A WORLD TO WALK DOWN
Cultural Change of the Outback 1851–2001

Edited by Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming
Patrick O'Farrell wrote that "Australia was for a very long time not so much a nation as an assemblage of assorted immigrants, living out of the cultural and psychological baggage they had brought with them ..." This was never more true than during the era of the gold rushes, when shiploads of immigrants from every corner of Britain, and the world, brought themselves and their cultural inheritance to this country, and in the process contributed to the matrix of modern Australia. These essays are as diverse as the cultures found on those early Australian goldfields. The narrative ranges from the Welsh staunchly maintaining their Eisteddfods, to the development of churches, and to tales of harsh working and living conditions.
A World Turned Upside Down

Cultural Change on Australia’s Goldfields 1851-2001

edited by
Kerry Cardell & Cliff Cumming

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Conversions

LENGTH
1 inch = 2.54 cm
1 foot = 30.5 cm
1 yard = 0.9 km
1 mile = 1.6 km

MASS
1 ounce = 28.3 g
1 pound = 454 g
1 ton = 1.02 t

AREA
1 acre = 0.4 ha
1 square yard = 0.836 square metres

VOLUME
1 cubic yard = 0.7 cubic metres

CURRENCY
There were 12 pennies (d) in 1 shilling (s), and 20 shillings in 1 pound (£). When Australia converted to decimal currency in 1966, $2 were equal to £1.
Introduction

The discovery of gold by Europeans in the Australian continent 150 years ago has had considerable impact on the social, cultural and civic life of the nation. This subject formed the broad theme of a series of papers given at a conference, “Gold and the Making of Modern Australia”, sponsored by the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra in June, 2000. This conference explored a wide variety of the ways in which gold has influenced cultural life in Australia, and some of the papers presented have been gathered together in this book. Among the elements of Australian cultural and communal life treated by the authors represented in this collection are immigration, ethnic groupings, indigenous populations, social disruption, and community and colonial politics, all of which felt the impact of the discovery of gold in 1851, especially in Victoria and New South Wales.

The essays printed here form a useful set of windows through which the reader can view the impact of gold on culture. Each of the authors has, in his or her own way, explored the cultural influence of the gold rushes. From remote, small settlements such as Solferino and Cowra Creek, to striding the British imperial stage through International Exhibitions; from the flowering and withering of ethnic identities to the development of a composite national persona; from its impact on the life of individuals to the uprooting of whole communities, the influence of gold was intrusive, sometimes cruel, disruptive, destructive of man, identity and environment, but never dull.
By the end of the 1840s government-assisted immigration to the Australian colonies was moribund, and the British press had ceased to give much attention to Australia as a potential destination for impoverished immigrants. The gold strikes were to quickly reverse this. In Victoria, home to the largest rushes, a decade of rapid population expansion followed the 1851 discoveries and gold initiated urban settlements in many areas hitherto the preserve only of pastoralists and indigenous tribes.

In the early 1850s press reportage of the Australian ‘El Dorado’ stimulated a new tide of emigration from many nations. In Scotland, for example, the Inverness Courier under the editorship of Thomas Mulock had long castigated the emigrations associated with the Highland Clearances for draining away the nation’s life-blood. Nevertheless, the paper enthusiastically spread the news of Australia’s golden wealth. The captains of returning ships were contacted by cable when they reached the Cape of Good Hope to solicit details of the amount and value of the gold they were carrying, and the statistics were eagerly published and avidly read. The Inverness Courier and the Inverness Advertiser were among several papers which readily printed letters from Highlanders active at the diggings, and they regularly carried advertisements for passenger vessels sailing for ports near the goldfields. Other literature, too, promoted the gold discoveries as a strong reason for emigration. A Welsh guidebook on Australia, for example, encapsulated in its title much of the prevailing media view of Australia at this time: GweladYr Aur (Land of Gold).

As Judith McKay’s chapter shows, the Australian colonies themselves were no less reticent than these overseas sources about trumpeting their mineral wealth to Britain and continental Europe. At the International Exhibitions throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the individual colonies proudly displayed gilded structures such as gradated obelisks, symbolising the quantity of gold currently won from their mines. Such displays served two major purposes. Certainly they were intended to woo further mining capital and expertise from abroad, but they also represented the rapidly-increasing sense of self-importance of the colonies which mounted these exhibits.
The wealth of gold mined in the various Australian colonies acted as a strong cultural stimulus in a number of ways. As news of the 1851 gold strikes spread overseas the desire to share in the anticipated bonanza attracted many new immigrants to Victoria, and later, to other colonies. Not only was population increase dramatic during the following decade, but significant urban conglomerations sprang up in areas hitherto void of European settlers, or at best lightly populated by indigenous tribes and pioneering pastoralists and their small labour forces.

If there was an inconsistency in simultaneously mounting crass displays to represent this wealth, and using the same trade displays as marketing tools by which to solicit overseas investment to further develop the gold extraction industry, there was also something of a cultural clash between the old world and the new which was exacerbated by the nineteenth-century gold discoveries. There was a growing awareness that Australia’s relationship with Britain could no longer continue to be that of a child to a parent. The Scot, William Westgarth, a contemporary of the gold period in Victoria, observed a difference between the social and political dynamism of the colonies and the conservatism of Britain and her colonial representatives, and the impact which this tension had on colonial politics and society.¹ The growing self-importance of the colonies, as measured in terms of the wealth they were producing, was enough to lead another contemporary to anticipate the cutting of the apron strings. Such an event, he wrote, had been hastened by fifty years as a result of gold. It was not to be expected, he said, that ‘a country which can export twenty millions sterling per annum in gold dust will long submit to be made the sink-hole of England’.²

During the decade of the 1850s, New South Wales and Victoria, the richest gold states at that time, gained their political independence from Britain. The sharp population increase created irresistible pressures upon society, releasing political dynamism and innovation. While grievances over the monthly licence fees which every digger was required to purchase produced a flashpoint in Victoria, there were many other demands miners

¹
²
were to make of the authorities in each of the “gold” colonies. The very remoteness of Australia continued to hinder the provision of government agencies which were unable to keep pace with the rapidly increasing population and the social, political and educational demands of the number of new settlements which were rapidly appearing on, and adjacent to, the goldfields. Diggers wanted bridges, roads, mail services, and a fair and just administration provided for the specific areas where they were working, and they wanted them immediately. State and local government often failed to satisfy the urgency of such requests, as we see in Barry McGowan’s chapter where the same pleas resurface during the rise of Cowarra township following the second “rush” in that locality, as had arisen during the first “rush” at nearby Cowra Creek some fifty years before.

Matters over which the colonies had to consult the British Government before determining a policy were particularly conducive to delay. Prospectors and miners lent their voices to calls for Crown Lands to be opened up to selection by would-be smallholders, yet it was not until the 1860s that NSW, South Australia and Victoria enacted legislation to enable such selection. In John Sharples’ chapter we see a reverse case of the frustration and delay caused by this remoteness of the colonies from London. The entrepreneurs who founded the Kangaroo Office sought to profit from the Victorian gold rushes by building a ship to ply the run, and stocking it with a pre-fabricated shop and goods for it to sell. They included in the cargo an “on spec” mint to strike gold coins, and the history of the Kangaroo Office’s agent Reginald Scaife, and his failure to exploit the strong popular demand for a mint, make tragi-comic reading.

The 1850s gold rushes not only effected a large increase in the colonial population, they also brought a concentration of population to what were often “frontier” areas. A number of the consequences of this are explored in this volume. Robyne Bancroft deals with a little-publicised area in her discussion of Aboriginal involvement in prospecting and mining on the Clarence River fields. In Victoria’s “golden triangle”, large urban populations grew up, sizeable enough to produce a concentration of ethnic
diggers: Chinese, and, more germane to the papers printed here, Irish, Welsh, Cornish and Scottish, for example.

Several chapters are devoted to these Celtic immigrants, for not only did they lend their voices to such generalised concerns of fellow miners as licence relief, development of civic facilities and access to land, but many of them also set about creating versions of the cultural institutions to be found in their homelands. In the papers of Wickham, Croggon, Cardell and Cumming, for example, are details of the evolution of “Celtic” churches (some of them operating in Welsh or Scottish Gaelic), Welsh choirs, eistedfoddau and Highland Gatherings. Welsh-language journals, hurling clubs, St Patrick and Burns’ Societies also flourished for a time. The abiding legacy of these cultural activities can be seen in the many fine stone or brick churches and non-conformist chapels which grace the towns of Victoria’s “golden triangle”, and in continuing institutions such as Ballarat’s Royal South Street Competitions and Maryborough’s New Year’s Day Highland Gathering, held continuously since 1858.

The decline of this Celtic flowering is as interesting as its sudden rise. The language issue, in particular, produced heated tensions. The transience of individual miners made the tenure of Celtic-language churches tenuous, but bitter rearguard actions were fought by many congregations to resist the institution of English as the language of worship. Eistedfoddau, initially conducted in Welsh, came, over time, to use English more and more. This denoted not only the loss of Welsh speakers, it also reflected a genuine attempt to open up these cultural festivals to English speakers; an assimilationist gesture by a national community in settlements where cultural entertainments were irregular. In similar fashion, Highland Games quickly evolved to include such non-traditional sports as cycling and tilting at the ring.

In other states, and outside central Victoria’s “golden triangle”, the cultural effects of gold strikes were not always so conducive to the re-creation of national cultures. Where strikes were smaller, or fields more ephemeral or more remote, the critical mass of
miners from the one home country sufficient to allow the creation of “national” institutions was not always sustained. Robyne Bancroft and Barry McGowan move several rungs down the scale from the larger Victorian mining settlements to look at several of the many small, remote, often isolated mining townships produced by gold in the second half of the nineteenth century in New South Wales. As well, the “rough camp” nature of these types of settlements abided for so long that, as Robyne Bancroft and Barry McGowan show, the effect of gold on culture on these goldfields was confined to impelling “civic” cooperation in order to bring several of the necessities for survival to their small and remote settlements. The need for roads, bridges, mail services, mining courts, religious services, shops, and basic entertainment meant that locale-based “civic” or communal culture remained the immediate focus, and fewer opportunities arose on the smaller goldfields for “ethnic” cultures to develop as fully as they did on the larger Victorian fields.

In these communities, therefore, miners were galvanised not by wider political aspirations, nor by a wistful impulse to foster ethnic identity, but by the survivalist need to join with their neighbours to fight for the basic facilities without which their settlements could not survive — a school, a hall for church meetings, a bridge, a decent access road. This do-it-yourself approach was also very evident in the range of entertainments created in these small communities. These included dances, balls, card evenings, concert nights and Sunday School picnics.

A view through the various “windows” presented by the authors in this volume presents the reader, either explicitly or implicitly, with a rich variety of images. The popular depiction of the heroic digger, prevalent in nineteenth-century paintings, sketches, poetry and prose, arose largely as a result of the perceived cultural, political and civic deprivations faced by gold-seekers. While that image is not the explicit theme of any of these chapters, it is implicit in almost all of them. Similarly, no single chapter is devoted to the life of women on the goldfields, yet as discoverers of gold, founders of mining dynasties, teach-
ers in early schools, operators of service businesses, arrangers of communal entertainments and initiators of social networks, they feature substantially in many of the studies presented here. The same cannot be said of the cultural contribution of the often reviled Chinese miners and merchants. While they are a notable omission from this book, their contribution is examined in the companion volume, Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia.

The impact of gold on the cultural life of Australia has been significant and continuing. The number and diversity of the papers delivered at the aforementioned Gold conference in Canberra gave adequate testimony to this and to what is a generally accepted interpretation of this period of Australia’s development. The demographic changes brought about by the rapid inflow of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from all parts of the world had consequences not only for civic development, but also for the democratisation of political institutions, land reform and the image of the colonies both within Australia and overseas. While no one book could adequately depict the full range of the impact of gold, the authors and editors believe that this volume has managed to convey something of its richness especially in the area of those whose cultural world was turned upside down.

Kerry Cardell
Cliff Cumming

Endnotes


'Great are the Inconveniences'

The Irish and the Founding of the Catholic Church on the Ballarat Goldfields

Dorothy Wickham

The cosmopolitan nature of the Australian goldfields has left a legacy which constantly reminds us today of the presence of the variety of nationalities which the gold rushes of the 1850s threw together. Statues of Scotland’s national poet, Robert Burns, and Ireland’s renowned literary figure, Thomas Moore, attempt to stare one another down from their equally important sites in the main street of Ballarat. Churches, large and small, of all the major denominations, and some not so major, bear testimony to the desire shown by each of these national groups to identify with their own place of worship. Thus whether it is in the form of buildings, paintings, statuary, plaques on walls, or in the lists of dignitaries who gave their names to parks, hospitals, streets and schools, the presence of a wide range of nationalities on the goldfields is well established. One major national group represented on the Ballarat goldfields was the Irish, Protestant and Catholic.

This chapter focuses on the Catholic Irish, the role of the Catholic church during Eureka and the formation and establishment
of St Alipius', the first Catholic church on the Ballarat goldfields, arguing that religion contributed to the fabric of Ballarat's cosmopolitan society. Grand stone churches and schools still serve the descendants of many of these original Catholic immigrants and provide contemporary witness to this inheritance. It is in the area of church and school that the goldfields' Irish were conspicuously represented and it is the church, particularly, which was to provide a major focus for Irishness in Ballarat.

St Alipius' parish evolved from the Pentridge-Coburg parish which was formed in 1851, and which served Ballarat Catholics in 1851 and 1852 through the presence of Father Dunne. It seems likely that St Alipius' was named after Bishop Alipius Goold (appointed in 1848 as first Bishop, and later Archbishop, of Melbourne). He was an Augustinian as, too, was St Alipius, who travelled with St Augustine during the fourth century. (See Fig. 1.1a) One colourful story about the origins of the name of the Ballarat church derives from the presence of numerous Chinese on the goldfields, who would watch the early Catholic diggers come to worship and they would exclaim, 'alli pious,alli pious'. It has been conjectured this was the origin of the name of the church. Colourful and attractive this might sound, the former, and more mundane, origin of the church's name would seem to be more likely.

In the goldfield towns of central Victoria alluvial rushes were succeeded by deep lead mining. Parochial histories of the individual denominations tend to delineate the progress from initial meetings in the open air or in borrowed tents, through a period of hardship, struggle and discouragement, to the emergence of weatherboard buildings, then of fine brick and stone churches. These edifices continue to grace the skylines of such cities as Ballarat, Bendigo, and Castlemaine, which were established as a consequence of gold. (See Fig. 1.2) If on one level such parish histories reflect the fortunes of the mines themselves, on another level they can be read as cultural barometers, giving some indication of progress toward those aspects 'civilized' life such as education, benevolence, and civic responsibil-
ity, which were hallmarks of nineteenth-century Christian charitable activity in Victoria and other Australian colonies. To some extent, too, Christian denominations provided a focus around which the different immigrant nationalities gathered and through which their cultures survived and were reinforced. This process whereby a particular denominational church is regarded as one of the main carriers and reinforcers of a distinct immigrant national culture, can also be seen elsewhere in this volume, especially in the chapters on the Scots, the Welsh, and the Cornish.

Among the growing number of Irish miners at Ballarat was a large percentage of Catholics, and the concentration of so many in relatively close proximity nurtured and strengthened Irish culture in specific areas of the goldfields and in that growing goldfield town. Goldfield society brought new and difficult challenges for the religious, and the church was faced with trying to establish itself in a society which, by its nature, was often lawless, without civic organisation, and at the mercy of goldfields’ authorities who sometimes abused their position through unsympathetic, antagonistic, and, occasionally, corrupt dealings with the miners.¹

Although in large numbers on the goldfields generally, the Irish did not comprise mutually exclusive groups. Miners who worked with a group of ‘mates’ may or may not have stuck to ‘their own kind’, and there are many examples of groups of miners being composed of several nationalities and religious persuasions. However, it is true that on a number of leads certain nationalities often formed a noticeable community. This was certainly the case with the Irish on the Eureka lead, a fact confirmed by the contemporary press, which also referred to them in a prejudicial tone as ‘Tipperary Boys’. This term was synonymous with being unruly, drunken, violent and lacking in regard to lawful authority.² They were dismissively referred to by the Acting Chief Justice of the time as ‘Irish rebels’ and his, and other government officials’, descriptions of the diggers at Eureka lead were made the subject of a resolution at a miners’ meeting condemning such insults.³
The attempt to discredit the disaffected miners as an undisciplined Irish rabble was further advanced by the publicity that followed the wounding of John Egan, a drummer attached to the 12th Regiment of Foot. This company of British troops marched through the Eureka lead. They were met with a shower of missiles and sporadic shooting took place. The wounding of the drummer was cleverly used to incense the general population and to promote sympathy for the military and, therefore, the establishment. Even the Argus, which was sympathetic to the demands of the diggers and had kept up an unremitting criticism of Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe, and then his successor, Governor Sir Charles Hotham, and their respective administrations, over their handling of the goldfields' injustices, promoted the image of the Eureka diggers as unruly bullies.

... a poor drummer boy was shot through the leg - are these deeds which will enlist the sympathy of an intelligent people? Is the maiming of a drummer boy a worthy triumph for a large Mass of a British population who wish to occupy a creditable position in the eyes of the world? Surely not!

The Census figures for April 1854 show that there were 37,728 Irish-born immigrants in Victoria. This constituted approximately 16 per cent of the total population, although L. G. Churchward suggests that the proportion of Irish on the goldfields was higher. Weston Bate, using the 1861 Census of Victoria, demonstrates the increase in the proportion of Irish at Ballarat. The Irish-born made up 24.77 per cent of Ballarat's population and, if Sebastopol, a nearby goldfield area, were included, this rose to 30.98 per cent.

Cardinal Moran's comments lend general support to such figures:

The Irish element at Ballarat was in the early days very considerable, and Irishmen fell in for their fair share of the gold. Melbourne and Geelong were nearly drained of their male population, agriculture was completely neglected, and flour
'Great are the Inconveniences'

and hay and oats went up to fabulous prices. It was soon found that it was more profitable to keep to ordinary occupations than to go gold seeking; so society soon began to find its level, and trade and commerce were again in a most flourishing condition.⁸

The emergence of a predominantly Irish Catholic church on the Ballarat goldfields tangibly demonstrates the numerical strength of Irish miners and also their desire for familiar ordinances of religion, from which they could draw confidence and security.

Gold was discovered at Buninyong in early August of 1851 and, ten miles away, at Ballarat itself later that month. Although Ballarat, by late October in the same year was a swarming gold settlement of about 10,000, there is no record of any resident priest up to the end of 1852, when Reverend Matthew Downing (See Fig. 1.1c) was appointed to the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy of the Ballarat goldfields.⁹ Until Downing’s appointment, the Catholic miners had had their religious needs attended to by Father Patrick Dunne¹⁰ (See Fig. 1.1b), who had travelled to Ballarat in October, 1851. It had taken him several days to negotiate the hazards of the wagon track that cut its way through to Ballarat.¹¹ Because the majority of the Catholic congregation then resided near Brown Hill, it was here that the first Mass was celebrated, in a borrowed tent thirty feet by fifteen feet, only six weeks after the discovery of gold at Ballarat. There is some doubt as to whether this first Mass was celebrated on Sunday 19 October or Sunday 26 October 1851. Dunne reminisced later that, although the first Mass should have been celebrated on 19 October, the Mass vestments were left to a wagon driver to bring, but the wagon did not arrive in time and therefore the first Mass was celebrated at Brown Hill on 26 October 1851.¹² When Dunne eventually reached his destination, he found thousands on the goldfields, surviving with only the barest minimum of the necessities of life, and housed mainly in makeshift dwellings and tents. Until he had a rough calico tent himself, Father Dunne was offered shelter in the tent of John O’Sullivan. This was located on Post Office Hill close to Golden Point.
On the Sunday after his arrival Father Dunne celebrated the first Mass that was offered up in what is now the episcopal city of Ballarat, and afterwards it became a familiar and a very edifying spectacle to see, every Sunday morning, hundreds of rough, red-shirted, long-bearded diggers devoutly kneeling outside in the open air, whilst the Holy Sacrifice was being offered up in the tent. The pioneer priest of the gold-fields made himself in all respects as one of the people around him.  

Even when the priest had acquired his own dwelling, it was no grander than those of his parishioners. Bishop Goold described Father Downing's living conditions in 1853 as 'the most miserable apology for a dwelling'. He continued:

A few badly made wine cases serve for chairs, a piece of dirty canvas for a partition between the end used for general purposes and that which answers for a sleeping apartment. The floor is nature's own making on which is crowded whatever is necessary for the general use and convenience of the Reverend occupant. Great are the inconveniences and privations to which the clergyman on this important mission is obliged to submit. He complains not, but with all the spirit of a zealous missionary he bends to his difficulties in pious, generous resignation.  

There was a close relationship between the parish priest and his parishioners, although his people did not always follow the priest’s authority in all matters as was evident during the Eureka riots. The nature of gold mining, with its risks, provided the priest with more than enough to do. The situation called for a superhuman effort on the part of any clergyman. There was one priest, no substantial church building, over one thousand parishioners, and life on the Ballarat goldfields was unquestionably harsh.

On the goldfields as in Ireland, the parish priest, being an integral part of the community, participated in the life of his flock. On Sunday 4 December 1853, Bishop James Alipius Goold wrote in his diary:
We returned to Ballarat in time to say evening prayers. Soon after we sat down to dinner the clergymen were called to visit a man who was dying from a fall down a hole ninety feet deep. I accompanied him to the tent of the dying person. He would not have been less than sixty years of age. His legs were broken and the spine was seriously injured. He suffered the most excruciating pain. It was the only thing he could speak of. With some difficulty his attention was called to his Spiritual affairs, but it was soon again absorbed in the frightful agony of his mangled body. The last struggle soon set in - it was short, and violent. He left a wife and three children to share amongst [them] the means he had with hard labour and much anxiety put together.\footnote{15}

The appointment of Father Matthew Downing at the end of 1852 consolidated the sizeable Catholic church community, which now constituted a congregation of over 1,000. Downing was indefatigable. After building a make-shift church, named St Alipius', close to the Brown Hill Diggings and the old Eureka lead, he then followed the Catholic miners who had now mostly shifted to the Eureka lead, and relocated the building around March 1853. By the middle of that year a school was attached with 250 pupils in attendance. Downing said:

I went to Ballarat in 1852 and found the place I was on not convenient for the diggers in general [that is, the Brown Hill site], so I changed the place and went on the place which there is some difficulty about at present [that is, the Victoria Street site]. That was after the first heavy rains in 1853. At that time I opened a school. The ground disputed was at that time used by the children to meet the call of nature.\footnote{16}

Downing's reference to the dispute over the land being used for the Catholic church arose from the fact that the site did not appear to have been officially granted for that purpose. On 18 January 1859, information was requested about the ownership of the ground upon which St Alipius' church building was sited.\footnote{17} A search failed to show any application for land for this
purpose prior to June 1858. John Taylor, the district surveyor, in reply to the query, wrote:

I beg to state that the Roman Catholic Denomination have been in the occupation of the land five years. The buildings are worth about nine hundred pounds consisting of chapel - slat sides, canvas roof; school - weatherboard; cottage - four rooms and kitchen; three stables and hay loft.\(^{18}\)

There had obviously been much improvement since the structure earlier described in 1853. The Statistical Return of the Mission of Ballarat dated 31 May 1858 describes St Alipius' as a wooden building, 130 feet by 80 feet with an average attendance of 1,500 people. When Reverend Matthew Downing had taken possession of the land for St Alipius', the road was not surveyed. When the present Melbourne Road was surveyed, it ran straight through the St Alipius' buildings, so it was decided to make an elbow in the road in order that the school and church were not affected.\(^{19}\) Despite the challenge to the church's rightful possession of the site, the evidence of the Catholic presence and use of the land under dispute was overwhelming. Mr Illbertson and Mr Roche had long owned property which adjoined the church reserve, and they were able to testify as to the continued presence of the church on the disputed land. The Reverend James Moore, stationed in Ballarat in 1868, said that it had been used as a Catholic school for the last fifteen years [i.e. since 1853], and that it was fenced on three sides, on the fourth was a ravine.\(^{20}\) The Select Committee set up to examine this case accepted that the Catholic Church had been in long possession. The Committee also expressed a strong condemnation of the conduct of Mr George Smith, from whom the original complaint had originated.\(^{21}\)

Although Matthew Downing gave evidence that there were 250 children attending the school 'at this time', the lists submitted in 1854 indicate that there were around only 100 to 150 children attending. It is, however, impossible to obtain an accurate figure due to the itinerating population and the fact that the lists submitted were taken in the winter months and hence many
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children were reported as not attending due to inclement weather. Bishop Goold's diary entries concerning his visit to Father Downing late in 1853 give an indication only of the size of the congregation being cared for by the priest. Goold recorded that a school chapel was being erected, which was about 60 feet long, with low slab sides and a canvas roof. (See Fig. 1.3a) This was, however, still too small for the average Sunday attendance at Mass of 'thirteen hundred persons, the majority [being] men'.

Several schools had been set up on the goldfields by the mid 1850s at Canadian, Bakery Hill, and at Golden Point, as well as at Eureka. However, Weston Bate's explanation that the disparity of attendance figures referred to above is probably due to attributing Downing's statistics to one school instead of to a combination of some of the schools seems to have little foundation. Women took a leading part in these goldfields' schools. Many of the first teachers of the Catholic pupils, for example, were Irish females. Anastasia Hayes, Honorah Ryan and Ellen Harrington all worked as teachers at St Alipius' school in the initial years after its formation and, during difficult times, when government payment of salaries was anything but regular, they worked for months without salaries. However these women were no shrinking violets, and eventually Anastasia Hayes resorted to the law to obtain her money. Anastasia's husband was present at the Eureka rebellion and was later arrested and tried for treason. Though he was finally acquitted it took a degree of courage on his wife's part to continue working for the church. She was present, too, when Peter Lalor, one of the Irish miners' leaders who was wounded during the Eureka skirmish with British troops, had his arm amputated and she may have been responsible for disposing of it. (See Fig. 1.4)

The dual system of schools, Denominational and National, had been introduced in 1848 and continued throughout the 1850s and 1860s, with the growing reluctance of the government to tolerate what it saw as a wasteful policy of duplication of schools by the different denominations. The desire on the part of the government for a universal system of education, secular and
free, saw the Roman Catholic hierarchy, in opposition to this trend, attempt to protect Catholic school children from what they regarded as the ‘spirit of the age’; a philosophy of materialism, free thought and religious unbelief, which, they argued, permeated the curricula of state school systems. They demanded, under threat of excommunication, absolute loyalty from Catholic parents to the Church’s own schools. It is doubtful, however, if such tactics, including targeting Catholic parliamentary candidates and voting for or against them according to their attitude towards the Education Bill, were effective in mobilising a united Catholic response against the government’s aim to abandon its support for Denominational schools, or in influencing the election of Catholic parliamentarians. Bate certainly casts doubt on any unanimous opposition of the Catholic community to the growing policy of secular education.

Despite some opposition, however, the relevant legislation was passed in 1872, and the Bill, commonly referred to as the Education Act, abolished State Aid to denominational schools and ushered in a policy of education based upon three main foundations. It was to be compulsory, secular and free.

The immediate threat in 1872 to St Alipius’, however, did not come as a consequence of the new Education Act, but from a source closer to home. The Advocate reported that the area occupied by St Alipius’ was being threatened by an acquisition order and that a new site in Ballarat East had been gazetted for St Alipius’ church. The church responded by saying that ‘the [church] authorities will accept it only if they are fully compensated for the removing from the present site on the Melbourne Road, which is required as part of a public park which has been conditionally reserved’. However, on 17 August 1872, the Catholic paper indicated that rather than moving, the church was strengthening its position on the original site as ‘steps are being taken for preparations for a new church in permanent materials in place of the present St Alipius’ Roman Catholic Church, Melbourne Road’. The park never eventuated, and St Alipius’ in 1874 was built on the site of its original building where it still
remains. (See Fig. 1.5) The fact that the new church building was to cost £5,000 when the local congregation only had £276 available for the project demonstrates the faith that the local clergy had in the loyalty and financial support of their people.

The role of the Catholic church in its welfare, educative and spiritual functions, particularly among its Irish members on the goldfields, reflected more than its continuing spiritual function. Its ‘Irishness’, as manifested in its Irish-born clergy, its traditional forms of worship and its defensiveness in the face of a society where officialdom often held its people in low esteem, led it to be seen as the people’s defender and a source of confidence. The part played by some of the Irish in the Eureka rebellion, however, brought strains upon this relationship although there is little doubt that the role of the church as a focus for Irish national identity also provided some of the miners with a rationalisation for their stand against British authority. For example, the local Catholic church’s role in reinforcing the Irish identity of its members no doubt contributed, inadvertently perhaps, to the reinforcing of that part of the émigré Irish psyche that was antagonistic towards British authority. On the other hand, the church’s endeavour to prevent the Roman Catholic section of the Eureka diggers from engaging in violence against British authority may have arisen as much out of a desire to protect its own denominational interest as out of any peaceful respect for the law. The church’s concern to protect what it saw as its own self-interest, combined with its political conservatism, ensured that its motives at this time appear somewhat mixed.

Although the grievances over which the miners were protesting were not peculiar to any particular group of miners, national or religious, there is little doubt that the Eureka lead contained a sizeable number of Irish diggers, enough to draw descriptions from contemporaries of the Irishness of these particular diggings. It is also the case that when the stockade, which the miners had erected to defend themselves, was attacked by the military, the majority of miners present at the time were Irish,
and that an Irishman, Peter Lalor, was one of those who led the protesting stockaders and that approximately half of those killed were Irish diggers.

There was increasing antagonism on the part of the authorities towards the miners. Despite the tensions heightened by the arrival of extra troops from Melbourne, a provocatively timed licence hunt ordered by the unpopular resident Gold Commissioner, Robert Rede, was carried out on 30 November 1854 by troopers with swords drawn. This harassment was met with further stone throwing and verbal abuse from the miners which in turn provoked violent retaliation by the troops. The Moral Force leaders of the miners, such as J. B. Humffray and George Black, editor of the Diggers Advocate, appealed to the miners to refrain from resorting to arms to prosecute their cause. On Friday 1 December and Saturday 2 December they kept up their appeals with the result that many diggers left the stockade. It is, perhaps, within this larger groundswell of non-violence, that we should place the endeavour of the Catholic church at this time. Anxious to protect his flock and to avoid bloodshed, the Catholic priest, Father Patrick Smyth (who had succeeded Father Matthew Downing as parish priest in September 1854), had been energetic in advocating that the stockaders disarm. (See Fig. 1.1c) Smyth had already written to Bishop Goold seeking his presence and his influence.

... my information is that everything tends to an insurrection... the first thing they intend to do is to burn the Licences and bid defiances (sic) to the oppression of the crown here to enforce the licence tax... On this whole I want advice. What am I to do? ... Whatever you think best I shall strive to obtain. A middle course should be adopted by myself if I thought it safe; that is to keep the Catholic body [from being] present. But to do this effectively I should like your letter to show them ... Of course, we have nothing to do with those who do not belong to us, but from the large Catholic body here and from the prominent part some of them play in the agitation going on here, that influence you can effect on them, will affect the whole body of the diggins (sic).28
Smyth had two main fears. The first was that if he did nothing the Catholic body would, along with the other diggers, become embroiled in violence to the detriment of the Catholic church. His other main fear was that by intervening and putting his 'face against it', he 'may bring odium down upon the cloth'.

Bishop Goold and Father Downing, well known to the Irish diggers, visited the diggings, probably in response to Smyth's appeal, and sought to calm the situation. It is said that the influence of these men persuaded many of the miners to leave the stockade before the end of November. Father Smyth addressed the diggers on Saturday 2 December when he appealed to them to disarm and to 'attend Mass on Sunday'. For whatever combination of reasons, the majority of diggers left the stockade over a period of a few days and when the attack came at 4.00 am on the Sunday morning there were only about 150 stockaders, mostly sleeping, remaining where, just a day or so before, there had been many times that number.

The 'battle' was over in a short time leaving many diggers and several soldiers dead, and others wounded. Father Smyth was at the battle scene shortly after its conclusion seeking to give comfort to the wounded and the dying, especially, but not exclusively, among his own people. He writes, however, that despite his best intentions he was discouraged from his acts of charity.

What do you think of this that I was not allowed to see the wounded among the soldiers tho' I applied myself to that first; again on my way to the stockade, an armed man with a pistol in his extended hand rode round me; and while on the stockade, looking after the dead and dying I was told politely indeed, to take myself away, tho' all was as quiet then as now. Would not this make a granite rock imbedded in polar ice turn to fire and much more one of my temperament and disposition who stakes his life for peace and would stake it doubly for the weal of the dying. But this feeling of anger — for I was angry — has passed away.
This humane concern for the needs of others and the identification of the Catholic priest with his people reflected the wider solidarity of the Irish community which was manifested in the aftermath of the unequal contest at Eureka. Peter Lalor, who had been wounded in the stockade, and who was sought by the authorities, was secretly taken to the tent of Father Patrick Smyth under cover of dark. After his wounded arm was amputated he avoided capture and was transported by cart to Geelong and hidden there where he was reunited with his fiance, Alicia Dunne. Despite the reward of £200 being offered for his capture, none in the Irish community, nor in any other for that matter, informed the authorities of his whereabouts.

The provision of churches and support groups for the people was, of course, not a preserve of the Irish community. However, there is little doubt that the Irish were among the first to organise themselves into an identifiable community on the Ballarat goldfields, with a church building and permanent clergy. They gave loyal support to their church and school, establishing these institutions of civic and social responsibility in an environment where they might have been excused for devoting their time and energy to the hard task of gold digging. While it cannot be said that the Eureka rebellion was an entirely Irish affair, it was, especially in the last days, the Irish who provided the core of the resistance to what has been generally perceived as the unjust goldfields' system of administration. The Catholic church was involved in this affair alongside its parishioners, though it was as the voice of reason, pacifism, and moderation, which, of course, not all of the Irish Catholic diggers heeded.

Endnotes

1 See, for example, Weston Bate. Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901. Melbourne, MUP, 1978, pp.46-49.

2 See for the use of this term the Ballarat Times, 25 November, 1854; see also Geoffrey Serle in Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand, Eureka Supplement, Melbourne, MUP, 1954, reprinted 1972, pp.49-50.
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3 Argus, 1 December 1854, p.4.

4 In the following 50 years this was escalated to the extent that it was reported by John Lynch, an Irishman, and one of Lalor’s Captains during the Eureka rebellion, that Egan was killed by the shot. A grave and a headstone in his memory recording that he had been ‘Killed in the Line of Duty 29th November, 1854’ was erected in the 1970s. In May 2001, the Ballarat Council had this gravestone removed.

5 Argus, 1 December 1854, p.4.

6 L. G. Churchward, 'Americans and Other Foreigners at Eureka’ in Eureka Supplement, p.79.

7 Bate, p.149.


9 VPRS 2814, Unit 3: 52/1123, 52/7606, Colonial Secretary’s Office 1851-1855, VA856, Outward Registered Correspondence, Public Records Office (PRO), Melbourne.

10 Bate, p.20.

11 Light, September 1972, p.31.

12 Light, June 1968, p.20.

13 Moran, The History of the Catholic Church.

14 James Alipius Goold Diary, entry for Saturday, 26 November 1853, Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.

15 Goold Diary, entry for 4 December 1853.

16 Report of the Select Committee upon Grants for Land for Roman Catholic purposes, 1868.

17 VPRS 1347, 1A Vol. 52/9998, B/2nd Index, 14 March 1855. Roman Catholic Church 2 acres, Chief Secretary’s Office 1855-1979, VA475, Index to Inward Registered Correspondence re Land Grants, PRO.

18 VPRS 242, Unit 20, 59/91, Crown Reserve Correspondence File, Board of Land and Works 1857-1964, VA744, PRO.

19 Crown Reserves Correspondence, VPRS 242 Unit 20 62/11310, PRO.

20 Minutes of Evidence, Report of the Select Committee for Grants of Land for Roman Catholic Purposes, 1868, PRO.
22 Goold Diary, entry for Sunday 27 November 1853.
26 Bate, pp.234-235.
28 Letter from Father Patrick Smyth to Bishop Goold, 27 November 1854.
29 Letter from Father Patrick Smyth.
30 J. Murtagh, Eureka Supplement, pp.154-155.
Welsh Identity on the Victorian Goldfields in the Nineteenth Century

Kerry Cardell, Cliff Cumming
Peter Griffiths, Bill Jones

The question of national identity has never been an easy one with which to come to grips. Two of the recurring dangers are that we fall back on stereotype and prejudice in identifying nationality. Caroline Trosset, in looking at the nature of Welsh national identity, highlights the problem of specifying out of a multitude of characteristics which of those the Welsh themselves choose to identify their ‘Welshness’. It is the role of the eisteddfodau and especially the National Eisteddfod which, writes Trosset, is the main cultural maintainer, ‘the enactment of fundamental elements of Welsh culture’ and from which the Welsh themselves, and for themselves, draw their representations of ‘Welshness’.

A. F. Hughes adds to this, religious nonconformity. This arose from the spread of Methodism in Wales in the eighteenth century, and from its association with an earlier radicalism of Welsh dissent, which had, by the nineteenth century, he writes, transformed Wales ‘into a stronghold of Nonconformity’.
Nineteenth and early twentieth century Welsh culture was essentially a chapel-centred culture, sustained by a puritan ethos and expressed in the Welsh language. In Australia, too, the Non-conformist chapel was to herald the Welsh presence and to serve as the focal point of the Welsh community.

Trosset and Hughes thus identify several elements which, they say, create and sustain a sense of ‘Welshness’ and Hughes adds that these were part of the Welsh emigrants’ ‘invisible baggage’ they brought with them to Australia. This sense of ‘Welshness’ included, primarily, the Welsh language, religious nonconformity and eisteddfodic culture. We might expect, therefore, that it would be from the main Welsh-language social institutions, the chapel and the eisteddfodau, that the Welsh in Australia would draw to retain their ‘Welshness’ and to which they would look for championship of their identity.

The new gold society, with its culture of cosmopolitanism, materialism, overwhelming secularism, individualism, its transient nature, and its predominance of English-speaking inhabitants, had an eroding effect upon Welsh culture. This was especially true of those Welsh within the goldfields community itself. The letters and other Welsh language material of the period chart the Welsh diggers’ attempts at retention and maintenance of Welsh language, and Welsh religious, and cultural institutions. The largely failed outcome of these attempts may bring into question the validity of the notions of ‘Welshness’ which were either brought out as ‘invisible baggage’ or which were presented to these emigrants by various social institutions such as chapel, eisteddfodau, and Welsh language journals, which assumed the role of ‘keepers of the flame’. The conflicting demands which resulted from the overlapping of the new emerging regional and national identity and the continuing Welsh identity was another of the major consequences of the gold culture.

For many Welsh, as for the Scottish Highlanders in the nineteenth century, internal immigration had already meant a changing landscape. For some of the Welsh, therefore, the decision to go overseas may have involved them in their second, or third migration experi-
ences. However, for scale and permanency these internal relocations did not have the same impact upon the Welsh emigrants’ sense of identity as did the shift to the Australian colonies. (See Fig. 2.1)

For immigrants settling in another country on the opposite side of the world the most obvious change was in their physical surroundings. The initial descriptions in letters sent home by Welsh emigrants were those of aliens in an entirely new land, a different world where nothing in nature struck them as familiar. As well as exposure to new ‘landscapes,’ it was recognised by some letter writers that here was something which challenged all their previous experiences and certainties. The landscape was not something which one could regard as a tourist might looking at some ancient artefact, astonished but not permanently altered by the experience. In many of the early letters from Welsh settlers the tension which was beginning to emerge between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ can already be detected. One of the common themes of these letters is that of the permanent change which must be accepted.

I beg to occupy the attention of your readers, and to address you as one who is willing to give some of my countrymen the benefit of my little experience in regards to some points of emigration.

I call this period the morning of life. I don’t think that Adam had much the advantage of us from having seen the world whilst it was new. ... In this new land ... all bids me to forsake and forget, as well as to endeavour and strive ...

Here was an understanding that life was beginning anew. The ‘old’ life, like the cabins or the steerage accommodation on the ships, had been left behind. What had sufficed for life in the past by way of environment, employment, culture etc., was ‘in this new land’ to be forgotten and forsaken. This was for no arbitrary reason but because this new ‘Eden’ demanded a whole new outlook and approach to life. For some, in fact, the ‘old’, seen in the context of the ‘new’, seemed just a little incongruous. For example, Daniel Jones, a regular correspondent home to Wales, wrote in 1856:
In Melbourne there is a Welsh Chapel tolerably well attended. In Ballarat they have a canvas chapel accommodating about forty persons. In fact, the chapel in nothing more than a large tent. It sounded strangely familiar to me to hear the old Welsh tunes sung in the old Welsh style, under such strange circumstances, many of the congregation dressed in the digger costume.  

Further experiences had still not got Daniel used to the incongruity and he questioned the appropriateness of the old culture in the new land. (See Fig. 2.2)

To render my belief still more difficult I went on Sunday evening to the new Welsh Chapel, to hear the Rev. Thomas Farr, who has just been imported from Wales. Well, there was the old language, old intonations, old hymns, sung in the old style, old character of faces, and to crown all an old face that I had seen in Jewin Crescent, the owner of which I am unacquainted with ... What do you think of all these old things for a new land?

It is the tension between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ which is revealed most clearly in another of Daniel Jones’ letters. The new landscape was imposing its ‘culture’ upon him, in the shape of new pursuits, interests, and hobbies, competing with those things which formed his ‘Welshness’. Writing from Warrnambool, where he was then working, he lamented that he missed the well-loved expressions of his own culture and that he was tempted to return to Melbourne for their sake alone. But the attractions of what Australia was now offering was pulling him in a different direction.

I have sometimes a very strong desire to go to Melbourne again to live solely on account of its musical attractions. But on the other hand, there are powerful charms in a country life - shooting, fishing, riding, excursions in the bush.

It was in choices such as this that we can detect the cultural tensions which existed in the colonial society. There were those whose aim was to win riches on the goldfields and return home their identity unaffected. There were others whose aim was to
remain true to their national identity and to seek out or to erect those social institutions which would preserve and promote it; and there were those who were overcome by, or who willingly embraced, the ‘gold culture’ and the new identities which were emerging out of the cosmopolitan community which was the colony of Victoria.

One thing which was inescapable was the ever-pervading presence and power of the gold culture. In daily intercourse with the rest of society, gold culture intruded. Institutions, habits, things understood as between members of a close community, language, modes of thinking, all suited to another time and place, and a situation of stability and permanence, all these pieces of the Welsh ‘cultural baggage’, fitted oddly within an environment of impermanence and rapid change, and with a confusion of tongues and attitudes. This was the ‘gold culture’.8

In the mind of some of the Welsh it intruded to the exclusion of any loyalty to what they saw as their cultural institutions; church, chapel, language.

Our dear land and its ancient language
Was yet again carefully weighed in the balance
But of greater weight than language or other values,
Is the gold of other lands
It's a greater adventure to leave
Than to endure such a small place
So confined is this tract of land called Wales
Compared to the broad horizons of Australia.9

The cold truth that riches were elusive was to disappoint more than one initially enthusiastic searcher.

Well dear teacher, I don’t know exactly what to tell you about the ‘Land of Gold’ but I can say this, that like many others; I have, so far been disappointed to a degree with her, however she may turn out later. I believed that work was easier to find and the wages higher, and that the ‘Thing’ that has enticed and drawn thousands here would also be easier to obtain, that
is the ‘yellow dust’ ... It is easy to relate in the ‘Old Country’ that many have and many are making their fortunes in Australia ... but at the same time, it must be remembered, that many more fail. There are thousands here now (as always) almost failing to earn their keep, searching for the ‘Hidden Treasure’ and by following a path “that no bird knows and that the hawk cannot see ...”

One area which might have been expected to provide continuity for those elements which made up some people’s perceptions of ‘Welshness’ was family and community life. There were several large settlements of Welsh on the goldfields and in urban areas such as Williamstown and in Melbourne itself. But even here were the contradictions which faced the Welsh. Was it possible to form a ‘Welsh Wales’ in Australia and remain apart from the general society, or should the Welsh, along with the other national groups become part of the multicultural society that was forming, and contribute to that? Was it, indeed, possible to do both? There is a more basic question, of course, and that is whether the Welsh who came to Victoria had in mind anything like establishing a Welsh colony among themselves. When they began to come in sizeable numbers in the 1850s there seemed to be little doubt that they were drawn by the gold and little else.

The Welsh, especially those on the goldfields, were faced with some enormous problems when seeking to maintain themselves as a Welsh community. The nature of the mining work, especially, meant that many of the miners were not long in one spot. Failure on one field often witnessed large scale removals of miners to the latest ‘strike’ in another district. (See Fig. 2.3) This not only meant an uncertain community life but meant that some of those social institutions, such as church and cultural celebrations, could only rest, at best, on uncertain foundations. This was particularly hard on the chapel culture which, by its nature, consisted of a plethora of different chapel denominations with relatively small congregations and, if fortunate, a Welsh-speaking minister. Few of these chapels could support a full-time minister. The drift of congregations to other churches, which
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were English-speaking, was to accelerate the decline in Welsh preaching, bible schools, tea-meetings and other functions built around the chapel culture.

Cambrian Hill, a few miles south of Ballarat, for a period, constituted a strong community of Welsh. But stronger than family life or friendship networks, stronger than religious life or loyalty to cultural and Welsh-language institutions, were the exigencies of seeking for gold. This continually drew men away to other ‘strikes’, and the gold culture’s uncertainties constantly created unemployment with the consequent need to move in search of work, and its cultural milieu was increasingly cosmopolitan. These demands left chapels with too few members for a viable congregation or a permanent minister. ‘Welshness’ took last place to the practical demands of living which the gold culture imposed on these people. This disintegration of Welsh community life can be traced through letters of the period, from a Welsh family at Cambrian Hill, Ballarat to another Welsh family who had shifted to America. These letters reveal the range of reasons for the decline of this Welsh community, ranging from lack of work, to chasing gold on other fields, to marrying out-with the group.

Cambrian Hill May 20th 1874

Dear Jane,

Oh Dear Jane we do miss you very much, we have no one to speak to now. Mrs Thomas is living in your house but we can’t bear to go over since you left, dear Jane. I do feel very lonely when I go to Sunday school. When you are not there, Cambrian Hill is very dull.

My brothers are all at Creswick and got work and we expect to shift there soon because we have no neighbours on the Hill. Mrs Thomas is gone to live at Pleasant creek. We had her to tea on the afternoon before she went away and she cut out a dress for me. All the Stewarts have got work at Creswick too.

Mr Williams from the store has gone away to Melbourne and all the family and Mister Rankin is keeping a shop in his old
place. Harry Armstrong got killed with quarrying at Pleasant creek. Mrs Richardson has gone to Pleasant creek and we had some fine fun with Lizza before she went away.

Cambrian Hill September 2nd 1878

My Dear Friend,

The Bible Christian Church, has been removed from where it stood when you lived here, to the road just about where Mr Wallace’s store was. No doubt you have heard long ago that Mrs Wallace married a Mr Richardson and removed to Sandhurst to live, there are not many people living here now. The Hill looks quite deserted. People have had to remove to different parts of the Coloney (sic) in search of Employment.

Caroline Trosset’s view that the Welsh eisteddfodic movement was ‘the main cultural maintainer’ of Welsh culture, seemed, at least initially, to have been true for Victoria. For example, the essential characteristics of ‘Welshness’ were identified during the opening address at the 1867 Ballarat Eisteddfod, the immigrants’ main cultural institution. The President’s Speech, in English, identified how ‘Welshness’ was perceived and promoted through this important cultural organisation.

The Welsh as a people are Christians, every man can read his Bible, and all the children scrupulously attend the Sunday-school. Those institutions were earlier recognized, and more extensively carried out, and they took a more firm hold in Wales than in any other part of the British Empire, after their first establishment, by Robert Raikes, in Gloucestershire, a border county deeply imbued, I would beg you to remember, with Celtic elements. To our country is due the Bible Society, which has immortalised its founder, the apostolic Charles of Bala; it speaks for itself and requires no eulogy from so humble an individual as myself ...

For those from Wales who saw their ‘Welshness’ as being constituted in this way, the eisteddfodau and other such gatherings of Welsh were the sources which reinforced their identity.
The President's speech went on to extol the virtues of 'Welshness'. Its essence, he said, stemmed also for the possession of a high moral standard, a result of the influence of a good home and family upbringing.

It is admitted that the true cause for crime must come from within, from early education and training, and as no one can join our congress without a certain amount of education, it follows that they tend to mental improvement and good conduct. This is why the gaols of Wales are so frequently empty, and why in this country one seldom hears of a Welshman being an inmate of a prison.  

From his speech, which contains the usual amount of hyperbole present on such occasions, we can isolate the main characteristics which, the speaker says, identify 'Welshness'. These were a good and stable family life with a sound moral education acting as a force for individual and social good, a deep and genuine religiosity, a respect for the law of the land, a wholesome leavening effect upon the rest of society, and a love of their homeland and its language and culture.

How accurate and how effective were such institutions as the eisteddfodau in helping to delineate, maintain and preserve a distinct Welsh identity? After a shaky start the various Welsh gatherings eventually took the form of a National Eisteddfod in 1863 and such eisteddfodau were held, in different years, at Melbourne (1866), and country centres such as Castlemaine (1864) and Ballarat (1863). (See Fig. 2.4) However, this did not survive the 1860s. The eisteddfod organised for Melbourne in 1866 was a disaster. It was unable to attract any choirs and it suffered a financial loss. Yr Australyd carried a critical letter about the matter identifying the lack of 'Welshness' present in the programme.  

The gathering in 1869, at Ballarat, which was to be the last of the National Eisteddfodau, was also deemed not to have been a success. There was a complete absence of entries for the choral competitions, it was poorly attended, and the growing trend
towards Anglicisation of the Eistedfodau, as well as other Welsh gatherings, was noted. “The adjudication was in English by D. M. Davies, who said that the Welsh in Ballarat were mostly speaking English”. 16

Joseph Jenkins, the celebrated ‘Welsh swagman’, who participated in this, the last of the National Eisteddfodau, also commented upon the dearth of those present who understood Welsh.

On Christmas eve, many of the workmen bother the Master for money. I collected three sovereigns, and walked ten miles to the Welsh eisteddfod at Ballarat on Christmas day. There I recited twenty-two verses of greeting while I stood on the staircase and was warmly applauded by the few that could understand the verses. 17

As usual, Yr Australyyd had a great deal to say about the weakening of Welsh culture with articles such as ‘The Demise of Welsh in Victoria’. It was also pointed out that there was something equally fatal to their cause, namely the trickle of emigrants coming from Wales, and especially the lack of single females. Welsh men and women were marrying outwith their own nationality and as a consequence the children were being brought up in a non-Welsh environment, and were becoming ‘more English than Welsh’. 18 It was also pointed out that many of the young Welsh men were not marrying at all.

The increasing evidence of the decline of Welsh led to more and more desperate suggestions as to how to save it. Editorials and letters in Yr Australyyd increasingly suggested the isolation of the Welsh from English culture. This was to be achieved either by establishing in Victoria a colony within a colony, or by shifting to the Welsh colony at Patagonia. 19

Attempts were made to revitalise the Welsh community, and the ‘Welshness’ of the Welsh, by inaugurating new, ‘purely Welsh’ societies such as the St David’s Day Society. 20 This did give a spurt to Welsh language activities in Ballarat and to some ambitious schemes aimed at promoting Welsh. These included establishing a Welsh school at Melbourne University and a Scholar-
ship to Aberystwyth College in Wales itself. But this renewal was short lived, and these grandiose schemes came to nothing. The Welsh cause in Melbourne and Williamstown had greatly weakened. A Baptist Church gathering in Maldon, although well attended by Welsh, was almost completely an English language affair. 21

With the collapse of the National Eisteddfodau there followed smaller and more localised gatherings held by individual towns. That contemporary observer of this period, Joseph Jenkins, 'The Welsh Swagman', a regular contributor and participant at eisteddfodau, expressed his disquiet at what he saw was the growing uselessness of these gatherings in maintaining and promoting the Welsh language.

The eisteddfod at Ballarat on next St David's Day is to be more of a concert where singing takes the place of composition. I do not consider that singing alone is of any advantage to keep up the language of the Ancient Britons. I cannot imagine what the patrons of the 'Eisteddfod Fawr Caerfyrddin' would say to parading this concert as an eisteddfod. 22

The effectiveness of eisteddfodau, as carriers of 'Welshness' and as maintainers of the integrity of Welsh social institutions in the face of contending cultural forces and identities which were emerging as a new composite form of identity, Victorian-Australian-Imperial, depended to a great extent on their remaining 'pure' in terms of what they offered by way of language, poetry and music. However, the Report of the Ballarat gathering in 1885-86 signalled a great decline that had taken place in the use of Welsh at the festivals. For example, there was only one competitor for the Welsh Recitation prize but several entrants for the English Recitation Competitions. The musical programme, too, bore few evidences of what would have been contained in traditional Welsh eisteddfodau.

The Report of the eisteddfod held in Ballarat 1885-86 demonstrates how far the national and imperial idea had overwhelmed the earlier Welsh social and nationalistic purposes of such gath-
erings. The contrast between this Report and the one, quoted earlier, from 1867, is marked and it is clear that wider social forces and institutions had placed these gatherings in the service of the whole community, the whole state, the nation and the Empire.

... however tenaciously Welshmen may cling to their native language and song, no doubt both will live as long as any language is spoken on earth ... But it must be admitted, in the words of the illustrious bard Talhaiarn:- “While we preserve our nationality, and foster the customs and institutions bequeathed to us by our forefathers, it would be idle and foolish to forget that we are an integral portion of the great British nation, whose flag waves on every sea, in every clime, and whose language and peoples form a belt around the earth ...”

The object of the Ballarat Eisteddfod is to encourage and promote the cultivation of popular music, that kind of music that vibrates through the heart and raises man in the scale of being that makes him think better of the creation and the Creator.

D. H. Evans offered a new definition, an imperial definition, of the term ‘Briton’ which was markedly different from that which once had applied to the Welsh and their language. Deeds and behaviour and nobility, the audience was instructed, formed the ‘voice’ of the new ‘Welshness’. In fact language, in a traditional sense, was now irrelevant. ‘Welshness’ itself now surpassed language and form, he continued, and could no longer be isolated from community or nation or empire but was part of a ‘compound body’ whose speech and culture was imperial in character. The ancient Britons opposed the Romans in defiance of oppression and tyranny. Their opposition was in that ‘language’ which manifests itself by heroism and defence of justice.

This is the language of the Briton today, and we at this distance respond to it.

The spirit that inspired these words is not dead. May we now - the inheritors of much that was good in the ancient Britons, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh - may we, united to the noble Saxon,
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the grand master of the arts, of peace, and the proud conquerors of tyranny in every land, here develop the lofty heroism, breathe the splendid poetry, and exercise every good principle that animated the ancient Britons! It is not of much importance that the Anglo-Saxon was a few centuries ago an unfettered marauder on the Northern Seas. From these pirates have sprung the greatest number of the greatest men of all ages; and the Anglo-Saxon grafted upon the Briton has surpassed all other races in the race of civilisation, and his progress is still onward. Some Celts are angry with the Saxon, but we will do him the justice to admire, and follow him. He is the wisest to govern, with all his indiscretion, with all his selfishness, he knows how to be generous ... Now, modern Briton! Fancy not that with all thy greatness, thou art not a debtor to the ancient Briton. We are not angry with the English. We envy them not. They justly hold the septre. The world instead of making the English like unto itself, is busy making itself like unto the English.

The English, Irish, Welsh, and Scotch combined, Make up the Briton, monarch of mankind.

Happy Wales, happy Welshmen of Ballarat, we are proud that we form a prosperous portion of a mighty nation.

The eisteddfod, once the main cultural maintainer of 'Welshness', was now, apparently, the champion of the imperial ideal bearing the face of John Bull!

A. F. Hughes, as mentioned earlier, regarded the nonconformist religious tradition of the Welsh as a strong bearer of Welsh culture. This, he wrote, was transplanted when the Welsh arrived in Australia. But was the Chapel movement any more successful than the eisteddfodau in retaining Welsh culture on the goldfields? One of the major problems with looking to the church for support in maintaining 'Welshness' was that there was no such thing as a denomination to which the Welsh belonged. The established church, the Anglican Church, was supported by more than 50 per cent of these Welsh, and conducted its worship and sunday schools in the English language. Those who consti-
tuted the chapel-based Welsh were spread over a large number of different independent chapels including Welsh Baptist, Welsh Congregational, Calvinistic Methodists, Wesleyans, etc. (See Fig. 2.5) At different times the independents would cooperate but generally this was for pragmatic reasons such as the joint use of a building. Divisions often occurred between the different chapels and there were the usual problems within the chapels themselves between English-speaking and Welsh-speaking members. There was the further difficulty of obtaining suitable Welsh-speaking ministers. The transient nature of life in the colonial society, especially on the goldfields, also made it difficult to establish viable congregations. Joseph Jenkins’ wry observations illustrate the extent of the divisions which existed between the Welsh churches and the Welsh themselves.

Four miles away there are three chapels belonging to different denominations. They are so close together that they are for ever quarrelling. Better the philosophy of the Bedouin in the desert, namely 'Pitch your tents far apart, so that your hearts may be closer together'... The family have gone to one of the three chapels, the one that accommodates the 'Bible Christians'. The other two are the 'Independents' and the 'Calvinistic Methodists'. The members of each expect to enter heaven, and from there to look down at the other two.27

The growing popularity of English-language worship, even within some chapels, was also noted and probably indicates the difficulty of obtaining a Welsh-speaking minister, or a minister who would actually preach in Welsh even if he had the language.

We have a very good Welsh preacher that came out lately to Melbourne N. Jones late Trefons near Swansea - he only preaches in English he is [certainly] the most popular preacher in the whole collonies (sic) the chapel holds between 2 and 3 hundred people it is filled to overflowing every evening he is a very pious man and liberal in his views he will do a great deal of good in the collony.28
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As well, the desire of some Welsh to improve their command of the English language led them quite deliberately to attend English churches.

I attended a service at the Welsh church. The congregation consisted mostly of children who sang melodiously. The majority of the Welsh community in Maldon attend English churches. They don’t keep together like other nationals do. The main reason is that they wish to be well versed in the English language.29

The church among the Welsh, especially the chapel variety, was unable to provide that reinforcement necessary to uphold the degree of ‘Welshness’ needed to maintain Welsh culture. The problems with transience among its adherents, the problems of the lack of Welsh-speaking ministers, the problems of the attractions which English-speaking congregations held out to some of the Welsh, all helped weaken the possible influence of the Welsh churches. In addition, there were the divisions between the nonconformist denominations, all of which contributed to the failure of this key institution to maintain and promote a Welsh language-based culture in the face of the demands of the gold culture, the demands of a growing cosmopolitanism, and the increasing loyalty of the Welsh towards the secular society.

It is Sunday evening, the church and chapel bells are ringing and the Salvation Army band is playing. This small town is full of religious buildings. Church of England, Church of Rome, two Wesleyan Chapels, Baptist Church, Bible Christian Church, Scotch Presbyterian church, the Welsh Methodist church and the Independent church, but the ‘Stay at Homes’ outnumber all the other denominations. Many spend their Sundays with their guns in the bush.30

Hughes suggests the mixing of nonconformity and radical Welsh dissent created in Wales a ‘stronghold of Nonconformity’ which the Welsh brought with them to Australia. However, there seems to be little evidence of any examples of Welsh religious nonconformity being allied with ‘liberal’ or ‘radical’ politics in Victoria.
in any general sense. There does not appear to have been any specifically Welsh liberal/radical groups responsible for presenting candidates or being influential in their election. Between 1856 (the year of the first representative parliamentary elections in Victoria) and 1900, only ten Welsh-born representatives served in parliament. Of these there were only two genuine nonconformists and six were members of the Church of England. Four of these did, at various times, represent what were or had been goldmining areas. However, nothing in their parliamentary performances stamped any of them, with occasional exceptions in the case of J. B. Humffray, as 'radicals' or even as fully paid-up 'liberals'.

A few of them reached ministerial level but none achieved much by way of introducing proposals for democratic reform, and they tended, at different times and on different issues, to support governments of varying complexions. Perhaps the best known of these, John Basson Humffray, had been a 'moral suasion' Chartist and secretary of the Ballarat Reform League. However, he played no part in the Eureka violence, although supporting the diggers' demands, and, in fact, endeavoured to get the diggers to give up their violent course of action and return to peaceful agitation for reform. His parliamentary performance was ambivalent when it came to any consistent evidence of a deep commitment to radical reform.

The role of the eisteddfodic culture and that of religious nonconformity, as promoters and maintainers of an essential 'Welshness', was understood, of course, in the context of a continuing Welsh language. Thus, the strongest claim to 'Welshness' lay in the Welsh language itself, and those who thus identified their 'Welshness' may have thought to have drank deeply at the well of those institutions promoting the language. Among these were the Welsh-language journals Yr Australlyd and Yr Ymwellyd, both founded and edited by the Calvinistic Methodist minister and erstwhile miner, William Meirion Evans. Evans had arrived in Australia in 1849 and had worked in South Australia before crossing to the Victorian goldfields in 1852. He had enough success to be able to return to Wales and then to go to America. In 1863
he returned to Australia as an ordained minister of the Calvinistic Methodist church. He was a strong advocate of the use of the Welsh language and, after some trouble and several abortive attempts, he managed to launch a Welsh language journal, Yr Australydd, in 1866. This journal lasted until 1872 and he followed with YrYmwelydd in 1874 which closed in December 1876. During these years Evans mostly ministered to the Welsh, in Welsh, in the Ballarat and Sebastopol regions but he also preached at churches in the metropolitan region (Melbourne and Williamstown). He retired to Melbourne to open a bookshop but his efforts to revive the flagging Welsh cause in Melbourne were unsuccessful. He returned to Ballarat, again opening a bookshop, and died in 1883.

Evans came to realise that there was a large chasm between image and the reality when it came to living one’s ‘Welshness’. The fact was that his audience was itself a limited one. His journals, which had a marked pietistic, chapel-based tenor, were directed at a certain kind of Welsh reader who happened not to constitute anything like the majority of the colonial and goldfields Welsh, and who were rapidly becoming a smaller and smaller minority. It may even be questioned if the image of the Welsh subscriber that Evans had in mind actually existed. The faithful, sober, family-loving parents, loyal adherents to their local Welsh-language chapel, who offered strong support for Welsh cultural gatherings, may, in fact, have been a less than accurate picture of the majority of Welsh immigrants. Evans’ message, itself, of what constituted being Welsh and being Australian was an ambivalent one. At one time he encourages the Welsh to ‘marry’ themselves to their new country. In the same breath he tells his readers that for the Welsh to try and assimilate was to try and mix oil with water.31

In his frustration at the lack of effect which these journals were having on maintaining ‘Welshness’ as expressed by language and by a strong cultural life built around major institutions such as the eisteddfodau and chapel, he joined those who, in desperation, suggested that the only means of preservation was for the Welsh to form themselves into a separate community either in
Australia or abroad. But he was also, apparently, contemplating converting his journal, late in its life, to an English-language publication. The tensions within the Welsh community, referred to earlier, would surely not have been resolved by these apparently conflicting messages.

Evans himself, in his second Welsh-language periodical, Yr Ymwydd, signalled the death-knell for the language.

The children are growing up as English; only a few are coming from the old country to settle among us; also there is room to fear that the national feeling is gradually disappearing in the hearts of many of the old settlers and that it is likely to be so as long as one thinks that it is of no profit, or of any distinction to be a Welsh speaker.

A letter from 'Tegid' to Yr Australydd, for example, seeking to explain the apparent indifference on the part of the Welsh to their own culture, considers the possible causes of this. He dismisses the possibility that it may be due to the small numbers of Welsh settlers. There were, he wrote, 6,000 Welsh in Victoria of whom at least half were Welsh speakers. This was more than enough to support the continuation of the language. Nor was it through denominational differences, he added, that the cultural erosion was continuing. The reason for the decline, the writer suggested, was that for most of these people 'Welshness' was more ephemeral than real. It was only an image and like some token was trotted out at special festivals, but for most of the time it was something which had no relevance to most of the Welsh and did not influence their day-to-day existence. It was, 'something to talk about and boast about around the time of Eisteddfodau, and similar meetings, but never to bring out to practice'.

In the absence of a closed Welsh enclave, the situation 'Tegid' describes would seem to have been unavoidable given that most of the bilingual Welsh had to conduct practically all of their verbal transactions in the wider community in English. The truth of the matter was that Welsh nonconformists in Victoria were in a minority. Similarly the image of the law-abiding, sober and
loving family man is not borne out by such things as prison records. The prison registers, for example, show, where it was possible to determine the nationality of the offender, that over 300 Welshmen served sentences in Victorian prisons between 1852 and 1900. Of those Welsh who were sentenced, at least 30 per cent of the charges related to crimes committed in goldfields areas. Among the range of offences were drunkenness and desertion of wife/spouse, and family, as well as more serious criminal offences. These statistics do not include the hundreds of local Petty Sessions offences for drunkenness etc., for which a fine or a caution was awarded. (See Fig. 2.6) The extent of drinking among the Welsh also formed a common theme in many of the private letters sent to family and friends in Wales.

I have sent you two newspapers one of them, the Evening Post, contains news [of a] sad end of a Welshman through intoxicating drink. I am sorry to say that I do know several more that is (sic) travelling the same road.

There was also a large disparity in numbers between the married and single men and there was nothing like parity of numbers between Welsh males and females until late in the century. This led to out-marriage with a further decline of Welsh-speaking in the home, and to a large pool of single middle-aged and elderly men who had no settled domestic life as the century wore on.

We the Welsh have to marry English, Scottish or Irish women as there is little choice from among our own kind ... much of the cause for the state of the Welsh in Victoria at present is due to the imbalance of men and women. This seriously affects our situation in the religious, social and national sense, the result being that we are falling into some sort of void that words cannot describe ...

There was thus no such thing as a Welsh community. Not everyone wanted to be 'different' or to retain as a means of self-identification those elements of 'Welshness' which were thought to be essential to a Welsh identity. Some were indifferent but
others deliberately sought to shed any such identification. The situation of some, for example those in the remoter areas of the state, and those engaged in farming or other rural employment, meant that numbers were insufficient to provide anything like a viable community of Welsh speakers. Even when such rural Welsh were Welsh-speaking, it was lamented, by the editor of Yr Australydd that some made no deliberate efforts to socialise in, nor to ‘aggressively’ foster, their native tongue:

I am led to make these observations as a result of a visit paid to an agricultural district, where I found some 15 Welsh families living in plenty and happiness. What are they doing? Well, fulfilling their agricultural duties, going to market, eating, drinking, and sleeping. That is about all. They are Welsh, and most of them, so I understand, have little English. They do not have a society, nor chapel, and because of this they do not mix socially or religiously. They are individual families, only fulfilling those essentials in the state, that is eating and growing things to eat. They are very happy, indeed; and they are as good settlers in their locality - as good farmers - as honest and able in their dealings, as any in the colony. But looking at them having followed each other and settled like this, in a taciturn/quiet way, proves to me that we should, like the Germans and Italians, at present aim to form Welsh settlements. 39

There were insufficient Welsh of status, wealth or power within the major institutions of society — political, educational, industrial, or the media — to form an influential elite. This is not to dismiss the lives of the ordinary Welsh as of no importance, but merely to demonstrate that the Welsh ‘cause’ could not rely for real leadership or support on any strong or powerful financial or social group of Welsh. There was no substantial Welsh elite, removed from the concerns of employment and the daily struggle to survive, who, disinterestedly could devote their time and energies, and money, and position, to championing the cause of ‘Welshness’ among the masses. There were, of course, some individuals, such as Rowlands, Lewis and Williams in Ballarat who did act in this capacity, but Evans lamented that not
enough of the ‘educated’ class of Welsh gave support to Yr Australydd or its aims.\textsuperscript{40}

It is doubtful if Humffray, for example, was a Welsh-speaker. Robert Roberts (1834–85), ‘Y Sgolor Mawr’, was well-equipped to take some lead in the Welsh community at the intellectual level, but despite his interest in Welsh historical and linguistic studies, there is little evidence that he took more than a passing interest in those institutions regarded as the bearers of Welsh culture. Roberts had a dalliance as a minister with the Church of England and, following his rift with that denomination, ministered, for a short time, in the Free Church of England, a short-lived breakaway group from the main Church of England in the Ballarat district. But these were both English-speaking churches. He also established his own school and acted as tutor to the prominent solicitor, politician, and landowner, Townsend McDermott and, for a short time, occupied the editorial chair of the Ballarat Star and the Ballarat Miner.\textsuperscript{41} Roberts undoubtedly had the ability to be part of a Welsh intellectual elite but he chose not to. Despite his Welsh scholarship, his meagre contribution to eisteddfodau seem to have been in English and to have downplayed, somewhat, the traditional elements of ‘Welshness’.

In a devastating critique of the Welsh in Australia, a letter signed ‘Mab Y. Weddw’, Ballarat, appeared in the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian in 1873. One by one the author took the icons of ‘Welshness’, as they were identified at such gatherings as the eisteddfodau in Australia, and showed them to be nothing more than phantoms, expressions of hypocrisy and betrayals of the true spirit of the Cymry. The chapel culture had succumbed to the spirit of the world. His letter shattered the image of ‘Welshness’ which chapel, eisteddfodau and Welsh-language culture had presented. Nonconformity, cultural affectation, the myth of Welsh religiosity and honesty were just a few among the icons which the writer demolished.

To talk of Voluntaryism in a community which makes up all shades of opinion is rather unpleasant to the strict admirers of this principle, for in the furtherance of congregationalism this
body are the loudest clamourers for State aid in districts where the brethren are not adequately compensated. Again, for a bazaar, tea meeting, concert, or fruit soiree, the tickets are entrusted to those who may coerce others who hold different religious views, thereby casting a hint, 'if you don't buy a ticket, ma or pa will feel much displeased.' So the butcher, baker, or tailor has the alternative of acquiescing or relinquishing his claim for custom. 42

The 'gold culture', he noted, provided ample opportunities, which the Welsh took, of engaging in activities which, if not illegal, were surely immoral and at odds with the 'famed' religiosity of the Welsh. From a member of parliament down, the Welsh displayed duplicity in their dealings with others.

With regard to [parliamentary] privilege, I see a Merthyrionian has been sheltering under this right when becoming liable to a debt incurred by a lawsuit. Wrixon, the ex Minister of Justice, dealt out some severe strictures on the attitude Benjamin George had taken. Judge Dunn, in passing verdict, could not surmount the privilege allowed to a senator. Again Benjamin, in the House, explained that matters did not stand in the manner given by the Argus, saying that he did not wish to evade the law, and that the affair had arisen from a mining transaction. 43

That such behaviour was carried out by the 'unco guid' made their claims of piety even more hypocritical, reprehensible and dishonouring to the true spirit of Cymry at home. The 'brotherhood' of the Cymry was seen as nothing more than an opportunity of fleecing one another. The gold culture provided the perfect means of doing so.

Such unjust acts, committed by the would-be respectable and upright, must damp the efforts of Welsh enthusiasts out here, who believe their race superior to all other in morality and general good conduct. No doubt, if these men committed themselves to such a way at home, the Church they were members of would disown them; but here, if a man escapes the clutches of the law, he enjoys communion whatever his moral
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conduct may be without restriction. This is not to be won­
dered at, for in this Church they have a reformed bully as a
minister, with a converted housebreaker for a deacon. 44

Like all pieces of such polemic, ‘Mab Y Weddw’s’ letter, contains
exaggerations and over-generalisations. However, it serves to
highlight the large gap that there was between the image of
‘Welshness’ promoted by sections of the community and the
reality. His criticisms included those who, purporting to be the
upholders of the cause of Welshness, compromised their posi­
tion by trying to mix Welsh and Australian culture. Their
Welshness had expanded to include the Australian ‘coat of arms’
as a sign of cultural fusion. For example, to commemorate the
special success of a Welsh choir in London, it was proposed to
send a special baton to be presented to the conductor. ‘Mab Y
Weddw’ testily saw in this gesture of cultural solidarity evidence
of a cultural sell-out on the part of the colonial Welsh.

The writer of the foregoing letter was, perhaps, particularly
overcritical and intolerant of what he regarded as the failure of
the Welsh to uphold their ‘Welshness’. The unrealistic pressures
on the Welsh to live up to what may, in fact, have been idealised
caricatures of what ‘Welshness’ actually was, led to the inevita­
ble charges of hypocrisy from the purists. Maintaining a
separate and distinct national identity while being very much a
minority group within a wider and overwhelmingly cosmo­
politan population, was never a realistic aim, if indeed it was an

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aim on the part of the majority of the Welsh immigrants at all. Gold had removed many Welsh people and their families from their homes in Wales and brought them to the Australian colonies. The only change which many eagerly looked forward to undergoing was that of ‘striking it rich’. The gold culture was, however, not to be so generous with most of the settlers nor was it to leave them simply disappointed in terms of failing to ‘strike it rich’. It also successfully challenged their old loyalties, seduced them through secularism, confused them first through cosmopolitanism, and then made them proud through their acquisition of a Victorian and, later, an Australian identity. In the face of this, the social institutions of the Welsh were unable to protect or maintain the sense of ‘Welshness’ which was promoted as being the essence of their identity. It may well be considered whether the reason for its rapid demise lies as much in its unreality in the first place as in the overwhelming impact of the gold culture.

Endnotes


3 All quotations from letters, diaries and other personal correspondence have retained the original spelling and punctuation except where it was necessary to render the material intelligible. Many of the items consulted, and especially those used in this chapter, were originally in Welsh, and we are grateful to Dr Bill Jones, Mrs G. Critchlow, Mr Eifion Wyn Williams, and Mrs Nan Owen, for their assistance in rendering this material into English.


5 ‘Letter from Victoria’, Carnarvon and Denbighshire Herald, 6 February 1858, p.6.

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8 See, for example, ‘Life in Australia’, Carnarvon and Denbighshire Herald, 11 December 1852, p.3.

9 Quoted in The Land of Gold. This small book, originally in Welsh, was written by Gan D. Ap G. Ap Huw Feddyg, under the title Gwlad Yr Awr, Neu Gydymaith Yr Ymfundwr Cwyreig I Australia. Caernarfon, H. Humphreys, 1852. We are grateful to Mrs Nan Owen for translating parts of this text.

10 Owen Jones, Forest Creek Victoria to Mr E. Thomas 12 May 1858. We are grateful to Eifion Wyn Williams, Wales, for translating the Owen Jones’ letters.

11 Mary Sarah Ward, Cambrian Hill, Ballarat, Victoria, to Jane Powell, Ohio, America May 20 1874. Powell Letters in private hands.

12 Ward to Powell, September 2, 1878.

13 Address of the President, Dr D.J. Thomas at the Eisteddfod, held at the Royal Theatre in Ballarat, on the 25th December, 1867. n.p., n.d., p.4.

14 Address of the President: p.5.

15 Yr Australydd, October, 1866. Translation by Mrs G. Critchlow, Bendigo, Victoria.

16 Australydd, October 1866.


18 Australydd, April 1871. Translation by Mrs G. Critchlow, Bendigo, Victoria.

19 See, for example, Australydd, April, 1867, August, 1869.

20 Australydd, April 1872.

21 YrYmwelydd, December 1875.

22 Jenkins, Diary of a Welsh Swagman. p.65.


26 Analysis of Victorian Shipping Registers 1839-71 - assisted passengers.


29 Jenkins, Diary of a Welsh Swagman, p.155.

30 Jenkins, Diary of a Welsh Swagman, p.173.

31 Australydd, July 1871, p.2.

32 See YrYmhwydd, November 1876, pp.282-3, where the question of whether that journal should become an English-language publication was discussed at a Gymanfa Ganu in Sebastopol.

33 YrYmhwydd, June 1875, pp.202-3.


35 See, for example, the shipping lists for assisted immigrants to Victoria 1850-1870. Those whose native place was identified as Wales also demonstrated an adherence to the Church of England which amounted to more than fifty percent of the total. This is borne out with the religious affiliation shown by Welsh hospital patients and also of Welsh prisoners. Rather than the temperate and law-abiding model citizen, the stereotypical view presented by the likes of Evan and the Eisteddfod descriptions, the Welsh figured prominently in the prison records and drunkenness was noted by contemporary commentators to be rife among the Welsh.

36 See, for example, Victorian Prisoners Registers c1850-1900, VPRS 515, Public Records Office, Laverton, Victoria.

37 Lewis to Williams 22 May 1868. See also Owen Jones, Forest Creek, Victoria, Australia May 12th 1858 to Mr E. Thomas, Wales.

38 YrYmhwydd, April 1872, pp. 282-283.

39 Yr Australydd, August, 1871, p.2.

40 Yr Australydd, July 1868, p. 2.

41 Papers of Robert Roberts, National Library of Wales, MS. 44/3.

42 ‘Mab Y. Weddw’, Sebastopol, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, March 8th 1873, to the Editor of the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian.

43 ‘Mab Y Weddw’.

44 ‘Mab Y Weddw’.

45 ‘Mab Y Weddw’.
Figure 1.1a Bishop James Alipius Goold, the first Bishop, then Archbishop of Melbourne. By permission MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Figure 1.1b Father Patrick Dunne, early visitor on the Ballarat goldfields. He conducted the first Mass, 26 Oct. 1851, in the open air. By permission MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Figure 1.1c Father Mathew Downing, in later years. The first resident priest on the Ballarat goldfields, at St Alipius', appointed 2 Nov. 1851. By permission MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Figure 1.1d Father Patrick Smyth, the parish priest at St Alipius' during the Eureka uprising. He succeeded Fr Downing in Sept. 1854, and showed great courage and compassion before and after the fighting at the Eureka Stockade. By permission MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.
Figure 1.2 Sabbath at the old Post Office, Forest Creek, Bishop Perry preaching on the goldfields. From Illustrated London News, 1853. By permission of the National Library of Australia.

Figure 1.3a 'St Alipius’ Roman Catholic Church at Gravel Pit, Ballarat.’ This view is from the back of the chapel showing the priest’s tent.

**Figure 1.3b** Eugene von Guerard. St Alipius Capella Catolica. From Von Guerard's Diary of an Australian Digger, p. 53. Note the canvas roof. By permission Manuscripts Collection, Dixson Library, State Library of NSW.

**Figure 1.5** St. Alipius' Roman Catholic Church, 1996. Photo: Tina Jones. Reproduced by permission.
Figure 1.4 Anastasia Hayes, one of the earliest teachers at St Alipius'. She was Mistress of the Roman Catholic Girls' School in 1855 and for several years afterwards.

Figure 2.1a Welsh-language Immigrant Guide to Australia, 'Gwlad Yr Aur', (The Land of Gold), c1852. Courtesy National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Figure 2.1b Front page of Welsh-language travel guide to Victoria, 1856. Editor’s copy.

Figure 2.1c Front page of the first issue of the first Australian Welsh-language journal Yr Australydd (The Australian), 1866. It was published in Ballarat. Editor’s copy.
Figure 2.2 Members of the Sebastopol Cambrian Society in National Costume, 1910. Courtesy of the Sebastopol Historical Society, Victoria.

Figure 2.3 ‘Diggers for Spring Creek starting from Sandhurst’. From Illustrated Australian News, 1 March, 1869, p. 48. By permission of the National Library of Australia.
EISTEDDFOD CYMRY VICTORIA, 1868.

"Penparth honedd ym dysg. "Penparth dysg ym hyder."

Cynelir yr Eisteddfod nesaf ym Ballarat, ar y 25ain a'r 26ain o Ragyr, pryd y gwobrywir ymgeliwyr buddugol ar y testynau canlyniol:

GYFANSODDIADâu RHYDDIAETHOL.

DORBANTH CYNTAF.
1. Traethawd. Testyn: Anebrig Gymdeithas Cymry Victoria—rhegoriaethau, difyigion, a'r meddliwn i'w gwella. Gwobr: Tiws ariann, ac.................. 220 0 0
2. Traethawd. Testyn: Oddi ei heb anatr. Gwobr...... 8 0 0
3. Flug-banes. Testyn: "Owen Glyndwr"................. 10 0 0

D.S. Yn yfansoddiaid hwn i fod o ffoist "Llywelyn Barri" Llwyfo.

AIL DOBANTH.
1. Traethawd. Testyn: Hunaddibyniad—yr eraill o arlangosiadol i fod yn gmyndergau Cymreig. Gwobr: Tiws arliann, a.................. 5 0 0
2. Traethawd. Testyn: Ballarat fel y bu, ac fel y mae. Gwobr............................................. 5 0 0
3. Traethawd. Testyn: Traeth a Gwanwethdu Teuluidd. I senywd. Gwobr............................................. 1 0 0

BARDDONIAETH.

DORBANTH CYNTAF.
1. Pryddest—heb fod dros 400 o linellau. Testyn: Gorés-gyniad/Prydain gan y Rhuthuniaid. Gwobr: Tiws ariann, a 10 0 0
2. Cywyd. Testyn: Y Ceunader (Missionary). Gwobr 5 0 0
3. Digrif-gain. Testyn: Y Carcher Trwstaun...................... 1 0 0

AIL DOBANTH.
1. Cân. Testyn: Y Plant Ceheliog. (Children Lost in the Bush.) Gwobr: Tiws arliann, a.................. 3 0 0

Figure 2.4 Programme page for Eisteddford Cymry Victoria, held 25 & 26 December 1868, showing some of the events and prize monies. From Yr Australydd. Editors' copy.

Below: Figure 2.5 Carmel Welsh Presbyterian Church, Sebastopol, shortly after its completion c.1865. This was just one of the many Welsh-language churches initially established on the goldfields of central Victoria. Courtesy Sebastopol Historical Society.
Figure 2.6 The sober Welsh! The father, himself inebriated, admonishes his son for being drunk. “Sam, my son, I’m ashamed to see you in that state. How’s it, boy?—Here’s a bottle—Come on my son, wake up my boy!” George Lacy, c 1860, watercolour. By permission of the National Library of Australia.

Figure 3.1 The bleak goldfields landscape which would have confronted the Cornish immigrants on their arrival at Ballarat. Edwin Stocqueler, Digging for Gold, 1880 (from sketches made in Australia 1854). By kind permission of Hordern House Rare Books, Manuscripts, Paintings and Prints, Sydney.
"What do you think of ole man's new patent wheelbarrow, Mister?"

"Wha's new 'bout un, m'son?"

"Angles in front and wheel behind."

Figure 3.2 'The Woollen Mill at Sunny Corner.' Designed by the architect H. R. Casselli, who was a Cornish immigrant. From a glass slide dated 1905. By kind permission of Central Highlands Regional Library, Ballarat Branch, Australiana Research Collection.

Figure 3.3 'Cornish Wheelbarrow', Oswald Pryor. From Cornish Pasty, a Selection of Cartoons. Rigby and Seal Books, 1976, p. 24.
Figure 3.4 Illustration of deep shaft mining, 'Gold Mining at Ballarat'. From Voyage Autour du Monde per le Comte de Beauvoir, Paris, 1878, opposite p. 84. By permission of the National Library of Australia.
Figure 3.5 'Cornish Row' in Sebastopol, Ballarat. From Lillian Dell and Joy Menhennet, Cornish Pioneers of Ballarat, Vol. 2, The Ballarat Branch of the Cornish Association of Victoria, Australia, n.d. p. 77.
Map courtesy Lillian Dell and Joy Menhennet, the Ballarat Branch of the Cornish Association.
From Liverpool as I before have stated
We sail'd a motley set we surely were
With coals and iron was our vessel freighted
Scotch Irish Welsh and English were there
Going out to see if emigration
Was a recipe against starvation.

There were ploughboys weavers blacksmiths tailors
Irish peasants and Welsh mountaineers
Together with a family of nailors
Scotch from the lowlands and some highland seers
Butchers bakers carpenters and joiners
There were also a lot of Cornish miners.

Historian Patrick O’Farrell has written that ‘Australia was for a very long time not so much a nation as an assemblage of assorted immigrants, living out of the cultural and psychological baggage they had brought with them ... ’ This was never more true than during the era of the gold rushes, when shiploads of immigrants from every corner of Britain, and the world,
brought themselves and their cultural inheritance to this country, and in the process contributed to the matrix of modern Australia. This chapter will explore the impact of one group of immigrants, the Cornish, on the gold town of Ballarat in Victoria where Cornish expertise in mining, and the broader aspects of Cornish culture, contributed to the social, religious and mining development of Ballarat.

The Cornish came from a distinctive background with a heritage of mining knowledge and a desire to escape what had become intolerable conditions at home. They quickly became involved at both labour and management levels in Ballarat’s principal occupation in the 1850s — mining. As well as their roles at the diggings, the Cornish participated in the variety of occupations which had sprung up in response to the need to service the goldfields. They were mostly Wesleyan in their religious outlook and helped establish Methodism in Ballarat. The close network established by the ‘Cousin Jacks and Jennies’ also assisted in the achievement of this outcome.

Although Cornwall was a rural society based mainly on agriculture and fishing, for centuries mining had also been a staple industry. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Cornwall entered a golden period of prosperity and creative energy. Its rise was spearheaded by the development of the Cornish tin and copper mining industry, and placed the county as one of the leading developers of innovative mining techniques in the United Kingdom. But Cornwall’s boom spawned a sadder consequence; conditions in the newly emerging industrial society were poor, with Arthur Todd describing the life of a Cornish miner as ‘nasty, brutish and short’. Hard physical labour with little relief from appalling physical conditions, unrelieved poverty, illness, danger and starvation followed the short boom cycles of Cornwall’s ‘industrial’ revolution. Similarly, the life of a farmer in Cornwall in those years was more often than not one of an unrelenting struggle against privation, diseased crops (especially during the potato blight in 1845 and 1846), poor seasons, high rents, and high taxation.
By the mid-nineteenth century, life in Cornwall was becoming increasingly uncomfortable for a great many of its working class people. The rural poverty of the 1830s, and the beginning of the collapse of the mineral market on which Cornwall's prosperity had grown, meant that the silver and gold of the New World shone with increasing appeal to those looking for a new and better life for themselves and their families. Between 1861 and 1900 Cornwall lost no less than 10.5 per cent of its male population overseas and 7 per cent to other areas of Britain. Five per cent of the female population went overseas and seven per cent to other counties within the United Kingdom. If we consider the ages of the men and women who left, the statistics are even more startling. Of Cornish men aged between fifteen and twenty-four years, 44.8 per cent left for overseas. Of women in the same age group, 26.2 per cent went abroad. All in all, some 118,500 people left Cornwall between 1861 and 1900. The West Briton, one of the most widely-read of the Cornish newspapers, worried about the human implications of the situation, wrote about 'the unprecedented exodus of the bone and sinew of the working population'. However, realistically, it recognised immigration as the only reasonable solution to the population 'surplus'.

Australia was the target for a portion of this heavy outflow of the Cornish, even before the discovery of gold. Between 1846 and 1850, for example, approximately 6,700 Cornish immigrants were assisted to Australia, almost 4,800 of them bound for South Australia. A large number of these worked in the copper mines until the gold strikes in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851 led to an outflow of many of them from South Australia for these goldfields. The arrival of hundreds of Cornish in Ballarat, for example, was largely determined by the fact that gold had been discovered there in 1851, and the lure of riches prompted an overland exodus from South Australia and other areas of Australia, as well as increased direct immigration from Cornwall itself.
The initial impression of the goldfields was not an encouraging one for those who, like the Cornish, had come from the ‘green and pleasant lands’ of their native homes. (See Fig. 3.1) In October 1851, early days on the Ballarat fields, Golden Point, one of the popular leads, was described as ‘a citadel thrown to the ground. Thousands of men were running about like rabbits between burrows. Everything had an appearance of deep yellow earth — yellow clothes — yellow hands — yellow faces — yellow everything’. It was to this new and unattractive environment that the Cornish came, bringing with them not only their ‘cultural and psychological baggage’, but the many important practical and specialised skills which had come to characterise Cornish mining. By the mid-nineteenth century these men had already acquired a world-wide reputation as miners. Communities of Cornish were well established in California, and in South Australia at Moonta and Burra, a copper mining area which was to earn the appellation of ‘Australia’s little Cornwall’.

Their skills, learned and honed in Cornish mines, were put to the test in what for them were the different types of mining experienced on the goldfields. They met the challenge of deep lead mining on the Ballarat fields and, when quartz mining replaced the earlier alluvial fields, their hard-rock mining skills were shown to advantage (especially on the Bendigo fields). Furthermore, their skills and experience, gained not only at home but also in America and South Australia, also fitted many of them for management positions in the mines. Ann Colman identified twenty-nine Cornishmen who were designated mine managers in Victoria between 1865 and 1880. In Ballarat itself, at least twenty-one Cornish mine ‘captains’, or managers, have been identified.

Cornish surnames appearing in mining affairs in Ballarat during the gold period indicate the extent to which these immigrants spread over the goldfields — Trembath, Serjeant, Williams, Rowe, Kent, Treloar, Trethowan, Kernick, are just a few of the familiar names indicating a Cornish presence. Some of these names are recorded for their substantial contribution to
community development as well as to mining operations. Robert Malachy Serjeant, for example, is justly well-known for his inspired and stalwart leadership of Ballarat’s famous and rich Band of Hope and Albion Mine, as well as his fine record of entrepreneurial citizenship. ‘Captain’ Nicholas Kent took a leading role, not only in mine management but also in the promotion of Methodism in Ballarat. John Trethowan was manager of the New Normanby, the South Woah Haup, North Woah Haup, Prince Extended and British Queen mines, as well as being director of the latter. Trethowan was also heavily involved in the civic and social life of Ballarat, being a fine sportsman, a justice of the peace, and a prominent freemason. John Rowe, from St Just, was not only an outstanding mine manager, certificated surveyor and metallurgist, but his mining knowledge was recognised when he was invited to take charge of the practical mining class at the famous School of Mines in Ballarat. William Hicks, in addition to legal and managerial roles with the Guiding Star mine, which eventually became the famous Star of the East mine, was a local councillor (later Mayor) on the Sebastopol Council. His welfare activities included his membership of the Ballarat Hospital, and of the Benevolent and Orphan Asylums. He was also Superintendent of the Rubicon Street Wesleyan Sunday School for nearly a quarter of a century. Given the transitory nature of goldmining settlements, it is certainly the case that many Cornish would have travelled to other fields such as those at Castlemaine, and Bendigo. Not all miners achieved riches, and the Cornish did not have a monopoly on success, but it can be reasonably claimed that the miners of Cornwall were certainly sought-after and employed throughout Victoria, and that their hard-rock mining expertise and their managerial experience were qualities which found them ready employment. As the gold ran out, or became harder to locate, Cornish folk — as did other new settlers — diversified where they could, seeking other areas of employment. Some of those who achieved a measure of success on the goldfields moved onto the land as small-scale farmers, or set themselves up in more secure or lucrative livelihoods.
There is much evidence of Cornish folk in Ballarat diversifying into a wide variety of employments, including foundry work, trades, crafts, teaching, the ministry, and engineering. Henry Troon, whose family hailed from Ludgvan, set himself up as a Blacksmith and Colonial Oven Manufacturer in Ballarat in 1870. He worked as a mining and agricultural blacksmith, and by the time of his death in 1929 had built up a substantial business. Richard Trahar (from Perranarworthal) operated one of the earliest foundries in Ballarat and began a family business which was still operating a century later. William Hambly joined a boot-making establishment in 1856, after initially seeking gold at Ballarat and surrounding goldfields. He gained distinction for the high quality miners' boots which the firm produced, and Hambly and Son became one of the largest retail manufacturing footwear businesses in Ballarat. Cornishmen like Cyril Retallack became noted for their entrepreneurial talents. Despite little formal training, Retallack was responsible for the erection of some important engineering edifices in Ballarat, as well as adorning significant buildings, such as the impressive Town Hall, with his wrought iron artistry.

The Town Hall had been designed by Henry Caselli, who won first prize in the design competition for this major civic building. Henry Caselli was also a Cornishman whose career burgeoned from a multi-skilled background which allowed him to practice in many areas once he arrived in Victoria. Caselli's occupation was variously described as 'mechanic', 'draughtsman and constructor', and 'blockmaker', as well as architect. In Ballarat he was involved in major building projects and was responsible for some of the city's and the district's distinct buildings including the Albert Hall, built as a permanent memorial to Prince Albert's visit, and the stately woollen mill at Sunny Corner. (See Fig. 3.2) Caselli was also involved in mining at all levels, both in a 'hands on' capacity as well as through shareholdings. He was a noted public citizen in the city of his adoption and on his death Ballarat's newspapers, in their obituaries, vied with each other in their use of superlatives.
Father of the district, always courteous and lively, ... we have lost an old identity, esteemed citizen and leading professional man ... he was noble kind and honourable ... he was a Man, take him for all in all.\textsuperscript{10}

The particular competency acquired by Cornishmen as a result of their long mining history was further sharpened and developed by the nature of the mining which they found on the Ballarat (and Bendigo) goldfields. The early mining on the new goldfields began with the innovative practices of the Cornish. (See Fig. 3.3) Christopher Davies, for example, identifies such innovations as the distinctive pick which they used, single pointed ‘because of its lightness and ease of use in confined spaces’, bucket pumps based on those developed in Cornwall, the ‘hammer and tap’ method of drilling or boring holes in the rock face, the ‘Cousin Jack wheelbarrow’, and the Cornish designed whims, as but a few of the innovations which these miners introduced to the Australian mining industry.\textsuperscript{11}

Later, as the nature of mining changed in Ballarat, and the miners found it necessary to go deeper to reach the quartz reefs beneath the erstwhile richness of the alluvial diggings, the skills and expertise of the Cornish hard-rock miners came to the fore. Their drilling and blasting skills were particularly significant, as William Kelly, a contemporary observer noted in 1859, when he compared some work he had witnessed at Bendigo with that of the Cornishmen at Ballarat. At Bendigo, he wrote:

... even at a distance, it was evident they were mostly new and inexperienced hands, for the loudness of the blasting reports in themselves proved they were little acquainted with the operation. [In contrast] The enterprise [of quartz mining] was kept alive by ... the systematic plodding of Cornish miners, many of whom came fresh from their native land, while numbers also made their way from the copper mines of South Australia.\textsuperscript{12}

The competence and professionalism of the Cornish, even of their children, impressed Kelly.
I entered into conversation with an intelligent Cornish man, who was working his small claim by the aid of his two sons, one a mere lad, the other a child; yet it was quite a treat to see the quantity of stone they raised, and the neat, methodical way in which they were proceeding. The style in which their windlass was rigged, their platform constructed, their shaft stayed and propped, and their stuff assorted, in little heaps, as it were, bad, better, best, satisfied me that they knew what they were about.13

Less easy to articulate, but nevertheless worthy of comment, were the perceived national characteristics of the Cornish as contemporary commentators such as Kelly identified them. Pragmatism, independence, a sense of brotherhood, a belief in the virtues of hard work, a plain and simple piety — all of these qualities were described as being characteristic of the Cornish. Certainly it is not difficult to comprehend the need for a solid ‘work ethic’, and a sense of ‘mateship’, in the difficult conditions which existed on Ballarat’s goldfields. Many of the miners on the goldfields had seen the importance of teaming up and working together, but the Cornish arrived with a tradition of such cooperative work organisation. In letters back to Cornwall, ‘Cousin’ Henry Giles described his fellow travellers, and implied the existence of a ‘network’ of ‘Cousin Jacks’ which was beginning to exist in Victoria. He wrote, for example:

John and myself and fifteen other Cornish men came to the diggings together ... [there were] Richard Eddy from Treen and Matthew Thomas from Treen and David Eddy from Bosigran. Matthew White, John Hosking from Treveal ... and Arthur Chellew from Zennor Church Town. [There were also] two miners, one is from Sancreed called George Thomas, the other from St Day called Richard Harvey. George Thomas [claimed Giles], is my Mate, he and me do belong on one pit we expect to Bottom next week which will be about 60 feet. (See Fig. 3.4) John and Richard Harvey is together on another pit. Arthur Chellew is with William Hearne from St Just in another pit, so we shall all share alike on the gain.14
Groups of Cornishmen travelled together, worked together, and lived together, making particular locations around Ballarat their own. Cornish Town in Sebastopol, and Mt Pleasant, for example, were particularly recognised as being almost wholly Cornish in population. (See Fig. 3.5) Henry Giles was amazed by the number of Cornish folk moving between Ballarat and Melbourne.

We are surrounded by Cornishmen I have seen a great many I know Thomas Floss was in our Tent yesterday he came down from Ballarat he is in very good health ... in fact if I were to name all that I have seen that I know I should say very little else.\(^\text{15}\)

A strong identifying factor among the Cornish was their worship which was almost entirely Methodist or Wesleyan. Cornish folk frequently worshipped together.

There were seven preaching places. The first, appropriately enough, was Wesley Hill, so called because of the number of Wesleyans who lived about the spot. The great name Wesley stands at the very front of our history in the golden city [i.e. Ballarat]. Then came Cornishtown, which needs no explanation. But it is appropriate, too, in this place. Where did Wesley have greater triumphs than among the Cornish folk? They have contributed greatly to Methodism in these lands.\(^\text{16}\)

The Cornish connection with the Methodist Church in Ballarat is a strong one. In almost every instance of the establishment of a place of worship for Wesleyans on the goldfields, Cornish names, Cornish money, Cornish leadership and Cornish devoutness characterised that establishment. Chapels proliferated on Ballarat fields, many of which are still in use today.\(^\text{17}\) Geoffrey Serle writes:

The Methodists were the only denomination to have a striking success on the goldfields ... In many places they often conducted more services than all the other churches combined. More than a thousand attended some services; hundreds were sometimes turned away. Cornish miners formed
a nucleus of support, but the intensity of Wesleyan evangelical zeal and the sense of a challenge accounts for much.18

Statistically, the figures for the number of Methodists on Ballarat showed a particularly stable membership. Always more than the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics, Methodist membership numbers actually surpassed those of the dominant Anglican Church, peaking in 1891.19 While it is true to say, of course, that not all Methodists were Cornishmen, and that not all Cornishmen were Methodists, nevertheless, the predominance of Cornish names on Circuit Preaching Lists, Sunday School rolls, and other church records, provides clear evidence that the Cornish played an important role in the establishment and support of this denomination. The numerous ministers and lay preachers of Cornish birth who proliferated throughout the Victorian circuit also confirm this Cornish influence. Names such as Martin Hosking, Sam Ham, 'Jimmy' Jeffreys, William Hicks, John James, 'Captain' Nicholas Kent, Benjamin Angwin, and Peter Eva, figure prominently in the development of Methodism on the Ballarat fields. Ann Colman points out that about two thirds of the teachers at the Mount Pleasant Wesleyan School in Ballarat appear to have been Cornish.

Mount Pleasant was, itself, a centre for Cornish settlement, beginning as early as 1855 when mining developments directed the diggers towards areas around the Mount. With the opening up of the Gravel Pits Lead, diggers (Cornish among them), moved into Mount Pleasant taking their church tent with them. This was pitched on the corner of Morton and Tress Streets, and was constructed with slab sides and a canvas roof. It held about one hundred worshippers and the services were conducted by Cornish lay preachers including James Jeffrey, John James and William Williams. The music, a big feature of Methodist services, was provided by ‘Cousin’ John Woolcock, who played the harmonium and began a tradition in Ballarat of Cornish-led church music which was later carried on by his brother Vivian Woolcock, foundation member of the Ballarat Liedertafel, and a well-known tenor involved in the musical and cultural life of
Ballarat for many years. Lists of early worshippers at Mount Pleasant again indicate the strong presence of 'Cousin Jacks', and the attendance rolls of the Sunday School 'read like a Cornish Sabbath School roll'.

Ann Colman also identifies a particularly 'Cornish' brand of Methodism which seemed to proliferate across Victoria. She writes:

It was commonly described by non-Cornish in superlatives in an attempt to indicate the depth of feeling and devotion with which many Cornish Methodists served their faith.

Particular elements of so-called Cornishness seem to be given a fuller meaning in their reaction to, and their dealings with, the raw societies of the goldfields. Henry Giles amplifies this excessive fervour and zeal which has traditionally characterised Cornish Methodists. Writing to his parents he lamented:

... drink is the ruination of hundreds here ... but my dear father I have not spent a farthing since I have been at the diggings in drink and I am fully determined that I will not unless I feel the need of it ... There is a church and chappel in the diggins the same as at home, But Dear Parents This is a terrible place for sin and wickedness. The Digger is obliged to stop their work on Sundays. There is Thousands here who don't pay any attention to Sundays no more than another day. They goes about [sic] and cutting wood and spending the Sabbath in a most fearful way. Butchers do kill Sundays the same as weekdays.

Attendances at the individual churches are not documented and are difficult to estimate. Geoffrey Serle demonstrates that in 1861, the year of the Census, for Victoria generally, the Wesleyans had established 204 churches with seating for 36,965, and with 34,140 usually in attendance. This outstripped any of the other denominations, none of which could match either the size of the overall membership or the attendance rate of the Methodists. Although it is not possible to identify the membership or
Jan Croggon

attendance rates at the individual Methodist churches, it is important to note that the strong communal spirit of Methodism, with its wide involvement in all aspects of community life, lent itself to a broadly-based local membership. The laity were encouraged to become involved with the church, the Benevolent Societies, the Sunday Schools, and the Temperance and Friendly Societies, all of which were seen as extensions of Methodism's role in society. As indicated earlier, the diggings were particularly open to the evangelical zeal and humanitarianism of the Cornish Methodists. Descriptions of the activities associated with the Methodist chapels on the Ballarat goldfields illustrate a wide range of socially entertaining and supportive activities — bazaars, jubilee dinners, tea meetings, prayer meetings, Sunday School picnics, musical events, and so on, all designed to draw in as many followers as possible. A language of 'stewardship' and 'revival' and 'cause' spoke of an evangelistic outlook on the part of the Cornish Methodists, and this lent itself well to a society attempting to establish a social and moral base.

A breakdown of wealth among national groups on the Ballarat fields is not available, particularly for the Cornish who are generally not distinguished in statistical records from the English. However, an examination of the foundation of most of the Methodist churches in the gold area indicates some of the extent of Cornish financial involvement. The churches were usually built on the basis of borrowing capital which was then paid back after having been raised from among the church community. There seems rarely to have been a lack of success once such appeals were launched. Public meetings were called, and all manner of innovative fundraising ventures were initiated. For example at the Neil Street church on Soldier's Hill, seats 'with backs' were let at two shillings and sixpence per quarter a sitting, while those without this 'luxury' were free. Practical management of church affairs seems to have predominated, so that even when financial difficulties were encountered, sensible action was taken to avoid disaster.

The Cornish have long promoted themselves as successful emigrants. The particular characteristics which have identified them
could be said to have sprung from the skills gained from a strong mining background, at the practical as well as the managerial level. It might well be argued that the contribution the Cornish made to the shaping of their new society owed a great deal to these skills. Comprehensive demographic information about the Cornish on the Ballarat fields is not available, a situation which has been regretfully recognised by other Cornish scholars. However, much can be learned through such circumstantial evidence as has been considered in this chapter. This includes the number of Cornish names which appear in church and mine management records, as well as identification of those individuals whose public spiritedness saw them identified and reported in newspapers.

Gold was the lure which brought the thousands of new immigrants to Victoria, especially in the 1850s and 1860s. The opportunity for these immigrants to make a new life, perhaps free from the class restraints and the poverty of the old world, had appeared at a most auspicious moment for many would-be emigrants, including the Cornish, within Britain and Europe generally. Emigration became the ‘catch-cry’, the perceived solution to overcrowding, to unemployment and to a life of grinding poverty. The Cornish brought to goldfields and towns such as Ballarat their mining skills, their staunch and strongly community-oriented Methodism, their sense of kinship, and their ability to adapt these attributes to the new and alien environment. The Cornish penchant for ‘self-improvement’, and their willingness to participate fully and conscientiously in the society to which they had now pledged the rest of their lives, has bequeathed a legacy of benevolence, independence and social commitment which Ballarat has carried with it into this new millennium.

The nineteenth-century historian of Ballarat, W. B. Withers, wrote of the importance of the gold digger in the ‘great sum of Australian history’, and claimed for the city of Ballarat the title of the ‘first and greatest’ of Victoria’s golden cities. Among the foundation stones of empire, claimed Withers, the name of Ballarat will be inscribed ‘on the base of one of the strongest columns of
national greatness'. The names of the men and women, the miners and Methodists of Cornwall, can also be found stamped on these ‘columns of greatness’, and their impact, which was significant, was both overt, and ‘beneath the subsoil of the historical landscape’.

Endnotes


4 West Briton, 15 June, 1866.


8 Dell and Menhennet, Cornish Pioneers.

9 Phillip Payton makes a general assertion about this state of affairs. ‘Cornish artisans appear as bootmakers, saddlers, tailors, farriers, carpenters, joiners, stonemasons, brickmakers, iron founders, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and a variety of other occupations relevant to life on the colonial frontier.’ Payton, Cornish Overseas, p.248. Ballarat’s particular experience offers corroborative evidence to support this.

I am grateful to Christopher J. Davey, for allowing me to read and to quote from his unpublished article, 'The Origins of Victorian Mining Technology, 1851-1901', pp.5-9.


Kelly, Life in Victoria.

Henry Giles to his parents 15 November, 1854; 3 December, 1854 in Letters written home by Cornish Folk who emigrated to Australia in the Nineteenth Century, collected by Dr J.M. Tregenza, South Australian State Archives, Mortlock Library, Adelaide, SAA D6029/68/69.

Henry Giles to his parents, 15 November, 1854, Letters Written Home, SAA D6029/68. Original grammar retained.

The Spectator, Special Edition, 'Ballarat Circuit History', 8 September, 1905, p.1470, from the records of the Lydiard Street Uniting Church, Ballarat.


Census of Victoria, 1891.

Colman, 'Colonial Cornish', p.171.

Colman, 'Colonial Cornish', p.132.

Henry Giles to his Parents, 1854 in Letters Written by Cornish Folk, SAA D6029/68. Original spelling and grammar retained.


Spectator, Ballarat Circuit History, 2 February, 1909, p.189.

The Geelong Advertiser, owned and edited by the Scot James Harrison, recorded the excitement which news of the 1851 gold discoveries in central Victoria immediately elicited:

... the whole town of Geelong was in hysterics. Gentlemen foaming at the mouth, ladies fainting, [and] children throwing somersaults ...

And officialdom quickly confirmed the social and economic disruption which this gold fever engendered. Charles Joseph La Trobe, the Victorian Lieutenant-Governor, wrote in an official report:

Within the last three weeks the towns of Melbourne and Geelong and their large suburbs have been in appearance almost emptied of many classes of their male inhabitants ...

Not only have the idlers, to be found in every community, and day labourers in town and the adjacent country, shopmen,
artisans, and mechanics of every description, thrown up their employments, and in most cases, leave [sic] their employers and their wives and families to take care of themselves, run off to the workings, but responsible tradesmen, farmers, clerks of every grade, and not a few of the superior classes have followed ... Cottages are deserted, houses to let, business is at a stand-still, and even schools are closed. In some of the suburbs not a man is left ... The ships in the harbour are, in a great measure, deserted.²

Scots were involved in the nineteenth-century goldrushes to Australia, especially those in Victoria, at all levels. Geoffrey Blainey points out that it was a Gael, Mrs Margaret Kennedy, who has been credited as the discoverer of the find that initiated the Bendigo ‘rush’.³ The initial gold find at Clunes was made in early 1850 by a Scot, William Campbell of Strath Loddon, on the property of a fellow station owner, Donald Cameron. He withheld the news out of fear of what a rush would do to the station of his friend.⁴ Other Scottish squatters, notably the Learmonth brothers (Thomas and Somerville), became proprietors of goldmines, and there is abundant testimony of the presence of Scots on the various goldfields in sufficient numbers to form identifiable Scottish and Highland camps.⁵ Scots were also to the fore in the retail, cartage and service industries which grew up to meet the needs of the goldminers.⁶ (See Fig.4.1a) The scale of their presence was sufficient for Scots to significantly participate in the social, cultural and political environments of the goldfield communities which arose, mostly as permanent settlements, around the major gold areas. Despite this, there has been widespread neglect of the specific voice of the Scots as it relates to gold in Australia. Nevertheless, to contemporaries, this voice was not only audible but also, on occasions, very loud.

Scots became very much involved in the social and political consequences of Victorian gold discoveries and took some of the leading roles in the Red Ribbon Movement and the other agitations on the Bendigo goldfields.⁷ At Eureka, on the Ballarat
goldfields, where the most serious clash against the authorities took place, Scots, although not prominent in the depleted stock­
ade when the attack occurred, were also affected. Peter Lalor’s list of the casualties at Eureka names among those killed the Scot John Robertson. Scots were also very much involved in the events leading up to the violence, many on the diggings recognising the injustice of the existing system and supporting, at least emotionally, the resistance to it. The probable catalyst for the uprising was the murder of a Scot, James Scobie, and the consequent corrupt trial which set free his killers. This in turn led to some digger disturbances which resulted in the pub owned by Scobie’s murderer being burned down. Another Scot, Andrew McIntyre, along with two others, was arbitrarily arrested, unjustly tried and sentenced to imprisonment for this. Scots were also present on the other side, among the force of government soldiers which had attacked the miners’ encampment.

The diggings also threw up many individual Scots who were to become prominent in taking a leading role in ongoing political, social, and land reform agitations during the 1850s and beyond. These included David Syme, later part-owner and editor of the politically influential Age newspaper. Scots were among the earliest of those elected to represent goldfields’ constituencies following the first ‘representative’ parliamentary elections in 1856. For example, the lawyer, Inverness-born James MacPherson Grant, who, without charge, helped successfully defend the Eureka ‘rebels’ in court, was an ardent democrat and land reformer in parliament, and when Minister for Lands framed, in his 1865 Land Selection Act, an improvement on the ineffective Duffy Land Acts of 1862. (See Fig. 4.2) This sought to break the firm hold which the squatters held over vast areas of crown lands and to open these up to small-holders and would-be farmers. Other Scottish radicals on the goldfields included land reformer John McIntyre (later Sir John McIntyre), who represented several goldfield electorates in parliament, Tom Kennedy, a physical force chartist, and Angus Mackay and William Dixon Campbell Denovan who were the leaders of the Bendigo Goldfields Reform League. Both later entered the Victorian parlia-
ment, Mackay becoming Minister for Mines 1870-75. The Scots presence on the goldfields was not, then, insignificant either in terms of their numbers or their contribution to society. (See Fig. 4.3)

The tensions which gold-seeking engendered between Scottish groups and the steps taken to surmount these command our attention here. Scots did not form an homogeneous group in the colonies, and it is no surprise, therefore, that they shared a range of opinions regarding the gold experience. Extensive first-hand commentary from goldfields Scots has survived, and from this body of personal testimony, both from the Scottish squatting interests and from the Scots diggers (especially the Highlanders), themselves, it is possible to reconstruct the incipient clash of interests between these groups which runs throughout the 1850s. The points at which these interests touched at various times included political and land reform and equal opportunity. For the mainly conservative squatter class, gold was initially seen as a threat to its control over vast landed empires, and a discovery whose consequences threatened a 'revolutionary' change to society.\(^{11}\) For many of the Scots digger class, gold promised riches, social mobility, independence and land, land free from 'ejecting lairds', and where every man would be 'his own landlord and factor'.\(^ {12}\) Here then was a recipe for 'turning the world upside down' but, as mentioned above, the only major violent clash was between government forces and a small number of diggers. The 'clash' with the squatters, when it came in earnest in the later 1860s and following, did not directly involve the diggers but, largely, their parliamentary representatives and other sympathetic forces within parliament. In fact, after an initial bout of fear and panic, the squatters generally, and without too much delay, reached an accommodation with gold and with those who mined it.

This chapter looks at the contemporary testimony left by these two groups of Scots (i.e. diggers and squatters), and explores the ways in which they contrived to 'rub along' together, economically and culturally. Apart from the Eureka incident,
socio-political change was evolutionary rather than violent and bloody in Victoria. A study of the Scots thus provides us with an example of the forces operating on the general community, for we find their voices on both sides of the divide; one side anxious to preserve its runs, its labour supply, and its socio-political influence, and the other demanding freedoms including release from the burdensome monthly mining licence fees, a measure of economic independence, direct political representation, and access to affordable land.13

At least part of the answer to the question of whether the discovery of gold did indeed, as many squatters feared, turn the colonial world ‘upside down’, can be found in the minutiae of the day-to-day lives of these two groups. What resulted from this close proximity of the few landed Scots squatters and the numerous, initially gold-hungry Scots? How did the squatting interests meet their labour needs in the gold decade? What did alluvial diggers do in the lean times, when it was too wet, or too dry to work on their claims, or when their returns were negligible? Scots, of course, were only one of the many goldfield groups confronting and working through these same issues, but in their letters and journals is a microcosm of the experiences and adjustments undergone also by the wider community.

It is possible, to an extent, to reconstruct the origins of those Scots who make up the Scottish digger class on the goldfields. There were those, for example, who were directly drawn to the colonies as a result of the discovery of gold. As well as the excitement generated within the Australian colonies themselves, news of the Victorian strikes soon had the Scottish press listing the values of the latest gold shipments, and the outputs recorded from the major fields. The Victorian goldfields and their attractions were thus constantly kept before the eyes of the Scottish public. To the excitement engendered by these reports was duly added the epistolary testimony from the locals who had gone to the rushes. One Highlander’s exuberance grew with each letter he wrote. ‘This country has astonished me to an extent that I cannot tell you. The people are wallowing in wealth’. His next
report was even more lyrical: 'This is a wonderful place, the gold here floats like oil on the surface of water; every house has sovereigns and nuggets'. The message was consistent and beguiling. It was 'Come', and all who would come could look forward to success.

... there is the diggings, at which you have the chance in a few months of realising a little fortune, like many I know. I could fill sheets of paper with accounts of many of our countrymen in Port Phillip.

A young Highlander writing to his parents in Abernethy, Scotland noted the effect of the consequent excitement upon all of the newly arriving immigrants from Scotland. 'Persons coming to this colony do not remain at other work till they try the diggings'. In the Highlands, the Inverness Courier announced that by late January 1853, 3000 registered letters (most said to contain money) had passed through the Inverness post office en route to relatives of those who had been attracted to the diggings. Cynics could not accuse the Scottish newspapers of fabricating these glowing reports, for such was the interest generated that individuals receiving private letters from the diggings would often pass them to the editors for publication. The specific references to names and origins of some of these Scottish diggers would thus have made it easy for false accounts to be refuted.

I have seen all the Muirlaggan lads now at the diggings. Donald Mackillop, Duncan Mackillop, Donald Grant, and Angus Rankin, are about three miles from here. They have done pretty well at the diggings; I saw them this morning.

These references to fellow-Scots by name, together with accounts of how they were doing, also acted as community notices by the newspapers to reassure friends and relatives still in Scotland, and to provide that extra incentive for those who were still swithering about leaving. The enticements offered by such private letters were added to by shipping companies who supported the quickening interest with advertisements for passage to Australia, and to riches.
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The Australian gold field is widely and rapidly expanding, and every day emigrants are hieing hitherwards. From an announcement elsewhere given it will be observed that Messrs. Macdonald, Gollan, and Co., - one of the partners in which firm is well acquainted with the character and requirements of the population of this quarter - are prepared to provide passages for, and afford every needful information to, those who may be disposed to try their fortunes in that region.\(^{19}\)

Thus was manufactured an appetite for unassisted emigration which drew many voluntarily to embark for Victoria and the other gold colonies. Newspapers, to their credit, did also carry more negative assessments from correspondents on the gold fields, but these appeared after the initial 'El Dorado' image, and the excitement which this had engendered, had been too firmly established in the public imagination for any 'doomsayers' to have much effect. No amount of cautionary tales could so much as dent the boundless optimism of the goldfields temper. 'The idea of gold failing for many years to come in the colony', wrote one emigrant, 'is treated as an absurdity by all persons of common sense'.\(^{20}\)

In addition to assisted migrants, another group, soon to become part of the Scots digger class, although not ostensibly bound for the goldfields, was the assisted immigrants, destined for jobs mostly on sheep stations as shepherds and hut-keepers. The cyclical famines in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the 1840s and later, exacerbated by clearances from Highland estates, increased migration from those districts to the Australian colonies in the early 1850s; a movement assisted by the activities of the Highland and Island Emigration Society (HIES), formed under the leadership of Sir Charles Trevelyan. Trevelyan saw depopulation of what, he claimed, were the overcrowded Highlands and Islands through assisted migration as the only permanent solution to periodic Highland famine.

The Australian colonies, desperate for rural labour at the time, were, generally, susceptible to the promise of securing an ongoing supply of cheap pastoral labour. Because Trevelyan regarded
the Highland peasantry as basically lazy and as only suited to 'dawdling' occupations such as shepherding, he presented the Highlanders as a labour source likely to be immune to the attractions (and the hard work) of the gold diggings, something which required 'sustained labour'. Between 1852 and 1857 the HIES brought approximately five thousand assisted immigrants to the Australian colonies of whom almost three thousand were landed in Victoria. Many more were to travel overland from the other colonies to the Victorian goldfields.

It is quite clear, despite Trevelyan's assurances to the contrary, that many of these Highlanders did not ignore the lure of the diggings. In fact, every letter in the HIES's own propagandistic booklet, made up of immigrants' letters praising their new life in the colonies, makes reference to the gold diggings, many recording fellow immigrants going off to try their luck. One wrote:

Sandy MacPherson, and James, and Archie, went up 3 days after I landed to the diggings. I heard nothing since, only some going and some coming every day.22

The Illustrated London News demonstrated too what was probably a common enough event as ships landed new HIES-assisted immigrants in the colonies.

The last cargo of Highlanders landed at Port Phillip spoke no English. They were closely questioned in the Bay as to their knowledge of the diggings. They professed to know nothing. They inquired 'whether she was a man or a beast?' Nothing could be more satisfactory, and already the squatters' agents saw the fine families tending sheep at the old original wages; but no sooner was the small Gaelic army, some three hundred, fairly landed, than they gave three cheers for the 'diggings' and marched off.23

Given the known poverty of the arrivals assisted by the HIES, to have gone to the goldfields and not to have met with early suc-
cess placed many families in perilous circumstances, as a number of letters intimate.

I have been in the goldfields ever since I arrived in the colony but has done no good ... J. Donaldson is down but does not intend to go back as he can make more at his trade. I make another trip to them [ie the goldfields], but if I have no better luck I will leave them altogether as there is no comfort and a great deal of hardships to encounter.24

A final group comprising the Scottish digger class consisted of those already working in the pastoral industry in Port Phillip at the time the gold discoveries were announced. Many quickly deserted the sheep stations, and made their way to the goldfields leaving the runs often without any labour. 'Men cannot be got here at present; although plenty are walking about they won't engage - "off to the Diggens!"' is the word,25 complained one station overseer to the manager of the large Scottish-owned pastoral Clyde Company, typifying the squatters' plight.

This new mobility of labour was noted by those used to hiring men on reasonably long-term fixed contracts. Station managers such as William Lewis recognised gold fever among his workers as an urge that had to be satisfied. 'Almost every shepherd or labouring man must have a trial of the diggings as soon as his engagement expires, which causes great movement among the labouring classes'.26 Not all labourers, however, were prepared to wait until the expiration of the contracts and many simply took off without any notice whatsoever. 'Black's men have all bolted,' reported a fellow squatter, 'He has 27,000 sheep in [the] charge of two Chinamen'.27 Thus, flocking to the goldfields were many Scots from these three groups, assisted and unassisted immigrants, and previously arrived pastoral workers, combining into what can reasonably be called a Scots digger class.

While there were many stories of diggers striking fabulous wealth, the truth of the matter is that few made anything more than a living out of gold, and many did not even make this.
Serle’s analysis demonstrates that very few of the gold diggers actually made even more than enough to live on. (See Fig. 4.4)

How much success did the diggers have? It has never yet been strongly enough asserted that the results of diggings were a cruel disappointment for the great majority ... Despite the immense production and its value to the economy, the producers were too numerous for many to gain a worthwhile share, and prizes were little more frequent that in Tattersall's sweeps or football-pools ... it is probable that from mid-1852, of all those who tried the diggings, eight out of ten made no more than the equivalent of reasonable wages, paid their way, or lost money.28

How then did Scots diggers, many with families, manage to survive? How, too, did the squatters, many of them Scots, surrounding the Ballarat goldfields survive the labour shortages of the early 1850s? Some of the diggers, of course, did not survive. Others begged or worked their way on outward bound ships and returned home 'disconsolate'.29 Many contemporary letter writers advised against emigrating for the so-called gold bonanza alone. Such a step they cautioned would be to gamble with their survival. They likened gold-seeking to a raffle with very few actually winning: 'I can see it's all chance-work, the same as taking a ticket in a lottery'.30

One difficulty impecunious gold seekers faced was that it was not possible to acquire a smallholding in the same general area as one's claim upon which to practice small-scale, subsistence farming, unless sufficient funds were in hand to buy such lands as they were surveyed and put to open auction. High transport costs, and the laws of supply and demand meant that foodstuffs and other necessities were very expensive in the diggers' camps. Scottish diggers on the southern fields around Buninyong and Ballarat, in particular, were living and working in areas originally — and often currently — held under long term pastoral leases (with pre-emptive rights) by fellow Scots. Thus, Donald Cameron at Clunes, Alexander MacCallum at Dunach, William Cross Yuille at Ballarat, the Learmonth brothers, Andrew Scott
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and Henry Anderson around Buninyong district, George Russell and the Clyde Company at Golf Hill and, nearer to the goldfields, at Carngham, were just some of the major land-holding squatters whose leases often covered or abutted many of the major gold rush areas. To reach the goldfields, therefore, many diggers had to traverse the runs of men such as these, ruining the existing tracks and carving out new ones, and causing inconvenience to the squatters.

Self-employed miners needed some sort of stake behind them in order to commence operations. In addition to the uncertainty of whether or not their labour would be rewarded by paydirt, alluvial mining was seasonal — heavy rains could flood the holes and cause digging to cease, while summer drought conditions would halt washing operations. During such lean times, written Scottish testimony suggests that squatters adjacent to various diggings were able to secure casual labour, and needy miners secure temporary financial respite (and the chance to build up another 'stake'), through mutual cooperation. As well as having to substantially increase wages, the alluvial gold rushes forced squatters to consider labour contracts that were shorter than the traditional twelve months. The station manager William Lewis wrote to his uncle, John Russell, in Scotland: 'Lately servants would not engage for any long period, their engagements only extending over two, four, or six months'.

Shrewd squatters, or their managers, were aware that would-be diggers needed, at the very least, a 'stake' before they could go off to the diggings. By adopting a flexible attitude towards work contracts, many of the squatters were thus able, to a certain extent, to overcome the shortage of labour created by the gold rushes, by hiring workers even for short-term employment.

Many people are foreboding a great scarcity of labour in the winter, but in the meantime hundreds of people are pouring into the country & they must hire with some one. The new arrivals, as I have mentioned before, cannot start for the diggings immediately, and living in the towns is too expensive for them.
Needy diggers who had established a satisfactory work history on a station could reappear and, in times of labour shortage, would rejoin that workforce. The correspondence of one of the major squatting stations demonstrates the existence of a level of goodwill on both sides which undoubtedly facilitated some of the mutually advantageous short-term arrangements which took place.

I saw the two Roberts here [on the Mt Alexander goldfield] the other day, and they were very unwell; they were wishing they were back on the Leigh [i.e. at Golf Hill station] again; and I think they will soon make there [sic] appearance on the Leigh in a short time.\textsuperscript{33}

Many of the Scots diggers thus survived by participating in something like a ‘dual economy’. When cashed up and when physical conditions were suitable, they worked their claims on the different goldfields. When the goldfield circumstances did not suit them, or they had used up their ‘stake’, or squandered their goldfields’ takings, they were prepared to return to shepherding or shearing or other rural employment until things got better. This, of course, would only work by the squatters being willing to take them back and by accepting, to a certain extent, the short-term presence of such labour. Thus the tensions, which could have been disastrous for Scots on both side of the divide, were, to a certain extent, relieved by a degree of pragmatism on the part of both classes of Scots.

Although the immediate reaction of many squatters to the consequences of the gold rushes on their labour force was a pessimistic one, they too soon learned to survive, with profit, and to ‘rub along’ with a class generally antagonistic towards them. Scots squatters were not, however, free from the anxieties which gold had brought to their vicinity, and the consequent pressures for land reform. When diggers began to press for the opening up of lands for purchase, squatters adjacent to the goldfields felt least secure in their tenure. Some feared ‘revolution’, forced appropriation, and loss of their political and social influence in the colony under the ‘democratising’ weight of digger voices.
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Squatters in south-western Victoria, a group dominated by men and capital from Scotland, found their pastoral industry threatened by dislocation of the labour supply: unfenced runs required a regular supply of shepherds as well as seasonal labour to wash and shear sheep and to harvest grain and silage crops.

The nephew of Niel Black, the prominent Scots squatter in Victoria’s Western District, wrote in panic to one of the partners in the station, and several times to his uncle who had returned temporarily to Scotland, regarding the desertion of his labour force who were:

... flocking in hundreds to the land of Ophir. Wages are rising and if the precious metal continues to be found in any quantity I am at a loss to know what Squatters are to do during the approaching shearing time.34

This trend was already noticed in the early months after the discovery of gold, and such was the eagerness for labour that the newly arrived immigrants, quickly grasping the notions of supply and demand, became aware of their own bargaining power. Nor was it only those properties on or near the goldfields that experienced this sudden labour shortage. The impact of gold upon employment meant that squatters’ runs, even up to many hundreds of miles away were also affected and left bereft of labour. One of the stations of the Clyde Company, Golf Hill, for example, miles from the nearest major goldfields, tasted first hand the consequences of its labour force taking off for the goldfields.

Labourers can scarcely be had in Geelong or Melbourne, and if the accounts continue favourable [concerning gold] for another fortnight every description of work in town must come to a standstill. ... Our men who were engaged in the operation of shearing and washing are all bound for the diggings ... I was in Melbourne a few days ago, and the emigrant ship Hooghly just arrived with a number of very good people principally from the Highlands of Scotland. I went on board expecting to get a few of them at moderate wages, but the deck in the
course of an hour was crowded with employees. Some of the farmers ... gave 25/- per week to single men and even higher rates were given. Married couples at outstations which I have here [at Golf Hill] for 30 pounds, would not take less than 50 pounds.35

Such wages as Lewis was to complain of having to pay were soon to pale into insignificance as the gold rushes continued and as stories of fabulous personal strikes became more and more common. The gloomy A. C. McDougall was one of the Scots squatters who predicted not only financial ruin, but also political and social disaster as a result of the diggings.

I am afraid that the most respectable portion of our Colonists will suffer by this exodus and unlooked for change. I mean my fellow squatters, there being such a scarcity of labour and consequently exorbitant wages (ten shillings a-day is the general rate at present) flocks and herds have to be left to the mercy of the wild dogs and no prospect of getting the sheep shorn.36

While other reports also initially tended towards pessimism, and wool producers were also seriously inconvenienced by the switching of all available waggons and other conveyances to the service of the goldfields, Scottish squatters, especially those adjacent to gold districts, did find not only strategies for survival, but learned to turn the gold experience very much to their advantage. In fact, even at the height of the gold rushes, their tenure over their land was still secure, their properties had increased in value and many were doing well from servicing the goldfields.

Sheep have risen ... from 7s. to 15s. and £1 per head. Cattle have risen in like proportions; and horses, which used to be worth some 30s. a head in the bush are now driven to Melbourne and sold for from £40 to £100 each. In fact, the squatting stations are now, on an average, quadrupled in value.37
While the decision of a few squatters (W. C. Yuille, for example) was to shift away to other runs or to sell up altogether, most stayed, profited in a variety of ways, and came to an accommodation with the labour situation. Thomas and Somerville Learmonth, for example, diversified by operating a goldmine at Ballarat and, later, one at Mt Egerton. The Glasgow-based principals of the Clyde Company, the Dennistouns, had evidently sounded out their managers on the subject of investment in gold ventures also:

In yours of 28th Febr., you inquire whether in the event of gold being discovered upon the Clyde Company’s property or Run any organisation could be made or formed with the servants of the Estabt. for the purpose of digging the gold.38

The reply went on to state that the likely sections of the Golf Hill station had already been well searched without success, and the manger, William Lewis, presciently stated the dangers facing pastoral companies which ventured into goldmining.

Men with capital who have ventured upon gold digging by hiring men to work for them, or even by giving them a share of the gold found, generally make little or nothing by the speculation.39

The danger, continued Lewis, was that companies so venturing ‘must be liable to peculation by their diggers’. It is widely believed that exactly this fate befell the Scottish squatter brothers, Thomas and Somerville Learmonth, when, after taking the advice of their mine manager William Bailey, they sold their Mt Egerton mine, only to see it strike great riches shortly after passing from their ownership. The fact that their manager was part of the group which bought it and struck it rich soon afterwards, added to the suspicion that they had been betrayed by their own employee.40 Lewis went on to identify for his principals the more lucrative, and less risky, economic opportunities the various diggings presented for those squatters whose runs were adjacent to the goldfields.
I understand that some of the settlers in the neighbourhood of the Ballarat and Mt Alexr. goldfields have not much reason to regret their discovery, as they have acquired a good deal of money from the sale of [live]stock &c. Holders of farm produce (hay, oats, &c.) in the vicinity of the gold fields or main lines of Roads to them have done exceedingly well by it. 41

Even A. C. McDougall, initially hostile to the close-by Dunolly goldfields, soon realised that he could cash-in on the diggings. He obtained the lucrative contract for supplying forage to the government camps on the Bendigo diggings and admitted that things were not so bad after all. 42 Similarly, Robert Simson of Lange Cal Cal, whose property was within 6 miles of the Yam Holes goldfield, was reported as ‘selling his sheep & cattle at a good profit to the diggers’. 43

Another way in which Scottish squatters made quick profits from the gold discoveries was through the sale or lease of their freehold lands. Scottish squatter John Winter, for example, who had property at the Buninyong goldfield took an extremely mercenary approach, subdividing one of his blocks into small parcels of land and selling these lots on the basis of their supposed auriferous potential. More shrewd than the Learmonth brothers, Winter was to profit handsomely from his dealings involving the goldfields without actually engaging in mining himself. An advertisement promoting the sale of one of his properties held out the promise of riches for those interested in purchasing. His notice was directed:

particularly to the GOLD DIGGERS of Ballarat and Buninyong, [John Winter informs them of his intention] to subdivide 100 acres of his celebrated WINTERS FLAT property, close to the River Leigh, into allotments containing each about half an acre ... There is no doubt that the richest lead of Gold in the Colony runs directly through the property to be sold, and the proprietor is anxious to facilitate parties desirous of sinking on this property, and without doubt accumulating a certain fortune. 44
The desire of diggers to apply their yields to the purchase of farming land created pressure on the government to release some of the vast acreages held under squatting leases for freehold sale. Diggers buying privately-owned acreages often found it necessary both to work their blocks and continue at the diggings. For those paying off their purchase of privately-held freehold blocks, or waiting for the first returns from the use of their land, working the diggings continued to be essential. Squatters with freehold land sometimes accommodated these desires themselves. Andrew Frazer, for example, purchased 38.5 acres from the Clyde Company on 29 July 1854, accepting the high asking price of 10 pounds per acre. But the uncertainty of life on the diggings often meant that the acquisition of land on such terms was short-lived. He was subsequently forced to write to the vendor seeking an extension.

I beg to say that being rather unfortunate at the [Mt Ararat] Diggings I’m afraid I will not be able to raise sufficient cash to take up my Bill for the remainder of the purchase money on the Ground I bought off you, [for] a month or two.45

However, large-scale selling of freeholdings did not make sense to the squatters as it would have further increased their reliance on the very leaseholdings the government was being pressured to open up for sale. Proprietors could see, too, that to buy lands speculatively, for sale or lease to successful diggers, was a risky policy, not only because of the financial circumstances of diggers like Andrew Frazer, but because of the vast acreages of Crown land which the government could decide to bring onto the market.46 Nevertheless, this period was to see an increase in the purchase of freehold land by squatters, not for immediate resale, but as insurance against what the government might do to their leases under the pressures of a rapidly increasing population. The shrewd and farseeing Western District Scots squatter Niel Black, for example, wrote as early as 1852, that, ‘It would be better to buy land. I fear the days of successful Squatting are nearly numbered’.47 Other Scots squatters followed suit, and a great deal of the best leasehold land was thus put beyond the
reach of those diggers and others who desired to become independent farmers. Calls to ‘unlock the land’ were not new and had frequently been heard throughout the 1840s. However, the pressure of a rapidly increasing population drawn by the gold meant that the demand to break the squatters’ virtual monopoly over large areas of the colony became all the more strident and insistent during the 1850s and 1860s.

Despite mild forays into goldmining and land speculation, on the part of some of the squatters, their core economic activity remained the raising of livestock and, for many of them, the production of wool. They required both regular labour to shepherd flocks on unfenced runs, and seasonal labour for peak activities such as shearing and harvesting. Thus, in the short-term squatters had no option but to bow to the law of supply and demand concerning labour and increased wages and piecework rates. George Russell recorded that by October 1853 the gold rushes had caused the rate paid to rural contract labour to double and shearers’ rates to treble. There is evidence, however, that squatters did not allow their immediate discomforts and diminished profits to cause them to lose sight of the longer-term more beneficial effects of the gold rushes. The anticipated increase in population bode well for cheaper labour in the future. As early as the end of 1851 William Lewis could write back to Scotland:

A number of people are already leaving the neighbouring Colonies in order to visit our [central Victorian] gold fields, & I trust that in the course of a few months we shall see many British Emigrants arriving here also.

The labour shortage which affected the shearing and harvest in the initial year of the gold finds was caused by local labour deserting the rural sector for the mining one. Lewis, and other hirers of labour, however, correctly foresaw that if gold was going to lead to a substantial increase in the overall population within the colony, then the difficulty of securing station labour would not always remain so acute. Nevertheless, the immediate difficulties of tending flocks, shearing, and harvesting grain and
hay remained, and indeed continued into the longer term because of the determination of so many of the predicted migrants to seek gold and not rural employments. Under such circumstances canny Scots squatters realised that positive personal relationships with employees were necessary and would enable them to successfully ride out the labour crisis. Workers, even the ones imported from Europe directly by individual pastoral concerns, had to be cajoled into staying away from the diggings. Increasing wages to whatever level was necessary was not always enough to ensure employee diligence. For example, the Scots squatter William Moodie’s reminiscences record his father’s difficulty in obtaining labour even at extremely high wages.

At Wando Vale things became so bad that we had to leave our calves unbranded for several years and for two or three years good shearers were unprocurable, and any men we did get would charge an outrageous 35/- per hour with two glasses of grog a day and you would be lucky if they took off 70% of the wool. My father and I started shearing on our own and worked for three weeks before we got the chance of a man.  

As the rushes continued and the ‘golden decade’ unfolded, tensions between squatter and digger steadily increased. William Moodie, for example, wrote that the gold rushes revealed deep social tensions between these two groups. At the individual level, however, diplomacy and interpersonal skills could blunt group antagonisms, and Scots squatters and diggers did learn to ‘rub along together’. In addition, station managers learnt to seize any opportunity that arose for maximising the labour from their men while they had them.

I have with difficulty kept my men; they wished to be off in a body last night, but I have got them to stop three days more that I may get another flock and the cattle branded. The Fife emigrants are all on the quevive for the diggings; but Graham is to get Married first, and there seems to be some delay about getting the Minister, of which I am taking advantage to get my little crop of Hay cut.
Workers who left for the diggings on cordial terms with their ex-employers were a potential asset to the latter. William Lewis, for example, was able to use the goodwill he had established with his shepherds to use them as labour recruiters on the goldfields themselves. Word of mouth recruiting could also bring some success.

I have just met a man bringing down your Wool: he says you are in want of Shearers. I came down from the Diggings last night; any number of hands can be got passing the Inn at Buninyong from the Diggings; on Tuesday morng. in a very short time several were engaged in my presence at 14s.54

While these adaptive practices on the part of Scottish proprietors nearest the central Victorian goldfields imply a measure of cooperation with the interests of the mining labour force, there were limits to how far the mutual compact went. Shearing, a time of high labour demand, coming late in winter/early spring, did not coincide, in ordinary circumstances, either with a time of flood or drought on the alluvial goldfields, so that climate did not regularly free mining labour for this seasonal activity. Squatters met their needs for non-seasonal labour by resisting skyrocketing labour costs in whatever ways they could, and by placing self-interest ahead of the interest of potential employees whenever possible. William Lewis, for example, wrote ‘Owing to [the] favourable season for feed and scarcity of bush fires, we have been enabled to throw the sheep into much larger flocks, which causes much fewer hands being employed’.55 The increased use of wire fencing, although a few squatters held out against this, also lessened the need for the usual number of shepherds, thus making the need for high numbers of station workers less pressing.57

It may seem paradoxical that two classes of Scots who, politically, socially, and materially, were so different to one another should, at so many points of tension during the golden decade, be able to touch without serious consequences. The clashes were to come, of course, and in earnest, during the 1860s and beyond, especially over land and the democratisation of the
Constitution. However, there was another area where Scots’ squatters and Scots’ diggers learned to ‘rub together’ in the 1850s; this was in the organisation of Scottish cultural and national activities. Many of the Scottish squatters in the areas of the Western District and the Central Highlands around Ballarat were young men when they first took up their runs. Although they had financial backing from family, or from Scottish capital interests, their origins, in the main, lay in the class of yeoman-tenant farmer rather than in the titled aristocracy. Despite these factors, a number of them had begun to display that sort of community-spirited behaviour evidenced by some of the lairds in their homeland. The pragmatism a number of Scottish squatters had shown in their labour relationships with their poorer countrymen in resolving their labour difficulties, was extended easily to the display of cultural patronage and leadership.

Regular Presbyterian worship in the country districts of Victoria, for example, was much facilitated by Scottish squatters. In the Ballarat-Buninyong goldfields district, for example, they stepped forward as patrons of the church and of education. The role of the Learmonth family, whose run was near the Buninyong goldfields, in financing a school and, later, providing buildings for a church, was one that was common throughout other gold districts and, indeed, throughout Victoria generally. The Russell family at Golf Hill, who encountered some labour problems due to the gold rush to the fields a few miles from their properties, was also instrumental in establishing a Presbyterian church for their own families, and those of their station workers, by guaranteeing the salary of a minister and providing a site for the church. Other Scots squatters who carried out similar acts included Niel Black, Daniel Curdie, Lachlan Mackinnon, and Duncan McNichol who guaranteed a salary of £200 for a minister, and Duncan Craig who donated 100 acres for a church, manse and glebe.

Scottish squatters on and adjacent to the Victorian goldfields were also associated with the initiation, and the patronage, of events arising from secular Scottish culture. The rapid increase in new arrivals during the 1850s increased the tempo of a
process that had begun even before gold was found. By 1840, for example, Niel Black was lamenting the absence of the traditional Shinty match to mark New Year’s Day in the colony, writing that the summer heat made such an event difficult, but not impossible.  

Others took steps to see that the game was played on either of the two traditional occasions, either New Year’s Day, or in association with meetings given over to dancing and to competitive traditional Highland sports. In the 1840s, for example, Archibald Grant hosted Shinty matches and Highland sports days on his property at Merri Creek, something which continued at least into the 1860s, and Archibald MacCallum similarly sponsored Shinty and Highland sports annually at Talbot.

The concentrations of Scots of the goldfields, especially Highlanders, ensured the continuation of Scottish traditional culture which included the reliance upon local landowning ‘lairds’ to instigate and maintain traditional games. For their part the local squatting figures in the colonies acted out that role. It is indicative of the large numbers of Scots on the different goldfields, and on the peripheries of the diggings servicing the diggers’ needs, that very soon the goldfields each had their own annual Highland or Caledonian Gatherings. (See Fig. 4.5) The formation of such societies also particularly demonstrates the level of patronage that existed on the part of Scots squatters. The Buninyong Highland Games and those of Ballarat, for example, were begun through the support and participation of leading Scots squatters.

Highland Sports on New Year’s Day at Alma - One of the best day’s sports that ever came off in the colony took place on New Year’s Day at Alma. ... The sports were got up principally by Andrew Elder, Donald McCallum, Stewart McAllister, and Mackay Leith, ably backed by all the Highland-men in the district. This is the third year the games have been celebrated on this side of the Loddon, got up by the same individuals ...

Not all of these men were Highlanders themselves, a fact which suggests that mutual convenience was at work on both sides.
Their wealth, social status, and influence made them seem appropriate figures, in the eyes of the newer and poorer arrivals, to organise and sometimes even to host such events. Such duty would have been seen by these ‘patrons’ as an extension of the noblesse oblige associated with those in similar positions in the homeland. They were not innovators in this regard, for men of their ilk had performed similar roles in the 1840s in getting up Scottish, Caledonian, Burns and St Andrew’s Societies in the urban centres of population, Melbourne and Geelong, where prominent Scottish squatters (and parliamentarians), Niel Black and Angus McMillan, held office as president and treasurer of the Melbourne Caledonian Society for much of the 1850s.

On the surface, shinty matches and Highland sports may seem relatively trivial outbursts of ‘tartanry’, expressions of ‘romantic’ nostalgia for, and attempts to recreate elements of, a long-distant past, activities the landed proprietors would support because they were culturally conservative and politically non-threatening. Malcolm Prentis’ claim is that Scottish Associations had little charter other than nostalgia, but he fails to consider the full significance of the foregoing activities. Sporting carnivals did provide a framework to allow Scots to come together for fellowship and conviviality, but these early goldfields’ Associations were far from merely being organised occasions for nostalgic romanticising. In fact, such activities were innovative rather than backward-looking. Out of the various ‘scratch’ games of shinty grew organised clubs and, at least between the 1840s and the 1880s, a level of embryonic organisation for the game that was often ahead of that achieved in Scotland. Similarly, the organisation of formalised Highland Games, and the development of pipe bands were paralleling, rather than copying contemporary developments taking place in Scotland. The setting up of Gaelic schools and a Gaelic newspaper also demonstrated the vitality and the initiative of those Highlanders who had come to the colonies, especially with the gold rushes.

But there was another dimension to Scots associations on the goldfields, and elsewhere. The development of these Scottish
societies overseas provides a good example of how minority ‘ethnic’ groups can seek to maintain their cultural identity while at the same time avoid being seen as ‘exclusive’. The transition, too, of Associations and their activities from being primarily ‘ethnic’ to encompassing the whole of the society within which they were located, provided a useful means whereby Scots, especially Highland Scots, themselves initiated the ‘adjustment’ of their own cultural traditions. The Games and Gatherings which evolved on the goldfields in the nineteenth century, for example, were not confined to such ‘traditional’ heavy field events as throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, and foot races. While continuing to maintain a core of ‘Scottishness’, they quickly widened to include a whole range of activities not particularly identifiable as Scottish. The Highland Games thus became the annual ‘Agricultural Show’ or ‘Grand Athletics Meeting’ for the whole community. Contemporary press accounts indicate that many of these Games enjoyed a very high level of support. The presence of such large crowds is indicative of the acceptance of such Gatherings as community events and points of focus for community identity, not just for Scots.

There were also strong pragmatic reasons for their existence. Hard work on the diggings and the strong Presbyterian ethic did not completely eliminate traditional pastimes, even if the arduous labour of the week left little time or energy for leisure and general fun, or for self-pity. It is also clear from the surviving constitutions of some of these organisations that sporting and festal events were far from being their sole, or even main, focus. The benevolent character of these societies was imbedded in their terms of association and this was directed towards social institutions such as schools, hospitals and the needy. Through such national associations, therefore, there was a measure of cooperation between Scottish squatter and digger in the furtherance of civic institutions, and in the ameliorating of difficult social conditions, in the fledgling gold settlements.

There are many contemporary accounts from Scots depicting the central Victorian goldfields as raw, dangerous and lawless
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places. Conversely, however, the concentration of Scots which followed the alluvial strikes brought with it the institution of aspects of 'Scottishness' hardly expected in such frontier conditions. As already mentioned, Scottish squatters were involved in establishing institutions representing and reinforcing Scottish identity. This was no less true in respect of church and school. The predominant church affiliation of Scots was presbyterian. The various branches of that denominational church were reproduced in the colonies, including the equivalent of the Free Church, which had been formed after the split in the Church of Scotland in 1843. Through the influx of large numbers of Highlanders in the 1850s (most of whom, at least initially, were of Free Church persuasion), Gaelic forms of worship were reinforced and many Gaelic churches established in the colonies, especially around concentrations of Highlanders on the goldfields. Because Gaelic was the first (often the only) language of many Highland worshippers, efforts were made to institute Gaelic worship wherever there were sufficient numbers of Gaels. At Ascot, for example, a short distance from the gold centre of Ballarat, a Gaelic church of 200-300 Highlanders was formed. James Munro, from Invergordon in Scotland, writing to his father back in Ross-shire, proudly says that at Ballarat, too, there was a strong Gaelic church.

There are hundreds of Highlanders here, and almost the whole of them doing well. I myself have got acquainted with very many from both Ross and Sutherlandshire. We have as large a Gaelic congregation as you have in Rosskeen.

In the 1850s a 'Gaelic' school, operated by John McIvor and his daughter, for the instruction of Highland children, was formed in association with the Free Church on the Ballarat diggings. A similar school existed in Geelong at this time, and surviving records suggest that from the groups which supported these institutions came a nucleus of support for the committees which arranged Highland sports and other cultural activities. Their Presbyterian churches and their schools thus stood as clear indications of the presence and activity of Scots and of their con-
tributions to a civilising influence on the growing goldfields’ communities.

Where Highlanders took their families to the diggings, even their domestic customs may have influenced those around them, if we can believe one contemporary description of a ‘Scottish’ camp.

Innocent mirth is the rule till ten pm when all is silent excepting the sound of Gaelic Psalm-singing by the heads of families, who have not forgotten that although there is a time for being merry, the first and last chief end is to praise God.70

The presence of Scots in the gold colonies, especially Victoria, long preceded the discovery of gold. The pre-gold social and cultural environment was not a harmoniously settled one whose calm was shattered by the discovery of gold. Tensions between groups as to the distribution of power, the maintenance of national identity, the shape of society and so on, were visibly present in the 1840s. The introduction of the first ‘free’ representative elections in Victoria in 1856, with the ensuing struggles over the next decade, had its roots in the 1840s struggles, especially led by Scots’ radicals, against the attempt by the Anglican political establishment to perpetuate the English system of patronage and privilege.71

Similarly, the struggles to keep Victoria free from transportation, and to achieve separation from New South Wales, and for a system of affordable education for every child, as well as early calls for the democratisation of land, originated in the 1840s. It is correct, however, to say that gold did add a new and decisive dimension to these struggles.72 The rapid increase in numbers and ‘quality’ of immigrants as a result of the gold rushes,73 and the pressures which this put on the pre-gold social and political institutional structures, was eventually to bring an even greater demand for change and the real prospect of a society ‘turned upside down’. Conversely, though these fears were being expressed by the more conservative Scottish elements in society, the innate traditional element within national identity paradoxi-
cally had the effect of reinforcing transplanted culture, at least for a time, and led to a cooperation between Scots squatter and digger. As well, the independent nature of gold digging, with the dream of a rich strike, made the immediate focus of diggers, including Scots, a quest for security, land, and a desire to 'get on', rather than any 'class' ideology. The Scots' voice, during the gold decade, then, was often a complex one but, nevertheless, one that was clearly audible.

Endnotes

1 Geelong Advertiser, 27 September 1851.

2 Charles Joseph La Trobe to Earl Grey 10 October 1851, Further Papers Relative to the Recent Discovery of Gold in Australia, pp.45-7, 1852, XXXIV, 1508.


5 See, for example, An Teachdaire Gaidhealach, No.7, August 1857, p.7.

6 See, for example, Robert Shortried Anderson. Diaries Relating to Victoria 1851-56, MS 8492, Box 992/2, La Trobe Section, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

7 This was a movement among the diggers to openly defy the government authorities by refusing to pay the monthly mining licence fee. Those who pledged to adopt this form of passive resistance wore a red ribbon. Cusack, pp.87-97.

9 See, for example, letters from Scots diggers printed in the Inverness Courier, 31 March 1853, p.2, 24 November, 1853, p.3, 5 April, 1855, p.6.


11 See, for example, A. C. McDougall's letter to Campbell of Jura, 6 September, 1853, Campbell of Jura Papers, GD64/3/5, the National Archives of Scotland.

12 See, for example, an emigrant's letter quoted in the Inverness Courier, 27 January, 1853, p.3.


15 Private letter quoted in the Inverness Courier, 27 January, 1853, p.3.

16 Inverness Courier, 29 December, 1853, p.4.

17 Inverness Courier, 20 January 1853, p.2.

18 A Highlander from Ballarat to his parents in Lochaber quoted in the Inverness Courier, 5 May 1853, p.4.

19 Inverness Advertiser, 3 May, 1852, p.3.

20 A Highlander writing to the Inverness Courier, 31 March, 1853, p.2.

21 Sir Charles Trevelyan to Scott 9 June 1852, HIES Uncatalogued Letterbooks, HD4/1, National Archives of Scotland, West Register House, Edinburgh.

22 Angus Mackenzie, Bush Station, Geelong 5 December 1852 to Norman Ferguson, Letters from Highland Emigrants in Australia dated Between September and December 1852, London, HIES, 1853.

23 Illustrated London News, 3 July 1852.

24 George Anderson to his father in Scotland 28 January 1853, George Anderson Letter, 1853, Box 19/6, Victorian History Institute Archives, Melbourne, original spelling and grammar retained. See also letter from James Rankine, quoted in the Inverness Courier, 14 July, 1853, p.4, and also other letters
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from disillusioned diggers dated 21 September 1854, p.6; 15 February, 1855, p.5.


29 Digger's letter quoted in the Inverness Courier, 31 March 1853, p.2.

30 Digger's letter quoted in Inverness Courier, 14 July 1853, p.4.


32 Lewis to J. and A. Dennistoun 4 February, 1852 Clyde Company Papers, Vol.5, p.139.


34 Archibald Black to T.S. Gladstone 5 May, 1851, Black Papers, Outwards Correspondence and letter books, 1840-1884, Latrobe Library, State Library of Victoria.


36 McDougall to Campbell of Jura, 8 September 1852, Campbell of Jura Papers.


42 McDougall to Campbell of Jura, 24 March 1854, Campbell of Jura Papers.
43 Mrs Williams to Mrs Reid 23 September 1854, Clyde Company Papers, Vol. 6, p.165.

44 Ballarat Times, 15th April, 1856, quoted in Griffiths, Three Times Blest, p.24.

45 Andrew Frazer to George Russell 31 March 1857 Clyde Company Papers, Vol. 6, p.424.


47 Niel Black to Archibald Black, 11 July 1852, Black Papers.


51 Palmer, William Moodie, p.75.

52 A. C. Cameron to George Russell 12 December, 1853, Clyde Company Papers, Vol. 5, p.576.


54 B. S. Holman to William Lewis Clyde Company Papers, Vol. 5, p.139.


56 See, for example, Philip Lewis to George Russell, 29 September 1858, Brown The Narrative of George Russell, p.360.


58 See, for example, William Hamilton Papers La Trobe Collection, MS 8960, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

59 Ballarat went from 6,000 to 41,000 during the gold decade of the 1850s, almost a seven hundred percent increase. The other main goldfields, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Maryborough had similarly startling increases. See, for example, Serle, The Golden Decade, p.388.

60 Niel Black Journal, entry for 1 January 1840, MSS 8996, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

61 See, for example, the Port Phillip Patriot, 6 January 1842, p.2.
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62 The Talbot Leader, 30 December, 1862.
63 Mt Alexander Mail, 9 January 1857, p.4. See for the Buninyong games the Mining and Weekly Star, 7 January, 1859.
65 The welfare and benevolent activities formed key parts of the constitutions of these associations. See, for example, the Standing Rules of the Highland Society Buninyong, Gunn Family Papers, in Private Hands.
66 Scottish papers printed many examples of accounts from Scots on the goldfields. See, for example, letters quoted in the Inverness Advertiser, 29 June 1852, p.5, Inverness Courier, 20 January, 1853, p.2, 5 May 1853, p.4.
67 Donald Munro 3 December 1853 to Finlay Munro, Invergordon, quoted in the Inverness Courier, 2 March 1854, p.6.
68 See, for example, Denominational Schools Board Inward Correspondence VPRS61, Item 1854/46, Public Records Office Laverton (now Melbourne).
69 See, for example, Minutes of the Committee of Management Gaelic Free Church School 1853-61. These minutes are held by the Free Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Free Church) Geelong, Victoria.
70 Letter from 'An Catanach ann na Castlemaine' to the Australian Gaelic-language paper An Teachdaithe Gaidhealach, No.7, August 1857, p.7.
72 See, for example, Invernessian's letter quoted in the Inverness Courier, 20 January 1853, p.2; Westgarth, Victoria and the Australian Gold Mines, p.270.
Figure 4.1a 'Scots in the service sector on the goldfields.' [Macpherson's Store, Bendigo, Victoria], c1858, watercolour. Collection: Rex Nan Kivell Collection. By permission of the National Library of Australia.
Figure 4.1b John Carter Northcote. ‘First Store on the Goldfields’, c1852, watercolour. Collection: Bendigo Art Gallery.
Figure 4.2 Trial of Eureka 'rebels'. Juries refused to find the rioters guilty when they were brought to trial, such was the sympathy for them. This illustration appeared unattributed in George Finkel, *Victoria 1834-1900*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd, 1974, p. 44.

Figure 4.3 The Scots presence on the goldfields was well enough noticed to be lampooned. 'National Costumes' (as suggested by Mr Punch, for the reception of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, at Ballarat). From Ballarat Punch, 7 September, 1867, p. 473. By kind permission of Central Highlands Regional Library, Ballarat Branch, Australiana Research Collection.
Figure 4.4 'Unlucky digger that never returned'. S.T. Gill. La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Figure 4.5 George Lacy. The First Gathering of the Bendigo Caledonian Society, Jan. 2nd, 1860. 1860, watercolour. By permission of the National Library of Australia.
Figure 5.1 Map showing location of Cowra Creek and Cowarra townships. Map courtesy Barry McGowan.

Cowra Creek ruins, 1890-1910.

Figure 5.2a Hotel
Photo: Barry McGowan
Cowra Creek ruins, 1890-1910.
Photos: Barry McGowan
Figure 5.2b Miner's Hut

Figure 5.2c Bakery

Figure 5.2d School.
Figure 5.3 Cowarra township, formerly Cowra Creek near Bredbo. Main Street 1940. Bayley Collection. By permission of the National Library of Australia.

Figure 5.4 Cottage at Cowarra gold mine township 1941. Bayley Collection. By permission of the National Library of Australia.
The existence and persistence of a distinct mining culture is illustrated by the Cowra Creek and Cowarra goldmining communities of south-east New South Wales. Cowra Creek existed during the 1890s and early 1900s, and Cowarra during the 1930s and 1940s. (See Fig. 5.1) Although neither of them was among Australia's more populous goldmining centres, they were of regional significance.

There are several features which make these communities important from an historical and archaeological perspective. Unlike many mining centres, neither of the town sites has been ploughed under, built upon, or otherwise desecrated by subsequent development. They were simply abandoned and left where they were. The archival record for both periods was also uncharacteristically voluminous. Although neither of the communities could boast a newspaper, much of the minutiae of everyday life was reported in the more distant Cooma Express. Other sources of information about these towns include a diary of personal reminiscences, and a novel based unmistakably on Cowra Creek. These proved to be excellent primary material for describing and contrasting the social relationships and culture of these communities.
Mining commenced at Cowra Creek and the outlying camps at Fiery Creek and Macanally in 1888. This mining was conducted primarily by local syndicates and companies, and the perceived riches of the field were enough for it to warrant description as a new Eldorado. There were sixty miners on the field in 1888, 100 by 1893 and 200 by 1895, the majority of whom were paid well and regularly. In later years, particularly in the subsistence phase of mining, operations were dominated by small groups of working miners, many of whom combined mining with work on pastoral properties. This practice prompted one correspondent to comment in 1899 that there had been an unwritten law concerning the holding of leases, many of which were worked until shearing time when they were left dormant. The expectation was that those who remained would not interfere with the leases in the men’s absence.

Cowra Creek township began to take shape in 1888, and by late 1893 it had acquired commercial facilities such as a bakery, general store, butcher and blacksmith. (See Figs. 5.2a-c) A hotel was built in 1895. While some of these businesses had a chequered career, life was much more austere at Fiery Creek and Macanally. A correspondent lamented that the miners there were worse off than in any other reefing places he had been to because of the absence of businesses like storekeepers and butchers who would supply them with provisions on the security of quartz. There was a storekeeper at Numeralla, but he would only take cash, a difficult commodity to come by when there such long delays in getting stone crushed.

Like so many other reef-mining centres in the region, the field was handicapped by the prevalence of refractory ore, that is, the gold was found in association with other minerals such as iron pyrites. By 1901 most of the ore had to be carted to the railhead at Bredbo and transported to Dapto and Cockle Creek for processing. Fortunately, much of the ore was high yielding and occasionally very rich seams were located. Consequently, the field lingered on for a considerable number of years, well past its prime. Additional difficulties were caused by the onset of drought.
conditions in the mid 1890s and again in the early 1900s. This often led to a shortage of forage and water, thus increasing the cost and feasibility of carting.\(^6\)

These vicissitudes led to a stop-start existence on the field. For example, in September 1897 the field was described as ‘just lingering on, a few working there and only making tucker’, and in the summer of that year there was not even enough water for domestic purposes and mining ceased, leading to a shortage of ore for crushing. In May of the following year some of the miners were described as ‘making a living, some fair, some only middling’, and in August and December the batteries were again silent, primarily due to water shortages. By 1902 the shortage of food was so acute that the residents had to resort to wallaby hunting and honey gathering. The food shortages had been exacerbated by the lack of rain and the lack of fodder for the miners’ cows and horses. There were only twenty miners on the field in April 1905, and by 1906 the mining population was described as ‘fast dwindling’. The next significant flurry of activity was in 1908, but after that there were rarely more than a few miners, the lack of an operating battery and the start of World War I putting paid to the field.\(^7\)

Community concerns in this period continually focussed on practical and immediate matters such as the need for a post office and a school. Representations on such issues were the preserve of a few prominent residents, for example, owners of crushing plants, such as Messrs. Murray, Kitchingham and Lewis, and the storekeeper Paulsen. They would also have been supported by most other residents. Kitchingham was particularly active in pressing for the establishment of a mail service in 1891 and 1892, and on the latter occasion he was supported by the local member of parliament. However, a receiving office was only established in late 1892 and it was only upgraded to a post office in 1895, at which time a twice-weekly mail service was established, and Mrs Paulsen appointed postmistress at a retainer of £10 per annum.\(^8\)
In 1894 and 1895 there were calls for the establishment of a school, for there were 'many young children running almost wild and no chance of getting them educated'. Messrs Murray, Lewis and Paulsen wrote to the local member of parliament complaining of the Inspector's response. On this occasion their representations were successful, and a school building was constructed in September, 1895. (See Fig. 5.2d) Even after this date schooling continued to be a concern, for in May 1896 it was reported that there were twelve children 'running wild' at Macanally, as it was too far for them to travel to either Cowra Creek or Peak View.9

Some of the local debate was less edifying. The timing of it appeared to reflect the changing and diminishing fortunes of the fields, for by the early 1900s Cowra Creek, as a goldmining town, had waned and as population drifted away, surviving miners, many of whom were subsistence miners at best, assumed greater prominence in local affairs. For instance, in April 1897 there was an altercation between Duffy, the hotel owner, and Newnham, the teacher, in which Duffy made official representations to the Department. Another incident concerned the appointment, in 1907, of Mrs Duffy as postmistress. Mrs Murray wrote a letter of complaint to the Department, demanding a full investigation. There was a sequence of acrimonious correspondence on the subject lasting for some months, but no inquiry was held.10

The most notable series of altercations, however, was between Mrs Murray and Mr Newnham. In 1900 Mrs Murray lodged several complaints against Newnham. In one response Newnham stated that Mrs Murray's children were nearly always late for school and that their homework was always done in a very careless manner. It had been necessary, therefore, to take stern measures to keep them to their work, as their mother was encouraging them in every way to get out of it. He stated that, 'from the opening of the school I have had trouble with the Murray family, and they are the only ones who have ever given any'. The Murray family was described as being in 'very poor circumstances'.

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On another occasion Newnham stated that the story doing the rounds was that Mrs Murray would not rest until she had him moved from Cowra Creek. He requested an inquiry into the matters raised by Mrs Murray, stating again that she had given him a great deal of trouble in scholastic matters, the children always attending school late, irregularly, and in a dirty state. The Inspector visited Cowra Creek, but both parents declined to add anything further and the inquiry fell through, the Department concluding that the claims were frivolous and showed vindictiveness.11

In February 1902, McDonnell, the new teacher, requested an exchange with another teacher. He stated that since he had taken charge of the school he had not been able to get on friendly terms with the parents, 'some of whom were very bitter towards him as a teacher'. In addition, the climate did not agree with his health. He was replaced by a new teacher in September, 1902, who in turn was replaced by another teacher, Mr Faulks in July 1903. The latter was obviously unimpressed with his new habitat, for in December he requested an exchange with a Mr Darmody. The Inspector annotated the request thus:

This school is in a very rough locality where it is difficult to obtain suitable accommodation, and where the conditions of life are hard and trying. During the past 2 years there have been 4 teachers a state of affairs destructive of progress in school work. It is not improbable that Mr Darmody is not fully aware of the character of the place to which he desires to go as he may in consequence if the exchange be sanctioned in his turn ask for an early removal.12

Mr Faulk's application was declined.

Most families were by this time under economic stress. The reminiscences of Dorothy Adams, a daughter of Mrs Murray, provided some insight into the general social environment during the latter part of the field's existence, and of the tensions that invariably existed between family members. She stated that there had been:
Life and hope ... when the mines were yielding gold and there was work for the men on the farms with their teams of horses or bullocks. But as with a lot of the early day fields, hope for a fortune died and the men moved on ... always poor. My father was one of them, he left a good business when he heard the call and like all the others he took his wife and family into the wilderness.13

Of the family she said:

For the younger members of the family it was all fun ... but for the older ones as the years went by it was almost a prison, yet they never openly rebelled, maybe dad had a persuasive tongue, or maybe they too believed in the pot of gold.14

Her family lived in a house, 'something only a couple of other people had'. The kitchen stood apart from the house and they kept a vegetable garden and a hen yard. Both her parents did what they could to help the poorer people, but when the mines began to fail, they themselves were not very far from being poor, as the schoolteacher Mr Newnham had intimated to the Inspector of Schools. The isolation of the community was no better illustrated than when it came to medical treatment. For example, Dorothy’s mother bore two children at the Creek with no doctor present, ‘only a nurse who somehow always seemed to get there in time’. For other medical attention, Dorothy’s mother, with her knowledge of homoeopathic medicine was called on.

When the family first moved to Cowra Creek there were few amenities. The priest held his bimonthly mass at the hotel and the hall was used by the Anglican minister. Gradually, as the miners left, visitations from the clergy decreased. The pub, butcher and grocery shop lingered on and when the store and pub were under the same roof the storekeeper would lie on the bench in front of the bar waiting for the ‘rare customer’. When there was a concert, Dorothy’s mother’s small piano, her most precious possession, was borrowed and carried over Cowra Creek to the hall by four men. Sometimes her mother would play and
when it was time to leave, the piano would be carried back over the Creek again.

Dorothy also recalled that although there were no police stationed at Cowra Creek, there were occasional visits. On one such occasion, the police were on the lookout for those who may have been growing poppies for opium which they would sell to an Indian hawker, Mr Singh, in exchange for a few shillings or a bright piece of print for a dress. Mr Singh supplied the seeds and anyone who had a small piece of unused land was glad to oblige. The only instances in which the issue of sobriety became a matter of public concern were the cricket matches between Peak View and Cowra Creek; matches usually ending in a fight between both teams and any onlookers who cared to join. Afterwards they would all repair to the hotel. 

A novel by Max Murray, one of Dorothy’s brothers, confirms such observations and adds some new ones. Some of the most telling parts of the narrative relate the impressions of the author as a young boy, and the reflections of his father. For example, the boy refers to the close-knit family with ‘little but nature to distract them’. He describes them as a village under one roof, a ‘tribe’, and refers to the over-bearing presence of the battery upon which all their hopes rested. Later Max describes his father’s perception that the small community was becoming more remote. ‘Not so many people were coming through and dosing down for the night and sharing a meal and paying for it with their gossip from outside, and then moving on’. Perhaps the most astute remark is by a fictitious travelling collector of folklore and bushlore, who observed that he had at last found the people he had been looking for, ‘people who were said no longer to exist ... but he had found them as an explorer finds a lost tribe’. 

Despite these difficulties, Cowra Creek’s social life, much of which was involved with fund raising, was very active, and the dysfunction that appeared elsewhere was little in evidence. A notable feature of these activities was their inclusiveness and the absence of sectarianism or class tensions. Social functions
were held very much on an all-in basis, where the opportunities for class pretensions were very limited, and the success of church fund raising activities depended upon support from the whole community, including members of other denominations. These activities also drew support from elsewhere in the district.

Cowra Creek was also a family oriented community, in which the women played a particularly significant role. Women participated in running businesses, either on their own or in partnership with their husbands, and were employed as postmistresses. They also tended the garden and livestock. The latter activity was not, however, mere time-filling in lieu of anything else to do. In a community such as Cowra Creek the economic survival of the household depended upon it. Women also participated in the development and maintenance of social networks and were primarily responsible for organising the various social functions. They were also responsible for the provision of a measure of social welfare. The example of Mrs Murray indicates that the women of Cowra Creek were not to be ignored, even when down and seemingly out. 17

There were many examples of these activities. For example, in 1895 a fund raising event was held for a severely injured miner and a committee was set up to raise funds for his family through various functions. There was an overwhelming response from the Cowra Creek miners and support was sought elsewhere in the district. In addition, in the mid 1890s, a large number of functions were held to raise funds for the churches. In May 1896, a ball and supper with about thirty couples present, was held to raise money for the hall which had been recently built for the Roman Catholic community by Duffy the storekeeper. A further fund raising social was held in July 1898 with more than forty-five couples present, some from as far as Cooma and Numeralla, and in September a concert was held by the school children in aid of the Church of England building fund, at which more than 120 people were present. Afterwards a dance was held at Duffy's hall. In May 1899 the newly formed Cowra Creek
Dramatic Club held a major concert, the purpose of which was to help pay off the Cowra Creek hall.\textsuperscript{18}

The cricket club was an important sporting institution, and matches were played against teams from other local communities such as Rose Valley, Peak View and Jerangle, with a social function usually held afterwards. However, there does not appear to have been a formal competition. Functions were also organised around events associated with the mines. For example, more than 200 persons from all parts of the district attended the christening of Murray’s battery in 1893. A large feast followed later in the day. In 1897 a banquet was held for John Murray on his return from Sydney. Even the local member of parliament attended. Functions were also held on special days such as St Patrick’s Day, Boxing Day and Empire Day. The first reported St Patrick’s Day function was held in March 1894, some of the women having ridden more than 32km for the function.\textsuperscript{19}

Other functions were organised on a more spontaneous basis. For example, in May 1896 there was a picnic for the school children followed by an evening dance at the hotel, which about twenty couples attended. In August, a function involving dancing, songs and recitations was held for the Koppmans of Colinton, with about thirty couples present. As they were unable to depart the next day, a further function was held the following night.\textsuperscript{20}

Even into Cowra Creek’s twilight years, the social life of the community was very active, and school concerts, St Patrick’s Day and Empire Day functions continued to be held. In April 1901 a picnic for the children was held, followed by a ‘solid program’ of activity and a luncheon for the adults, after which a large number of young folk repaired to Mrs Thurbon’s for an evening of dancing and singing until the early hours. A return social by the ‘ladies of Cowra Creek’ was held in May 1905 when some sixteen couples took the floor, those present including visitors from Peak View. The social was followed by a feast at the hotel and a musical soiree; the guests departed the next day.\textsuperscript{21}
In the 1930s the mining leases were held by parties of working miners, until they were bought out by BHP in 1938, an event which caused much jubilation. The Cooma Express gave a great deal of coverage to this new development. It reported, for example, that one leaseholder exclaimed exultantly, that they had achieved ‘a most satisfactory result from their little flutter’, and that they now formed ‘a comparatively select band of those who had made a profit from gold mining’. From that time all the miners were employees of the Company and there was a union presence through the Australian Workers’ Union. There were occasional labour disputes, but unlike the early 1900s, the wages were adequate and regular. Unlike the earlier operations, BHP’s activities were highly capital intensive. A large wood-fired power plant, a concrete dam, and a treatment plant to provide for crushing grinding by a ball mill and cyanidisation were constructed. Productive mining commenced in 1939 and continued profitably until 1942, when it was ended by the exigencies of wartime demand for men and materials.

Despite these differences and others, there were some striking similarities between the Cowra Creek and Cowarra communities. (See Fig. 5.3) The arrival of the motor vehicle did not change matters greatly, for the daunting conditions of the main track ensured that vehicle use was limited. Even the gold escort was conducted on horseback. There was, for instance, a similar lack of amenities and a frequent recourse to self-help activities. For example, it took until late 1937 for a butcher’s shop and a boarding house to be erected, and a store was not built until late 1939. By October 1937, however, a cricket club had been formed, the old recreation reserve cleared, the cricket pitch repaired and a tennis court constructed; but there was no hotel. BHP allowed ‘two up’ schools on the mine premises, and the artefact scatter suggests there was no shortage of alcoholic beverages in the town.

This recourse to self-help extended to the provision of housing facilities. With the exception of the mine management and salaried staff such as engineers and fitters and turners, other
employees had to prepare their own house sites and build their own houses with whatever material was available, timber slabs, galvanised iron, stone and occasionally brick. They were not large because the area of land available was limited, and almost all of the huts had to be built on embankments set into the side of the ridge. (See Fig. 5.4) However, on the larger sites there was room for small gardens and animal enclosures. The town site was not, therefore, very different from the way it would have appeared thirty or forty years earlier.

Just as at Cowra Creek, however, there were concerns at the lack of facilities. In late 1940 anxiety was raised by a ‘go slow policy’ in connection with the post office. It was stated that it seemed ‘almost unbelievable that a village with a population of over 200 [was] still without postal facilities. What will happen when we ask for a school?’ The post office was opened several months later; however, there were continued concerns at the lack of telephone connection, the poor state of the two access tracks and the lack of a school. By late 1940 there were seventy children, of whom thirty were of school age. A school was established in March 1941, as a result of continued pressure from both the Progress Association and the Company. The site for the school was cleared by voluntary labour, with BHP providing the cartage of material and equipment from Bredbo railway station. Continued neglect by officialdom brought discontent to a head in August 1941 when the death of a 15-year-old boy could have been avoided if a telephone had been connected. The coroner pointed out that in a mining town of over 300 people, ninety of whom were children, accidents were bound to happen, a state of affairs exacerbated by the isolation of the community and the lack of a telephone.

Community action in the form of fund-raising activities also loomed very large on the social agenda. For example, in 1937 a ‘progress committee’ was formed and a hall built in which socials were held regularly. By October 1939, weekly card parties and other functions were held to raise funds for the tennis club and for the purchase of a piano. The latter obviously suc-
ceeded, for a feature at a function held not long thereafter was a Mr Irons playing the piano while standing on his head! In November a card and social evening was organised in the mess hall in aid of the Bredbo Queen candidate, a Miss Daphne Pettit, with the music supplied by the Bredbo Dance Orchestra. 26

By November 1940 Cowarra had acquired a branch of the Bush Nursing Association, with the Company providing board and lodging for the nurse. Each mine employee contributed sixpence per week towards expenses. A branch of the Red Cross Society was in existence by mid 1941. Petrol rationing, due to wartime restrictions, meant that more people would be staying at Cowarra on weekends, and for this purpose the Cowarra Joint Entertainment Committee was formed to hold euchre parties each alternate Saturday, with proceeds to go to the Red Cross. In addition to the usual fortnightly dance and other functions it was expected that there would be some entertainment each weekend. November and December 1941 were particularly active socially, with a jumble fair, fancy dress ball, school concert and a picnic and sports day. Proceeds went to the war effort. The first entertainment in 1942 was a dance in the mess, with proceeds going to the Red Cross. 27

The similarity between the 1930s and 1940s experience and that of the 1890s and 1900s, suggests a degree of persistence, in remote and small-scale gold communities, of a 'community culture', extending well beyond the confines of the nineteenth century. Despite the presence of a union, clear demarcations between management, salaried staff and wage earners at Cowarra in matters of housing, and obvious differences in income levels, there was a similar absence of divisions along the lines of class or religion. At Cowra Creek this was likely to have been a result of most of the mining having been the preserve of working miners combining cooperatively in small scale syndicates or companies. If there was any industrial antagonism on the field it was not between labour and capital, but between the mining fraternity and the carters and battery operators, and between the miners and shepherders. As poverty encroached, commu-
nity ire was also directed at the teachers, who, because of their isolation, were an enticing target. These actions would hardly, however, be deemed as industrial or class based. At Cowarra, the absence of industrial antagonism may have been due to the greater security of employment.28

Some of the physical and external constraints were also similar during the two periods. For example, the Cowarra community remained physically isolated, despite the arrival of the motor vehicle. In addition, at Cowarra the miners and their families had to contend with a similar official reluctance concerning the establishment of, firstly, a post office, then a school, and lastly a telephone service. While Cowarra was served by a bush nurse this was also a relatively late acquisition. The absence of these services was the prime focus of the Cowarra community just as it had been for the Cowra Creek community some forty years earlier. In both instances these facilities were acquired only after considerable lobbying, latterly, in Cowarra, by the Progress Association and the Company.

In addition, the miners and their families at Cowarra displayed a similar disposition and skill at developing social networks as their forebears had at Cowra Creek, and there was also a similar absence of sectarian animosity. At Cowarra, parties, socials and sporting functions were perhaps even more prevalent than at Cowra Creek, and they still drew a large following from other towns such as Bredbo. Although a ‘dry’ town, the number of empty beer bottles dating from this period attests to the large consumption of alcoholic beverages! Women played a similar role socially and domestically, although in the later period, other than the nurse, there is no record of them running businesses or holding official positions. Cowarra was, however, as demonstrated by the nature and frequency of the social functions, a very family orientated community.

There were also strong physical similarities between the two communities in the area of housing. In addition, while artefacts left on site at Cowarra included many items of modern disposition such as stoves and occasional car bodies, there was a good
deal of improvisation, and items such as clothes boilers made from 44-gallon drums, home made cake and bread baking tins, and lamps can also be found. Both communities were, if not part of the same era, at least subject to the same social processes. That these processes occurred within thirty to forty years of each other suggests a remarkable community tradition and persistence. Taken together, they highlight many of the common factors affecting life in remote gold mining communities. Despite the evolution from small-scale, independent mining cooperatives to a single, BHP-controlled field, the ongoing battle to wrest facilities from central authorities, and to build a sense of community and cohesion in the wilderness, reflects processes repeated many times across Australia during the past 150 years.

Endnotes

1 Cooma Express, 2 June, 1893.

2 NSW Department of Mines. Annual Report, Sydney, 1888, p.97; Cooma Express, 25 August, 1893 and 26 February, 1895.

3 By subsistence I mean earning less than wages or good wages. See, for example, Barry McGowan, 'A Measure of Production: a suggested method of assessing gold production on historic mining fields', paper presented to the Australian Mining History Association Conference, Sydney, 5-7 July, 1998.

4 Monaro Mercury, 13 March, 1899.

5 Cooma Express, 2 June 1893 and 13 September 1895.

6 Cooma Express, 2 February, 1902 and 9 September 1902.

7 Cooma Express, 29 September, 1897; 24 May, 19 August and 30 December, 1898; 11 April 1905, 14 March, 5 June and 21 September, 1908; Annual Report, 1906, p.15.

8 Correspondence from Messrs Kitchingham, Miller and Bartlett, and Departmental Minutes, Post Office Records, Australian Archives, Sydney, October to December, 1892; May to July, 1895.
9 Cooma Express, 4 January, 15 and 26 February, and 17 September, 1895; 29 May, 1896; Memorandum from Inspector Nolan to the Chief Inspector 12 November, 1894 and 12 February, 1895, letters from Lewis, Paulsen and Murray to Miller MLA and the Minister for Public Instruction, 27 November, 1894, NSW Department of Education Records, NSW Archives, Sydney.

10 Correspondence from Walter Lewis, Mrs Murray and Mrs Duffy and Departmental Minutes, March to August, 1907, Post Office Records, Australian Archives, Sydney.

11 Correspondence from Mr Newnham to Mr Baillie, Inspector, Braidwood, 18 December, 1900 and 20 February, 1901, and correspondence from Baillie to Chief Inspector, 8 March 1901, NSW Department of Education Records, NSW Archives, Sydney.

12 Correspondence from McDonnell to Baillie, Inspector, Braidwood, February, 1902; correspondence from Faulks to Walker, Inspector, Braidwood, 8 December, 1903, NSW Department of Education Records, March to August 1907.


14 Little ghosts.

15 Little ghosts.


17 The question of networks has been discussed by a number of historians, but in particular by Susan Lawrence, 'Gender and Community Structure in Subsistence Mining', paper presented to the Australian Mining History Association Conference, Sydney, 5-7 July, 1998.

18 Cooma Express, 29 May and 21 August, 1896.

19 Cooma Express, 20 February, 1901, 2 June, 1893, 6 April, 1894, and 27 July, 1897.

20 Cooma Express, 29 May, and 21 August, 1896.

21 Cooma Express, 12 April, 1901, 19 May, 1905.

22 Cooma Express, 18 February, 4 and 18 March 1938; Annual Report, 1938, pp.52-54.
Barry McGowan

23 Cooma Express, 4 October and 1 November, 1937, 23 October 1939; oral discussion with Ted Hayden, April 1993; Information from Darrell Powell, Jan. 2001.

24 Discussion with Ted Hayden, April 1993.

25 Cooma Express, 15 January, 4 March, 15 April, and 8 August, 1941.

26 Cooma Express, 23 August 1937; 6, 9 and 23 October, and 13 November, 1939.

27 Cooma Express, 14 November, 1940, 28 March, 14 July, and 28 November, 1941, 16 February, 1942.

28 Cooma Express, 28 March, 1941.
This chapter examines the rise and decline of the Clarence River goldfields of northern New South Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as this was depicted by the local press and through oral testimony. These contemporary reports enable us to glimpse the importance that inhabitants in the district themselves placed on the economic and civic expansion which took place, and to appreciate the concerns they felt to acquire what they deemed appropriate services and facilities for the new settlements. In the pages of the Clarence and Richmond Examiner can also be traced some of the little-known history of the activities of indigenous people in the life of the Clarence goldfields.

The story of Goori (Aboriginal) people involved in mining in this, my country, is yet to be told to the white community, but has always been known in the Goori community, and in this chapter skeletal newspaper reports are supplemented by information concerning the history of my own family. Aboriginal
people have long known of the existence of gold on the Australian continent. For over 60,000 years of occupation and care of the land there has been knowledge of the flora, fauna and minerals, but it was not until the gold fever set in that Aboriginal people realised the great importance that the miners and capitalists placed on gold. Gold brought an influx of European miners, and with them a strong social and cultural impetus for the development of Western-style infrastructure and government services. But, as we shall see, while goldmining accelerated 'Europeanisation' in the Clarence River area, it was not able to exclude Aboriginal participation in the gold society, nor to totally submerge Aboriginal culture.

When the first squatter came to settle at Yulgilbar on the Upper Clarence River in the north-east corner of New South Wales in 1839, my grandmother's people, the Goori, were already occupying the Lionsville Washpool country. The Goori people were just beginning to recover from the massacres of their tribe and surrounding tribes. My grandmother's mother, Pemau, was one of the few survivors of the massacres that occurred during early settlement of this area and is said to be the only survivor of the Lionsville area tribe. These killings marked the beginning of our dispossession from our traditional lands and the destruction of our traditional lifestyle. In order to survive, some Goori women formed liaisons with sympathetic squatters, settlers and/or miners. Other Goori women were forced into situations not of their making. Pemau, my grandmother's mother, given the white name Alice, had another daughter by the same white man whose family had settled in the area, and was in her late teens when gold was discovered by Paulo Marcolini and Paul Modoni in her country, which became known as Solferino Lionsville Washpool.

My Goori grandmother was legally married to a white miner in her country, now known as Lionsville Washpool. Born Anne Alice Tindal in 1878, she married in 1912, and became Mrs Arthur Bancroft. Being legally married at this time was rather unusual as many white men did not bother to marry the mothers of their children. The nine Bancroft children were raised on the
Aboriginal Miners & the Solferino & Lionsville Goldfields of Northern NSW

goldfields while their father continued mining in their mother’s country. (See Fig. 6.1)

Paulo Marcolino, from Genoa Italy, arrived in Victoria at the time of the Ballarat riots in 1854. He found gold in the mountains of the Washpool between the Great Dividing Range and the Clarence River in northern New South Wales. Marcolini with his fellow countryman, Paul Modini (also referred to as Paul Madona), named their mine at Solferino, the ‘Garibaldi’ after the contemporary Italian patriot. (Solferino was originally a village west of Milan in the province of Lombardy in Northern Italy.) By 1871 district newspapers were carrying reports about ‘The Garibaldi’ at Solferino on the Washpool and the several other claims that were operating. For many years the byline ‘Our own Correspondent’ introduced articles on matters to do with official and unofficial goldfields, and reported, in the local newspaper, The Grafton and Richmond Examiner, on all aspects of the people living and working on these fields. It is these reports which form the basis of the account which follows.

In May 1871 Modini journeyed to Sydney to have some 185.61 ounces of quartz assayed and tested at the Mint. The gold weighed in at 3 pounds, 17 shillings and 10-and-a-half pence per ounce. And so the gold rush commenced. Prospectors from all around the country arrived to try their luck. Within six months a water-wheel machine was erected, and crushing began at Solferino. When the miners expressed no confidence in the machine as constructed, alleging that the cables were not right and its supports not strong enough, Marcolino went to Sydney to purchase a better crushing machine. Businessman James Laird had Solferino gold put on show at his Freemason’s Hotel in Grafton. Almost immediately the little township of Solferino began lobbying the government for basic services for its community, the first being a mail service. A satisfactory river crossing was another. When heavy rains fell, the mining shafts filled with water which all but stopped the mining. The main river, the Clarence, would become impassable and many people had narrow escapes from drowning. A private boat was owned by
Edward Ogilvie, a local squatter, who refused to lend anything or help the mining community, unless it was profitable to him in some way, causing the Grafton and Richmond Examiner to remark: ‘Surely the Government is bound to provide the requisite accommodation for crossing from one bank to the other’. The Yulgilbar ford was to continue to be an on-going source of accidents.

1872 was a big year on the Solferino goldfields. Mining boomed. The new crushing machine owned by Marcolino, a five stamper weighing 500 pounds, and driven by a water-wheel, had arrived from Sydney on the ship Agnes Irving. Mr H. Wilson also had his own crushing machines erected. The miners were very enthusiastic about this new reef which they thought compared favourably with any reefs in the colony for so young a field. However, there was a great shortage of tools such as picks and shovels, and no steel was available. Fifteen claims were operating around the Garibaldi in the first three months of 1872. The great Lombardy find saw the population increasing rapidly. Another reef causing excitement amongst the miners was the Golden Lion, referred to as the Lion, which had thirteen claims taken out. The Shellameeler (other spellings also apply) had about twenty claims taken up. Several were disputed and required a judgment from the Commissioner of Mining. The Mining Registrar’s office listed the following reefs within the boundaries of the Solferino goldfields: Garibaldi; Solferino; Golden Lion; Waterloo; Pride of the Clarence; Sedan; Undaunted; Band of Hope; Shellameeler; Nil Desperandum; Prince of Wales; Queen Elizabeth; Excelsior; Tattersalls; Union; Unicorn; and Victoria.

At the same time the reefs were beginning to attract the attention of capitalists and mining speculators, with one mine share being sold for a minimum of £100 (one share in No 1 Lombardy Reef sold for £750). The origin of capital invested in the goldfields was demonstrated by the report in the newspaper that the Marcolino Gold Mining Company Ltd had three local shareholders and ninety-eight Sydney shareholders. This confirms the diggers’ comments that the mines’ ‘capitalists’ came
from the metropolis. Eight Mining Districts were declared by the end of 1872 under which were grouped the old goldfields. For example, Solferino and Lionsville came under the New England and Clarence Mining District. The Clarence division consisted of Toloom Creek; Boorook and Lunatic; Ballina and Casino; Timbara; Little River; Chambigne; Cangi; Gulf; and the Mitchell River goldfields.

As a result of all this mining activity, the Solferino township was developing and many buildings were being established. (See Fig. 6.2)

In 1872 a Mr J. Laird had applied for a publican’s license for a house to be called the Solferino Hotel. He thought Solferino would be more profitable than other fields around the district. Mr Wilkinson had a crushing machine within a mile of Marcolini’s machine. There were two stores, a large hotel being built and a blacksmith’s works, but the call for a post office and a Mining Registrar had not been answered. Within the first six months of 1872, Solferino had the appearance of an old established goldfield with everything looking prosperous. The population numbered 2,000 and the increase was about twenty people per day. The population peaked at 4,000, of which 300 were said to be Chinese. This rapid increase raised health concerns, especially as the slaughterhouse and yard were situated on the upper end of the creek which flowed through the town. The newspaper noted a number of other grievances which arose as a result of the gold rushes.

Although a bi-weekly mail run commenced from Grafton to Solferino, the state of road access caused ‘Our correspondent’, describing his journey to the Solferino goldfields, to write:

The dust of the track from Grafton to the fields, which in former times was seldom disturbed except by ants or a bullock team passing furiously at a mile an hour, is now raised continually and tormented by horse drays, horsemen, packhorses, bullock teams and other visitors, besides numerous footmen, humping their swags in search of work or fortune,
then on reaching the Clarence at Yulgilbar about 50% of the men are either ducked entirely or sustain narrow escapes at this crossing. It is country that does not abound to easy traveling, there being any number of ridges, spurs and well timbered rises but very few flats. The timber is densely packed and locomotion is impeded by rocks, dead and rotten timber, vines, supplejack, cabbage trees and toothed vegetation.

The clergy's visits were intermittent. In June 1872 the Bishop of Grafton and Armidale was expected and ministers from the Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Roman Catholic parishes came to hold services at the diggings, causing The Examiner's correspondent to remark:

Surely some better arrangement could be devised to have periodical visits rather than a rush of ministers on one Sunday, and then for weeks after being left entirely without even the sight of one being seen in our midst.

A Police Magistrate visited the goldfields to settle disputes and litigation on the reefs and to attend to other matters, including the first reported crime on the goldfields allegedly committed by a Chinaman. Crown land was reserved from sale because of the gold mining. The Solferino Company was making havoc amongst the timber, by erecting buildings. Calls were made at a public meeting for the establishment of a school for the fifty or so children of school age in the area. Again calls were made for a road from Lionsville to Solferino. The Police Magistrate promised to do all he could to have an area reserved for a public cemetery. An old subscriber of The Clarence and Richmond River Examiner residing at the Lion township wrote petitioning for a lock up:

We have to endure the assaults and insults of a set of drunken ruffians - simply because the police have no power to confine them, and the knowledge of the fact makes them trebly callous and abusive. No one is safe from these nuisances simply because there is no way of getting rid of them. Chastisement has no earthly effect, beside [sic] no satisfaction to the aggrieved.
The Minister for Works, Mr Sutherland, visited the goldfields in October 1872, stopping overnight with the pastoralist Edward Ogilvie. He was met by fifteen to twenty horsemen at the Yulgilbar crossing and then proceeded to the townships. Suggestions for a bridge and road improvements were pointed out. The miners also wanted a resident gold commissioner and mining surveyor as the current commissioner was over fifty miles away in Casino, requiring miners to walk or ride long distances for settlement of petty cases and the signing of affidavits. Again the miners' requirements of sites for, and the services of, a telegraph office, a pound, churches, schools, a cemetery and a powder magazine were mentioned. Ogilvie requested to be present at the deputation before Sutherland, alleging that some misrepresentation had taken place concerning him. Ogilvie had substantial interests and large properties in the district and he wished to draw attention to the fact that the road ran chiefly through his property and had never been opened. Great complaints from the people had reached Sutherland stating that Ogilvie was felling trees and obstructing the road, particularly between the river and their towns. The Examiner reported that Mr Ogilvie responded to 'the many unkind and ungentlemanly remarks' that had been made about him to the Minister for Works and the Engineer for Roads by remarking, of the gold-seekers that: 'If they had been deviating from the surveyed road onto his private property, he had perfect liberty to do anything lawful to protect that ground'. 6 He also objected, the report continued, to the representation of himself as an obstructionist. On an earlier occasion he had defended himself by stating that, 'he had established a ferry solely for the miners' accommodation and that he was quite willing for the Government to fix the scale of charges'. 7 The miners were convinced that the workings of a punt, either by Ogilvie or the Government, would be most unsatisfactory and most vexatious. Nothing but a bridge would suit them. Mr Sutherland stated that he would do his utmost in getting it for them. 8

All of these practical difficulties could not prevent the emergence of a degree of civic pride. Three Italian men who arrived at the fields via New Zealand, Messrs Commissori, Michaeletti
and Valli were recognised for their contribution in prospecting at Solferino by being presented each with a gold watch in 1872. Recognition was also given to Messrs Armstrong and Wade for having developed the Lion reef, which in turn stimulated population increase. Among the new businesses attracted to the town were Mr Pearce’s Theatre at Lion township which also served as the public meeting room, and a chemist’s shop run by Mr Watt. Towards the end of the same year, photographer J.W. Lindt visited the goldfields photographing the township and surrounds. His photographs reveal many of the sources of growing civic pride. They included: Mr Wilkinson’s crushing machine; the old Solferino store; the Australian Joint Stock Bank; Mr Watt’s chemist shop; Mr Kuhl’s private residence; an old miner’s residence; Mr J. Laird’s Hotel from across the creek; a view of Grass Tree Creek showing the old alluvial ground; a view of Solferino township taken from the hill opposite; Mr J. P. Jordan’s Solferino store; large box tree in the bed of Grass Tree Creek; waterfall in Grass Tree Creek; ferns and grass tree in a gully; and a large panoramic view of the Solferino township.

Mining growth continued throughout 1872. Another new reef, the Guiding Star, was discovered about two miles from the Lion with thirty claims taken up, and the Union Jack was discovered closer to Yulgilbar. Ten to twelve miles south of Solferino another new reef, the Caledonian, had been opened. By August 1872 there were no less than seventy-three reefs in the neighbourhood. In 1873 new reefs were still being discovered, such as the Flying Dutchman. Lion Town, or as it is now named, Lionsville, had expanded and numerous buildings had sprung up. Businesses had begun to change hands, for example Laird and Davidson Store at Solferino was purchased by a Sydney firm Harper & Co., and a Mr Lobliner had purchased the butchery establishments of Messrs A. Smith and A. Limeburner. The continued absence of rain affected the crushing machines’ operations at Solferino and Lionsville during November 1873. Some prospectors departed to go tin mining, and the population declined. However, social life continued for those who stayed, with horse races, for example, being held at Lionsville.
Nevertheless, within two years there was a great falling off of correspondence from the mining districts. By February 1874 some mining operations were suspended because of the lack of water in the creek beds. Lack of rain could stop water-driven crushing machines for two to three months at a time. Nearly two years after the Minister for Works had visited the goldfields, a public meeting was held to petition the government to begin work on the promised bridge at the crossing at Yulgilbar. The money had been appropriated but work had not yet commenced. Another petition called for a Justice of the Peace and the establishment of a Warden’s Court at Lionsville. But by 1875 the fever of the goldrush to Solferino and Lionsville was over with only a population of 200 to 300 people staying on. Services suffered accordingly and facilities became redundant:

Our greatest deficiency is that since the place has declined we never see a clergyman of any denomination. We certainly had one twelve months since who paid us a visit from Yulgilbar, but since then we have never seen one. This contrasts strongly with the fact that in the prosperous days in 1872-1873 we never were without one on Sundays, and frequently had 3 or 4.9

Individual miners continued to work reefs which had proven non-viable for mining companies. By 1878 Solferino and Lionsville, both formed during the widely speculative times of 1872-1873, were almost deserted townships. Solferino had some excellent buildings. Among the empty houses was a large and well-built hotel, almost entirely constructed of cedar, and roofed with shingles and iron, containing four living rooms, a billiard room, bar and kitchen, about fourteen bedrooms (of which, in the more prosperous days, it was rare to find one vacant), stabling, bathroom, cordial manufactory etc. The establishment would have cost the owner over £1,000. Opposite this was a roomy and well-built store, which at one time transacted a business of from £200 to £300 per week. A four-room cottage had been built for the Australian Joint Stock Bank, there was a Mining Registrar’s office, a cottage built for the chemist shop, a bakery, a former billiard saloon later applied to the better purpose
of a schoolroom for the half-time school, and about nine or ten slab and bark houses. Lionsville contained an excellent hotel, an extensive store, a shoemaker, post office, lock-up, warden’s court and clerk’s office, police station, schoolhouse and smithy, besides ten to twelve bark or slab houses. Between 1873 and 1874 some eighty to 100 claims operated by miners and their families supported these two townships. However, by 1880 only about thirty people were living at Lionsville. Those miners fossicking on the goldfields were still waiting for the Government’s promise of a bridge made eight years before, in 1872.

Nevertheless, in the 1870s, especially, the Clarence River goldfields had seen much capital investment in machinery. The largest of the water-driven machines was situated on the Nogrigar Creek and was erected by T. Wilkinson, afterwards sold to the proprietors of the Lombardy mine, and since their collapse purchased by Mr Thos. Bawden. It was a ten stamp battery with 700-pound heads driven by an overshot wheel, 30 feet in diameter. In Grass Tree Creek was another five stamp water-driven battery, while near Lionsville stood a ten stamp machine which had greater capabilities than any of the others, but the supply of water had to be pumped to it. Mr P. Marcolini, the pioneer of the goldfields, designed a new smaller stamper crushing machine. His object was to benefit the district by placing within the reach of miners a machine that was not only cheap, but also effective and could be worked by manual labour, by horse or by water power. The patent was sought in 1886.

The later history of the Lionsville Solferino goldfields shows its further decline, with mining continued mainly by individuals. Wages in 1895 for work at Oakey Paddock, 3 miles from Yulgilbar, were £1 per week for the seventy-one miners working there. There were ten men at Cedar Creek and ten men at Solferino. Mining at Yulgilbar was creating some tension at this time because ‘the best deposits were on private lands, and to work there you have to submit to the whims and caprices of one who makes his own terms and alters them as he sees fit; and forbids certain lands and marks boundaries’. By late 1896 there was a handful of men scattered about the field, and the remains of several
ancient roadways were all that was left of the once famous Solferino. The original township was now nothing but a small collection of camps, scattered along the banks of the creek. Lionsville was now the only place that had survived. Among old timers who stayed on in the district were Mr Marcantelli and his two sons who arrived to peg out the old Lombardy. Mr Mark Udesich was working the Lion claim and Mr A. Tamini and Mr F. Vortz were still working their claims. Mr Marcolino, the pioneer of the Solferino goldfields and inventor of a portable quartz-crushing machine, died on 5 February 1891 after living in Grafton for many years. His contribution to the district was noted in the newspaper: 'He was an enthusiastic worker for the railway, his collection of minerals illustrative of the wealth of the district were well known'.

That Aboriginal people continued to show prospectors and miners gold-bearing deposits is evidenced by the following report in the newspaper.

In the early 1870s the Sir Walter Scott mine was discovered by a blackfellow and was taken up by Mr Ross, Mr Bawden and Mr Fisher. Old 'Jack' Torrance, who was an Aboriginal police tracker had a keen eye for 'outcrops' which materially assisted the prospecting operations of Messrs Smith.

One feature of these northern NSW goldfields is that Aboriginal miners and prospectors are included among these pioneers, although as the following account shows, they did not always receive fair treatment regarding their mineral finds. In 1913 an Aboriginal named Mr William Little had discovered an exceptionally rich reef on the west side of the river opposite Penrose reef, 6 miles from Lionsville at a place known as Caw Caw. He took some very rich specimens to Copmanhurst, where he sold several ounces of gold dollyed from the reef. The right to the ground was in dispute and no further work was carried out until the matter was to be settled by the Warden's Court. An objection was lodged by William Little against Mr Parkinson and party's application for a 10-acre lease near the Penrose reef. The matter was dealt with by the Mining Warden at Copmanhurst.
Mr Little did not apply for a lease, he simply lodged an objection against Mr Parkinson and party usurping possession of his claim. Parkinson responded by lodging his own objection. An application for a gold lease of 10 acres on the Caw Caw line of reef was later lodged by Mr William Little at the local Mining Warden’s office. The Warden (Malone) afterwards intimated that he would recommend the granting of Parkinson’s application. In this matter notices were served on the parties with a view to having further evidence taken with respect to compliance by the applicant with the appropriate Mining Regulations. There was no appearance of the objector or the applicant and the matter was allowed to stand over. 

Although Mr Little followed the due processes of the law, he was unsuccessful in claiming his right to the mine he discovered. However the majority of the miners always referred to the mine as Little’s reef.

My own family were among the district’s mining pioneers. Following the patrilineal line, five generations of Bancrofts have called the Lionsville Washpool area their home country. In 1872 my paternal great grandparents, Mr Joseph Bancroft and Miss Margaret Jones were married at Solferino. Mr Joseph Bancroft and his brothers had come to the goldfields from mining in England. Their sons were subsequently to continue the mining tradition in what was my grandmother’s traditional country. The first recorded mention of goldmining Bancrofts, was on 6 June 1872 when ‘Messrs Bancroft and party took out some excellent stone from No 1 north, Golden Lion’. However the Goori people trace descent through the matrilineal line and it is through this line many of my ancestors called, and still call, this country home.

Joseph and Margaret Bancroft left the Solferino goldfields for Bingara, but their sons, Arthur, David and Langloe Bancroft subsequently returned to Lionsville to continue the tradition of goldmining in the area. Arthur married my grandmother Ann Alice Tindal, daughter of Pemau a survivor of the massacres which followed the arrival of European pastoralists. The next generation of Bancroft miners were the children of Arthur and Ann. These were, Artie, Annie, Stella, George, Mick, Dulcie, Pat, Bill
and Toby (my father). My mother, Elsie Marshall, a Gumbaingerr woman, first visited relations in the Washpool area when she was a young teenager. She married my father, Toby Bancroft, who was born in 1928, and went to live at Lionsville. It is interesting that Elsie’s family also were involved in goldmining. Her grandfather, John Marshall, operated his registered gold mine at Nambucca Heads. The Bancroft family bought land in the area and continued mining while farming in the Washpool. It is unusual to find detailed accounts of Aboriginal miners and their activities in the press which served goldfield communities, but the following history of Bancroft activity on these fields was drawn from the local newspapers, and will serve to round out this account of the rise and fall of the Clarence River goldfields.

In 1899 there was a wagon road from Grafton to Lionsville. Messrs Bancroft, Armstrong and party had finished blasting away a large bar in the creek which had taken them nine weeks. The newspaper wished them a good return as this had been a big undertaking.

Mining was reviving at Lionsville in 1910. The old Lion had once more made a start, a tunnel had been driven 600 feet. Mr Langloe W. Bancroft had a 3-acre goldmining lease. Exceptionally rich gold had been unearthed at Solferino in 1912, in the vicinity of the old Band of Hope and Solferino reefs by Mr A. Bancroft of Lionsville. He owned the Mountain Maid mine situated on the old Lombardy line of reef, about one and a half miles from Solferino west. (See Fig. 6.3) This was a new discovery and Mr Bancroft stated at a rough calculation that he had obtained 40 ounces of gold within four or five days, and most of this time was taken up dollying the specimens. Mr Bassetti immediately had his battery put into repair through a private crushing. Mr Mark Udersicht says that Mr Bancroft’s find was the best he had seen on the field for forty-odd years. Work on the Mountain Maid mine was making headway; the reef was said to be four feet wide and well defined between the walls. In 1913 the Mountain Maid Gold Mining Company raised twenty tons of stone from its mine at Solferino and treated 35 tons for a yield of 131 ounces valued at £434.
Since the closing down of the fields, individual miners with no capital had been earning a living in the old workings. The Mountain Maid was discovered by Mr A. Bancroft in 1910 in an old trench on the Solferino reef that had been opened up in the 1870s. This was only one of the many discoveries that had been made in the district in the last few months of that year. The rich finds within the last few weeks on Little's reef, parallel to the old Caw Caw reef (abandoned for many years) and on the Penrose line of reef, were further evidence of the justification of the prediction that the former phenomenal results achieved from these fields would be repeated. Rich gold had been discovered during the last week at the Caw Caw with about twenty chains of that rich find disputed by Mr Billy Little and party. Messrs Bancroft and McCloyment were commencing operations on the alluvial ground at Burnt Down and also on the old Garibaldi. The prospects obtained by them were very promising. Outside of the Garibaldi leases and on the Garibaldi line of reef, the Bancroft Bros. had made a further rich find. These new discoveries had already caused a rush for the fields. Leases had been applied for in all directions, and an area of 209 acres representing 28 applications for leases had been lodged with the local warden since November, 1910. Mr F. Benn and son were at present drawing stone from the Mountain Maid mine to the Pucka battery. The Mount Arthur and other mines held by the Bancroft brothers were also crushing at the Pucka battery.

In the early part of 1914 quartz mining activity in the locality of Lionsville resulted in 28 applications for gold leases, covering an area of 186 acres. A considerable amount of prospecting was carried out in the vicinity of Lionsville, Solferino and Yulgilbar for the next ten years. (See Fig. 6.4) Messrs A. Bancroft, W. G. Bancroft, G. C. Smith, and others treated 20 tons of stone (hand-picked) for a yield of 108 ounces of gold valued at £413 in 1924. It had become necessary to build a five-head battery on this site. In the following years Mr Arthur Bancroft won sixty ounces of gold from a claim at Lionsville. This result was obtained from the treatment of 44 tons of ore. About sixty tons of stone were raised of which thirty tons were treated for
104 ounces valued at £405. He sank two shafts to the depths of 30 feet each and put in drives totalling 100 feet. Mr Arthur Bancroft was now working with his sons mining. In the next decade the Bancroft family continued mining in the area.

The Bancroft families continue to live and work in the Lionsville Washpool area today. Mr Pat Bancroft is one of the few people alive who has knowledge of the old mining ways and an intimate knowledge of the landscape of our country. My brother, Mr Sunny Bancroft, has inherited a detailed knowledge of all aspects of living in our country. The Bancroft family continue our ceremonies and custodianship of the land. The gold rushes in this district neither drove them all away nor swamped or obliterated their relationship with their lands.

Endnotes

1 Grafton and Richmond River Examiner.
2 Clarence and Richmond River Examiner, 24 December, 1872.
3 Examiner.
4 Examiner, 14 June, 1872.
5 Examiner, 1 October, 1872.
6 Report on the visit of the Minister for Works to Solferino Goldfields, the Examiner, 29 October, 1872.
7 Examiner, 3 August, 1872.
8 Report on the visit of the Minister for Works to Solferino Goldfields, the Examiner, 29 October, 1872.
9 Examiner.
10 From a correspondent of Town and Country Journal reprinted in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner, 1874.
11 Obituary notice in the Clarence and Richmond River Examiner, 7 February, 1891.
12 Clarence and Richmond River Examiner, 24 September, 1907.
13 Warden's Court, Copmanhurst, 25 March, 1913.
14 Clarence and Richmond River Examiner, 6 June, 1872.
‘Only a gilded show’

Australian Gold at International Exhibitions 1851-1901

Judith McKay

In the fifty years, from London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 to the Victorian Gold Jubilee Exhibition held in Bendigo in 1901, Australian gold exhibits stunned the world. The exhibits, in their wealth and splendour, and as evidences of technological advance in the colonies, came to rival those presented by the mother country itself. This half-century of gold exhibits coincided with the evolution of the six young, competitive and under-populated colonial States into an Australian nation. The exhibits demonstrated, too, a growing sense of self-importance on the part of these colonies as they presented themselves as resource rich, technologically advanced and entrepreneurially mature. These gold and other mineral exhibits were, unashamedly, platforms for presenting the colonies as attractive fields for overseas, especially British, investment. Though overlooked generally in Australian historical writing, the exhibits reveal much about the aspirations of colonial Australia and Australian identity on the world stage.

In 1851 payable gold was discovered in New South Wales and Victoria, leading to one of the largest gold rushes in modern times, and in later years similar excitement was to be generated
by the gold finds in Queensland and in Western Australia. Also
during the year 1851 the Great Exhibition opened in London’s
Crystal Palace, the first of the international, or universal, exhibi­
tions that would mark the progress of ‘Western civilisation’.
Australian gold was rushed to London to be shown in the exhi­
bition before it closed in October. London’s next International
Exhibition, staged in 1862, featured the Australian colonies as
major exhibitors for the first time. Victoria’s exhibit was the
most ‘extensive and varied’ yet shown by a British colony, re­
lecting its new status as the richest gold producer of the British
Empire.³

Gold was Victoria’s main exhibit. Under the exhibition’s Eastern
Dome, a gilded obelisk rose 45 feet, representing the 800 tons
of gold so far found in the colony. This was the brainchild of
John George Knight, Secretary for Victoria at the exhibition and
a leading Melbourne architect (best known as co-designer of
Melbourne’s Houses of Parliament). Knight’s obelisk, based on
an ancient Egyptian symbol of victory, was an ingenious struc­
ture of stacked timber sections, covered in canvas. (See Fig. 7.1)
Glued onto the canvas were grains of sand, gravel and broken
plaster, all ‘gilded over so as to imitate the appearance of a pile
of gold nuggets and dust as it comes from the mines’.⁴ The
largest of Victoria’s nuggets were modelled in plaster around
the base. The towering obelisk, glittering like solid gold, was
well received in London, reportedly one of the ‘most striking
objects’ in the exhibition.⁵ Also applauded back in Victoria, it
featured in the transformation scene of a pantomime, High, Low,
Jack, and Game; or, Harlequin Prince Diamond; or the Fairy Pearl, which played
at Melbourne’s Haymarket Theatre during the Christmas panto­
mime season 1862/1863. The scene, skilfully painted by the
Melbourne scene-painter William Pitt, was a sequel to a pano­
rama tracing the progress of Victoria.⁶

Besides the obelisk, Victoria showed a rich collection of gold
specimens at the London exhibition and, in an open court, a
half-scale model of a gold battery operated by the Port Phillip
and Colonial Gold Mining Company at Clunes. During the course
of the exhibition, the battery crushed some 50 tons of quartz
‘Only a Gilded Show’

from the company’s mine, reassuring London investors that colonial mining methods differed little from those of Europe. Also, a colonial miner demonstrated alluvial gold-washing with pans and cradles. Not to be entirely overshadowed by Victoria, New South Wales also put on a show of gold at the exhibition, for the colonies were direct competitors in the race for world investment.

Knight's obelisk set the pattern for future exhibits, and soon gilded obelisks became symbols of Australia, as familiar as the giant timber trophies of Canada or the diamonds of South Africa. A one-eighth scale model of Knight's obelisk was shown at the Dublin International Exhibition of 1865. The large obelisk made further appearances at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867 and at Melbourne's preceding intercolonial exhibition. By this time the obelisk was 17 feet taller, and stood 62 feet high, so it could keep up with Victoria's rapidly increasing gold output. Again it attracted attention, featuring in illustrations of Melbourne's exhibition and becoming one of the triumphs of the year, appearing in Samuel Calvert's cover for the Melbourne Punch Almanac for 1867. A reporter at the Paris exhibition also saw the obelisk as a triumph:

It is not every colony that can show as much, and I fancy by the way in which the lower order of visitors stare up at it, that they are under the impression that it is the actual gold which has been sent.

At the same event, Victoria showed another obelisk from the Band of Hope Company's mine at Ballarat, and gilded plaster models of its largest nuggets. Among these were the 'Welcome' nugget of 2,195 ounces, found at Ballarat's Bakery Hill in 1858, the largest lump of pure gold yet found in the world, and the 'Blanche Barkly' nugget found at Kingower in 1857. These nuggets were modelled by Maximillian Ludwig Kreitmeyer of Melbourne, proprietor of the popular Kreitmeyer's Melbourne Waxworks.

A decade later at the United States Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, Victoria and New South Wales
displayed more obelisks and nuggets, and New South Wales added a large trophy celebrating its diverse mineral wealth. At Philadelphia, Queensland showed its first obelisk, for since the strike at Gympie in 1867, Queensland had joined the ranks of Australia’s gold producers. The 22-foot high obelisk was designed by Queensland’s Colonial Architect, F. D. G. Stanley, to represent the colony’s gold yield of 65 tons. This glittering shaft drew covetous attention, even if it was ‘only a gilded show’, as an exhibition commentator wrote wryly. Surrounding the obelisk were a series of photographs by geologist Richard Daintree, illustrating the geological formations of Queensland, including its newly-discovered northern goldfields.

In 1878 at the next Paris Exposition Universelle, the three Australian gold producers again showed tall, gilded obelisks, while South Australia had an obelisk of copper. At the request of the Prince of Wales, who oversaw the British colonial exhibits, the Australian obelisks were placed in the corners of the western dome of the Palais du Champ-de-Mars, making a spectacular display. In addition, in the centre of Victoria’s court at the exhibition, stood a ‘grand’ trophy with life-sized figures of a goldminer, stock-rider and Aborigines, signifying the central importance of goldmining to the colony. These figures, like the previously-mentioned nuggets, were modelled by Kreitmeyer, this time in wax instead of plaster.

Not surprisingly, a ‘colossal’ tribute to gold graced Australia’s first international exhibition, held in Sydney in 1879. In the exhibition gardens was an obelisk representing the 2,153 tons of gold so far produced by Australia, and standing as a symbol of antipodean progress and prosperity. This obelisk, designed by New South Wales Colonial Architect, James Barnet, stood on a pedestal showing the output of the principal coal-seams of New South Wales. To further celebrate their gold wealth, New South Wales and Queensland erected large obelisks within the exhibition’s Garden Palace. Queensland’s offering, again designed by Colonial Architect Stanley, rose 33 feet in the eastern transept. Shown also, for the first time, was gold from the Northern Territory of South Australia. Interestingly, the exhibitor of this
gold was John George Knight of obelisk fame, now Chief Warden of the Northern Territory Goldfields and commissioner for the Northern Territory at later exhibitions. 11

The succeeding Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880 brought more obelisks, or 'goldometers', as they came to be called. 12 Minerals and mining exhibits were a special feature of this event, held in a city largely built on gold wealth. In the words of an official exhibition report: 'In no Group [of exhibits] was the display made by the various Colonies of such uniform excellence as in that devoted to mining and metallurgy'. 13

In the New South Wales court were obelisks representing the colony's output of both gold and silver, while in Victoria's mining court another obelisk recorded the 336 tons of gold raised in the Bendigo district alone. Queensland's exhibit included the obelisk recently shown in Sydney, though it was not updated for its second appearance. By this time, obelisks were becoming 'a somewhat stale device', and the Argus reporter hoped to see 'no more' of them after the exhibition. 14 Although somewhat hackneyed as exhibits, they were now regarded, especially overseas, as symbols of Australia's colonial progress, and they continued to receive enthusiastic attention from exhibition visitors and officials alike. The Argus may have been tired of the device, but Australia's grandest obelisks were still to come.

The Melbourne exhibition had more than the, by now familiar, columnar representations of mineral wealth. As the Argus reporter observed, Victoria's mining court was a veritable 'golden square' filled with objects of great fascination. 15 These included a gilded hemisphere imitating a huge cake of retorted gold, representing the output of the Port Phillip and Colonial Company's mine at Clunes, and models and designs of mining machinery and appliances showing the complexity of present-day operations. Also in the mining court was a full-sized model, 28 feet high, of a Bendigo saddle reef, one of the famous quartz reefs bringing new riches to Victoria's most productive goldfield. Containing real quartz from the Bendigo mines, the model celebrated the era of quartz reefing in Victoria. Close by this was a large rhombic dodecahedron, a twelve-faced form gilded to look like a giant
gold crystal, representing the 1,503 tons of gold so far found in Victoria.\textsuperscript{16} This, probably the most inventive of all Australian gold trophies, was designed by a Victorian Government geological surveyor of mathematical bent, Reginald A. F. Murray. (See Fig. 7.2)

Such spectacular gold exhibits were hardly equalled at Melbourne’s later, and larger, international exhibition, held in 1888 to mark the centenary of British settlement in Australia. At the exhibition’s southern entrance stood a 60-foot-high obelisk, the ‘Australasian gold trophy’, a worthy tribute to what the event’s Centennial Cantata called ‘the great magician — GOLD’. The Australasian colonies could now boast 2,524 tons of the precious metal, and this would be the last obelisk to record their total gold output, for they rarely cooperated at exhibitions. Other mineral exhibits were overshadowed by the massive coal, silver and tin trophies of New South Wales and Tasmania, presenting to the world the extent of the mineral resources of their respective colonial States.

Most of the gold exhibits were to be found in Victoria’s court. These included a large dodecahedron from the Band of Hope and Albion Consols Company of Ballarat, and an obelisk from the Long Tunnel Gold Mining Company of Walhalla, north Gippsland, renowned for its rich dividends. In South Australia’s court was a gilded globe representing the 8 tons of gold so far found in the Northern Territory and a novel ‘mineral trophy’ in the form of a rustic house, the work of Commissioner Knight. Knight’s house, octagonal in shape, had a roof of bark and bamboo supported by eight pillars of shining mineralised ores, including gold. The exhibition’s largest mining exhibits were in the machinery court, where Victoria and Great Britain vied for honours in manufacturing. Here the Melbourne engineering firm of David Munro and Company showed a full-sized beam pump for keeping water from mines and a huge, ten-head gold battery.

In 1886, it was Queensland’s turn to stun the world with its gold wealth. This was at London, in the first of the British Impe-
rial exhibitions, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Mining in Queensland had expanded in recent years, and Queensland was now second only to Victoria among Australia's gold producers. However, it needed an influx of capital to develop its mines and, in particular, to fund deep reefing at its richest goldfield, Charters Towers. So a promotional exercise was mounted for the exhibition, to open the purses of London investors.

Queensland's court at London was dominated by a 21-foot-high gold trophy, surmounted by a pyramid representing its gold yield of 135 tons. The base of the trophy featured quartz and photographs from the colony's goldfields. This elaborate structure was designed and erected by J. N. Longden, the Queensland mining engineer engaged to oversee the gold exhibits. Within the court was a mineral collection claimed to be the finest yet shown by an Australian colony, comprising more than 1,407 specimens of ores and quartz arranged systematically by districts and mines. Lending scientific validity to this collection were a Handbook of Queensland Geology by the Government Geologist, Robert Logan Jack, and his first geological map of Queensland. Both were published in 1886 especially for the exhibition.

Queensland's most popular exhibit in the London exhibition was a five-head gold battery, larger than Victoria's battery of 1862, complete with troughs, tables and ripples. The Queensland-made battery was erected under engineer Longden's supervision in a pioneer hut in the South Promenade. During the course of the exhibition the battery crushed and treated 200 tons of Queensland quartz, demonstrating the whole process of crushing bulk quartz to produce glittering bars of gold. The battery was acclaimed by British engineers for its design and strength; indeed it was a quintessential symbol of colonial progress. Exhibition-goers who could stand the noise within the pioneer hut could also see a colonial miner demonstrating alluvial gold-washing. Also present in London were Queensland mining magnates, including Thomas Mills and Hugh Mosman of Charters Towers, who promoted their mines during the exhibition and relayed reports of rich crushings and dividends.
Victoria also put on a stunning display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. At the entrance to Victoria’s court stood a glittering triumphal arch representing the colony’s gold yield of 1,507 tons. The triple arch, made of gilded plaster bricks, was ornamented with ‘dummy’ ingots and cakes of retorted gold and surmounted by a maiden with cornucopia ‘typical of the Peace and Plenty unmistakably to be found in Victoria’. Within the court were the ‘dummy’ nuggets so often shown by Victoria at exhibitions, arranged like delectable cakes in an ‘alluring’ case, and gilded cubes and trophies recording the output of richer mines.18

But Victoria could not match the success of Queensland’s exhibits which, it was said, represented wealth won by ‘serious’ enterprise, not luck, and were not just gilded replicas.19 Even before the exhibition closed, in November 1886, Queensland goldmines began to be listed on the London Stock Exchange. In August 1886, the rich Charters Towers’ Day Dawn Block and Wyndham mine, of which Thomas Mills was the major shareholder, was floated for nearly £500,000. Then followed a Queensland goldmining boom that became ‘the speculative event of the year’.20 However, as speculation increased, so did doubts about the integrity of some of the companies being floated. On 28 October 1886 Queensland’s Premier, Samuel Griffith, cabled to warn British investors that some companies were ‘not altogether bona fide’. In particular, Griffith was alarmed by the Mount Morgan West Gold Mining Company masquerading in London as the original Mount Morgan Company. He saw ‘a great danger’ that such ‘bogus speculations’ could destroy confidence in the colony as a field for investment.21

Despite Griffith’s warning, the Mount Morgan West Company was formed, leading to engineer Longden’s suspension from his exhibition duties for his part in the formation of this Company of which he was a director. The boom in Queensland mining stocks continued until 1890, during which time nearly fifty mining companies were floated in Britain to operate in Queensland, costing British investors some £6.4 million. This transferred the mines of Charters Towers to the ownership of
London-based companies, while the Etheridge, Ravenswood, Palmer, Gympie and Mount Morgan goldfields also received British capital.22

In 1890, an International Exhibition of Mining and Metallurgy was held in London. This, the first event of its kind, set the standards for future displays of the world’s mineral wealth. The New South Wales exhibit exceeded Queensland’s of four years earlier, and was reportedly ‘the finest show of natural products in the whole Exhibition’.23 The stage was now set for New South Wales to make a grander splash at the World’s Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, in 1893. Here, New South Wales spent a massive £36,000 on its exhibit, the largest sum ever spent by an Australian colony on an exhibition.24 Yet all this was to little avail once news broke, during the exhibition, of the great bank failures in Eastern Australia. The final insult came at the close of the exhibition, when the New South Wales gold exhibits were seized by the Sheriff of Chicago, acting for the American Sells Brothers’ Circus. The circus had a score to settle over the quarantining of its animals on a recent visit to Australia. The exhibits were returned only after diplomatic representations.

In 1897 Queensland again took the lead, at the Queensland International Exhibition. A vast mining court in Brisbane’s Exhibition Building formed an entrance to the event, showing Queensland’s mineral wealth as never before. The court was a triumph for its organiser, geologist Logan Jack, who collected his 2,040 exhibits from throughout the colony. Towering over the court were two gilded columns, 35 feet high, designed by Thomas Pye the Chief Draftsman of the Public Works Department, to represent the colony’s gold yield. (See Fig. 7.3) Leading up to these columns was an avenue of twelve gilded obelisks, also designed by Pye, representing the yields of the goldfields, from Charters Towers to Coen. These were flanked by district exhibits of bulk ores and quartz, and precious exhibits including a collection of gold from the Charters Towers magnate, E. H. T. Plant. Attesting to the ability to exploit such riches were diamond drill cores and bore sections from Charters Towers, now also a field of deep reefing, and a model of the
chlorination works at Mount Morgan. Undoubtedly the mining court impressed Queenslanders, and it was said to make them ‘draw themselves to their full height and feel proud of their country’, or even ‘flap their wings and crow’. But the court could make little impression on the British investors who had already turned their attention to the rich new goldfields of Western Australia.

Logan Jack was appointed to accompany his exhibits to London in 1899, to be shown in another Imperial event, the Greater Britain Exhibition. Here colonial Queensland made its grandest exhibit, with minerals filling two-thirds of its court. The court was divided by a gateway replicating London’s old Temple Bar and gilded to represent the colony’s gold yield of 361 tons. Within the court were more obelisks and columns and literally ‘tons’ of ores. The gold exhibits were valued at more than £50,000 and included three large cakes of retorted gold. The largest, weighing 5,913 ounces, was from Charters Towers’ Brilliant mine, reportedly the largest lump of gold yet seen in England. The court also told of Queensland’s progress in metallurgy and mining technology, for which the Charters Towers field was noted. A model of the cyanide works at the Brilliant Block mine demonstrated the cyanide process of treating tailings, which had given Queensland a record gold yield in 1899. In an enclosure in the exhibition’s Elysia amusement area, another gold battery crushed and treated colonial ore. The exhibits were backed up by scientific and practical information, including the third (1899) edition of Logan Jack’s geological map of Queensland, prepared especially for the exhibition. In addition, a team of colonial mining experts were on call to answer visitors’ enquiries.

Queensland’s exhibit at the Greater Britain Exhibition was applauded as ‘the finest’ mineral collection to be seen in London for years. It was more than a match for Victoria’s exhibit, which included another gilded triumphal arch and no fewer than seventy-one model nuggets. But Queensland’s exhibit failed to again win the support of British investors, despite jubilant predictions of another mining boom as had followed the earlier London
exhibition. Investors found Queensland’s mining laws discouraging, and many had lost money on the ‘speculations’ of 1886. In the words of a London mining commentator, ‘Once bitten twice shy’. Moreover, Logan Jack’s sudden resignation to take up exploratory work in China did not add to investors’ confidence. Before the event closed, Queensland decided to take part in the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901, for Glasgow was the second city of the British Empire and an important centre for world investment. The London exhibits were reduced to one-tenth of their bulk and sent on to the Scottish city.

Queensland’s section at the Glasgow Exhibition was truly a court of gold. It was enclosed by a gilded arcade and dominated by a 24-foot high gilded obelisk, now representing more than 550 tons of gold. Also in the court were more cakes of gold and two working models, a gold battery and a poppet head. The 15-foot high poppet head was gilded and equipped with illuminated cages, which were driven up and down the mine shaft by motor power. Accompanying the exhibits was a special edition of the Queensland Government Mining Journal, a 64-page ‘flying survey’ of the mineral fields in ‘a territory ... embarrassed with the multitude of its mineral deposits’. Yet all this was jeopardised by events at home. During the Glasgow exhibition rumours were heard of the impending collapse of north Queensland’s huge Chillagoe copper-mining venture. The rumours became a reality at the close of the exhibition, discrediting Queensland as a field for investment for decades to come.

In 1899, Western Australia joined the exhibition race. ‘Golden Westralia’, as it was called, was now the richest gold producer of Australia and the British Empire, following the discoveries at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie within the previous decade. An exhibition, the Western Australian International Mining and Industrial Exhibition, was held at Coolgardie to celebrate this newfound wealth, and ‘civilisation’s’ remarkable advances at Australia’s most arid and remote goldfields. The chief attraction of the event was the mining court, not unlike Brisbane’s recent exhibit. Interestingly, the general manager of both the Brisbane
and Coolgardie exhibitions was Australia's leading exhibition entrepreneur, Jules Joubert.

Within the court were yet more obelisks. A tall gilded one represented Western Australia's total gold yield of 75 tons, while fifteen smaller ones represented the output of the colony's goldfields, from East Coolgardie to Ashburton. The mines of Kalgoorlie, within the rich East Coolgardie field, had another obelisk surmounted by a globe, boasting 30 tons of gold won within four years. Other mines had their own trophies. The Burbank's Birthday Gift mine of Coolgardie showed a large gilded replica of the mine poppet head, 'complete in every detail' and scaled to represent the mine's output of gold. Also in the court were exhibits of gold in all its forms from throughout the colony, collected by the exhibition's metallurgist Arthur G. Holroyd, and the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie Chambers of Mines. The gold included Kalgoorlie's fabulously rich telluride ores recently discovered by Holroyd. The exhibition also featured mining machinery, intended to bring the latest technology to Western Australia's mines, and hands-on exhibits, tugs-of-war between miners, and hammer-and-drill competitions.

The Coolgardie exhibits were augmented and sent on to the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, the greatest of all exhibitions, to show Western Australia's riches to the world. Western Australia was the only Australian colony to accept the excessive cost of exhibiting at Paris, and spent £30,000 on its court in the British Colonial Building. Within the court was a display described as the 'grandest' collection of gold specimens the world had ever seen, 'a regular jeweller's shop' worth £100,000. The gold, filling cases from floor to ceiling, came from every field, district and almost every mine in the colony. Again, much of the gold was collected by metallurgist Holroyd, who accompanied his exhibits to Paris. The British Australasian newspaper, in its weekly reports of Australians and Australian events in Europe, gave a glowing account of Western Australia's gold exhibits:

Solid slugs of the precious metal, huge chunks of quartz laminated and held together by yellow bands, mustard gold in
handfuls, sponge gold, cobweb gold-flake gold, all are here in gleaming, glittering heaps or masses ... Almost the only break to the gleam of yellow is made by the great chunks of telluride ... But although these, as a rule, do not show gold to the eye, somehow they are suggestive of wealth ... A child could not miss such an object lesson ...

Another lesson was offered by an obelisk declaring that Western Australia's gold output was now valued at £16.6 million. It is little wonder that the exhibits caused a sensation in Paris and won the exhibition's highest honour, a Grand Prix.

Later, the Paris exhibits were sent on to the Glasgow exhibition of 1901, where Western Australia had a court to rival Queensland's. In the words of the British Australasian newspaper, 'no labour or expense' was spared to put on another spectacular show of gold, again under the direction of Holroyd. The Paris and Glasgow exhibits helped to boost Western Australia's mining stocks on the world market. Stocks had fallen since a boom of 1899, and the future of Kalgoorlie, Australia's richest goldfield, had been jeopardised by uncertainty over the treatment of its rebellious sulphide ores. Kalgoorlie stocks had also fallen with reports of mine mismanagement, which had culminated in December 1900 with the collapse of the London and Globe Finance Corporation (promoter of Kalgoorlie mines), bringing ruin to many British investors. During 1901 Western Australia was able to regain favour with British and Continental investors, and won some of the capital redirected from the mines of South Africa following the outbreak of war there in October 1899. This favoured position lasted until 1904, by which time Western Australian mines had reached the peak of their output, and more scandals involving Kalgoorlie mines and their infamous London directors, Whitaker Wright and Frank Gardner, had broken investors' confidence.

In 1901, the Victorian Gold Jubilee Exhibition was held in Bendigo to celebrate the jubilee of the discovery of gold in Victoria and the 'marvellous advance' made in mining over the past fifty years. Though claiming international status, the ex-
hibition was primarily an opportunity to promote Bendigo, Australia’s most productive goldfield outside Western Australia, and site of some of the world’s deepest mines. Needless to say, mining exhibits dominated the event. In the mineral court were exhibits showing the diverse mineral wealth of Victoria, including the often-exhibited model nuggets. These now included the largest of all Victoria’s nuggets, the ‘Welcome Stranger’ of 2,284 ounces, found at Moliagul in 1869. Also in the court were gilded cubes representing the output of Bendigo mines and plans showing the extent of reefs still to be worked. Exhibits from the Bendigo School of Mines attested to the application of science to mining, while in the machinery court were examples of the massive machines used on the Bendigo field.

Among the exhibition’s attractions were its model mines. There were miniature working models made by local miners, complete with miniature figures and equipment which could be moved by winding mechanisms. One such model had taken its maker three years to complete. There was also a larger mine, which visitors could enter and view the underground workings of a Bendigo saddle reef. By descending ladders visitors could enter the various levels of the mine and, with the aid of electric lights, observe drilling operations and realistic recreations of quartz veins. To add to the authenticity of the experience, the mine was timbered and ‘mullocked’ up. The model mine was built under the supervision of the local mining engineer, J. Sarvaas.

What conclusions can be drawn from this fleeting visit to international exhibitions? Australians were bold and adventurous exhibitors, and spent enormous sums of money and effort on exhibitions. Much of this money and effort was spent on overseas exhibitions, particularly events in the mother country. Gold exhibits were prominent in the fifty years following the discovery of gold, recording its central importance in Australian life, and the rise and fall of the great gold producers, Victoria, Queensland, then Western Australia. The gilded obelisk became a symbol of Australia, even winning a place on Queensland’s coat of arms (granted in 1893). Australian gold exhibits were vehicles
for celebrating new-found wealth and technological competence, as much as for attracting capital for mining operations, and exhibits seldom brought significant returns. Finally, these exhibits show in gilded splendour the growing pride and confidence of the Australian colonies in the fifty years preceding Federation.

Endnotes

1 This chapter omits discussion of the nineteenth-century exhibits of Australian gold jewellery and decorative metalwork as these are presented by John Wade and John McPhee in the catalogue Gold and Civilisation, Canberra, Art Exhibitions Australia and the National Museum of Australia, 2001, which accompanies the exhibition of the same name organised by the National Museum of Australia.


4 Pardon, p.59.

5 The obelisk, for example, was included in Joseph Nash's painting of the International Exhibition, Hyde Park, London, 1862. It also appears in the Frederick Grosse and Robert Bruce engravings of the Great Hall of the Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1866. The painting and the engravings are held by the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

6 I am indebted to Anita Callaway for this information.


9 The various national and thematic sections of the International Exhibitions were called 'courts'.

161
10 Graphic (London), 29 December, 1879, p. 37.
12 Graphic (London), 29 December, 1879, p.37.
14 Argus, 2 October, 1880, Exhibition Supplement, pp.4-6.
15 Argus Exhibition Supplement.
16 Interestingly, New Zealand also adopted a geometric form, an octahedron, for its gold trophy at the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880.
17 Brisbane Courier, 17 March, 1886, p.2.
18 Illustrated London News, 7 August, 1886, p.156.
19 Australian Times and Anglo-New Zealander (London), 7 October, 1887, p.394.
24 Of the New South Wales exhibits at Chicago in 1893, those of coal and silver dominated those of gold.
25 Brisbane Courier, 6 May, 1897, p.6; Queenslander, 7 August, 1897, p.269.
26 British Australasian (London), 18 May, 1899, p.737.
27 Australian Mining Standard, 28 September, 1899, pp.249-250.
28 British Australasian (London), 6 September, 1900, p.1271.
30 Coolgardie Miner, 15 April, 1899, p.6.
31 British Australasian (London), 14 June, 1900, Supplement, pp.4-5.
32 British Australasian (London), Supplement.
'Only a Gilded Show'

33 British Australasian (London), 14 March, 1901, p.450.

34 The sulphide ores were eventually treated by the Diehl process. This was trialled from January 1899, and used tube mills to crush the rock and promo-cyanide to dissolve gold from telluride.

35 See, for example, A. L. Lougheed, 'The London Stock Exchange Boom in Kalgoorlie Shares, 1895-1900', discussion paper no. 41, Department of Economics, University of Queensland, 1990.

36 British Australasian (London), 28 February, 1901, p.364.
Figure 6.1 Mr Arthur Bancroft, miner — grandfather of Robyne Bancroft, author. "Dollying for Gold on the Washpool at Lionsville." date unknown. Bancroft family photograph.

Below Figure 6.2 'Panoramic View of Solferino.' Photo: J.W. Lindt. Courtesy of the Clarence River Historical Society.
The Mountain Maid Gold Mining Company

(CAPITAL, £12,000, divided into 12,000 Shares of One Pound each as follows:
6000 Shares issued as Contributing, payable in on application and is on allotment, balance by Calls not exceeding 1/2 share per month,
3000 Shares held in reserve.

Directors:
WM. ZIEGELS, Esq., Grafton; T. B. BASSETTI, Esq., Baryulgur; JOHN HARRINGTON, Esq., Lismore.

Bankers:
ENGLISH, SCOTTISH & AUSTRALIAN BANK, Ltd., Grafton Branch.

Solictor:
B. J. LOBBAN, Victoria-street, Grafton.

Legal Manager:
F. W. O. WHITEMAN.

Registered Office:
PRINCE-STREET, GRAFTON.

The Company is being formed for the purpose of acquiring from the Mountain Maid Syndicate the land comprising in the Applications for Gold Leases Nos. 129 and 132 (Local) lodged with the Warden's Clerk at Coopmyrath, and containing in all fifteen (15) acres situate in the Parish of Churchill, County of Drake, at Lismore, and of working these lands in a comprehensive manner.

The Mountain Maid property was discovered by Mr. A. Bancroft in November last in an old trench on the Sullerino Reef that had been opened up in the 70's. From this claim, and without any expense in sinking or driving, two months in 11 days raised 15 tons of stone. Of this 7½ tons were treated at the Puck Creek (11 miles distant) for a yield of 100 oz. of smelted gold and 13 oz. retorted gold. A further crushing of 25 tons from this property has just been completed for a yield of 113 oz. retorted gold. This, with the previous crushing, gives a total of 245 oz. of retorted gold from 32½ tons of stone. In addition to this, there is a pile of rich specimen stone yet to be treated. The average* per ton for the 32½ tons is 7 oz. 2 dwt. 15½ gr. per ton from the plates. The tailings from these parcels assay 1 oz. 8 dwt., and the concentrates 11 oz. 14 dwt. per ton. These parcels of stone, together with 8 tons of seconds yet to be treated, were won from 20ft. of sinking.

The only agreement entered into on behalf of the proposed Company is as follows:—Agreement dated the twenty-sixth day of May, 1911, made between William Ziegels, Thomas B. Bassetti and John Harrington, of the one part, and D. J. Lobban, of Grafton, Solicitor, as Trustee for and on behalf of the proposed Company for the purchase of certain mining properties; and the same may be inspected at the office of the Company's Solicitor, Victoria-street, Grafton.

This Prospectus is published for Public Information only, the whole of the present issue having already been applied for.

Figure 6.3 Abridged prospectus of the Mountain Maid Gold Mining Company. This mine was discovered by Robyne Bancroft's (author) grandfather, Mr Arthur Bancroft, in Nov. 1910.
Figure 6.4 ‘A Prospecting Party Examining Bancroft’s Battery on Washpool Creek’. Bancroft family photograph.

Figure 7.2 Victoria’s mining court at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880, with a model of a Bendigo saddle reef (left), and a giant gold crystal representing Victoria’s gold yield (right). Alexander Kennedy Smith photograph album, LTAF 277, p. 9, H83.319. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
Right: Figure 7.1 Victoria's gold obelisk (left), at the London International Exhibition of 1862. Photo: London Stereoscope and Photographic Company, The International Exhibition of 1862. Photograph album, LTAEF82, H37252. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
Figure 7.3 Geologist Robert Logan Jack (left), who organised the Queensland display, and columns of gold at the Queensland International Exhibition, Brisbane, of 1897. Photo: Queensland Department of Mines and Energy.
Figure 8.1 Set of the gold coins minted by the Kangaroo Office Mint. Collection: British Museum. (Gold). In Dion H. Skinner, Renniks Australian Coin and Banknote Guide. Malvern, South Australia, Skinner and Warnes, 1980, 12th ed., p. 143.
Figure 8.2 Tokens minted by Scaife, the Kangaroo Office private mint, Melbourne, 1854, for James Nokes, grocer, Melbourne, Victoria. In Dion H. Skinner, Renniks Australian Coin and Banknote Guide. Malvern, South Australia, Skinner and Warnes, 1980, 12th ed., pp. 231-232.

Figure 8.3 Tokens minted by the London partner of the Kangaroo Office private mint for George Petty, butcher, Melbourne, Victoria. In Dion H. Skinner, Renniks Australian Coin and Banknote Guide. Malvern, South Australia, Skinner and Warnes, 1980, 12th ed., pp. 231-232.
Gold & Entrepreneurial Culture

The Kangaroo Office and its Private Mint for Victoria

John Sharples

'I have much pleasure in calling your attention to four curious pattern pieces in gold, struck in the year 1853, when it was proposed to erect a separate mint for Port Phillip (Melbourne), in South Australia'.

W. S. W. Vaux, Numismatic Chronicle, 1864

In the early hours of Sunday morning, 26 June 1853, Reginald Scaife realised that he had left a case on the train that had brought him from London. Leaving his wife and companions to make their way to the ship, he rushed back and was delighted to find it untouched. This was an unneeded additional worry for Scaife who was setting off to manage a complex project which would capitalise on the new golden wealth pouring out of the far-away colony of Victoria.1

He soon rejoined his companions and together they boarded the brand new, white and gold painted clipper ship Kangaroo. Waiting at Gravesend, the Kangaroo, which had been taking on cargo at the London docks for some time, was now ready for her maiden voyage. So new was the ship that the green paint in the cabins was not yet dry. Her captain, Christopher Pickering,
was a last minute replacement for John Giles R. N., but now that all were safely aboard there was no time for complaints. Shortly after 3.00 a.m. the orders were given and the Kangaroo slipped down the Thames, her next stop distant Melbourne, gateway to fabulous goldfields and to wealth. It was the allure and promise of gold that had brought the Kangaroo into existence, stocked her holds and filled her cabins. Gold at that time was money in a very real sense. To have the raw metal made into currency one simply handed it in at the mint and it was soon returned as shiny new gold sovereigns, each valued at, and containing, a full pound sterling of gold.

Scaife and his party on the Kangaroo were particularly aware of this, as they represented a London-based group that included among its numbers the owner of a private mint. This party, calling themselves the 'Kangaroo Office', were even sailing with their own coining press and dies. Their mint was only one part of their venture, the ship itself was another component. They had also loaded the pre-constructed elements of a large building that would be erected in Melbourne. From it they would retail the wide variety of British goods, expected to be much desired in the colonies, that now filled every nook and cranny of the Kangaroo. Victoria was in the grip of gold fever with goods at premium prices. It was also without a mint of its own. With a ship designed to rapidly sail back and forth to Australia, a fully stocked shop and their own mint, the future thus looked golden indeed for the Kangaroo Office and for Reginald Scaife. However, as many others who came expecting an easy fortune were to find, Scaife and his party discovered that high expectations of success did not guarantee success.

The 'four curious pattern pieces' of the Kangaroo Office mentioned in the opening quote are numbered today among the greatest numismatic rarities of the world. (See Fig. 8.1) At first sight it may seem strange, since gold coins now are rarely met, but the great majority of the gold coins of the gold rush era are not rare. There was so much gold and so many coins that, despite a century and a half of melting, plenty remain to fill collectors' needs. There are, however, exceptions. These
include coins which were so desperately needed that they soon became worn and so were melted down, coins that had more gold in them than their face value and were melted, and coins of which few were ever made and which now are extremely rare. Australia has examples from each of these classes — those of the Kangaroo Office belong to the last grouping. As Vaux went on to explain in his paper, only twenty-seven sets were ever made.

The voyage of the Kangaroo did not start well as the weather was very poor. There was a strong south westerly blowing and the ship, although hoping for a swift voyage to Melbourne, was forced to drop anchor near Deal to shelter for the first night. The Captain chose to stay close to the south coast of England, as the winds were at gale force and causing damage to shipping. They passed close to the Isle of Wight where the passengers reported they could clearly see the Needles and did not begin to head south until past the Lizard Lights near the tip of Cornwall.

Most passengers sailing to the diggings complained of the food provided for the voyage, and those on the Kangaroo were no exception. The ship's owner had employed his brother-in-law to supply the provisions, but he seems to have mostly failed to deliver that which he had promised, and supplied low quality for the balance. After one meal a few weeks out, even gentlemanly Victorian tempers were fraying. The meal was of pea soup ("undrinkable"), ham ("OK"), boiled salt beef and salt pork ("rancid") with preserved potatoes ("revolting") and boiled rice ("inedible"). A passenger, described as a rough but good-tempered Yorkshireman, "grew quite red in the face with excitement and declared that the ship's owner [was] no gentleman and ought always to live on such fare himself". Reginald Scaife went further and wished this fate upon the ship owner's wife as well!

Scaife later correctly surmised that the people charged with stocking outbound ships were in the wonderful position of delivering, taking their money, and waving goodbye to their problem. In the case of the Kangaroo, there was not enough food or even water on board to have made supply stops unnecessary. It was
essential, then, for them to drop anchor at the Cape, thus ensuring a further delay. The ship itself was also slower than expected. Tyndall had loaded 10 tons on deck and 50 tons between decks, plus a load of bricks somewhere up front. The Kangaroo listed to port and could not raise all her sails for fear of going over. Other ships sailed quickly past while she bobbed and rolled. Inside, the green paint never did dry and soon covered the bedding, clothes and even books. Outside, the white and gold was getting washed off altogether. On hot days the rigging rained tar, and on one occasion most of the sails were lost when a ‘slight puff’ took them overboard. Below decks, the partitions of the cabins became loose and creaked with every movement of the ship and the cargo stowed between decks regularly disrupted the ship’s pipes releasing the contents of the water-closet into the cabins.

The passengers passed their time playing cards, trying to catch porpoises, fish and birds, painting, and trying out their shot guns, rifles and pistols in friendly competition. On crossing the equator the ships surgeon ‘got excited with the grog’, bit people and broke things. He was eventually handcuffed and ‘laid on the poop with cold water applied’ where he remained unconscious for five or six hours. Sixty-seven days out one of the Kangaroo Office workers, Mr Graham died of ‘typhoid-pneumonia’ and was buried at sea. His wife was very upset as he had not eaten for two days and she feared he would thus be too light and would not sink.

These delays and problems are very relevant both to the Kangaroo Office’s commercial venture and to the rarity of the gold coins. The entrepreneurial enterprise had begun soon after the arrival in London of the first news of Australian gold discoveries. In 1851 the Times reported on the low prices being paid for gold in New South Wales and, later, in Victoria. Scaife recalled later in life that the gold price of 55 shillings per ounce at Ballarat had inspired the venture. The London price of gold paid at the Royal Mint was 77 shillings and 10-and-a-half pence. As it took about three months for news to reach London and be published, plans made there were necessarily based on old information.
Although there were cases of low prices being paid at new gold-fields through 1851 and 1852, the Times was recording a gradual closing of price between Australia and London. The paper also discussed the reasons for the gap and compared the Australian experience with the still fresh experiences in California. In both places, uncertainty of the purity of the gold caused initial low prices, but already by 1852 Victorian finds were being widely recognised for the high quality of the gold they offered. Scaife, given the mint component of his duties, would have been well aware of these trends which he doubtless imagined were continuing while he was totally cut off on a slow, broken and generally unpleasant trip.

The Kangaroo was held up an additional seven days at the Cape. Departing on 17 September 1853 for Melbourne, she eventually docked six-and-a-half weeks later on 26 October. It was now almost two-and-a-half years since the Victoria gold rush had begun and the Kangaroo Office been initiated. Much had changed.

When gold was discovered in Australia, the colonies did not operate on the monetary 'gold standard'. The classical gold standard, as it operated roughly from the end of the Napoleonic Wars until World War I, involved three basic tenets. Firstly, gold had a fixed price at which government monetary authorities would buy or sell on demand. Next, that the import or export of gold, in the form of coin or bullion, was unrestricted and, lastly, the banking system treated gold as a key form of reserve and based its credit policy and interest rates on its reserve ratios. 

Prior to the great gold discoveries of the 1850s, Australia simply did not possess enough gold to comply with such a system. Indeed, in the 1820s, most Australian colonies had made short-lived attempts to go onto the alternate 'silver standard'. This was to have been based upon the abundance of Spanish-American silver dollars and Indian silver rupees finding their way to Australia as a component of the international trade with China. At the end of 1829, for example, the New South Wales military chest contained copper and silver coins but no gold.
The silver standard experiment was quickly stopped by the British Government and the colonies adopted a system of exchange based on bills on the British Treasury and British silver coin. This system, extensively supplemented by Australian banks' capital holdings in London, was the mechanism for international exchange in Australia at the time of the gold discoveries. The internal currency reflected this; gold coins were legal tender but so too were silver coins. In Australia silver could be tendered in payment for any amount (in Britain they were only legal to the value of two pounds). Copper coins were legal to a shilling. Private banks issued their own paper money and, prior to the gold discoveries, felt that their notes should be redeemed in British silver coin, not gold. In such a situation the first bags of gold nuggets and dust found in Australia could not be treated as if they were in London. Short of taking an expensive and time-consuming six to eight-month journey to the mint in London, the diggers, who generally preferred to use their time digging, had to accept what they could get for their gold, although some arranged to have it sent home to family and friends who were then able to sell it at the higher rates offered in Britain.

In London, knowledge of Californian experience may have guided expectations of the Australian fields as much as the outdated reports arriving from Australia itself. The nature of the Kangaroo Office certainly suggests this, while the actual differences between gold rush San Francisco and Melbourne explain much of the reason for Scaife's eventual failure. On the surface there are many parallels between Victoria and California at the beginning of the gold-rush era. Just as Victoria had obtained independence, peacefully, from New South Wales shortly before gold was discovered, so California had just gained its independence, through conflict, from Mexico. Both were seen as very isolated from the cultural and economic centres of the English-speaking world, London and New York. Both had sudden and vast wealth available, both had this wealth in the wrong form (i.e. raw gold), that needed to go to the mint to become currency, the mints being in distant in London and Philadelphia.
The Diggers Handbook was published for Australians heading off to the Californian goldfields in 1849, and was full of what was regarded as practical information for the would-be emigrant digger. Its information on the state of the currency was to prove apposite for the Victorian scene and the attempt to establish a private mint.

There is no coinage in the country. A Company, however, has been formed, which has imported from the United States all the material necessary for striking coins, and it is doubtless at the present time in full operation; that is, if it has succeeded in procuring coal to carry on the works, for wood here is much too dear for the purpose.\(^5\)

This section, however, could easily have been describing the Kangaroo Office setting off from London with its mint four years later. In fact the private Californian mint referred to here was only the first of many loaded on the wagon trains crossing from the East Coast, and the ships rounding the Horn, for California. In California some fourteen private mints and a State Assay Office went into gold coin production, and more than twenty other companies developed their mints as far as striking trial pieces.\(^6\)

These many private mints were formed in California to meet a widespread need for money, a need apparently not felt in Victoria to the same extent. The differences between the two, perhaps not understood in London, go part of the way to explaining why Scaife’s time in Melbourne was not all that he, and his backers, had hoped for. A key difference between the gold rush commercial experience in California and in Victoria lay in the simple method required to pay customs duties. In that era, before income tax, customs dues were among the most important sources of government income. This, combined with the vast increase in consumer demand brought on by the new wealth from gold, saw great and widely significant activity in the Long Rooms of the Customs Houses of Victoria and California.

In California the duties had to be paid in legal tender coin. This resulted in merchants hoarding coins (both gold and silver) as...
the essential key to getting their imports off the dock and into their shops. Needless to say there was not enough coin. The Governor of the Territory tried to alleviate the problem in 1848 by instructing customs to accept gold at near its intrinsic value, US$16 per ounce, but was informed that this was a violation of US law. Instead, customs accepted gold dust at US$10 per ounce on deposit for sixty days, if the depositor could not redeem it in that time it would be auctioned to anyone who had legal tender coin. This led to gold changing hands for as low as US$6 dollars per ounce for those lucky enough to get coins. Legal tender coins therefore disappeared from circulation and were replaced by foreign coins circulating (everywhere but at the Customs House) at the US denomination nearest to their size. This then was the situation when the first private gold coins were made in California. It may now seem strange, but the US Government had no difficulty with the private issue of gold coin.

In Australia the mechanisms of commerce were in many ways more sophisticated. Fairly extensive banking facilities already existed, particularly to meet the requirements of the Australian wool trade. These banks were able to respond rapidly to Victoria’s increased wealth, and their notes, supported by gold coins which may have been in their London vaults, were acceptable in payment of Customs dues. 7

In only one place in Australia did the coinage crisis approach that of California, Adelaide in South Australia. There the crisis occurred because the colony’s economy was already weak as a result of over-expansion in the wake of the copper mining boom. When gold was discovered in Victoria, the banks of South Australia had large issues of notes in circulation, were charging high interest rates and were expecting a financial crash. The gold discoveries led to a massive emigration to Victoria of the colony’s male workforce. With them went their savings, withdrawn in gold coin from the banking system. The banks became alarmed as they had to retain coin to support their note issues. Then, to add insult to injury, the first of the people who had rushed to Victoria began to ship back gold. The first shipment was of £50,000 to be sold in Adelaide. 8 So difficult was the situation
that most of this had to be returned to Melbourne for sale. Confidence in the banks declined and there was a serious concern of a run on them finally destroying what remained of the colonial economy.

To overcome these problems a Government Assay Office was established. It would prepare ingots of gold which the banks were authorised to use as backing for their note issue while the notes were to be treated by Government as legal tender (except in payment to the government by the banks themselves). A little later, in 1852, the Assay Office was also authorised to issue gold tokens in the form of coins. Dies and minting machinery were prepared locally and coins of value one pound were issued (later the dies for a £5 piece were used to make a few specimens for collections). The colonial government authorised these extraordinary events for a period of one year and wrote to London for approval. This approval was not forthcoming but by the time the refusal arrived, the Assay Office had overcome the economic crisis, abundant gold coin had arrived from London and it had even been closed (17 February 1853). The immediate cause of the closure was that the banks were able to buy raw gold for 74 shillings per ounce (close to the full London price) whereas the Assay Office, created to save the banks, was limited to 71 shillings per ounce. It was thus put out of business by the banks it had saved.

The Kangaroo Office, some eight months later, with its fully stocked shop and mint sailed quietly into Melbourne. James Henty of Little Collins Street was appointed agent and immediately began running advertisements in the daily newspapers to inform people who were importing via the Kangaroo that she had arrived. These continued until 19 November, recording a variety of lighters discharging goods to the Queen’s Wharf. A complete list of the cargo together with the names of consignees was published. Only one batch had no associated name, apparently the pre-fabricated Kangaroo Office and mint itself as it included twelve cases of‘wooden houses’ (the shop) and one bale of ironmongery (the mint). Amongst other items, stock for the shop included twelve cases of cheese and 158 cases of spirits!
Scaife and his wife booked into the Prince of Wales Hotel and immediately set to work making contacts and seeking land for the shop. In early November he wrote to Governor Charles La Trobe, who may have personally known one of the London backers of the Kangaroo Office, Mr Hodgkin. As he had sent out some books for the Governor, a good pretext for a meeting existed. Scaife was also an active Freemason in Liverpool and soon joined the Melbourne lodge.

In 1892 a Sydney coin collector, Dr W. E. Wroth, went to London and searched out Reginald Scaife who had by then taken his family home. In his interview, over lunch at Brighton, Scaife recalled that it took six months to get the machinery off the wharf and set up. Since that discussion, it has been numismatic lore that the eventual failure of the mint was to be attributed to this lost six months and that the weight of the press and lack of facilities in Melbourne were the principle cause. But, in this case, a coin collector desperate for subject-related information, may not be the best person to undertake oral history research. The twelve cases of ‘wooden houses’ turned out to be the real problem, not the coin press.

Melbourne in late 1853 and early 1854 was not the place to start building a new shop if one had limited finance. Land values were astronomical, even by London standards, and the work force was either at the diggings or demanding very high wages by charging rates related to the scarcity of labour. Scaife had been given £500 to arrange everything related to the Kangaroo Office. Perhaps half of that had been spent on getting himself and his team to Melbourne. Added to the shipping costs was also the cost of landing the goods at Melbourne, which were one pound to one pound ten shillings per ton from the ship to the wharf. And the stores for the Kangaroo Office were being replenished by other ships almost immediately. We soon find Scaife auctioning tobacco and wine sent out in January 1854 on the ship Fervor.

In December of 1853 Scaife was trying to find land on which to erect his store. He offered £160 a year rental on a ten-year lease
with the store remaining the property of the land owners at the end of the lease. He eventually acquired a lease on a property in Franklin Street West for £175 a year. If his later recollection of six months to be fully set up is correct, the store would have begun trading in April 1854. The mint was certainly operating by June as they struck a halfpenny copper trade token for the grocer James Nokes (See Fig. 8.2) which commemorated the arrival of Sir Charles Hotham on 26 June.\textsuperscript{11}

In September 1854 Scaife wrote home to his father lamenting 'that the store is still Empty, it has brought in nine shillings since it was finished. Business is in such a state that the idea of consignments is absurd'.\textsuperscript{12} Melbourne was awash with 'colonial goods'. Not only were ships arriving by the dozen every week laden with goods, but the warehouses of Adelaide had already been stocked in response to the copper boom in South Australia, providing a rapid response for merchants to Victoria's new wealth.\textsuperscript{13}

Already, by July 1854, Scaife had been in a state of near despair. He wrote to his mother that he and his wife had a bad cold. Their nurse had had fits and spent a month in bed before going to hospital. Of three men to whom he had sub-let the store, one was in gaol for six months, one had run off to the diggings, and he was taking legal action to evict the third. A final straw was that his butcher was demanding that his bill for £40 be paid.\textsuperscript{14} Scaife had already taken up a position as an agent for the Victoria Insurance Office. The mint remained his one hope to restore the financial position of the Kangaroo Office.

Along with the press, Scaife had brought from London a series of dies for gold tokens of two, one, half and quarter ounce. He had also brought some dies with a Kangaroo and a seated figure of Australia for striking copper trade tokens of halfpenny denomination. There were blank halfpenny dies, and engraving tools to make up dies for local merchants, together with a supply of copper token blanks. These were much sought-after by local traders although the big need was for penny tokens, not halfpenny. A new problem for the would-be minters was that
copper sheet of the required thickness for pence was not available in Melbourne, nor was die-quality steel. If penny tokens were to be made locally, they would cost two pence each to manufacture. There were, apparently, letters of advice from London suggesting that Aboriginal or cheap European day labour could be employed to get the project going. But Scaife explained that there were few Aborigines in Melbourne and that Europeans expected to be paid the same as British workers, unless an agreement was reached before they set out from home. Scaife felt that the novelty factor of local production, rather than price, had helped him sell his halfpennies. For those who wanted penny tokens he recommended manufacture in London. George Petty, a butcher in Swanston Street (perhaps even the one to whom he owed forty pounds), had Scaife arrange for penny tokens to be sent through the private mint partner of the Kangaroo Office, W. J. Taylor, in London. (See Fig. 8.3) Scaife had also arranged for Taylor to manufacture prize medals for a local society, probably the Port Phillip Farmers.

The winter of 1854 was very difficult for Scaife with illness at home and economic difficulty at work. He tried to manufacture prize medals himself and ended up being £57 out of pocket after a 'bottom die' broke. He could not get rid of the shop, and may even have tried unsuccessfully to sell the mint. His only success was in making 2,000 buttons for local forces' uniforms. He tried to get business making copper promissory tokens for Sydney with values of 2 pence, 3 pence, or 4 pence, again without success. Only Taylor's samples for these have survived.

With the spring, however, came the Melbourne Exhibition of 1854. Based on the London Crystal Palace International Exhibition of 1851, this was to be an exhibition on a grand scale. It would be held in its own new building on the corner of William and LaTrobe Streets. Its primary function was to select exhibits of a sufficient quality to represent the new and wealthy colony of Victoria at the Paris International Exhibition of 1855.

The press that Scaife brought from London had actually been employed at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851.
There, its owner W. J. Taylor had struck commemorative medals for the public to purchase as mementoes. Scaife entered into an agreement with the Commissioners of the Melbourne Exhibition for the press to be set up and to undertake the same role as it had in London. He would strike medals made from tin discovered in the Ovens River and these would be sold at 2 shillings and 6 pence each. The Commissioners would pay for the moving and setting up of the press and would receive 1 shilling and 5 pence from each medal sold, leaving Scaife with 1 shilling and 1 penny per medal. Scaife also tendered for the manufacture of the bronze prize medal for the exhibition, and brought it to the attention of Taylor in London, who was better placed to manufacture the quite large, high relief medal requested. In the end this job went to the Wyon family in London, who were perhaps the finest medallists in the world at the time.

In a letter to his father in September 1854, just a few days before the exhibition entries closed, Scaife mentioned that he was planning to strike ‘two sets of the pieces to exhibit in the Exhibition and afterwards to forward to Paris’. He went on to say that he would nominate his father to receive the sets after Paris and went on to mention that if his father did not want them they would ‘Fetch cost, without loss’. This then was his first mention of the Kangaroo Office gold tokens, now one of the world’s great numismatic rarities.

At some time between September 9 and 14 the sets were struck with special high purity gold supplied by the important Melbourne bullion broker Edward Khull. (See Fig. 8.1) The sets were exhibited to the press on Thursday, 14 September and the next day the Argus ran the following story:

A LOCAL COINAGE - At the Chamber of Commerce yesterday, several tokens made of pure Victorian gold were exhibited by Mr Khull, bullion broker. They were manufactured by Mr Scaife, and are to be exhibited at our Palace of Industry, on 20th inst. They are a 1/4 oz., 1/2 oz., 1 oz. and 2 ozs. respectively ... On the reverse is a kangaroo and on the obverse the weight is described, whilst around the rim on one side are the words
We cannot speak too highly of the excellence of the workmanship. It is perfect and is a most satisfactory and most pleasing proof of the great advancement of the art in Melbourne. We understand the artist intended to prosecute the manufacture of such tokens as a circulating medium, but the high price of crude gold prevents this for the present. As objects of curiosity, however, and as fitting complements to send to friends at a distance, we doubt not they will be in demand, and certainly the talented artist merits every possible encouragement.15

The Melbourne Morning Herald also carried the story in its ‘Commercial News’ section and, a week after the opening of the exhibition, an illustrated advertisement offering the gold tokens for sale appeared in the Argus and later ran for a week in the then recently established Age newspaper. The tokens were available at Khull’s bullion office and at the medal press set up in the exhibition. The press was described in a report on the Exhibition in the Melbourne Morning Herald: ‘While in this corner we may well see Mr Scaife’s arrangement for coining. Yon ponderous screw fly press is the main agent of this operation’. The article goes on to fully describe the process for striking the tin commemorative medals and refers to the gold pieces which were displayed in the nave of the building with other examples of gold.

Of the twenty-seven sets made only one has survived. It was acquired by Morgan Brown, the mechanic and tool maker brought from England for the mint. He was probably given the set in part payment for his work at the Kangaroo Office. When he returned to England he sold it to the British Museum where it now resides. The two sets which were to go to Paris have not been fully traced, but were almost certainly broken up. Of the remaining twenty-five sets, all of the unsold pieces were melted when their market dried up with the closure of the 1854 Exhibition. It is unknown how many were ever purchased but most seem to have eventually found their way into the melting pot. Among those to have survived, the most famous are now in the
Smithsonian Museum of American History’s National Coin Collection. These, a two-ounce and a half-ounce piece were apparently purchased by an American who came to the Victorian goldfields and made enough to buy a few ounces of gold tokens as a memento. After returning to America he either fell on hard times, or his mementoes ceased to have meaning for his family. They were sent to the Philadelphia Mint to be turned into US gold coins. Fortunately the Philadelphia Mint actively collected coins itself, and these were recognised as something special. They were retained and eventually transferred with the rest of the collection to the Smithsonian.

According to Morgan Brown a full set was preserved in Melbourne. Scaife was never wealthy enough to keep such a memento, so it was probably a set kept by Edward Khull, the bullion broker. This set has not survived. Khull was involved in insolvency proceedings in the 1860s and it may have been melted at that time. In that era there was a coin collection associated with the National Gallery of Victoria, that of Eugene von Guerrard, but there was no gold in it. The Melbourne Mint did start a collection in the 1870s and even retained a US private mint $20 piece handed in for melting, but no Kangaroo Office tokens remain. The only Australian public collection to hold an original striking is Adelaide where a quarter ounce has survived. Perhaps a dozen pieces, most of the quarter and half ounce size, are today spread among the collections of the world.

After the exhibition closed Scaife returned to his new business of shipping insurance. He lived in North Melbourne and remained an active Melbourne freemason. Some of his spare time was dedicated to painting. A watercolour and an ink sketch of his home have survived. In 1856 he sold the coining press and tools to Thomas Stokes who employed it to produce many commercial tokens and most of Victoria’s nineteenth and early twentieth century commemorative medals. The Kangaroo Office dies were part of Stokes’ purchase and were employed early in the twentieth century to make mementoes of a visit to Stokes’ mint by the Numismatic Society of Victoria. In the 1930s these were
donated to the National Coin and Medal Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, were then transferred to the Science Museum of Victoria in 1976, and are now treasured by Museum Victoria.

Scaife eventually returned to London as an Agent of the Victoria Insurance Company where he managed to insure a fleet of ships destroyed in a storm in the English Channel. It was apparent that his ill luck had not been left behind in Victoria. He moved into a variety of other occupations and is finally seen having lunch at Brighton with an Australian coin collector in 1892. His association with the Victorian goldfields had been an entrepreneurial failure, but it had been an adventure. In any case, as he wrote to his mother in the worst moments of the winter of 1854, ‘It will be all the same a hundred years hence, so its no use bothering’.

Endnotes

1 The narrative of this paper has been reconstructed largely from a small group of unpublished copies of letters written by Reginald Scaife to his family and business colleagues. These are held in the numismatic archives of Museum Victoria. Details of the departure of the Kangaroo are based on advertisements, shipping and weather reports in the Times (London) for June 1853.

2 S. J. Butlin. The Australian Monetary System 1851-1914, Reserve Bank of Australia, Canberra, 1986, p.27.


4 Butlin, p.28.

5 The Diggers Handbook, Sydney, New South Wales, 1849.

7 Unlike the California experience, there is no contemporary discussion of difficulty in making payments in Victoria. Customs returns in Victoria reflect the use of bank notes, even recording the return of issues of banks in other colonies for local payment.


9 Melbourne Morning Herald, Saturday 29 October, 1854, p.5.

10 Scaife to Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph LaTrobe 4 November, 1853, Scaife Letters, Copybook I, Museum Victoria, Melbourne Victoria.

11 Copper tokens of penny and halfpenny denominations were issued throughout Australia and New Zealand from the 1840s until the 1880s. Although issued by private firms, and often close in design to current coins, they were extensively used in daily trade and are today often found in archaeological excavations. The merchants who issued them were responding to a public need for small change which the banks and the government were unwilling to fill. As the production of tokens often entailed outlaying substantial sums for the six months needed to obtain orders from London or Birmingham, and as the costs were often equal to the actual face value of the coins, these activities do not constitute a 'get rich scheme'. Only in the 1860s, when local production dramatically expanded issues in Victoria at the same time as new smaller bronze coins were being introduced, did the government step in. Even then the tokens were withdrawn on par with coins and were sent to the Royal Mint, London, for melting.

12 Scaife to Doctor (Scaife's father) 9 September, 1854, Scaife Letters. This letter gives details of the store and the mint in Melbourne.

13 Butlin, p.47.

14 Scaife to his mother, 4 November, 1854, Scaife Letters.

15 Argus, 15 September, 1854, p.4.
The coins of the National Coin and Medal Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, were first displayed in the Science Museum of Victoria in 1976, and are now measured in a variety of other collections. The collection includes a range of precious and semi-precious materials, such as gold, silver, and copper. The coins are carefully preserved and displayed in a secure environment.

Efforts are underway to improve the exhibition space and provide更好的参观体验. 工作人员正在努力改进展览空间，以提供更好的参观体验。
The Humanities Research Centre of The Australian National University, Canberra has played a key role as an international centre for interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences since its establishment in 1972. The Centre encourages interdisciplinary and comparative work, and seeks to take a provocative as well as supportive role in relation to existing humanities studies in Australia. It aims to give special attention to topics and disciplines which stand in need of particular stimulus in Australia. One of its central functions is its visiting fellows program, through which it brings to Australia scholars of international standing who will provoke fresh ideas within, and beyond, the academic community.

Following an annual research theme, it also has an active program of conferences and seminars.

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WHEN GOLD WAS DISCOVERED in Australia European goldseekers flocked from, what was for them, the top to the underside of the world. In more than a physical sense their world, and that of the Australian colonies, was to be turned upside down. The multicultural character of the new communities undermined the diggers' attempts to transplant their separate ethnic worlds in the new colonial society - their own cultural identities joined the long list of other casualties of the gold experience.

This book discusses many of the major consequences of the discovery of gold in Australia. It shows that while the 'gold' colonies competitively promoted themselves internationally as attractive areas for investment, it was the internal social, political, and cultural impact of gold that was more important in laying the necessary conditions for the foundation of an Australian national identity.

This collection of essays is as entertaining as it is informative, describing, in often personal terms, how despite an initial flowering of celtic identities, the cosmopolitanism and the new goldfields 'culture' hastened the process of creating a new, proto-Australian, 'national' identity.