

Colonialism and the Role of the Local Show: A Case Study of the Gympie District Show, 1877–1940

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Agricultural shows are important events in rural and regional Australia. For over a century, they have often been the main annual festival on any given town's calendar. This importance makes the lack of scholarly attention to rural and regional shows puzzling. Recently, Australian exhibitions and agricultural shows have come in for some very welcome scholarly attention, although very little has been written about rural and regional events. Scholars such as Kate Darian-Smith and Sara Wills, Joanne Scott and Ross Laurie, Judith McKay, and Kay Anderson have all written on exhibitions and shows – although, of this group, only Darian-Smith and Wills have written on rural shows, the rest focusing more on inter-colonial and metropolitan Australian shows. Even Richard Waterhouse's groundbreaking study of rural Australian cultural history, *The Vision Splendid*, provides little detail on agricultural shows and their role in rural cultural life, although the show's importance is recognised.¹

This article seeks to address this lack of detailed research on rural and regional shows by discussing the role of the regional show in localising broader colonial aspirations. As Anderson has noted, agricultural shows during the colonial era were celebrations of the march of white civilisation into previously untouched lands. They were celebrations of ownership.² Peter Hoffenberg, writing on the great exhibitions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agrees with Anderson that these events were showcases of the Empire and the territories it *owned*, while also promoting external commonwealth and internal nationalism.³ The demonstration of ownership provided by displays of colonies' products asserted to the world the success of the colonial goals of progress and civilisation in lands that were deemed *terra nullius* prior to British arrival.

Despite this, the role of the local show or exhibition in promoting and upholding these values of white civilisation's march has gone unexamined. The manner in which the rural and regional show developed links between local efforts and broader colonial goals will be examined here by way of a case study of the Gympie Show. The regional show also played a vital role in colonial life in areas only recently opened up for colonists by providing a space for community-building and

a place in which Empire loyalties, colonial race relations and understandings of Gympie's place in the grander scheme of things could be established, displayed and contested. This article focuses on the Gympie District Show from its earliest days to the beginning of World War II, in order to demonstrate the changing ways in which Australia's relationship to Britain was reflected in the local agricultural show, and how over time the show shifted its language without substantively changing its focus.

The Gympie District Show – or, as it was known at its inception, the Gympie Agricultural, Mining, and Pastoral Society Exhibition – was first held in 1877, making it the oldest ongoing cultural event in Gympie. At the time, Gympie was a gold-mining town, founded on 16 October 1867, when the Gympie goldfield was declared at the Maryborough Court House.⁴ The town, originally known as Nashville after James Nash, who discovered gold, is situated in rural Southeast Queensland, approximately 160 kilometres north of Brisbane.

Origins of the Gympie Exhibition

In its early days, the Gympie District Show was an agent of colonialism. By encouraging agriculture, it promoted the establishment of white proprietorship, both physical and moral, of a land that had been declared *terra nullius* prior to European occupation. The show has its roots in the colonial enterprise, in the project of possessing the land by making it productive. This process, according to David Day, is important in establishing 'moral proprietorship' of the land, as cultivating the soil meant making fruitful use of the Australian continent.⁵ Progress meant improving the land, and by improving the land the white occupiers were taking ownership of it. Australia had been perceived as 'no man's land' by the British, Kay Anderson notes, arguing as they had in the American case that 'all "empty things" including unoccupied lands' were common property 'until they are put to some, generally agricultural use'.⁶ Agricultural shows were a means of promoting agricultural development, and were therefore an important part of this process of possessing the 'empty' land.

The focus on progress was evident at the inception of the Gympie Agricultural, Mining and Pastoral Society (GAM&P Society) in 1877. On 17 March 1877, local farmers held a ploughing match, as 'an initiation of the trials of skill in useful industries in this locality'. After the ploughing match, interested farmers met at the Seven-Mile Hotel to discuss the 'desirability of immediately organising an agricultural Society'. Those present unanimously agreed to the proposal, with one speaker, Abraham Hutchinson, a future Mayor of Gympie, clearly expressing the feelings of those present: 'an agricultural society would be of great benefit to farmers ... [and] of mutual benefit to the farmer and the district'.⁷

The motivation for establishing the Society was clear, based on the results of agricultural societies in the south of the colony. The *Gympie Times* editors believed that a Gympie society would provide 'an impetus to farming in this district',⁸ further arguing that the whole region – not just farmers – would benefit. Such an

understanding was tied to broader colonial goals. At the time, Gympie's potential for agricultural production was relatively untapped, with only around 1000 acres under cultivation, producing wheat, maize, potatoes, sugar, gardens, vines and other crops.⁹ Ten years after the discovery of gold, the establishment of a group that promoted agriculture signalled the maturing nature of colonisation in the Gympie region, where a more settled form of exploitation was beginning to occur. The name of that society is noteworthy in this regard. Its title included each of Gympie's major industries, whether actual or aspirational. Gympie, founded on the discovery of gold, would not be viable without diversification into agriculture and pastoralism.

The Gympie District Show was a part of the exhibition movement, which began with the so-called Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851. This first exhibition ushered in the 'age of exhibitions', as many such events sprang up across the globe – and nowhere more so than in the British colonies.¹⁰ These exhibitions were central in solidifying a culture of Empire, and also an opportunity to provide accessible meanings to the political relationships of Empire.¹¹ The Gympie Show, as will be argued below, took some of these aspects of the Empire and localised them, providing an intimate look at the ways in which local efforts contributed to both the colony and the Empire.

The show was organised by a committee of volunteers from the local population. The only paid position was that of secretary, whom the committee appointed. The other positions were voted on by members of the GAM&P Society, with membership of the Society open to all those interested in the show. Generally, those members voted into positions of importance were leaders in the areas of business, agriculture and pastoralism. Interestingly, the first president of the GAM&P Society was neither a farmer nor a businessman, but a doctor. Dr John Robinson Benson migrated from the Canadian colonies in the mid-1860s and had been a Member of Queensland Parliament for five months from April to September 1870. After being voted out of parliament, Benson was appointed government medical officer to Gympie, where he was, it seems, a popular figure and heavily involved in local affairs. Announcing his presidency of the Society, the *Brisbane Courier* observed that Benson was 'overflowing, not with vanity, but with energy and perseverance'.¹²

Benson was heavily involved in local affairs on the goldfield. With these credentials, he was an obvious choice as president of the GAM&P Society. Despite Benson's ability and prominence, the society still required a genuine figurehead to make its exhibition truly 'important'. As an event focused on promoting expanded and more settled colonisation, the logical choice for patron of the Society was the Governor of Queensland. The Governor also saw reason to patronise the society, and on 12 May 1877 the *Gympie Times* happily reported: 'His Excellency the Governor has signified his willingness to become patron of the Gympie Agricultural Mining and Pastoral Society.'¹³ The picture of an event with strong colonial goals was complete.

The importance of the vice-regal patron at shows such as this was great. Since the Great Exhibition, royalty or the monarch's representatives have been present at, and opened, British and British colonial exhibitions at grand opening

ceremonies. Hoffenberg argues that the opening and closing ceremonies at exhibitions ‘provided a ritualistic political and social “centre” in the ideology and practice of imperial cultures’, framing the ‘sense of place, social roles, economic structure, and political authority of the empire in terms of a traditionalist commonwealth centred by the Crown’.¹⁴ At Gympie, too, such constructions were evident, as will be demonstrated below.

Empire Loyalty and Race Relations

In 1878, the GAM&P Society’s patron, Governor Sir Arthur Kennedy, opened the second exhibition in front of a large, loyal crowd.¹⁵ Early on Wednesday, 19 June 1878, members of Gympie’s Friendly Societies and other citizens began gathering on Commissioners Hill, together with local dignitaries, where a procession was being organised to escort the Governor to the showgrounds. It was a big day for Gympie, with the Governor of Queensland in town, and citizens planned a strong display of Empire loyalty to mark the occasion. The whole town had been decorated with bunting and evergreens, while several arches had been constructed with the word ‘Welcome’ emblazoned on them, while the ‘emblems of England’s vast empire’ festooned flagstuffs on Nash’s Bridge, and the Victorian Flag (Queen Victoria’s personal standard) and Union Jack were conspicuous throughout the town.¹⁶ Meanwhile, back on Commissioners Hill, those participating in the procession had assembled in the following order:

1. Chinese
2. Hope of Gympie Lodge (Good Templars)
3. Manchester Unity Oddfellows, with Band
4. Rechabites
5. Grand United Oddfellows
6. Roman Catholic Band
7. British Templars
8. Caledonian Society
9. Salem Lodge (Good Templars)
10. Citizens
11. His Excellency and Suite
12. Mounted Police.¹⁷

Aboriginal residents were conspicuous by their absence from the program. While the Indigenous presence was widely acknowledged in the newspaper (albeit mostly as a nuisance) and in local settlers’ diaries, Aborigines were not included in any commemorations or processions during this period. At the 1878 procession, the *Gympie Times* noted: ‘There were no aboriginals present, perhaps their presence could well be dispensed with.’¹⁸ Such an attitude indicated the traditional owners of the land were unwelcome, a viewpoint compounded by the fact that the Governor, representative of the invading British, was in town to open an agricultural show,

the main object of which was the promotion of British civilisation and land ownership in the region.

This situation was in stark contrast to the Chinese, who took the lead at the procession.¹⁹ Chinese participation in the processions produced reciprocal relationships between themselves and the organisers. These relationships enabled the Chinese to gain a measure of authenticity and respect. In doing so, Gympie's Chinese also gained public recognition, which was manifested in different ways. Indeed, while prominent Chinese residents subscribed to the Gympie Hospital and the Christmas Race Meeting as a way to gain public recognition,²⁰ as well as running businesses that were vital to the local economy, the processions still afforded the best method of gaining the desired amount of recognition. The Chinese in Gympie took the opportunity afforded by a vice-regal visit not only to make their presence felt, but on at least one occasion, in 1873, to present an official welcome to Queensland's Governor themselves.²¹ The Governor's generous reply acted as an incentive for the continued participation of the Chinese in processions, including that held to welcome the Governor for the second Gympie Exhibition.

As the leaders of the procession in 1878, the visibility of the Chinese was greatly enhanced. The *Gympie Times* recorded the sight and sounds of the Chinese:

First came the Chinese, about thirty in number, nearly all carrying flags and preceded by a band consisting of a gong, cymbals, and drum. A man who heralded this part of the procession, kept up a perfect *feu de joie* with crackers which were exploding all the way from the Camp to the Society's grounds.²²

The content and tone of this report suggest that the Chinese had gained some recognition for their contribution to the local economy. This interpretation appears to be supported by the continued presence of Chinese in subsequent processions. In fact, the Chinese group was 'decidedly the feature of the turnout' to welcome the Governor for the 1890 exhibition, 'with its showy banners, constant fusillade of crackers, and noisy beating of gongs and drums'.²³ However, violence against Chinese miners continued, and the colonial goals of the GAM&P Society suggest that any respect or recognition was conditional.

The GAM&P Society was established to promote European agriculture, which was married to the colonial notion of establishing ownership of the land. The achievement of this goal was made urgent by the fact that Chinese market gardeners were already well established and doing good business by 1877. In fact, miners were reliant on the Chinese for fresh food, and had been for some time. Chinese settlers began growing vegetables commercially as early as 1869, around two years before Europeans began growing food.²⁴ Chinese success made the development of a European agricultural industry important, necessary and possible. Despite any gains the Chinese might have made in commerce and by their involvement in hospital subscriptions and loyal processions, Europeans still expected to dominate. The Gympie Exhibitions were designed to give local white farmers extra incentive to do so.

If the exhibition was designed in part to gain the upper hand over the Chinese in agriculture, a new front in that battle was opened up soon afterwards. The GAM&P Society established horticultural shows after the third exhibition to further encourage Europeans to grow fruit and vegetables. The attitude toward Chinese competition was exemplified in a *Gympie Times* report on the Society's second horticultural show in December 1880, where the European growers' cabbages were described as 'very different, it need scarcely be said, to the "forced stuff" Gympie housewives have to buy from Chinese gardeners'.²⁵ By different, the writer meant superior, exemplifying the racial and colonial attitudes of the time, which sought to protect not only British interests, but also the racial superiority of the British. Again, at the 1885 agricultural show, the *Gympie Times* reported that:

The display of cabbages was particularly good, and plainly indicated that if our farmers would only go in a little more strongly for this and other garden products, the occupation of 'John Chinaman' would soon be gone.²⁶

Removing 'John Chinaman' from the picture was the ultimate goal, and the combination of agricultural shows and horticultural shows was beginning to have the desired effect, especially since there is no evidence of Chinese exhibits at either of these events.

The Show and Its Exhibits

One key to the links between the Gympie Exhibition and larger colonial goals was the nature of the exhibits. Colonialism first required the possession of the land, and agriculture was, for the Europeans, the clearest demonstration of ownership. Therefore, the first exhibitions were focused mainly on promoting agriculture, and the *Gympie Times* saved some of its most detailed reports and florid language for the description of agricultural exhibits. Gold was still the major product of the region, as demonstrated by the feature presentation of specimens of quartz from the mines, but a wide variety of other products were displayed, from sheaves of wheat to horses, cattle, dogs and fowl. These were, GAM&P Society president Benson declared when opening the inaugural exhibition, some of the 'many new avenues to wealth' that residents were beginning to take advantage of in the district.²⁷

The *Gympie Times* provides a rich description of the exhibits at this first exhibition, and through this a number of important themes that mark the agricultural show as a distinct and important event. First, the show was the most important forum for the conspicuous display of the produce of the region. Farmers, miners, women and business owners entered the show to compete for awards in the various sections. Second, the show was a gauge by which the productive capacity of the region could be measured. The agricultural displays 'were amply sufficient to demonstrate the adaptability of the soil in the neighbourhood of Gympie to the production of European as well as tropical and semi-tropical' plants and foods. Third, the exhibition created a connection between productivity and civilisation. The

collection of ‘exceptionally good’ maize and potatoes, as well as other products, ‘could hardly be excelled in any other country’.²⁸

Mining was listed first in the newspaper reports, with limited space devoted to it. Agriculture came next, occupying a much greater volume of column inches than mining had, highlighting the importance of agriculture in a region dominated by the mining industry. One notable point made by the *Gympie Times* is that many of the products on display were ‘equal to the best we have for some years seen imported from Tasmania or New Zealand’, suggesting a pride in the achievements of the region given the relative youth of the Gympie district, while also demonstrating a sense of self-sufficiency. After discussing agriculture, the newspaper moved on to secondary products, or manufactures, such as saddles, boots and general merchandise, ‘as if everything actually worthy of being shown on Gympie’ was being exhibited. Finally, art, flowers, needlework, crocheting and knitting were highlighted. These were also recognisably ‘women’s work’, demonstrating, as Martha Sear argues, that women’s work was a highly valued aspect of the exhibition movement.²⁹ Local boosterism, or the promotion of regional pride, was evident in the *Gympie Times*’ statements that ‘visitors who had been at the Sydney and Brisbane Exhibitions freely express[ed] an opinion that the display was far in advance’ of exhibits at either of these places.³⁰ The paper did not provide the names of any of these ‘visitors’.

This narrative, seamlessly moving from primary to secondary products and finally arriving at high forms of civilised life, such as painting, sewing and gardening, was designed to show how the productivity of the region had enabled the civilised aspects of life to develop freely. It was also a demonstration of a phenomenon common to nineteenth century exhibitions that Judith McKay has noted:

Human achievement was often accorded an official position of supremacy at exhibitions. At Paris in 1867 the exhibits were arranged in concentric galleries that ‘progressed’ from raw products in the second outermost gallery to fine arts near the central courtyard. Similarly the original classification system at Philadelphia placed raw products at the base, with categories ascending according to the application of human skill.³¹

The GAM&P Society adopted this method to demonstrate the sophistication of the region and its residents. While the primary product-oriented sections were crucial to Gympie’s economic prosperity, another valorised measure of progress and civilisation was to be found in its examples of fine art. These concepts informed the first Gympie Exhibition and the *Gympie Times*’ reporting of it, further cementing in the minds of locals that civilisation had arrived on the Gympie goldfield.

This presentation was also an articulation of the white colonial idea that production must continue, advance and contribute to the colony’s development. Particular emphasis was placed on this at Gympie’s first exhibition. This progressive discourse was highlighted by the demonstrations of both agricultural and mining tools that would advance the production of food and the extraction of ore. This notion finds perhaps its clearest demonstration in the regional show because of the

immediacy of the contact with the products of the soil. The fruits and vegetables were grown near to where they were being exhibited, unlike at the Sydney Exhibition, where goods might travel hundreds of kilometres to the display tables.

As with the metropolitan shows, the Gympie District Show was a manifestation of the improvements made through cultivation of the land. The first Gympie Show was consciously placed within this realm in Dr Benson's opening address, where he stressed the importance of practical results that would lead to 'the speedy development of the boundless resources of this fruitful district of this noble colony'. His use of terms such as 'fruitful', 'boundless' and 'noble' are instructive: these suggest that not only had the colonisers developed the land profitably, but that it was their duty to do so. Providence sanctioned and encouraged their settlement of the land as just, moral and 'noble'. Such comments justified the project of occupying the land, planting crops and running cattle. Furthermore, the Gympie Show quite explicitly took on as its models the shows of other colonies and parts of the world. As Benson noted, 'following on Exhibitions in the old world and America, and at Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, comes our Gympie Agricultural, Mining, and Pastoral Society's Show'.³² Prior to hosting a show, Gympie had contributed to Empire by filling Queensland's coffers with gold, but with the evidence of agricultural settlement on conspicuous display, Gympie was finally a civilised district of note in the colony, not just a mine.

At the first Gympie Show, the following sections were listed for competition:

- Section I – Horses
- Section II – Cattle
- Section III – Pigs
- Section IV – Poultry
- Section V – Dogs
- Section VI – Farm and Dairy Produce
- Section VII – Horticultural
- Section VIII – Manufactures
- Section IX – Implements and Machinery
- Section X – Industrial &c.
- Section XI – Fine Arts
- Section XII – Mining and Forestry.³³

The inaugural show was designed explicitly to encourage development in pastoralism and agrarianism. Although the agricultural exhibits 'were not very numerous', the first nine sections in the program were linked intrinsically with farming: horses for mustering and ploughing; cattle for dairying and meat; pigs for hams and bacon; poultry for eggs and meat; dogs for rounding up stock; farm and dairy produce for milk, butter, wheat, sugar cane; horticulture for its fruit and vegetables; and manufactures, for refining the raw products from the sections listed above. The Implements and Machinery Section was devoted to items that would encourage and facilitate agriculture, with entries called for in ploughs (one horse, two horse and for deep cultivation); cultivators; seed-sowing machines; and corn huskers and shellers.³⁴ The emphasis was on production.

From Colony to Nation: The Shifting Significance of the Show

In 1884, the Gympie District Show moved to new grounds on Gympie's south side, where it has been held ever since, with the Governor of Queensland again opening proceedings. This was to be the first in a series of 32 uninterrupted annual shows, broken only in 1916 by World War I. The following year, the Gympie Show returned, and was included in Gympie's fiftieth anniversary celebrations. At this show, the Governor, once again present, praised the society for resuming the show, because 'whatever was happening overseas, they must go on producing'.³⁵ The theme of production was again stressed, but another was added: patriotism. At a meeting of representatives of Gympie's public bodies, gathered to discuss Gympie's Jubilee celebrations, the town's mayor, George H. Mackay, argued that while celebrations were appropriate, they should also 'be a means for raising funds for patriotic purposes'.³⁶ The GAM&P Society reflected this concern in advertising for the 1917 show:

Gympie Jubilee Show
(PATRIOTIC)
Official Opening To-morrow, 11am³⁷

By designating the show as 'patriotic', visitors to the show knew that the Society was donating proceeds to the war effort, enabling some of the guilt associated with enjoying a day out while others were fighting and dying overseas to be assuaged.

The Gympie Show highlighted its own history for the first time in 1917. At the opening, the president of the GAM&P Society highlighted the progress of Gympie over the previous half-century, noting that gold and timber were being replaced by agriculture. Indeed, the few gold specimens on display really only served to 'put old residents in mind of old times'.³⁸ Such references to the past emphasised the continuous modernising impetus that the show embodied. Agriculture was the way of the future.

The 1931 show revitalised the event after the society had endured hardship between 1929 and 1930. The *Gympie Times* recorded that 'the faith of the Society in the district and its people was not misplaced ... record entries ... have been received in every section, and given the fine weather, this year's exhibition should eclipse any held in recent years'.³⁹ That year, the diminished status of gold was plainly acknowledged, and the importance of the show as a place where the wealth of the district – particularly agricultural wealth – was confirmed. During the opening ceremony, Hubert E. Sizer, Queensland Minister for Labour, stressed the nobility of those working on farms – whether farmers or labourers – in the Gympie area. He said that these were the people:

who were producing the wealth of the State and to whom the State looked to get it out of its present difficulties ... The cities could not solve the present problems, but the people who were manfully producing and creating the wealth with which to pay the debts in

legitimate coinage. Those were the people who were going to save Australia and who would roll away the dark clouds of depression and bring sunshine into the homes of the people.⁴⁰

Here the role of agrarianism was posited as that of saviour. Farming was seen as just as noble in 1931 as it was in 1877, when the first Gympie Show was held. However, where the emphasis in 1877 was colonial, in 1931 it was national. At those early shows, agriculture was needed to secure ownership of the land, to cultivate a society that contributed to colonial and Empire goals. In 1931, on the other hand, farm produce would be used to save the country. Further, just as Gympie had ‘saved’ Queensland when gold was discovered, so too could Gympie save the nation with agriculture.

Throughout the 1930s, the GAM&P Society continued to present exhibitions, displaying, as ever, the products of the soil and the machinery that would increase the farmer’s yield from it. However, in 1940, with World War II entering its second year, the Gympie Show was unable to remain immune from its effects. That year, the fifty-eighth annual exhibition was held with a pronounced awareness of the war raging overseas. The *Gympie Times* noted that:

The products of farm, dairy and garden have assumed an added importance in the economy of the nation and the Empire, and it was heartening to see so fine a collection, grouped into sections and giving mute but unmistakable evidence of the industry of the community, as well as of the fertility of the soil.⁴¹

Conclusion: Localising White Civilisation’s March

The emphasis on agriculture indicated a continued reliance on ideas of progress and productivity, as well as reinforcing a sense that the colonising and settling of the region of Gympie had been just and providential. The success of the GAM&P Society in achieving its aim of diversifying the productive base of the area was clear. Local citizens had embraced Dr Benson’s 1877 hope that they would branch out into agricultural and pastoral industries. Indeed, these had become the dominant industries, while gold had fallen by the wayside. The fruit and vegetable displays at the Gympie District Show in the pre-war era tangibly demonstrated the arrival of European civilisation in the district. While no longer demonstrating civilisation’s arrival – this had well and truly arrived by 1940 – the displays were proof of the consolidation of white ownership of the land. This gave the produce sections a symbolic value above and beyond their financial value. Agriculture was portrayed variously as a way to cement ownership in a newly colonised land, as the national saviour and as the saviour of Empire.

However, whereas major metropolitan shows such as the Sydney Royal or the Brisbane Exhibition are held at the ‘centres’ of civilisation, and are places to celebrate the productivity of an entire state, local events such as the Gympie Show display the goods produced in the immediate hinterland. Metropolitan shows are

opportunities to showcase the success of the colonial project on a grand scale. By contrast, the Gympie District Show and other regional shows display the wealth of the *district*, while also reminding locals of their valuable contribution to the state, nation and Empire. The regional show localises the norms of white civilisation that the metropolitan exhibitions affirm by providing an opportunity for local residents to observe, consume and celebrate their own achievements in a venue central to their community and its cultural life. These ‘emblematic texts of civilisation’⁴² are made all the more meaningful for being displayed in their local contexts, ensuring that a sense of pride in achievement and a sense of place are constructed around these modernist symbols of success.

As an event at which all of the modernist symbols of success were on conspicuous display, the Gympie District Show was able to perform the role of localiser of community norms. The show was the point of contact for local people and, as the largest and longest-running event in town, invited all members of the Gympie community to visit the showgrounds and consume the evidence of their community’s success, helping to create a kind of whole-of-town community. Consumption of the event and of the local evidence of civilisation’s march was made more meaningful by the large proportion of the local population in attendance. Senses of community could be enacted within the specific space of the showgrounds.

From its inception in 1877 until 1940, the period of this study, the Gympie Show worked to promote ideals of progress and civilisation. While attending the show, patrons observed and consumed evidence of their ownership of the land through conspicuous display of the products of the district, affirming their legitimate possession of the land in and around Gympie. This was a celebration not just of the region, but of their presence in the region. Those present created this progress, planted the crops, cut down the trees and mined the deep pits. The show proved that the colonial project had succeeded, and provided a space to recognise and reflect on their shared effort and shared values – in this case, a whole-of-town community centred on the space created by the Gympie District Show.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Kate Darian-Smith and Sara Wills, ‘From Queen of Agriculture to Miss Showgirl: Embodying Rurality in Twentieth-Century Australia’, in *The Show Girl and the Straw Man*, ed. Richard Nile (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001), 17–31; Kay Anderson, ‘White Natures: Sydney’s Royal Agricultural Show in Post-Humanist Perspective’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28(4) (2003): 422–41; Judith McKay, ‘A Good Show: Colonial Queensland at International Exhibitions’, PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1996; Joanne Scott and Ross Laurie, *Showtime: A History of the Brisbane Exhibition* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008); Judith McKay, ‘The Queensland Exhibition of 1897: “Dazzling Display” or “a Frost”’, *Queensland Review* 5(1) (1996): 78–85; Joanne Scott and Ross Laurie, ‘Colonialism on Display: Indigenous People and Artefacts at an Australian Agricultural Show’, *Aboriginal History*, 31 (2007): 45–62; Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle: Curtin Books, 2005), 158–59.
- 2 Anderson, ‘White Natures’: 422–41.

- 3 Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), xiv.
- 4 Cooloolo Shire Library Service, *Cooloolo Shire ... a Golden Past*, Part 2 (Gympie: Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001), 22.
- 5 David Day, *Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: Harper Perennial, 2005), 43.
- 6 Anderson, 'White Natures': 430.
- 7 'Formation of a Gympie Agricultural Society', *Gympie Times*, 21 March 1877: 5.
- 8 'Local and General News', *Gympie Times*, 21 March 1877: 2.
- 9 Cooloolo Shire Library Service, *Cooloolo Shire*, Part 3, 41.
- 10 Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, xiii–xiv.
- 11 Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, xv.
- 12 *Brisbane Courier*, 21 April 1877, quoted in Turtle Bunbury, 'Dr J.R. Benson (1834–1885) – The Australian Politician', *Family History: Benson of the Fould*, <www.turtlebunbury.com/history/history_family/hist_family_benson.html>, accessed 14 January 2009. All biographical information on Dr Benson comes from this site and should, I argue, be considered more authoritative than the information offered by Jacqueline Bell in 'Benson, John Robinson (1836?–1885)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 3 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), 144.
- 13 'Local and General News', *Gympie Times*, 12 May 1877: 3.
- 14 Hoffenberg, *An Empire On Display*, 258.
- 15 'The Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 26 June 1878: 3.
- 16 'Visit of His Excellency, Sir A.E. Kennedy, to the Gympie Goldfield', *Gympie Times*, 22 June 1878: 3.
- 17 'Programme of Arrangements for the Reception of His Excellency the Governor', *Gympie Times*, 19 June 1878: 2.
- 18 'Visit of His Excellency, Sir A.E. Kennedy, to the Gympie Goldfield', *Gympie Times*, 22 June 1878: 3.
- 19 This inverts the order Amanda Rasmussen observes at the Bendigo Easter Fair during the same period, where the Chinese came last and the Mayor, Governor and other local elites took the lead. Amanda Rasmussen, 'Networks and Negotiations: Bendigo's Chinese and the Easter Fair', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, 6 (2004): 81.
- 20 For example, in 1869, Ah Long, Chien Wangli and Lin John all subscribed to the Race Meeting. See *Gympie Times*, 3 November 1869: 2.
- 21 'Visit of His Excellency Governor Normanby to the Gympie Goldfield', *Gympie Times*, 30 April 1873: 3.
- 22 'Visit of His Excellency, Sir A.E. Kennedy, to the Gympie Goldfield', *Gympie Times*, 22 June 1878: 3.
- 23 'Gympie Agricultural, Mining, and Pastoral Society's Show', *Gympie Times*, 25 September 1890: 3.
- 24 R.G. Vickery Lockwood, 'History of Gympie: the 1840s–1900s', BA (Hons) thesis, Department of History, University of Queensland, 1964, 69; the Cooloolo Shire history observes that George Flay was 'probably the first man' (apart from the Chinese) to begin growing fruit in 1871. See *Cooloolo Shire*, Part 3, 41.
- 25 See 'The Show', *Gympie Times*, 29 December 1880: 3.
- 26 'Gympie Agricultural, Mining and Pastoral Society's Show', *Gympie Times*, 15 August 1885: 3.
- 27 'The Gympie Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 17 October 1877: 3.
- 28 'The Gympie Exhibition'.
- 29 See Martha Sear, 'Unworded Proclamations: Exhibitions of Women's Work in Colonial Australia', PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 2000. This is not to say,

of course, that women's work at exhibitions was universally praised and recognised alongside more traditionally 'masculine' industries and exhibits.

- 30 'The Gympie Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 17 October 1877: 3.
- 31 Judith McKay, 'A Good Show: Colonial Queensland at International Exhibitions', PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1996, 55.
- 32 'The Gympie Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 17 October 1877: 3.
- 33 'The Gympie Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 20 October 1877: 3.
- 34 'Prize Schedule of the Gympie Agricultural, Mining, and Pastoral Society's Show', *Gympie Times*, 11 August 1877: 4.
- 35 'Gympie's Jubilee Show', *Gympie Times*, 30 August 1917: 3.
- 36 'Celebrating Gympie's Jubilee: Conflicting Suggestions', *Gympie Times*, 13 March 1917: 3. Delegates at the meeting included representatives from the Gympie City Council, Widgee Shire Council, Chamber of Commerce, GAM&P Society, as well as some representatives of the Friendly Societies of Gympie.
- 37 Advertisement in the *Gympie Times*, 28 August 1917: 2.
- 38 'Gympie's Jubilee Show', *Gympie Times*, 30 August 1917: 3.
- 39 'The Gympie Show, 1931: Prospects Bright for Successful Exhibition', *Gympie Times*, 16 May 1931: 13.
- 40 'Success Attends Gympie Show', *Gympie Times*, 23 May 1931: 1.
- 41 'Gympie Show Breaks Records', *Gympie Times*, 1 June 1940: 2.
- 42 Anderson, 'White Natures': 434.