, in 1879, he called upon his clergy to expand the provision of Sunday Schools in an attempt to counteract the menace of the Council. "The Council of Education", he told them, "is employed, rather too industriously, in endeavouring to close our Church schools, by establishing in their immediate neighbourhood rival secular schools".¹ The statistics support the view that, whether or not the bishop's interpretation of its actions was accurate, this was indeed the result being obtained.

A further cause of the decline of the Denominational schools may be found in the siting of those already built when the Council's operations began. Of the fifty six schools in being in 1867, no less than thirty five were in the oldest settled region, that taking in Yass, Goulburn and Queanbeyan as its largest centres.² In addition, six of the schools (three Anglican, three Roman Catholic) were on the south coast, another early area of settlement. There were only four Denominational schools in the Monaro, only seven in the south west of the area at the eastern end of the Riverina. Yet these were the areas to which the largest part of the rapidly expanding population was tending, partly as a response to the land legislation of the early sixties. Wagga Wagga's only Denominational school was a Roman Catholic one, though already in

¹ Speech of 12 February 1879, Report of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Church Society... (Goulburn, 1879) p. 18.

² This figure included nineteen of the twenty seven Anglican schools and all of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan ones.
1867 it had the fourth largest Public school in the diocese;¹ Cooma had no Protestant Denominational school, though it was growing to be the largest population centre in the Monaro. Due to the difficulties created by the Act of 1866 in obtaining certificates, new centres of the seventies like Cootamundra, Gundagai and Temora had no opportunity to experience Denominational education outside the Roman Catholic independent schools. The timing of the 1866 Act was such that it confined church schools to the older districts of settlement, where the demand for education was, by the 1870s, much less than in the frontier regions. The new centres of population were served from the beginning by the Public schools and by the independent Roman Catholic schools; the older settlements could no longer support Denominational schools, especially against the competition of the Public schools.

Moreover, the same public attitude that made possible the Public Instruction Act of 1880 also sealed the fate of the individual church schools. The Public schools agreed with the "temper of the age", therefore it was to them that most of the children were sent. The Public schools were better served for funds than were the church schools, hence they could usually offer better facilities and, despite the protestations of Bishops Lanigan and Thomas, offer a better secular education, while providing enough religion to satisfy the average conscience through the Scripture lessons and occasional visits from local clergymen as provided by the Act.

One common element in the five chief factors which, taken together, go far in explaining the collapse of the Denominational system, was that of economics. The Public Schools Act reduced the amount of funds

available from state sources to the church schools; the attitude of the Council was partly determined by a desire to use the available resources in the most efficient manner possible; the local financial situation in the churches themselves did not assist the plans of the denominationalists; the changes in population patterns accentuated the local difficulties; and the public, by preferring the Public school system, added what was perhaps the final blow.

Alternatively, the common factor may be sought in "the temper of the age". The decline of the church schools may be seen as one practical effect of the general public indifference to religion. The terms of the Public Schools Act, the actions of the Council of Education, the origins of the local problems and the popular acceptance of the Public schools may all be interpreted in this fashion. Mesac Thomas would indubitably have concurred with this second interpretation. In fact, it is difficult to separate the two; they represent different sides of the same coin. Together they ensured the diminution of the rôle of the Protestant churches in education from a position of dominance to one in which any participation by them was by the grace of the secular authorities. Only a determined independence saved the Roman Catholic church from a similar fate. Eventually, the Protestant churches accepted the facts of the situation, after the decline of their schools was made complete by the Act of 1880 and the secularization of the Church and School lands within a short time thereafter. ¹ Matters had advanced considerably by 1895 when William Chalmers, the second Anglican Bishop of Goulburn, could comment on the "great benefit" derived by the church

¹Mesac Thomas estimated that the Church of England in the Goulburn diocese lost £600 a year from that quarter. Mesac Thomas to the Rev. H.W. Tucker, Secretary, S.P.G., 29 January 1883. Letterbooks, vol. 9.
from the fact that religious education was permitted in the Public schools through every clergyman being "allowed to visit and instruct the scholars of his own denomination". The bishop continued to say that "he thought the people of New South Wales might well be proud of their Education Act".1 This time Mesac Thomas (and William Lanigan) would not have concurred.

IV

Though the Protestant Denominational schools eventually succumbed before the advance of government sponsored education, the Roman Catholics of New South Wales were determined to resist such an eventuality befalling them. In the south east, as elsewhere, the Catholic response to the removal of state aid was to set up their own system of education, for the support of which they made plans regardless of Parliamentary action. The steps taken by the Goulburn diocese were typical.

In March 1882 Bishop Lanigan wrote a circular letter to his priests,2 setting out his ideas on necessary steps to be taken in sustaining Roman Catholic schools, and asking for their opinions on these together with any suggestions of their own. The priests' replies3 showed that they appreciated the need to ensure that their schools were at least equal to the Public schools in the provision of secular education.

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3Including letters from the Revs. P. Butler, Cootamundra (2 June 1882), M. Dalby, Temora (May 1882), W. McGrath, Young (12 June 1882) and P. O'Keeffe, Yass (26 June 1882). Lanigan Papers.
otherwise none would attend them. Two of them, Father Butler and Father O'Keeffe, thought that no paid inspector or secretary should be appointed at first, in order to divert as much money as possible into the schools themselves; Bishop Lanigan disagreed, feeling that these officers were essential to organize and control the system. In July the clergy of the diocese held a conference at which they decided to replace the diocesan mission fund with a special educational fund, on behalf of which a collection was to be made throughout the diocese once a year. The fund was to be administered by a Central Council, comprising the bishop and six priests, meeting in Goulburn. The Council was to be in charge of all financial aspects of the running of the schools, paying the inspector, Father R.J. Carr, and assisting those schools which could not raise sufficient running capital locally. The educational and spiritual control of the schools was entrusted to the Brothers of St. Patrick.\(^1\) This was to be no amateur endeavour, but a serious attempt to emulate the Public system on a basis of private finance. To succeed it required the complete support of the Roman Catholic population, clerical and lay. Such support was forthcoming in full measure in the years following the end of state support.

Even with the generous support of the laity the Roman Catholic church had no hope of raising enough money to offer lay teachers comparable salaries to those paid by the state. By 1882 most of the best Catholic teachers were already employed in the Public school service, thus damaging the quality of the Catholic schools.\(^2\) This resulted in the second distinctive feature of the Catholic system, when the rôle of

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\(^1\) *Express*, 22 July 1882, p. 3.

the religious orders in the teaching of Catholic children was dramatically expanded. The process of expansion, beginning in Roger Bede Vaughan's Archdiocese of Sydney, quickly spread throughout the country dioceses in the first years of the independent system.¹

The religious did not, in the eighties, represent a totally new element in Catholic education. On the contrary, there had been teaching orders in several parts of New South Wales for many years. The first religious orders to come to Australia had been the Benedictine Fathers and the Sisters of Charity, both in the 1830s.² In the southeast the Sisters of Mercy had been in charge of the independent girls' school at Albury since 1868,³ while the Sacred Heart Convent of the Presentation Sisters was founded by Archbishop Vaughan at Mount Erin, Wagga Wagga, in 1874.⁴ There was, though, a great increase in the numbers of religious, and of convents, established in the area during the early 1880s, largely as a result of the personal efforts of Bishop Lanigan.

In 1880 the bishop visited Ireland in the hope of persuading a body of religious brothers to undertake the establishment of a foundation for the boys' schools of his diocese.⁵ While in Ireland he made unsuccessful approaches to houses of Christian Brothers, Presentation

¹Ibid., pp. 258-262, 268-272.
²Ibid., p. 270.
⁵Fogarty, op. cit., vol. II, p. 262; Bishop Lanigan, Pastoral Letter, Express, 12 August 1882, p. 3.
Brothers and Brothers of St. Patrick, before arranging with the St. Patrick's Brothers at Mountrath for them to send nine young men, then in training, to the diocese, hopefully by the beginning of 1884.¹ By July 1884 five of these men had actually left Ireland.² Girls from within the diocese were encouraged to enter the convents already present, the first of these undertaking her training from 1880.³ Therefore the hope was that recruits from among the local people would supplement those religious who could be persuaded to travel from Ireland to join the schools of the diocese. Considering the limited resources available, the task of financing such an ambitious programme was a mighty one.

At the end of 1882 state assistance was withdrawn from nineteen Roman Catholic schools in the south east, ten of which were in the diocese of Goulburn, nine in the Archdiocese of Sydney.⁴ Of these, it is likely that the schools at Bungendore, Jembaicumbene, Jugiong and Reidsdale swiftly collapsed.⁵ The remainder joined the independent Catholic schools already in being. Such schools had existed at Albury, Wagga Wagga and Yass, where girls' schools had operated independently for some years, and at Gundagai, where a mixed school had done so.⁶

¹Pastoral Letter, loc. cit.


³Pastoral Letter, loc. cit.


⁵There is no trace of them in the Roman Catholic inspectors' reports in 1884, or in a return to order in which school attendance officers reported on all independent schools in their areas, 6 May 1886, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1885-1886, vol. IV, pp. 256-263.

⁶Compiled from various local school reports in the Express, 1882-1883.
As part of the Catholic reaction to the threat of the Public Instruction Act independent schools were also created before the end of 1882 at Cootamundra, Murrumburrah and North Goulburn. Religious orders were already in control of these new schools as well as those at Albury and Wagga. Thus there was already a strong foundation on which to build the new system.

Little over a year after the withdrawal of aid Bishop Lanigan was able to report that Catholics in his diocese were supporting twelve mixed schools, four boys' schools, four girls' day schools, two girls' boarding schools, four infants' schools, two orphanage schools, two select schools (high school departments within convents) and one special school for aboriginal children, in addition to St. Patrick's College, the first Catholic high school in the diocese, founded by the bishop in 1872. The total enrolment at these schools was about 2,750. This represented a substantial increase in Catholic educational activity in the diocese. Not only this, but only the boys' schools and eight of the mixed schools were still in the hands of lay teachers. Convents had been established at Burrowa and Tumut, thus increasing the total number

1Express, 18 November 1882, p. 3; 1, 29 July and 9 December 1882; and 2 and 9 September 1882 respectively.

2The Sisters of Mercy at Cootamundra, Murrumburrah and Albury; Sisters of St. Joseph at North Goulburn; and Presentation Sisters at Wagga.

3Figures calculated from an annex to the bishop's Lenten Pastoral for 1884, Express, 1 March 1884, p. 5.

4For the origins of this school, at Yass, see below, pp. 130-131.

5Bishop's end of term address at St. Patrick's, 13 December 1883, Express, 22 December 1883, p. 3; Bishop Lanigan to the Rev. John Gallagher, 1 December 1873, appointing him the first Principal of the College. Lanigan Papers. The College actually opened on 1 February 1874.
of convents in the diocese to nine. In the region, but within the Archdiocese of Sydney, there were convent schools at Queanbeyan, Bega, Braidwood, Cooma and Moruya,\(^1\) and a lay school at Araluen.\(^2\) Therefore in the whole of the south east there were in early 1884 nearly forty Catholic schools of various descriptions, whereas only twelve months or so earlier there had been only nineteen Catholic Denominational schools plus a handful of independent schools.

Apart from the difficulty of persuading the religious orders to leave Ireland for New South Wales, the major problem was to raise the money to build the necessary convents and pay reasonable amounts for their maintenance. This could only be done by running the Catholic schools more economically than their state counterparts. Inspector Carr estimated from the Public school report of 1883 that in that year the cost to the state of educating the children attending Public schools was more than £9 per child. At the same rate it would have cost in the region of £20,000 to educate the Catholic children of the diocese of Goulburn, a sum which could not possibly be raised in the diocese. In fact, these schools had been run at a cost of only about £3,000.

Now the inspector's calculations were, to say the least, tendentious. He based them upon a total expenditure figure by the state of £821,852, which was the gross figure for the year, including the capital costs of building the 375 schools begun or completed during the year, and of building sixty four weathersheds and forty four extensions to existing schools.

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1. The schools at Bega and Cooma are not mentioned in the returns, but the convent at Cooma was in course of construction in late 1882 (Express, 29 July 1882, p. 6), and that at Bega opened as a convent school on 6 February 1884 (Express, 9 February 1884, p. 6).

buildings.¹ The actual running costs, a fairer indication of the expense involved in educating the children, were, according to the Minister of Public Instruction, only £391,386, or £2-10-3 per head of school enrolment.² Father Carr had certainly exaggerated. But he had no need to. Using this figure with the inspector's own estimate of the attendance at Catholic schools,³ it would still have cost in the vicinity of £5,500 to educate the Catholic children at the same rate. Therefore the Catholic schools were being run more cheaply than were the Public schools.

The inspector, in his report, hoped that despite this the Catholic children had had as good a secular education as those attending the Public schools; he was sure their religious training had been of a much higher standard. "This is a marked contrast in the economy of our system, and we have invited Government inspection to test its proficiency", he remarked. The economy was due to the presence of the religious, to whom Father Carr looked as his main hope for the future. Their way of life was such that it needed but little support, he explained, generally being satisfied by the fees from the select and general schools, together with the contributions of interested parties.

That government inspection had been invited was certainly true, as Bishop Lanigan had not yet lost hope with the withdrawal of state aid. Early in 1883 he issued a scathing attack on the policy of the

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¹Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1883, p. 6, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1883-1884, vol. VII.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Father Carr's report for the half year ended June 1884, Express, 26 July 1884, p. 5. His estimate was 2,200 pupils.

⁴The select schools were high schools intended for use by members of all denominations, and charged higher fees than the general schools.
government. He enumerated the schools being supported in his diocese by the Catholic community, praising the deep sense of value felt by his flock in so protecting their faith. He reiterated earlier comments about the dangers to the Roman Catholic faith inherent in the Public school system, praising Father Carr for the latter's initial success in acquiring good teachers for the Catholic schools. He appealed for a sum of £700 to be used to consolidate the work already done, and in moving phrases he sympathized with his people in their trial:

Why is this burden taken on your shoulders? only because you think the object of guarding the faith, sufficient to demand the sacrifice. In our schools, I am confident secular teaching will be as good as in the Public Schools, and still the Law will give our schools no aid. This wrong is inflicted on us as a penalty for being determined to continue Catholics.

In the same month the bishop continued his campaign with a letter to the Minister of Public Instruction, in a cunning attempt to persuade the government to send inspectors to report on "the condition of secular instruction" in his schools, so that full statistics for schools in New South Wales might be obtained. Presumably the reasoning behind the invitation was that if the government were to inspect the

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1 Pastoral Letter on the Feast of the Purification, Express, 10 February 1883, p. 3.

2 In a financial statement attached to a circular letter to the clergy and laity on 6 September 1883 the bishop showed that in that year £732-5-0 were to be spent at the diocesan level on increasing the priesthood and on education, of which sum £464-16-10 had been received. Lanigan Papers.

3 For an assessment of the quality of education in Catholic schools, see chapter 5.

Catholic schools then it might be persuaded to pay for the privilege. The Minister was not deceived. On 13 March the Under Secretary replied that such inspection could not be undertaken.  

With the failure of this attempt went the bishop's last serious hope of regaining state assistance; thereafter his schools were on their own.

The actual finance of the Roman Catholic schools in south east New South Wales was carried on at two levels. In the Goulburn diocese the annual diocesan appeal, made in Lent, was intended to defray the diocesan costs of organizing the system and paying the salary of the inspector, any surplus funds after meeting these expenses being used to assist small schools having difficulty in raising locally sufficient funds for survival. But the expenses of maintaining and building individual schools and convents were locally met, though, like Bishop Thomas, Dr Lanigan was usually the first subscriber to any project within his diocese.

The schools relied for their support on similar devices to those used by the churches. The initial expenses were usually met by subscriptions collected at a public meeting, held in some places even before the withdrawal of state aid. At Cooma, a meeting of St. Patrick's church in July 1882 subscribed £1,000 towards the erection of a convent, and at Tumut in the following month a committee was formed to raise money to bring nuns to a convent they planned to build for them. It was expected that nearly £300 would have been collected by Christmas. One

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1 Correspondence, loc. cit.

2 Express, 22 July 1882, p. 3; Circular Letter, Bishop Lanigan to the clergy and laity, 6 September 1883. Lanigan Papers.

3 Express, 29 July 1882, p. 6.

of the boldest decisions was that taken by the Catholics at Moruya when, in May 1883, they agreed to convert the existing church into a residence for the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and to build an entirely new stone church.\(^1\) No less than five local Catholics subscribed £100 each towards the endeavour, the total subscriptions promised at the meeting being £980, including one of five guineas from a Protestant. This was expected to be boosted by large donations from people in outlying parts of the district. By October, when the Sisters moved to Moruya, £500 had been spent on the alterations to the church.\(^2\) The foundation stone for its replacement had not yet been laid, the schoolroom, which had been conducted by volunteers for nine months, still doubling as a church. Actions like these prove that enthusiasm for the system was by no means confined to the hierarchy.

Once established, the schools derived their running expenses from various sources. Not all found it easy, despite the presence of the religious. Although one nun was in charge of ninety children at Cootamundra in 1886, it had not been possible to obtain another teacher to help her;\(^3\) owing to depression in the town the Catholics of Cooma were by 1884 in trouble over the erection of their new convent. They still needed £3,500 to complete construction, but could see no prospect of raising this amount. They asked their Archbishop for assistance in getting £2,500 of the total, as that much was urgently needed.\(^4\) At Wagga

\(^1\)Express, 2 June 1883, p. 6.

\(^2\)Express, 20 October 1883, p. 3.

\(^3\)Rev. R. Butler, Cootamundra, to Bishop Lanigan, 3 February 1886. Lanigan Papers. In this case the difficulty was not financial; the bishop had been asked to send another teacher, but had not yet done so.

\(^4\)Rev. P. Slattery to the Archbishop of Sydney, 29 September 1884. St. Mary's.
the school committee estimated they would require £400 a year to run the school.¹ As in the Public schools, the first source of revenue was sought in school fees, which parents were asked to pay, though the bishop could not compel them to do so.² In 1884 Father Carr calculated³ from the returns sent in by the schools that the average actually paid was slightly less than threepence a week for each child, the total income thus gained by the schools in the diocese therefore being under £1,800 a year. The fees asked by the schools in Goulburn were sixpence each for the first two children in a family and fourpence per child thereafter;⁴ clearly many believed themselves unable to afford such fees. The sum raised by fees made up, according to Father Carr, the nucleus of the teachers' salaries, the rest being through voluntary contributions. At Adelong in 1883 a good example was set, for at the annual meeting a credit balance of £11 was reported, a resolution to increase the salaries of the teachers by £20 adopted, and two thirds of the increased salary subscribed on the spot.⁵ Not all schools were so fortunate, for by 1886 the priest at Temora was pleading to Bishop Lanigan to send a community of Josephite nuns to replace the lay teacher there as the people could not afford to continue paying him £120 a year. If the nuns were not sent, he believed the school would have to close.⁶

¹Express, 28 April 1883, p. 3.
²Express, 22 December 1883, p. 3. End of term address, Mercy Convent, Goulburn.
³Half yearly report to June 1884. Express, 26 July 1884, p. 5.
⁴Express, 13 January 1883, p. 6.
⁵Express, 5 January 1884, p. 6 (Quoting the Southern Free Press).
⁶Rev. Michael Buckley, Temora, to Bishop Lanigan, 3, 9 November 1886. Lanigan Papers.
Some places supplemented donations by holding bazaars, concerts, balls and the like. A bazaar in Burrowa in 1883 produced nearly £350 in aid of the Mercy convent,¹ and two years later the children attending the Gundagai Roman Catholic school performed in a "concert and dramatic entertainment" to help their school funds.²

In the years immediately following the withdrawal of state aid, then, the Roman Catholics of south east New South Wales made a determined and successful effort to establish a viable alternative to the state system. By 1887 they had, within the Goulburn diocese, thirteen convents of nuns and two of religious brothers, sixteen schools conducted by lay teachers, and seven schools aiming beyond simple primary education.³ The total enrolment was 260 at the high schools and 3,100 at the others, the estimated average attendance seventy two per cent.⁴ There were also schools in the Monaro and on the south coast within the Archdiocese of Sydney. In 1886 school attendance officers made reports on six of these, at Araluen, Bega, Bombala, Braidwood, Moruya and Queanbeyan, in generally complimentary terms.⁵ Bishop Lanigan must have been well pleased.

What was more, these independent Catholic schools were not, as the Protestant Denominational schools had been, confined to the older areas of settlement. Certainly there were Catholic schools in strength

¹Express, 24 February 1883, p. 3.
²Express, 22 October 1885, p. 11.
³Two boarding schools, four select schools and St. Patrick's College.
⁴Year Book of New South Wales, 1887.
in the Goulburn district, the Yass district and on the south coast. But by the mid eighties they were also in evidence in places such as Cootamundra, Temora, Germanton and Bombala in the growing areas. As a result there was less chance that these Catholic schools would follow their Protestant counterparts into oblivion.

At no stage did any of the school systems of the nineteenth century limit their intake to members of any one denomination. This was obviously true of the National and Public schools, but it was equally true of the Denominational schools, both before and after the passage of the Acts. Clearly, although they might have preferred to send their children to schools run by their own church, the Protestants had few qualms about sending them to the Public schools. It is less obvious, but nonetheless true, that many Catholics were equally willing to do so, despite the warnings of the clergy. Over four hundred Catholic children, or almost a quarter of the total roll, attended Public schools in the south east in 1867, and in 1875 more than twelve hundred of a total enrolment of 5,129 were Catholic children. In the latter year seventy six Catholics were enrolled at the Araluen Public school as against ninety at the local Catholic school, while at eight Public schools Catholic children made up half or more of the total number of enrolments. This was so despite a strenuous campaign against the Public schools by the clergy, especially in the late sixties, when Bishop Lanigan went so


2Report on Public Schools, 1875, Appendix B, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1875-1876, vol. V. These figures do not include Provisional or Half-time schools, of which there were about seventy five in the region.

3Ibid., also Report on Denominational Schools, 1875, Appendix A, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1875-1876, vol. V.
far as to threaten withdrawal of the sacraments from anyone supporting the Public schools by sending their children to them. Many uneducated Catholic parents were unconcerned about the education debate, and found it more convenient to send their children to the Public schools than to pay extra for a Catholic school. In an effort to counter such attitudes Bishop Lanigan visited parts of his diocese in 1867 and 1868 speaking forcibly against Catholic participation in Public schools, and in his efforts he was supported by his priests, one of whom refused the rites of baptism and confirmation to some families until their children were removed from the Public school. The statistics suggest that these measures had only temporary effects, though, for many of the priests' complaints were made at later dates. As well as attending Public schools members of one denomination often attended schools run by another.

There was less Roman Catholic participation in Protestant schools, but Anglican and Wesleyan children in particular frequented each others' schools and Presbyterian schools, and some Anglicans also attended Catholic schools.

1 Bishop Lanigan to the Rev. R.J. Duigan, Yass, 3 November 1868. Lanigan Papers.


3 J. Barnes, Cootamundra, to Inspector J. McCredie, Albury, 16 November 1867. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 3. (AONSW 1/737); James Arkins, teacher, Public school, Binalong, to Inspector McCredie, 30 September, 31 October 1868. Ibid., vol. 35. (AONSW 1/769).

4 Memorandum, Samuel McPhail, schoolteacher, Queanbeyan, to the Council of Education, 11 September 1868. Ibid., vol. 53. (AONSW 1/787).

5 Reports on Denominational Schools, e.g. 1867, 1869, 1875. It was very rare, but not entirely unknown, for Presbyterian or Wesleyan children to attend Catholic schools. There were twenty six such cases in the region in 1867, fifteen in 1869 and thirty one in 1875, of whom fourteen were Wesleyan children at Yass.
One remarkable instance in the field of education involved the Roman Catholic church, whose actions stand out as a contrast to those taken by the government. In early 1883 some aboriginal and half caste children enrolled at the Public school at Yass. Almost immediately the parents of white children attending the school complained to the local board, who referred the case to the Minister. A reply was received stating that children living in a camp, as these children were, ought not to be attending the school, and that the teacher was instructed to refuse them admission.\(^1\) The suggestion was made that provision could "doubtless" be made for the children at the aboriginal stations at Warangesda and Maloga. This was hardly a reasonable suggestion, for both of these stations were in the Riverina, at Darlington Point and Moama respectively, a matter of two hundred miles or more to the west of Yass. The dereliction of duty shown by the government in failing to provide some more accessible education for these children brought about a strong reaction from the Very Rev. Dean O'Keeffe, the Catholic priest at Yass. He almost at once established a special school for the children under the guidance of the Sisters of Mercy.\(^2\) Whether the Dean's motives were purely humanitarian, or whether he calculated by his actions to gain public sympathy for his church, his efforts did not go unnoticed. Early in 1884 the local newspaper hoped that the kindness shown to the aboriginals would lead to their becoming better citizens than those who were regular attenders at the local court.\(^3\) Perhaps the Catholics of

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1. Department of Public Instruction to Henry Dodds, Secretary, Yass Public School Board, 29 May 1883, printed in the Express, 9 June 1883, p. 3.

2. For references to this school, see the Express, 29 September, 13, 27 October 1883, 5 January 1884, 23 March 1887 (as the Illustrated Express), and the Yass Courier, 11, 18 September 1883, p. 2.

3. Yass Courier, 1 January 1884, p. 3. This reference was to gifts of food and clothing at Christmas, not to the school itself.
Yass were racist enough to keep their children's education separate from that of the blacks, but they at least proved their willingness to do more than the public authorities to provide the black children with an education. The school still flourished in 1887, when the work of the Roman Catholics was praised by the Anglican Canon Faunce in the course of an address to the Aborigines Protection Association, held in the Protestant Hall, Yass. By then the way had been shown.

V

By the latter part of the 1880s, then, the educational system in New South Wales had undergone a radical transformation which left it very different from that prevailing in the sixties. In place of the easy going, largely complementary system of the School Boards there had evolved, as well as a number of private schools, often of doubtful quality, two systems in open competition with each other, representing rival sections of the community and teaching utterly different philosophies.

The Public schools were mainly concerned with secular attainments, the Catholic as much with the development of the religious aspect of life. While Protestants might regard themselves as primarily Australian, and then British, Bishop Lanigan made it clear, in his Lenten Pastoral of 1884, that Catholics, though living thousands of miles from

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1 The only other reference to aboriginal education I have encountered also concerned the Roman Catholic church. In 1869 some of the Yass black children attended the Mercy convent at Goulburn. (Sister M. Magdalen to Bishop Lanigan, 6 August 1869. Lanigan Papers.)

2 Illustrated Express, 23 March 1887, p. 11. Father N.M. Cook, of the Roman Catholic Education Office in Canberra, informs me the school continued until the middle decades of the twentieth century.

3 Printed in the Express, 1 March 1884, p. 3.
Ireland, were still Irish and Catholic first, Australian a long way second. To him, this was inevitable, and indeed highly desirable, the more so as Ireland had been largely responsible for the material advance of the Australian church as well as its religious progress, which still depended on Irish priests. To whom, he asked his people, did they owe the gift of the true Faith?

If through Irish parents you may be reminded of the long and terrible persecution through which the highest of gifts was preserved for you through three centuries of hard trial, two honoured traits of character were prominent — love of country and fidelity to the Catholic Faith. So remarkable were these, that the line through which you received the Faith might be called a line of heroes and of martyrs. You continue this line in Australia. Individuals who can point to a long line of honoured family connections do not forget its history; they wish to speak of it.

He could not have been more explicit. Approximately one third of the population of south east New South Wales was Irish and Catholic. It was to remain so.

Therefore in one sense the consequence of the decline of state assisted Denominational schools, and of the efforts of reformers to break the power of the Roman Catholic church in education, was exactly the reverse of that intended. Freed from all obligation towards the state, the Roman Catholic schools were enabled to develop an individual identity which was extremely likely to be reflected in the community at large. Thus the free, secular and compulsory movement contributed towards the presence in New South Wales of two different, and in many ways opposed, cultures, which might in the future mirror the tensions and conflicts of the British Isles.

1Ibid.
If the hopes of the Roman Catholics for the future were in some ways enhanced, those of the Protestant churches were not. Their prospects for winning converts through the Public schools were very bleak, and they had few schools of their own. But they had the consolation that they had been spared the vast expense which would have been necessary to establish a similar system to that of the Roman Catholics, let alone a vast organization such as the Public schools. Although the influence of the churches in education had diminished since 1863, at least the alternative to them had brought education to more children than they could have hoped to. But the extent to which the children benefitted from this expansion, and the eventual influence of the schools on social development, depended more on the quality of the education provided than on the numbers providing it.
Chapter 5

"Unwillingly to School": The Quality of Education

I

Despite the decline in the importance of church run schools in the second half of the nineteenth century, the school remained the one place where it was certain that a child would have some contact with religion. This was obviously so in the Roman Catholic schools, but it was also the case in the Public schools, at the close of the century as well as in the sixties.

Although the promoters of the Public Schools Act and the Public Instruction Act were in part concerned to reduce the powers of the churches within education, they did not desire to exclude religion completely from the schools. The Acts themselves provided for religious instruction to be given by the teachers and by visiting clergymen; clause thirty of the Public Schools Act of 1866 defined the term "secular instruction" to embrace the teaching of religion in a general way "as distinguished from dogmatical or polemical theology", while by clause nineteen at least one hour per day was to be set aside for religious instruction by any accredited denominational representatives who cared to present themselves for the purpose. The Act of 1880 amended these provisions only by prescribing a maximum instead of a minimum period of one hour for visits by clergy. 1 The provisions of the latter Act were the ones so highly praised by Bishop Chalmers in 1895. 2

1 Clause 17.

2 See above, pp. 115-116.
Clearly the effectiveness of these provisions depended upon the ability and willingness of each local clergyman to carry out his responsibilities in this direction. But the large numbers of small schools scattered throughout each parish or district made many clergy unable to undertake as many visits as they should have liked. Some ministers of all churches did make an effort to fulfil "this important duty", as Bishop Thomas described it. In 1881 the Anglican minister of Bega reported to his congregation that he visited the local school "with tolerable regularity" each Friday, instructing an average of 104 pupils. He also visited small schools at Numbugga and Stony Creek once a quarter, but was unable to visit other schools in his parish as to do so would interfere seriously with his other duties. It is beyond doubt that most other clergy faced similar problems.

This was recognized by the Presbytery of Goulburn, which in 1893 resolved to leave it to each individual minister to do his best as "it appeared that it is utterly impossible for ministers in country districts to carry out any one scheme systematically". Despite the difficulties, all denominations intended throughout the period that their clergy should provide religious instruction at both Public and Denominational schools wherever possible. Early in his episcopate Bishop Lanigan noted rules to be observed by priests when visiting Roman Catholic schools, which were to be visited often, and Public schools.

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1 Mesac Thomas to Archdeacon Pownall, 24 September 1881. Letterbooks, vol. 5.
2 Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting, St. John's Church, Bega, 19 April 1881. There were seven other small schools in the parish.
4 Bishop Lanigan's Diary, entry for 11 March 1868 (note made by Father N.M. Cook).
Although recognizing their difficulties in country districts, Mesac Thomas also urged upon his subordinates the importance of this task when he noted "an encouraging advance" in the number of visits made in 1880 as compared with the previous year.¹

The clergy were not always faithful to their task, even allowing for the conditions in which they worked. In 1872 only eight Public schools in the south east received any visits at all from clergymen, the total visits recorded being 168;² in the following year even this number was reduced to 121.³ With the controversy of the later seventies the number of visits increased. In 1880 twenty seven Public schools in the region were visited, mostly by Church of England representatives, and a total of 559 calls was recorded.⁴ With regard to their own Denominational schools the Roman Catholic priests certainly took Bishop Lanigan seriously; in 1880 fifteen Catholic schools were visited by twenty four priests, some of them being visited almost daily. For example, the Rev. T. Carroll visited the Albury school on 174 occasions during the year, and the Rev. H.B. Callachor paid 101 visits at Moruya.⁵

Apart from the regular visits to Roman Catholic schools, these figures do not suggest that there was great concern among the clergy to

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¹Minutes of the Proceedings of the Second Session of the Fourth Synod of the...Diocese of Goulburn (Goulburn, 1882). Opening address by the bishop.

²Return to Order, 11 November 1874, NSW:J. of LC, vol. XXV, Session 1875, pp. 562-563. More than half of all visits were by Church of England clergymen.

³Ibid.


⁵Ibid.
carry out this aspect of their duties. The Presbyterian and Wesleyan clergy in particular seem to have felt that there was religion enough in the Scripture lessons provided for by the Acts, together with such attendance as was made at church or Sunday School, for their visits to schools were very few.

There was therefore a considerable onus on the teachers to give a religious education to their classes in the form of non sectarian Scripture lessons. The means they chose to impart this instruction, and their general attitude towards religion, could lead to controversy and complaint, especially if they were indiscreet in the comments they made to their classes.

One such complaint occurred in 1872, its subject being Mr Bousfield, the teacher of the Eden Public school. On 15 January the local Roman Catholic priest wrote to the secretary of the Council of Education alleging that the teacher's conduct tended "to unsettle the faith of the Catholic children frequenting his school", and that the investigation of the case by the local board had been unsatisfactory. The teacher was at once suspended and the inspector of the Braidwood district, Mr J.C. Maynard, sent to inquire into the affair. His report, written on 26 January, stated that, although there was some doubt in his mind as to the reliability of some of the child witnesses, he was of opinion that Mr Bousfield had treated certain subjects, such as the

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1 Roman Catholic priests were instructed to ensure that Catholic children did not take part in these lessons. Circular letter, Bishop Lanigan to the clergy, 16 July 1885. Lanigan Papers.


3 Ibid., p. 700.
Council of Bishops and Papal infallibility, in such a manner as to leave the children with the impression that he was casting doubt on specific tenets of the Roman Catholic faith. On the same date a petition signed by twenty seven people (including the mother of one Catholic child who had given evidence against the teacher) asked for Mr Bousfield's return to his duties. On 8 February the suspension was lifted, the Council having decided that he had acted indiscreetly, not maliciously. Nevertheless, he was severely reprimanded, and warned that a repetition of his errors would result in immediate dismissal.

The importance of this case is that it demonstrates how carefully a teacher had to guard his conduct, as people were on the lookout for instances of proselytization. Indeed, the desire for religious neutrality on the part of teachers was so great that teachers at Moruya and Gunning were instructed to cease their activities as local preachers in connection with the Wesleyan and Anglican churches respectively in the late sixties. The teacher at Moruya was informed by the Council of Education that, as Public schools were "intended to provide for the education of children of various religious denominations, without offence to the peculiar convictions of any", his official activities in connection with any one denomination were unacceptable because they identified him with the doctrines of that church. The result would be that he would forfeit the confidence of the parents, and

1 Ibid., p. 707.

2 Ibid., pp. 708-709.


4 Letter of 12 August 1868, ibid., p. 1025.
might well "destroy that harmonious co-operation of different sects in school matters which it is the design of the Public Schools Act to create and foster".

Whichever type of school he attended, the school pupil of the late nineteenth century came into contact with religion within its walls. In a Roman Catholic Denominational school there was a great accent upon the place of religion in the daily life of the school; in a Protestant school this would not be the case, but the instance of Canberra Church of England school was probably representative. Here the parson, Pierce Galliard Smith, made himself thoroughly unpopular with the boys by examining them in catechism every Friday afternoon, just at the time when thoughts of home were uppermost in their minds.  

Prayers opened and closed the work of each day, and religious teaching was an important part of the curriculum. Protestant Denominational schools were much less common than Roman Catholic ones, though, therefore the experience of Protestant schoolchildren was more usually that of the Public school.

This experience was probably not greatly different to that of children attending the Denominational schools, except that visits by the clergy were less frequent. The morality taught by the Public schools was still based on a Christian viewpoint, if a neutral one in sectarian terms. Until 1898 the books used in Public schools were those of the Irish National Board, which made free use of religious stories in demonstrating their points. Among the most commonly taught subjects in

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1 E.G. Williams, "Old Canberra", Queanbeyan Age, 1 November 1929.

2 F.W. Robinson, Canberra's First Hundred Years (Sydney, 1924) p. 51.

Public schools were the Scripture lessons to which the Roman Catholic clergy objected so strongly, though no child was forced to attend these lessons if his parents objected to his doing so. The Public schools were not secular schools, as Mr McIntyre, inspector of the Goulburn district, demonstrated by naming their religious nature as one of the four principles on which they were founded. The others were their moral, social and utilitarian qualities. Together these principles inculcated a love of truth and of God, brought together people of all classes and persuasions, and encouraged economy and industry.

The aim of the Public school system was to produce adults who would fit into the type of society educationists wished to create. They promoted the values of the articulate members of the existing society, the values of "respectability". The Roman Catholic schools furthered similar ideals, though with a greater emphasis on the religious basis for their morality.

Whether or not these aims were realized is open to question; large numbers of children were unaffected by schooling because they had none. But those who did attend were exposed to the ideas of Christianity, and they did learn about the Scriptures, at least for examination purposes (in 1875 in the Yass inspection district the highest marks in any subject were in Scripture). This teaching of Scripture as a

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2 Firth, article, p. 124 says "The public schools...stood for particular moral and political values which reflected the opinions of the public... Since that public was 'respectable', or at least believed children should be 'respectable', the schools, too, were models of respectability".

scholastic discipline undoubtedly reduced its status in the eyes of the children to that of any other examination subject, something to be learned and repeated, not something to be thought about and lived out.

Yet the success or failure of the schools in achieving their aim, of raising citizens whose morals were based on Christian values, did not depend on the decision to treat religion as a subject rather than a way of life (of course the Roman Catholic schools did treat it as part of the life of the class). It did depend on the physical conditions in schools, the ability of the teachers to educate their pupils in all subjects, and the receptiveness of the pupils themselves.

II

The greatest benefits, in terms of the provision of schools, of the reform Acts of 1866 and 1880 were felt in the country districts. By 1863 most of the existing population centres were already supplied with a school of some kind, thanks to the policy of the National School Board in not competing with the schools set up by the Denominational Board. After the reorganization brought about by the Public Schools Act the towns were still well served, for any new population centre quickly acquired a Provisional school or, where numbers justified it, a Public school. Now the country districts also gained, as Provisional and Half-time schools increased in number.

If the towns had satisfactory provision for the education of their children by the 1860s, and in some cases before, in that decade there were still glaring deficiencies in the system with regard to the
country districts. In 1863 a correspondent of the *Yass Courier* bemoaned the lack of public education in the bush, maintaining that few children living far from towns received any instruction at all. Those whose parents cared to engage an itinerant schoolmaster were little favoured, for these men were, "almost without exception", drunken and dissolute, "too lazy, or incapable, of working at any useful occupation".

Depending upon the size of the potential school population, three main types of school might be supplied to a locality by the government. Where the numbers in attendance averaged thirty or more a full Public school was provided; with an average of about twenty a Provisional school; and where the average was about ten Half-time schools, shared between two adjacent centres. Thus in 1867 Inspector T. Harris of Goulburn reported to the Council of Education that in his opinion the prospective attendance at a proposed school in the small settlement of Bateman's Bay on the south coast was insufficient to justify the formation of a Public school, but a good Half-time school might be established in conjunction with the small gold field of Mogo, about eight miles away. The same inspector, reporting on the prospects for

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1 In 1863 there were sixty six schools recognized by the government in the south east. Of these, thirty seven were in towns or gold field centres of which the population had been more than one hundred and fifty at the time of the 1861 census. A further seven were in gold field centres which had reached that figure since the census.

2 "One of the Public" to the Editor, *Yass Courier*, 20 May 1863, p. 3.

3 Ibid.

4 Later in the century House-to-house schools were also introduced in very remote areas.

5 Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 2 (AONSW 1/736). The inspector noticed that to reach the school some of the children would have to cross the Bay in a boat. The regularity of their attendance was therefore likely to be adversely affected by inclement weather.
public education at Araluen, was of the opinion that a school of three
departments was necessary to meet the needs of the settlement, as the
population was less shifting in character than that of other fields.¹

The establishment of a Public school usually followed an
application on the part of some citizens of a town or other settlement.
The nearest inspector visited the location to report on the likely
attendance, and on the availability of a suitable site on which to build
or the state of any existing building which was offered for use. The
Council then made its decision, carried out negotiations for building,
and appointed a local board to take charge of the functioning of the
school. By these means the government ensured that, even if the churches
found it hard to keep up with increased population, public instruction
was to be had wherever there was a demand for it.

By the 1870s the annual reports of the district inspectors
reflected a confidence that on the whole the task of expanding
educational provision was being accomplished in an acceptable manner.

In 1872 Inspector J.C. Maynard of the Braidwood district was sure that:

Ample provision [was] made for education in all
townships, however small, but in some of the thinly-
settled parts, especially in the mountain districts
lying along the Victorian border, in the neighbourhood
of the Snowy River, there [were] small groups of
families scattered about that [had] no means of
instruction provided for them.²

This was so despite the Council's efforts in providing itinerant teachers,
Provisional schools and Half-time schools. This shortage was limited
to remote areas.

¹ Memorandum to the Council of Education, 9 November 1867. Council of
Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 1. (AONSW 1/735.)

1872-1873, vol. III.
In other parts of the region the inspectors were also satisfied with the progress which had been made. Mr E.H. Flannery at Albury praised the readiness with which local people were coming forward to subscribe the necessary portion of the cost of the school buildings. Only in a very few localities did he feel that the population could support a Public or Provisional school, yet did not. But he reported that Half-time schools were not popular, as many parents thought they provided only half an education. In the north of the region, progress was also rapid, for Inspector J.H. Murray reported from Yass in 1879 that the school accommodation in his district was adequate, not only for the existing enrolment but for a large number of children in addition. He went so far as to say that his district was oversupplied with schools in some places, thus causing "a useless expenditure of public money, and a deterioration in the standard of public instruction".

Whether or not the existence of both Public and Denominational schools in a town was wasteful of public funds, it was certainly true that the number of schools catering for the youth of the south east was increasing sharply. From sixty six in 1863 the total number of schools in operation had increased to 120 by 1879, a total which included ninety five Public schools. After the Public Instruction Act the number of Public schools rose still more dramatically. By 1882 the total in

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3 He referred especially to Yass, Young, Burrowa, Queanbeyan and Bungendore, in all of which Denominational schools competed with the local Public schools.

4 Not including Provisional or Half-time schools.
the south east had doubled to 190, a figure which did not include the large number\(^1\) of Provisional and Half-time schools. Clearly the opportunity to gain some education was being provided to most children, even in outlying areas, by 1880 if not before. To this extent the government was certainly justified in pressing forward with the secular legislation of 1880. The churches would have been utterly incapable of supplying education to the country districts on such a scale.\(^2\)

If the vast increase in the number of school buildings in the later nineteenth century was necessary to give the children a fair chance to receive an education, it was even more necessary that conditions in them should improve. This was clear from the complaints made by school inspectors in the 1860s. In 1864 there were actually schools in existence which lacked even a desk, table or chair for the teacher's own use.\(^3\) There were also ten National schools in the Southern District without a playground or "proper appliances", the furniture and apparatus of the schools in the district being only "moderate" in quality.\(^4\)

Despite the tighter control exercised by the Council of Education, the

\(^1\)Approximately fifty. Calculated from Appendix IX of the Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1882, NSW:LA V&G, Session 1883-1884, vol. VII. My figures may be slightly too small, as some schools in small settlements may have been omitted from my list, since it is not always possible to locate these from their names.

\(^2\)By 1895 there were over 270 Public schools in south east New South Wales. (Calculated from Appendix VII of the Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1895, NSW:LA V&G, Session 1896, vol. II.)


\(^4\)The worst schools were non-vested ones, not originally built as schools and owned by individuals or organizations other than the government Board. Report of Inspector B.H. McCann, in the Sixteenth Report of the Commissioners of National Education, Appendix E, p. 28, NSW:LA V&G, Session 1864.
inspectors' reports continued for some time to be unfavourable to many schools, including some of those in populous towns, although most of the schools in these centres were in better condition than were those in small villages or in country districts, where resources for improvement were less easy to come by. Not surprisingly the conditions in Denominational schools were usually poorer than those in the Public schools, because the Denominational schools did not qualify for the assistance of public funds in the carrying out of repairs.

Among the most common defects in school facilities were the lack of proper water supplies, inadequate size of buildings, insufficient and unsuitable supplies of furniture and the want of fencing of school grounds. Some schools were deficient in toilet facilities, in others the school building or teacher's residence was in bad repair, or the supply of elementary needs such as books and slates was too limited. All of these faults, as well as others, were reported by the inspectors as they examined the schools of south east New South Wales in 1869.1

The Public school at West Araluen lacked a teacher's residence, a bell, fencing and a water supply, yet it enrolled 107 children, who were taught in a "rather small" schoolroom. Even at Goulburn the boys' Public school had no sheds in the playgrounds and no supply of good water, so it is not surprising that conditions in the smaller centres were unsatisfactory. At Eurobodalla on the south coast the teacher and his pupils had to put up with a schoolroom described by the inspector as

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1Reports on Public and Denominational Schools, 1869, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1870, vol. II. A new teacher at Adaminaby and Boconnoc Half-time schools complained to the Council in 1869 that on his arrival he had found no slates, pencils, pens or ink, all of which he had had to borrow where he could. Emil Benschel to the Council of Education, 1 September 1869. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 71. (AONSW 1/805.)
"much too small", with an insufficient quantity of books and apparatus, and with unsuitable furniture. There were no closets, and the teacher's residence was "uncomfortable". And these were Public schools. Denominational schools and Provisional schools were often in even worse condition. At Tumut, not the smallest centre in the region, the Roman Catholic school had insufficient supplies of furniture, books and other requisites, and at Marulan the education of Anglican children was carried on in a church building in need of repair and short of desks. The contrast between the Public and Denominational schools at Albury was noticeable, since the model Public school had been completed only recently and both church schools¹ were defective in some way.²

By no means all schools were defective in construction or in material possessions. For example, the Roman Catholic school at Araluen, though held in the church building,³ was well furnished and contained a good stock of teaching materials. Likewise, the Church of England school in Goulburn, situated in a "picturesque position", received a favourable report, as did Public schools at Albury and Young. But conditions were not often as good as in these schools.

In his reports for the year 1872⁴ Inspector Maynard of the Braidwood district gave graphic descriptions of the schools in his district. In his reports he made it clear that the variety of standards

¹Church of England and Roman Catholic.

²But at Araluen, Wagga Wagga and Goulburn church schools received markedly better reports than did the Public schools.

³One of the few the inspectors considered suitable for use as a school.

in school accommodation was very great indeed.

The best school was that in the small village of Candelo. Thanks to recent enlargements the school was in good condition, and it contained a good supply of furniture and materials. More, the attention paid to the school grounds, which were neatly laid out in flower gardens, made the school "the most picturesque...in the Southern District". Its fifty five pupils had a school to be proud of.

Unfortunately, few schools were of this calibre. There were many whose condition the inspector was able to describe as satisfactory, these numbering twenty five of the thirty nine schools which Mr Maynard visited. Some of these required minor repairs and others would have benefitted from an increased supply of desks or materials. On the whole, however, Mr Maynard was content to record their condition as acceptable; but there were some schools which did not satisfy him.

Many schools outside towns of the size of Goulburn or Albury were held in small buildings built of slab or wood instead of brick or stone, and these schools were very often in a dilapidated condition, as Mr Maynard reported. Even where there was a stone building it might not be in the best of repair. The rubble stone Public school at Cooma\(^1\) required interior and exterior painting, replastering and whitewashing; the Public school at Eden was extremely damp as a result of its being built of a porous brick. Where the building was of slab or wood it was fortunate if the only problem was the opening of the joints due to timber shrinkage.\(^2\) The pupils in the Cobargo Public school must have

\(^1\) Badly built, according to the inspector.

\(^2\) Strangely, the worst of the inspector's reports referred to Public schools. This may have been because the poorest Denominational schools had already closed by 1872; indeed they may even have become the Public schools in some cases.
known many miserable days in their small unfloored slab hut, devoid of windows or a fire-place, squeezed, all twenty five, onto four rough forms behind their desks, yet even they were fortunate compared with those at Major's Creek and Queanbeyan. The weather board building at Major's Creek, where the enrolment was sixty five, was in a dangerous condition. The joists, corner-posts, sleepers and window frames were rotten, "and the whole place is settling over to one side". It was not before time when action was taken to remedy the faults. At Queanbeyan conditions were so bad that only a new school would suffice to improve the situation. As the school was held in a room in an old store there was obviously no playground. Mr Maynard's description, if vivid, was no exaggeration:

The out-offices are disgraceful, and worse than none; there are not sufficient desks and forms; and, as there are no window-blinds, the children, who have all to sit and face the great windows, are much distressed by the sun.

William Holland, the new teacher sent to the school in 1870, was even more shocked at the conditions which greeted his arrival. Within three months he applied to the Council of Education to be removed to another post because the residence supplied was "not only most cheerless and inconvenient, but so palpably unhealthy that to reside [there] without serious prejudice to health would be impossible". The walls were mildewed, the floors rotten, and there were snails everywhere, even in dry weather. He had intended to bring his wife, who suffered from

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1 Inspector Maynard's report, p. 50.

2 Ibid., p. 51.

3 The enrolment was seventy two, of whom twenty one were girls.
rheumatic fever, from Sydney at Easter, but now refused to do so. As for the school itself, he agreed with Inspector Maynard that the local board had had work done to render it acceptable for teaching, except that it was below street level and badly drained, so that "during heavy rains the water flows in at the back entrance and disappears beneath the floor". On 6 October he again applied for removal. His wife was still in Sydney, the teaching living in a public house and attempting unsuccessfully to support her at the same time. His request was not granted, and he taught in that hovel during his entire stay of six years in Queanbeyan.

The greater commitment of government funds to education ensured that conditions, at least in Public schools, improved over time. By 1879 the district inspector at Yass could describe the buildings and furniture of these schools as good, though the smaller Provisional and Half-time schools had to put up with poorer quality furniture, and most of the Denominational schools contained inferior furniture. The cramped, cold and uncomfortable quarters were beginning to improve, so much so that by the eighties the inspectors had ceased to comment as fully upon the material conditions of the schools, although the wretched schools of previous decades had not all disappeared by then. One who

1 W.T. Holland to the Council of Education, 7 April 1870. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 120. (AONSW 1/852.)

2 W.T. Holland to the Council of Education, 6 October 1870. Ibid.

3 E.J. Lea-Scarlett, Queanbeyan: District and People (Queanbeyan, 1968) p. 107. After much public controversy a new school was finally built in the mid 1870s.

had no love for the Public school system described a Provisional school which he encountered while passing through Ginninderra\(^1\) on his way between Yass and Queanbeyan:

Anything more utterly disgraceful I have not often seen than the accommodation provided for the children. In the cold bleak winter these unfortunates are obliged to have learning freeze'd into them in a wretched tent. Only imagine thirty or forty children cooped up in a calico tent on a cold winter's day, with their teeth chattering and their hands and feet freezing, trying to learn.

Although the author was a Roman Catholic\(^3\) writing at a time when Catholics were bitter about the withdrawal of state aid, his description would have served very accurately for many schools in the country districts, at least in the sixties and seventies. Children in these areas were often dependent upon the local landowner, who might give a small building or a tent for use as a school. The cold must have been a trying problem, especially in the high lands of the Monaro. Few of the squatters can have been as helpful as Edward Pratt, himself a teacher in Sydney, who set up a Provisional school on his property, Myalla, near Cooma, and paid visits to it to ensure that all was well.\(^4\)

What the support of the government achieved in improving conditions in Public schools over the last twenty years of the century, pride and determination achieved for the independent Roman Catholic schools. Even before 1880 Bishop Lanigan was proudly informed that St.

\(^{1}\)Written "Eininderra" in the article, but from its location this was clearly Ginninderra, a few miles north west of Canberra.

\(^{2}\)Article, "Country Rambles", by "Quod Dixi Dixi", Express, 2 December 1882, p. 5.

\(^{3}\)The Express was a Roman Catholic newspaper at any rate.

\(^{4}\)Edward Pratt, diaries, entries for 19 January, 7 June, 24 August, 6 September, 4 October 1881, 5 March 1883, 16 March 1887.
Michael's school, Wagga Wagga, had been described by an inspector as "one of the best appointed and most suitable he has seen in Australia", and second to none in the diocese.\(^1\) After the withdrawal of aid, the appointment of school inspectors by the Roman Catholic dioceses demonstrated that it was to be a point of honour that their schools should be in no way inferior to the secular ones. Their speedy success in the matter was reflected in the reports of School Attendance Officers in 1886,\(^2\) when most of the Roman Catholic schools reported upon were represented in favourable terms, some being compared to Public schools.

It is unlikely that the poor conditions of the sixties and seventies had entirely disappeared by the end of the century, especially since there were still large numbers of very small schools in operation in country districts. In a valiant effort to achieve the aim behind the Public Instruction Act, that of making education available to all children in the colony, the system of Half-time schools was extended; where there were too few children to justify even these, House-to-house schools were sometimes begun, the teacher visiting several properties in an area and teaching the handful of children at each for perhaps one week in every month. In the opinion of Inspector John Kevin, successor to Mr Maynard at Braidwood, these part time schools often did the best work, especially if the teacher was conscientious enough to provide courses of home exercises for the children to perform during his absence. This practice, and the regular breaks from school, which permitted the children to appear brighter and fresher after their rest, were the factors to

\(^1\) Dr P. Bermingham, Wagga Wagga, to Bishop Lanigan, 5 September 1878. Lanigan Papers.

which he attributed the excellence of these schools. He may well have been accurate in his judgement, for at least the children of the part time schools had a greater variety in their lives than those living in places large enough to justify full time education.

It was not only in the buildings provided for use as schools that improvements occurred; the teaching materials available also received attention. If during the sixties some teachers had been forced to teach in schoolrooms lacking even desks for their own use, by the end of the eighties they were better off. Perhaps a few House-to-house or Provisional schools were short of some requisites, but on the whole schools were fully equipped, and the annual grant for books, slates and other materials sufficed to meet their needs. In the Wagga district in 1889 £666 was spent in this way, a sum equivalent to 10½d per head. The inspector was pleased to say that, as a rule, the materials bought with this money and supplied gratuitously to the schools were wasted neither by teachers nor by their pupils, though in one or two cases he had felt obliged to issue reprimands upon the matter.

Whichever system was employed, the Public or the private, the organizing body had to supply not only the schools and the materials but also the teachers to staff them. Once again, this was easier for the state than for the competing Roman Catholic church in the period after 1882.

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3Ibid.

4Before that date all teachers' salaries were paid by the state.
since the state system had access to a much larger supply of funds. It was for this reason that the Roman Catholic church turned increasingly towards religious orders to provide well qualified staff for their schools at a cheaper rate than would have been possible with secular teachers.\textsuperscript{1} This action may even have given Roman Catholic schools in the smaller towns better qualified teachers than the Public schools in these places, for naturally the better qualified among the secular teachers gravitated towards the better paid positions in the larger schools.

This trend was accentuated by the system of classifying both teachers and schools during the period. Public schools were arranged in ten classes, fixed partly by average attendance and partly by the proficiency of the pupils under examination. The teachers were appointed to schools by gaining certificates of various teaching classes, seven in number, the receipt of which qualified the teacher to take charge of a particular class of school.\textsuperscript{2} In the case of Provisional schools classification (and the salary of the teacher) was solely determined by the numbers in attendance, the teachers in these schools usually being uncertificated. Teachers' certificates were normally gained by examination, though a teacher might on occasion (especially in the early part of the period) be granted an increase in classification through service, in which case he was expected to confirm his suitability for such promotion by examination as soon as possible.

In the south east few schools were above the sixth class, so that in effect almost all of the teachers held qualifications only in the

\textsuperscript{1}For a fuller discussion of this point see chapter 4 above.

lower grades of service. Only in a few large towns such as Goulburn, Yass, Wagga and Albury\(^1\) were the schools of sufficient size to justify the appointment of a teacher of IIA classification, the third highest. In general, each school was staffed by one teacher of fairly low attainments, perhaps with the assistance of his wife or a pupil-teacher. A pupil-teacher was a youth or girl who assisted the teacher in instructing the younger children, being tutored in more advanced matters after school in an endeavour to train for the status of schoolmaster. Of course, the limited attainments of the masters imposed restraints on the knowledge which could be thus acquired by even the most intelligent pupil-teacher, and most well qualified teachers were trained either at the Fort Street school in Sydney or at one of the other training schools.

Ministers of religion of all denominations suffered from inadequate incomes to the extent that some of them were compelled to resign their charges,\(^2\) yet the majority of them were no worse off than most of the teachers in schools in their parishes. In 1873 the Council of Education reported that over the whole colony the average income of Public school teachers was only £107-3-4, that of teachers in Church of England schools was £100-14-8\(^{1/2}\), and that of teachers in Roman Catholic schools was a mere £95-13-7\(^{1/4}\). Teachers in Provisional schools were less fortunate still, for their average earnings amounted to only £54-2-8.\(^3\)

The Council's conclusion was in no way surprising:

\(^1\) "Model schools", used for training teachers, were established during the period at Albury and Goulburn.

\(^2\) See above, chapters 2 and 3.

\(^3\) Report on Public Schools, 1873, p. 8, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1873-1874, vol. V. These earnings included income from school fees.
The Council does not consider that the rates of payment...are adequate to the value of the services rendered, especially when compared with the wages now earned by artizans, and with increased cost of the means of subsistence.

The Council did not content themselves with commenting on the deficiency in salaries, but in October 1873 increased them at a rate ranging from five per cent of the highest salaries to ten per cent of the lowest. These increases did not raise the incomes of teachers in the bush to comfortable levels. Despite a further increase in 1875, the average income of teachers in the south east was still well below the £200 regarded by most churches as the minimum stipend acceptable for their clergymen. In the Albury district, which had in 1876 the fourth highest average in the colony, the average earnings of teachers, including fees, amounted to £173-19-10; the Yass district average was £170-19-9, that of the Braidwood district £169-7-8, and that of the Goulburn district was at £152-5-3 the lowest in the entire colony. By 1884 further increases had brought salaries to a respectable level, but a considerable portion of the official sums represented an entitlement to the use of a residence of specified value (see Table 4). The incidence of the financial crisis of the early nineties induced the government to reduce the value of teachers' salaries by five per cent in 1893, when the policy of regarding the value of the residence as part of the salary was dropped, though male married teachers in charge of schools were still provided with accommodation. At all times male unmarried teachers, male married

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.


### Table 4

#### Salaries of Teachers, 1884

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<tr>
<th>Class of Teacher</th>
<th>Class of School or Department</th>
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<td>Salary (£)</td>
<td>Value of Residence (£)</td>
<td>Total (£)</td>
<td>Salary (£)</td>
<td>Value of Residence (£)</td>
<td>Total (£)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>278</td>
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<td>IIA</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>204</td>
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<td>230</td>
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<td>IIA</td>
<td>4th</td>
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<td>5th</td>
<td>228</td>
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<td>6th</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>296</td>
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<td>7th</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIIB</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIIC</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIIC</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers unclassed</td>
<td>1st Provisional</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Provisional</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd Provisional</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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1. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1884, p. 27, NSW: LA V&P, Second Session of 1885, vol. I. The effective salaries of the teachers were those in the first column.
teachers not assisted by their wives, and female teachers of schools below the fourth class, were paid £12 less than the official rate.

The misfortunes of a country teacher began with the shortage of funds imposed on him by the paucity of his official salary and by the notorious impossibility of collecting many of the school fees. Poverty was enough of a curse among the teachers of small schools to cause some of them to leave the profession. Edward Pratt noted in his diary that the schoolteacher at Cooma had resigned his post and taken to selling grog. Again, in 1875 David Bell of Rocky Vale, in the southern Monaro, wrote that the attendance at his small school had declined from nearly forty to fifteen, "some of them free pupils", as a result of the action of a local squatter in buying out small farmers in the area. In consequence, Mr Bell's income was now "so miserably low, that I cannot drag along at all", so he had decided to give up teaching to take up shepherding, if he could get charge of two flocks, one of them to be looked after by his son.

Teachers' residences, like those of some clergy, were often quite unsuitable or even dangerous. The case of William Holland, who

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1 That is, nearly all of the schools in the south east.

2 Some teachers were afraid to insist on their right to collect fees as children might be withdrawn from the school and its classification accordingly reduced.

3 Entry for 22 January 1874.

4 David Bell to Charles Garnock, Bombala, 2 April 1875. Bukalong Station Papers, A.N.U. Archives 108/1/5.

5 Pupils whose parents had declared themselves unable to afford the fees, from the payment of which they had been granted exemption.
dared not bring his sick wife to Queanbeyan, has already been noted, but others faced poor living conditions as well. Many inspectors' reports recognized the inadequacy of the residences supplied, and it was a source of pleasure to Inspector Lawford of Wagga in 1894 that he could report a general improvement over the previous ten years:

The old style at bush schools of a cottage with only four rooms, each about 10 feet square, generally built in one block with the school, is quite out of date. The houses now built are larger, always detached, and are provided with conveniences such as a bathroom, which ten years ago would have been considered as wholly unnecessary luxuries.2

The teacher of the 1860s would often have felt pampered even in the four roomed cottage attached to the school.

The Council of Education accepted that the teachers they employed in country schools were undergoing severe hardships. In 1876 the annual report stated the Council's awareness of the fact that teachers in sparsely populated districts often had to subsist on "a coarse and innutritious diet which is detrimental to the health of both body and mind"3 due to lack of proper food supplies. The report continued to enumerate the frustrations faced by many of these teachers in the forms of "the want of suitable society, the entire absence of sympathy on the part of parents, and too frequently the antagonism of the School Board, or influential members of that body". It occasions no surprise that under these circumstances inspectors were occasionally asked to investigate complaints that teachers had succumbed to the temptations of loneliness.

1Pp. 149-150 above.


Like ministers of religion, schoolteachers were not immune to the lure of strong drink. In pressing for the appointment of a teacher to Kiandra in 1867 the Anglican incumbent at Cooma advised the Council that any master sent there ought to be able to "withstand a great amount of pressure to drink". 1 Even in the larger towns the temptation persisted; in 1869 William Wilkins, the Council's secretary, travelled personally to Goulburn to investigate reports by the inspector that the head teacher at the Public school, Matthew Kennett, had persistently drunk himself into a state of intoxication. The case was proved and Kennett dismissed from the service, despite a petition to the Council on his behalf signed by fifty parents of children at the school. 2 The small number of such complaints in comparison with the number of teachers employed suggests, however, that relatively few proved weak in this way. Most teachers probably acted as examples of moral, respectable citizens for their pupils and some, though of limited education themselves, conducted their schools with great enthusiasm. An extreme example of devotion to duty was shown by James Odgers, who was appointed to the Tumbarumba school in 1868. Asked about Mr Odgers' claim for £4 coach expenses for his journey from Albury, about a hundred miles distant, the inspector at Albury commented that the money had been well earned, considering that Mr Odgers had walked the last forty miles to take up his appointment; at the school he had shown great energy and attention to duty. 3

1 Rev. Thomas Druitt to the Council of Education, 2 December 1867. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 1. (AONSW 1/735.)

2 Correspondence and memoranda, September 1868-January 1869. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 79. (AONSW 1/813.)

Almost all of the schools provided by the state catered for children at the primary level. Secondary schooling remained almost entirely in the hands of privately run colleges, whether these were organized by religious bodies, as in the case of St. Patrick's College, Goulburn, or by individuals. In 1886 Goulburn had at least two schools catering for the secondary education of girls and three for boys, including two large establishments, Hurstville College and St. Patrick's.¹

A decade earlier a Cambridge man, Hardwick Evans, used the names of the Anglican bishops of Goulburn and Bathurst as referees for his school, also in Goulburn.² Among the other institutions available for the children of the prosperous were the Grammar School at Wagga, which admitted both boys and "Young Ladies" to its classes,³ the Albury Grammar School, run in 1884 by a graduate of Durham University who had previously taught in Mauritius and at Geelong College,⁴ and the Albury Boarding School for Young Ladies.⁵ All of these schools cited Anglican clergymen among their referees, and from their published fees and subjects offered they were intended to take the place of the Public Schools of England; their doors were open to all, but they were designed for gentlefolk, to whose children secondary education in the south east was effectively limited. The only state venture into secondary education

¹Edwin Bean and J.D. Sly, *High Schools versus Scholarships: an enquiry into the merits of the two systems* (Bathurst, 1886) p. 3. Mr Sly was the headmaster of Hurstville College.


³Advertisement, *Yass Courier*, 26 June 1885, p. 3.

⁴*Border Post*, 3 May 1884, p. 2; advertisement, p. 3.

began in October 1883, when boys' and girls' high school departments were opened in Goulburn, the peak enrolment of sixteen boys and seventeen girls occurring in the following year. By 1885 the average attendance had fallen to eight boys and seven girls, and in the last quarter of 1886 the schools were closed through lack of attendance; for the rest of the century secondary education was abandoned to the religious and private schools.

Even at primary level some children were educated at private schools. Those whose parents could afford it were taught at home by private tutors; others went to one of the many private schools which existed at various levels of efficiency in most towns of any size. There were seven of these, run by individual ladies, in Goulburn in 1886, the government of the schools being "that in a well-conducted family" in most cases. There were four private schools, enrolling between nine and thirty, operating in reasonable conditions in Albury at the same date. At the lower end of the scale was the private school conducted in the dark, dirty and damp cellar of a public house in Adaminaby by an unqualified fourteen year old girl whose father had disagreed with the Public school teacher over a debt he owed the latter, and who had withdrawn from the Public school as a result. In this "school" the materials and

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5Ibid., p. 263.
furniture were unsuitable for teaching, and the seventeen or so who attended (mainly defaulters in fees or in attendance at the Public school) were exposed to the drunkenness, foul language and fighting which took place in the badly conducted public house above. Such schools were able to survive through the enrolment in them of the children of families who wished to evade the attendance provisions of the Public Instruction Act.¹

The quality of the education received by children was therefore largely open to chance, especially in areas of sparse population which nevertheless contained a village or two where private schools, good or bad, could be set up. In general, the facilities in the state financed schools and in those run by religious bodies improved rapidly after the efforts of the Council of Education took effect, and still more quickly after the Public Instruction Act became law. The primitive conditions of the early years gave way to more comfortable ones in which more efficient teaching could take place, although of course conditions in rural areas remained spartan much longer than did those in the towns. By the end of the century few children in the south east were beyond the reach of an education, but their response was not always that desired by educationists; in the bush too many schoolboys did indeed creep "like snail, unwillingly to school".

III

Official efforts to provide all children in New South Wales with primary education were for long frustrated by public apathy. For many years the people of the country districts in particular preferred their children to work at home, and there is little doubt that the

¹See Section III below.
children preferred to do so as well.

In 1863 there were 1,521 children enrolled in National schools in south east New South Wales and a further 1,864 in schools recognized by the Denominational School Board;\(^1\) the average attendance at the National schools, however, was only 1,057, or 69.5 per cent of total enrolments, and the Denominational schools did little better, the average attendance of 1,317 representing 70.7 per cent of those enrolled. This situation remained largely unchanged throughout the rest of the century, despite the reform measures.

Government inspectors were fully aware that between a quarter and a third of the children in their districts attended school, if at all, only very infrequently. As early as 1865 the Southern District inspector declared that until parents were themselves educated out of their indifference, which he saw as the main cause of irregular attendance, the only means of ensuring regularity of attendance would be some form of legal compulsion.\(^2\) Inspector McCredie of Albury contended in 1867 that greed as well as ignorance on the part of parents kept children from school, particularly in agricultural and mining districts, where parents kept their children at home "on the most frivolous pretexts, or for the most mercenary reasons".\(^3\) He agreed that compulsory education

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\(^1\) Attendance figures are, unless otherwise stated, my calculations from those for individual schools published in the annual reports of the various responsible government bodies. These figures may be marginally in error through the omission of a few small schools which gave no indication that I could recognize of their geographical location; I believe any such errors to be very small. Provisional, Half-time and House-to-house schools were not included in my calculations.


Table 5
School Attendance, 1863-1895

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
<th>Percentage Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1521</td>
<td>1057</td>
<td>69.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational</td>
<td>38(^1)</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>70.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>70.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3005</td>
<td>2071</td>
<td>68.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5129</td>
<td>3571</td>
<td>69.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>66.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>13489</td>
<td>8806</td>
<td>65.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2139</td>
<td>1435</td>
<td>67.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>32(^2)</td>
<td>2584</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>66.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>16378</td>
<td>12014</td>
<td>73.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) No return from one school.

\(^2\) These figures are for the Goulburn diocese alone; they are taken from a list appended to Bishop Lanigan's Pastoral Letter of Lent 1884, and referred to "the last quarter". Express, 1 March 1884, p. 5.

\(^3\) No returns from St. Patrick's College or from the boarding schools at Goulburn and Albury.
was the only answer, and repeated this recommendation in the following year. But not all inspectors were convinced that the parents were the only ones at fault; Inspector McIntyre of Goulburn argued that in some schools the blame lay with the teachers, whose poor management of the schools made parents and children alike careless of enforcing attendance where the discipline and instruction were felt to be worthless. Children were only attracted to cheerful, well run schools. 1

These factors were no doubt important causes of irregular attendance, but there were others. The geography which placed such strain on clergymen as they endeavoured to serve their parishes had its effect upon the children of their parishioners, especially in isolated country districts. Illnesses tended to spread through whole communities, causing schools to lose large numbers for a time; measles or scarlatina sometimes caused schools to be closed down completely for a week or two. Moreover, the motives of parents in keeping children at home were not always selfish, for in the country it was often impossible to operate a farm at harvesting, shearing or lambing without assistance from the younger members of a family. In 1868 Charles Campbell of Duntroon drew these facts to the notice of the Council of Education, pointing out that where children had to walk up to five miles to school natural obstacles such as a river in spate could prevent them from reaching school. 2 In the next year the teacher of the Church of England school at Ginninderra explained that a low attendance for the month of October had been due partly to heavy rain which had rendered the roads and creeks impassable, and partly to


2Charles Campbell to the Council of Education, 1 June 1868. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 44. (AONSW 1/778.)
Mr J.C. Maynard, the perceptive inspector at Braidwood, made a thorough analysis of attendance at the schools under him in 1876. In his analysis he identified four distinct groups of children. The children in the first group were regular attenders who seldom missed a day: those in the second group missed the occasional day: those in the third were absent a week or two in most months: and those in the fourth attended only for short spells during slack times on the farm. The first two groups, of regular attenders, comprised slightly below half of total enrolments, and the occasional attendances of the other two raised the daily average to about sixty five per cent. Mr Maynard was in no doubt who were to blame for the infrequent attendances. He commented that, although the parents kept their children away from school, the consequent lack of progress achieved by these children was almost always blamed upon the teachers. The fourth group was a particular source of anguish to many teachers for, despite their regular absences from school to take part in potato picking, shearing, harvesting, lambing and general farming, these children were apparently expected to learn as much as the others, who were receiving constant instruction. The parents of these pupils were quick to maintain "that though they have sent them four or five
years to school yet they have learnt nothing".

Even the introduction of compulsory education by the Public Instruction Act was not sufficient to rectify the matter. Within two years of its introduction it was admitted to be a failure by Inspector Kevin of Bega, who reported that, of the 1,061 pupils who had failed to attend school for the prescribed hundred and forty days in the year, 870 had been absent through causes other than sickness, truancy or removal from the district.  

\[1\] "With the labour market almost empty, and wages at an exorbitant figure", he explained, "parents will and must keep their children at home", whether to help with the shearing in the Monaro or with the harvest on the coastal plain.

There is no doubt that, although the problems of geography, sickness and economic necessity combined to cause a considerable amount of the total absences from school, the desire of parents to make use of their children's labour for more than strictly necessary purposes was the principal cause of irregular attendances. After the passing of the Public Instruction Act parents went to extraordinary lengths to evade the compulsory clauses, which were rendered ineffective by their efforts. One favourite method was to enrol children at private schools, often of inferior quality, which kept inaccurate attendance records if they kept any at all. The letter of the law was satisfied by the enrolment, but the children enrolled often did not attend these schools at all. Alternatively, parents made use of the stipulation that children living more than two miles from a Public school were exempt from the compulsory clause by sending their children into service at places over that limit. And of course free use was made of sickness as an excuse.

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to keep children from school.\textsuperscript{1} So easy was it to evade the regulations that by 1890 the fear of punishment had little deterrent effect on those determined to do so. Even children of seven years of age were being kept from school to work at home.\textsuperscript{2} Obviously the education of parents, recommended by inspectors in the 1860s, had not yet been achieved.

Home duties did not solely keep large numbers of children from school. In dairying districts particularly, these tasks affected the punctuality as well as the regularity of attendance at school, for children had to undertake milking duties before going to school.\textsuperscript{3} Nevertheless, this problem was much less acute than that of irregularity, and less damaging to the education of the pupils, for those who were unpunctual at least attended and received instruction; those who were habitually absent did not.

One result of these practices by parents was probably the growth of bad feeling between them and the teachers. If so, the grievances of the teachers were certainly accentuated by the attitude of many parents towards the payment of school fees, upon which the teachers relied to supplement their meagre salaries. The official scale of fees for much of the period was that set in 1874, by which a family was charged ninepence per week for the first child, sixpence for the

\textsuperscript{1}Principal School Attendance Officer's Report, in Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1886, Appendix XV, p. 149, NSW:LA V&P, Second Session of 1887, vol. III.


second and threepence each for subsequent children in attendance.¹
Large numbers of parents proved to be exceedingly reluctant to pay these
fees (there were even public meetings to protest against the "exorbitant"
fees charged at the Public school in Albury in 1874);² yet very few
were willing to enrol their children as free scholars, which could be
done simply by showing that they could not afford to pay fees.³ It is
understandable that people should wish to avoid the stigma of poverty
which might result from such action, but in many cases the reluctance to
pay fees was on the part of those who could easily afford to do so. In
some cases people withdrew their children from school in protest against
the fees set in 1874, "rather than, to use their own words, make themselves
and their children paupers";⁴ others achieved the same ends more subtly.
In country districts it was common for parents to send their children to
school without paying fees, and, if the teacher attempted to obtain
payment, to threaten him with the removal of the child, which could
result in a reduction in his salary through loss of attendance.⁵ In such
circumstances, the teacher was often forced to accept the child without
fees, or with reduced fees. It is remarkable that an examination of the

¹Report of Inspector D.S. Hicks, Goulburn District, Report on Public
Schools, 1874, Appendix H, p. 64, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1875, vol. IV.
The fees in the Roman Catholic independent schools in 1884 averaged
slightly less than threepence per child. (Father Carr's report for the
half year ending June 1884, Express, 26 July 1884, p. 5.)
²Border Post, 10 October 1874, p. 3; 17 October 1874, pp. 2-3.
³Report of Inspector W. McIntyre, Goulburn District, Report on Public
IV.
⁴Report of D.S. Hicks, 1874, loc. cit.
⁵Ibid. This was especially true at places with Provisional schools, where
the teacher's salary was entirely dependent on the average attendance.
letters received by the Council of Education reveals very few cases in which teachers were suspected of falsifying returns;¹ this is a tribute to the honesty of most country schoolmasters in very trying conditions.

Before the publication of the general scale of fees in 1874 there had been some misunderstandings about the legality of school fees. One such occurred at Braidwood in 1868, when a Mr John Brennan questioned the right of the teacher in the local Roman Catholic Denominational school to charge fees.² The investigation held by Assistant Inspector Flannery showed that "the labouring and artisan classes are generally of opinion that teachers of schools receiving aid from the Council of Education have no right to charge for the education of their children".³ The disharmony evident between parents and teachers as a result was reflected in many places throughout the south east, both before and after the publication of the official scale. The parents' indifference and even hostility towards any attempt to educate their children was shown in this issue more than in any other.

It is clear that, in some areas, the efforts of the government to provide an education for all children were negated by those of many parents to prevent such an occurrence. The result was that many children in south east New South Wales, throughout the last forty years of the nineteenth century, received little or no education through the desire of their parents to use them as additions to the family workforce from

¹In all cases in which a teacher was suspected or accused of any form of misconduct, the District inspector was asked to report. The memoranda containing these reports were filed with other letters received. Few of them dealt with this form of misconduct.

²John Brennan to the Council of Education, 4 January 1868. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 36. (AONSW 1/770.)

³Memorandum, E.H. Flannery to the Council of Education, 4 February 1868. Ibid.
a very early age. The high rate of absenteeism\(^1\) recorded throughout the period shows that about three out of every ten children who were enrolled received no education; or more likely that a much larger proportion received only little. Perhaps only half of the children had the relatively small amount of education they were supposed to pick up in attending school between the ages of about seven and twelve to fourteen years. What they learned in their brief visits to school was supposed to fit them for a respectable adult life.

IV

The aims of those who controlled the schools in New South Wales, both Public and Denominational, changed little over the last four decades of the nineteenth century. Both the Public schools and the Roman Catholic (by far the most important of the Denominational schools) were as much concerned to develop values and attitudes as to convey knowledge. Schools were always intended to have a very definite influence on the society of the colony, an influence exerted on the young which would mould them into respectable citizens. The Public schools, supported by taxation, taught Australian Protestants to be moral, truthful and loyal to the British Empire; Roman Catholic schools, maintained by voluntary action, taught their pupils to be religious, truthful and loyal to Old Ireland.\(^2\) To this end the children were taught different versions of literature and history as well as of religion.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy were not impressed by the books

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\(^1\)Which takes no account of the (probably small) number of children who were never enrolled at school at all.

prescribed by the Council of Education for use in schools. These were books produced by the Irish National Board, and at first it seemed likely that the bishops would refuse to countenance their use. Archbishop Polding even considered calling a special meeting of bishops to discuss the matter, but they decided to quietly allow the use of the books, supplementing them with proper Catholic material. After the Catholic schools became independent the question was of course no longer relevant, for the Catholic children were then given approved reading material.

In achieving the main aim of the educationists, that of producing a class of respectable citizens, the curriculum of study was the most important single element. Under the Council of Education there was little variation between the subjects taught in Public and in Denominational schools. All children were supposed to be taught reading, spelling, writing, slate and mental arithmetic, grammar and "object lessons", which were intended to include the explanation of everyday items such as animals, vegetables and manufactures. Most schools also made some show of teaching singing, drawing, Scripture, the laws of health, duties of citizens and, for the girls, needlework. In addition to this basic course a few schools taught book keeping, mensuration, geometry and algebra, with Latin for the advanced boys at the best schools. This was a very comprehensive list of topics, and it is doubtful if it was faithfully adhered to in many cases. The syllabus of the average

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1 Archbishop Polding to Bishop Lanigan, 14 August 1867. Lanigan Papers.
2 Bishop James Murray, Maitland, to Bishop Lanigan, written from Tamworth, 29 October 1867. Lanigan Papers.
school probably included only reading, writing, arithmetic, a little grammar and geography, Scripture lessons and object lessons.¹ Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century it was common for teachers to ignore the official curriculum and to work without a properly planned time table, although these failings were less evident in schools situated in towns than in small country schools.

The emphasis within the curriculum did not alter greatly during the remainder of the century. In 1882 in the Goulburn district the only subjects certain to be found in most schools were reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and object lessons; about half of the schools also offered grammar, Scripture, drawing, singing, needlework and drill; and a very few taught history, French or other subjects.² At the same time Roman Catholic children could expect to have more instruction in religious matters than pupils in the Public schools, but in other respects the syllabus followed in each type of school was similar.³ As in the Public schools, so in the Roman Catholic schools the children were instructed in reading, writing, grammar, geography, singing, military drill (except in Convent schools) and arithmetic, while occasionally drawing, algebra and Euclid found a place. The subjects taught in secular and Roman Catholic schools were thus substantially the same, even if the aims in teaching them were not identical. Even at the very end of the century little had changed, at least in the Public schools, although

¹This list compiled by Inspector T. Harris, Southern District, Eighteenth Report of the Commissioners of National Education, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1866, vol. II.


by then drawing, music and drill had become almost universal, and English
history more popular, while geography had declined in importance, and
object lessons had vanished from the scheme. Australian history was
studied by less than one tenth of the children in attendance at Public
schools in the Goulburn inspection district.¹

The syllabus taught to boys and girls was basically the same,
simply because many schools were too small to have separate departments.
But wherever possible the classes were divided, the teacher's wife taking
the girls. This practice had the support of the parents, who intended
girls to be educated in special subjects of importance in their adult
lives, like needlework. In 1867 the local board at the Gundagai Public
school asked that a married couple (or a female teacher) be appointed
there. For over a year boys and girls had been taught together, a practice
so strongly objected to by some parents that they had removed their
children from the school. The board's secretary wrote:

The want of a female teacher is...much felt for
instructing the girls in sewing, and in the many
other matters of great importance in which none but
a woman can give instruction. Many persons of slender
means complain strongly that...they are compelled to
send their female children to private schools, where
the literary instruction is of an inferior character,
while the cost is very much higher than at a Public
School.²

Although twenty parents sent a memorial to the Council in support of the
existing teacher, he was transferred³ and replaced by a married

¹Report of District Inspector D.J. Cooper, Report of the Minister of
Public Instruction, 1900, Appendix XII, Annex Q, p. 83, NSW:LA V&P,
Session 1901, vol. III.

²A.C.S. Rose, Secretary, Gundagai Public School Board, to the Council of
Education, 10 July 1867. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters
Received, vol. 8. (AONSW 1/742.)

³Mr Geary, teacher, Gundagai Public school, to the Council of Education,
30 July 1867. Ibid.
couple. Of course, such occurrences were impossible in the independent
Roman Catholic system, in which the girls all attended convent schools.
Some idea of the courses desired by the respectable for their daughters
may be gained from the prospectus of the Albury Boarding School for
Young Ladies, at which in 1865 the girls were given "a sound English
education, combined with the comforts and attention of a religious home"
at a cost of forty five guineas per year for girls aged under ten years,
fifty guineas for those over that age. Dancing, French, Harp, Piano and
Drawing were two guineas each extra, the services of a laundress thirty
shillings a quarter; pupils had to provide bedding and towels. The
establishment, plainly designed for the wealthy, was attended by
finishing masters. Girls attending Public schools could not expect
such sophistication, but they were intended to learn feminine
accomplishments as well as the basic subjects.

More important than the subjects taught was the quality of the
teaching; the onus was on the teachers to educate their pupils rather
than simply to occupy their day. In order to accomplish this, especially
when one teacher had to teach pupils of all ages at several levels, the
first essential was the achievement of classroom discipline.

Education in Victorian England is traditionally thought to have
occurred in an atmosphere of strict discipline maintained through fear.
This picture, which owes much to the imagination of Charles Dickens, was
not entirely a false one in some schools in New South Wales. Some teachers
considered the cane to be the most effective, and indeed the only, means
of keeping discipline. The inspector who observed this in 1879 was aware

1 A.C.S. Rose to the Council of Education, 12 August 1867. Ibid.
2 Advertisement, Border Post, 5 April 1865, p. 1.
that there were schools at the other extreme in which the teacher exercised little control of any kind over his pupils. He rightly pointed out that in neither the authoritarian atmosphere nor the lax were the children likely to receive effective instruction in the fundamental subjects taught, let alone in the principles of respectable behaviour which the Public schools were intended to impart; better the school in which the teacher possessed the skill to employ "the sympathy of numbers" in maintaining discipline. Unfortunately, he saw few schools whose discipline he could describe as "creditable." 1

Ten years earlier inspectors' reports on individual schools had contained similar estimates of the methods used to create ordered conditions for instruction. 2 In the Church of England school at Albury the discipline was "still too harsh in tone", though in the local Roman Catholic school it was lax, uneven and "wanting in firmness". All three schools, Public, Roman Catholic and Anglican, at Young had acceptable systems of discipline, but in some of the smaller schools, such as the Public schools at Eurobodalla and Binda 3 and the Anglican school at Bombala, the systems of school government were weak and ineffective.

In this aspect of teaching, as in others, the passage of time had a beneficial effect as more and more teachers underwent better

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2Reports on Public and Denominational Schools, 1869, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1870, vol. II.

3In November 1869 Inspector McIntyre of Goulburn, investigating complaints about the running of the Binda school, found the teacher inefficient and the pupils undisciplined. They were "allowed to wander in the bush", instead of staying in the school playground at lunchtime. The teacher was dismissed. Memorandum, William McIntyre to the Council of Education, 12 November 1869. Council of Education, Miscellaneous Letters Received, vol. 73. (AONS W 1/807.)
training courses. In 1885 Inspector Kevin of Braidwood described
discipline in schools in his district as "fairly satisfactory", though
he felt that many teachers were not insistent enough upon punctual
attendance. In 1889 Inspector O'Byrne of Wagga Wagga stated his pleasure
that over the previous twenty or twenty five years a new attitude,
involving "higher and better motives than fear", had grown up regarding
disciplinary procedures, which he believed were constantly improving. Corporal punishment was no longer the appeal of first resort; although
twenty thousand children were in attendance at schools in his district,
only one case of alleged cruel flogging had been brought to his attention.
Yet his conclusion, that this was evidence of "discretion, self-control,
gentleness, and humanity" on the part of the teachers was perhaps too
optimistic, for in the following year Inspector Cooper of Goulburn
complained that, though discipline was generally satisfactory, the cane
was still being used for trivial offences "that tact and vigilance would
prevent". He continued:

It is to be regretted that the very explicit cautions against, not only undue, but also too frequent, corporal punishment are so little heeded; and on this point even teachers who have had the advantage of regular training are not altogether free from blame.

He deplored the use of the cane as an instrument of instruction by some
teachers, who punished failure to learn as well as misbehaviour. In these
cases to use the cane was "always unjudicious and sometimes cruel".

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From these comments it is clear that the system of discipline in schools was still far from perfect by the nineties. True, most schools were now run in a more enlightened manner than previously, but the human failing of weakness was still in evidence. Nonetheless, the child of the nineties was more likely to learn in a relatively comfortable school, under a teacher who did not make excessive use of corporal punishment in order to retain the attention of the class, than that child's parents had been twenty or thirty years earlier. Most children in the nineties were also taught by teachers of higher capabilities than those of the sixties.

In the 1860s there had been great room for improvement in the methods of teaching employed by the average school teacher in south east New South Wales. Many of the teachers employed in schools had undergone little formal training, with the result that they knew little of advances in teaching methods, often being content merely to copy both the virtues and the faults of their own teachers. Many teachers were so ill-trained that they had no notion even of the importance of planning a course of instruction and preparing each lesson in advance; they had no knowledge of the amount of learning which could be absorbed by the children in each age group; and they trusted to a system of rote learning to drive into the minds of their luckless classes enough of the prescribed material to pass the tests set by the inspector at his annual visit.\(^1\) Hence the children learned the words or the rules of arithmetic parrot fashion and without understanding or insight, if they learned at all. Some teachers even wasted their time and that of their pupils by

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using technical terms such as "subtrahends" and "minuends" with classes of young pupils, before the pupils even understood the operations which were connected with them. ¹

This was not the opinion of one man alone. In 1872 Inspector Maynard reported that fifty nine of the ninety schools he inspected in the Braidwood district were below a reasonable standard, and only fourteen were performing creditable work.² Four years earlier Inspector McIntyre of Goulburn had echoed the thoughts of Inspector Harris, adding his own comment that the teachers often carried out their tasks as though they were "a kind of mechanical routine", requiring neither thought nor preparation.³ As he said, most of the teachers did their best, but were lacking in the judgement to make that best useful to their pupils.

When Mr D.S. Hicks, the new inspector at Goulburn, investigated in 1873 the state of education in that district, he was not impressed by what he saw. Over half of the Public schools, three in every four Denominational and Half-time schools, and four fifths of the Provisional schools, failed to reach the standard required by the Council's regulations.⁴ He isolated five main reasons for this state of affairs: the practice of paying too great attention to reading, writing and arithmetic;⁵ the failure of teachers to make any attempt to teach beyond

¹Ibid.


⁵In this belief, Mr Hicks was alone before 1883, when the teacher assessment system was altered. See below, pp. 184-185.
the minimum requirements of the standard; the length of time some schools remained closed after a teacher left; the poor qualifications of some teachers; and irregular or seasonal attendance by many children. The last three of these factors were most common in small bush schools, especially in Provisional schools. The greatest deficiencies in educational achievement were to be found in outlying parts where interest in and provision for education were least.

Improvements in other aspects of educational provision were paralleled by improvements in the quality of teaching. Already by 1876 Inspector Maynard was able to report that most schools were now performing "honest, substantial work" and that when he compared the state of education with that of five years earlier he felt he had reasonable cause for satisfaction with the progress which had been made. This was perhaps an optimistic view, for early in the eighties inspectors were still complaining that standards were inadequate, although by then the standards demanded had certainly risen. Progress was being made, as was shown by the increasing praise given by the inspectors as the decade wore on. Inspector Kevin, now at Braidwood, reported in 1885 that standards of proficiency were being met, a sentiment with which Inspector Dwyer of Goulburn agreed in the following year, when he attested that the results of his examination showed "considerable care, energy, and success on the part of teachers and scholars", although he qualified his praise by

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commenting that defects were still prominent in reading, word meanings and paraphrasing, as well as in arithmetic and geography. The fault still lay with the teachers, who were still lacking in motivation and in interest in their work.

Despite an increasing emphasis on the training of teachers, the greatest weakness of the teaching system throughout the period of operation of the Council of Education and later was that the teachers were not aware of the most effective methods of teaching. Classes still learned their lessons largely by rote; they knew what the teachers told them, but without understanding. Illustrative material, visual or verbal, was almost unknown, because the teachers themselves were ignorant of the value of such material. In any case, the teachers were often poorly educated themselves until quite late in the century. This was especially the case in reading; for many years inspectors complained that children were not taught properly, and were often actually taught to read badly, simply because the teacher himself was not able to read well. Teachers were for long satisfied with mere accuracy of pronunciation, paying no attention to intonation, with the result that pupils often even lost the natural inflection of voice with which they had begun school.

If reading were taught badly for much of this period, many other subjects fared little better. Arithmetic was persistently taught in a


4 Ibid.; also Inspector Harris' Report for 1865 on National Schools, loc. cit.
mechanical manner, with attention being confined almost exclusively to the most elementary processes. Other branches of English language, grammar and writing, were as poorly taught as was reading in most cases, while in the teaching of geography most masters were satisfied when they had ensured that their pupils could repeat a number of memorized facts, making no effort even to make them familiar with the uses of a map. One inspector was aghast to discover that "rivers having a northern course when traced upon the map from their source to the sea were understood to run uphill". Of the individual subjects, only Scripture seems to have been generally well taught, according to the results of examinations. Outside the best schools the attainments of the pupils, at least until the eighties, were rated by the inspectors as unsatisfactory or at best fair, due to inefficient teaching in each branch of learning and to incompetent planning of courses of study by the teachers.

This incompetent, or even non-existent, planning of courses resulted in the pursuit of a very unbalanced curriculum in large numbers of schools, a practice which excited regular comment from the inspectors. Singing, which was part of the official syllabus, was not given at all in many places. In the opinion of Inspector Murray of Yass this

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1Reports of Inspectors Harris (1865), Maynard (1872), Kevin (1882), Dwyer (1886), loci cit. Inspector Dwyer reported the reverse fault to the last mentioned; that is, that in some cases children were being advanced too rapidly to the higher rules.


3Inspector Murray's Report of 1875, loc. cit. The Yass Courier was totally unimpressed with Inspector Murray, regarding him as incompetent both as a teacher and as an inspector. (Yass Courier, 27 April-25 May 1880, passim.) Whether or not such complaints were justified, Mr Murray's reports as an inspector were in agreement with those of his colleagues, therefore they may be accepted as evidence.
was an unforgivable omission. ¹ "No subject", he said, "is of more
d value in an elementary school in proportion to the small amount of time
required to teach it", for it engendered a spirit of cheerfulness in the
school, provided a valuable source of enjoyment for the children, and
was an important part of mental and moral culture. Likewise, it was
deplored that drill was not given the place it deserved as an aid to
discipline and as a means of improving the physical condition of the pupils.²

For this lack of balance in the average curriculum there were three main
causes. Of these the two of lesser importance were the failure of
teachers to plan their work properly and sheer laziness on the part of
some of them, but by far the most important cause lay in the system of
teacher assessment itself.

Teachers were assessed by the award of marks on the basis of the
performance of their scholars at an examination carried out verbally by a
visiting inspector. Since they knew that on this assessment depended the
amount of their incomes for the succeeding year, they naturally concentrated
their attentions on the subjects which could gain most marks at examination
with the least amount of effort. Although under the Council of Education
all subjects from arithmetic to singing were eligible for ten marks, in
effect arithmetic and reading were worth less, as they could be divided
into several parts, each requiring as much work as any other subject,
therefore teachers tended to skim over these subjects, hoping to acquire
a pass from the results in the easier subjects like writing, object lessons
and Scripture.³ During the seventies it was realized that there were too

¹Report of 1875, loc. cit.
²Report of Inspector Kevin, Braidwood Section of the Goulburn District,
Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1885, Appendix XV, Annex P,
³Report of Inspector Maynard, Report on Public Schools, 1872, Appendix H,
many subjects on the syllabus, to the detriment of reading in particular, therefore a new standard of assessment was devised immediately upon the creation of the Ministry of Public Instruction. From 1 January 1884 much greater weight was given to reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic in an effort to persuade teachers of first and second classes to spend more time on them.\(^1\) It was probably unnecessary to urge the teachers of older children to do so, for as early as 1873 Inspector Hicks of Goulburn had noticed a tendency in that district, against the conclusions of some other inspectors, to concentrate to excess on these very subjects, to the extent that the children became "surfeited and disgusted with them", and desperate for something different to relieve the monotony.\(^2\)

Despite the efforts at reforming the system, and at providing better facilities and better teachers, matters were not perfect as the century drew towards its close. Inspector Friend of Young found cause to be critical of the teaching of grammar, geography, history, drill, mental arithmetic and words and meanings, though he did find improvements in reading, writing, slate arithmetic and several subjects taught only in the highest classes of large schools.\(^3\) It is hard to believe that the quality of education did not improve greatly under the influence of the inspectors, who were themselves accomplished teachers, and of the improved standards of accommodation, equipment and teacher training. As in so much else, however, the full force of the improvements in education were felt in the towns much more than in the countryside. At all times,

\(^1\) Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1883, pp. 9-10, NSW: LA V&P, Session 1883-1884, vol. VII.

\(^2\) Report of Inspector Hicks, Goulburn District, 1873, loc. cit.

although there were a few outstanding small country schools, the best of the schools were those in the towns, which could support larger, better equipped and better paid schools. The education of country children was curtailed by their early removal from school to take their place in the work force, by their regular absences from school, and by the appointment of inferior teachers to the inferior schools which existed there.

As a result, the effects of more widespread and better education were most commonly felt in the larger centres of population. Through the better opportunities in these places for children to gain a good education it is likely that a better informed class of people came to inhabit the towns, where the young also had a greater chance of maintaining an interest in the external world after they left school. In 1873 Inspector Maynard expressed a hope that a system might be devised whereby children would be compelled to remain at school, not for a set number of years, but until they had attained a specified amount of knowledge; most of all he wanted their retention at school until they could read sufficiently well to become interested in newspapers and such other reading matter as came their way. Thus they would not only retain the knowledge they had acquired at school, but would "throughout life be insensibly widening their knowledge and improving themselves". His argument was the more valid for its timing, during a period of great advances in a wide variety of methods of communication. As things stood, he argued, most country children learned but little in their years of occasional attendance at school, the smattering of knowledge actually acquired being lost through lack of use shortly after leaving school. His hope was

partly realized under the Minister of Public Instruction, when attendance at school was made compulsory until a certain age or standard of achievement had been reached, but widespread evasion of the compulsory clause must have limited its effect.

It is difficult to assess the results of the changes in education during these years on the lives of the people in south east New South Wales. The main benefits to be derived from the spread of education were that the inhabitants of the colony would become more literate and better informed, and that their behaviour would become more "respectable". From external evidence it seems that the first of these benefits was forthcoming to a large extent, as the increased circulation of local and national newspapers suggests increasing literacy as well as increasing numbers in the population. The schools began to encourage children to read more in the nineties when, as funds were less required for the basic necessities of school life, there was a move to provide school libraries. Although some teachers objected to performing the additional work involved in administering a library, several schools in the south east added libraries to their assets, and in 1895 Inspector Cooper of Goulburn looked forward to the time when the library would form an essential part of all schools.1

One sign of "respectable" behaviour in the adult world is the ability to exert self discipline, and efforts were made to inculcate this virtue at school. Of course, increasing education ought, it was hoped, to lead to the exertion of self discipline as a matter of course, but the foundations were laid at school, partly through the participation of the pupils in classroom discipline and in drill, partly in the nineties.

through the formation of branches of the Public School Cadet Corps. This organization prepared boys for service in the army in later life, and was part of the patriotic atmosphere which was fostered by the government schools. In 1897 there were fourteen branches of the Corps in the south east, enrolling a total of over three hundred and twenty cadets. Although this was only a small proportion of those then enrolled in the Public schools, the Corps' existence was a significant indication of the type of person the state system was intended to produce. The desire for discipline, the glorification of the Empire, and the interest in soldiering in schools reflected society at large. The aim of the schools was not to change society by making its members more "respectable" in outlook and behaviour than they were already; it was to repeat in the next generation the best of the current adult one, but improving its knowledge of the world and trusting to its traditions and instincts to maintain the respectability already there in a changing world.

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The thirty seven years between 1863 and 1900 witnessed great changes, both legal and practical, in the educational system of New South Wales. Without the legal reforms, most children living in remote parts, and many who lived in parts less remote, would have remained innocent of contact with school or teacher, as the church bodies which were the only alternative to the state could not have coped financially with the necessary expansion in school provision. Within the schools the efforts of the inspectors in praise and criticism helped to improve the quality of the instruction. Thus by 1900 schools and their equipment

were of a higher material standard than they had been forty years earlier, teachers were better qualified, and educational courses were much improved.

Nonetheless, the need for further improvement remained. Advances in teaching methods did not keep pace with those in physical conditions; too many schools were still staffed by incompetent and relatively ignorant masters. Children could still leave school hardly more enlightened than when they had first attended, while others could still avoid attendance completely. But at least by 1900 most children would have been able to satisfy Inspector Maynard by reading a newspaper, which had not been the case in his day.
Chapter 6

Taming the Wilderness: Transport and Communications

I

On his first tour of visitation through his diocese in 1867, Bishop Lanigan suffered considerable discomfort and inconvenience as a result of the primitive state of the transport system. In October of that year he noted in his diary, "To Adelong to Mr. Roche's — on the way stuck in water and mud for about two hours". 1

It is a measure of the changes occurring in the succeeding years that a much more minor inconvenience provoked editorial comment in the Yass Courier 2 and the sending of a deputation from the Yass Municipal Council to interview the railway traffic manager in 1885. They merely wished to have the time of the evening train altered, to benefit the people of the town. As a result of their efforts the time of arrival of the train was changed from nine in the evening to ten minutes to eight. 3 What seemed an intolerable imposition in 1885 would have taken on the appearance of an unmitigated blessing twenty years earlier.

During the first forty years after the initial exploration and settlement of the south east, transport development followed slowly along predictable lines. First, a road system of a kind took shape, joining the main centres of population to Sydney and Melbourne and then to each other. 4

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1 Bishop Lanigan's diary, 11 October 1867. Lanigan Papers. (Notes made by Father N.M. Cook.)

2 Yass Courier, 1 May 1885, p. 2.

3 Yass Courier, 2 June 1885, p. 2.

4 At first this meant Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Yass, Wagga and Albury only.
Further roads gave contact with this main southern road to the farming areas north and south of the main route, to the gold fields, and to the south coast, though the direct sea route to Sydney remained the most important to the coastal towns. However, although by the 1860s this pattern of road transport had evolved, contact between Goulburn and Albury or Wagga, Sydney or Melbourne, was far from being simple and smooth. The road system was barely more than a series of loosely connected bush tracks. For example, the roads in the Moruya district were few in number and, where they did exist, unsuitable for any form of transport except pack horses. In 1865 even the main southern road itself was incomplete. Beyond Gunning only "a little" metalling existed, between Gundagai and Adelong Crossing the creeks had not yet been bridged, and from Bowning to Jugiong even the line of the road remained to be determined. As until 1864 minor roads were the responsibility of local trusts the state of these can be more easily imagined than described. Their condition, even in the relatively well populated north, was such that traffic was sent by longer routes to avoid some sections. Thus the Yass Courier reported in 1868 that at last, after repeated representations on the matter, the government had agreed to make funds available to repair the roads around Burrowa:

The entire absence of traffic during the past winter from this, the main arterial line of communication between Goulburn and Young, and its diversion to the


better, but more circuitous route by way of Yass, must have awaked the most apathetic of our townsmen...

Even in this most propitious season for travelling, the most disheartening accounts of the neglected and wretched condition of the road between Burrowa and Gunning are given.

Most roads being unmetalled, the effects of rain upon them were disastrous. From being hard, rutted and dangerous they turned into muddy tracks on which travel was almost impossible. One man who suffered a miserable night in consequence of this was George Campbell of Duntroon, who was returning home from Goulburn with his wife and daughter in their coach, pulled by four horses, when the coach became bogged in a sea of mud near Collector. When the horses had been unharnessed in mud "up to their bellies", the men in the party had to drag the coach for about a hundred yards before it was possible to make another start. Their troubles were not yet over, for the coach became bogged again after passing through Gundaroo; this time they were not successful in freeing the coach, and were compelled to spend the night in the open. Such experiences must have been very common in the sixties.

Even in towns conditions were often as bad as on country roads. In 1864 the streets of Albury displayed a tendency to flood after even one day's rain; on 1 March Townsend Street was one of three streets which resembled lakes or lagoons, although only a small expenditure of money would have cured the problem. In 1870 eighty two inhabitants of

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1 Yass Courier, 2 May 1868, p. 2.

2 Samuel Shumack, An Autobiography, or Tales and Legends of Canberra Pioneers (Canberra, 1967) p. 4. Drought could also affect transport through reducing the feed available for draught animals.

3 Border Post, 4 March 1864, p. 2. On 27 March 1869 the Wagga Wagga Advertiser commented that one night's rain had flooded the streets, and that "the town might serve by dint of a great effort of poetical imagination for a model of the Lake District in miniature". (Quoted by K.J. Swan, A History of Wagga Wagga [Wagga Wagga, 1970] p. 116.)
Adelong begged parliament for assistance in improving the condition of Tumut Street, the main street in the town, which was described as:

Almost impassable, being in places a perfect swamp, causing a great deal of loss and inconvenience to persons in business and others, and endangering life, limb, and property to a serious extent.

There were two main reasons for the existence of such conditions. First, the roads were only in process of construction, therefore it was inevitable that for a time they would be inadequate for the needs of the people. Second, as yet only a small number of roads were maintained by the government. In their petition the people of Adelong stated that their voluntary subscriptions had been the means by which Tumut Street had been reclaimed "from its wild state" through the clearing of timber and stumps. Indeed, apart from the main southern road, only forty five maintenance grants were made by the colonial government to roads in the south east during 1862 and 1863; eleven of these were to roads on the south coast or to roads joining Braidwood gold field to the coastal ports, and a further nine were to roads connecting Goulburn with other nearby centres. By the mid sixties a system of classification of roads had been introduced, by which roads were divided into five classes, each class carrying a specified maintenance grant for each mile of the road.

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2Ibid.

3Expenditure upon Roads since 1 January 1861, Return to Order, 7 January 1864, NSW:J. of LC, vol.XII, Session 1865, pp. 447-471.
Table 6
Road Classifications, 1866

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Amount per mile (£)</th>
<th>Examples in south east New South Wales (mileage in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Braidwood-Araluen (via Dirty Butter Creek) (15 miles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Gundagai-Tumut (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bungendore-Queanbeyan (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wagga-Young (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bateman's Bay-Moruya (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tumut-Adelong (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Goulburn-Taralga (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooma-Bombala (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Albury-Wagga (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gunning-Burrowa (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Queanbeyan-Cooma (67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that those who agitated successfully for government aid for roads near Burrowa in 1868 had a strong case when as important a road as that from Gunning to Burrowa was awarded only £315 for an entire year's maintenance of a forty five mile length of road, equivalent to little over ten shillings a month for each mile. In 1866 the only class one roads in the south east were two short roads giving access to the Araluen gold field; only five roads were in the next highest class, seven in class three, twelve in class four, and twenty eight in class five. No other roads received any government aid at all.

In 1865 the Roads Commissioner detailed the principles upon which he based the allocation of funds. There were five main

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1 Subordinate Roads of New South Wales, two returns of road grants from different departments, NSW: LA V&P, Session 1865-1866, vol. I, pp. 931-936, 937-938. These returns did not include the main southern road.

2 Ibid.

considerations: the removal of obstacles to traffic, and especially the mails, by bridging rivers and creeks; the building of cuttings through mountain and swamp areas; the determination of the direction of roads and the clearing of these, followed by drainage and culverting where these were required; the forming and metalling of the busiest roads, starting at railway termini and leading into the interior; and the connection of the metalled stretches, again beginning at the railway termini or most important town. As the railway did not reach as far as Goulburn until the end of the decade, such funds as were allocated to the south east were intended for the more basic purposes mentioned. Away from the most important places even these were not fully attended to.

In the 1860s, then, the road system in south east New South Wales was incapable of carrying large quantities of traffic, and was suitable only for the sturdiest and most primitive forms of transport. Of these, horse, buggy and bullock cart were necessarily the most common, although on a few main routes there were already coach services for those who could afford the fares. In 1863 three coach companies travelled between Yass and Goulburn. In January Mr Hilly, the mail contractor, reduced his fares to one pound in each direction,\(^1\) and two months later\(^2\) James Roberts’ "four horse American coaches" were advertised, the fare being two pounds from Lambing Flat to Yass, four to Goulburn and six to Sydney. On the same date Cobb and Co. advertised a fare of ten shillings between Yass and Goulburn. One of the first sporting specials in the region occurred in 1864 when Mr Garry, another mail contractor, charged £2-10-0 (single) and five pounds (return) for a trip from Albury to the

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\(^{1}\)Yass Courier, 21 January 1863.

\(^{2}\)Yass Courier, 11 March 1863.
Wagga races.  

Owing to the unmade condition of most roads and to the effects of weather upon them, overland communication was both slow and expensive. However, even in the early 1860s it was possible for messages to be relayed from Sydney or Melbourne to most towns of importance in the south east quickly and reliably, for an electric telegraph network was already in existence. The opening in 1858 of the telegraph lines between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide was followed very rapidly by the establishment of intermediate telegraph stations, and by the building of branch lines to other country centres. Thus by 1863 Goulburn, Yass, Braidwood, Gundagai, Albury, Tumut, Kiandra, Wagga Wagga and Young were served by the telegraph; most of these were on the main line, though Braidwood and Kiandra were the termini of branches from Goulburn and Tumut respectively, and Wagga and Young were on the line from Orange and Parkes to Albury.

In little over a year lines were opened from Braidwood to Queanbeyan and to Araluen, and the contract issued for an extension from Queanbeyan to Cooma. By 1869 Burrowa had been joined first to Yass and then to Young, Cooma to Kiandra and Bombala, and Araluen to Moruya, while further extensions on the south coast brought telegraph services to Eden, Bega and Merimbula; in addition a new office on the main line had been opened at Marulan. These developments, taken together, meant that by 1869 the

1 Advertisement, Border Post, 26 February 1864, p. 3.


3 Report from the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, 1865 and 1866, pp. 1-2, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1866, vol. IV. The Queanbeyan office was opened in August 1864, the Araluen office in February 1865.

major towns along the main trade route from Goulburn to Albury, the largest centres in the Monaro and on the coast, and the gold fields all had telegraph offices. Communication with the world outside the region was already a very much simpler and cheaper matter than it had been a dozen years earlier.

If at first sight it appears surprising that the telegraph, a sophisticated system of communication, was the first to operate well in the south east, the reason for its rapid development was simple. The telegraph lines were cheap and easy to build and to maintain. They required no great excavations, no great quantity of materials, even in very rough country. For example, in 1869 the total cost of constructing the line from Cooma to Kiandra, a distance of sixty miles, was only £1,718-1-4, or slightly under £30 a mile; again, the line from Braidwood to Queanbeyan cost only £1,991-6-10, or £37 a mile, in 1864. Such costs contrasted sharply with those for the construction of the railway lines during the following decades, as indeed they did with the costs of maintaining the roads, even in the case of class five roads, which exceeded these levels every five or six years, whereas the telegraph costs were non recurring. In any case, the telegraph lines quickly repaid the outlay. Within four years of opening, the receipts at the Queanbeyan office totalled £660-5-8, more than a third of the amount spent on constructing the line from Braidwood.

During the next thirty years, when dramatic developments were

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3 Calculated from figures in the reports of 1864, 1865, 1866 and 1867, loci cit.
taking place in railway construction and in the improvement of the road system, further extensions were made to the telegraphic service, so that by the eighties not only were the main centres served, but also small settlements and even individual pastoral properties, particularly in the Monaro. In 1900 an extension was even constructed to provide a telegraph office at the Cooma Racecourse.¹

As early as the sixties, then, the south east was not altogether isolated, for the telegraph made possible the rapid transmission of news. Its most important contributions were to farmers and graziers, who learned speedily of Sydney market conditions and could thus decide whether to consign produce there. The telegraph was also valuable to property owners in areas where free selection was progressing. In the seventies Edward Pratt, of Myalla, sent regular instructions to his brother Sam from Sydney,² where Edward was employed as a teacher in the Sydney Grammar School, and there can be no doubt that others in similar situations used the telegraph to obtain legal advice from Sydney. Even postal services were relatively regular, given the size of the population and the condition of most roads. There was at least a weekly service to most of the eighty or so post offices in the south east in 1865,³ including services to such small places as Bobundarah, near Cooma, Wombat, near Young, and Kameruka, near Bega. Many of these were local stores whose owner had a contract with the postal department; Canberra's first post office was run by Francis Williams, the local blacksmith, who was paid


²Edward Pratt's diaries contain many references to telegrams sent to Sam, who managed the property during Edward's absences.

£14 a year plus a commission of five per cent on the sale of stamps.¹ Such a system may seem primitive, yet a generally reliable service was provided. As early as 1865, when the main southern road was still for many miles a mere track, the Roads Commissioner was proud to report that improvements to that road had permitted the time taken in mail delivery to be halved, and that Albury now had a daily mail; "the mails are now seldom as many hours late as they were formerly days".² Five years later the residents of Adelong recognized the services of Mr Yabsley, their mailman, by subscribing £15 for a presentation to him. The gift was made because of his regular deliveries despite the local roads being "so bad that it was almost impossible for travellers, or vehicles of any description, to get along at all".³

These improvements should not obscure the limitations of communications in the south east at the end of the sixties. Travel was still a severe ordeal, the more so away from the main routes. Before it could be otherwise many things had to be done; a large proportion of these was accomplished in the next twenty years.

II

The most dramatic development in communications during the 1870s and 1880s was the arrival of the railway. In 1869 the line reached Goulburn, after which no further lines were opened in the south east until 1875, when on 9 November the extension from Goulburn to Gunning, thirty miles to the west, came into operation. Thereafter work proceeded swiftly: by 1878 there was a railway as far as the Murrumbidgee at

¹Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 21.


³Australian Town and Country Journal, 3 September 1870, p. 7.
MAP 2  RAILWAY EXTENSION 1869-1894
Wagga, and within three more years the line was complete to Albury.

Between 1881 and 1889 outlying parts of the region were joined to the
main line by means of junction lines, which extended services to Gundagai
(1886), Queanbeyan (1887) and Cooma (1889), as well as providing links
with other parts of the colony. The south western line from Junee to
Narrandera in 1881 brought the Riverina within easier reach, and the
central districts of the colony were made more accessible by the
completion in 1886 of the line from Murrumburrah through Young to Cowra
and the western line.\(^1\) The only important section of line to be built
in the nineties was that from Cootamundra to the Temora gold field, opened
in 1893,\(^2\) though other lines to Braidwood and from Cooma to Bega, Bombala
and Delegate were considered but not begun. Whereas in 1870 there had
been only twenty miles of railroad open in the south east, by 1880 there
were about two hundred, and within ten more years that figure had doubled.

The building of the railway had an important effect on
government policy on road construction. Between 1870 and 1900 two main
considerations dominated the classification of roads in the south east.\(^3\)
First, roads were regarded primarily as feeders of the main railway line,
to be used almost entirely for short distance traffic. More especially,
they were planned to facilitate the transport of agricultural products
by connecting to the railway areas of agricultural importance, for
example that in the vicinity of Wagga, while of course individual roads

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\(^1\) D.N. Jeans, An Historical Geography of New South Wales to 1901 (Sydney,
1972) pp. 187-188, points out that this line was particularly important
as it was the first to depart from "the overriding plan of a radial
system centred on Sydney and Newcastle".

\(^2\) Information on dates of opening of lines and on mileage taken from the
annual published reports on the railways of New South Wales.

\(^3\) R.H.T. Smith, op. cit., pp. 126-142.
supporting a high level of traffic also received a higher rate of assistance. The policy of developing local agricultural areas was also important in determining the siting of the branch railway lines which were built, especially towards the end of the century.\(^1\) Where road transport was particularly expensive, a railway might be built to facilitate the marketing of agricultural products.

The concentration of resources on developing roads in agricultural districts was already apparent in the late seventies. In 1878 there were thirteen roads of class one in south east New South Wales;\(^2\) of these, four were in the agricultural districts around Goulburn, two on the far south coast, already important as a dairying region, and four in the Riverina farming districts. Of the other three, two served the Adelong gold field and the third joined the main southern road at Murrumburrah with Young and Grenfell.\(^3\) In contrast to the sixties, when very few roads had been in receipt of government funds for maintenance purposes, in 1878 no less than a hundred and fourteen were assisted in this manner,\(^4\) two and a half times the number of fifteen years earlier.

When to these advances is added the further extension of the telegraph system, it is clear that the years 1870 to 1890 witnessed a considerable revolution in the transport and communications systems. In the seventies and eighties new telegraph lines joined smaller centres such as Wolumla, Tathra and Bateman's Bay on the south coast, Adaminaby

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\(^1\) R.H.T. Smith, op. cit., pp. 95-102.

\(^2\) Excluding the main southern road.


\(^4\) Ibid.
and Tumbarumba in the Snowy Mountains, and Barmedman in the extreme north west of the region, to the system; and second wires were added on some of the main lines, for example, that from Goulburn to Wagga. As a result, the country people were more in contact with each other and with external events than before.

Communications in the seventies were still very unsophisticated. The impact of the railway was tremendous, but, despite the money expended upon them, the roads improved in quality only slowly. To travel by road remained an uncomfortable and hazardous business for many years.

In 1874 roads in the Albury district were said to be "in a glorious state of impassability", that leading to Wagga being described as "a continuous line of sloughs, ruts, crab-holes, and gullies". Even in towns in long settled districts the roads often remained in a deplorable condition. The Rev. A.D. Faunce, an Anglican clergyman, was moved to write a piece of doggerel in a scrapbook kept by his hostess while on a visit to the incumbent at Queanbeyan in 1876:

Oh! Queanbeyan Oh! Queanbeyan
Your streets they run with water
And strangers if they had some slime
Could easily make some mortar.

Edward Pratt was a seasoned traveller between Sydney and the Monaro. In 1876 he noted that the coach driver had travelled from

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1 Information from annual reports from the Postmaster General, NSW:LA V&P.

2 Road conditions were blamed for two accidents near Young early in 1877, Burrangong Chronicle, 31 January, 14 February 1877, p. 2.

3 Border Post, 4 July 1874, p. 3.

4 Border Post, 13 May 1874, p. 2.

5 Verse dated 16 October 1876, in an album of Mrs A.D. Soares, in possession of Mr E. Slater, Hughes, A.C.T.
3. Wallace Street, Braidwood.

Mitchell Library Collection.
4. Coaching in New South Wales — "All Aboard".

*Illustrated Sydney News, 18 August 1877.*

*Mitchell Library.*
Michelago to Queanbeyan "at a furious pace". After breakfast there was rain almost all day, and the roads were "fearful". ¹ Eleven years later he commented on a road near Cooma, "road rough but great improvement on old times".² This was probably an apt summary of the conditions of the eighties. But road improvement was not the only matter which concerned the voyager. Pratt's reference to the pace of the coach was not his only criticism of the drivers of these vehicles. In 1875 he and a fellow passenger were annoyed by the frequent delays caused by the driver, named Bolton, who either became drunk or pretended to become drunk at Bredbo, thus holding up departure until five in the morning.³ Three years later he reported fear among the passengers when two coach drivers raced each other on the stretch between Bredbo and Cooma.⁴ On the other hand, one traveller was most impressed by the skill of his young driver on the road, which was in shocking condition, from Goulburn to the Monaro.⁵ Less fortunate was the correspondent of the Express who in 1882 travelled by the illustrious Cobb and Co. between Temora and Cootamundra, a distance of thirty five miles. He was sure that a recent fare increase had resulted in a proportionate reduction in speed, for the journey took seven hours to accomplish. The fault was that of the drivers, who went through their duties "in a most independent manner", stopping at every inn and refusing to move until the passengers had "shouted" for him.

¹Edward Pratt's diary, 17 July 1876.
²Edward Pratt's diary, 10 February 1887.
³Edward Pratt's diary, 12 June 1875.
⁴Edward Pratt's diary, 18 April 1878.
The correspondent somewhat sarcastically concluded, "however, I did arrive in Cootamundra at last". ¹

The inadequacies of the road system and of overland travel impressed very strongly upon the inhabitants of the region the benefits which would accrue from railway development. Both urban and rural communities were aware of the advantages to be gained by the districts fortunate enough to be within easy reach of the railway. So great was the desire to participate in railway expansion that even the delay of a few months in building caused by the destruction of surveys and plans in the Garden Palace fire dismayed the people of Gundagai. They had begun the construction of buildings costing more than £11,000 on the strength of the expected prosperity to be brought by the railway, and now they feared for the safety of their investment. ² Other people held similar hopes for their own localities. When the line to Cooma was opened, Henry Tollemache Edwards, the manager of Bibbenluke station in the southern Monaro, confidently forecast an extension through nearby Bombala to the Victorian border because he believed that the Victorian government were keen to advance their line to Bendock, six miles from the border, where important gold discoveries had been made. Edwards continued:

I need not remark what an important change it will make in all Monaro [sic] properties, the Rail running through it. Monaro & particularly this portion of it will be the most favourably situated part of Australia commanding Sydney markets on one side Melbourne on the other with Tasmania in the

¹Express, 29 April 1882, p. 3.

²"Quod Dixi Dixi", "Country Rambles", Express, 14 October 1882, p. 3. The existence of the Railway Hotel at Braidwood, which has never had a railway, is another illustration of the importance of the railways to the country people.
middle by shipping from 'Eden' 60 miles from here.

Edwards was not alone in his desire for a line from Cooma to Bombala. As early as 1882, when the Goulburn to Cooma railway extension was still only in the planning stage, a petition from "Residents of Monaro" to the Legislative Assembly argued that, as Monaro had two centres of activity, a further extension to Bombala was essential if the full benefit was to be derived from the railway. The southern centre of activity, around Bombala, had always been connected with Sydney through the ports in the Twofold Bay section of the south coast, and must continue to depend on "the uncertainty of coastal import and export" unless the railway was constructed as far as Bombala. The petition further argued that this southern part of Monaro embraced "over one third of the material basis upon which Parliament has voted the railway to Cooma", therefore without the further extension that line could only be a partial success. Further agitation in 1884 led to the taking of surveys which generally proved favourable to the construction of the line, although they did raise some practical difficulties; but the proposal became one of the early casualties of government retrenchment in the depression of the nineties, and the completion of the line was delayed until the twentieth century. For the time being the residents of southern Monaro still had to depend on the south coast ports, though some goods were moved overland to Cooma and then by rail. Henry Edwards preferred to travel to Sydney himself by rail and coach, and recommended


3 Return to Order, 18 October 1887, loc. cit.
others to do likewise, but transported most goods, particularly heavy or bulky cargoes, by sea through Merimbula or Tathra, even after the railway to Cooma was open. It causes no surprise that railway building fell foul of difficult economic conditions, for the cost of building lines was very high. By the end of 1881 the total cost of the main line from Granville in Sydney to Albury was approaching four million pounds, an average of £10,421 per mile of track, yet this compared favourably with the average cost of £11,579 per mile for all lines in the colony built to that date. The cost of construction was obviously likely to be higher in the hilly districts of the southern Monaro, therefore this project, like other railway extensions, was expendable in a time of financial crisis.

Happiness about the prospective arrival of a railway was not universal, despite the promise of closer contact between the bush townships and the capitals. The editor of the *Yass Courier* was pessimistic enough to fear that lack of energy among the locals might cause the town to suffer from the increased competition the approaching railway would bring. Likewise, one of his counterparts at Albury was concerned that that town might lose the commercial benefits of its geographical situation on the border between New South Wales and

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4 Such as the line to Braidwood and that from Eden to Bega.

Victoria, and that it might become a mere railway station, "only distinguishable from the long list of names on the time-table as being the point where the line spans the Murray". He urged that the danger be met by the establishment of woollen mills, tanneries and boot and shoe factories, which would provide the basis for a more stable prosperity and create employment for the rising generation. A few months later he pointed his message by ascribing the decline of Tarcutta, formerly an important staging post for the mails, to the recent completion of the line as far as Wagga. The railway had "improved Tarcutta out of existence". Nevertheless, such worries and doubts were far less common than the enthusiasm for railways of which the agitation in the Monaro was but one example.

The expansion in communications in the 1870s and 1880s, therefore, provided the enlarging population with the facilities to further the economic development of the region through easier contact with Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere. By 1890 the final sophistication of the system had begun with the conversion of telegraph offices into telegraph and telephone offices. Instant communication was available through the telephone from any telegraph office with Sydney or Melbourne; in time domestic telephones would remove the necessity of a visit to the telegraph office, but in the nineteenth century such items were restricted to a few privileged country towns (Goulburn was one) and to

1 Editorial, Border Post, 1 January 1879, p. 2.

2 Border Post, 14 May 1879, p. 3. Tarcutta's population was at this time below one hundred; in 1891 it was 196, in 1901 302, so the Post's pessimism was not justified in the long term.

3 In 1891 Henry Edwards asked that he might use the telephone at Bibbenluke post office for station business at an agreed annual rental instead of paying for each call. Henry Edwards to the Postmaster General, Sydney, 24 August 1891. Bibbenluke Papers, Letterbook 1890-1897, ANL MS 1154/21/2.
the big cities.

Thus these decades were, in communications as in so many other fields, crucial for the development of the south east. The advances made during these years transformed the situation utterly, so that by 1890 the region was in a position to adapt to external events much more quickly than had been the case twenty years earlier.
5. Goulburn Railway Station in the early 1870s.

*N.S.W. Government Railway Archives.*
By the nineties the south east was in close contact with the outside world. Even if transport was still subject to the vagaries of the weather at times, as when in 1897 the mails for Sydney could not leave Moruya on the coast because of the height of the river, the construction of railways had made the population much less dependent on the roads. Almost every settlement was within easy distance of a railway station or a port by the nineties, and the road system was being designed to give as many places as possible such access.

Transport was not only made quicker and easier by rail, but also much cheaper. This occasions no surprise when the coach fares from Yass to Goulburn already cited are recalled. Several years later, in 1871, the fares of the "Goulburn and Yass Express" were seven shillings and sixpence from Goulburn to Gunning, fifteen shillings to Yass. The twice weekly trip took fifteen hours from Goulburn to Yass, fourteen in the reverse direction; this for a distance of fifty four miles. Within a few years the trip from Goulburn to Gunning thirty miles apart, could be accomplished in ninety five minutes, at a cost of nine shillings and eightpence (first class) or seven shillings and ninepence (second). Even

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1 W.A. Bayley, Behind Broulee, p. 68.

2 P. 195, above.

3 Advertisement, Yass Courier, 24 March 1871.
Sydney was only six and a half hours from Goulburn any day of the week but Sunday.\(^1\) By 1881 the train took just over two hours to get from Goulburn to Yass, and sixteen and a half to travel from Sydney to Albury;\(^2\) the fare for the shorter journey was twelve shillings and threepence (first class), eight shillings and threepence (second), that for the longer was £3-16-3 (first class), £2-12-0 (second).\(^3\) Not surprisingly, the railway authorities were quick to remark upon the advantages of rail travel. In 1871 it was pointed out\(^4\) that railway fares were as cheap as coach rates, even in first class, and that even second class carriages were superior to coaches in comfort. The journey from Goulburn to Picton, a distance of seventy five miles, was cited as an example: by road the journey took thirteen and a half hours and cost eightpence per mile, by rail it took 3.49 hours at a cost of \(3\frac{1}{4}d\) per mile (first class) or \(2\frac{1}{2}d\) (second class). The contrast was plain. Twenty years later the disparity between coach and rail fares was even more noticeable, when it cost Henry Edwards £2-10-0 to make the return trip from Bibbenluke to Cooma by coach, a total of forty

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\(^1\) Railway time table in the Yass Courier, 29 February 1876.

\(^2\) Time table dated 28 February 1881, "Old Timetables: Suburban and South, 1855-89", typescript, NSW Government Railway Archives.

\(^3\) Government Railways, Coaching Rates..., 1st February 1881 (Sydney, 1881) NSW Government Railway Archives.

seven miles in each direction, and £4-10-3 for the return rail journey from Cooma to Sydney, over two hundred and fifty miles away.¹

The success of the railways made extensive trunk road development unnecessary. By the 1890s the roads receiving most aid from the government were those from towns like Burrowa to Goulburn, and from Tumut and Tumbarumba to Albury, Wagga or the railway line.² Roads now had their main importance in serving the supply centres of farming districts at a distance from the railways, and in serving isolated settlements. Their importance to regional supply centres like Crookwell or Taralga was that, had there been no satisfactory road from them to the railway, these towns might have declined as farmers sent their goods direct to the railroad instead of using them as intermediate stops.

Such local value was the reason why country people were still very sensitive about road conditions in the nineties. Even after more than thirty years faults remained only too clear; some roads were even believed to have deteriorated. Thus in 1890 there was a complaint³ that necessary repair work had not been carried

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¹ Henry Edwards, Memorandum of expenditure, Bibbenluke to Toowoomba, 16 August 1894. Bibbenluke Papers, Letterbook 1891-1895, ANL MS 1154/7/5.

² R.H.T. Smith, op. cit., p. 133.

³ Letter from a resident of the district, Yass Courier, 18 February 1890, p. 2.
out on the road between Gunning and Gundaroo, said to be blocked by fallen timber after the collapse of a culvert. "This road was once a first class road; now, I may say it is not of any class for it is more like a common bush road or track". Three years later a visitor to the town wrote to the Bombala Herald of his disappointment with the main road to Cooma, "or what I should feel inclined to call a track"; the coach in which he had travelled had at times been reduced almost to walking pace. 1 Again, in 1895 it was reported that the junction of the main southern road with the Murrumbidgee Road was in process of being formed and gravelled, which process would remove the cause for the local nickname for the junction, "the slough of despond". 2 It is clear, therefore, that the improvements of the previous thirty years had not entirely eliminated bad roads, even from the more densely populated parts of the south east. Travel could still be a trial, as a Mrs Dawes discovered when her buggy was bogged on the Black Range Road, also near Yass, and she was compelled to walk almost two miles in order to obtain assistance. 3 Hard though this was on the lady

1 Letter to the editor, Bombala Herald, 9 June 1893, p. 2; on 3 November the Herald published an article protesting against the state of the road.

2 Yass Courier, 27 August 1895, p. 2.

3 Yass Courier, 17 September 1895, p. 2.
concerned, the fact that the incident was reported at all is significant; thirty years earlier it would have been one of many such, and therefore unworthy of individual comment. Even with their obvious limitations, the roads of the nineties were generally much better than those of the sixties and seventies.

As in any other modern society, communication between people was more commonly achieved by means of the postal services than by personal visits, so the development of these services was of vital interest to the inhabitants of the region. As the post office-cum-general store could be the centre of a village or the meeting place for the scattered employees of a sheep station, and as stage coaches were often mail coaches at the same time, there was more to the mail than simply the transport of letters and packages. The post office, even where it was not also a general store, gradually acquired other functions. By the eighties it was usually a telegraph office as well as a post office, and was often a savings bank in addition. The first of these government savings banks was opened in 1871, and by 1875 there were already twenty four branches in the south east with almost a thousand depositors; ten years later there were forty five branches with 5,066 active accounts. By 1885 the banks were holding

1 The annual reports of the Postmaster General list these savings banks, together with the number of accounts open and the total credit balance at each branch.

almost £120,000 in trust for their depositors. When it is recalled that by the late eighties and early nineties these post and telegraph offices were also serving as the first public telephone offices, it is clear that they fulfilled in the nineties a very different and in many ways more important rôle than had been theirs in the sixties. True, there was less emphasis, at least in larger towns, on the post office as part of the business of the town store; postal business had become much too complex for such diversity of function in large centres. But the post office was, even more than the railway station, the place where contact was made with, in particular, Sydney.

Therefore by the turn of the century, although improvements were still necessary in the condition of some roads and bridges, and although people in some towns still felt the need of a railway, the basic transport system of south east New South Wales had been established. South coast contact with Sydney and Melbourne still depended on the sea,¹ as it would until the coming of the automobile and beyond, but for most of the rest of the region the railway was the most important form of transport. No part of the south east was excessively dependent on the roads; almost everywhere was within easy reach of the railway or the sea.

IV

There was one form of communication, quite different to those already discussed, which was essential to the development of social life in a nineteenth century community, one which itself depended upon the basic forms of transport as much as any individual did. For the spread

¹In 1883 two companies, the Tasman Steam Navigation Company and the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company, operated between Eden, Merimbula, Tathra and Sydney. They also travelled from the Twofold Bay ports to Tasmania. Bombala Herald, 5 May 1883, p. 1 (advertisements), p. 2 (article).
of information, and for the formation of a social identity, it was necessary that newspapers were universally available in the country; and not only the national, or more accurately colonial, papers like the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was important that local newspapers, containing principally items of local interest, should come into existence to serve local needs and demands.

As the first villages in the south east began to grow into towns various individuals of enterprise founded newspapers in them; similarly, mining centres quickly spawned their own papers, many of which collapsed with the decline of the gold field if not before. Even in the 1850s there were a few towns of sufficient size to support local newspapers. Of course, Goulburn, being the largest town, was among the first with the establishment of the *Goulburn Herald*. But Goulburn was by no means alone: the *Border Post* was founded in Albury in 1856, the *Yass Courier* commenced operations in 1857, and the *Wagga Wagga Express* and *Murrumbidgee District Advertiser* did so in the following year. These newspapers, based in towns of relatively large populations, proved very durable, all of them remaining in publication until well into the twentieth century. However, many of those founded in the sixties, when a large variety of papers attempted to establish themselves, failed to survive for more than a short period. For example, both the *Miner* and the *Burrangong Courier*, each serving the Burrangong gold field, passed out of existence in under two years, while two newspapers published at Eden in 1860 failed to reach even their first anniversaries. This type of experience was common to many.¹

¹E.g. The Moruya Messenger (1862-1863), Araluen Star (September 1863-July 1864), Burrangong Courier and Lambing Flat General Advertiser (March-November 1862) and Alpine Pioneer (Kiandra), founded in 1860, whose proprietor moved to Cooma to found the Manaro Mercury in 1862.
The sixties also witnessed the establishment of several newspapers which proved successful and permanent features of the local scene in various parts of the region. During that decade both Albury and Wagga acquired second newspapers,\(^1\) and the gold field settlement at Young, after several disappointments its first permanent one in the *Burrangong Argus*, which began publishing in 1864. One of the most important of these creations of the sixties was at Queanbeyan, where the remarkable Mr John Gale, a Methodist minister turned tutor, established a newspaper with the optimistic title of the *Golden Age* in 1860. The name was soon changed to the *Queanbeyan Age*, but Gale's radical opinions continued to find expression in it.\(^2\)

Already by the sixties, then, there were several newspapers serving the people of the south east, and as the population of the region increased so too did the number of newspapers. Goulburn and Young, like Wagga and Albury, acquired second newspapers at the same time as many smaller towns achieved their first. Cootamundra, Gundagai, Burrowa, Bega, Moruya, Crookwell and Tumbarumba were among the places to gain local papers of some permanence in the seventies and eighties; the process of foundation and collapse continued in other centres. By the nineties there was a paper giving local news and gossip in every part of the area.

These newspapers were not, of course, dailies. Many of them were weeklies,\(^3\) most, perhaps beginning publication on a weekly basis,\

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1. The *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* (1860), and the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* (1868).


3. For example the *Moruya Examiner* and *Bega Gazette*. 
were able to sustain two editions each week.\textsuperscript{1} It is very noteworthy that although published in a particular town and containing much of interest to residents of that town, these newspapers regarded themselves as catering for a much wider area than that of the immediate neighbourhood. Thus the \textit{Yass Courier}, which was published on Tuesdays and Fridays, claimed an extensive circulation in:

\begin{quote}
Yass, Goulburn, Gunning, Young, Grenfell, Murrumburrah, Marengo, Cootamundra, Bethungra, Junee, the Murrumbidgee, the Lachlan, Binalong, Burrowa, Tumut, Adelong, Gundagai, Queanbeyan, the Monara \textit{[sic]} Albury, Sydney, Melbourne, Wagga Wagga, Gundaroo, Beechworth, Collector, Tarcutta, Deniliquin, Jugiong, \\&c., \\&c.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

This may or may not have been an extravagant claim, but it is certain that the \textit{Courier} did have a much wider circulation than might be expected of a local newspaper, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that others reached a readership beyond the merely local. This conclusion is supported by the substantial reporting in the \textit{Courier} of sporting events, agricultural shows and court proceedings from other country centres like Goulburn, Wagga, Gundagai and Cootamundra, and the occasional reporting of these from even further afield. If there were no circulation in these other centres it would hardly have been reasonable to publish these items. At any rate, newspapers from one locality were read in others through the reading rooms of the Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes if in no other way. Even in the very small settlement of Bungendore the School of Arts received, in addition to Sydney periodicals, newspapers from Goulburn, Queanbeyan and Cootamundra, all supplied free of charge by the

\textsuperscript{1}For example, the Wagga Express, Burrangong Argus and Yass Courier. By the later years of the century the Goulburn and Albury papers were issued three times a week.

\textsuperscript{2}This claim was on the front page of most issues of the paper in 1885.
newspaper offices themselves.\(^1\) In 1897 the larger Mechanics' Institute at Yass received the Maitland Mercury, Queanbeyan Age, Queanbeyan Observer, Burrangong Argus, Wagga Wagga Advertiser, Yass Courier, Yass Tribune, Burrowa News, Dubbo Liberal and Junee Southern Cross.\(^2\) If these two very different institutions were typical, then country newspapers did indeed circulate widely, and could be said to be in competition with each other even when published in different towns.

Having said that local newspapers were proliferating during the period, and that they set their sights more widely than the immediate local market, it remains to make some analysis of their content, of the services they provided for their readers.

First, and most obviously, they provided news: local, regional, colonial, intercolonial and even international news were all represented within their pages. For the supply of this news they were dependent to a high degree upon improvements in other forms of communication; the importance of the telegraph to country editors can hardly be overrated. In the sixties the telegraph brought publishable details of the movements of bushrangers and of the passage through Parliament of the Public Schools Act. In the eighties General Gordon's progress to and murder at Khartoum were followed as avidly in the country press as in the city. Again, the trial and execution of Ned Kelly received prominent coverage, at first by telegraph, later by the reprinting entire of accounts from the Melbourne newspapers. Later still there was great interest in the telegraphed reports of the South African war, describing the courageous

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\(^1\) Bungendore School of Arts, Minute Book, 1888-1908, meetings of 31 May 1892 and 8 August 1899. ANL MS 663.

\(^2\) Yass Courier, 21 January 1898, p. 2.
deeds of the New South Wales Volunteer Corps (which raised many recruits from country towns). Occasionally, too, as if to substantiate these descriptions, a letter home from one of these "brave boys" would be published.

More plentiful than these dramatic reports of events in the wider world were those recounting local occasions. There were regular reports of monthly or annual meetings of local bodies such as hospital boards, town councils, churches and Mechanics' Institutes; court reports from the Petty Sessions, Magistrates' Court or Quarter Sessions included the full reproduction of evidence (except in cases involving delicate matters, when certain passages would be omitted); and, in the appropriate seasons, cricket and football matches were replayed, athletics sports and horse races rerun in detail surprising to the reader of the twentieth century press. In addition to these reports, other minor items of purely local interest were plentiful: lists of impoundings and of selections taken up or forfeited, agricultural and pastoral prices, rainfall and the like. Visits to the town concerned by important people such as a bishop or a politician, or by a circus or other travelling entertainment, would also rate a mention. Another form of communication of local news was the Correspondent's Report. Correspondents from smaller centres within the general ambience of a town from which a newspaper was published would contribute, with varying regularity, columns dealing with local matters in these centres. Thus, for example, the Yass Courier had frequent reports from Gunning, Gundaroo, Binalong and Murrumburrah.

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1 For example charges of rape or indecent assault.

2 The progress of intercolonial matches and of tours of or by England was also closely charted, usually by telegraph.
occasional ones from Brindabella, Dalton, Yass River and other less populous centres. These reports would generally repeat the same kind of news as that reported from Yass itself: sport, the courts, cultural and social activities, unusual occurrences. They thus made the paper more truly serve the district rather than the town.

Second, the newspapers were the main advertising medium in the nineteenth century, local country newspapers as much as city ones. Indeed this function may have been even more important than that of supplying the news. At times in the 1890s advertising in the Yass Courier occupied nearly four pages of the six in each issue. This was not only display advertising, though display advertising was the most common form (and one in which quite remarkable ingenuity in design was shown); increasingly advertisements were inserted at the bottom of news columns, sometimes in smaller type than the news features, sometimes disguised as new stories themselves, complete with headline and a leading in piece which might easily deceive the reader into thinking he was reading a news item. A wide variety of things was advertised, from the recent acquisitions of the local general store to a dramatic performance, from hotel accommodation to the latest patent medicine or even sexual tonic, available by postal subscription only from Sydney or Melbourne. Truly varied were the advertisements and advertising features in these newspapers. And of course it was important that this should be so, for in these years there were few other ways in which people might learn of the arrival of the latest stocks of merchandise from Sydney or of the impending social, cultural or sporting event which had been arranged. As Gordon Buxton has commented,¹ "local news, and particularly local advertisement,

remained the main interest for readers".

The third main service they provided was the least important in a practical sense, though, if the current craze for light reading as displayed in the circulation of novels from libraries is taken into account,\(^1\) it may have been the most popular of all. Entertainment was provided by the serialization of popular fiction and by the recounting in the news columns of sensational tales from all over the world. Most stories were published in serial form, often running to fifty "chapters"; they were usually romantic adventures or cautionary tales of love affairs gone wrong,\(^2\) but occasionally a story of more enduring appeal might appear. In the eighties the Yass Courier published a much cut version of *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen in about forty "chapters", each covering less than a page of the newspaper.

The attraction of editors towards sensational items was truly remarkable. Calamities, abductions and elopements, cases of cruel assault, and most of all executions, were reported in detail and in the most graphic language. In 1864 the editor of the *Border Post* commented on the English mail\(^3\) that "the home intelligence is dull as ditch-water, nothing even very atrocious having occurred", except for a triple murder in a London cab which received full coverage in his news columns. Stories of horrible and extraordinary deaths by accident, suicide or murder were

\(^1\)See below, chapter 8.

\(^2\)Typical was "All's Well That Ends Well", which ran in the Goulburn Herald from 24 March until 5 May 1899. Young love seemed to be thwarted by the impoverishment of an otherwise eligible suitor for the hand of the daughter of an English noble family, whose mother designed to marry her to a nasty French aristocrat. The pair eloped, and after many adventures found happiness in wedded bliss and financial security (through a timely inheritance).

repeated with great care in almost every issue of the newspapers, and the accounts of criminal executions almost always described every muscular contraction of the unfortunate victims. Such accounts were heavily moralistic in nature, for they always contained an assessment of the state of mind of the condemned man, noting with approval any sign of admission of guilt, repentance for the crime, and (perhaps to salve the conscience of the society perpetrating the execution) any indication from him that he believed he deserved this most awful of punishments. While the publication of articles of this sort was no doubt intended to point a moral lesson to the readers, it is impossible to explain the prevalence of such items except as a sort of gruesome entertainment. Remembering that these were decades in which sensational novels attained a high degree of popularity and in which, for example, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it is easy to extend the Victorians' enjoyment of the macabre from fiction to fact.

One final feature of note in the contents of these country newspapers was their dependence upon each other and upon Sydney and Melbourne newspapers for much of their copy. Each one regularly reprinted items originally published elsewhere, usually (though not always) acknowledging the sources from which the items had been culled. This practice was not limited to country newspapers, or even to Australian ones, for it was common in Britain and elsewhere at the period. There is,

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1 In 1868, for instance, the Goulburn Herald alleged plagiarism against the short lived Anglican newspaper, the Southern Observer in respect of articles referring to the proceedings of the diocesan Synod then in progress. R.T. Wyatt, *The History of the Diocese of Goulburn* (Sydney, 1937) pp. 129-130.

2 In July 1866 the Tumut and Adelong Times made acknowledgements to twenty nine country and eight city newspapers as well as the London Times, the Times of India and five papers from New Zealand.
though, some importance to be attached to the country newspapers' reliance on their rivals for news of events occurring only a short distance away.¹

Of the various functions performed by the local newspapers, the most important was their encouragement of the growth of a local identity, partly through their reporting of local news, partly through their exhortations to the locals on a variety of topics. The editors of the *Yass Courier* continually upbraided the people of the town for their lack of local pride, for their lack of enthusiasm in support of local enterprises. Through caustic editorials² and through short paragraphs evincing astonishment at lack of interest in local societies the *Courier* stimulated the revival of the Yass Agricultural and Pastoral Association in the early seventies; there can be no other explanation for its sudden reappearance after several dormant years, just after the *Courier* 's campaign. Twenty years later it was the turn of the cricketers of the town to undergo similar treatment, and at other times the topics of action varied from the apparently failing Mechanics' Institute to the condition of the roads in the town. It is difficult to imagine that any settlement greater in size than a relatively small village could develop a social identity of its own without a newspaper to act as a catalyst to action and as a forum for debate. The growth of these newspapers not only informed the people what was going on around them but also stimulated their thoughts and gave them a sense of unity. In this context the work of inspectors of schools³ assumes a greater importance than ever. The

¹The *Yass Courier* frequently reprinted articles from newspapers published as close as Queanbeyan, Burrowa, Goulburn and Gundagai, in addition to those from further afield.

²For example that of 30 May 1863.

³See chapter 5 above.
development of a social identity depended upon the expansion of literacy which brought these newspapers within the understanding of as large a proportion of the population as possible; for this reason, as well as for the improvement which he hoped they would obtain throughout life, Inspector Maynard\(^1\) chose well in his assessment of the minimum level of education which pupils ought to reach before leaving school — to "read sufficiently well to take an interest in newspapers and the books that come in their way..."

V

Briefly, these were the main improvements in transport and communications in the south east during the last forty years of the nineteenth century: first the rapid spread of the telegraph, later that of the railways and postal services, and throughout the period the gradual development of roads, major and minor, and of the local country press (though country people continued to subscribe to Sydney newspapers and magazines). These things were important in themselves, but much more important in the effects they had on a number of aspects of bush life, both economic and social in nature.

The most immediate and most obvious benefits gained from progress in communications were economic. The possibilities in this field were realized by the people of the south east even before the advances had become a fact, as is evident from their agitation during the seventies and eighties, especially with regard to the building of the railways. For example, the direction of the railway line from Goulburn to Cooma was the subject of much petitioning. The people in the Monaro were simply

\(^1\)See p. 186, above.
desperate to see the railway built, without having any great preference as to the route it should take; those further north were deeply concerned that the railway should pass through their own particular area. The main rivals were the town of Braidwood, where 410 signatures were found for a petition, and the farming district north and east of Canberra, where 333 people signed. In the event, neither party was completely satisfied, as the line went to Queanbeyan via Lake Bathurst and Bungendore, thus falling about half way between the two petitioned for. The motives of the petitioners were simple. They wanted the economic advantage of quick and easy contact with Sydney, which would result in an expansion of the market for local produce and an improvement in the competitiveness of local producers through a massive reduction in the cost of transporting their goods.

The prospects for such a reduction in costs had been demonstrated as early as 1873, just four years after the opening of the railway to Goulburn, when a parliamentary report stated that the average cost of transporting one ton of goods from Goulburn to Sydney was in 1871 £2-8-7, whereas seven years earlier it had been (by road) £3-15-0; furthermore in 1864 the journey had taken, on average, seven and a half days, yet in 1871 it was accomplished by rail in fourteen house. In 1875 railway authorities

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rammed home their point still more forcibly by publishing a table comparing transport rates for the carriage of goods between certain places. This showed, for example, that the rates for the hundred and twenty three miles from Goulburn to Cooma were £4-10-0 (stage coach) per ton and £2-12-0 (rail) per ton; also that it cost only £3-3-3 to transport a ton of goods by rail from Gunning to Wagga Wagga as against the £7-0-0 of the stage coach. It may well be that other overland forms of goods transport were less expensive than the stage coach, but it is unlikely that they were as cheap as the railways, and certain that they took much longer in transit.

Part of the reason for the lower charges made by the railway, especially after its construction as far as Wagga and Albury, was the increasing competition, not between rail and road, but between the railway systems of New South Wales and Victoria, for the trade of the Riverina, where the earlier arrival of the Victorian lines had given that colony a temporary commercial supremacy. From the end of the seventies there developed an economic war between the two systems as Sydney and Melbourne each strove to achieve a more permanent supremacy in trade with the region. To this end a rebate system was applied by railways in both colonies, making transport of goods from outlying regions to the capitals very much cheaper than transport from closer areas. Thus, the normal rate for the distance from Sydney to Wagga which was split into eight scales according

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2This is discussed at length in R.H.T. Smith's thesis cited elsewhere. It would be pointless for me to conduct as detailed investigation as he has into the problem, therefore, as my impressions from other sources largely reflect his findings, I accept them and give here a brief summary of this part of his argument.
to the value per ton of the goods carried, was from 32/7 per ton (or 1.24d per ton mile) to 232/6 per ton (9.02d per ton mile). However, with the rebate offered by the railways these scales fell to 26/2 per ton (1.01d per ton mile) rising to 150/11 per ton (3.18d per ton mile). Such savings were indeed lucrative to the producers who lived in the regions where they applied.

The transport improvements, notably the railways, thus offered to the growing country population far greater opportunities for economic progress, and for participation in the growth of trade both within Australia and in the world outside than had previously existed. Not surprisingly, they were quick to take advantage of these opportunities. The new railway lines were used very heavily in the eighties and early nineties: passenger tickets issued at stations in the south east increased in number from 12,952 in 1875 to 81,680 in 1880 and to 173,530 in 1892/1893. It is of course impossible to say how many of these journeys were local or short distance ones, how many were long trips, but if it is assumed that the proportion of short to long journeys remained reasonably constant then these figures give some sort of image of the volume of traffic being carried. More important economically than passenger traffic was goods; for these figures are also available. The figures given are, in the case of general goods, the tonnage outward and inward at each station, in the case of wool, the number of bales outward and


2 These and other figures are my own calculations from the official figures given for every station in the colony in the annual reports on the railways printed in the parliamentary papers. After 1887 the year on which the reports were based was that ending 30 June.
inward. It is impossible to tell what proportion of general goods travelled internally within the region, and what was involved in external trade. It is, however, noticeable that throughout the seventies and eighties the aggregate of these figures for tonnage inward exceeded that of tonnage outward, and that after 1890 the position was generally reversed. This is easily explicable from the fact that during the seventies and eighties large quantities of material for the building of the railways themselves were being imported to the region. It is feasible, though impossible to tell, that the situation in the nineties would also have been that in the earlier period without the influence of railway materials; the south east may have been a natural exporter rather than an importer.

In one commodity, wool, this certainly was the case. Wool growers benefited from the introduction of the railways more than most. Their sales depended on early arrival at the market, their profits (in an industry of notoriously fluctuating fortunes) at least partly upon cheap transport to the market.¹

In the sixties the wool growers in the south east (except for some in the Riverina who used overland or riverboat transport, to Albury or Echuca, for transit to Melbourne) had to depend on overland travel to Sydney itself or to the coast for shipping to Sydney. In the early seventies those close enough to Goulburn used that station or Marulan as a railhead, and as the line extended westward and southward more and more towns became available as despatch points, the overland trip becoming increasingly shorter as time passed. The opening of the railway to Young in 1885 gave the pastoralists of the Lachlan district their own station

¹The railway, especially the line joining the southern and western lines and the spur line to Tumut and Gundagai, also ensured adequate fodder supplies in time of drought. (D.N. Jeans, op. cit., pp. 187-188.)
(though Bathurst did have a line earlier), and the building of the line from Queanbeyan to Cooma between 1887 and 1889 did likewise for the Monaro. The quantity of wool loaded at stations in the south east increased from 20,235 bales in 1875 to 70,403 in 1887,¹ and to 113,971 in 1893/1894. Most of these were presumably for sale in Sydney, though a large number of bales (ranging from 6,225 in 1887 to 22,042 in 1892/1893) were received at Albury station, probably for export to Victoria and sale in Melbourne; it is possible that most of these came from the Riverina proper, and not from the south east as I have defined it.

Wool growers also derived much benefit from improved postal and telecommunications systems, which brought them closer to market conditions in Sydney, Melbourne and even London, thus facilitating their task of deciding when to continue offering wool for sale in Australia, when to ship it to London unsold in the hope of better prices there.² Of course wool growers were not the only ones to gain from these and other improvements. Farmers and cattle raisers derived similar advantages. Henry Edwards of Bibbenluke, who raised both sheep and cattle, regularly sent livestock to other centres by rail, on occasion even chartering a special train for the purpose; his must have been a typical experience. The journey by rail could, of course, be broken to permit the resting and feeding of the animals. In 1897 Edwards sent twenty show bullocks by rail to Melbourne for sale. They travelled from Cooma to Goulburn, where

¹There was a decline between 1880 and 1882, mainly in the stations closest to Young, so this may have been due to a diversion of traffic from the Lachlan district to Bathurst.

²This element is often found in the diaries of Edward Pratt and in the letters of Henry Edwards. These same improvements also permitted Pratt to keep in close touch with events at Myalla while on an extended visit to England during the eighties.
they waited for a day, then to Wodonga, where they were rested in a hired paddock (Edwards wanted one with fresh grass or lucerne hay) before completing the journey.\(^1\)

The very links with the outside world which brought the chance of prosperity to these people also brought the threat of failure. The livelihoods of the inhabitants of the south east became increasingly dependent on the tantrums of the national, and even of the world, economy as contact between them grew. This was most plainly the case in the wool industry, where prosperity utterly depended on the international price, but it was just as true in other fields of activity. The extent of the vulnerability of the wool growers was demonstrated in the mid 1880s, just at the moment when the railways were reaching the heart of the wool country. The years 1885 and 1886 saw a terrible drought in the region\(^2\) coinciding with a sharp fall in wool prices. At the end of 1885 Edward Pratt wrote sadly in his diary, reviewing the year:

> The disastrous state of the wool market and the equally disastrous drought have given me many fits of anxiety, & even despondence [sic] — Can I live on the wreck if it be a wreck?\(^3\)

During 1886 he reported that great economies had been carried out, even to the extent of cancelling the *Manaro Mercury*, in an effort to save money.\(^4\) His was not the only property to suffer. During 1885 the Roman Catholic priest at Wagga sent a bleak report to Bishop Lanigan:

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2. Described in Edward Pratt's diary as he, in England, received regular reports from his brother Samuel on Myalla.

3. 31 December 1885.

4. Various entries, March and April 1886.
Wagga is gone down very much in a financial point of view. Half the shops in the town are shut up & the other half do very little business. The good times for Wagga are past & it is doubtful if they will ever return.

Perhaps he was a little too pessimistic; however, there can be no doubt that the situation throughout the region was very precarious. Two years later the committee of St. Paul's Anglican church in Cooma lamented a falling off in contributions, attributable in part to "the great financial depression after the terrible drought and fall in wool of 1885-6, which crippled the district very much". While natural disasters like drought continued to be of vital importance in determining the economic condition of primary producers and, indeed, of everyone else through the pre-eminent position of primary production in the regional economy, the closer proximity to and increasing dependence upon external factors acted to compound their effects. Further, the 1890s demonstrated that external factors could now supplant internal ones as determinants of prosperity. In these years the financial depression originating in the cities hit quickly and hard at the country as well. This might, of course, have happened without the advances in communications which had by the nineties brought city and country very much closer together, but it is at least arguable that the greater interdependence between them which had resulted had also diminished the independence and self sufficiency of the country districts, and rendered them more vulnerable to events beyond the control of their inhabitants.

One final area in which improving communications affected the economy of the region was through the provision of employment. This

1 Father P. Dunne, Wagga Wagga, to Bishop Lanigan, 4 December 1885. Lanigan Papers.

2 St. Paul's, Cooma, Annual report for 1887, in Account Book, 1877-1894.
obviously occurred in the short term during the period when roads were being formed for the first time, bridges built, and telegraph and railway lines constructed. Such employment could only be temporary; more permanent were the jobs provided for the maintenance of roads and bridges, for the running of the railways. Most stations required a small permanent staff, but larger ones could and did employ a sufficient number of people to make a noticeable impact upon the employment situation as a whole in the town. This aspect of the effects of the transport improvements is worth mentioning, but was only of marginal economic importance in comparison with their other effects, both positive and negative.

Closer contact with Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere also provoked social changes, less tangible perhaps than the economic ones, but of considerable moment nonetheless. One of the most important of these was the greater awareness of the outside world generated by the reporting of external events in the local press. The element of entertainment in such reporting was very obvious, for example, in the accounts of New South Wales versus Victoria cricket matches, but there was more than entertainment involved. Even reports of these matches were an indication that New South Welshmen in the country were identifying with their colony in the rivalry with Victoria as much as were those in the city. More important was the great interest in overseas matters, especially where war was involved. The country people were strong believers in their British connection; even the Irish paid lip service to it, even if their education tended to inculcate an entirely different sentiment. During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 the Burrangong Chronicle insisted that,

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1Examples of such towns are Goulburn, Junee Junction and Wagga Wagga.
though Australia was remote from the scene, her eyes were fixed upon it, "and any advantage gained by either Russian or Turk affects every inhabitant"; British (and hence Australian) interests were those of Turkey, whose successes were "hailed...with enthusiasm" as rendering the necessity of British intervention in defence of Suez less likely. The most impressive demonstration of these feelings came in 1885, when public meetings were held in support of the Patriotic Fund, which was to send the New South Wales Volunteer Corps to the Soudan. The meeting at Yass was attended by the Mayor and addressed by Canon Faunce, the Anglican minister, who praised the government's action in raising the force, "one of the grandest actions that could have been carried out by any Government". Although the Mayor was disappointed at the attendance, of about a hundred people, at the meeting, by its close sixty eight people had enrolled in the Yass Volunteer Corps. This was one example of the patriotic (British) feeling in the country. Another was the universal practice of declaring the Prince of Wales' birthday a public holiday upon which it became traditional that a variety of organizations held picnics and athletics sports.

Apart from the awareness of the world overseas created by the spread of communications, particularly the local press, there was also an increasing interest in matters of colonial importance and intercolonial importance beyond local issues. This is shown by the increasing ferocity with which elections to parliament were fought, the campaigns often becoming very personal and vindictive in the eighties. Partly this is explained by the controversy over the respective merits of free trade and

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1 Editorial, Burrangong Chronicle, 18 August 1877, p. 2.

2 Yass Courier, 20 March 1885, p. 2.
protection, which were felt to be matters of local concern as well as being issues affecting the colony as a whole, but partly it must have been because of the increasing public contact with the world of politics through the pages of their newspapers. This is not to deny that by the fifties there were many country people who were politically aware, but the growth of communications and the existence in the sixties and seventies of two politically explosive issues (the Education Question and the Land Question) undoubtedly led to the widening of interest in politics. In addition to the effects of the newspapers on this development, the progressive ease of transport permitted national figures such as Sir Henry Parkes to visit country towns (in the eighties there was even a visit by J.E. Redmond, the Irish Member of Parliament, to Goulburn\(^1\)); such visits can only have stimulated a consciousness of the external world among the inhabitants of the outback. These visits would have been unlikely before the construction of the railway.

At the same time as they increased awareness of matters beyond those of purely local importance, the local newspapers in the growing towns contributed greatly to the development of a sense of community among the townspeople. Moreover, the attention paid by the local press to the surrounding country districts encouraged a view of each town as the nucleus of a wider local community, a view which was supported by the inclusion of country districts within the parish centred on the town, by the participation of country people in societies based on the town, and by the regular sporting contact between the townspeople and the inhabitants of the rural hinterland.

\(^1\)Express, 12 January 1884, p. 3.
As educational improvements increased literacy and by implication the circulation of newspapers, so the newspapers (and other forms of communication) aided the educationists by making a wider variety of cultural opportunities available in the country. Apart from the limited improving function of the newspapers, transport improvements allowed many city, and even foreign, lecturers and entertainers to visit the country towns, especially those on the main railway line.\(^1\) They further permitted, through the operation of excursion trains, large numbers of country people to visit Sydney, whether to participate in the cultural life of the city or simply to enjoy the beaches or race tracks of the metropolis.

All of these changes combined with the spread of education to modify people's attitudes towards a wide variety of issues. In this process the newspapers' own attitudes were important, for many editorials and slanted reports assumed a general acceptance of the values of gentility, though few were as explicit as the new editor of the *Bega Gazette*, who stated in his first leader that he aimed at respectability, not brilliance; "miserable personalities, satire upon private individuals, abuse generally, we shall strive to keep out of our columns".\(^2\) He, at least, was one editor hoping to influence, by example, his readers to be sober, polite and respectable.

Education and communications were both catalysts for change in the last forty years of the nineteenth century. There also existed a variety of local and regional institutions, both

\(^1\)For an expansion of this point, see chapter 8, where cultural events will be discussed in greater detail.

public and private, which tended to promote change in some way, or in some cases which exerted a more conservative influence. It is necessary for a fuller knowledge of the society of the south east to understand the rôles they played in its formation.
Chapter 7

Order and Disorder: Institutional Influences on Society

I

As the nineteenth century progressed Australian national feeling tended to become more specifically and even aggressively Australian, as opposed to British, in character. The sentimental attachment of the early settlers to Great Britain was replaced in the minds of many by an almost violent rejection of the British (or at least the English), and a contempt for many aspects of the English way of life. Perhaps few were as extreme as James Weir, of Melbourne, whose poem "Australia" was published in the *Hummer* in 1892:

Now let each true Australian show
His title to the name,
And let each heart with fervour glow
Of patriotic flame,
A cheer, my lads, a lusty cheer
For this our native land,
And sound it forth both loud and clear,
That all may understand.

We'll not be ruled by aliens,
We'll own no foreign sway,
Australia for Australians,
With a HIP HIP HOORAY.

No distant Monarch's delegate,
No lordling from abroad
Shall batten here in flunkied state —
A Todies' [sic] demi-god;
We'll have no foreign figurehead,
No British Nominee,
But a True Australian in his stead
Our President shall be.

Many people, if less extreme, would have supported the nationalism which inspired the poem. Yet there remained among Australian habits and attitudes...

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1These verses are excerpts from the poem, published in the *Hummer* on 16 January 1892, p. 3.
much that was derivative of the British heritage. The paradoxical relationship between Australians and British was such that many of those who were most scornful of the English were the same people who were the strongest patriots towards Queen and Empire. This patriotism was already well established by the sixties and seventies, and it persisted into the late century.\(^1\) The Queen's Birthday was everywhere kept as a public holiday;\(^2\) indignation was widespread at any diplomatic or military setbacks received by Britain. So intense a personal loyalty did Victoria command that in 1878 a ministerial deputation at the opening of the railway to Junee was castigated for its conduct at a banquet given after the ceremony by the Roman Catholic priest at Wagga. "They were humiliated in the sight of the whole country...by the studied omission of the prime toast, dear to all loyal hearts, 'The Queen';\(^3\) their reputation in the writer's eyes was finally destroyed when, insensible to the slur thus cast on their sovereign, one of them had the temerity to reply to the substitute toast, "Her Majesty's Government in New South Wales".

Attachment to traditional British values went far beyond simple loyalty to the Crown. The ideals held by New South Welshmen in the later nineteenth century were also those of the British. Like most Englishmen, many of the people of New South Wales wished to contribute towards and to live within a "respectable" society, whatever that might be. To an Englishman, "respectability" was:

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1 Except among the Irish who were much more fiercely attached to the "Old Country" and its quarrels than any expatriot Englishman. There was even a Home Rule Association in Gundagai in 1887. (Australian Town and Country Journal, 30 July 1887, p. 223.)

2 On her Jubilee in 1887 children's treats, special church services, balls, firework displays, sports and parades took place all over the colony.

3 Australian Churchman, 18 July 1878, p. 42 (leading article).
A style of living understood to show a proper respect for morals and morality; usually it meant some degree of formal Christianity, but you could be respectable and value your respectability without being Christian.¹

This definition would have been acceptable in south east New South Wales, though here the link between Christianity and respectability was if anything more tenuous than in England.

This ideal of "respectability" was actively promoted. Churchmen hoped that their efforts to supply the bush population with the ordinances of religion would be rewarded with the advance of Christian respectability; educationists trusted that their schools would instil respectability into the rising generation; newspaper editors felt they could help to set a tone in their own towns that would recall more "civilized" surroundings.

But there were other institutions at work which supported that same principle. These, too, despite their many differences of attitude, opinion and approach, worked towards the end of reforming the rough country society into one more congenial to the cultivated city dwellers who were coming more and more into contact with it.

II

The first institution to affect the individual was the one which influenced him more than any other: it was the home. In the nineteenth century the home and family life were almost unchallenged as the accepted centres of social activity. In Great Britain the home was proclaimed as "at once the finest source of human virtue and the firmest foundation-stone of social order",² even if the prevailing social

²Ibid., p. 277.
conditions tended to invalidate this claim. Similarly in Australia the home and family occupied a high position in the theory of social order and progress, and similarly in Australia circumstances often conspired to minimize the value of the theory, at any rate in the great cities, where the living conditions of the poor and the demands of social life upon the rich limited the attention that parents could devote to the raising of their children. It was in the country districts such as the south east that conditions became most conducive to the development of a genuine family life.

Of course, initially these conditions were not present. The development of the newly explored country was primarily a task for men, hence relatively few women ventured into the south east during the early years of settlement; those who did found bush life almost unbearably strange and hard. Therefore until settlement was well advanced most of the population of the south east was male. By the time of the census of 1861, when settlement (at least in the northern part of the region) had already been in progress for forty years, women still formed only thirty-six per cent of the population of the region. However, one trend which was to continue for the rest of the century was already evident; there were more women in the towns and villages than in the bush. In the towns and villages forty five per cent of the total population were women. As numbers in the south east grew, the proportion of women in town populations remained noticeably higher than that in country districts, until by 1901, although over the whole region men still outnumbered women, women were actually in a slight majority in the municipalities.

1 The experiences of Miles Franklin's Johanna Delacy in the early chapters of All That Swagger (Sydney, 1936) may be taken as representative of those of many young wives, brought by eager young husbands to an unfamiliar and probably frightening countryside, far from the kinds of civilization they had been accustomed to.
Table 7

Percentages of Males and Females in south east New South Wales, 1861-1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>64.03</td>
<td>56.66</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>53.64</td>
<td>53.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>35.97</td>
<td>43.34</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>46.36</td>
<td>46.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total numbers</td>
<td>61,919</td>
<td>78,457</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>132,559</td>
<td>144,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Towns and Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>54.95</td>
<td>53.85</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>50.18</td>
<td>49.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>45.05</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>49.82</td>
<td>50.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total numbers</td>
<td>12,938</td>
<td>23,987</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>43,161</td>
<td>47,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>66.43</td>
<td>57.88</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>33.57</td>
<td>42.12</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total numbers</td>
<td>48,981</td>
<td>54,470</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1891 and 1901 figures refer only to municipalities.

From these figures it is clear that there was in the 1860s a substantial increase in the number of women living in the country districts of the south east. During that decade, more than any other, the percentage of women in the total population underwent a considerable increase. It is at least plausible that the 1860s were the years which witnessed the end of the pioneering phase in the development of the south east. For in these years not only did the proportion of women in society increase, but also the Christian churches all achieved a measure of local or regional independence, communications improved with the expansion of the telegraph system and the arrival of the railway at Goulburn, and the passing of the Public Schools Act made possible the establishment of large numbers of new schools in country districts.

¹My calculations from census statistics.
The nature of life in south east New South Wales during the 1860s was as yet hardly of a type which would facilitate the growth of an ideal family life. Even in those parts which had undergone some sophistication since first settlement the physical conditions in which people lived were uncomfortable, necessitating the expense of a great deal of labour in the attempt to bring a little ease into their lives; in more remote areas the environment was rougher still. Work dominated the lives of most people; new arrivals almost invariably had to clear their own land, construct fences and dams and build their own homes, living under canvas or in the open until the buildings were ready for occupation. Other than the houses of the rich, few were very grand, most being built of bark stripped from nearby trees, though by the 1880s more permanent structures built of brick or stone had rendered the bark huts obsolete, at least in well settled areas. Already by 1872 it could be written that "the homesteads of Manaro are in general very comfortable, neat and substantial — all of them most hospitable — and some of them replete with the conveniences and adornments of the most refined life", almost all being single storeyed cottages. These were, of course, the homes of the station owners; more typical were the huts which housed their men. For example, in the 1850s Samuel Shumack's father came to Duntroon as a station hand, living with his wife, two sons and two daughters in a two roomed slab and

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1. Where they actually owned their own land. Most people, of course, were employees on stations, but they, too, would often have to build their own huts, as would many townspeople.


3. A. McFarland, Illawarra and Manaro (Sydney, 1872) p. 102. In the same year a travelling correspondent described Mahratta station, near Bombala, as bearing evidence "not only of comfort but of luxury". ("A Tour to the South", Australian Town and Country Journal, 13 January 1872, p. 42.)
bark construction for which he had to make all of the household furniture in the evenings. 1 By the seventies matters had improved, at least on some stations, when Henry Edwards was able to offer "a good 4 Roomed hut" for the accommodation of a married man to be groom and gardener at Bibbenluke. 2

Even in the sixties those who lived in towns like Goulburn or Albury could expect their accommodation to be of a more substantial nature than the bark huts so common in the country and in smaller towns, but inhabitants of gold fields might live in more squalid conditions still, as their living quarters were generally of a temporary nature. At Young in 1864 private dwellings were most unpretentious in character:

There are a few neat weather-boarded cottages, but the great bulk of the buildings are the old style of diggings edifices, of the usual slab, board, or corrugated iron build, but patched up, decorated, and improved upon, as long tenancy begets the feeling of permanence. 3

By 1870 at least one gold field had become more settled in character. At Araluen the regular employment of men in company mines had resulted in the retention there of a more fixed and settled population, with the result that their residences were of a more "substantial and permanent character" than usual on a gold field. 4

As the century progressed even those living away from townships came to enjoy a modicum of comfort. Homesteads grew in size, improved in

1 Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 6. See also John Martineau, Letters From Australia (London, 1869) p. 124.


3 Yass Courier, 13 January 1864, p. 4. (Quoting the Sydney Morning Herald.)

quality, at least for those with some land of their own.¹ Miles Franklin recalled how this process came about for her family. Unlike many men, who took their wives to a two roomed stringybark hut while they (and perhaps their brothers) constructed a more permanent dwelling, her father had not taken his bride to their new home until the house was complete. The first, earth floored, building became the kitchen and store room, situated at a distance from the main house in case of fire.

The house proper would grow..., and when the end room fell to the bigger girls, another was added for the boys, and yet another for visitors. The veranda would stretch in accordance to be blocked at the ends by tiny rooms. Later these would serve as the station post office or office.²

The pressure of work, so great in the sixties, began to decline thereafter as the heaviest of tasks were completed and as farmers took advantage of the increased availability of labour saving machinery. Even in the 1860s threshing machines were in use in the vicinity of Canberra and Queanbeyan,³ and in 1878 the first reaping machine had been successfully tested by the Canberra postmaster;⁴ at the Industrial Exhibition held by the Albury and Border Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1879 there were examples of reapers and binders, strippers, double furrow ploughs, winnowing machines and windmills.⁵

¹I cannot find many descriptions of the conditions of shepherds or station hands after the seventies, but it is reasonable to conclude that their accommodation must also have improved, though probably less than their employers' did.

²Miles Franklin, Childhood at Brindabella (Sydney, 1963) p. 3.

³Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁵Advertisement, Border Post, 12 July 1879, p. 3.
During the remainder of the century these and other devices eased the work load on the people of the south east, therefore they began to find more time for other pursuits.

By the eighties, then, three of the prime requisites for the existence of family life of the ideal Victorian pattern were present in south east New South Wales. There was, especially in the townships, an approximate balance in numbers between men and women; the standard of accommodation was generally more comfortable than it had been twenty years previously; and there was more leisure time available than had once been the case.

It is difficult to assess the importance of the family structure in the south east. In the first place there may have been differences between the towns and the country, and between both of these and the settled gold fields; again, it may have varied between the diverse ranks of society. On these points explicit evidence is hard to find. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some judgements.

Among the relatively prosperous, such as the owners or managers of pastoral properties, the position of the family was of great importance throughout the period. Family traditions evolved, certain families like the Ryries of Michelago, the Campbells of Duntroon, or the Faithfulls of Springfield, near Goulburn, achieving a social status roughly analogous to that of the county families in England. Members of such families, and of others perhaps less august, were trained to fill the social position

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1 The McLaurins of Yarra Yarra station, near Germanton, may be likened to the Scottish lairds, having emigrated from that country. The social prestige of such families as these was sufficient for their weddings to reach the society pages of Sydney magazines. For example, in 1883 a "fashionable" wedding took place at Yass between the manager of the Oriental Bank at Young, Mr C.W. Russell, and Miss Emily Campbell of Fifield station. (Bulletin, 22 September 1883, p. 16.)
expected of them. Educated either at boarding schools or at home by tutors like the seventeen year old Eleanor Mary Bowler,¹ who taught the young Cliffords of Rose Valley, near Cooma, they were given experience in property management and in social life before entering into the family's business on their own account. Thus developed dynasties of pastoral families, who often (like the Ryries) followed each other into local or colonial politics as well as into the social pattern of their families.

Family life at the other end of the social scale, among small free selectors and station labourers, also maintained considerable ties. This could hardly have been otherwise in the sixties and seventies, when transport was difficult, thus largely confining poor people to the vicinity of their homes. The pressures of work during these years, compelling many parents to keep their children from school to assist on the farm,² must also have increased the importance of home life to these people, though as compulsory education took effect the relative weight of school influence grew in comparison to that of home and family. Whereas members of prosperous families could obtain a good education at home through the services of a tutor, like the Dawson family in the nineties, or at a school in Sydney or Melbourne (Edward Pratt's sons all attended Sydney Grammar School), and whereas they could visit other families both in the country and in the city (for example, Pratt regularly travelled to and from Sydney, and Ida Dawson spent a holiday with a friend in Pambula),

¹Miss Bowler later married Robert Dawson, who became stock inspector at Bombala and Goulburn. Her diary for 1875, "Diary while at Rose Valley" (wrongly titled "Diary at Rosebrook, Cooma" in the catalogue) is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. (FM 3/462). Miles Franklin described the (probably autobiographical) experiences of a governess at a bush station in My Brilliant Career.

²See above, chapter 5.
people of the lower classes could do these things only at the end of the century, and even then only in certain places. Advances in education and communications which merely assisted the wealthy to expand their current way of life gave new opportunities to the new generation of the poorer families, and reduced the influence of the home relative to external ones. In townships, where services improved earlier than in country districts, and where diversions and sources of information and amusement were more common, these tendencies probably operated earlier. It may be that in the larger towns like Goulburn, Albury, Wagga, Yass, Young and Bega, the influence of home life was always limited by the different pressures of town life, though here, too, the wealthy, who had a social position to maintain, were less affected than the labouring families. ¹

Family influence was naturally exerted through its social standing as well as through its activities as a family. Membership of the "squattocracy" entailed the pursuit of a certain gentility, even in the bush. (It was, after all, "Tom Collins", in Such is Life, not an English author, who commented that "the 'gentleman' is not necessarily gentle; but he is necessarily genteel".) Bush gentility was limited by the scarcity of suitably genteel company, hence both in township and in country districts men of mere wealth could aspire to social position. Station managers like James Litchfield, who acquired substantial properties of his own by free selection near Cooma, could become as respectable as their original employers, while in the townships commercial men such as

¹It is almost impossible to cite concrete evidence in support of or against any specific point in this argument, which is an impressionistic view, drawn from my readings of local newspapers, of diaries of people like Eleanor Bowler, her daughter Ida Francis Dawson, and Edward Pratt, and of books such as Samuel Shumack's reminiscences and the fictional works of Miles Franklin and Henry Lawson.
storekeepers or even hotel keepers achieved comparable status. Members of these classes, town and country, often mixed with each other, for they fulfilled similar functions within their own circle. The station owner, the successful free selector and the auctioneer were each expected to be to the fore in the organization of sports clubs, charitable functions and local societies. In 1887 the Cooma Pastoral and Agricultural Society had David Ryrie as President, Frederick Blaxland (a solicitor) as Treasurer, and committee members including, from the country, William Jardine, J.J. Devereux, Charles Pryce and James Litchfield, and, from the town, Charles Solomon, David O'Rourke, Richard Evans and Ezra Margoschis, as well as Archdeacon Druitt of the Church of England and Dean Slattery of the Roman Catholic church. It is remarkable how often these same names appeared in other contexts. Four of the committee of the School of Arts were also committee members of the Pastoral and Agricultural Society, the Hospital Committee included Archdeacon Druitt and Messrs J.G. Beazley

1 Although, as Miles Franklin suggested (All That Swagger, p. 338), "squatters and selectors had a feeling of wholesome superiority over the town-dweller", this did not preclude social contact between them. Edward G. Brown, Mayor of Tumut in 1887, had been a pastoralist, owning first Blowering and then (as a partner) Tumut Plains stations, before moving to the town to establish a stock and station agent's business in 1876. He was a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1866 to 1872. (Australian Town and Country Journal, 13 August 1887, p. 340.)

2 Manaro Mercury, 20 August 1887, p. 2. Jardine and Pryce owned considerable grazing properties, while Devereux and Litchfield were prosperous free selectors. Solomon owned the Caledonian Stores in Cooma, O'Rourke the Australian Stores, and Evans was the proprietor of the Manaro Mercury (the other local newspaper proprietor, G.T.C. Miller, was also on the committee).

3 Manaro Mercury, 27 August 1887, p. 2. The name of Mr Margoschis (a watchmaker, jeweller and optician) was added at the annual meeting on 25 August.

4 Manaro Mercury, 20 August 1887, p. 2. They were Messrs J.G. Beazley, E. Dodds, E. Margoschis and C. Solomon.
and E. Dodds, all members of the Pastoral Society committee; and the leadership of the Manaro Cricket Club included Charles Solomon, Frederick Blaxland and W.T. Cohen (owner of the Cooma Hotel), again all members of the same committee. The ubiquity of members of a certain class of people was not confined to Cooma, for almost any town would give similar results if a full analysis of its leading citizens were made. Not only did individuals fill a variety of social and charitable positions, but they often contrived to conduct several professional functions at the same time. Some of the men already mentioned had extensive interests, but the most remarkable example I have encountered was Mr Emmanuel Jonas of Bombala. He was in 1883 proprietor of the Bombala Herald, an auctioneer, stock, station and land agent, Bombala agent for the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, the Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company, and "Orient's" Melbourne Cup Consultation. Outside business hours he was secretary both of the Bombala Exhibition Society (the local agricultural society) and of the Bombala Sheep Stealing Prevention Association. Ten years later he had acquired still another function, that of Justice of the Peace.

In south east New South Wales the social situation of a family was therefore of extreme importance in determining an individual's life

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1 Manaro Mercury, 3 September 1887, p. 2. Mr Beazley was manager of the Commercial Bank.

2 Manaro Mercury, 28 September 1887, p. 2.

3 Though Samuel Mudge, auctioneer and Town Clerk of Albury during the 1870s must have run him very close. (See the Border Post, August-October 1874.)

4 Advertisements and public notices, Bombala Herald, 25 August 1885. It is highly improbable that this list exhausts his interests. In 1888, for instance, he was a vice president of the Bombala Amateur Dramatic Club.
style, more so than in large cities. As the family was of necessity more closely knit than in the cities or even in English country districts, it is impossible to ignore its significance as an influence on the life of a member of society in the region.

III

Although in childhood the inhabitants of south east New South Wales had few contacts with institutions beyond the home, in adult life they were confronted, even in the 1860s, with a variety of formal organizations. The child met only the school and perhaps the Sunday School or the church; the youth or man met societies concerned with the government of the country or of the locality, with economic matters, with the regulation of society and with his entertainment and edification. Every settlement of note had its post office, its newspapers, its banks, its lock-up and its court house; really substantial towns had their own local government authorities, race clubs and Mechanics' Institutes. Already by the sixties the society of the region was in the process of advancing towards a relatively high level of sophistication.

The first type of institution to affect the individual would probably be one which touched on him as a member of the work force. And as most people lived and worked in pastoral or agricultural districts, societies for the advancement of pastoral and agricultural pursuits were among the first economic societies to develop. These societies were

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1Apart from the rapidly growing Government Savings Bank scheme of the later decades, these tended to be confined to the more important centres. In 1876, for example, in the region there were only fifteen branches of the Bank of New South Wales, ten of the Commercial Bank and five of the Australian Joint Stock Bank. (Advertisements, Australian Town and Country Journal, 22 January 1876, p. 123.)
generally begun and carried on by members of the property owning classes, but their work was of economic benefit to members of all classes.

In 1873 George O'Malley Clarke of Young petitioned the Legislative Assembly for financial aid to agricultural societies. He was, he said:

In a position to bear testimony to the incalculable benefits that attend the successful prosecution of Associations of this nature by the inducements thus held out for the improvement in the breed of stock of all classes, and the encouragement given to the agriculturist for the growth and production of grain and other crops of a superior character.

Similar petitions were received from other parts of the colony, including one from ninety eight members of the Pastoral and Agricultural Association of Yass, dated 14 February 1873.

The early formation of an agricultural society at a place like Young is significant, for the district around the town was notable for the success of free selection. By 1875 there were 615 freeholders in the Police District of Young, owning a total of 247,450 acres, an average of almost exactly four hundred acres each. The Burragong Chronicle described the town and district as "circumferented [sic] with thousands of acres taken up under free selection" and used for the cultivation of various

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1 Petition of 22 February 1873, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1872-1873, vol. III, p. 1603. Mr Clarke was then senior gold commissioner at Young. He later became police magistrate before his appointment in 1882 as a stipendiary magistrate in Sydney. He was very active in charitable and sporting clubs in Young. (Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 3, pp. 412-413.)

2 Ibid., p. 1601.

3 O'Malley Clarke was writing as President of the society, which had been formed in 1870.

4 Burragong Argus, 7 August 1875, p. 2.

5 Also of 7 August 1875, p. 2.
grain crops, lucerne grass and potatoes. For up to twenty miles around "nothing meets the eye but permanent homesteads, settled population and cultivated soil". Despite the presence of rich pastoral lessees in the district (there were 611,040 sheep in the Police District), an agricultural society in such an area could hardly exist solely for the benefit of the wealthy. It is therefore likely that small farmers gained by membership of these associations as well as pastoralists.

Whatever the effect of the petitioning activity of 1873, in the following year government money was available to be distributed among agricultural and pastoral societies. Initially this amounted to £4,000 for the whole of New South Wales, but by 1878 a further £1,000 had been voted for the purpose. To qualify for aid each society had to forward to Sydney a list of its members together with an account of the amount of money paid as subscription by each. The money was then divided among the societies in proportion to the total subscription money obtained by each from its members, a practice which favoured those societies charging high subscription rates. For instance, in 1878 the society at Moruya, which had a membership of seventy seven and an annual subscription of ten shillings, collected only £44-11-6 and received government aid of £42-8-10; the Murrumbidgee association, located at Wagga Wagga, which had only sixty members but an annual subscription of three guineas, collected £209 and received government aid of £198-19-10.¹ The availability of government funds certainly stimulated the growth of these societies, for the number of applications for assistance rose quite sharply during

¹NSW Colonial Secretary's Department, Special Bundle, Agricultural Societies, Applications for Endowments. (AONSW 4/7184). Some members paid more than the official subscription, hence the apparent discrepancy in the figures.
the late seventies and early eighties. Whereas in 1878 societies received aid almost at the rate of pound for pound of their subscriptions, by 1882 the rate had come down to just under eleven shillings in the pound.¹

In the south east the number of societies in receipt of this aid increased rapidly. In 1874 only the Bega, Bombala and Burrangong societies, with a combined membership of two hundred and thirty five, benefitted from the scheme;² two years later the Albury and Border, Monaro (Cooma), Moruya, Tumut, Murrumbidgee, Braidwood and Yass societies had been added to the list,³ their combined membership totalling about seven hundred and fifty. These were soon joined by societies in Crookwell and Goulburn (1880), Cootamundra and Taralga (1881) and Germanton (1882), by which time 1,370 people in the region were members of societies in receipt of government funds.⁴ During the period from 1878 to 1882 the share of the total available funds being assigned to societies in the south east also increased, from £775-17-11 to £1,064-3-5. This might suggest that agricultural societies were growing in number more quickly there than in the rest of the colony, were it not for the fact that some societies were in operation for years before applying for government aid.⁵ Although it cannot be said from these figures⁶ that new societies were

¹My calculations from exact amounts paid. (AONSW 4/839.2).

²Agricultural Societies, Return, May 1876, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1875-1876, vol. VI, p. 956. The membership figure for Bombala disagrees by one from that given on the return in the Colonial Secretary's Department papers. (AONSW 4/1796).

³NSW Colonial Secretary's Department, Special Bundles. (AONSW 4/1796-7).

⁴AONSW 4/821.3, 4/832.2, 4/839.2.

⁵For example, that at Goulburn.

⁶Regretfully I cannot find further figures for aid to these societies.
founded through this government action, it is certain that the aid
stimulated the work of existing societies and encouraged them in their
efforts. There can be no doubt that from the seventies until the end of
the century agricultural societies were important in the life of all
country towns of stature.

The government aid which was made available was essential for
the growth of most societies, especially in their early years of
development, when they were compelled to make considerable investments.
Any society of ambition required its own show ground, though some, like
that at Moruya,¹ were forced to rent land. Once the land had been
acquired, there were improvements to be made, the cost of which often
sent societies into debt. As late as thirteen years after its foundation
the Albury society (one of the more prosperous) spent £636-2-5 in 1888
on the erection of permanent cattle pens, drainage, painting and the
planting of trees and shrubs along two of the boundaries. This society
could afford such expense, as during the preceding seven years its
membership had risen from 142 to 430 and the number of entries for the
annual show from four hundred to 1,815.² This was a relatively rich
society, but others, less fortunate, had to undertake similar expenses
at the cost of contracting debts which could prove difficult to repay,
especially once the effects of the financial crises of the nineties were
felt in the region. In 1898 the situation at Bombala had become so serious
that Henry Edwards, President of the Society, was obliged to beg for a
special government grant to save the show ground from being "sold over our

²Report of Annual General Meeting, Albury Border Post, 1 February 1889,
p. 9.
heads. The existing debt of about £500 had been incurred many years previously to erect buildings, sheep and cattle pens and other necessaries; severe seasons and low stock prices had reduced the prosperity of the district and of the society's members. The society had been fortunate that most of its supporters had voluntarily returned prizes gained at the annual show, in an effort to save it, but the situation remained grave. It is not recorded by Mr Edwards whether the grant requested was forthcoming.

The main activity of these societies was the annual show, which rapidly became a major feature of life in every country town. These shows varied considerably in size and scope, but they presented similar characteristics. Most essential were the competitions for the best locally produced grains, sheep, cattle, horses and other livestock, or for the best locally owned farm machinery, but the importance of the shows often spread far beyond the competitions and education in farming techniques. The show was socially and culturally important in that it provided an opportunity for large and small agriculturists to meet and to learn from each other (the Yass Courier took great satisfaction in the interest of small settlers in the first show there in 1863), and in that many exhibits and events were of a non agrarian character. The show often became a kind of local festival. In Bombala in 1888 more than a thousand people turned up to watch events such as a horse parade, exhibitions of fine arts and fancy work, and tent pegging and tilting at the ring.

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2 Editorial, 7 March 1863. The social aspect of a show might be best represented by the annual show dinner which was usually held on the opening night.
contests, in addition to the agricultural section of the show.\footnote{Bombala Herald, 2 March 1888, p. 3, 9 March 1888, p. 2.} The fifteenth Yass show was important enough for it to become the occasion of a public holiday in the districts around Yass and even Gunning, twenty four miles away. Indeed, as railway transport from as far away as Wagga Wagga and Goulburn was to be charged for at excursion rates, a large number of visitors was expected.\footnote{Yass Courier, 1 September 1885, p. 2.} How big a carnival a show might become was demonstrated in 1899 at Goulburn, where there were of course all the usual competitions plus others in painting, drawing and schoolwork, in food and cookery, and in fancy work. There were also special exhibitions: local photographers displayed portraits of Goulburn identities, Messrs Beale and Company showed pianos and sewing machines, the Singer Machine Company exhibited their sewing machines and work done on them, and the Goulburn Technical College gave displays of wood carving and turning, and of chip carving.\footnote{Goulburn Herald, 17 March 1899, pp. 2-3.} In such a mixture there was plenty to interest townsfolk as well as country dwellers, and it is likely that relations between them were enhanced by their meeting in such circumstances.

Although these activities, and the local events such as ploughing contests organized at other times of the year, had an importance beyond the purely practical, it must not be forgotten that their existence depended upon their practical values. They were of consequence in country towns because these towns were in reality service centres for an essentially agrarian community. The prime reason for the existence of agricultural and pastoral societies lay in their economic value, in their relevance to the daily work of the people who belonged to them. Often
these people were also members of other organizations which represented a less positive aspect of the work situation than these essentially creative associations.

Despite the contact which might be established between large and small settlers at the local shows, tensions remained within the bush community. These were most evident during the sixties, seventies and early eighties, when the controversy over the abuses of the Robertson Land Acts was at its height. In these years there grew and collapsed a variety of associations intended to further the interests of both free selectors and squatters, associations which were willing and able to undertake strong political action in the course of their struggle.  

Although free selector's associations, affiliated with the colonial body, the Free Selectors' Protective Association, had been formed in Cooma and Queanbeyan in 1866, it was not until economic conditions improved in the 1870s that agitation for further land reforms became general, as selectors and squatters vied with each other in evading the provisions of the acts.  

These were, in the Monaro more than elsewhere in the south east, years of bitterness: a man of faint heart or tender conscience was unlikely to succeed as less scrupulous men freely practised dummying and peacocking to secure for themselves the land they desired. In 1872 Edward Pratt wrote indignantly in his diary:

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1 I do not propose to discuss these in detail, as this work has already been admirably covered by C.G. Karr in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis (UNSW 1969), "Political Protest and General Development in Rural New South Wales 1865-1894", from which I have extracted much of the information for the following argument.

2 Not all squatters had bad relations with selectors. William Halliday, of Brookong station, near Wagga, was said to have actively assisted them to become permanent settlers. (Australian Town and Country Journal, 21 May 1887, p. 1053.) Similarly, David Ryrie had good relations with selectors and with his employees. (Obituary, Bombala Herald, 21 July 1893, p. 2, quoting the Cooma Express.)
At present the state of things is scandalous. Kiss gets Bobunderah [sic] for nothing by selecting all over it...I was publicly characterised as a fool in Cooma for not selecting over Myalla before bidding for it.¹

Even the reforms of 1875, intended to prevent dummying, did not end the problem, but merely led to more ingenious methods of evasion. In 1882 Pratt pointed out² that it was common for the lessee of a small run to protect himself "against land sharks, and, indeed, to save himself from absolute ruin" by taking up illegal selections, "making no pretence of either residence or improvements", and accepting the inevitable forfeiture simply to gain time and, hopefully, survey of the land with an opportunity to buy it at auction. He continued, "I see nothing dishonest in this. It is certainly a crooked road to travel, but there is no straight one". Those with a sufficient lack of scruple usually even contrived to avoid the forfeiture by making a false declaration in the Commissioner's Court.

The employment of these and other tactics in defiance or evasion of the law provoked more selectors into forming their own associations, though apart from certain parts of the Monaro the south east was less affected by the trouble than was, for example, the Riverina around Deniliquin. This was partly because of the early close settlement of much of the south coast and of the Goulburn and Yass³ districts, partly because of the unsuitability of a large part of the region for farming.

¹ That is, before bidding for the Crown lease. Edward Pratt's diary, 15 June 1872.

² In a letter to the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 July 1882, copy in Pratt's Papers.

³ A strong free selectors' association developed in the Yass Plains district, though, but it was a product of a violent election campaign in 1874 and of administrative inefficiency and corruption rather than of a confrontation between squatter and selector. (Karr, op. cit., pp. 66-67.)
The main impetus to the formation of free selectors' associations came during the mid seventies; the Yass Plains association followed the election of 1874, the Albury association was formed two years later, and these became two of the largest in the colony. The election anticipated in 1878 roused the selectors to greater activity still, this time at a colonial level, for in October 1877 a conference was held in Sydney to establish a united platform for the selectors. The main demands agreed upon were the abolition or at least the limitation of auction sales in the country, and the removal of interest charges on balances of conditional purchase payments.\(^1\) When a new land bill introduced after the election avoided the auction issue, further organization took place, this time involving squatters as well as selectors. In 1878 the squatters, on the initiative of Riverina men, established the Freehold and Pastoral Association of New South Wales, an organization more powerful than any of which the selectors were capable.\(^2\) The 1878 land bill was defeated, but in 1880 another reform measure, still unsatisfactory to the selectors, became law. George Adams, editor of the *Albury Banner*, who had been instrumental in organizing the earlier selectors' conference, now arranged a second to prepare for yet another election. The result proved disastrous to the selectors' cause, for their candidates met with defeat all over New South Wales, even in the Murray electorate around Albury itself, the centre of much of the selector organization.\(^3\) However, a new conference in Sydney in 1882 resulted in the foundation of the New South Wales Free Selectors' Alliance, again with the purpose of contesting an election brought about

\(^1\)Karr, op. cit., pp. 88-95.


\(^3\)Karr, op. cit., pp. 133-137.
by the defeat of yet another government over a land bill. This time the selectors' candidates were, on the whole, successful, though they by no means dominated the new parliament. In an effort to resolve the land question, Alexander Stuart's new government appointed the Morris and Ranken commission, which certainly did not represent the selectors' opinions, to inquire into the working of the land system. After their report a new Act at last proved effective in ending the agitation, and permitted the country population to turn their attention to other political issues.

The working of the land acts was by no means the only issue to affect relationships between squatters and selectors, or between employers and employees. At the same time as the squatters worried about the safety of their land, they had cause to worry about the safety of their stock. One of the folk songs of the period suggests that selectors were not totally innocent in the matter of cattle thieving in particular.

> When the moon has climbed the mountains and the stars are shining bright,
> Then we saddle up our horses and away,
> And we yard the squatter's cattle in the darkness of the night,
> And we have the calves all branded by the day.

Oh, my pretty little calf, At the squatter you may laugh, For he'll never be your owner any more; For you're running, running, running on the duffer's piece of land, Free selected on the Eumerella shore.

Whether or not free selectors were really responsible for stock thieving, the prevalence of the practice drove groups of squatters into

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1 Karr, op. cit., pp. 172-176.

2 A.B. Paterson, Old Bush Songs (Sydney, 1905, 1930). The "Eumerella" may well be a corruption of the river Umaralla, which flows into the Murrumbidgee near Cooma. In Rolf Boldrewood's Robbery Under Arms Dick and Jim Marston became involved in crime through cattle duffing.
defensive associations. For example, in 1874 David Ryrie proposed the formation of the "Cooma Graziers Protective Society", whose members (initially limited to twelve to ensure speedy and united action) would offer a reward of £100 for information leading to the conviction of any of the culprits. Similar organizations were constituted in most towns in pastoral districts, as may be seen from the advertisements common in local newspapers of the seventies and eighties.

These local defensive bodies, set up to combat a specific annoyance, were of much less importance than were the agricultural societies or the selectors' associations; they were also of minor consequence compared with the unions which evolved during the eighties in response to a new conflict, that between graziers and shearsers. This dispute had its origins in a reduction in the prices being received for wool, compounded by a severe drought extending throughout much of 1885 and 1886. These difficulties forced economies on the graziers, who attempted to ease their own burdens by decreasing the wages of their employees, and the rates paid to shearsers in particular. The men's reaction was the establishment in 1886 of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union, inspired and led by William Guthrie Spence; by October the shearsers' association formed at Wagga in July had become affiliated to the larger combination, and by 1892 branches existed at Wagga, Young and

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1 Circular letter from David Ryrie, Coolringdon, 29 June 1874, in the papers of Charles Pryce, ANL MS 2631. Mr Pryce, of Woolway station, agreed to join Mr Ryrie in the venture.

2 See, for instance, any issue of the Bombala Herald of 1883 or of the Border Post of 1889.

3 The effects of these factors can be closely followed in Edward Pratt's diaries for these years.

Goulburn. The pastoralists retaliated by forming their own unions, especially as the shearsers began to demand that only union members be employed in the sheds. Although he had as yet been free of pressure to use union labour, Henry Edwards for one was convinced by 1890 that the only hope the pastoralists had of averting tyranny by the shearsers was to unite and refuse to employ any union labour at all. He recognized that the struggle was likely to be bitter and the consequences dire, but "the sooner it is fought out the better". So angry was he at the thought of any compromise with the shearsers that, feeling betrayed by the pastoralists' leaders, he withdrew from the Pastoralists' Union in disgust. Despite his views, his relations with his own shearsers appear to have been cordial. On 1 August 1890 he replied to a request to meet a Shearsers' Union representative, declining to consider placing his shed under union rules. He was aware that the Shearsers' Union was the result of unjust treatment by "incompetent & unprincipled managers in the west & north", but he had always tried to treat his men with "kindness consideration & liberality", and in any case most of his shearing was done by men who were regular employees on his station throughout the year. This last factor was not confined to Bibbonluke. In the Monaro most properties were small compared to those farther west, the majority

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1 Hummer, 27 February 1892, p. 2. The Goulburn branch may have originated in one formed at Crookwell in 1887, which had expected a membership of 150. Australian Town and Country Journal, 19 March 1887, p. 588.

2 Henry Edwards to J.W. Ferguson, 7 O'Connell Street, Sydney, 1 August 1890. Bibbonluke Papers, Letterbook 1890-1897, ANL MS 1154/21/2.

3 Letter to J.W. Ferguson, 11 August 1890, ibid.

4 Letter to John McDonald, Agent, Shearsers' Union, Bombala, 1 August 1890, ibid.
of the shearing being performed by local men, who were either regular station employees or small farmers doing some shearing to augment the incomes they earned on their own farms.\(^1\) Relations between employers and shearmen were generally good in the Monaro; the obituary of David Ryrie\(^2\) maintained that he had, during the dispute, accepted union shearmen and paid union rates. More significant than the attitude of one man was that of the alliance formed in 1888 by the sheep owners of the Monaro. At its inaugural meeting on 30 August Edward Pratt, chairman for the evening, welcomed the birth of the combination because it enabled the stock owners of the area to meet organizations like the Shearers' Union, "not in an unfriendly spirit but in a way that would be amicable". The objects of the association included the protection, not only of sheep owners but also of shearmen and other employees, and the adoption of a uniform set of shearing rules.\(^3\) It is not surprising that the Monaro was hardly at all affected by the shearmen's strike which so devastated other parts of the colony in 1890.

Nor indeed was the other pastoral district in the south east much affected. Although two of the strongest branches of the Shearers' Union were at Young and at Wagga, where Walter Head founded the labour newspaper the H\(\text{u}m\)mer (later the Worker), the eastern Riverina was also relatively undisturbed. This was partly due to the closer settlement brought about by the relative success of the land acts,\(^4\) but perhaps also

\(^1\) Information from Dr John Merritt of the Research School of Social Sciences, A.N.U.

\(^2\) Bombala Herald, 21 July 1893, p. 2 (quoting the Cooma Express).

\(^3\) Bombala Herald, 7 September 1888, p. 2 (quoting the Manaro Mercury).

\(^4\) G.L. Buxton, op. cit., p. 263. Buxton especially referred to the Albury district; the Young district was also notable for its small farms. (Burrangong Chronicle and Burrangong Argus, 7 August 1875, p. 2.)
to the deterrent effect of the severe jail sentences passed on nine unionists convicted of rioting at Brookong station, south west of Wagga, in 1888.\(^1\)

Unionism was obviously confined almost entirely to pastoral workers in a region such as the south east, where few other industries were large enough to justify the formation of such an institution. Only the railways employed workers in sufficient numbers to permit such action; at the end of 1883 the New South Wales Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Association had seventy six members at Goulburn, and just over three years later the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association had 981 members in the south east, 447 of them at Goulburn and 206 at Junee.\(^2\) There was also a curious instance in 1889, when the men working on the roads in the Tumbarumba district formed a union. Over sixty men had pledged themselves to join by the date of the meeting at which the formation occurred, and most of the contractors concerned had already accepted their action.\(^3\)

The very natural concern, especially among the poorer members of society, to provide a certain security for themselves and for their families was partly responsible for the creation of many of these

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1. K.J. Swan, op. cit., pp. 161-162. Two men were sentenced to four years each, four to two years and the remaining three to one year. The Shearers' Union did not limit its activities to dealing with employers. On 19 March 1892 the Hummer reported a meeting at Tumut which passed a resolution boycotting all hotels employing Chinese cooks, and on 3 September it noted a meeting at Gundagai to start a Workers' Reading Room.

2. Information from Mr J.C. Docherty, Department of History, School of General Studies, A.N.U.

3. Albury Border Post, 11 January 1889, p. 12. This case was apparently unique; at least, I have come across no others comparable to it, nor even a further reference to this one.
economic institutions, and for the disputes between them. It was also responsible for the spread into the region of another type of economic organization, whose activities came to extend far beyond the nominal functions they were established to perform.

These were the mutual benefit, or friendly, societies, which had their origins in the cities in the north of England created by the Industrial Revolution. There, as in New South Wales, their original and fundamental purpose was to act as a kind of co-operative insurance fund. As the report of the Friendly Societies Act Inquiry Commission put it:

Their main objects are the securing, in virtue of small periodical payments during health and vigour, of a weekly sum during sickness, a sum to cover the funeral expenses at death, sometimes to provide a pension in old age or in cases of infirmity, and to provide for medical attendance and medicines to the member himself, his wife and family.

For the proud poor, the chief among these benefits was the avoidance of a pauper's grave.

The societies active in New South Wales were not normally local societies, but part of large international organizations, most of which were of English origin. Apart from the two societies formed in connection with the Roman Catholic church (the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society and the Australian Holy Catholic Guild) they were independent of other outside bodies, though they usually had a vaguely Christian concept — perhaps Deist would be a better description — behind their hierarchical organization and elaborately ceremonial conduct of business, reminiscent of Freemasonry. The atmosphere of mystery thus attached to the activities of their branches (usually known as lodges) no doubt played its part in attracting members,

especially among the poorly educated. The largest of these societies was the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd Fellows, others represented in the south east including the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Independent Order of Good Templars, the Independent Order of Rechabites and the Sons and Daughters of Temperance. While the Good Templars, Rechabites and Temperance societies combined the functions of opposition to alcohol and of mutual insurance in the most open manner, other friendly societies were also active in the temperance field. At a dinner in Albury in 1874 celebrating the opening of the new Odd Fellows' Hall in connection with the Loyal Albury Lodge, Manchester Unity, Samuel Mudge spoke of the increasing control of drunkenness in the town due to the activities of the friendly societies.\(^1\)

It is surprising that friendly societies have received so little attention in works on Australian history, both general and regional, in view of the large numbers of people involved with them and the benefits they conferred upon their members. The investigating commission of 1883 estimated their total membership in the colony at 35,000, whose families brought the total numbers dependent on them in times of trouble to approximately 175,000 people.\(^2\) In 1881 the population of New South Wales had been slightly over 750,000, therefore almost one person in every four belonged to a family connected with one of the friendly societies in the early 1880s.

In 1883 the membership in the south east of the lodges of the Manchester Unity society alone was 1,990; in 1889 the total was 2,259,

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\(^1\) Border Post, 20 May 1874, p. 2. There appear to have been Odd Fellows, Foresters and Hibernians active in Albury at that date.

\(^2\) Report, p. 25, loc. cit.
and in 1899, after the society had suffered like every other from the
effects of the depression, there were still 2,250 members\(^1\) in these
lodges. By taking, as did the commission, the average family size as five,
it will be seen that at each of these dates about ten thousand people in
the south east were connected with the Manchester Unity society. Other
societies also had considerable membership, though it is not possible to
obtain full figures for them. The Hope of Goulburn lodge of the Good
Templars had 1,500 members in 1887;\(^2\) the lodges of the Grand United
Order of Odd Fellows at Moruya and Bodalla were much smaller, with forty
six and thirty two members respectively in 1881;\(^3\) Hibernian membership
was probably much larger than either of these.

Friendly societies were often early arrivals in the south east.
The Manchester Unity order had a lodge in Goulburn as early as 1848 and
a second in that city twelve years later, by which time lodges were
active in Queanbeyan (formed 1856), Gundaroo (1860), Yass (1860) and
Albury (1860). In the sixties lodges opened at Bega (1868), Braidwood
(1863), Burrangong (1861) and Wagga Wagga (1862). By the close of the
century there were twenty six lodges of that order alone in the region,
including lodges at such small places as Cobargo, Pambula and Central
Tilba, all on the south coast, Lake Bathurst, near Goulburn, and
Germanton, north east of Albury. So strong had the order become in the
region that the Grand Annual Movable Committee for New South Wales was
held at Wagga in 1900.\(^4\) Other orders were also widespread. By 1869

\(^1\)My calculations from the returns in lists of lodges, Report & Proceedings
of the Grand Annual Movable Committee, N.S.W., I.O.O.F., M.U., Friendly
Society (Sydney, 1884, 1890, 1900).


\(^3\) Moruya Examiner, 26 March, 27 August 1881, p. 2.

\(^4\) Information on lodges from the report of 1900.
Young had acquired, in addition to the Manchester Unity lodge, lodges of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows and of the Freemasons, a branch of the Miners' Mutual Benefit Society, and branches of both the Sons and Daughters of Temperance. In Albury in 1875 the Odd Fellows had 150 members, the Foresters had sixty, the Hibernian society ninety, the Rechabites sixty (plus sixty junior members) and the Good Templars 120. Even a relatively small centre like Adelong was well supplied with friendly societies in 1871, when Father Slattery wrote to Bishop Lanigan for permission to introduce one of the Roman Catholic societies to the town. There were already Freemasons, Sons of Temperance, Odd Fellows and others, but he hoped to enrol forty or fifty members at least, as "several [had] promised that they would leave the Odd Fellows". Apparently the introduction was successfully effected, either then or later, for in 1903 there was a Hibernian society branch in Adelong. By that year, indeed, the Roman Catholic societies had proliferated within the Goulburn diocese, where there were thirteen branches of the Hibernians and five of the A.H.C. Guild.

The method of operation employed by these organizations ensured that they acted as friendly societies in more than one sense. The contributions paid by each member were collected at fortnightly meetings of the local branch, which became social gatherings as well as business

1W.A. Bayley, Rich Earth (Young, 1956), pp. 66-67. The position was similar in 1875, though by then the Good Templars and Band of Hope were also present. (Burrangong Argus, 7 August 1875, p. 2.)

2Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, 7 August 1875, pp. 13-14.

3Father Slattery, Tumut, to Bishop Lanigan, 5 September 1871. Lanigan Papers.

4Almanac of the Diocese of Goulburn, 1903 (Maitland, 1903).
meetings. It was perhaps to avoid holding the meetings in public houses that most lodges, at least in substantial towns, quickly built halls of their own, which soon became the centre of much of a town's social activity, being used as the location for balls, theatrical performances, concerts, dinners and even political meetings. The friendly societies were not slow to organize social events of their own, one of their favourites being picnics for local children on the various public holidays.

The value of the work of friendly societies was early recognized in the south east. In 1865 the Border Post declared that there were few institutions more useful than the Odd Fellows, because of their tendency "to render the position of the working man an independent one"; a member, by paying his contributions and becoming eligible for sick benefit, "is never an object of charity". The Odd Fellows were plainly assisting the churches, schools and other such institutions in their efforts to create that "respectability" in society so much desired during the period. Indeed, they may have been making that respectability a little too easy, and rendering the payment of benefits more precarious in the process, by their policy of charging very low membership dues.

A group of actuaries, appointed by the commission of 1883 to carry out a thorough investigation of the financing of these societies, reported that the rates of contribution were "utterly inadequate to afford the necessary security that in the time of need the benefits promised would be forthcoming". In the same year the actual scales charged in the south east varied only between one shilling and one and threepence per

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1 Editorial, 18 January 1865, p. 2.

week, the sick benefit payable usually being twenty one shillings, though a few lodges had a sliding scale of benefits. During the year the Manchester Unity lodges had paid out a total of £1,254-18-1 in sickness benefit, the lodges at Goulburn (two lodges), Adelong, Yass, Young and Wagga Wagga each paying over £100. The receipts from contributions of these lodges, if all members were financial, ranged from £250 to £650 per year. When operating costs are deducted, the remainder does not appear adequate to guarantee solvency in case of local outbreaks of disease, even in the case of these large lodges; smaller ones must have been in very precarious positions. In these circumstances it is surprising that these lodges do not appear to have carried into effect the commission's recommendation that graduated scales of contributions be charged; it is also surprising that they appear to have remained solvent, even during the depressed years of the early nineties.

Despite their doubts about the financial arrangements of many societies, the conclusion of the commission of 1883 was favourable. "There can be no doubt", they stated, that friendly societies "have been and are of great importance to the State, relieve the Government of a considerable expenditure, and are doing much to prevent the increase of pauperism in our midst". These institutions were indeed performing the function of a poor man's insurance company, although their membership, and their hierarchies, were by no means confined to the poor.

1Report & Proceedings of the Grand Annual Movable Committee, N.S.W., I.O.O.F., M.U., Friendly Society (Sydney, 1884) Appendix. In Bega the Sons of Temperance had charged in 1870 initiation fees of from 7/6 to £1, depending on age, and monthly subscriptions of from 2/6 to four shillings. (Bega Gazette, 1 September 1870, p. 2.).

2My calculations from Manchester Unity report of 1884, Appendix.

3Report, p. 23, loc. cit.
The importance of economic matters in the lives of the pioneer inhabitants of south east New South Wales, and the uncertainties of their existence, at least until closer contact with the outside world in the eighties, was reflected, therefore, in the proliferation of societies with economic motives. Whether creative, like the agricultural and pastoral associations, social, like the friendly societies, or defensive, like most of the semi-political organizations, they fulfilled an essential function in the uniting of people of like ideas or problems. For this reason, and because of the proximity of their causes to the basic issues of life in the region, these institutions were important and influential among the people of the south east.

IV

As communities began to grow in size it became desirable that some form of control be exercised locally to govern the manner of that growth. During the last forty years or so of the nineteenth century a variety of towns in the south east acquired the status of municipalities, each with its own municipal council to look after the affairs of the town. By 1891 eighteen towns in the region had achieved this distinction,¹ and ten years later Wallendbeen had been added to the list. The straggling, uncoordinated growth of most towns before incorporation made this step desirable at a relatively early stage in town development, or at least before the population reached a thousand.

The main functions of these local bodies were to ensure that the streets of the town were in good order, to provide a proper water

¹Census of 1891. They were, Albury, Bega, Bombala, Braidwood, Burrowa, Cooma, Cootamundra, Goulburn, Gundagai, Junee, Moruya, Murrumburrah, Queanbeyan, Temora, Tumut, Wagga Wagga, Yass and Young.
supply, to restrain "nuisances", to control the standard of building in the town, and to provide adequate drainage and lighting. In time a council might concern itself with the supply of other amenities such as recreational facilities. Thus, for example, the Temora Municipal Council began its activities in 1892 by arranging permanent quarters for its meetings and appointing a Council Clerk, inspector of nuisances, and finance and works committees. Its next task was to assess the extent of the problems facing it, therefore it called for tenders for taking the levels of the town streets and drainage system, and ordered a report on the best sites for water conservation to provide a water supply. When a municipal rate of one shilling in the pound of assessed value had been agreed on, the council could draw breath before commencing the humdrum task of ordering and supervising these and other similar tasks. Sometimes they were called on to act in cases affecting individuals and groups within the town, if these might cause inconvenience or danger to the townspeople generally. As in most towns, the owners of some buildings were neglectful of their condition, so it became the council's duty to draw attention to the state of the property and demand that the owner rectify the situation. Even government departments were

1 A vague term embracing such diverse matters as the impounding of stray animals and the disposal of night soil.

2 The municipality had been declared by 1891, but the council's first meeting was not held until March 1892.


4 Meeting of 30 May 1892.

5 Meeting of 26 July 1892.

6 Meeting of 27 June 1892.

7 Meeting of 5 September 1892.
not free from this power; in 1897 the council wrote to the Department of Justice stating that the existing building was "not a fit building for a court-house" and asking for the erection of a new one.¹ More general nuisances, too, were dealt with. In 1893 a resolution was passed that the inspector of nuisances prosecute all owners of animals trespassing on the town streets;² in 1900 (by which time the powers of the council in this direction had been extended by the Public Health Act of 1896) the inspector reported on the condition of cesspits on various premises, all of which were adjudged a public nuisance under the terms of the act and their owners required "to abate the nuisance" within fifteen days.³ Apart from such action, and action on the provision of certain public amenities (a fire engine, a cycle track and public urinals at Temora Park), the council's business concerned the maintenance of roads and drains above all else.

Even in a much larger town the basic duties of the council were of the same types. The Albury Borough Council's agenda of 5 August 1874 included road maintenance, a claim for compensation for damage caused by the council's workmen, drainage, the reports of the inspector of nuisances and the finance committee, and a report by the public works committee on an application to modify a building to assist in the loading of grain.⁴ Fifteen years later the meeting of 19 June 1889 discussed tenders for water pipes and for the erection of a band stand in the

¹Meeting of 18 October 1897.

²Meeting of 13 March 1893.

³Meeting of 2 April 1900.

⁴Border Post, 8 August 1874, p. 2.
Botanic Gardens; reports from the public works committee, the curator of the Botanic Gardens, the rate collector, the borough engineer, the caretaker of the municipal saleyards and the finance committee; general business matters involving "the closet system", the Sydney road and the nuisance caused by briar bushes; and motions on drainage, street maintenance and lighting.¹ The issues dealt with by the council of the larger town were more complex, but of the same sort, as those dealt with in Temora.

In districts not yet populous enough to require a local council, similar work might often be done by a local progress committee (though these sometimes existed even after incorporation in order to put the town's point of view to outside bodies²). For example, a progress committee formed at Germanton in 1889 discussed similar matters to those occupying the attention of the formally constituted councils — the need for lamps at certain places, the proper disposal of rubbish, the state of the local lock-up.³ The merit of such ventures was extolled at the meeting called to form a progress association at Young in 1877, when one speaker maintained that a recognized body was necessary "to lay any wants that might be required by the town and district before the Government, and correct any abuses" that might need righting.⁴

Here, then, was yet another type of institution concerned with the quality of life of the people of the south east. The work performed

¹ Border Post, 21 June 1889, pp. 11-12.
² The Wagga Wagga progress committee was formed in 1881 solely to campaign on railway issues. (K.J. Swan, op. cit., p. 156.) The town had become a municipality in 1870.
³ Border Post, 8 February 1889, p. 12.
⁴ Burrangong Chronicle, 8 August 1877, p. 2.
by these councils, not only in the regulation of the expansion of their towns, but also in the pressure they put on the central government for the extension of services like the railways to their towns, was intended to elevate the tone of these towns, to make life in them more respectable than it might otherwise be.

This tendency towards the promotion of respectability was reflected in the composition of the councils themselves. As in the case of other town committees, agricultural societies, turf clubs, hospitals, so the councils were filled with men of solid social and financial standing. The Albury council of 1874 will serve as a typical example. At its head was the Mayor, Kenneth McLennan, a draper and tailor of substance, assisted by Samuel Mudge, the Town Clerk, who was an auctioneer. Among the aldermen were both partners of a firm of solicitors, Messrs Thorold and Blackmore, the proprietor of the Exchange Hotel, Lewis Jones, the owner of the Commercial Chambers, George Day, who was also President of the Albury Turf Club and of the School Board, and who later represented the town in the Legislative Assembly, and two other merchants, P.E. Fallon, dealing in wines and spirits, and James Higgins, dealing in cloth. All were men of property and of good social position, as were the members of the council at Wagga Wagga. Of seventy four people who held positions on the council between 1870 and 1900, the occupations of all but two are known. Apart from the newspaper editor, 

1 He was also Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge, secretary of the Albury Turf Club, agent for the Victoria Life and General Insurance Company, and secretary of the Second Albury Building Society.

2 Occupations from advertisements and reports, Border Post, August-October 1874.

3 K.J. Swan, op. cit., Appendix I. At Moruya's first council elections in 1891 five farm or property owners, two storekeepers, a jeweller and a bootmaker were successful. (Colonial Secretary's Papers, Moruya Municipal Council File, AONSW CSO/91/7588.)
J.T. Williamson, the secretary-librarian, W.E. Howarth, and the "Gentleman", P.W. Lorimer, they may be divided as follows: fourteen were storekeepers or retailers, ten in the hotel trade, nine farmers or graziers, nine professional people, eight auctioneers or land agents, eight engaged in food production, seven in the building trade, and four were coachbuilders or saddlers. Aside from a clerk, two saddlers and a fellmonger, none could possibly be said to be of the lower orders of society, and even these four people were probably comfortable. To reach the status of alderman they were certainly respectable and probably prosperous, for the position made heavy demands upon free time without any pecuniary reward.

Although personal differences could inflame even local politics, social questions and conflict were absent from council elections. Councils were strictly local in outlook and strictly utilitarian in function, therefore they rarely became involved in political issues of the type which dominated colonial politics. Nevertheless, the south east was by no means quiet politically; here as elsewhere the population was divided over many of the issues which agitated the politicians in Sydney.

Colonial political activity, though not confined to the towns, was very much centred upon them, for these were the places where meetings were held and reported. Newspapers were of great significance in local political life, as their reports of political events were usually comprehensive. Often, indeed, the editor of the newspaper was himself a vigorous participant in political affairs. For instance, John Gale of

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1The only exception I have found was when in 1892 a unionist stood as a representative of the workers at the Wagga Municipal Council elections. *Hummer*, 6 February 1892, p. 1.
the Queanbeyan Age was the member for the Murrumbidgee in the protectionist interest during the late eighties, and Frederick Pinkstone of the Cootamundra Herald was the local leader of the Land and Industrial Alliance, an association formed in Sydney in 1884 to promote land reform. They were not the only ones.

Political activity tended to be limited to the months, even weeks, immediately preceding one of the numerous elections or by-elections, after which it tended to diminish until the prospect of a new election stimulated a fresh burst of agitation. An election could be a very exciting, even violent, affair, especially where there was a clash of personalities as well as political philosophies. Where such a clash occurred, it was usually at least partly due to sectarian bitterness, for, despite the relative indifference of most of the population towards the religion they professed, and despite the generally good relations between active members of the various churches, the jealousies evident in Ireland in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were transplanted to the south east of New South Wales without any diminution in their force. The south east had a larger proportion of Irish born or their descendants than most parts of the colony, a fact reflected in the political skirmishes of the region. In 1877 the official Anglican newspaper regretted that church's lack of involvement in political affairs, considering the well established influence of other bodies.

There was the Roman Catholic vote, "certainly a positive quantity", the

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1 E.J. Lea-Scarlett, Queanbeyan: District and People (Queanbeyan, 1968) p. 147.

2 C.G. Karr, op. cit., p. 259.

3 See chapter 3 above.
Orange vote, and so on. And certainly this seems to have been the case. In 1880 the defeat of John Walsh in the Argyle election brought from a leading Roman Catholic newspaper a cry of outrage. Mr Walsh, a newspaper proprietor who had lived in Goulburn for over twenty years, had stood as a protectionist, only to be defeated by Major Holborow, of Richmond, who was standing in the electorate for the first time. This was alleged to have occurred solely because Mr Walsh was Roman Catholic, Major Holborow an Orangeman. Local farmers were said to have been for months previously agitating in favour of a protectionist policy only to vote for the free trader. The newspaper was probably right when it pointed to the education issue as the one which decided the election, although its treatment of the subject was hysterical. "Bigotry and sectarianism reigned predominant at the election yesterday, and were finally crowned with victory".2

Even if these allegations were true, the Roman Catholics were themselves far from guiltless of the tactics they accused the Protestants of using. At Queanbeyan in 1874 two Irish Protestants contested the election against William Forster. Roman Catholics declared John James Wright to be an Orange Lodge candidate; he in turn described Forster as the priests' man.3 The contest was a violent one, processions in Queanbeyan culminating in brawls, before Wright was successful. Again in 1884 sectarian troubles entered the election at Gundagai, where the local priest divided his congregation by supporting Mr Watson (claimed to be the Orange candidate) against the popular Roman Catholic choice, Jack

1Editorial, Australian Churchman, 1 November 1877, p. 214.

2Express, 4 December 1880, p. 7.

Want. Here matters were made worse when Mr Watson’s supporters somehow acquired a banner belonging to the Roman Catholic church, paraded it through the streets, and destroyed it. The priest, Father Finnegan, had “made Gundagai too hot for himself”, and it was likely that he would have to be transferred to a quieter place.

The prevalence of this form of ill feeling is not surprising in view of the composition of the population, especially in the northern part of the region, and considering the fact that one of the most important issues in the elections of the sixties and seventies was that explosive matter, the education question, which polarized society very sharply. The other issues, too, tended to make things worse. The land question, dividing society into squatters and selectors, also involved a religious element, for most of the pastoralists were nominal Protestants, many of the selectors Roman Catholic. The same lines tended to be drawn over the fiscal issue which dominated politics in the nineties, and it is significant that Edward William O’Sullivan, the ardent protectionist and reformer, represented the Queanbeyan electorate in the colonial parliament.

O’Sullivan was not the only prominent public figure to represent a constituency in the south east. Among others were Michael Fitzpatrick, member for Yass Plains, who became Colonial Secretary in December 1877, L.F. Heydon, who succeeded Fitzpatrick in that electorate, and Sir George Dibbs (premier in the early nineties) and James Gormly, both of whom


2 Letter from Rev. P. Dunne. It appears that Father Finnegan had been a friend of Mr Watson while at his previous charge of Young.
represented the Murrumbidgee, Gormly also representing Wagga Wagga at the end of the century. Not all of the local members had high aspirations; many were content to retain their seats if they could, devoting more time to their constituencies than to matters of national policy. Some did their best to make sure that their constituents were aware of their efforts in this direction, using the local newspaper as the vehicle for supplying the information. Thus James Watson, member for the Lachlan, regularly published his correspondence with government departments on local matters in the *Burrangong Chronicle*. These members left themselves open to the charge that they were merely "roads and bridges members," an accusation even made of E.W. O'Sullivan in 1893, when he was said to have been pandering to the "Mickey" vote, all his promises of "a culvert for Pat, a road for Mike, a bridge for Barney" having been kept. O'Sullivan's reply was that he had merely done what all members should in the absence of proper local government. Other members made more of their efforts. The same James Watson reviewed his achievements on the occasion of his re-election in 1877, unopposed:

> He didn't think anyone could charge him with want of looking after the roads and bridges and general prosperity of the district; he never shrunk from giving his time and ability in furthering the interests not only of Young merely, but of the Lachlan and the colony generally, but more particularly of the Lachlan...He held in his hand a list of the grants of money he got for the town for the last few years, and it was of considerable amount.

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1. *Burrangong Chronicle*, e.g. 21 February, 3, 7, 10, 21, 28 March 1877, letters respecting such matters as mail frequency, the debt on Wombat Public school, and a recreation ground at Murrumburrah.


Again, in 1888, H.W.H. Stephen, a resident of Manly who represented the Monaro, replied indignantly to a letter published in the Bombala Herald alleging that he and Mr Dawson, the other local member, had talked much but performed little on the matter of the desired railway from Cooma. He detailed the steps the two men had taken in parliament in the matter, pointing out that each time their motion had come up for discussion there had been such a small House that a count out was possible and defeat in a division certain, therefore they had been forced to postpone the motion. Their efforts to collect support had been unavailing, as other members did not regard a railway to Bombala as essential for their own districts; those applying for railways themselves were active opponents of any project likely to diminish the funds available and thus interfere with their own.¹

Politicians who accepted their jobs as being primarily involved in issues concerning their own electorate were probably correct in their estimate of priorities in their efforts for re-election. It was certainly expected that members of parliament would extend themselves in these matters, for at least one came under fire from the local press for his apparent inactivity. T.H. Mate was the victim of a sarcastic attack on the part of the Border Post, which alleged that "when other members are looking out to secure the loaves and fishes for their constituents, Mr Mate shews himself to be above all such sordid considerations, by refusing to take part in the scramble".² Plainly it was wiser and safer to be an active "roads and bridges member" than to stand aloof, from whatever motives.

¹Letter to the Editor, Bombala Herald, 20 July 1888, p. 2.

²Editorial, Border Post, 6 January 1869, p. 2.
Political controversy was therefore an important feature of life in the south east. The issues of education and land reform and of tariff policy (especially in Albury, where customs duties on trade with Victoria were strenuously opposed) were ones which could affect every individual; when they were linked with the national and sectarian tensions of a mixed community, the results could be spectacular. The quality of government and the type of government affected the lives of these pioneers very deeply in a time of rapid change. In at least one way government made their lives safer, when the crime so common in the early years was brought under control.

The conditions of life in the 1860s were highly conducive to the existence of a high level of crime. It was difficult to police the large rural areas, whose scattered population was relatively unprotected due to its isolated nature. Also, the gold fields at Braidwood, Araluen, Nerrigundah, Young and Bathurst, all reasonably close to each other, presented temptations which many found it impossible to resist. Moreover, the mining population itself included a selection of criminals and rough characters whose very presence rendered the commission of crimes more likely. The gold fields as a result acquired a partly undeserved reputation for violence, particularly in view of incidents like the anti-Chinese riots at Burrangong in 1861. And it is true that a good

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1 E.A. Baker, later a Member of the Legislative Assembly, wrote to his sister, Jane Leman, from Adelong on 8 January 1860, "Seriously I know of no place where a finer set of men are to be with than on some of our diggings...Nor must you think that we have a lawless and uncultivated population. I can say that for courtesy and genuine politeness you will but rarely find a class of people to equal the Gold miner". (ML DOC 1651.)
deal of crime did take place on the diggings. One bank officer recalled that in his early days at Burrangong he habitually carried a revolver, and that at night he often heard cries for help from "some poor fellow, who was being eased of his cash". To counteract the dangers of the gold fields much larger contingents of police were stationed there than their populations might warrant. In 1866, when Goulburn was served by twelve police officers and Albury by eleven, Braidwood's force numbered ten men and that of Young thirteen. This policy, and strong action by local magistrates, was successful in keeping the less volatile gold fields in order, and most of the south east gold fields were of this nature after the initial violence at Burrangong had declined. However, the attention of the public during the sixties was held by events on the gold fields and by the brief but dramatic upsurge in highway robbery which took place at the same time.

After these had been controlled by the end of the decade the most common crimes committed in the region were of three kinds. First, there were the crimes common in any society: stealing, assaults and fraud; second, crimes arising from the current controversy on land settlement and from rivalry between large and small proprietors: stock stealing, evasions of the land laws and trespass; and third, crimes of loneliness at least in part due to the state of settlement: rape and

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3 D.L. Carrington, "The gold rushes of New South Wales 1851-74: A Social History", (M.A. thesis, A.N.U., 1961) pp. 75-76. He suggests, probably correctly, that gold fields in this region, being more settled than the western ones, did not attract as many of the criminal types as these did.
drunkenness for example. In July 1871 the Yass Court of Petty Sessions heard three cases of alleged drunkenness, two of assault, one of trespass, one of unlawful ejectment from land, one of vagrancy, one of riotous behaviour (which was dismissed) and two affiliation actions (one of which failed). The cases at the General Sessions in October included one of forgery, two of stealing and nine civil cases involving such matters as malicious prosecution and breach of agreement. More dramatic perhaps were the charges at the Albury Circuit Court in 1874, when no less than four men were charged with rape, two of them upon their own daughters. Both were found not guilty, and in one case the verdict caused a sensation in court and a vitriolic editorial in the Border Post, in which the accused was described as "this brute", and in which it was stated that the man admitted repeated intercourse with his daughter since the age of fourteen, and that she had borne him a child. The leader continued, "God forbid that we should cry for the blood of any creature; yet we say that the acquittal of this man was as clear a robbery of the gallows as was ever perpetrated in any country". The mandatory death sentence for rape produced a reluctance on the part of juries to convict, for the other three accused men were found guilty of the lesser charge of "assault with intent to commit a rape", receiving prison sentences of two years in two cases and eighteen months in the

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1 Reports, Yass Courier, 7, 14, 28 July 1871.
2 Reports, Yass Courier, 17, 20 October 1871.
3 Reports, Border Post, 15 April 1874, pp. 2-3.
4 Border Post, 22 April 1874, p. 2.
5 Two men were accused together of raping the same woman.
other. Much more common were the charges of stealing. In the same year at the Quarter Sessions four people were convicted of horse stealing, two of other thefts and one of altering a cheque with fraudulent intent.

An analysis of the cases appearing in Yass Petty Sessions made by the Clerk of Petty Sessions showed that in 1875 fourteen people were convicted of offences against the person and two committed to a higher court, eleven convicted of offences against property and twelve committed, and thirty two convicted of drunkenness, including twelve females.

Improvements in communication and in education, advancing prosperity, and the widespread acceptance of "respectable" social values, together with more efficient police organization, made even these crimes less frequent as the century progressed. Crimes of violence, in particular, decreased. In New South Wales as a whole the rate of committals to higher courts for serious offences declined from twenty one in every 10,000 of population in the quinquennium 1880-1884 to ten in every 10,000 in 1895-1899. This tendency was reflected in the south east, where in 1890 the Yass Courier could state proudly that the calendar of the criminal courts in the town had been reduced by nine tenths in twenty years. The Assizes and Quarter Session hearings now lasted only a few hours, "while in former years they would last a whole week", and most of the cases now heard were caused by drink. The Courier confidently attributed this happy state of affairs to "the vigilance of

1Reports, Border Post, 14, 18 February 1874.

2Yass Courier, 11 January 1876, p. 2.


410 October 1890, p. 2.
our police", and to the excellence of the local inspector in particular.

Praise of this nature was very rare twenty five years earlier. In the early and middle 1860s the southern part of New South Wales was, or so it seemed, at the mercy of a few marauding gangs of highway robbers, whose exploits the police were apparently incapable of checking; often they gave the impression of being unwilling or even afraid to try. The result was a considerable volume of criticism of the police, especially of police organization, in the press, and public rumours of police cowardice. In 1863 the Yass Courier was "loath to believe" these rumours, preferring to place the blame upon the distribution of the available officers, who were limited to the highways. "We have no doubt it is very necessary that police constable should be so placed, but it must not be lost sight of that along cross roads, and where the back settlers have formed their homesteads, an equal necessity exists for police protection", for these were the haunts of the sly-grog shop, "the harbourer of the bushranger and the receiver of stolen property". Early in the following year the Border Post began a series of criticisms of the force. After giving a list of reported crimes and convictions, the paper concluded that the efficiency of the police was far from acceptable. Two months later the Post spoke again, agreeing that rumours of cowardice among a force "of Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen" could be discounted, and attributing lack of success in apprehending the bushrangers to lack of numbers, inefficient officers and limiting regulations which prevented a constable from leaving his station for more than two days unless he was in company with a sub-inspector. It was alleged that officers were

1Editorial, Yass Courier, 26 December 1863, p. 2.


3Editorial, Border Post, 4 March 1864, p. 2.
appointed through the practice of nepotism, and not on merit. By the end of the year, after an encounter between the police and Ben Hall's gang in which a sergeant was killed and after which a constable was charged with cowardice,¹ the Post had become more bitter in its attacks. It asked if the force was maintained only for show, there being a large number of "idle drones in blue clothes" in Albury itself, making "safe arrests of drunkards" and persecuting young boys, but no police in the bush, "where the police are really wanted". Referring to the recent incident, the Post continued:

If by any chance...a brave man or two should be found, they always seem to fight at a heavy disadvantage, and so it happens that the fools and cowards run away, and come off scot free, and the few men who stand their ground are shot down in cold blood.

Shortly afterwards, in reporting another mail robbery, the Post sarcastically commented, "of course the Albury police are about as much on the alert as usual".³

A more constructive comment on the reasons for the police's lack of success came from a correspondent to the Yass Courier who remarked on the rigidity of police routine, which made it easy for bushrangers to time their raids to avoid them, and on the uniforms of the police, which gave as much warning "as if they went along the road sounding a trumpet". The writer advocated the establishment of a force staffed by native born youths brought up in the bush, as the only people experienced

¹Most unfairly on the evidence given at his trial, when he was disciplined. See also Martin Brennan, "Police History of the Notorious Bushrangers of New South Wales and Victoria", part typescript, part MS, ML A 2030.

²Editorial, Border Post, 23 November 1864, p. 2.

³Border Post, 14 December 1864, p. 2.
enough in bush conditions to defeat the bushrangers.¹

These criticisms were all the results of frustration, and all of them were directed, implicitly at least, against the system of police organization. In his version of the events of the period a former policeman agreed. Martin Brennan, who was a young member of the force in the sixties and who later became a superintendent, believed that the reforms made to the system in 1862 were very necessary. Before this the police had been "of a nondescript character", the southern patrol consisting of about fifty men, most of whom were old soldiers of low intelligence whose duties were confined largely to the main roads.² The reforms consolidated the mounted police, gold police and local constables (previously governed by Magistrates' Benches) into a single force under Captain John McLerie.³ The reforms were not completely successful, since some of the senior officers appointed were unsuitable for the task, only three of the nine superintendents having a reasonable knowledge of police management, and many subordinates being decrepit, inexperienced or otherwise unfit for their positions and responsibilities.⁴ Despite these faults, Martin Brennan was of the opinion that it was the best system which could have been adopted.⁵ When a few years had passed, and "the defective branches had been lopped off", the new force was responsible

¹Letter, "J.P.", to the Editor, Yass Courier, 1 August 1863, p. 3.

²Martin Brennan, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

³Ibid., pp. 39-40.


⁵Ibid., p. 43.
for destroying the bushrangers and gaining the confidence of the people.

By 1874, ten years after the paper had derided the local force, the 

*Border Post* had a different opinion:

> It must be very gratifying to Mr. Inspector Singleton that his men are not only esteemed by the public, but also perform their duties in a manner which speaks well for their commanding officer.¹

The distribution of police in the south east reflected fairly accurately the situation regarding crime at the appropriate date. During the sixties, when bushranging was prevalent and gold fields plentiful, there were actually more police in the region than there were twenty years later, when the population was considerably higher. In 1866, not including the gold escort which visited the south east as well as other diggings, there were 197 men stationed in the region, 122 of whom were mounted.² By 1875 this number had been reduced to 150,³ and in 1885 it was up again to 194.⁴

Considering the awe with which bushrangers were regarded in the sixties, their numbers were very small. In the south east only Daniel Morgan, working almost alone in the Albury area, the Clarke gang in the Monaro and on the south coast, and Ben Hall's gang, roaming over the Yass Plains and as far as Goulburn in one direction and Gundagai in the

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¹*Border Post*, 4 March 1874, p. 3. (Erroneously 4 February at top of page.)


⁴*Police* Department, Report for 1885, pp. 5-9, NSW:LA V&P, Session 1885-1886, vol. IV.
other, were really important. This small number of bushrangers created a panic among thousands of people and contrived to avoid capture for many months. This apparently irreconcilable phenomenon of perhaps thirty men evading a police force of nearly two hundred and terrorizing a vast area requires explanation.

Part of the reason is simple and obvious. The small numbers of police and bushrangers involved, scattered over a wide and thinly settled area limited the likelihood of contact between them unless the brigands attacked a coach under police escort. The weaknesses of the police force itself, its poor organization, the predictability of its patrols and the personal inadequacies of many of its officers in the years following the reorganization of 1862, were also important factors. Yet the bushrangers could not have survived for so long without the existence of the notorious "bush telegraph", the network of support, concealment and information which permitted the bushrangers to remain free. It has often been argued, especially by Russel Ward, that the basis of this support was the genuine affection of many country people, in particular the free selectors, for the Robin Hood characters they saw as representative of their own struggles with the rich and powerful and as the "professional opponents" of a despised police force. The Irish origins of many farmers (and police, incidentally) strengthened their hatred, as the Irish had a long tradition of opposition to police authority. These factors made bushranging so widespread "that it amounted

1Frank Gardiner had already "retired" by 1863, though he was not captured until two years later.


3Ibid., p. 154.
to a leading national institution".  

Against this it has been argued that the romantic image of the bushrangers was misplaced, that in reality they were rogues deserving their eventual fate, and that the "bush telegraph" was maintained through fear rather than through sympathy or affection.  

In south east New South Wales it is possible to discover evidence to support both points of view, even discounting as posthumous romancing the ballads cited by Professor Ward. It is undeniable that bushranging was widespread, and that the bushrangers received succour from many people in the region. In 1866, although a gang of bushrangers had been entering houses to commit robberies in towns during daylight hours without disguises, none but their victims admitted seeing them. Despite having accurate descriptions of the men, the police were unable to find them; they had never robbed anyone of food, yet they were not seen buying it in any of the towns or villages around Gundagai where one of the robberies had occurred. Plainly someone was sheltering them.  

Again, when Trooper Chalker was detailed to investigate some robberies in the Abercrombie district late in 1863 he and two other troopers had to conceal themselves during the day and travel by night to avoid the "scouts" of the bushrangers. 

It was agreed that a considerable amount of this support was supplied by "foolish young men", whose heads had been turned by the

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1Ibid., p. 145.

2See, for example, Humphrey McQueen, A New Britannia (Ringwood [Vic.], 1970) pp. 137-140.

3Tumut and Adelong Times, 26 July 1866, p. 2.

4Martin Brennan, op. cit., p. 136.
prestige of the successful bushrangers, and who regarded them "rather as heroes than as thieves and murderers".\(^1\) As high an official as Sir John Young, the Governor of New South Wales, believed that a member of parliament had been correct in saying that this was so, that the bush telegraphs were not the heads of families but "young lads in the bush, without education or instruction of any sort", though he added the lack of religion in the sparsely settled regions as an additional cause for their misplaced sympathies.\(^2\) These youths were not alone in entertaining misplaced romantic sentiments towards the bushrangers. Even among the respectable citizens of Albury it was regarded as a grand occasion when a sight was obtained of a bushranger, and the ladies of good families were often "guilty of the extreme folly and wickedness of speaking in such terms as to leave their hearers somewhat in doubt as to whether they condemn the system of bushranging, or have some pet malefactors of their own".\(^3\) Such chatter was probably harmless and born of curiosity, not sympathy, but it was symptomatic of a wider affection for those who dared to challenge the law. Martin Brennan, at least, had no doubt that the Land Acts allowed noted stock stealers to become selectors far in the bush where they turned to bushranging themselves or happily aided those who did.\(^4\) It is significant that the Clarkes had themselves first gained a reputation as stock thieves before beginning on their bushranging career.\(^5\)

\(^1\) Editorial, Border Post, 5 October 1864, p. 2.


\(^3\) Editorial, Border Post, 5 July 1864, p. 2.

\(^4\) Martin Brennan, op. cit., preface, p. 3.

\(^5\) Martin Brennan, op. cit., p. 270; E.J. Lea-Scarlett, Queanbeyan, pp. 73-76.
Whether or not the bushrangers' reputations as "gentlemen" were justified, which is unlikely, not all of their support came from sympathetic sources. Mr Rowland Hassall, a magistrate at Braidwood, safeguarded his property from attack by the Clarke gang by making it known that he would not sit on the bench at the hearing of any case involving bushrangers.\(^1\) Ordinary people were afraid to travel or to send money by post, preferring to entrust remittances to friends for delivery.\(^2\)

Although part of the assistance came from "the sympathetic freemasonry of crime", much of it was forced on unwilling settlers by terrorism, for some, "who have made themselves obnoxious to these bush legislators, by refusing to harbor or assist them, [were] besieged and bombarded in their own houses, and their property committed to the flames".\(^3\) Tactics like these ensured the bushrangers of shelter through fear in outlying places far from such police protection as existed.

The bushrangers of the south east were not, for the most part, the romantic figures they were later made out to be. Ben Hall and Morgan were recognized\(^4\) as basically vicious; the Clarkes committed some atrocious crimes culminating in the "Nerrigundah outrage" of 9 April 1866, when seven members of the gang spent the whole day robbing passers-by.

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\(^2\)William Affleck, Reminiscences of William Affleck from Infancy to Present Date (Sydney, 1916) p. 15.

\(^3\)Editorial, Border Post, 1 March 1864, p. 2.

\(^4\)Ibid.
and wounding severely one who tried to escape, before bailing up the town's store and a hotel. During their visit a policeman was shot dead, having risen from his sick bed to face them.\(^1\) Three of the gang (Tom and Pat Connell and one of the Berriman brothers) had three weeks earlier attacked Rosebrook station, near Cooma, where their actions were not such as to add weight to tales of bushrangers' chivalry towards women. Mrs M.A. Harnett recalled many years later that, on her refusal to join the other members of the family who were being robbed in another room, one of the men struck her on the arm with his rifle and compelled her to do so. During the raid they were polite to the ladies, but, having said they did not want jewellery, later ignored her entreaties in stealing a brooch and necklace that had been given to Mrs Harnett by her grandmother.\(^2\)

As population increase made settlements less isolated, and as transport and communications systems improved, it was likely that bushranging would eventually be controlled. The decline of the bushrangers was accelerated by two new elements in the situation. First there were the improvements in the police force. Even in 1864 the police were not totally incompetent, at least in some parts. Three men who began sticking up stations in the Monaro were caught when the police accidentally came across them, and defeated them in a pitched battle.\(^3\) The disgraceful performances of many police, which led to an investigation by the Inspector General himself in 1863, were no longer typical two or

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\(^1\)Account of the event in Martin Brennan, op. cit., pp. 282-287. The officer killed had previously shot one of the gang.

\(^2\)Mrs M.A. Harnett, "Bushrangers Raid, 1866". (ML Ah 67/3.)

three years later. In 1863 the Colonial Secretary, Charles Cowper, had threatened "to set the regular Police aside, and organize another band under an entirely separate arrangement to accomplish what the police seem unequal to".¹ Three years afterwards the reforms of 1862 had begun to take effect, especially as the police now had more encouragement in their task. This encouragement was the second new element in the situation, and the more critical. In 1865 parliament passed the Felons' Apprehension Act,² which permitted the police to select the best horses wherever they came across them in a chase, thus removing one of the bushrangers' advantages. It made provision for men to be summoned to appear in court by Bench warrant published in the Government Gazette, and upon failure to comply for them to be declared outlaws and liable to be shot on sight. And, most important of all, it rendered anyone aiding or abetting a declared outlaw liable to a heavy term of imprisonment.

By this one action, Martin Brennan believed, the government ensured the speedy elimination of the bushranging menace. Its effects were mainly on the sympathizers and scouts, "whose nefarious occupation was practically stamped out in one act, through fear of penalties, if detected".³ The law was now more to be feared than the bushrangers; it also paid better. The Ben Hall gang collapsed before the year was out, because those "who had shared in the spoils of the gang for years, now applied themselves vigorously to the task of betraying them to the police


²28 Vic. no. 2, assented to on 8 April 1865. NSW Government Gazette, 1865, p. 817.

³Martin Brennan, op. cit., p. 214.
6. Ben Hall.

_National Library._
in the hope of securing the large reward of £2,800 offered for their arrest". 1 Hall, Gilbert and Dunn were summoned to surrender at Goulburn by 29 April 1865; 2 on 30 April Ben Hall was shot by a police party acting on information received. On 10 May, Gilbert and Dunn were proclaimed outlaws; 3 three days later John Gilbert was dead, shot by police after they had been informed of his whereabouts by a former telegraph. The third of the famous trio, John Dunn, was found by accident by police who were arresting another man; he was hanged on 19 March 1866. 4 Other bushrangers suffered capture equally quickly: Morgan was shot in Victoria, once more on information received. The Clarke gang, due to the secluded and difficult terrain of their centre of operations, the Jingera mountains, lasted longer, but in 1867 their stronghold was invaded and they, too, were captured. Eventually all of the major bushrangers were caught or killed, so that by 1870 the country was safe to travel. The railway and telegraph played little part in this process, for the railway did not reach Goulburn until 1869. Telegraph messages were used to inform police stations of the latest known movements of the bushrangers, 5 but they were not responsible for any of the captures. The drama of the arrest of Ned Kelly was not typical of New South Wales.

As the south east settled down, then, crime diminished in frequency and became less dramatic. By the eighties young men who might

1 Ibid.


3 NSW Government Gazette, 1865, p. 1013.

4 Information on the fate of the bushrangers from Martin Brennan, op. cit.

5 Some of these, sent from Young in 1865, are still extant. ML DOC 913.
earlier have become bushrangers were still causing their elders annoyance, but now by their boisterous behaviour in towns. In 1879 there were complaints of youths congregating in the streets of Albury and insulting ladies.¹ Now, however, the solutions suggested were less violent, for it was advocated² that the Mechanics' Institute be further developed to turn the energies of these youths to literature, chess, puzzles and improvement through instruction on drawing, music, gymnastics and dancing. Similar solutions were suggested at Yass in 1885, where blasphemy could be heard in the street, on the race course and even in the church yard. The cause of larrikinism of this and other types was said to be "defective home training, the spared rod, and bad example", the cure to be prosecution of adult offenders, especially of the "respectable" classes, and the provision of educational and entertaining amenities, properly supervised, for the young. These youths were not ruffians but energetic youngsters without a proper outlet for their enthusiasm, which could be given such an outlet in comfortable play rooms and gymnasiums during the long winter evenings.³ As it was, many bored youths found their own outlets in the ruining of other people's enjoyment on occasions when, as in Bombala in 1893, an unruly group disrupted a theatrical performance.⁴

Nuisances of this sort were minor problems compared to those of the sixties. The intervening years had witnessed a revolution in social

¹Letter, "Leander", to the Editor, Border Post, 5 April 1879, p. 3.

²Letter, "Action", to the Editor, Border Post, 15 October 1879, p. 3.

³Editorial, Yass Courier, 26 May 1885, p. 2.

⁴Bombala Herald, 21 April 1893, p. 3. A similar complaint was made at Moruya in 1881. Moruya Examiner, 9 July 1881, p. 2.
conduct with the removal of bushranging and a general decrease in criminal activity. In this, as in so much else, the south east had become more civilized with the years through the improved quality of the police, the greater settlement of the region, and changing attitudes brought about by increasing contact both within the region and with the outside world. A safe, "respectable", society had come closer by these developments.

VI

If the society of south east New South Wales was in the 1860s rough and rural, burdened with a fear of criminals, the institutions implanted in it during the next thirty years softened that society and made it much more acceptable to men and women of culture and refinement. This development had been partly due to rising material standards of living and of comfort in the bush, but also partly to the greater control exercised by bodies created for the purpose. In the towns the local councils' actions ensured that certain building and sanitary standards were maintained; throughout the whole region, urban and rural, the police and magistrates combined to eliminate the wildest elements from society. Occasionally they may even have exercised their authority too stringently, for in 1879 the residents of Tumbarumba deputed one Mr Shepherd to visit the Ministers responsible for police and petty sessions to complain about "the state of thraldom and terrorism that is being exercised by an unscrupulous portion of the public service toward a quiet community". ¹ This was untypical, however. In most cases the

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increasing efficiency of the public authorities was welcomed by the citizens.

The advancing sophistication of life was also assisted by the private organizations concerned with issues affecting the everyday life of the inhabitants of the region. They, too, demonstrated the increased maturity of the society of which they were a part; they, too, helped to promote the ideals of respectability.

All of these institutions, public, economic, political, dealt with matters relating to the business life of the community. They, and the other forces pressing towards respectability — churches, schools, newspapers — were representatives of the serious side of life. Since it is impossible for human beings, even in remote places, to be serious at all times, there developed at the same time an ebullient social life, which made its own contribution to the character of the society of the south east.
Chapter 8

The Spice of Life: The Uses of Leisure

I

Even in a newly settled country, where the demands of establishing settlement take up most of the time and energies of the pioneers, there are moments for relaxation and for indulgence in amusements. Leisure time, being rare, is the more precious for its scarcity; men demand the opportunity to use it in the manner they most desire. So it was in south east New South Wales, even in the 1860s; and the demand for entertainment was not always satisfied. A bored newspaper correspondent recorded his feelings:

The difficulty which a correspondent experiences in a town such as Gundagai can only be imagined by those who really reside here. There are times and seasons when actually nothing, so to speak, transpires here worthy of note... The past week has been one of those particular dull ones, that were it not for the arrival and departure of the mails, it would resemble a week of Sunday's in mourning.¹

The week in question was not entirely typical of country town life, although it was more likely true of life on country stations, where the arrival of a casual visitor could be a notable occasion.² The country towns of the south east often had a variety of entertainments to choose

¹Tumut and Adelong Times, 2 August 1866, p. 3.
²Many stations, though, had large numbers of visitors, as members of the respectable classes often preferred to lodge there rather than in hotels. James McLaurin of Yarra Yarra, itself described as larger than many townships, provided a thousand travellers with free accommodation in one year. "A Tour to the South", Australian Town and Country Journal, 6 April 1872, p. 433.
from, some sporting, some theatrical, some social; and there was always
the pub. As the immediate pressures of building a home, clearing and
tilling the land, decreased, more and more people had the opportunity of
interesting themselves in matters which did not directly impinge upon
their working lives. At first many of them no doubt welcomed the chance
to perform less pressing, but still important, tasks, and so took little
part in social activities, but it is certain that people became
increasingly willing to spend their time in pursuits outside the work
routine. These pursuits may initially have been directed in many cases
towards the political activities of the pastoralists' or selectors'
associations, or towards the societies aiming at improvements in
agricultural techniques. However, more light hearted pastimes also
attracted many people, glad of a diversion from their hardships in what
remained, at least until the seventies, a frontier society.

The character of a society is usually reflected in its
recreations. There are three main forms of recreation, all of which were
present in the south east from an early period; each has its own value,
both for the individual and for the community as a whole. The need to
relax, to be entertained, to enjoy the company of others is the cause of
almost all of the potential methods of recreation, but other benefits
are also derived. Sporting activities, for example, are beneficial to the
physical health of individuals as well as providing entertainment for
players and spectators alike. Cultural pursuits can lead to improvement
in the educational standard of the population and add a fresh dimension
to humdrum lives. Concerts, dances and social entertaining, while perhaps
having fewer such tangible advantages, satisfy the needs for social
contact, relaxation and amusement, and add a measure of diversity to the
individual's experience. An added benefit to society was often realized
in the south east by the fact that many of the entertainments held were for the purpose of raising funds for institutions like churches, schools and hospitals, therefore the spare time activities of the populace had repercussions beyond the immediately obvious.

To judge a society's character from the leisure activities of its members, it is necessary to recognize these values which derive from the various forms the activities take. This done, it remains to examine the relative importance of the three basic forms of recreation — cultural, physical and social — in the society concerned, and the attitudes of the society towards them. The pursuits held to be the most valuable by the articulate people may not be those most popular among the people as a whole. This was the case in south east New South Wales.

II

In a community in which so many people were attracted by the ideal of a "respectable" way of life, and in which so many formal institutions existed for the promotion of that ideal, it is predictable that there should have been some attempt to further "respectable" behaviour through the leisure time activities of the people. In Victorian times this attempt was most likely to occur in the provision of facilities for the "improvement" of the minds of the inhabitants of any region; where educational neglect was often due to adult ignorance, it was reasonable to hope for an increased interest in culture through education of these same adults, who might then show a greater responsibility towards the schooling of their children.

Facilities for improvement in the bush were substantially limited to the towns and villages, since the provision of such facilities was necessarily a combined effort. Outside these centres, only the rich
could afford to subscribe to informative journals or to buy books for a private library, and the population was too scattered to permit mutual improvement societies, debating clubs and the like to flourish. In towns, the supply of the fundamentals was taken over by institutions established for the purpose.

Especially in small places, the initiative in cultural matters was often taken by the churches, though their motives were generally mercenary. Aside from the concerts, auctions and tea meetings which supplied the revenue to keep many churches solvent, there were also occasions when financial gain was combined with mutual improvement. For example, in 1868 the Rev. J. Hopkins, the Wesleyan minister at Gundagai, lectured on "Various objections to the scriptures answered" at a soiree following upon a Bruce auction, held to reduce the debt on the church building.\footnote{Yass Courier, 19 February 1868 (abridged from the Gundagai Times).} Again, in 1886 the Church of England funds at Cooma were aided by the proceeds of a series of lectures given by the incumbent, including one on General Gordon.\footnote{Manaro Mercury, 12 May 1886, p. 2.}

The cultural endeavours of the churches were not limited to the presentation of the views of the local clergyman. The minister of St. Andrew's, Goulburn, arranged for the Rev. Dill-Macky of Scots Church, Sydney, to give the third in a series of lectures organized without financial object in 1899.\footnote{Goulburn Herald, 18 September 1899, p. 2.} More important than lectures, singly or in a series, was the formation of improvement clubs in connection with some churches, including the Roman Catholic literary societies and institutions at Yass and Goulburn, the Anglican Church Union at Goulburn and the
Wesleyan Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society at Kiora, near Moruya, which have been already mentioned. But associations such as these were relatively rare, depending upon a few determined enthusiasts or upon the existence of relatively strong and stable congregations. In most places the contribution of the churches towards cultural progress was limited to the fund raising lectures and the library sometimes operated by the church or Sunday School.

The real endeavour to bring culture into the lives of the inhabitants of the south east came not from the churches but from Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts. The idea behind the Mechanics' Institutes originated in England in 1823 with the formation of the London Institute, where it was hoped that working class people would acquire knowledge by regular meetings at which they would discuss topics of importance. Within ten years an Institute had been formed in Sydney, and thereafter they spread throughout the colonies, with the object of educating the working classes. The first to be founded in the south east was the School of Arts at Goulburn in 1854; by 1860 it had been joined by others at Albury, Braidwood and Wagga Wagga, and by the first of a series of short lived institutes at Queanbeyan. Further progress was stimulated by a government decision to subsidize adult educational institutions at the rate of £1 for every £2 raised by subscriptions.

1See above, pp. 71-73.

2The title of the individual institution seems to have had no significance, as all of them performed similar functions. Some even changed their titles or were known by both.


4George Nadel, Australia's Colonial Culture (Melbourne, 1957) p. 125.
By 1874 Mechanics' Institutes, Schools of Arts or Literary Institutes existed in Albury, Bega, Bombala, Braidwood, Goulburn, Gundagai, Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga, Yass and Young, and others at Araluen, Tumut and Cooma had already gone out of operation. The active institutions had a total membership of 857, and Albury and Wagga also had small free libraries, catering for an average of eight readers daily. In 1886, when the government grant was given on a pound for pound basis, seventeen institutions in the south east were in receipt of such assistance, including one in a town as small and isolated as Tumbarumba, and others in the small centres of Candelo, Cathcart, Pambula and Wolumla on the far south coast.

The objects of these institutions were simple. Those of the Yass Mechanics' Institute may be taken as representative; these were:

The diffusion of literary and scientific knowledge by means of a library of works of science and general literature; a reading-room for books and periodicals, and by purchasing and collecting models and apparatus illustrative of the principles of physical and mechanical philosophy, and by promoting in every way possible the intellectual improvement of the Members...

The political climate of the times was reflected in the rule forbidding the discussion of religious subjects.

The library was the main cultural contribution made to a

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2 For that year only, I think.


4 Rules and Regulations of the Yass Mechanics' Institute (Yass, 1867) p. 3.
community by the Mechanics' Institute, although from time to time several progressive places attempted to do more. Already by 1864 there were complaints that the Albury Mechanics' Institute could not sustain lecture courses due to lack of interest among the townspeople, although some months earlier the committee had attempted to increase such interest by making admission free to subscribers to the Institute. At this early stage in the formation of a society in the south east, such attitudes are not surprising, since most of the people's efforts were being directed towards more practical ends. In these early years it was easy to raise some enthusiasm for a new project, less easy to maintain interest once the initial phase was complete, as there were always new projects to excite the imagination of the townspeople. There were churches, schools, hospitals and law courts to be built, roads to be formed, and farms to be established. Even by 1863 the town of Yass had seen the rise and fall of a dramatic society, a market commission and a Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association. The local newspaper commented:

We appear to be singularly unfortunate, as a community, in all our local organisations. A special fatality seemingly attends every one of them... Nothing could exceed the temporary excitement that each of these associations called forth on being first ushered into the notice of the inhabitants...How such interest...could have been excited, and die out so suddenly, is hard to say.  

Among co-operative efforts only the Mechanics' Institute remained, and it, too, was in a state of some frailty.

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1 Editorial, Border Post, 14 September 1864, p. 2.

2 Border Post, 4 March 1864, p. 2. In 1870 complaints were made at Bega that members were not attending the weekly meetings, though they had been popular in the previous year. Bega Gazette, 14 April, 24 November 1870, p. 2.

3 Editorial, Yass Courier, 30 May 1863, p. 2.
As towns became more settled, and as education and communications improved, there developed an atmosphere more receptive to improving endeavours. Public lectures were delivered by eminent men such as the celebrated journalist G.A. Sala, who spoke on Russia at the Mechanics' Institute in Yass to a large audience in 1885; the size of the audience was unusual, for even in the eighties it was difficult to persuade Yass people to attend even free lectures, and Mr Sala charged admission fees ranging from two to four shillings. The cause was probably the current preoccupation with Russian intentions towards Afghanistan. Although some such lectures were privately arranged, most cultural activities centred on the Mechanics' Institutes. A few institutes tried to establish debating and literary societies; among these were Moruya in 1881, Cooma in 1885 and Collector, where the society was well established at the end of the century. The Bombala School of Arts proposed holding evening classes in English, writing, mathematics, drawing and shorthand in 1888, and at Germanton it was planned to attract visitors by creating a museum in conjunction with the library. Such a museum was by 1898 a major attraction at the Goulburn

1 Yass Courier, 17 July 1885, p. 2.

2 The Y.M.C.A. at Albury ran a course of lectures in 1864, Border Post, 7 September, 5, 19 October, 16 November, 21 December 1864, p. 2.


4 Manaro Mercury, 28 November 1885, p. 3.

5 Goulburn Herald, 9 August 1899, p. 4.

6 Bombala Herald, 1 June, 27 July 1888, p. 2.

7 Border Post, 8 March 1889, p. 9.
Mechanics' Institute, for in that year a total of 22,497 visitors were received there, viewing 3,156 exhibits. The Goulburn institution also supported at that date a technical college (giving lessons in Chemistry, Geology, Public school Physics, Manual Training, Wood Carving and a number of crafts), and provided facilities for chess and draughts in its smoking room. It must be remembered, though, that Goulburn had by the end of the century a population of ten thousand, therefore its experience was atypical of most of the south east. Most schemes for educational activities went the way of those tried at Bungendore.  

The School of Arts was established in the village of Bungendore in 1888, and in 1892 it was resolved to form a literary and debating society and to commence a course of instructive lectures; the first debate, on the introduction of Kanaka labour into Queensland, was held on 28 June. By the close of the year four speakers (including E.W. O'Sullivan, the controversial member of parliament for the Queanbeyan electorate, of which Bungendore formed a part) had given lectures, and six debates had been held, therefore a good start had been made. During 1893 these activities increased in popularity, particularly debating, in which interest became so great that meetings were held weekly instead of fortnightly and "a full house was the rule and a crowded one not unusual".

2. Information on these is taken from the minute book of the Bungendore School of Arts, 1888-1908, ANL MS 663.
3. Sub-committee meeting, 7 June 1892; minute book, p. 32.
4. Committee meeting, 5 July 1892, p. 35.
5. Annual report for 1892, p. 41.
6. Annual report for 1893, p. 54.
But this represented the peak of interest; 1894 was a less successful year, the committee introducing lantern lectures in a vain attempt to maintain attendances, and the debating club apparently being dormant. By 1896 it was plain that participation in the activities of the School was declining. In that year the debating society was resurrected with some hopes of success, there even being an inter-club debate with the debating society from Queanbeyan, "but unfortunately fell through on account of the frequency with which more attractive entertainments were held in the town". An effort to diversify the pursuits open to members proved equally unsuccessful, as the chess club "had a merry but very short career". Although the committee believed in 1897 that the institution was "not now a luxury but...a necessity to the people of Bungendore", it was a necessity solely as a library and reading room, for by the turn of the century the only organized events held in three years had been a flower show in 1898, held for the purpose of raising funds, and two lantern lectures in 1899. As a co-operative mutual improvement institution, the School was dead.

Yet the experience of Bungendore was less extreme than that of many other country institutes, which became transformed from centres of

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1 Annual report for 1894, p. 72.
2 Annual report for 1896, p. 115.
3 Ibid. A chess club also existed in the Queanbeyan School of Arts in 1896. Queanbeyan Age, 29 February 1896, p. 2.
4 Half yearly report, 30 June 1897, p. 132.
5 Committee meeting, 6 December 1898, p. 172.
6 Annual report, 30 June 1899, p. 184. There was also a flower show in that year.
learning into places for recreation with a library attached, retaining
the title of Mechanics' Institute merely to continue to qualify for the
government grant. The dilemma of the country Schools of Arts and
Mechanics' Institutes was summarized at the end of the century by Mr
A.W. Jose, Secretary to the University Extension Board in Sydney, who
described the process by which this transformation occurred. These
institutions, he argued, were started with the intention of providing
good literary facilities to the twelve people in every thousand that he
estimated desired them; the problem was that this number could not
sustain the institution financially after the first spasm of community
interest had waned, so they turned to bazaars and concerts to raise funds
to buy books. But, as only subscriptions attracted government subsidy,
the temptation grew to attract the youth of the town into membership by
providing a billiard table for their amusement. This proved gainful to
the book fund only until recreational subscribers elected committeemen
from among their own ranks who encouraged the games at the expense of the
literature. He concluded:

I have several times watched the slow but certain
change by which the School of Arts under such
influences becomes a sports club with a library
attached to its tail.

This process was indeed observable in some places in the south
east. Representative of the institutions undergoing such change was the
Bombala School of Arts, which was formed in 1872 and four years later was
in a thriving condition. By 1883 the building was in danger of

1 A.W. Jose, "The Difficulties of Country Schools of Arts", Library
Association of Australasia: Proceedings of the Sydney Meeting, October
1898 (Sydney, 1899) pp. 96-98.

2 Balance Sheet, Bombala School of Arts and Mechanics' Institute, November
1872-31 December 1876, in Australian Papers, ML A 666, pp. 346-347.
compulsory auction, as the School's debentures had fallen due with interest arrears of £677, and there was no prospect of their liquidation. This danger was forestalled in May, when at a public meeting a committee was appointed to raise subscriptions to clear the debt; by August over £200 had been raised, and a committee elected for re-opening the institution. Their success in the matter was remarkable, for within four years a new wing had been added, the roll of membership was increasing rapidly, and prospects were bright. Significantly, however, the realism of the committee was such that the new wing was to house a billiard and general club room, and the other main work done had been on the stage of the main hall, which was used for theatrical productions as well as for functions connected with the School of Arts. In 1888, despite the rising fortunes of the institution, one local newspaper was uneasy about these developments. The billiard club was now "the life of the Institution and its chief support"; the reference library was kept in a locked room. The newspaper warned that, although the success of the billiard club was benefiting the School, it was "not for the formation of billiard clubs that this School of Arts is subsidised by the Government". The caution was already too late. In March a special meeting of members approved the purchase of a second billiard table, and

1 Bombala Herald, 21 April 1883, p. 2.

2 Editorial, Bombala Herald, 12 May 1883, p. 2.

3 Bombala Herald, 18 August 1883, p. 2.

4 Manaro Mercury, 26 October 1887, p. 2.

5 Editorial, Bombala Herald, 24 February 1888, p. 2.

6 Bombala Herald, 16 March 1888, p. 2.
in the same month the committee spent £15, a fraction of the cost of the table, on new works for the lending library, which was:

Sorely in need of this addition, as it is a well-known fact that many members...are in the habit of procuring works of fiction from private circulating libraries."

Already, of the one hundred members of the School of Arts, over fifty were members of the club, which did appear to have some positive results aside from the obvious financial help it provided. It was claimed that many people who had joined the School so as to gain membership of the club had thereafter taken advantage of reading room and library facilities, and the club had assisted in "bringing together harmoniously all classes of the community". Even through the debasing of the aims of the School, some good at least may have been achieved.

Other institutions in the south east were faced with the same problem. The Albury Mechanics' Institute resisted the introduction of billiard tables, a proposal for their introduction being defeated in 1887, but in 1892 it, too, succumbed, and two tables were installed. The librarian of the School of Arts at Germanton resigned in 1889, stating "that he felt he was virtually taking a salary for doing nothing, as so few members had...patronized the library during the year".

Nevertheless, in view of persistent public apathy towards

1 The table cost £127-19-6, Bombala Herald, 13 April 1888, p. 2.
2 Bombala Herald, 23 March 1888, p. 2.
3 Editorial, Bombala Herald, 30 March 1888, p. 2.
4 A. Andrews, "Albury Mechanics' Institute Jubilee", Book of newspaper cuttings, ML 374.9A.
5 Albury Border Post, 1 February 1889, p. 9.
lecture courses and debating societies, the major cultural significance of Schools of Arts lay in their libraries and reading rooms. Even the value of these was questionable in many instances, for they often limited their stock to light fiction, which was regularly condemned as educationally useless and even morally unsound. One honourable exception was the Yass Mechanics' Institute, whose library was specially praised in the mid seventies for its good selection of books of all types, which were not, "as is usual, drowned in novels". It is notable that even in the 1890s the annual reports of the Yass institution dealt solely with the library and reading room; its apparent freedom from the necessity to cater for mere recreation makes it the exception which possibly proves the rule, yet by the nineties even in Yass book issues were predominantly works of fiction, as was the case almost everywhere from a much earlier period.

Some institutions built up exceptionally large libraries; most received a wide variety of magazines (both Australian and British) into their reading rooms. In 1886 the Goulburn Mechanics' Institute was ranked with the Schools of Arts at Bathurst and West Maitland as the foremost provincial libraries in New South Wales, with a stock of over five thousand books. This was remarkably high, even for a town as large as Goulburn; the holdings of other libraries were usually very much less

1 Rev. Andrew Gardiner, "A Minister's Holiday", Australian Witness, 1 January 1876, p. 4.


3 C.W. Holgate, An Account of the Chief Libraries of Australia and Tasmania (London, 1886) p. 45. In 1883 the library had 5,131 books in stock; by 1898 the total was 8,438, annual report, Goulburn Herald, 20 January 1899, p. 3.
extensive. In 1870 the Bega School of Arts had over three hundred "volumes of modern standard literature" in its library;\(^1\) in 1875 the Cooma Institute had about seven hundred;\(^2\) in 1883 at Albury there were over 650;\(^3\) and the library at Bungendore contained 348 volumes in 1893,\(^4\) and 451 five years later.\(^5\)

Even in the larger libraries the collections were dominated by fictional works. At Braidwood in 1872, for example, there were 1,012 fictional works in the total of 1,730, while only seventy two works dealt with scientific subjects, 247 with history and biography and eighty three with voyages and travel.\(^6\) Within each section the quality of the available works was far from uniform. At Braidwood the scientific works included works by Sir Humphry Davy (\textit{Elements of Agricultural Chemistry}) and Sir Charles Lyell (\textit{Principles of Geology and Antiquity of Man}) as well as twenty six volumes of the \textit{Nautical Magazine}, but also a series of books by John Timbs under such titles as \textit{Curiosities of Science} and \textit{Popular Errors Explained}. While the history section contained many works by eminent historians, among them Carlyle's \textit{French Revolution}, Gibbon's \textit{Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire} and Macaulay's \textit{History of England}, as well as the writings of Samuel Smiles, it also had books like the three

\(^1\)Bega Gazette, 20 January 1870, p. 2.
\(^2\)Cooma Gazette, 7 August 1875, p. 2.
\(^3\)Annual Report for 1883, Border Post, 23 January 1884, p. 2.
\(^5\)Return to Department of Public Instruction, 1 June 1898. Ibid., p. 151.
\(^6\)Catalogue of the Works in the Library of the Braidwood Literary Institute (Braidwood, 1872).
by one Dr Dorem on *Queens of England, Monarchs Retired and Knights and their Days*, the educational value of which was more questionable. Of course, the section devoted to fiction displayed the widest range of all: Dickens, Defoe and Scott at the one extreme, George Cupples (*Hinchbridge Haunted*) and Miss M. E. Braddon (fourteen titles including *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Sir Jasper's Tenant*) at the other, and Disraeli, Wilkie Collins and James Fenimore Cooper somewhere between. Other works in the library included Darwin's *Descent of Man*, Mill's *Utilitarianism*, the *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare, plays by popular dramatist Douglas Jerrold, John Dunmore Lang's *History of New South Wales*, and in lighter vein, *Arabian Nights*, G. and P. Wharton's *Wits and Beaux of Society* (in two volumes), five volumes of *Punch*, and (in the section on voyages and travel) *Harem Life*, by Emmeline Lott. There was therefore sufficient variety to cater for any taste, high or low, educational or recreational, demure or racy. Quite probably the most valuable books from an educational point of view were commonly on view on the shelves, rather than out on loan. Variety of choice such as that at Braidwood was not universal, for in Albury in 1884 there was a complaint that the latest purchases for the library were largely fictional in character. Furthermore:

Special pains seem to have been taken to have well-bound novels, while on the contrary some of the standard and instructive works are positively so flimsy and cheaply got up that it is scarcely possible for the most careful person to read any one of them without returning it with a mutilated cover, and perhaps loose folios.

This concentration on the provision of light literature was simply explained by the public demand, which was for such material. Especially after the Sydney Free Public Library introduced in 1883 its scheme for loaning books of educational value to country institutes there

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1 Letter, "A Member", to the Editor, Border Post, 16 July 1884, p. 2.
was little point in their expending money on such works, which were read
by only a very small proportion of their members. In any case, these
works were more expensive than popular novels. The Sydney library's
system was intended to alleviate the difficulties of country institutions
in regard to finance, boxes of about sixty volumes being purchased from
a special government grant and loaned free of charge to the committees
of these institutions, even the costs of transport being born by the
Sydney library. The scheme began in 1883, when the first vote was passed,
the first fourteen boxes, containing only books by "well known standard
authors", being circulated from August. At once the system proved
highly popular, this suggesting that there were at least some country
people interested in furthering their education. In 1884 institutions
in the south east at Murrumburrah, Pambula and Wolumla borrowed books,
and by the end of the decade ten institutions were participating in the
scheme, including those at Bungendore, Bombala, Cooma, Gundagai, Temora
and Wagga Wagga. By then the monthly applications for loans were greatly
in excess of the number of boxes available, though there were now almost
four thousand books for loan. During the nineties the demand continued
to increase, even the Goulburn institution taking boxes in some years;
in 1896 over one hundred country libraries applied for books, and 14,208
volumes were sent out. In that year ten institutions in the south east
were successful in their applications, most of them in small centres like
Bowna, Captain's Flat and Central Tilba, though Goulburn, Queanbeyan and

1883-1884, vol. VII. For an example of the contents of a box, see table 9.

2 Sydney Free Public Library, Annual Report, 1884-1885, Appendix E,


4 It is especially noticeable that towns on the south coast — Wolumla,
Pambula, Central Tilba, Cobargo, Bermagui, Eden and Wyndham — were
regular participators in the scheme.
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<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works</em> (1872) 3 vols.</td>
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<td>G. Grote</td>
<td><em>Plato, and the other Companions of Sokrates</em> (1875) 3 vols.</td>
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<td>A. Guillemin</td>
<td><em>The Heavens, by J.N. Lockyer and R.A. Proctor</em> (1878)</td>
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<td>A. Hayward</td>
<td><em>Sketches of Eminent Statesmen and Writers</em> (1880) 2 vols.</td>
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<td>W. Ihne</td>
<td><em>History of Rome</em> (1871-82) 5 vols.</td>
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<td>A.W. Kinglake</td>
<td><em>Invasion of the Crimea</em> (1877-83) 7 vols.</td>
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<td><em>Miscellaneous Writings</em> (1860) 2 vols.</td>
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<td>Justin MacCarthy</td>
<td><em>History of our own Times</em> (1880) 4 vols.</td>
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<td><em>Ilios; the City and Country of the Trojans</em> (1880)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.P. Smyth</td>
<td><em>Life and Work at the Great Pyramid</em> (1867) 3 vols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.R. Young</td>
<td><em>Around the World with General Grant</em> (1880) 2 vols.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Sydney Free Public Library, Report for 1883-1884, loc. cit., Appendix I, p. 11. All books except the last, which was published in New York, were published in London.
Yass also received books in that year.\(^1\) By 1900 it was reported that the system was proving very useful and that it was highly appreciated by country students.\(^2\) And certainly many Schools of Arts in the southeast had benefitted from it. In 1886 six boxes of books had been sent to three institutions in the southeast, and 364 books circulated by them; in 1899 fourteen institutions received twenty five boxes and circulated 1,664 books.\(^3\) At least one local committee was satisfied. In 1898 Mr A.M. Millard, President of the Bungendore School of Arts, defended his committee's selection of fiction in its own library on the grounds that "good novels provided a healthy mental relaxation" and that "for those who appreciated the higher forms of literature...the regular supply of books from the Free Public Library, more than met the demand".\(^4\) This was probably true, not only in Bungendore but elsewhere. And considering the fact that the population of the southeast was then in the vicinity of 140,000, a circulation of about 1,500 quality books in a year makes it very clear how low the demand was.

Of course, to this figure must be added the circulation figures of the individual libraries' own holdings. But there were mainly comprised of light literature, even in those institutions whose activities remained closest to the intentions of their founders. In Goulburn, where the library was said to be of considerable value to students at the Public school and technical college preparing for examinations, works of fiction


\(^3\) My calculations from statistics in the library reports.

\(^4\) Bungendore School of Arts Minute Book, 1888-1908, Annual General Meeting, 28 July 1898, p. 159.
made up 34,632 of the 40,159 issues from the library in 1898. As magazines and illustrated papers issued totalled a further 3,167, books of educational value represented little more than one in every twenty issued in that year.\(^1\) The Yass Mechanics' Institute, where the library was the most important feature of work, had a similar experience, fiction dominating borrowing to an even greater extent.\(^2\) If borrowing of novels was so important in these places, it must have been much more so in institutions in more isolated places and in institutions such as Bombala School of Arts, which were being kept alive by a billiard club or by the regular hire of the hall for concerts, theatricals or dances. It is likely that even the libraries were in reality used for recreational purposes by the late century,\(^3\) so that the magazines in the reading room may even be regarded as of more cultural value than the books circulated.

The public only demanded light literary entertainment from most of the books they read, but they could hardly avoid gleaning information of practical value from the newspapers and magazines provided.

It is at first sight surprising that many institutions took such a wide range of newspapers and magazines, until it is realized that many of these were supplied free of charge. While it might be expected that local newspaper proprietors would perform such a service, it was also true that more distantly situated ones did so. At Bungendore, in addition

\(^1\)Annual Report for 1898, Goulburn Herald, 20 January 1899, p. 3.

\(^2\)See table 10, whose figures are taken from the annual reports published in the Yass Courier.

\(^3\)The working class preference for light reading is illustrated by the figures for borrowing from the libraries connected with railways. In 1888 fiction formed 73.8 per cent of books borrowed from the library of the Victorian Department of Railways, and five years later it formed 74.6 per cent of books borrowed from the New South Wales Railway Institute library. (Information from Mr J.C. Docherty.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>History and Biography</th>
<th>Travels</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
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<td>90</td>
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<td>1899³</td>
<td>8165</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>40⁴</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>9183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹"Art, science, etc." (1898), Art and science (1899).

²Geography and travels.

³Also issued were eighty five volumes from the Free Public Library.

⁴Poetry and drama.
to the two Queanbeyan papers, the *Cootamundra Herald*, *Goulburn Penny Post* and *Freeman's Journal* were all supplied gratuitously.\(^1\) It is hard to believe that the larger institutions would have received the variety of periodicals they did if they had been compelled to subscribe to them all. In 1864 the Albury Mechanics' Institute received both Albury papers, one from Wagga, one from Goulburn, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Argus*, the *Yeoman*, *Home News*, *Bell's Life in Victoria* and six magazines, all from Great Britain;\(^2\) in 1872 the Braidwood Literary Institute took the London and Sydney *Punch*, *Illustrated London News*, *Illustrated Sydney News*, *Mail*, *European Mail*, *Australasian*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Empire* and three local newspapers from Goulburn and Braidwood, as well as seven notable British magazines and the *Government Gazette* and Parliamentary Papers;\(^3\) at Bombala in 1893 local newspapers were held from Bombala, Cooma, Tumut, Adelong and Bega, as well as fifteen newspapers and periodicals from Sydney, London and even the United States;\(^4\) and at Yass in 1897 a member could consult local newspapers from Maitland, Queanbeyan, Young, Wagga Wagga, Yass, Burrowa, Dubbo and Junee as well as national ones from Sydney, and a very large variety of literary and scientific journals.\(^5\) Even if members read books for entertainment, their reading of periodicals was more improving in nature.

\(^1\) Bungendore School of Arts Minute Book, 1888-1908, Committee meeting, 8 August 1899, p. 188.

\(^2\) Advertisement, *Border Post*, 26 April 1864, p. 3.

\(^3\) Catalogue, op. cit.

\(^4\) Bombala Herald, 14 June 1893, p. 2. The American publication was the *Scientific American*.

The public taste for light literature was reflected also in the books they bought. Books were not common in the bush, at least in the sixties, for they were expensive, but even by the sixties some enterprising newspaper proprietors, most of whom also ran stationery businesses, were importing books from Sydney. J.B. Elworthy acquired three cases of books and brought them to Tumut in 1866. They were divided into two classes: the first contained books "handsomely bound, and suitable for Birthday Gifts", such as Shakespeare, a *Life of St. Francis Xavier* and Trollope's *Rachael Ray*, but even these included romances and adventure stories like *Doubrovsky, the Russian Brigand*; the second type were almost entirely of this nature. These included several works by "Aimard" with titles like *The Stone-heart, an Indian Romance* and *The Strong-hand, or the Noble Revenge*. It is hard to doubt that these were the tales demanded by people bored with the often monotonous life in the bush, instead of the improving literature that a few educated men would have preferred them to study. Trener and Morley, newspaper proprietors in Young, attempted some gentle persuasion in 1877, when advertising parcels of books that they would get from Sydney if receiving encouragement. They advertised works by Carlyle, Lytton, Marryat, Trollope, Thackeray and Dickens, but further down the page recognized the inevitable by announcing "Bret Harte's Heathen Chinee and Sensational Novels" in one volume, and *Hostages to Fortune*, a new novel.

The existence of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in the south east must not, therefore, be taken as implying a flourishing

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1 Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 42.


3 Advertisement, *Burrangong Chronicle*, 10 January 1877, p. 3.
cultural tradition in the region. Many of them never aspired to be the improving agencies intended by the originators of the movement; none were fully successful even if they did so aspire. In any case, relatively few people were members of these institutions, and these were confined to the middle classes almost to a man. In 1874 there were only 857 members of such institutions in the entire region, and only 193 of these were mechanics or apprentices.¹ The cause was that most institutions charged subscription rates which, though perhaps not excessive in view of their aims and intentions, were certainly discouraging to members of the working classes. In 1864 at Albury the annual subscription was one pound,² enough to make many people hesitate before joining a young institution offering as yet few facilities and no guarantee of permanence. In recognition of this the committee reduced the subscription to ten shillings soon after, but in 1880 it was returned to its old level.³ Other institutions set similar rates. At Young the subscription was fixed at one guinea (half for ladies),⁴ while the Yass committee felt it necessary, despite an increase in membership, to reduce the subscription to sixteen shillings as from 1 January 1898 in an effort to bring it within the reach of all.⁵ Hence the members of most institutions, and certainly their committees, came from the same class as that which ran

² Advertisement, Border Post, 26 April 1864, p. 3.
³ A. Andrews, op. cit.
⁴ Burrangong Chronicle, 19 May 1877, p. 2.
⁵ Advertisement, Yass Courier, 7 January 1898, p. 3.
the pastoral societies and school boards. Presidents of Mechanics' Institutes included men of high social standing: Robert Maddrell at Braidwood, Dean Sowerby at Goulburn, H.B. Fitzhardinge at Wagga, John Gale at Queanbeyan. They were institutes for mechanics in name alone.

The furthering of "respectable" behaviour through leisure time activities cannot, then, have been a conspicuous success. Not surprisingly, people preferred diversions of a less demanding nature, even those who were members of improving institutions. Yet it would be wrong to suppose that society was the poorer for this reluctance to take part in improving activities. Membership of Mechanics' Institutes did increase as time passed, as did their issues of books. The fact that people were reading more, even if only popular novels, magazines and local newspapers, is surely more important than the quality of their reading matter. In the sixties there had been few Mechanics' Institutes, little reading of any sort; by 1900 the proliferation of reading material was of itself a significant indication that the educational advances of the intervening years was having its effect. A certain level of "respectability" was already apparent, even if it was at a lower level than that the upper levels of colonial society wished to see achieved.

III

Without doubt, the most popular pastimes among the bush population in the 1860s were sporting activities, and throughout the late nineteenth century sport remained a major source of amusement for people of all classes, whether as participants or spectators. At first sporting activities were confined largely to horse racing, shooting, cricket and foot racing, but as time went by and technology advanced other sports such as cycling and roller skating enjoyed periods of great popularity.
In years when there was no motor transport, in a land as large and as difficult as Australia, the horse naturally achieved a very high status, as a worker and as a friend to the bushman. It is therefore not surprising to discover that horse racing was by far the most popular sport in south east New South Wales. Every town and village had its annual races; larger towns had their turf clubs, fine racecourses and handsome grand stands. In Albury the racecourse was finished five years before the first church was even begun.¹ In 1864 a new grand stand provided ladies with a place from which to enjoy the races "without being annoyed by drunken rudeness"; it could hold two hundred people, and contained refreshment booths "to provide for hungry and thirsty souls".²

As in the towns, so at the diggings racing was quickly established. At Young the Burrangong Race Club was organized and races held within a short time of the discovery of gold, two thousand people attending a meeting in May 1861.³ At Kiandra races were held on New Year's Day in the same year on a makeshift track a few miles out of town.⁴ By the seventies races were well established as a highlight in the calendar of any town.

As population increased so did the popularity of horse racing. By the seventies no public holiday could pass without race meetings being held at every substantial town or at one of the nearby villages. And as meetings increased in number the prizes increased in value. The Albury

¹G.L. Buxton, op. cit., p. 95.
²Border Post, 4, 29 March, 1 April 1864, p. 2.
³W.A. Bayley, Rich Earth (Young, 1956) p. 68.
meeting in 1874 had a total of £1,079 in prize money, the value of the Albury Cup race itself being £322. But even this handsome sum was overshadowed by the magnificence of the Wagga Cup spectacle, which attracted visitors from distant places, and which turned Deniliquin, Cootamundra and Albury into mere suburbs of Wagga for the duration of the meeting. For in the mid seventies the Wagga Cup was second only to the Melbourne Cup in value, the Murrumbidgee Turf Club offering a specially donated Gold Cup valued at £100 and a cash prize of a thousand sovereigns in 1876, when Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales, attended the meeting while on a tour of the colony.

Expenditure of this nature was not widespread. More typical, and just as popular, were the races held on a more modest scale at Murrumbateman, near Yass, early in 1885. About three hundred people watched a programme of five horse races, four foot races (including one for girls) and a competition for throwing at a wicket. It was of such a meeting, at Candelo, that a correspondent wrote:

For real sport the country race meetings stand unequalled. To those who have experienced the pleasures and evils of both [city and country meetings], the country races must always be preferable. Hilarity and genuine social feeling predominate...

1Border Post, 14 March 1874, p. 2.

2Mary Gilmore, Old Days: Old Ways (Sydney, 1934) p. 38.

3K.J. Swan, op. cit., pp. 77–78, states that, according to the Australasian, the Wagga Cup was, about 1874, even richer than the Victorian race.

4Australian Town and Country Journal, 16 December 1876, pp. 971, 989, 990. Other prizes at the meeting included £500 for the Grand Stand Handicap and £500 for the Town Plate. (Ibid., 10 June 1876, p. 930.)

5Yass Courier, 3 February 1885, p. 2.

Popular, too, were impromptu private races, which could attract a substantial number of spectators, as at Young in March 1877 when, although there had been no publicity, over a hundred people turned up to watch some friends racing their horses on the local racetrack for side stakes of £5 and £10.\(^1\) In the country, too, friendly meetings of this sort were held between neighbouring stations simply for amusement, or perhaps as a prelude to a congenial evening, as suggested by "Banjo" Paterson:

We kept a racehorse now and then  
On Kiley's Run,  
And neighbouring stations brought their men  
To meetings where the sport was free,  
And dainty ladies came to see  
Their champions ride; with laugh and song  
The old house rang the whole night long  
On Kiley's Run.\(^2\)

Sporting events on stations were not confined to horse racing. Cricket matches between station teams such as that held in January 1882 between Myalla and Hazeldean\(^3\) were not uncommon. Larger in scale was the annual festival held at Duntroon each New Year's Day, when up to two hundred people would be present to watch or take part in foot races, the schoolboys' cricket match or the evening bathe in the river.\(^4\) That athletics and cricket should feature prominently in this event is predictable, for these were the two most popular sports after horse racing.

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\(^1\)Burrangong Chronicle, 28 March 1877, p. 2.


\(^3\)Edward Pratt, Diary, 26 January 1882. Myalla won in one innings. See also Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 4, for one employer's attitude towards cricket.

\(^4\)Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 118.
Spectator sports quickly developed into occasions of more general entertainment. Held as they often were on public holidays, they provided the opportunity for an afternoon's entertainment of remarkable variety, usually followed by a dance, dinner or convivial evening at a local hotel. This was particularly true of horse racing, where it was normal practice for booths and sideshows of all descriptions to surround the track for the amusement of spectators. The most exotic of these was the lion and tiger booth at the Albury race meeting of 1864, but there were many others. Ten years later the amusements at the same venue included Aunt Sallies, merry-go-rounds, wheel of fortune and three-card tricks, and at Binalong in 1885 there were available several games of chance and a booth run by the American Photographic Company. Of course, cricket matches and athletics sports as well as race meetings would have refreshment and publicans' stalls, and sometimes fruit and confectionery sellers as well. By the nineties one particular meeting had reached still greater heights, for the annual gathering of the Goulburn Highland Society and Burns Club provided the most spectacular entertainments of all. The meeting of 1899 at the show ground took place among a number of booths offering games of chance and other amusements, but for once the amusements on the ground were even more colourful and attractive than the peripheral ones. There were cycle races, throwing and jumping competitions, a caber tossing contest, dancing and piping events and

1 Border Post, 1 April 1864, p. 2.


3 Yass Courier, 27 February 1885, p. 2. In 1882 the stewards at Moruya prohibited "all card sharpers and other low swindling characters" from attending their meeting; their efforts proved successful in eliminating this element. Moruya Examiner, 1 October 1881, 28 January 1882, p. 2.
military competitions, including tilting at the ring and lemon cutting, in which each swordsman had to slice two lemons hanging at shoulder height while at full gallop.¹

Occasions like this, and many lesser ones, while they were fun for spectators, were serious matters for many of the contestants. Although a few athletic clubs competed solely for trophies,² during the seventies and eighties the practice of running for money grew steadily. The annual sports run by friendly societies as well as meetings arranged by specifically athletic clubs charged entry fees for their races and awarded cash prizes to the winners, though boys' and girls' races might carry prizes such as those of a book and a pair of gold ear rings offered by the Independent Order of Foresters at their annual sports in Albury in 1879.³ By the eighties the prizes offered were high enough to attract competition from beyond the locality. In 1885 the Yass Courier⁴ commented:

Athletic sports bid fair to rival the horse racing mania which at present prevails in the colonies, as almost every newspaper...contains reports of foot races, in which large numbers of athletes take part, while the prizes competed for are valued at hundreds and even thousands of pounds.

The natural result was that foot racing swiftly joined horse racing as a serious gambling sport. Horse racing had always attracted the gamblers. Sometimes it was on a modest scale, as at Bellevale race course near Yass, where in 1868 just enough betting occurred "to give

¹Goulburn Herald, 27 January 1899, p. 2.
²For example, the Yass club formed in 1880. Yass Courier, 10 September 1880, p. 2.
³Border Post, 16 April 1879, p. 2.
⁴20 February 1885, p. 3.
Excitement or sufficient interest to the various races". Often the betting was on a much larger scale than this. In 1883 it was noted as a sign of hope that the bookmakers attending the Albury races would not be the usual second rate men, but the leading men from Melbourne. Their presence would guarantee the success of the races, for that success depended upon the support of the public, and in this connection "the bookmakers form a very important element". So great was the public interest in betting and racing that in 1888 Henry Edwards of Bibbenluka gave a worker who had just acquired a race horse the option of selling it and forsaking racing or leaving within three months, as he believed the racing fraternity was bad company; he told the man, "you are going down hill now as fast as you can go". The employee seems to have accepted Mr Edwards' judgement, for he was still at Burnima in August. Foot racing, or "pedestrianism", also attracted large numbers of followers. In 1877 a challenge race at Cootamundra between a local man and one from Gundaroo attracted four hundred spectators. The race, over a hundred and fifty yards, was for £25 a side. Within a few years the potential public interest in properly organized contests had been jeopardized, however, as people of doubtful character took part. In 1884 the Border Post alleged that the handsome prizes offered at meetings were jeopardized, however, as people of doubtful character took part. In 1884 the Border Post alleged that the handsome prizes offered at meetings were

1 Yass Courier, 15 April 1868, p. 2.


3 Henry Edwards to W. Girvan, Burnima, 4 April 1888. Bibbenluka Papers, Letterbook 1886-1888, ANL MS 1154/22/1.


5 Burrangong Chronicle, 7 March 1877, p. 2.
resulting in the practice of swindling the public. This was happening partly through betting on the races at unfair odds, and partly through false declarations of ability by outside runners, who were receiving ridiculous handicaps as a result. Protests were almost inevitable after each race, and these were dealt with by committee men and stewards who themselves had a financial interest in the result.\(^1\) The newspaper was supported by "a lover of pedestrianism",\(^2\) who alleged that this form of cheating by making false declarations was so prevalent that any man running "straight" had no chance of winning. Four years later matters came to a head in Bombala, when the annual meeting of the local Athletic Club was almost ignored by the public. The local newspaper\(^3\) explained this by a complete lack of public faith in the genuineness of the contests:

Footracing from one end of the colony to the other bears the brand of fraud so palpably that it has come to be regarded merely as a means by which a certain class of swindlers and loafers contrive to make a living.

This occurred in the running of races known as Sheffield Handicaps,\(^4\) which attracted the attention of bookmakers, who had been the originators of the frauds. For the Bombala club to free itself from this taint, it would have to ensure that no race official had any interest in the result, so that justice could be seen to be done. At the recent meeting the club

\(^1\)Editorial, Border Post, 5 January 1884, p. 2.

\(^2\)Letter to the Editor, Border Post, 12 January 1884, p. 3.

\(^3\)Editorial, Bombala Herald, 1 June 1888, p. 2.

\(^4\)In 1887 there were sixty seven nominations for a Sheffield Handicap, carrying a prize of £130, at Bega. Australian Town and Country Journal, 22 January 1887, p. 196.
had been placed in the embarrassing position of having to ask two outsiders to adjudicate on a protest, as so many members of the committee were financially involved in the race! Several athletes had stated their intention of never running again in the town.\(^1\) Another writer in the same newspaper\(^2\) reckoned that the evil was not confined to foot racing, but that such sports as cricket had also been affected by gambling, with detrimental results to the honesty of the contests.

Whether or not this was so, cricket and other team sports were certainly taken as seriously as individual sports by the people of the south east. If every town or village had its racetrack, most of them had cricket teams, and by the nineties teams playing one of the codes of football as well.

Like so many games, cricket was often played on a friendly basis between scratch teams. Even after the formation of clubs, trial matches between members of the same club created as much interest as those against rival teams, the annual fixture between married men and bachelors being a highlight of the season in many places.\(^3\) As early as the sixties, though, the formation of clubs had led to greater competitiveness and to the development of rivalries, as when a good attendance turned out on a warm summer's day in 1864 to watch the Albury club defeat the visiting Beechworth team from Victoria by nine runs on the first innings.\(^4\) The

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\(^1\)"Notes by 'Rambler'"*, Bombala Herald, 1 June 1888, p. 2.


\(^3\)For example, three such matches were played at Bombala in 1888, when only four were played against outsiders. Bombala Herald, 5 October 1888, p. 2.

\(^4\)Border Post, 8 February 1864, p. 2.
game was still the thing in most of these early fixtures, which were played in a friendly spirit, no day's cricket being complete without the dinner at the local hotel, the speeches, and the wine, flowing free until the early hours of the morning. Despite increasing population and a consequent rise in playing standards, this spirit continued among village clubs into the later years of the century. One account of matches played at Berridale, on the eastern slopes of the Snowy Mountains, is particularly evocative of an atmosphere more usually associated with village green cricket in southern England. Play would commence at eleven o'clock, on a pitch but recently cleared of stock. Half an hour after the stock was moved:

The genial host of the hotel, assisted by two or three other admirers of the game, marks out the crease as near as may be, and the first stragglers put in an appearance; Mr. Thomson, a squatter who bowls at a desperate pace; Mr. Gannon, the butcher, much esteemed for his left hand bowling; and Mr. Brown a young farmer especially renowned for the impartiality with which he hits all sorts of balls round to square leg.

Meanwhile, the hotel has been prepared specially for the occasion and great quantities of food made ready, including onions despite the objection of one gentleman who felt the impropriety of eating them with lady spectators so close. The said young ladies are already bantering with the players and making bets of gloves or 'kerchiefs on the outcome.

After an entertaining first innings, dinner is taken, all players having removed their boots:

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1 See, for instance, the accounts of the two matches in the Germanton district in 1869 between Ten Mile Creek and Back Creek. Border Post, 2, 23 June 1869, p. 2.

2 "Cricket in the Country", by R.F.W., Woolway station, Manaro Mercury, 19 October 1887, p. 2. This delightful article is reminiscent of the best English cricket writing of the 1920s and 1930s.
Out of respect for the landlady's floor... At first complete silence prevails, broken only by irregular remarks fired from the length of the table at each other by the opposite heads..., but as the sherry flows the conversation increases in volume, and when the teacher has satisfied nature by twice going to beef and gooseberry tart, he rises in complaisance with the general call, and in a voice in which emotion and repletion struggle for the mastery, sings of the 'jolly miller's daughter, who has hair of golden hue'... And then, after a speech or two, the majority go out on the verandah to smoke... Some few of the more convivial are, however, loth to leave the sherry, which they employ in the most appropriate toasts, until themselves and the bottle are both exhausted together...

Play [is] now resumed, and for a short time is characterised by a certain wildness and dangerousness to all concerned. It does not, however, last long, and some steady, skilful play is exhibited in its stead. By this time there is round the ground a dozen buggies, two or three fruit and vegetable carts, a few shearers asleep in the sun, and thirty or forty others on the green, who call out and jeer at the catches occasionally dropped or balls misfielded.

Games of this sort, at which squatter, farmer, teacher and butcher met and played together, were valuable for creating a village identity and for assisting social harmony. There must have been hundreds of them played in the south east over the years. In the larger towns, however, the advent of inter-club rivalry brought during the eighties and nineties a new seriousness to the game.

By the eighties friendly matches were supplemented by cup competitions in some areas. Mr Solomon, of Cootamundra, offered a cup to be contested by any club in the area bounded by Yass, Young, Temora, Wagga Wagga, Narrandera and Tumut, any club winning the cup for three successive seasons to be entitled to keep it permanently.1 Similar trophies were competed for in the nineties. In the south of the region

1Yass Courier, 20 November 1885, p. 3.
the Murrell Challenge Cup was to go to the winner of a series of home and away matches, played on a league basis, between teams from Bombala, Delegate, Jindabyne, Snowy River, Berridale, Paupong, Umeralla and Nimitybelle. In the north clubs competed for the Heaver Cup, any side being able to challenge the holders to a single tie to decide who should hold it thereafter. This trophy's history demonstrates how seriously the game was taken by then, for in 1895 it became the subject of recriminations between clubs. First, Gunning protested that a Bowning player was ineligible after losing the cup to that club, then in the following month a match was played between Bowning and Burrowa. At the time agreed for stumps to be drawn Burrowa required only a few runs for victory with five wickets standing. They therefore wished to continue, but Bowning refused, therefore Burrowa appealed to the Yass Cricket Club, who organized the competition. Their decision was that Burrowa should gain the cup, as the match should have been played to a finish. Bowning refused to comply, so the Yass club eventually instituted successful court proceedings to recover the cup. By then feelings were so high that the three clubs were unlikely to meet in competition again.

Although such bickerings brought the game into disrepute, cricket was by the eighties and nineties so popular that not even these unsavoury proceedings could seriously affect it. Cricket's status in the region was sealed in 1885 when Alfred Shaw and Arthur Shrewsbury led an

1 Bombala Herald, 1 December 1893, p. 2.

2 Yass Courier, 15 January 1895, p. 2. The protest was referred to the New South Wales Cricket Association, which decided that the player had been eligible. Yass Courier, 25 January 1895, p. 2.

All England Eleven to Australia, playing matches against teams of twenty two players at Wagga, Candelo and Yass.\(^1\) The match at Candelo greatly surprised the tourists, for the village was so small that "all wondered where the people would come from to see the match", yet at least two thousand people appeared on foot, by horse and by buggy, some from up to a hundred miles away. Although the match cost the organizers £300 to arrange, they made a profit. For the tourists' match at Yass a special train ran from Goulburn,\(^2\) and more than 1,200 people from as far distant as Queanbeyan and Grenfell saw the Englishmen score 103 runs, the Yass side replying with seventy runs for the loss of eleven wickets.\(^3\)

These and other English cricketers were not the only touring sportsmen to visit the south east, for in 1899 a British rugby union side led by the Rev. M. Mullineux played and defeated a Goulburn Select team as the first match of an Australian tour. The day of the match was declared a public holiday, excursion rates were charged on trains from Moss Vale, Harden and Queanbeyan, and although the weather was dull and cold three thousand spectators witnessed the match.\(^4\)

Although the various football codes were introduced comparatively late in the century, they speedily attained a position of favour. The two Albury sides, Albury Football Club and Federal City, had acquired a good measure of support by 1884.\(^5\) However, the conduct both of players


\(^2\) *Yass Courier*, 20 January 1885, p. 2.

\(^3\) *Yass Courier*, 23 January 1885, p. 2; Shaw and Shrewsbury, op. cit., p. 119. The tourists estimated the attendance at 1,500.

\(^4\) *Goulburn Herald*, 7, 14 June 1899, p. 3.

\(^5\) *Border Post*, 4 June 1884, p. 2. The code was probably a version of Australian Rules.
and spectators was already causing alarm. Players had a reputation for rough play and rough language, to the extent that the attendance of ladies was rendered impossible, and the game was in danger of being brought into contempt. While teams were travelling, their members had been known to damage the property of transport companies and inconvenience other passengers, though this did not occur when the same people travelled as members of cricket clubs. Rough play and spectator misbehaviour ruined a match between the two Albury clubs, one observer describing the supporters as more like "a pack of famished wolves, only secure in their numbers, than human beings". Such occurrences were not limited to Albury. In 1887 the two reports of a match between clubs from Cooma and Bega commented on ill temper and rough play on the part of the players, and disgraceful conduct by spectators. At least one umpire, Mr J. Allan, decided to exercise severe control over the players in a match between Albury and Wagga in 1889, and earned the gratitude of followers of the game by doing so, for the match was played in a friendly spirit as a result. However, such interventions were not always necessary, many matches being played in a more acceptable manner; these instances of unsporting conduct were remarkable as departures from normal practice. As in the case of cricket, games of football were followed by dinners and pleasant evenings; this was true even of that between Cooma and Bega, when the players forgot their differences when the game ended.

1 Editorial, Border Post, 5 July 1884, p. 2.
2 Border Post, 9 July 1884, p. 3.
3 Manaro Mercury, 10 August 1887, p. 4 (quoting the Bega Standard), and 13 August 1887, p. 4. A Cooma player broke three ribs during the encounter. This was probably a rugby union match.
4 Border Post, 28 May 1889, p. 3.
A variety of football codes was played in the south east. In the Monaro and in the north east of the region a version of rugby union seems to have been the most popular, while in the Riverina the reports suggest a composite of rugby and Australian Rules. In 1890 some codes of football were still a novelty, for a report in that year of an association football match between Yass and Bookham included the judgement that "Bussell, who understands the rules, played in splendid form for Yass".

Although team sports and horse and foot racing proved to be the most durable in the affections of the people of the south east, other sports enjoyed periods of popularity. There was a roller skating rink at Young in 1877, but it was in the late eighties that "rinking" was most in fashion, with rinks in operation at Albury, Bombala and Yass, as well as elsewhere. These were patronized, not only by youths, but also by ladies and children. Sometimes skating had unfortunate consequences; at Bombala, where skating was practised in the hall of the School of Arts, so much damage was done to the floor that it required planing before dances could be held there.

It was in 1869 that the first bicycle, known as the "velocipede", made its appearance in Albury, and two years later that a

1 A Rugby Union club was formed, for instance, at Young in 1887. Australian Town and Country Journal, 4 June 1887, p. 1183.

2 Yass Courier, 26 August 1890, p. 2.

3 Burrangong Chronicle, 6 October 1877, pp. 2, 3.

4 Border Post, 19 February 1889, p. 2; Bombala Herald, 14 September 1888, p. 3, 12 October 1888, p. 2; Yass Courier, 18 April, 9 May, 9 September 1890, p. 2.

5 Bombala Herald, 2 November 1888, p. 2.

6 Border Post, 8 September 1869, p. 2.
local surveyor introduced his machine to Yass, at a time "when bycyles [sic] are almost out of date elsewhere". This comment was mistaken, for it was not until the nineties that cycling became a fashionable sport. During that decade clubs were common in the south east, members holding road and track races or simply going out together for trips; solo journeys such as that to Sydney undertaken by a youth from Yass were also of public interest. By then those interested in cycling had become highly proficient; in 1893 the winner of a race from Bega to Candelo covered the fifteen miles in thirty seconds over the hour, thus demonstrating "that bycycles have been improved to such an extent that even the best horses have little chance of keeping pace with them".

Interest in minority sports tended to be spasmodic, but very great during periods of activity. Boxing was not a major sport in the south east, yet in 1880 a large number of people watched and gambled on a prize fight for side stakes of £5 at Temora. Again, in 1889 four hundred people attended the Federal Skating Rink in Albury to watch a young local boxer, Mick Collis, fight a draw with J. McGowan of Melbourne, some local gentlemen having subscribed a purse of £25 for the meeting. Even in prize fighting decorum was essential, as supporters of the Albury boxer

1 Yass Courier, 10 November 1871, p. 2.

2 Yass Courier, 6, 23 August 1895, p. 2. At Yass the "Affleck Medal", donated in 1895, was to be presented to the winner of the most races in a series held at the local track on public holidays over a two year period. See also the Goulburn Herald, 8 May 1899, p. 2, 24 May 1899, p. 3, and the diary of Ida Francis Dawson, 25 September 1894, ML Uncat YSS Set 475.

3 Yass Courier, 6, 30 August 1895, p. 2.

4 Bombala Herald, 2 June 1893, p. 2 (quoting the Bega Standard).

5 Bulletin, 18 September 1880, p. 9 (quoting the Temora Herald).
discovered when the referee censured them "with due gravity" for calling out "knock him out, Mick" at a stage when the visitor was in some trouble, this being "a contravention of the ethics of the game".\(^1\)

Other sports, too, had their adherents and their clubs. Shooting at live pigeons was popular,\(^2\) as was coursing among the more prosperous;\(^3\) there was rowing on the Murray and on the south coast\(^4\) (Albury had an annual regatta on St. Patrick's Day in the sixties); miners and children at Kiandra enjoyed skiing;\(^5\) and by the nineties tennis courts were appearing and tennis clubs being formed.\(^6\) But none of these sports commanded the permanent following achieved by cricket, football and racing.

Sporting activity, whether organized or spontaneous, was largely confined to the towns and villages. There were occasional cricket matches or race meetings on stations, and by the nineties some stations, such as that on which Ida Dawson grew up, might have their own tennis courts for the children,\(^7\) but recreation on most properties was limited to shooting.

\(^1\) Albury Border Post, 8 October 1889, p. 3.

\(^2\) Albury Border Post, 22 March 1889, p. 11, 20 August 1889, p. 3, 23 August 1889, p. 10 and many other reports.

\(^3\) Australian Town and Country Journal, 27 May 1876, p. 850, referring to a new club at Wagga whose committee members included local notables H.B. Fitzhardinge, John Cox (of Mangoplah station) and Dr Morgan O'Connor; Albury Border Post, 16 August 1889, on the second meeting of the Albury club.

\(^4\) Border Post, 24 February 1869, p. 3. In 1870 Thomas Walter recorded a visit to a regatta (at which much betting was carried on) at Moruya. Extracts of Diary, 30 September 1870.


\(^6\) Goulburn Herald, 27 March 1899, p. 2; Diary of Ida Dawson, 29 September 1894, loc. cit.

\(^7\) Diary for 1893, passim.
riding and driving, or even walking on the property. Country people themselves preferred to visit the nearest town to enjoy sporting activities, as did A.L. Faithfull and E.R. Deane, of Springfield, near Goulburn. They, like many other station owners, bred their own race horses, which they took to races at local courses and in Sydney.¹ Sport was therefore based on the towns and on the facilities which they alone could supply, and as town life became more varied so did the forms of sporting activity available; so it was with all forms of public entertainment, of which there was a rapidly increasing amount as the century progressed.

IV

Life in the country could be a very boring existence, as Henry Lawson has pointed out in many of his short stories,² for anyone unused to bush life, and especially for the women, who were not out with other people all day splitting rails or digging dams. Yet the facilities for self entertainment were minimal, unless access could be had to the library of a School of Arts or a church; entertainment for bush people had to be in the form of social calls. Thus, for example, the station families north of Cooma, the Cosgroves of Billylingera, the Harnetts of Rosebrook, the Cliffords of Rose Valley and others, visited each other regularly, though they were all close enough to the town to render such visits calls of choice rather than of necessity.³ On these occasions

¹ A.L. Faithfull, Diaries, 1872-1875, occasional entries; E.R. Deane, MS Australian Trotting Register, November 1894. ANL MS 1146, Boxes 20, 12 respectively.

² See, for example, "Water Them Geraniums", "Barney, Take me Home Again", and his stories of Peter McLaughlan, the bush missionary.

³ Eleanor M. Bowler, "Diary while at Rose Valley", ML FM 3/462, various entries February to April 1875.
songs round the piano or card games like whist provided variation to the basic amusement of conversation. The piano could be a very important acquisition: the arrival of Aunt Martha Moore at the home of William and Louisa Whittakers at Tubbutt, near the Snowy River, in 1864 was momentous because of the standard of elegance her piano, harp, glass, china and books brought to the homestead. "Tubbutt became a focal-point for district entertainment". Home visits were varied by picnics, for which there were many suitable spots on most properties. In 1881 Edward Pratt's family held such an outing at the Bobundarah creek in celebration of his daughter's birthday; it was attended by the mistress of the station school and by several neighbours and their families, including the Litchfields of Hazeldean. On a larger scale, sixty guests from Adaminaby, Brindabella and Uriarra attended a picnic held by three ladies of good family at Coolamon Plains in 1895. Activities included cricket and rounders, dancing until dawn, and "an abundant and most appetising al fresco banquet".

Occasions such as these provided some diversion for the families of the rich, yet even for them life was often a drudge. In 1893 a ball and supper at Bibbenluke was organized almost solely "to break the monotony of this dull hole"; five years earlier it had been remarked that social gatherings were rare, and that most people spent their time

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1 Entry of 15 April 1875; see also Edward Pratt's diary for 6-7 July 1872.


3 Edward Pratt, Diary, 30 September 1881.

4 Yass Courier, 10 May 1895, p. 2. Guests included "Miss Franklin" and Miss Amy Franklin.

5 Bombala Herald, 12 May 1893, p. 2.
sitting at home discussing other peoples' business. ¹ If people of this
class could find little to occupy them, the families of station hands,
small farmers and shepherds were worse off, for they had still fewer
facilities for amusement at their command.

It became common for the richer families, at least, to satisfy
their desires for social contact and recreation in the towns. ² The very
self conscious Polite Society of the bush ³ established its position at
balls and dinners, sometimes at each others' stations, but often in towns,
many of these being connected with important sporting occasions or with
one of the institutions of the town. Typical was a Private Subscription
ball held at the Yass Mechanics' Institute in 1883, which was attended
by about eighty people, some of whom had travelled from Sydney, Goulburn
and other places for the occasion. ⁴ It was possible for people who made
no claim to gentility to attend some of the larger functions, but at these
they were often strictly segregated, a situation which for the most part
they accepted. If they did not, the social significance of the occasion
was likely to diminish. The Wagga Wagga Race Ball was at one time the
social event of the year in the town. To ensure proper segregation of
the classes, a chalk line was drawn across the floor, thus dividing
Society from the common people:

¹ Bibbenluke correspondent's report, Bombala Herald, 3 August 1888, p. 2.

² The diaries of Eleanor Bowler, Edward Pratt, Ida Dawson and A.L.
Faithfull all contain references to concerts, balls and so forth attended
in town.

³ It is only necessary to read Miles Franklin's All That Swagger, My
Brilliant Career, or Up The Country (written as "Brent of Bin Bin") to
realize how conscious of social status the squattocracy was.

⁴ Bulletin, 2 June 1883, p. 18.
No thought of trespass came to anybody's mind, till, with the multiplication of selectors, business increased the trade population, and enabled people in general to buy tickets. This meant a packed floor at one end of the hall, where two-thirds of the population milled in one-third of the total space, while a comparatively small number danced delicately in the comfort of the other two-thirds.

When one daring couple crossed the line while the squatters were at supper, the result was that the following year a rope was used in place of the chalk line. However, the precedent had been established, and two years later someone cut the rope:

And the horrifying spectacle was witnessed of ordinary trades people dancing right in among the squatters and their wives and daughters. That was a thing not to be borne, and the Race Ball as a special social function declined to nothing, debutantes thereafter "coming out" at the Masonic Ball.¹

Predictably, the institutions whose functions were attended by the social elite were the Race Clubs, Agricultural Societies, churches, Mechanics' Institutes and friendly societies, all of which (excepting the Race Clubs) were devoted to the promotion of a "respectable" style of life. Townspeople as well as country squatters aspired to this Polite Society, to which the more prosperous of them gained entrance by virtue of their financial position and their willingness to adopt the habits and manners of the squatters.² As early as 1864 Society in Albury was well developed, for a forthcoming housewarming and Masonic Ball had provided

¹Mary Gilmore, Old Days: Old Ways, pp. 38-40. These events occurred when the prestige of the Murrumbidgee Turf Club was at its height, in the early 1870s. Twenty years later the women of Wagga were no less conscious of class, as was shown by the indignant complaint of a sewing girl that she had been snubbed at a ball by "some daughters of the would-be aristocrats". Letter to the Editor, Hummer, 26 March 1892, p. 2.

²See above, pp. 247-249.
the occasion for many ladies to send specially to Sydney and Melbourne for fresh supplies of dresses, gloves and other adornments. Admission to the ball was at a price of one guinea for gentlemen, ladies to be in attendance by invitation only. Despite the cost of tickets and torrential rain the ball was a great success, over a hundred people attending.¹

Even a small place like Adelong drew "a brilliant assemblage" of about a hundred and fifty people to the Odd Fellows' Ball in 1866,² and in 1883 about fifty couples attended the Odd Fellows' Ball in Bombala, where tickets were ten shillings single and fifteen shillings double, more than sufficient to ensure the respectability of every person in attendance.³

In a few of the larger towns the provision for respectable recreation extended to the theatre. In the 1870s Mr Hugo Alpen, later well known in musical circles in Sydney, founded the Albury Philharmonic Society, whose concerts were designed for the enjoyment of those with an ear for serious music and for the education of those yet to acquire such tastes. For this purpose Mr Alpen selected Handel's Messiah as the work to be performed at the first concert; he hoped that the hearing of such music would, in time, lead people to prefer it to "those simple things which usually form the programme at amateur concerts".⁴ Later pieces performed by the society included Haydn's oratorio, The Creation,⁵ and Balfe's opera, The Bohemian Girl,⁶ both of which proved very popular.

¹ Border Post, 17 June 1864, p. 3 (advertisement), 21, 28 June 1864, p. 2.
² Tumut and Adelong Times, 8 November 1866, p. 2.
³ Bombala Herald, 31 March 1883, p. 2.
⁴ Letter, Hugo Alpen to the Editor, Border Post, 7 March 1874, p. 3.
⁵ Border Post, 24 June 1874, p. 2.
⁶ Border Post, 10 October 1874, p. 2.
being thought lighter in character than Handel's work. *The Bohemian Girl* was also one of the works from which selections were performed at Yass in 1899 by the, by then well established, Goulburn Liedertafel. Such groups as these were rare, and public entertainments, whether or not by locals, catered for a less refined taste than they did. If most institutions in the bush attempted to foster the respectable values of the middle and upper classes, the theatre made no such efforts, but presented what was popular rather than what was culturally valuable.

From the early decades of settlement there was a demand for public entertainment in the form of concerts and plays, this demand being quickly met by the formation of local dramatic clubs and by the tours of professional theatrical companies. Already in the sixties it was traditional that on St. Patrick's Day the amateurs of Yass gave a performance of a light farce and of songs sentimental and comic, the performance taking place in the large room of the Royal Hotel, the audience covering the balcony and filling adjoining rooms as well. Audience reaction at a charity concert at the Exchange Assembly Rooms in Albury in 1869 clearly showed what the public wanted: Mr Alpen's piano playing "deserved more recognition than it met with", but the "Ethiopians" and the comedy sketch received audience approval. Later in the century public taste had not changed, as only one hundred and fifty people attended a concert in Cooma in aid of the Wesleyan church, when many more had been expected. The reason was that the programme was

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1 Goulburn Herald, 15 May 1899, p. 2.

2 *Yass Courier*, 21 March 1868. The audience, some three hundred strong, was described as "most respectable".

3 *Border Post*, 8 December 1869, p. 2.
not "such as to draw a large audience, especially those who generally fill the back seats, it being of a quiet and entertaining order".¹ Such preferences, like the partiality of bush people for novels rather than for educational works, were natural and understandable in a society of relatively poorly educated people who looked to the theatre or concert hall as a place of relaxation, a place to forget the hard labour of establishing themselves in a new land.

Professional companies also found it profitable to visit country centres, and the south east, being on the main route from Sydney to Melbourne, probably received more visits from these companies than did most parts of the colony. Usually their tours only included stops at the larger towns on the Great Southern Road, though gold fields also attracted them. Early in 1871 Braidwood was visited in rapid succession by "circuses, dramatrical entertainments, wizards, dancers, panoramas, and pictorial exhibitions".² In March 1866 Tumut had performances by Madame Carandini and Company (a superior concert party who performed operatic selections as well as English, Scottish and Irish songs), by Mr and Mrs Simmonsen, by Mr Montague Murray and by the Lancashire Bell-ringers, whose concert at a local hotel attracted as large an audience as had ever been known in Tumut. All but Mr Murray could "be weighed in the scale of respectability and not found wanting", for they were purveyors of good music.³ Most entertainment provided by travelling companies was in lighter vein. Some were circuses, with the usual acrobats, horsemen,

¹Manaro Mercury, 3 December 1887, p. 2.
²Australian Town and Country Journal, 29 April 1871, p. 519.
³Tumut and Adelong Times, 8, 15 March 1866, p. 2, 22 March 1866, p. 3 (advertisement).
clowns and contortionists. Also popular were the "nigger minstrels" or "Ethiopians", as they were often known, who could on occasion appeal to select audiences as well as to ordinary folk;\(^1\) this sort of variety show was also common without the blacking, companies like the "Lo-Lo" troupe, which featured trapeze artistes and dancing acts in addition to the seemingly inevitable comic sketch, drawing large crowds.\(^2\) Occasionally more exotic performers came, like Professor Dante, "the greatest conjuror who has visited Australia"\(^3\), the Klaer Brothers, who trained dogs and monkeys,\(^4\) or Professor Bushell, a mesmerist who described himself as an Electro-Biologist and whose performances purported to instruct in the science of electricity as well as to amuse (he devoted the first half of his show to electrical "experiments", the second to mesmerism).\(^5\) Of course, the theatrical life of a town was unpredictable.

In 1877 Albury went for months without any public entertainment, then within two months had visits from Thiodon's Wonders, the Five Star Troupe, the Stephenson Troupe and the U.S. Minstrels, all light variety artistes, as well as having a performance by the local amateur dramatic society.\(^6\)

By the eighties, as the number of touring companies increased, there were even complaints of a surfeit, almost every company travelling from Sydney to Melbourne earning their passage by playing Goulburn, Yass, Wagga

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and Albury at least. Albury, for one, could not support them all as they deserved.  

By the end of the century the *Goulburn Herald* felt it was time to call a halt. Since the arrival of the railway, the visits of these groups had increased sharply in frequency, but:

Pleasure is apt to pall and...a course of travelling dramatic and operatic companies, conjurers [sic] and mind-readers, negro melodists and circus clowns, may prove too much for the strongest appetite. In pre-railway times the appearances of professional stars (at their own valuation they are all stars), were comparatively rare, and there was about them at least the quality of novelty. But now they flash upon us with such frequency that they fail to dazzle, and indeed many come and go and no man regardeth them.

Although the majority of touring performers were variety artistes, there was a leaven of genuinely theatrical companies and even occasionally an opera company. Like the minstrels, most of their visits were to towns on the main road and railway, but they did occasionally venture along the south coast and into the Monaro. The most regular visitors to the south east were the theatrical groups under Mr Dan Barry. In 1884, after he had already become familiar with the region, he accompanied the "celebrated Irish comedian and character artist", Grattan Riggs, to the south east, appearing with Riggs in the "sensational drama", *The Irish Detective*, the "romantic Irish drama", *Shin Fane* [sic] and other plays, all Irish in character. At the end of the century Dan Barry was still on tour, this time with a "patriotic military drama", *Soldiers of the Queen*, set in the Transvaal during the Boer War, in which local men were fighting at the time. Other companies of note included

1 *Border Post*, 10 December 1884, p. 2.


3 *Border Post*, 12 April 1884, p. 3.

4 *Yass Courier*, 12 January 1900, p. 2.
the Ireland and Herbert Company and the Montague-Turner Opera Company, whose principals were Miss Annis Montague, Mr Charles Turner and "Signor G. Verdi" (an English baritone whose real name was Joseph Green), whose orchestra was led by Mr G. Rivers Allpress, and whose repertoire included *Maritana* and *Il Trovatore*.\(^1\)

The quality of presentation of these groups was naturally subject to wide variation. In 1894 Ida Dawson wrote that her parents had been to see a performance of *Maritana* in Bombala, and that "some of the company had beautiful voices, which was rather a wonder for Bombala".\(^2\)

Others were less talented, but they did have to put up with trying conditions. Most performances were in hotels, halls of Mechanics' Institutes, or in Odd Fellows' halls, few of which were properly equipped as theatres. Even the new specially built theatre at the Albury Mechanics' Institute was unsatisfactory when it opened, acoustics and lighting being poor and insulation of the hall inadequate.\(^3\) These conditions and worse limited the ability of the best groups to stage good plays, but on the whole they sufficed for the more popular melodramas, farces and romances which were the most commonly produced items. There were occasional performances of plays and musicals of substance, but the usual plays were those by authors such as Henry J. Byron, whose *Our Boys* and *The Lancashire Lass, or Tempted, Tried, and True* received both amateur and professional production in the eighties. Other plays presented regularly were Douglas Jerrold's *Black-Eyed Susan*, Dion Boucicault's *Colleen Bawn*

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\(^1\) *Border Post*, 17 May 1884, p. 3. Information on Signor Verdi's real identity from Miss P.A. Foulkes.

\(^2\) Ida Francis Dawson, Diary, 11, 12 June 1894.

\(^3\) *Border Post*, 26 March 1884, p. 2; editorial, 24 May 1884, p. 2.
and Octoroon (which were probably of a higher standard than most, for Boucicault was a major influence on Sean O'Casey) and Michael Vinson's Gra Deelish. There was a surprising number of Irish plays, including (as well as those of Boucicault) Acushla Machree, The Shaughran and The Irish Detective. Though most were of English, Irish or American origin, occasionally an Australian play was produced; Mr Alfred Dampier's company performed an Australian drama called No Mercy, by Julian Thomas, at Albury in 1884, and the Bombala amateurs put on Tom Taylor's The Ticket of Leave Man in 1888.

The popularity of these plays, of novels and of the variety shows and burlesques of other touring groups suggests that in the field of entertainment, if nowhere else, the tastes of the common people prevailed, for the more cultured entertainments received little encouragement, while audiences at these performances were usually large, despite often astonishingly high seat prices. The respectable classes as well as the tradesmen enjoyed these lighter shows, as was shown by the pricing of seats, which effectively enforced social segregation, whether or not intentionally. Professor Bushell's lecture (or performance) in Albury had admission charges of four shillings for front seats and two shillings and sixpence for the back seats; ten years later the Monster Asiatic Circus Company asked the same prices for "circle" and "pit" respectively, as did the Empire Minstrels for reserved and

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1 Border Post, 12 January 1884, p. 3. Mr Dampier, a descendant of the explorer, was an English actor of considerable repute who came to Australia in 1873, appearing at the Theatre Royal in Melbourne and the Victoria Theatre in Sydney. He remained in Australia thereafter, except for a short trip back to England in 1878. Bulletin, 17 April 1880, pp. 1-2.

2 Bombala Herald, 23 November 1888, p. 2.

3 Advertisement, Border Post, 14 June 1864, p. 3.

4 Advertisement, Border Post, 23 December 1874, p. 3.
unreserved seats at Tumut in 1866. Perhaps cash was scarcer in the north, for the "Lo-Lo" troupe charged three shillings for "first class", two shillings for "second" and one shilling for back seats at Young in 1877, and similar prices prevailed for Rignold and Allison's company when they visited Yass in 1885. Whatever the prices charged, the differentials remained, and the social distinctions that accompanied them.

It was unusual for sporting or theatrical amusements to be disparaged, one exception being Mesac Thomas' complaint in 1888 that "gaiety and amusements of all kinds [were] occupying the minds of thousands of otherwise estimable people". One form of public relaxation was, however, regularly criticized by religious and secular people alike, and was subjected to increasingly tight control, but remained popular regardless. Drink was of great significance in the lives of these settlers, and the public house quickly became an institution of wider importance than its basic function would suggest. The town pub in particular was a centre for social life and even for a variety of other institutions: it was used as consulting rooms by itinerant doctors and dentists, as a coaching station, the settling place after a race meeting,

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1 Advertisement, Tumut and Adelong Times, 8 January 1866, p. 3.

2 Advertisement, Burrangong Chronicle, 27 June 1877, p. 3.

3 Advertisement, Yass Courier, 15 May 1885, p. 3.

4 See above, p. 347, for the revealing comments at Cooma on those "who generally fill the back seats".


6 Bruce Ryan, "Towns and Settlement of the South Coast, New South Wales" (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1965) p. 188.
the venue for hospitality after cricket and football matches, often a committee room for a club, sometimes the place where a political meeting was held, sometimes a makeshift concert hall (one or two, such as the Exchange Hotel, Albury, actually had proper theatres attached). It might even be the original building in a town or village; having been opened at a crossroads, it might later serve as a focus for the surrounding district, and in time attract other businesses to the locality thus providing the nucleus for a village or even a town.¹

The importance of the public houses is born out by their large numbers. In 1870 in New South Wales 2,182 licenses were issued, one for every 228 people living in the colony; though by 1900 this ratio had fallen to one for every 444, there were in that year 3,063 held in the colony.² In the south east, too, there was a higher ratio of pubs to people in the sixties than in later years. At the end of 1865 there were 396 licensed premises in the region; ten years later there were 401; in 1885 442 licenses were issued; and in 1895 the total was 440.³ Considering the great increase in population over the same period, this small rise in the number of licenses requires explanation. It is to be found in the system of licensing. In the sixties and seventies licenses were issued by local magistrates' benches upon the fulfilment of certain conditions regarding accommodation in the premises to be licensed.⁴

² Ibid., Appendix B, pp. 204-205.
³ My calculations from lists of licenses granted at annual and special meetings of local licensing courts, published in supplements to the Government Gazette.
⁴ Sale of Liquors Licensing Act of 1862 (NSW 25 Vic. no. 14). Paragraph 33 gives the conditions of accommodation required.
This system was widely abused; in 1867 a witness before the Braidwood Commission stated that licenses were granted too easily:

> It seems if two sheets of bark are raised on end now a man is granted a license. The Benches have no power now, the money [£30] is merely sent to the Treasury.

This opinion was also that of Sir Henry Parkes, who, in introducing a new Bill on 8 September 1881, maintained that:

> It has come to be considered that a license should be issued, as a matter of course, to any person who applied for it, provided the premises were eligible.

Sir Henry and other speakers asserted that temperance magistrates had, especially in Sydney, begun "packing" Benches to guarantee rejection of license applications, and that other magistrates had retaliated by packing Benches for the reverse purpose. True or not, the new Bill, which became the Licensing Act of 1882, ended that particular problem by establishing special licensing courts and new procedures for the issue of licenses. The standard of accommodation necessary was increased, local option voting introduced, and a system of objections to individual applications instituted. The Governor was also empowered to appoint a District Inspector and Sub-Inspectors to each Licensing District, these officials to be police officers of sergeant's rank or above. It was therefore much more difficult to obtain a publican's license after the passage of this Act, thus the number of public houses thereafter was less

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3. Speakers included Michael Fitzpatrick (Yass Plains), Alexander Ryrie (Braidwood) and William Forster (Gundagai).

4. *NSW 45 Vic. no. 14.*
7. Commercial Hotel, Bombala.

_Australian Town & Country Journal_, 6 January 1872.
8. Australian Hotel, Wagga Wagga.

than would have been the case under the old law. Almost certainly there were before 1882 more public houses than necessary to meet reasonable demands: many people commented on their proliferation. A new arrival to Albury "noticed with sorrow" the number of drinking establishments in the town, which was "quite out of proportion" to the number required as lodging houses for travellers. A visitor to Junee found little to report there except for the hotels, "equal to a country inn of England, but they are Hotels, the sign board says so".

The quality of these establishments varied widely, though of course less so after 1882. In 1872 a traveller writing for the *Town and Country Journal* encountered both extremes. The Australian Hotel in Wagga was "a fine brick building" of fifty five rooms, plus parlours, dining rooms, coffee, reading and smoking rooms, and its stables could accommodate up to fifty horses. It could, the traveller said, "hold its own with any in the colony" in regard to its accommodation, food and cellar. On the other hand, he also had the misfortune, while travelling from Cooma to Queanbeyan, to stop for rest at "a wretched accommodation-house" at Collinton, near the Cosgroves' station of Billylingra. It had "a tumble-down lee-lurch appearance", and the food supplied for horse and rider was atrocious, the horse having "judiciously refrained from eating the stunted dirty grass, mixed with an occasional oaten straw or two improperly called hay".

1 Letter, "New Colonist", to the Editor, Border Post, 30 November 1878, p. 2. In 1875 seventeen licenses were issued to publicans in Albury.


Not all public houses were licensed, of course; "sly
grog-shops" were plentiful, even when the issue of a license was easy to
achieve. Although publicans' licenses cost £30 a year, those for wine
shops cost only £1 before 1882 and £3 later, so, as Major Holborow said
during the debate, many wine shop proprietors illegally sold spirits as
well:

I know a district in which there is a respectable
half-way house kept by a man who pays £30 a year
for a license, and within a few miles at a wine
shop...spirituous liquors are sold.¹

Gold fields, remote districts and railway camps were among the
worst affected places. Sly grog-selling and even distilling was said to
be carried on with impunity along the Snowy River, to the annoyance of
"respectable residents".² In 1878 there were reports of debauchery at
the railway camp near Albury, where it was alleged that the presence of
several shanties was leading to drunkenness and fighting.³ Police
efforts to close such establishments were hampered by a directive that they
should not use disguise to enable themselves to become informers by
actually frequenting the illicit shanties.⁴

Even properly licensed establishments were not free from corrupt
practices. It was common knowledge that some less scrupulous publicans
mixed substances like fusel oil with the drink;⁵ others permitted

¹Speech by Major Holborow on 14 September 1881. NSW Parliamentary
Debates, Session 1881, p. 1212.


³Editorial, Border Post, 19 June 1878, p. 2.

⁴Jno. McLerie, Inspector General of Police, to the Metropolitan
Superintendent, 19 May 1863, General Order no. 15. AONSW 7/6212, p. 15.

⁵Border Post, 9 December 1874, p. 2.
gambling\(^1\) or music and dancing\(^2\) on their premises. All public houses, respectable or not, were seen as contributing towards drunkenness, which many people regarded as the greatest evil in their society. Sir William Manning, the judge at the circuit court, spoke out against the practice of Wagga publicans of enticing and encouraging men to drink to excess.\(^3\)

Charles Hutchings of Moruya noted in his diary:

> What an awful curse drink is! I have seen another instance of its evil effects tonight — a strong intelligent man made weak — nearly helpless — & stupid.

Another citizen of the south east was annoyed because he felt that too many "judges, clergymen, and writers for the press" were exaggerating the ills of drink. "It is clear", he said, "among a portion of citizens drinking is considered a greater crime than theft".\(^5\) And certainly liquor had its opponents in societies like the Band of Hope and the Sons and Daughters of Temperance, which held regular meetings in most large towns. But the curse, if curse it was, remained, and in 1886 the government appointed a commission to inquire into the causes of the excessive use of liquor then believed to prevail. Through lack of funds the inquiry took evidence only from the Metropolitan Licensing District, but the commission believed that much of the evidence could as easily

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\(^1\) Editorial, *Queanbeyan Age*, 7 August 1875, p. 2.


\(^3\) *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 14 October 1876, p. 610.

\(^4\) Charles H. Hutchings, Diary 1875-1876, entry for 21 December 1875. ML B 1161/1.

apply to the whole colony.\textsuperscript{1} Statistical evidence relating to country districts showed that in 1885 there had been 1.55 convictions for drunkenness for every hundred people in the country population, though in 1886 the figure fell to 1.29. These figures only included "drunk and incapable" and "drunk and disorderly" charges. If inebriates who escaped arrest and those who drank at home were included:

The conclusion seems to us irresistible that the proportion of persons, throughout the Colony, who habitually drink to excess...must reach a startling figure.\textsuperscript{2}

There was room for hope that matters were improving; the commission also discovered that consumption of spirits had declined from 1.64 gallons per head of the colonial population in 1877 to 1.20 gallons per head in 1886, and that even beer consumption had begun to decline from a peak of 16.63 gallons per head in 1884, the figure for 1886 being 12.85 gallons per head.\textsuperscript{3} Already the Act of 1882 seemed to be making some progress towards rendering even pubs and drinking respectable.

The public house, or hotel, had therefore two distinct uses. The labouring classes used it simply for drinking, and perhaps playing billiards where tables were provided; the respectable classes, possibly including the very people speaking against drink, resorted to the hotel

\textsuperscript{1} Report of the Intoxicating Drink Inquiry Commission, pp. 21-22, NSW:LA VGP, Session 1887-1888, vol. VII.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 75-77.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 25-27. These figures compared with consumptions of beer of 26.85 gallons per head in the United Kingdom, 8.63 in New Zealand and 15.80 in Victoria, and consumptions of spirits of 0.97 gallons in the United Kingdom, 0.87 in New Zealand and 1.05 in Victoria (1885 figures). In Australia in the late 1960s beer consumption was about 26 gallons per head, spirit consumption 0.4 gallons per head.
in organized groups, usually as members of sports clubs. In each case, the pub was an important social phenomenon.

V

Those people who promoted the ideal of a "respectable" society established many institutions for the purpose, some of them meeting with considerable success. But they were frustrated in any efforts they made to control people's leisure time activities and direct them towards the same end. On the whole, the people of the south east showed themselves to be uninterested in improving themselves during their spare time. They preferred novels to educational books, they turned most of the Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes into billiard clubs, skating rinks or dance halls by refusing to come in any numbers to debates or lectures except for very short periods. They demonstrated their preference for melodrama and farce over plays of cultural value, and for music hall and concerts even over these. They preferred to spend their free time in sport, particularly racing and cricket, and to gamble on anything they could. And they spent much time and money in the local pubs, whose continued prosperity testifies to their popularity.

The substantial class of propertied men in the country and of business people in the towns formed a separate subculture to that of their employees and of the smaller independent farmers and craftsmen. The leisure time of these people was spent in social intercourse, in self improvement (at least to some extent) and, like their social inferiors, in sport, again mainly racing and cricket, where most contact between the classes occurred. These people often made an effort to use their leisure time to cultivate their minds, their bodies and their friends, but then they had more leisure time to use for the purpose. The labouring classes
had little free time, even if it did increase later in the century, 
and they naturally used it mainly for enjoyment. If they did so in ways 
their social superiors often disapproved of, that was unfortunate for 
their social superiors.
Chapter 9

"Advance Australia Fair"

I

On 1 January 1901 the federation of the Australian colonies was finally accomplished. The decision to site the capital within New South Wales, but more than a hundred miles from Sydney, inspired many provincial towns, including several in the south east, to lay their claims for the honour. As early as the 1870s the people of Albury confidently described their city as the Federal City, and as the eighties and nineties progressed they were joined by the inhabitants of Yass, Bombala, Cootamundra, Goulburn ("the chief inland town"), Queanbeyan and other smaller centres. Outside the south east such places as Orange, Bathurst and Blayney also pressed their claims, so competition was stiff. On 20 February 1899 twelve hundred people rallied at the Odd Fellows' Hall in Goulburn to appoint their committee to further the local cause. The meeting was addressed by local celebrities and by E.W. O'Sullivan, who favoured Goulburn to avoid having to choose between the several centres in his own electorate of Queanbeyan which all sought his support.

It is a measure of the growth of the south east that so many of its towns could by the end of the century consider themselves suitable to become the capital of Australia. And indeed this growth had been

1Editorial, Goulburn Herald, 21 July 1899, p. 2.

2Goulburn Herald, 22 February 1899, p. 2. It is ironic that Canberra was then in O'Sullivan's electorate.

3Had an existing town been chosen as the nucleus of the federal capital, Yass, Albury, Bombala and Goulburn could all have pressed very strong claims.
dramatic. In forty years the population of the region had increased from sixty two thousand to 144,000, an increment of over 130 per cent, mostly taking place during the twenty years from 1871 to 1891.\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>39,645</td>
<td>22,274</td>
<td>61,919</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>44,450</td>
<td>34,007</td>
<td>78,457</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>71,101</td>
<td>61,458</td>
<td>132,559</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>76,655</td>
<td>67,780</td>
<td>144,435</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the balance between rural and "urban" population had also changed. In 1861 only one person in six lived in a population centre of five hundred or more people; by 1901 almost two in every five did so.\(^3\)

Most of this change, too, had occurred before 1891. This suggests that the depression of the early 1890s, which severely affected the south east, had a dampening effect upon population growth and upon the formation of larger population centres.

The settlements achieving most growth were in the northern part of the region, between Goulburn and Wagga, which was the most accessible to Sydney. In 1861 the seven most populous towns included

\(^1\)See Table 10. Unfortunately the detailed figures for 1881 were destroyed in the Garden Palace fire before the census was published.

\(^2\)See above, p. 4, note 1.

\(^3\)See Table 11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of settlements of</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>over 1,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in population</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of people and percentage of total population living in settlements of</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>over 1,000</td>
<td>5,951</td>
<td>11,579</td>
<td>15,513</td>
<td>41,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9.6%)</td>
<td>(14.8)%</td>
<td>(19.8)%</td>
<td>(31.4)%</td>
<td>(32.9)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999</td>
<td>2,737</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>6,499</td>
<td>7,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4.4%)</td>
<td>(7.2)%</td>
<td>(8.3)%</td>
<td>(5.4)%</td>
<td>(6.4)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in population</td>
<td>8,688</td>
<td>17,241</td>
<td>22,012</td>
<td>48,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14.0%)</td>
<td>(22.0)%</td>
<td>(28.1)%</td>
<td>(36.8)%</td>
<td>(39.3)%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Column a excludes, column b includes, the gold fields of Araluen, Major's Creek and Jembaicumbene, all with abnormally high levels of population in 1871.
Goulburn, Yass, Queanbeyan and Braidwood in the closest part of the south east to Sydney by land, and Bega, close to the coastal ports of Merimbula and Eden. The other two, Albury and Wagga, owed their growth to their situations as the major crossing points of the Murray and Murrumbidgee respectively on the droving routes to and from Victoria.

In the thirty years to 1891, by which date the permanent centres of population were well established, town formation occurred in three areas. First, the traditional area in the north increased; second, some gold fields — Braidwood, Tumut and Adelong — survived as service centres for local agriculture; and third, the building of the railway created a series of new towns along the main line: Murrumburrah, Cootamundra and Junee. Two other main centres also developed at Cooma and Bombala to serve the pastoral community in the Monaro, the former already confirmed as the most important town in the Monaro by the arrival of the railway. Smaller developments at places like Crookwell and Burrowa in the Goulburn area were encouraged by improved road communications between Goulburn and these local agricultural centres, and occasional growth occurred in outlying places like Tumbarumba and Temora (where gold was the catalyst). This picture has changed little since 1891; today, if the rise of Canberra is ignored, the major centres are still Goulburn, Albury, Wagga, Young and Bega. The region's pattern of economic development was set in the 1870s and 1880s, even the

1H.W.H. King, "The Urban Hierarchy of the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales" (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1956) pp. 55-56, states that the period from 1870-1900 was the one in which the general pattern of urban growth in that region was established.

2The other early centre of population growth, the south coast, stagnated after 1870. See Bruce Ryan, "Towns and Settlement of the South Coast, New South Wales" (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1965) p. 98.
selection of Canberra as the federal capital fitting with the earlier trend, for Canberra is itself in one of the districts which progressed from the earliest days of settlement.

Although these were years of great change in religious matters, in education, in communications, in politics and in much else, no changes were greater or more important than these demographic ones. The speed of the increase in population, the alterations in its composition with the increase in the numbers of women present, and the variations in its pattern of distribution were themselves vital determinants of the type of society that would be created in the region. This must always be remembered in assessing the influences of the forces I have considered in earlier chapters, for these forces were themselves modified by the demands of this growing population.

II

Between 1863 and 1900, which period may be regarded as the formative one for the society of south east New South Wales, all of the services necessary in a contemporary community were established in the region, and the pattern of its future economic development determined. These were also critical years in forming the character of that society, and various forces, some planned, some accidental, acted as major influences on its development.

There are three ways in which class relationships may form in a society, like that of the south east, containing clear class inequalities.¹ The lower orders may accept the values of the socially dominant classes, acknowledging their inferior status, and either

regarding the more powerful classes with deference or aspiring to join the elite by improving themselves. Alternatively, the deprived classes may accommodate themselves to the facts of the situation, accepting enough of the behavioural standards of the dominant group to permit coexistence with them while retaining their own values and attitudes. Or, if they are sufficiently organized politically, the lower orders may actively promote the establishment of an alternative set of values, by force if necessary. In the south east the ruling values were those of the "respectable" sector of society, represented in the country by the squatters, some farmers and a few senior station employees, in the towns by the commercial community and the professions. During the late nineteenth century this group made a conscious effort to establish their values as those of the whole community; that is, they attempted to make the lower classes acquiesce in their subordinate position, accepting and living by upper and middle class values. Towards this end the respectable classes employed a variety of public institutions.

Although many of the respectable classes took no active part in the life of the Christian churches (it was not necessary to be religious to be respectable, though it helped), the clergy represented them and furthered their ideals. Clergymen were expected to take a position in respectable society, even if they were not always provided with the means to live a comfortable existence; their efforts to raise funds brought them more into contact with the prosperous than with the poor; and the doctrines they preached favoured self improvement\(^1\) and respectable behaviour. Similarly the schools were used to foster a spirit of respectability and patriotism (whether to the Empire or to

\(^1\)Church libraries and Sunday Schools were the practical expression of this aim.
Ireland), to further the cause of working class improvement (which assumed that members of an "improved" working class would accept a subordinate position, adopt middle class values, and attempt to raise their social status by hard work), and to promote discipline among the working classes. Like the clergy, teachers were required to be models of sobriety and good behaviour, even under the handicaps of inadequate training, lack of parental support and extreme isolation. Those who succumbed to the temptations of loneliness (usually drink) rarely had a second chance; dismissal was the general rule.

The respectable classes hoped that other institutions, introduced and dominated by themselves, would influence the lower orders to become more like they were. Local councils worked to improve the physical conditions of life, at any rate in the towns; friendly societies helped to provide most people with financial security; Mechanics' Institutes tried to educate the adults towards respectability just as the schools tried to condition the children.

Improved schools and teaching, together with the compulsory clauses of the Public Instruction Act, had a considerable influence on those educated in the last fifteen years of the century. These people almost certainly accepted more respectable standards and values than did their parents, though the direct influence of the latter at home must often have reduced this impact of education. Less successful, despite their progress in numbers and often in style, were the churches. Mesac Thomas had believed himself to be in a worldly society in the sixties; he would not have seen much to change his mind had he lived to see the

1 Discipline was heavily emphasized in many schools (too heavily in some), not only in class but at play and through school cadet forces.
end of the century. There were certainly many Christians in the south east in 1900, but in proportion no more than in 1863. In an age of scepticism through scientific advance, even to hold their ground might be thought a success for the churches.

By the nineties the efforts of the respectable classes to promote respectable values had undoubtedly received some reward. Schools, churches and the increasing proportion of women in the society had their effects. These factors, plus improved communications, closer settlement and the deterrent effect of an efficient police force, persuaded the working classes to accept respectable standards of conduct, at least in public, as was demonstrated by declining crime rates in the eighties and nineties. But this is far from implying that the aims of the respectable had been fully realized. The lower classes did not come to accept all of the values of respectable society; rather they accepted enough of them to allow coexistence between the different levels of society while maintaining their own values and interests.

This result partly occurred because of ambiguous effects of the forces in action during this formative period of society in the south east. The impact of communications, for example, was not wholly in support of any one value system. The economic potential of the south east was increased massively by these advances, but the greater contact they brought with the big cities had mixed effects on the development of society. Certainly people were better informed through telegraphic news and through wider personal travel; certainly city personalities could and did pay visits to the country. But the trains which brought classical actors and good books from the free library also brought low entertainers, bookmakers and cheap novels. Even some local newspapers were of mixed value: side by side with international news and reports
from local societies they printed serial stories of dubious intellectual quality and sensational items from the city papers of Australia, Europe and America.¹ Hence an apparently civilizing influence could have the reverse consequence to that at first anticipated.

This was also true of many of the apparently healthy institutions existing in the region. Often, these had been created with the intention of promoting respectability, only to lose their initial purpose through time. Mechanics' Institutes often became mere recreation centres concentrating on billiards clubs to the detriment of their libraries, which themselves deteriorated into repositories for the trashy novels that were preferred to the improving works whose circulation the libraries had been meant to promote. Sport, too, a potentially improving influence through the contact of classes in a mutually absorbing pursuit, was too often the occasion for gambling rather than recreation. Likewise, the theatre was almost entirely devoted to music hall, farces, burlesques and dioramas,² for these were the shows which paid their way. An interest in serious music and drama was confined to a small minority, public performances of them to Goulburn, Albury, Wagga and occasionally others among the larger towns.

Andrew Wotherspoon, a schoolteacher in Canberra in the 1850s and early 1860s, expressed the hopes of respectable society in a poem in a collection he entitled Maid of Erin. He wrote:

¹Executions, horrible murders, rapes and other atrocities were reported in language which, while not usually explicit, was plain enough to permit the dullest imagination to fill in the grisly details without much difficulty.

²A form of illustrated popular lecture, usually depicting the course of some recent war.
When equal laws shall be the rule,
The State becomes the fostering school,
To elevate the mind.
When arts and science shall have shone,
To give society a tone —
Of taste and view refined.
A nation shall Australia be,
The Empress of the southern sea.  

Perhaps not all respectable people would have agreed with
the first three lines of the stanza, but the hope of giving a "tone"
to society was one shared by them all. When Australia became a
nation on 1 January 1901 this hope was still well short of fulfilment
in south east New South Wales. Perhaps it was just as well; a
refined and uniform society is not likely to create a strong and lively
nation worthy of such a title as "Empress of the southern sea".

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1Quoted by Samuel Shumack, op. cit., p. 133.
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