

THE GOLD RUSHES OF NEW SOUTH WALES

1851-74

A SOCIAL HISTORY

Thesis submitted for the  
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This thesis is the original work of the candidate

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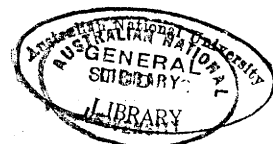
## ABBREVIATIONS

- B.F.P. - Bathurst Free Press
- Empire - Sydney Empire
- J.L.C. - Journal of the Legislative Council of New  
South Wales
- S.M.H. - Sydney Morning Herald

## SYNOPSIS

After following with excitement for three years the news of the gold-rushes in California, the colonists of New South Wales found similar exciting opportunities suddenly revealed in their own territory in May 1851, when Edward Hammond Hargraves made public the news of his discoveries near Bathurst. The intensity of the gold fever which swept through New South Wales equalled anything which had been experienced in California, and abated only with the news later in the year of richer and more extensive gold-fields in Victoria.

As a result of the greater public interest in the Victorian fields, both in Australia and overseas, the great majority of immigrants attracted by gold went to that colony, and New South Wales was spared the swamping of the pre-gold population by immigrants which Victoria experienced. Moreover, being the seat of an older, more firmly established society than the daughter colony, New South Wales was not changed and dominated by the diggers to the same degree as Victoria. The gold discoveries, after the first wave of excitement had subsided, had little





effect upon the colony as a whole other than to increase her population and speed her internal development to a somewhat faster rate than would otherwise have happened, and to add another industry - gold digging - to the colony's tally.

The most outstanding incident during this period was the series of riots at Lambing Flat in 1860-1, when the diggers combined to drive the Chinese from the field, and forced the government to restrict Chinese immigration into the colony. The prevailing element in these proceedings was not one of reasoned disapproval or of actual provocation by the Chinese, but blind and passionate prejudice, which spread rapidly from the gold-fields to infect the whole colony until restriction betokened the removal of the 'menace'.

Though the interior was as a result of the diggings thrust into the light of public notice, few of the many gold settlements survived the gold-rushes to become thriving provincial centres, unless there was an economic need for such a community to serve as a real centre for an agricultural or pastoral region. Such centres were served by the communications network which the gold-fields inspired, but the most important requirements, such as roads and railways, did not materialize as a result of

gold-field pressures. Unlike the Victorians, the New South Wales miners could not muster enough political influence to win such amenities. Gold-digging here was of secondary importance.

There was a strong individualistic strain in many of the diggers, but this very factor made it difficult for the development of militant political groupings of miners, who, until the spread of wage-labour in the 1870s took effect, had no inclination to combine for any but the most immediate needs. Political apathy rather than radicalism was the hall-mark of the New South Wales diggers. Their conduct on the fields was generally marked by a greater calmness and peace than was the case in Victoria, though this disappeared in the continuous rush in the western district during the 1860s.



DATES OF DISCOVERY OF PRINCIPAL GOLD-FIELDS  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES

1851	Ophir Turon Araluen Major's Creek Rocky River Hill End - Tambaroora
1852	Hanging Rock
Mid-1850s	Tumut - Adelong
1858	Port Curtis
1859	Kiandra
1860	Lambing Flat
1861	Lachlan
1866	Emu Creek and Weddin Mountain
1868	Gulgong
1871	Carcoar



## INTRODUCTION

Since 1851 much labour has been expended upon explanations of Australia's debt to her gold-rushes, and the extent to which they influenced the formation of the so-called Australian national character. Poets and bush bards have embraced the subject eagerly, producing soul-stirring works at varying levels of literary merit. These in turn have provoked reactions, though not in verse, the most noteworthy of which is Russel Ward's Australian Legend. But whether or not the heroic form of the legendary 'digger type' is claimed as the spiritual forefather of the first A.I.F., and whether he was a product of the manly, gold-field way of life, or of the pre-gold 'bush civilization', there is one factor common to almost all writings and thoughts on gold in Australia; the picture is dominated by Victoria at first, and later adapted to Western Australia. It is drawn in Victoria, and superimposed upon New South Wales. Ballarat and Bendigo, magic names both, appear as typical gold-rush communities.

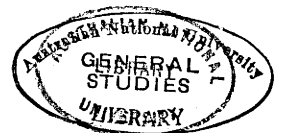
This is no recent phenomenon. Even in the early years of the rushes, when the interest of nations - especially those of the United Kingdom - was focussed upon Australia,

'Australia' to them meant Victoria, or Melbourne and its satellite gold-fields. It was in Victoria that the great discoveries of rich auriferous land were made. Ballarat and Bendigo became famous because their gold deposits were of unusual value and extent. They were certainly not typical gold towns, for they remained centres of population even after the gold had gone, whereas the majority of such settlements left little but legend for posterity to remember them by. There was nothing in New South Wales to equal the wealth of these two. As a producer of gold she could not hope to rival Victoria, which played by far the greater part in Australia's gold story, and events and attitudes there inevitably had the greater effect upon the opinions of observers remote in distance or time. Nevertheless, New South Wales by no means followed the Victorian pattern in every way. She was by comparison an old-established colony, with a history of over sixty years of settlement and consolidation. Victoria in mid-1851 was very young and almost empty.<sup>1</sup> Their respective stories might fairly be distinguished by a comment that in the 1850s a gold-rush occurred in New South Wales, while at the same time Victoria was little else than a self-governing gold-rush.

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The official census return gives the population of Victoria in 1851, before the gold-rushes, as 87,345.



Most contemporary publications referring to the gold-fields are concerned with Victoria alone, and many others mention New South Wales but briefly. More recent general histories, such as E.O.G. Shann's Economic History of Australia and B. Fitzpatrick's British Empire in Australia, provide much useful background information, though the sections on gold are again concerned primarily with Victoria. Most local histories, normally compiled to commemorate a jubilee or centenary, are devoid of useful information on this period, though there is no lack of romantic nostalgia for the digging days. Excepted from this condemnation are W.A. Bayley's books on Grenfell, Nundle, Young and Albury,<sup>2</sup> though his custom of omitting source references is irritating. Donald Friend's Hillendiana contains much interesting information on the Hill End-Tambaroora field, and Ransome Wyatt's History of Goulburn is also useful on this period. An excellent model for useful local histories is provided by the Cooma-Monaro Historical Society's Historic Kiandra, published in 1959 to mark the centenary of the Kiandra gold-rush. It has no profession to historical comment, but presents a series of extracts from contemporary books and

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W.A. Bayley, Golden Granary - the history of Grenfell and the Weddin Shire, N.S.W.; Rich Earth - history of Young and the shire of Burrangong, N.S.W.; Hills of Gold - centenary history of Nundle shire, N.S.W.; Border City - history of Albury, N.S.W.

newspapers. This 'scissors and paste' method of presenting information does not detract from the enjoyment of the general reader seeking knowledge of a localized sequence of events, and is of more value to the working historian than Bayley's story-book type of presentation.

Very little research work has been done concerning the history of goldmining in New South Wales. The Regional Research Monographs, numbers 1 and 5, published in 1950 by the New England University College, on goldmining around Armidale and Glen Innes, are very useful, but remain isolated examples of what needs to be done. The only other work is in unpublished thesis form, and is very limited in quantity and scope. Only two are known which deal with New South Wales, both theses for the degree of M.A. They are D.F. Mackay's 'Rocky River Gold Field, 1851-67', and N.O.P. Pyke's 'Foreign immigration to the gold fields, N.S.W. and Victoria, 1851-61'. Both proved to be very useful, especially in providing bibliographical information.

Documentary material is abundant in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, but proved to be of no great value. Other sources were examined at the National Library, Canberra, the Alexander Turnbull Library and Victoria University Library, Wellington, New Zealand, and the Auckland Public Library.



Most of the information used has been drawn from official sources and newspapers. Prominent amongst the former are the Votes and Proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Council, 1850-5, the Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and the Journal of the Legislative Council, 1856-75, New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, 1853-8, and Correspondence on the discovery of gold in Australia, 1852-57. In the case of newspapers, a decision had to be made between selective use of the many country newspapers at times when nearby gold-fields were flourishing, or intensive use of the metropolitan press. The latter was chosen, partly for convenience of access, and partly because any occurrence or opinion of note, first appearing in a country journal, would normally be reproduced in the Sydney newspapers. The Sydney Empire was consulted closely for the period 1851-2, and then selectively. The Sydney Morning Herald was consulted for the entire period from 1851 to 1874. A very valuable collection of extracts from many journals and periodicals, containing information on all matters connected with the Eden-Monaro and Tumut-Adelong districts, the former being indexed, was compiled by the late J.A. Perkins, M.H.R. for Eden-Monaro, and copies are held by the National Library, Canberra, and by the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

The period under review begins in 1851, with the discovery of gold, and ends in May 1874. The latter date has been chosen primarily because control of gold-fields affairs in N.S.W. then passed from the Department of Lands to the newly-created Department of Mines. It was around this time, too, that wage-labour and company mining began to increase in New South Wales, and that the centres of the industry moved from many old worked-out fields to new localities. In brief, it was the end of an era. No claim is made to attempt to portray the history of New South Wales in this period. It is intended only to trace the effects of the gold-rushes upon the colony. Since it is the gold-rushes, rather than the gold producing industry, which are under examination, these effects are primarily social. The field, however, is not necessarily narrow, since social developments inspired by the gold-rushes had considerable impact during the twenty-three years up to 1874, and cannot be ignored in considering the subsequent social history of New South Wales.

It has been said above that the Victorian pattern is that commonly accepted when thinking of the Australian gold industry. Even this owes much to the historical accident of the first discovery of payable gold, and publication of this discovery, in New South Wales some months before

Victoria's wealth was revealed. The principles of administrative methods and practice formulated in the older colony became the basis for the organization of the Victorian industry in the important early years. The contribution of New South Wales was a framework for gold production by which the chaos which had overtaken California might be avoided.

The greatest single influence upon the pattern of Australian gold-rushes nevertheless came from California. The lengths to which the lure of gold will draw ambitious men had already been demonstrated more than twenty years before, in the state of Georgia. Here the Cherokee tribe of Indians had signed a treaty with the United States government guaranteeing them permanent possession of their lands. They quickly adopted European customs and way of life, and established villages, well-run farms, churches, and commercial enterprises, similar to those of the Americans around them. But gold was discovered on their land. In response to urgent prompting by its citizens, the state government declared that a treaty between an indigenous tribe and the federal government was not binding upon the state of Georgia, which had not been consulted. By force and stratagem the Cherokees were finally removed from their

ancestral lands and deported to the waste lands west of the Mississippi, and gold-hungry diggers took their place.<sup>3</sup>

Another twenty years passed before the modern world's first major gold-rush took place. As a result of the experience and powers of observation of an old Georgian miner, gold was found and recognized at Sutter's Mill in California in 1848. Georgians there demonstrated the art of panning, and California entered upon her golden age.<sup>4</sup> By the time Edward Hammond Hargraves discovered gold in New South Wales in February 1851, the industry was already well developed in California, where he had learned his trade. Into an almost empty, slackly-governed territory, newly captured from Mexico, poured thousands of adventurers in search of excitement and wealth. California began to experience action on a scale and at a rate which few parts of the world had seen before. With a weak local government, far from the seat of power, the immigrants made full use of the opportunities for free enterprise.<sup>5</sup> Unhampered by restrictions or by law,

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Albert Bushnell Hart (ed.), The American Nation: a history from original sources, vol.XIII, section by William MacDonald, 'Jacksonian Democracy'; H.C. Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492-1865, pp.539-40; W.P. Morrell, The Gold Rushes, p.75.

4

Morrell, pp.77-8.

5

Morrell, ch.IV.

a new 'frontier society' rapidly developed - the 'mining frontier' had entered upon the scene of American history in California.<sup>6</sup>

What would have happened in New South Wales had the Californian rushes never taken place? Presumably the gold deposits would have been found at some time. Satisfactory methods of working them would have been evolved by a process of trial and error even had there been no 'old Californians' to teach the craft and introduce the tools. What form, however, would the system of working gold deposits have taken? This question is partly answered by Gipps' plea to the Rev. W.B. Clarke, when confronted by the latter's specimens of Australian gold in 1841, to suppress publication of the discovery lest an excited and unruly population<sup>7</sup> threw off all restraint and turned savagely upon its rulers. Government preference was evidently to avoid any occurrence which might tend to disturb the colony's balance, whether it might stimulate or retard its growth. With New South Wales' history of paternal government, and the Crown's undoubted legal rights over all deposits of precious metals, it is very possible that sooner or later the government

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F.L. Paxson, History of the American Frontier (Students' ed.), ch.XLI.

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E. Scott, Short history of Australia, p.207.

would have worked the gold-fields by wage labour, under a system similar both to the road-making practice then current in the colony. In short, the government might have decided to work the mines as a state monopoly.

After 1848, this was no longer possible. The impact of events in California was felt no less in Sydney than in other parts of the English-speaking world. The exodus from Sydney caused considerable concern in that city's press, with fears of depopulation loudly expressed. At the same time, the presence of her citizens in California aroused an almost personal interest in events there. Stirring things were happening in California. Owing to the lack of an effective law enforcement body, a crime wave of great magnitude had appeared both in the mining camps and in the cities of San Francisco and Sacramento, and was gathering force in the first months of 1851. Conditions were ideal for its expansion, with questionable characters from all nations mingling freely with honest fortune-hunters in a very fluid society. The group singled out as scapegoats by the Californian press was that from the penal colonies of Australia, all immigrants from whence were declared at least to be tainted by their contacts in Sydney and Hobart even if they were not actually as dishonest as most of their compatriots. The Vigilance Committees of San Francisco and

Sacramento, which were created to counter lawlessness by implementing the laws of fear and force, seized upon the Australian menace, and endeavoured to remove it permanently. A declaration was issued forbidding immigrants from Sydney to land unless they had a personal character reference from the U.S. consul there. Two of the four men hanged by the San Francisco committee in 1851 were from Australia. Wild stories about an intended convict takeover of the state were freely circulated to increase popular agitation, and the blame for the many fires which devastated the crowded wooden cities was laid squarely upon Australian incendiaries. 8

Naturally this anti-Australian hysteria produced its reaction in Sydney. California was constantly described as chaos on earth, whose example was to be avoided at all costs. Californians were depicted as bearded, be-pistoled savages, whose answer to a fancied insult was invariably a challenge to a duel. Material gain might be won from gold-

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Werner Levi, American-Australian Relations, pp.37-42; Phil Stong, Gold in them hills; Robert Caldwell, The Gold Era of Victoria, p.42; Alan Valentine, Vigilante Justice, pp.42, 51-2, and chapters 10-14; Illustrated London News, 6 Aug. 1853; Sydney Morning Herald, 21 Jan. 1851; 25 Jan. 1851 (extract from Alta California, 20 Nov. 1850); 25 Apr. 1851; 26 May 1851; 1 July 1851; 2 July 1851 (extract from D.P.N., 10 May 1851); 26 Aug. 1851; 1 Sept. 1851; 1 Sept. 1851 (supplement, extract from Alta California, 21 June 1851); 8 Sept. 1851.

rushes, but moral ruin was an inevitable consequence if California was to be taken as an example.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, California was the sample followed, and was the main factor in deciding the course of the Australian rushes. With this example before the people, and news of California being republished in Sydney journals after the arrival of every boat from San Francisco, no government restraint was possible. Australia was to experience full-scale gold-rushes, rather than officially-founded mining settlements.

But if California was the principal model, it was not copied slavishly in New South Wales. The colony could not under any circumstances be compared with California, for it had a long tradition of ordered government from a strong centre. A paternal government had led it along the path of development, taking a direct interest in all major undertakings. Free enterprise was not given its head as in California, where little restraint was possible. Sydney controlled New South Wales as Sacramento was never able to control California during its early rushes. FitzRoy's government from the beginning took a detailed interest in gold-mining affairs, and its example of official control over all developments was copied by Victoria. In many ways the latter

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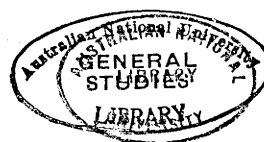
<sup>9</sup>

S.M.H., 16 and 23 May, 26 Aug. 1851.



colony resembled California - it was largely a mining community, strong enough to exercise its will, seldom wise enough to know fully what its will was. New South Wales' legislation and administration were not always suitable for Victorian conditions, and a new system had to be evolved in Melbourne, though the idea of governmental control remained. The difference between the two colonies came to be that with responsible government the miners were in a position to dictate to the Victorian authorities, but not to those of New South Wales.

Hargraves' announcement in 1851 followed closely the granting of self-government to New South Wales, and the separation of Victoria. For five more years government action was not necessarily bound by a majority decision in the Legislature. After 1856, however, a government responsible for its actions to an electorate including large numbers of diggers had to weigh their opinions against its actions. In 1858 direct representation was granted to the miners - the only example of interest-representation outside the Sydney University seat - and henceforth they elected three members to the Legislative Assembly. Nevertheless, governments were seldom dictated to by the miners, whose influence, potentially so strong, was actually weak through a lack of political organization. What Victorian miners



were able to express by sheer weight of numbers, those of New South Wales could have achieved only through organization, and this they failed to do.

Since the colonial government was by tradition expected to take the lead in all important matters, and since it had shown its willingness to assume the role of protector of gold-fields affairs, it was considered to be the government's task to tackle all connected problems to the satisfaction of the diggers and those interested in their success. Roads and mail services must be provided and maintained by the government, though country road transport remained the preserve of private enterprise. Railways were expected, though this was not yet to be the railway age in New South Wales. Regulations were formed for the actual control of the diggings, and officers appointed to supervise their operation. Increased immigration, long recognized as a prime need for the colony, brought with it social problems of assimilation, especially in the case of Chinese, which only the government could solve. All these problems were thrust upon a newly self-governing community in addition to the normal problems of recent national maturity, such as taxation and tariff policy, and development of the colony's other resources.

The pessimism with which pastoralists had received news of the gold discoveries is understandable. The 1840s had not been a happy period for them. Discontinuation of transportation was considered a misfortune which would rob them of controllable labour. While free labour was preferable, it was not always procurable, and assigned labour had for so long been a stand-by that the abolition of the system was considered an irreparable harm to the pastoral industry. Economic slumps during this decade had not helped instil optimism into the graziers.<sup>10</sup> These, however, were troubles of the 1840s, and by 1851 a recovery was well under way. The prospect of a possible mass desertion of labourers to the gold-fields filled their employers with such dismay that most seemed blinded to the advantages which might accrue to their industry from the increased demand for meat, which the gold-rushes created, and the increased shipping space available for wool and hides in returning emigrant vessels. Their pleas for government intervention to check or control the expected tragedy were inspired by fears that were genuine enough, but, as it proved, mostly needless. Gold, though it was to produce many upsets for the colony, did not bring about its ruin.

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<sup>10</sup>E.O.G. Shann, Economic History of Australia, pp.105-8.

## Chapter 2

### THE DIGGINGS AND THE DIGGERS

'An Australian type of mining camp was evolved in the years 1851 to 1858, and it is surprising how each field conformed to this type. The many accounts of the various fields written by observers in the 'fifties are curiously similar. They tell of the long lines of washers and rockers beside the stream; the field honeycombed with claims in all stages of excavation; the eager feverish toil of men not now working for a master but for themselves; the Commissioner's tent beneath its flag; and the constant altercation of police and diggers over the production of licences. Nightfall was heralded by the "cease-work" gun fired from the Commissioner's tent and the twinkle of a thousand fires reddening against the dusk; the lethargy of meal time was followed by the gradually rising chorus of relaxation - here a group sentimentally singing its songs of homeland; there the noisy discord of a gambling dispute; and always the drunken brawling and shouting of those upon whom the sly grog-sellers lived. Finally, as night drew on, there was the constant popping of firearms emptied each night for careful reloading by anxious diggers, and the slow surrender of the pin-points of firelight to the enveloping darkness.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in truly poetic prose, G.V. Portus painted his picture of an Australian mining community. Despite his obvious tendency towards romanticism, and the differences imposed upon such settlements by size and location, season

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Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol.VII, part I, chapter on 'The Gold Discoveries' by G.V. Portus, p.252.

and stage of development, this paragraph contains within it much that was true of most gold-fields. Commissioners, police, and sly-grog sellers form the supporting cast on each, and diggers followed much the same pattern of everyday behaviour everywhere. The picture, however, cannot be claimed to give anything more than a vague and general impression of gold-field society. It describes only the early stages of a rush, without theatre, public-house, or restaurant, and with the Commissioner still quartered under canvas. Gold-fields, like time itself, did not stand still, but went on from phase to phase, changing perhaps according to a general pattern, but each retaining a certain individuality.

California had figured prominently in the thoughts of the colonists of recent years. They had seen how gold could transform an empty country into a bustling state whose vigour and drive impressed the world even more than the excesses accompanying such a mushroom growth. Through their newspapers and travellers' tales Australians had a romanticized but clear idea of what was expected of them in the event of gold being discovered in their own country. When Hargraves made his announcement in May his seed was planted in ground that had been well dug and thoroughly prepared, though the rapidity with which the golden beanstalk

grew amazed all and dismayed many who believed their own crops to be in danger of withering under its shadow. The colonists generally did not share this pessimism. Seeing this exotic growth within their own reach - a fairy-tale from a far-off land suddenly re-enacted in all its wonder within their own country - they scrambled to explore and see for themselves, like children on holiday. Every man saw himself in the role of Midas, and gold was ever on his lips until he became disenchanted by cruel experience.

The road westward to the diggings from Sydney was filled with excited gold-seekers as all who could, including 'influential gentlemen' and 'leading merchants', made for the diggings.<sup>2</sup> A Sydney baker announced sadly that 'One of my men has bolted to the digging's (sic), and being short of tools has taken with him the Bakehouse shovels and flour sieve'.<sup>3</sup> The air of vibrant excitement is well conveyed in a report in the Bathurst Free Press of 24 May.

At the present time there are about 1,000 people at the mines, and the number is daily increasing. And when it is considered that Ophir is the centre of an immense circle from which many new trodden roads radiate in all directions, and that a steady stream of human beings is daily flowing from each, some idea may be formed of the rapid increase of digging

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Empire, 17 May 1851.

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Empire, 21 May 1851.

population. About three miles of frontage are occupied with this busy throng. Every village of the surrounding country is emptying itself or sending forth its quota to the great gathering. A few days ago, a band of about a dozen women left Bathurst for the diggings, and since that time several small knots of females have started for that locality, where we are informed they drive a profitable trade by the washing tub. Tents and gunyas are rearing their heads in every quarter, but hundreds receive no other protection from the weather than a few boughs thrown together after the fashion of a black-fellow's mansion. In fact the whole settlement has the appearance of a vast aboriginal camp.<sup>4</sup>

Ships in the harbour lost their crews as sailors, sometimes forfeiting large arrears of wages, joined in the general rush.<sup>5</sup> Sydney suddenly became, according to the Empire's joyfully exaggerated account, completely free from any sort of crime for a while;<sup>6</sup> no doubt the criminal elements had been drawn to the diggings no less strongly than others. The first flush of excitement knew no barriers of class or rank.

Soon, however, news began to return to Sydney of painfully shattered dreams, and of 'the disappointment and suffering which are beginning to be felt by the many persons, who have visited the Diggings, in circumstances unprepared,

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<sup>4</sup> Empire, 27 May 1851 (ext. from Bathurst Free Press, 24 May 1851).

<sup>5</sup> Empire, 27, 30 May 1851.

<sup>6</sup> Empire, 27 May 1851.

or themselves constitutionally unfitted, for such enterprises....'<sup>7</sup> Disillusioned by the hard work, physical discomfort, and lack of immediate success, those unsuited to life on infant gold-fields returned to their homes. Others stayed, many prospered, and gold digging began to develop from being the subject of an exciting excursion for a few days from Sydney, into a major colonial industry, manned by skilled workers. Some months were to pass, however, before the elements of uniformity which this development brought were really established. As yet the gold-fields, by now including the Turon as well as Hargraves' Ophir, were worked in a peaceable manner, 'thereby giving the lie to the wholesale libels which the Californian press has heaped upon Australians', claimed the Bathurst Free Press proudly.<sup>8</sup> This early crime-free stage did not last long. By 12 July the Empire noted in a leader that, now the first excitement had died down, crime was re-appearing in the 'natural' manner.<sup>9</sup> The gold-fields were fast becoming a normal section of colonial life.

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<sup>7</sup> Empire, 28 May 1851.

<sup>8</sup> Empire, 2 July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P., 28 June 1851);  
<sup>4</sup> July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P., 2 July 1851).

<sup>9</sup> Empire, 12 July 1851.



If the first phase of the gold-rush period is defined as that during which the colonists of New South Wales flocked to the diggings, sampled the experience of working there, and quickly decided either to remain or to return to their homes, the second is undoubtedly that which began with the influx of adventurers from neighbouring colonies. This was not long delayed. An Empire leader of 23 June describes the arrival in Sydney within 24 hours alone of seven vessels from South Australia and Victoria, carrying 238 passengers.<sup>10</sup> Presumably most of those drawn to New South Wales by the lure of gold intended to dig for it themselves, and lost no time in making for the diggings. When news arrived a few months later of the riches of Ballarat, many Victorians returned south, motivated, as the Empire's Sofala correspondent uncharitably put it, by the 'natural desire to crow on one's own dunghill....'<sup>11</sup>

Immigration was expected to be greatly stimulated by the gold discoveries,<sup>12</sup> and the colony waited impatiently for the benefits of this to appear. As late as May 1852 - one year after the first rush to Ophir - the Herald was

<sup>10</sup> Empire, 23 June 1851.

<sup>11</sup> Empire, 25 Oct. 1851.

<sup>12</sup> S.M.H., 31 May 1851.

disappointedly commenting on the lack of immigration so far  
 induced by gold.<sup>13</sup> Immigrants trickled in at not much more  
 than the rate of previous years until in September 1852 a  
 rush of a new type suddenly swept into Australia.<sup>14</sup> From  
 all parts of the world they came, though the British were  
 in the great majority. Melbourne was the primary objective,  
 and in the ten years from 1851-61 Victoria's population  
 bounded upwards from a mere 87,345 to 540,322.<sup>15</sup> The gains  
 of New South Wales were not so dramatic, but they are im-  
 pressive enough. A census return taken in March 1851, be-  
 fore the gold rushes, shows a population of 187,243, of whom  
 106,229 were males. Five years later these totals had  
 risen to 266,189 and 147,091 respectively, and in 1861,  
 even allowing for the separation of Queensland, the steady  
 rise was continuing, with a total population of 350,860.<sup>16</sup>

The effect of such a wave of gold-seekers breaking upon  
 Victoria may well be imagined from this summary of its mo-  
 tivating forces by Rev. W. Arthur, a Methodist minister, as  
 quoted in R.M. Martin's Australia.

<sup>13</sup>

S.M.H., 1 May 1852.

<sup>14</sup>

T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, p.572.

<sup>15</sup>

Figures from official Victorian census returns.

<sup>16</sup>

Figures from official N.S.W. census returns.

Men's head were turned with the whirl, and away they plunged, madly diving for gold - a well-behaved, sheep-breeding, sheep-eating, sleek and sober colony, all wool and tallow, comfort and prosperity, became the noisiest country in the world; - talked of, written of, legislated for, envied, abused, praised, coveted, and above all, hurried to - by energy as its own place - by laziness as the shortest road to live without doing anything - by avarice as its heaven - by generosity as the best hope of lifting up the grey head of a ruined father - by money as its market - by poverty as its relief - by theft as the land of plunder - by honesty as a way to pay debts - by vice as an open sphere - by piety as the scene for a mission; - all this rushing in red-hot, and bringing to one point every passion and every project that youth or age, ambition, energy, whim or genius could foment, the whole stirred by the burning hope of gold - gold - gold, has poured itself out - is pouring itself out, on those once peaceful plains, and there is a heaving and sweltering, as when a water-spout is discharged upon the sea.<sup>17</sup>

New South Wales was to some extent protected from such a great inundation as Victoria suffered by this very channeling of the tides of immigration into the southern colony, but the Rev. Mr Arthur's breathless description sums up diggers' motivations north of the Murray as well as those in the south. Ambition, restlessness, and desperation drove men of all types and all classes to a common task. As Russel Ward says, newcomers to the diggings sought to hide their inexperience by adopting the dress and mannerisms of the older bushman class which had become standardized before

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17

R. Montgomery Martin, Australia, p.416.

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1851. But there would appear to be little difference between the personal habits and rough clothing of diggers anywhere, whether in California or Australia. They were, it may be inferred, dictated more by expediency than by preference, though the presence of a desire to conform cannot be denied.

Diggers in New South Wales were generally of a migratory tendency. Where there were settled fields with a large community of permanent diggers it was a matter for comment, though such fields did exist, a notable example being the Braidwood area.<sup>19</sup> New discoveries rapidly drew off the population of other nearby fields. Diggers were ever willing to join a rush to a new field on the strength of the slightest rumour. This tendency seemed to increase rather than the reverse as the years passed by, and the diggers became more of a permanent class than a cross-section of colonial society. Professional diggers, with no fixed home or other occupation, might well be expected to be more vulnerable to rumours of better fields further on. The Port Curtis rush, near Rockhampton, was a perfect example of diggers' rootlessness. Rumours circulated of rich and

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Russel Ward, The Australian Legend, pp.106-8.

19

Sir William Denison, Varieties of Vice-Regal Life, pp.388-9.

extensive deposits of gold there at Canoona, and thousands joined the rush, from Melbourne as well as from Sydney, with no thought for anything else. The Governor of New South Wales, Sir William Denison, was disgusted.

I think these rushes speak most unfavourably for the state of the people who are engaged in them. They appear to be bound by no ties; they leave home, wife, children, carried off by a most intensely selfish spirit; they do not think of any duty which they owe to their country, or to their family, to say nothing of that which they owe to God; but every impulse of their selfish nature is obeyed on the instant....<sup>20</sup>

The Canoona muddle was not helped by the unduly optimistic reports of Captain M.C. O'Connell, the government official in charge of administration of the field. His reports, and those of his colleagues, give glowing accounts of the progress and prospects of the diggings from 26 August well into September, and not until 27 September did he show any sign of worry that the field might not be as promising as first it seemed. One week later he tells of a majority of diggers wishing to return south.

It is evident that a complete panic has taken possession of the minds of all those who have hurriedly quitted other occupations in Sydney to hasten hither, tempted by the accounts of the quantities of gold obtained by the first diggers at Canoona; and this feeling of alarm at finding

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Denison, pp.453-4.

themselves so far from their homes, without the facility of picking up gold immediately on their arrival, has proceeded to such an extent that the stream of immigration has almost entirely ceased....'21

He goes on to request government aid in further exploring the area around in order to make new ground available for the destitute to work upon. Instead, the Victorian government sent a steamer to bring back those who wished to return. In New South Wales the emergency was met by a public fund to assist diggers to be returned to Sydney and resettled in employment upon the gold-fields and elsewhere in the colony, to which diggers as well as others subscribed liberally.<sup>22</sup>

O'Connell's report as quoted above appears to indicate that many of those involved in the Port Curtis rush were not regular diggers, but inhabitants of Sydney. Regular diggers did not learn the lesson so painfully illustrated, however. Port Curtis was but the forerunner of a long series of similar rushes, each more or less depopulating the previous one. Kiandra was the centre of attraction in 1859-60, Lambing Flat 1860-1, Forbes in 1861, then Grenfell,

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21

Reports of O'Connell, W. Hutchinson, and W.H. Wiseman from Port Curtis diggings, reprinted in Journal of Legislative Council of New South Wales, Session 1858, vol.III, pp.645, 647, 653, 664.

22

S.M.H., 27, 29 Oct., 6 Nov. (ext. from B.F.P.), 13 Nov., 16 Nov. (ext. from B.F.P.), 20, 22 Nov., 4 Dec. (ext. from Mudgee Newspaper) 1851.

Gulgong, Hill End and Parkes. During the sixties and early seventies mining was predominantly a permanent occupation and a nomadic one, though a small group of diggers settled and remained at each old site, eking out digging profits with vegetable gardens.

Since most professional diggers were nomadic, theirs tended to be a rough, masculine life. Women were present at early stages of rushes, but generally the presence of a large number of women was a sign of a gold-field passing on from its roaring days to a more settled period. Families were an encumbrance which the 'classical' digger, with restless longing for a free and hearty life, could ill afford to bear. Those who lived off the diggers, rather than off the diggings, could more easily raise families, since theirs were the more certain profits, and their advent in numbers to a gold-field generally signified its prosperity. The first women on the fields were generally camp-followers, harlots, and later dancing girls, followed by the tough pioneer type, as those at the Turon described in the Empire in September 1851.<sup>23</sup> Less than three months later the maturity of that field was proclaimed by the arrival of a better class. 'Storekeepers of respectability are gradually

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Empire, 29, 30 Sept. 1851.

concentrating their families about them, and well-dressed ladies are now frequently to be seen passing through our streets,' writes the Empire's Sofala correspondent in December.<sup>24</sup> But the 'rushes' proper remained a male preserve, as distinct from mining settlements.

It is fortunate that G. Preshaw was posted to two gold-rush communities in this colony by the Bank of New South Wales, for his writings on them, contained in his book Banking under difficulties, are a pleasure to read, and are of great value in picturing gold-rush society at its height in New South Wales. It was a society which Anthony Trollope, visiting the colony ten years later, would not have recognized as belonging to New South Wales. He, writing of his first visit, observed: 'Victoria was very keen about gold, believed in gold, was willing to trust to gold for her greatness and population. Victoria prided herself on being a gold colony. Let it be so. New South Wales was conscious of a pride in better things.'<sup>25</sup> New South Wales may well have been so conscious and so proud, but Trollope's words would have been derided by the brawling miners of the Snowy Mountains. Preshaw tells of a canvas bank, with a stream

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Empire, 8 Dec. 1851.

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Anthony Trollope, Australia and New Zealand, vol.I, 1883 ed., p.281.



of water running right through the 'building', and with no safe. In explanation he merely says that 'Yates' - the bank agent - 'was a man that did not value personal comfort.' Preshaw valued comfort, and found it at night sharing blankets with three others on the floor of Kidd's Hotel, at a rent of 50/- per week.

At Kiandra the weather was so cold that Kidd's restaurant proved a popular institution, owing to the chance it offered of a temporary escape from the discomfort normally prevailing. There was no distinction between classes at the crowded tables, and noise was continuous. From time to time disputes occurred. 'The aspect of affairs then changed; curses were heard; men became quarrelsome and were violently expelled, till at last the lights were put out for a time. The room cleared up and relighted, was again filled, now with drinkers and gamblers, and lastly, it was covered over, tables and all, with "shakes down".'<sup>26</sup> Apart from the hotels and the circulating library - price 6/8d per month - the only entertainment for the diggers was Carmichael's dance-room, at the Empire Hotel. Preshaw attended on the opening night.

In a room 14 x 20 I found some forty or fifty diggers standing about, smoking, chatting, and dancing. There

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G. Preshaw, Banking under difficulties, pp.53-7.



were only three dance girls, and those who were fortunate enough to secure one as partner must have found it hard work dancing on a floor fully an inch thick in mud. Just fancy fifty diggers coming into a room with their muddy boots, and walking about; what a nice state the floor would be in for dancing. It struck me as a queer sight to see hairy-faced men in pea jackets, and long boots, with pipes in their mouths, dancing together. The dance room was a great attraction, after every dance the landlord expected each girl to entice her partner to the bar, to pay for a drink for himself, his partner, and often-times a friend or two.<sup>27</sup>

Horse racing was popular with the diggers at Kiandra as elsewhere, and Preshaw tells, with a touch of humour, how rowdy gangs organized the results to suit themselves.<sup>28</sup>

The rush moved on to Lambing Flat, and Preshaw followed it in July 1861. It proved to be still more lawless than Kiandra, though the notorious riots of that year had finished. 'When I first went to the Flat, I have often, when snug in bed, heard some poor fellow, who was being eased of his cash, calling out "Murder", "Police". In coming home from the Great Eastern I invariably carried a revolver with me.'<sup>29</sup>

Only the movement of the rush yet again to Forbes improved the social condition at Lambing Flat, indicating perhaps that the parasite classes found easier and better pickings

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Preshaw, p.61.

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Preshaw, p.63.

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Preshaw, p.71.

in rush conditions than in settlements. Certainly society was in a freer state in these frontier conditions, and this would better suit the purposes of the lawless.

Although Kiandra, as a result of its severe climate and difficulty of access, is perhaps an extreme case even for gold-rush centres, which were often beyond the bounds of normal settlement, Preshaw's description of it does hold good for many other centres. The rush came, a township sprang up, dance hall, skittle alley, race-track, and bars appeared. Money flowed as freely as alcohol, violence was common, until rumours of a new strike elsewhere occurred, and the rush moved on. Until it had ceased to be a gold metropolis, no amount of optimism on the part of its inhabitants could ensure permanence for a digging township. When the rush had gone, the town survived only if it was necessary for the commerce and agriculture of the district, like Young. If it was not, it withered and died like Kiandra. There was little difference between the New South Wales rushes of the sixties and the rushes of California and Victoria in so far as digging society was concerned. It was predominantly masculine. Community of interest was shown only when a sufficiently big issue arose, such as Chinese immigration. Otherwise the diggers tended to keep to their work in small groups, eating, drinking, and making very

merry when they could afford it. The police were not over-efficient, but there was never any need to resort to Californian lynch law, which had been necessary there to offset the lack of an efficient law-enforcement body.<sup>30</sup> Isolated from the gold-fields by the great distances of New South Wales, Sydney never became, as Melbourne rapidly did, the focal point of the diggings. In New South Wales no such focal point ever existed, since the diggings were spread over the whole eastern part of the colony - a region some 900 miles long and 250 miles wide. Though this was roughly divided into three regions for administrative purposes, the real divisions were smaller, with a centre such as Braidwood or Armidale for the diggings in its vicinity, and very little sense of any greater community. Only the main rush of the sixties, beginning at Kiandra and rolling northwards from gold-field to gold-field, resembled the Victorian picture of a cohesive body of diggers.

Life in the mining settlements, as distinct from the later standardized rushes, varied of course, from year to year and according to geographical location. A study of reports from and comments on such settlements, however,

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Rodman W. Paul, 'Old Californians in British Gold Fields', Huntingdon Library Quarterly, vol.17, no.2, Feb. 1954.

reveals that there were many points which are common to all, and even a rough pattern to which most eventually conformed. The description of Ophir in the early stages, quoted above,<sup>31</sup> is one which is repeated again and again as great collections of tents and rough huts appeared around the shafts. By July 1851, almost as soon as the new Turon field was opened, in fact, and with an estimated population of only 800-1,000, trade had joined the rush to such an extent that for these few men, scattered over seven or eight miles of frontage, there were reported to be seven or eight stores operating, in addition to retail and butchers' shops. More stores were being built to serve the expected increase in population.<sup>32</sup> Ten weeks later huts and substantial tents were reported to be springing up rapidly at the same spot, now known as the township of Sofala, while the Empire correspondent noted great changes in the facilities of the township itself.

Facing the Post Office, in the principal street, George-Street, an hotel has been built, and although it of course cannot vie in bulk with the massive structure which rises in architectural grandeur in the centre of your metropolis, yet its comely simplicity and acknowledged utility, deservedly merits and meets with encouragement. The 'Royal

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31

See pp.18-19 above, and note 4.

32

Empire, 9 July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

Hotel' at Sofala is kept by Mr S.A. Wood, late of New Zealand. In addition to comparatively extensive stabling, the 'Royal' has its coffee room, bed chambers, and those other conveniences requisite for the gentlemen of travel.<sup>33</sup>

While diggers generally were content to live in their tents in the early days, boarding-houses and hotels such as the one described above were rapidly erected on all the diggings.<sup>34</sup> Sofala itself advanced still further with the report on 28 October that another wing was being added to the Royal Hotel, and that a 'Subscription Reading Room' was being erected.<sup>35</sup> The township grew according to no plan. There had indeed been a plan, for when the Turon field had first been discovered the government had the township surveyed and several town allotments had been put up to auction. Few were purchased or built upon. Few followed the government plan.

On account of the distance of the water from the laid out streets, the new comers took no notice whatever of the map of the town, but built and settled themselves in the most convenient place they could find near the river.

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Empire, 29 Sept. 1851.

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Empire, 25 June, 9, 11 July (all ext. from B.F.P.), 31 July, 21, 28 Oct. 1851; S.M.H., 17 Sept., 6 Nov. (ext. from B.F.P.), 9 Dec. 1851.

35

Empire, 28 Oct. 1851.

In other words, the actual site of the town was that of the projected government reserve.<sup>36</sup> So much for planned development!

While a settlement was flourishing, the diggers did not lack sources of entertainment. Travelling circuses and minstrel shows toured the various gold-fields to gather their share of the rapidly-circulating produce of the diggings.<sup>37</sup> Not for long were the diggers to rely on hurdy-gurdy, Punch and Judy, and improvised concerts,<sup>38</sup> though a projected theatre at Sofala had to be abandoned in November 1851, its timber being sold to build an Anglican church.<sup>39</sup> Organized prize-fights were popular in the masculine atmosphere of the early diggings, and attempts by the forces of the law to stamp it out appear to have met with no success.<sup>40</sup> Turon diggers showed a blood-lust unusual even for the

<sup>36</sup> S.M.H., 30 June 1857.

<sup>37</sup> Empire, 13 Oct., 11 Nov., 26 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 4 Nov., 23 Dec. 1851, 5 Feb., 15, 24 April 1852.

<sup>38</sup> Empire, 10 June (2nd ed., ext. from B.F.P.), 16 July (ext. from B.F.P.) 1851.

<sup>39</sup> Empire, 11 Nov. 1851.

<sup>40</sup> Empire, 23 July, 6, 15, 22 Aug., 7 Oct. (all ext. from B.F.P.) 1851, 16 Jan., 3 Feb. 1852; S.M.H., 1 Sept. 1851, 2 Jan., 2 Feb., 16 March 1852.

gold-fields when in January 1852 they gathered excitedly around to see an organized fight between a sheep-dog and a bull-dog.<sup>41</sup>

For every mining township, however, the day eventually came when skittle-alley and billiard-room were silent, the bulk of the diggers having moved on, and those remaining behind being too sober-minded or too poor to turn their minds to lighter things.

During the last three months the inhabitants of the Lachlan have been put to their wits' end to find anything amusing. Previously there had been theatres in existence where the multitude could pass an evening and obtain a shilling's worth of tragedy or comedy, and bad grog at sixpence a glass. Latterly, matters are assuming a more serious turn, and religious tea meetings and Christian associations are coming into vogue. During the prosperous days of the town the people were given to frivolity and excesses of various kinds; but, as adversity approaches, they seem to fly for refuge to something more substantial and serious.<sup>42</sup>

But before such oppressive mid-Victorian morality overtook them in their declining years, the gold-fields were the scene of such excesses as to make it almost a natural reaction to expect. Where there were diggers there was alcohol, and if it could not be obtained legally there were

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S.M.H., 23 Jan. 1852 (ext. from B.F.P.)

42

S.M.H., 30 March 1863.



sly-grog sellers a-plenty to supply it. The first major seizure of illicit alcohol was made at the beginning of July 1851 in Ophir, but after this, despite all official efforts, the press is liberally sprinkled with reports of the activities of sly-grog sellers. The evil grew to such an extent that Archbishop Polding, speaking at the Turon in October 1851, condemned all pedlars of the 'poison'. Furthermore, he assured his flock that 'upon any clear proof being established to fix any Roman Catholic with selling upon the sly, the offender should without respect to person or circumstance, be denounced from the altar, and even be denied the right of Christian burial'.<sup>43</sup> His Grace's words seemed to check the sly-grog trade for a while,<sup>44</sup> but the opportunities for rapid accumulation of wealth proved too tempting for such a check to be permanent. Only the spread of licensed public-houses succeeded where the Church had failed, and unhealthy drunkenness caused by bad grog was succeeded by the only slightly lesser evil of normal drunkenness from unadulterated liquor. Drunkenness in itself was ineradicable, and no strong temperance movement appears to have arisen of the gold-fields to counter it.

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Empire, 13 Oct. 1851.

44

Empire, 13 Oct. 1851.

Mining was not permitted on a Sunday, and this came to be the general recreation day on the diggings. Apart from drinking, gambling appears to have been the most popular pastime,<sup>45</sup> with 'two-up'<sup>46</sup> early making its appearance. The evil which aroused most indignation was neither of these, nor was it prize-fighting, brawling, and other manly sports. It was Sunday trading. Being a non-working day, it was the most convenient for the diggers to sell their gold to storekeepers and to buy provisions. Most stores were open to accommodate them.<sup>47</sup> From time to time public opinion and the press were so outspoken in their disapproval that the practice stopped, only to begin again shortly after.<sup>48</sup> In October 1851 all Turon storekeepers were reported to have been persuaded to sign a pledge not to open their establishments on Sundays,<sup>49</sup> but even this did not prove permanently binding.

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Empire, 24 June (2nd ed.), 11, 23 July, 6, 13, 15, 27 Aug. (all ext. from B.F.P.), 17 Sept., 7 Oct., 23 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 7 July, 11, 22 Aug., 1 Sept., 6 Dec. 1851.

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Empire, 4 July 1851.

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Empire, 6 July, 22, 27 Aug. 1851 (all ext. from B.F.P.), et al.

48

Empire, 26 Sept. 1851.

49

Empire, 21 Oct. 1851.

In religious observance on the diggings, as in much else, the diggers began eagerly only to fade as time went on. It is likely that the religious enthusiasm of the early years, when congregations were large and clergymen relatively plentiful, was a result of the mixed nature of the gold-fields population, and the continuation of long-used habit.<sup>50</sup> The gold-fields were in every person's thoughts, and it was natural that they should early be visited by such eminent clerics as John Dunmore Lang, and the Anglican Bishop and Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney.<sup>51</sup> The Presbyterian Synod was quick to provide a roster of clergymen for duty at the diggings.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to find reasons why diggers should be more enthusiastic over church attendance than others elsewhere in the colony, and easy to think of many reasons why their attendance should be less frequent, distracted as they could be by the many Sunday entertainments on a populous field. Much lip-service was paid to matters religious by the press, but it is probable that religion, except as an exercise in public argument,

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Empire, 26 June, 30 Sept., 13, 15, 21 Oct., 10, 14, 21, 28 Nov., 9, 13, 27 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 20 June, 1 Aug., 6 Nov. 1851, 20 Jan. 1852.

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Empire, 10, 13 Oct., 10, 14 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 6, 18 Nov. 1851.

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S.M.H., 29 Aug., 1851.

or as a novelty for a while, played no unusually great part in the lives of those involved in the rushes, while in older, quieter mining settlements religious duties were performed as automatically as elsewhere. Certainly the gold-rushes provided a good opportunity for evangelism, but the digger was essentially a man of no moderation, and neither the successful nor the failures are men the most receptive to argument.

Gold-rushes normally involved alluvial fields. As these became worked out more and more attention was given to the exploitation of reef and matrix gold, often buried deep in the earth. Here the individual digger, or the small group, was powerless, since even when the shaft had been sunk and gold-bearing rock brought to the surface, the gold itself could only be obtained by crushing and processing - an expensive operation in many cases, where the gold yield was often as low as one ounce per ton of quartz or less. It could only be made profitable by company mining, with considerable capital resources. The floating of companies provided ideal chances for swindlers and stock-jobbers to reap their profits from the unwary. The Sydney newspapers warned their readers against plunging too heavily into the many companies being formed in England with the avowed intent of working Australian gold-fields. Many of them were of

dubious value, as could be seen from titles such as the 'Lake Bathurst Gold Mining Company'. Many were undoubtedly share-promoters' bubbles.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, when the Great Nugget Vein Company's shares were offered in Sydney in July 1852, applications for them greatly exceeded the number available.<sup>54</sup>

Company mining had operated from the beginning of New South Wales gold era.<sup>55</sup> From the first there was some grumbling from alluvial miners over company 'monopolies' of large tracts of land,<sup>56</sup> but these did not yet amount to much. The incident is interesting because it revealed an unexpected champion for the companies in the shape of an Empire leader-writer.<sup>57</sup> The government recognized the need for capitalized mining by making considerable allowance for them in the framing of regulations for the gold-fields. This form of mining was never directly concerned with a gold-rush, and was not so important in the creation of the

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Empire, 24 May, 29, 30 June 1852; S.M.H., 13 Feb., 18, 19 March, 18, 21, 29 May, 4 June, 23, 26 July 1852.

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S.M.H., 31 July 1852.

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Empire, 21 Aug., 9 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 11 Dec. 1851.

56

Empire, 6 Jan. 1852.

57

Empire, 7 Jan. 1852.

'digger legend' as in the later movement towards organized labour in New South Wales. By its division of capital and labour it changed the direction of the digger's self-interest, and gold-digging became relegated almost to the status of a rural trade. Company mining brought a new look to the gold-fields, as this report shows of the Araluen diggings.

...they are more like some gigantic railway works than anything else you can conceive. The extensive excavations, water wheels, and engines, the great amount of labour employed does certainly give the place a very animated appearance.<sup>58</sup>

The increasing importance of quartz mining is shown by  
59  
the following table of mechanization.

	1868		1869		1870		1871		1872		1873	
	Al.	Q.	Al.	Q.	Al.	Q.	Al.	Q.	Al.	Q.	Al.	Q.
Steam engines	28	52	27	49	25	62	30	71	33	83	24	43
Crushing machines		66		66		72		76		104		148

Note: abbreviations in above table: Al. - alluvial mining  
Q. - quartz mining

It is with the alluvial digger that we are principally  
60  
concerned, however. Of the thousands of men more or less

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S.M.H., 25 Jan. 1861.

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Figures from Statistical Register of New South Wales, 1868-73.

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Census return for 1856 gives total number of diggers as 4,451; for 1861, 20,365. No information as to occupation is contained in the 1871 census return.

permanently employed in digging for gold, little can be said if the intention is to classify or standardize all diggers. However, there are common characteristics, and in tracing these the risk must be taken of over-generalization. Rather than attempting to remove the obvious signs of hard manual labour which their clothing and general appearance proclaimed, the diggers tended, in a self-conscious way, to assert it. Their bluff succeeded in such a way that their appearance caused little comment after the nearly rushes, save that their red or blue shirts and 'California' or cabbage-tree hats were remarked from time to time. It would seem that they attempted to identify themselves with the herd in their dress, at least in the early years, after which it became a genuine characteristic rather than an assumed mannerism. This description, written in July 1851, holds good of the mass of New South Wales diggers:

The character of the people is essentially nomadic, but whether if the pursuit of gold finding were constantly followed, it would improve, is exceedingly doubtful. The want of female society, the general neglect of the person, and the absence of the numberless aids to civilisation which are constantly in operation in towns and villages, do much towards roughening the whole man. The dress, comprising the hunting shirt, California hat, broad belt, and the almost universal prevalence of moustachios, give the digging population a very un-English appearance. A growing taste for 'imperials' is manifested amongst the dandy diggers. So far as externals are concerned, we are fast losing our national characteristics, and aping the barbarians

of the continent. Some of our miners, upon whom nature has been lavish in the matter of hair, look much more like Don Cossacks than Englishmen.<sup>61</sup>

Conformism in dress, then, would appear to be a digger characteristic. Rough language and hard drinking suggest a conscious or unconscious conformism of behaviour to a certain degree. The digger mass which formed the most part of the continuous gold-rush of the sixties can perhaps best be likened to an army, where the same superficial conformity and the same sense of occupational community prevail. Like an army too the mass moved across the countryside, with satellite and parasite settlements springing up where they halted in the hope of profiting from their presence. When the digger army moved on, these settlements were thrown upon their own resources, though often their founders preferred to follow in the wake of the advance than vegetate in the bush alone. Like the soldier, the digger had chosen a predominantly masculine society, with a life of hardships. While he remained with the digger army conformity was his path to what comfort and fellowship he could find within the group. His destiny, like that of the soldier, was beyond his control unless he broke from the group. Many continued in this life until the advance of company mining

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61

Empire, 25 July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).



and the decline of alluvial fields forced them to change. Their life as members of the digger caste had many compensations, but very little of the romance attributed to it by later generations, or lent to it by the pen of Professor Portus.

## Chapter 3

### ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT

During the weeks after Hargraves' triumphant announcement in May excitement in Sydney soared as the desire spread to share in the riches to be won in the west, and it soon appeared that all who were able were filled with a determination to join in the stampede from the capital.<sup>1</sup> As they hurried off, ill-equipped and ignorant of the nature of their task, often losing all sense of reason and proportion in their desire to gather a quick fortune, it appeared to those who fancied themselves wiser that the fruits of sixty years of labour in building in New South Wales an ordered British community were to be cast away in the current infatuation with gold.<sup>2</sup> In a community which had been accustomed, from the very nature of its settlement, to protection and direction from a paternal government in all major developments, eyes were now turned towards that body in the hope that it would bring order out of the present

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<sup>1</sup> Empire, 17, 19 May, 20 May (ext. from B.F.P.), 28 May 1851.

<sup>2</sup> S.M.H., 16, 17 May 1851.

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chaos. For the government this was no easy task. The emergency came at a time when the old Legislative Council had been dissolved, and before a new council, under the provision of the 1850 Australian Colonies Government Act, had been elected. All weight of responsibility therefore lay upon the Executive, which, since no other British colony had been the scene of extensive gold discoveries, was destitute of any guiding precedent to help decide its course. And all the time the example of social and economic confusion in California, resulting from a lack of adequate central organization, stood before FitzRoy and Deas Thomson as a warning against the dangers of delay. Sir William Denison, then Governor of Van Diemen's Land, wrote of the dangers in a warning letter to Earl Grey

Here we are protected from the evil to a certain extent by the presence of convicts, a class who cannot leave the colony; but should a sudden change in the policy of the government put a stop to transportation, we shall feel it most deeply in the ruin of most of the landed proprietors, who form now the basis of a sound and healthy population.

New South Wales, too, is as much interested as we are in the maintenance of the system, for unless she can procure the necessaries of life from us, the population must be reduced to great distress from actual want of food.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>  
S.M.H., 16, 17, 26 May 1851.

<sup>4</sup>  
Denison, p.159.

Government action must be swift and decisive if the colony was to be rescued from confusion and disorder. While an official announcement was being prepared, mounted police were moved to Bathurst from Sydney as quickly as possible to assist the local constabulary,<sup>5</sup> and the Bathurst police were awarded an immediate increase in pay from 2/6d to 4/6d per diem, to counter the attractions of the gold-fields and to meet the rapidly rising cost of living in their vicinity.<sup>6</sup> William Spain, the newly-appointed Inspector-General of Police, was in the district to arrange as far as possible for the re-organization of the available police to meet the emergency,<sup>7</sup> and a troop of police under Captain Edward M. Battye was stationed at Black Heath to patrol the Penrith-Bathurst section of the Western road.<sup>8</sup>

On 22 May the government was ready to declare its policy, with a proclamation asserting Crown sovereignty over 'all Mines of Gold in its natural place of deposit... whether on the lands of the Queen or of any of her Majesty's subjects'. It was further stated that

<sup>5</sup> Empire, 19 May 1851.

<sup>6</sup> S.M.H., 23 May 1851.

<sup>7</sup> Empire, 20 May 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>8</sup> Empire, 30 May 1851.



all persons who shall take from any Lands within the said Territory (of New South Wales), any Gold Metal, or Ore containing Gold, or who within any of the Waste Lands which have not yet been alienated by the Crown, shall dig for and disturb the soil in search of such Gold Metal or Ore, without having been duly authorised in that behalf, by Her Majesty's Colonial Government, will be prosecuted, both Criminally and Civilly, as the law allows.<sup>9</sup>

The following day was published a list of Provisional Regu-<sup>10</sup>lations under which gold-digging would be permitted. John R. Hardy, Police Magistrate at Parramatta, was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Gold Districts, with orders to proceed immediately to the diggings to implement the regulations,<sup>11</sup> and five days later, on 28 May, Charles H. Green was sent to help him as Assistant Commissioner.<sup>12</sup> As confirmation was received of the extension of the known auriferous area into the Turon valley in July, and to Abercrombie and Araluen further south during the following months, it was found necessary to appoint another seven Assistant Commissioners to officiate at the various digging centres before the end of the year,<sup>13</sup> and a body of Gold

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<sup>9</sup> Empire, 23 May 1851.

<sup>10</sup> Empire, 24 May 1851; F. Lancelott, Australia as it is, vol. I, pp.294-5.

<sup>11</sup> Lancelott, p.301; New South Wales Blue Book, 1851.

<sup>12</sup> N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851.

<sup>13</sup> N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851.

Police was formed to assist them.<sup>14</sup> Theoretically the Commissioner was to be accompanied by one sergeant and a trooper, and each Assistant Commissioner by one sergeant, four mounted troopers, and five dismounted, though few of these officials had received their full complement of men<sup>15</sup> by the end of 1851.

Thus far the government had acted well and wisely. In establishing a system of administration by commissioners it was following the practice normally used in matters involving Crown Lands, and in this way arrangements could be made for any expansion or collapse of the still uncertain gold-digging industry merely by increasing or reducing the staff of officials, without any major disturbance in the composition of the public service which might have arisen in the event of establishing a new department. The pattern of administration thus laid down was in the main followed until the establishment of a separate Mines Department took responsibility for the gold-fields out of the hands of the Department of Lands in 1874. It was closely followed by Victoria when she too became a gold-producing colony a few months

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14

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851.

15

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851.

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later, though the southern colony was soon to take the lead in adapting the system to deal more adequately with changes in the nature of the industry. Basically the system adopted by New South Wales in those early days of gold-mining was sound, but its satisfactory operation inevitably depended upon the selection of honest and competent commissioners, upon the equitable, just, and realistic nature of the regulations under which they must work, and upon the readiness of the diggers to co-operate. The absence of one or more of these factors was a prime cause of all trouble or discontent at the diggings, unsuitable regulations being the most common reason for dissatisfaction.

In considering its actions the government had first to decide upon the spheres and limits wherein lay its own obligations and duties, and a clear indication of what it considered these to be appeared in the first list of Provisional Regulations. Existing interests which were of great importance to the colony must be preserved and protected as far as possible. This meant, above all else, the vital wool-growing industry, but withdrawal of labour to the gold-fields threatened the well-being of city employer as well as pastoralist. The regulations included a clause

requiring the production of a clearance certificate from the applicant's former employer, or equally satisfactory evidence that he was not 'a person improperly absent from hired service' before a licence to dig could be issued.<sup>17</sup> This precaution was reinforced by the determination of certain magistrates to inflict the severest penalties under the Masters and Servants Acts upon errant labourers.<sup>18</sup> Much opposition to these measures was expressed both on the diggings and in the columns of the self-appointed diggers' champion, the Empire,<sup>19</sup> and their impracticability was recognized after a few months when the commissioners, satisfied to issue licences to all who sought them, ceased to question eligibility.<sup>20</sup> The prohibition against deserters was still continued in the first regulations issued under the 1852 Gold Fields Act,<sup>21</sup> but remained almost a dead letter in practice. Henceforth employers, including the government itself, had to meet the competition of the gold-fields by offering higher wages. Salaries of all government

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<sup>17</sup> Empire, 24 May 1851.

<sup>18</sup> S.M.H., 27 Nov. 1851.

<sup>19</sup> Empire, 26, 28 May 1851.

<sup>20</sup> S.M.H., 25 Oct. 1852.

<sup>21</sup> S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1853.



officers in receipt of less than £150 per annum were temporarily increased by 25 per cent, and as a further precaution it was announced that any person holding a government appointment who deserted his post during the emergency, should thereby be precluded from any further employment by the government. With a slight fall in the cost of living as a pretext, these increases in official salaries were discontinued on 28 June, as soon as the first wave of excitement was over. Only the police retained their increased pay rates. The proclamation against the re-employment of deserters, however, continued in full force. To safeguard landowners from unrestricted invasion of their property by hordes of gold-seekers, the regulations included a provision that in the case of private lands held in fee simple, licences to dig for gold were to be issued only to the proprietor or to persons duly authorized by him.

Those sections of the Provisional Regulations which instituted the payment of a digger's licence fee were perhaps the most unpopular so far as the diggers themselves were concerned. The administration and policing of the gold-fields entailed increased government expenditure, and it determined to offset this by raising revenue from the

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S.M.H., 8 May 1852, 'Retrospect of the Australian Gold Discovery, No.1'.

new industry. The simplest method was the imposition of a direct charge upon all resident at the diggings of a fixed sum which at first was set at 30/- per month, to be collected in advance by the commissioner.<sup>23</sup> Few could honestly deny the justice of making the diggers pay the costs of their own protection in circumstances where such protection would not otherwise have been available, but the object of imposing a licence fee was not confined to the mere collection of such a revenue. By making the issue of a licence conditional upon the production of a certificate of good character it was hoped that the criminal element at the diggings would be kept at a minimum, and that labourers with other obligations would be prevented from deserting en masse to try gold-digging.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it was argued by some - and their view received the blessing of the Sydney Morning Herald - that the high cost of the licence would discourage many from leaving a job where they enjoyed a reasonable degree of security to endanger the security of the colony by flocking to the gold-fields. In any case, it was argued, as complaints against the magnitude of the fee began to make themselves heard, diggers who could not afford to pay

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23

Empire, 24 May 1851.

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S.M.H., 16, 17 May 1851.

the sum of 30/- per month out of their earnings were thereby proved to be inefficient, and would be far better employed at their accustomed occupations.<sup>25</sup> Such arguments were little heeded in the first excited rush to the diggings. After the initial flush of enthusiasm it is very likely that the high cost of licence fees combined, with the wearing out of the glamorous veneer which at first attached to the idea of digging for gold, to discourage many. Diggers who through ill fortune or inefficiency had failed to profit relinquished their ideas of a hastily acquired fortune to return, sadder if not wiser, to their homes.

Tales of ingenious methods of evading payment of the licence fee were common,<sup>26</sup> and at the Havilah field Assistant Commissioner Green countered the diggers' blunt refusal to pay by closing the diggings.<sup>27</sup> When the industry settled down, however, evasion does not appear to have been the rule amongst bona fide diggers, since any claim which proved to be at all productive was likely to be 'jumped' if its owner were found to be working without a licence.<sup>28</sup> Despite its

<sup>25</sup>

S.M.H., 6 June 1851.

<sup>26</sup>

Empire, 22 Aug. 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.), 26 July 1852;  
S.M.H., 14, 26 Feb. 1853.

<sup>27</sup>

Empire, 23 July (ext. from B.F.P.), 25 July 1851.

<sup>28</sup>

S.M.H., 4 Oct. 1851; 20 Sept. 1852.



oft-quoted unpopularity amongst the diggers, the licence fee continued in existence until March 1857, having been reduced from 30/- to 10/- per month in September 1853. Hitherto it had been principally a device for raising revenue, but its function as a protection for the genuine digger against exploitation and fraud by others was recognized - if not enhanced - by its replacement in 1857 by a 'miner's right', costing only 10/- per annum.<sup>29</sup> The loss in revenue from the adoption of this measure was made up by the imposition of an export duty on gold of 2/6d per ounce.<sup>30</sup>

The monthly licence passed away with but few mourners. It had proved to be a most serious obstacle to the smooth running of gold-fields administration, for commissioners and troopers had to spend an inordinate amount of time issuing licences and in hunting down unlicensed diggers.<sup>31</sup> An attempt to simplify their task in November 1851 at the Turon when diggers were required to call at the camp to buy their licences, was greeted with a marked lack of enthusiasm by those who now had to waste valuable working time waiting

<sup>29</sup>

S.M.H., 29 Nov. 1856.

<sup>30</sup>

S.M.H., 17 Jan. 1857.

<sup>31</sup>

Empire, 10 Oct. 1851; S.M.H., 18 March 1853, 31 Jan. 1855 (ext. from B.F.P.).

to be served at the commissioner's tent.<sup>32</sup> Technically, until the beginning of 1853 no person was exempt from payment of the fee if he lived and worked in the vicinity of a gold-field, but under the Gold Fields Act of 1852, women, children under 14 years of age, prospectors, and persons engaged in pastoral or agricultural pursuits were excused,<sup>33</sup> and by an amendment in September 1853 clergymen, civil servants, schoolmasters, sick persons, and servants were added to the list of exemptions.<sup>34</sup> A constant source of grievance during the six years in which they were collected, licence fees continued to be imposed by the New South Wales government until more than two years after the Eureka riot at Ballarat had demonstrated to the Victorian government the diggers' views on the matter.<sup>35</sup> In abolishing the licences in March 1857 the older colony was merely following the example of her southern neighbour, where a gold export duty had in 1855 replaced the revenue from licence fees, and where

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Empire, 7, 14, 26 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 17 Nov. 1851.

33

Empire, 25 Dec. 1852.

34

S.M.H., 1 Oct. 1853.

35

Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand, Eureka Supplement, Nov. 1954.

it had been realized so much earlier that a good deal of the income from licences was consumed by the cost of collection.<sup>36</sup>

In the absence of a Legislative Council all provision for the management of the gold-fields had had to be made by proclamation. Thus the revenue from this quarter became the property of the Crown, since it had not been voted by the Council. When challenged, however, the government did not argue this in support of keeping control of gold revenue, but sheltered behind the excuse that since they were derived from Crown Lands, all proceeds from royalties on matrix gold, escort charges, and the sale of licences belonged to the Crown in the same manner as other revenue from Crown Lands.<sup>37</sup> Since the latter had been reserved from colonial control by express command from the Imperial government, it alleged that FitzRoy's government had no discretion in the matter, and that control of the gold revenue could not be surrendered to the Legislative Council. Wentworth in September made a magnificent speech in the Council, refuting the government's claims,<sup>38</sup> but the issue was settled two days

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<sup>36</sup> S.M.H., 31 Jan. 1855.

<sup>37</sup> S.M.H., 8 Sept. 1852.

<sup>38</sup> S.M.H., 8 Sept. 1852.

later by the arrival of a despatch from Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir John Pakington, handing over to the colony control of all revenue from Crown Lands.<sup>39</sup> By the government's own argument it now had the power to turn over to the legislature this control, but it hesitated, and the elected members saw their chance to strike a telling blow against what they called undue government control over the colony's financial affairs. On 29 October 1851, in a debate on the Annual Financial Message, Stuart A. Donaldson moved that the council should not vote one shilling towards the increased expenditure occasioned by the gold discovery. Since the revenue derived from the sale of licences was entirely under the control of the government, he declared, the House, representing the people, must refuse any responsibility whatever for defraying expenses attendant upon the transmission of gold, the establishment of a staff of gold commissioners, or the enlargement of the police force. The council supported him by a majority of 25 to 11, every elective member present voting for this amendment. When the House went into committee, every item which could in any way be referred to the gold discovery was at once struck out, and the government was left to provide for all the

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<sup>39</sup>

S.M.H., 10, 11 Sept. 1852.

increased expenditure out of the Crown Revenue.<sup>40</sup> The  
 elected members had made their point, and in December 1852  
 the council formally accepted responsibility for gold-fields  
 affairs by passing the first Gold Fields Management Act.<sup>41</sup>

The primary task confronting the government in its  
 formulation of a gold-fields policy had been one of organiz-  
 ing a system of management. The example of chaos in Cali-  
 fornia was too close and too vivid for those concerned with  
 the welfare of New South Wales not to feel a certain degree  
 of alarm lest similar occurrences should take place within  
 the colony. The government's action in deploying available  
 police in the vicinity of the diggings at the earliest  
 opportunity showed its determination that the situation  
 should not be allowed to get out of hand, and there was no  
 lack of support for this policy from conservative elements.  
 Digging communities, whose outstanding characteristic during  
 rush conditions was their instability, had, it was argued,  
 to be strictly controlled as well for their own benefit as  
 for the well-being of the colony as a whole.<sup>42</sup> In its  
 determination to preserve good order, the government went

<sup>40</sup> Empire, 24 Nov. 1852.

<sup>41</sup> S.M.H., 24 Dec. 1852.

<sup>42</sup> Empire, 13 Oct 1851; S.M.H., 16 May, 6 June 1851.



further than the mere provision of police for the protection of life and property. Unlicensed sale of spirituous liquors was prohibited on or in the neighbourhood of the gold-fields.<sup>43</sup> Drunkenness had long been a major blot on colonial society, and it was soundly reasoned that its banishment from the diggings would make the task of management easier. Prohibition was easier than abolition, however, and there were many who were prepared to supply illegally the alcohol which could not be obtained legitimately. Soon every field had its full quota of sly-grog establishments, many of them retailing a mixture which was far more harmful to its consumers than plain brandy or rum. Restriction's only contribution to society was the establishment of meeting-places for the lawless at the sly-grog shops, and the consequent creation of much additional work for commissioners<sup>44</sup> and police.

In response to popular demand the government in July 1851 extended its responsibilities by undertaking the task of conveying gold from the western diggings to Sydney, and on 2 July advertised for the supply of horses and drivers

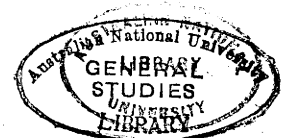
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43

Empire, 11 July, 27 Nov. 1851.

44

S.M.H., 24 Dec. 1851, 23 Jan (ext. from B.F.P., 5 Feb. 1852.



for a proposed escort conveyance.<sup>45</sup> No satisfactory tenders were received, and the first consignments were sent later that month in the mail coach, escorted by police.<sup>46</sup> The first southern escort from Braidwood began operations on 24 November, in a vehicle provided by Andrew Badgery.<sup>47</sup> In July 1852 an escort was provided for the northern mail,<sup>48</sup> and in the same month the Legislative Council debated a plan to establish a service between the Victorian gold-fields and Sydney,<sup>49</sup> but the suggestion was not acted upon until later the Sydney Gold Escort Company was formed privately for this purpose.<sup>50</sup> The first gold escort in the north began operations between the northern diggings and Tamworth at about the same time.<sup>51</sup> In the early years the gold was usually carried by a contractor, with a police guard.<sup>52</sup> The first charge, in 1851, for the conveyance of

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S.M.H., 2 July 1851.

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S.M.H., 25 July 1851.

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Empire, 29 Nov. 1851.

48

S.M.H., 10 July 1852.

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S.M.H., 17 July 1852.

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S.M.H., 1 Dec. 1852, Supplement; 14 Jan. 1853.

51

S.M.H., 28 July 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury).

52

Empire, 29 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 27 March, 19 July 1852.

gold to Sydney was 1 per cent, and in 1852 provision was made for the carriage of banknotes under the same conditions. By 1856, when gold was being worked in widely scattered regions, further escorts were operating from Mackerawa in the west, and Armidale and Rocky River in the north, and the charge was reduced in September of that year to 8d per ounce for the conveyance of gold, no change being made in the rate for banknotes. On 24 July 1857 it was declared that all gold which was sent down to the Mint for coinage, and the proceeds of such gold were to be transmitted free of charge by the escort. Charges for notes and specie, not being the proceeds of gold sent to the Mint for coinage, were reduced in 1858 and 1859 to one-fourth per cent. With such low charges the escort service could not possibly show a profit, and in 1864 the Colonial Treasurer at last declared that the situation was most unsatisfactory, with the escort operating at a considerable loss.<sup>53</sup> On 30 August of that year the Executive Council accepted and endorsed his proposal 'that a charge of 8d per ounce should be made for the conveyance of gold between intermediate stations, in whatever direction, and for whatever distance it may be

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J.L.C., 1861-2, vol.VIII, p.344, papers relating to escort fees.

conveyed'.<sup>54</sup> This re-introduction of escort charges proved most unpopular on the gold-fields, and was claimed in a Herald leader to have been instrumental in the defeat of the government candidates in the gold-fields constituencies in the next general election.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it was not the escort charge against which most agitation was directed. Much more unpopular was the flat refusal of the government to accept any responsibility whatsoever for loss or theft of gold or money entrusted to the escorts, even where it could be proved that the loss was attributable to the care-<sup>56</sup> lessness or dishonesty of government employees. Agitation here proved fruitless, and since little attempt was made by private concerns to exercise their right of competition with the government in the escort business, the latter could not thereby be forced to accept the desired responsibility.<sup>57</sup> Consignments were nevertheless fairly safe when in the care of the escort, for in the whole period up to 1874 only one successful attempt at robbery was made, when the Lachlan escort was attacked in June 1872. One

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54

J.L.C., 1861-2, vol.VIII, p.350.

55

S.M.H., 3 May 1865; J.L.C., 1861-2, vol.VIII, p.346.

56

S.M.H., 29 April, 3 May, 29 Nov., 1865, 4 Dec. 1867.

57

S.M.H., 3 May 1865.

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policeman was shot dead during the attack. The police soon managed to find a considerable proportion of the stolen gold, and later to capture the robbers, who were duly  
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punished.

Closely bound up with the story of the gold escorts is that of the Sydney Branch Mint. As early as December 1851 the possibility and desirability of establishing such an institution, together with an Assay Office, was being dis-  
60  
cussed in the columns of the Empire, but the Sydney Mint  
61  
was not opened until 14 May 1855. It had been requested by the inhabitants of New South Wales for the benefit of their own colony, and was maintained at the expense of that colony alone, with no subsidy from either the Royal Mint in London, or any of the other colonies of the Austral-  
62  
ian group. Its benefits were not confined to this colony, however, for the coin it produced was current in all the  
63  
colonies of the group. To it came gold for coining from

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S.M.H., 19 June, 24 June 1862 (exts from Western Post and Lachlan Observer).

59

S.M.H., 24 June, 14, 17 July 1862, 26 Jan., 24, 25, 27, 28 Feb., 17, 26 March 1863.

60

Empire, 17, 18 Dec. 1851.

61

S.M.H., 15 May 1855.

62

S.M.H., 16 June 1855.

63

S.M.H., 16 June 1855, 3 April 1865.

Victoria, California, and, later, from New Zealand, as well as that produced in New South Wales,<sup>64</sup> and in this way was saved the expense of sending raw gold to London to be re-exported to Australia as coin. The effect of the Mint in raising the price of gold in these colonies was not so great as might be thought, since already by 1855 competition for the purchase of Australian gold, both by banks and by private buyers, all well represented on the various fields, was vigorous enough to raise and keep prices fairly near the official valuation of £3/17/10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per ounce of standard gold<sup>65</sup> - after an understandable period of initial caution when the value of Australian gold was uncertain, and buyers were able to make large profits by offering low prices on the diggings.<sup>66</sup> But if it was not instrumental in raising the price of gold, the advent of the Sydney Mint was certainly helpful as a stabilizing influence on the new high price of that commodity, since it was always ready to pay the fixed price of £3/17/10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per standard ounce.<sup>67</sup> Efforts

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64

S.M.H., 3 April 1865; J.L.C. 1868-9, vol.XVI, p.1149, Mint returns.

65

S.M.H., 3 April 1865.

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Empire, 30 July, 12 Sept. 1851; S.M.H., 21 May 1852 (all ext. from B.F.P.)

67

S.M.H., 16 June 1855.

were made in its early days to establish the practice of sending all gold produced in the colony to the Mint, and as part of this plan escort charges were abolished for all gold sent direct to the Deputy Master for the purpose of coinage. The re-imposition of the charges in 1864 was considered safe and morally defensible on the grounds that their removal had been a purely temporary measure, and that since almost all gold now found its way to the Mint, it was time for the escort service to cease operating at a loss. The value of the Mint to the gold-mining industry was not confined to coining gold and stabilizing prices, however. It offered facilities for the assaying of various types of gold-bearing rock, and for experiments in various methods of separation of gold from its companion materials. In 1860 £1000 was voted in the Legislative Assembly for setting up at the Mint an experimental quartz-crushing machine. Thus scientific knowledge without which the gold industry could not advance was tested at the Mint and then passed on to the diggers and mining companies. For this function alone the Sydney Mint proved well worth its keep.

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S.M.H., 3 May 1865.

69

S.M.H., 16 June 1855, 15 Feb. 1859, 3 April 1865.

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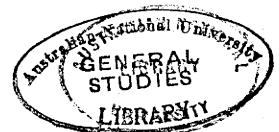
S.M.H., 22 Feb. 1860.

The provision of an adequate and well-trained police force to meet the changed condition of the colony, in the light of the general misgiving in conservative circles concerning the crime and disorder which they - influenced by their distrust for the lower strata of society, and by the warning example of California - associated in their minds with gold-rushes, was an urgent task which the government had to tackle as soon as possible. Reorganization of the rural police force was necessary. Thousands of men of no fixed abode, now moving restlessly from one point to another in search of easy fortune, required a mobile and active police force if their actions were to be controlled at all. The establishment of the Gold Police was a first step in this reorganization, and the gold escort forces served to keep certain sections of the main roads relatively free from crime, but the only group which could have answered the need for mobility was the New South Wales Mounted Police Force - a semi-military type of organization which had, however, been disbanded just five months before<sup>71</sup> by a Legislative Council bent on measures of economy. The few mounted troopers remaining were despatched as soon as possible to Bathurst, while Inspector-General Spain did what

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<sup>71</sup>

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1850.





he could to supply the need for a more adequate force amid reports of mob-justice at the under-policed Ophir field.<sup>72</sup> New mounted patrols were organized from Sydney to take up duty in the various gold districts. In the most important of these regions, the west, Captain Battye was appointed Superintendent of Patrol in May 1851, in command of 38 men;<sup>73</sup> the following year a force of ten was operating in the northern district;<sup>74</sup> and in March 1853 Assistant Gold Commissioner Henry Zouch resigned to become Superintendent of the southern patrol of 31 men.<sup>75</sup> These patrols remained fairly constant at this strength until the rise of bush-ranging on a large scale in the south and west caused the authorities to double the police in those two areas in 1860, and to add to the southern patrol a detachment of 18 foot police.<sup>76</sup> The north was less troubled by lawlessness, and in consequence its patrol, led after April 1859 by Superintendent Lawrence H. Scott, was not greatly increased in strength.<sup>77</sup> In April 1862 the new Police Act sponsored

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Empire, 5 June, 23 July 1851; S.M.H., 23 July 1851.

73

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851, 1853.

74

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1852.

75

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1853.

76

N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1860.

77

N.S.W. Statistical Registers, 1859-61.

by Cowper's government came into force with a sweeping re-  
 formation of the police system.<sup>78</sup> The separate sections  
 of the police force were merged under Inspector-General  
 John McLerie, who since his appointment in 1850 as Super-  
 intendent of Police had held the highest office in that  
 service.<sup>79</sup> The former superintendents of the various re-  
 gional patrols, included Scott, Zouch, Chatfield (who had  
 been appointed to the command of the western patrol after  
 Battye was dismissed in April 1861 for alleged monetary ir-  
 regularities),<sup>80</sup> and J.A. McLerie, son of the Inspector-  
 General, who had been Assistant-Superintendent of the south-  
 ern patrol under Zouch. In all, eight superintendents were  
 appointed, four of whom continued in office, together with  
 J.W. Orridge, promoted from the rank of Inspector in 1863,  
 until the end of the period under survey. No others were  
 appointed during this period, and the number of senior  
 officers was allowed to undergo a process of natural decrease,  
 with the same apparently happening in the lower ranks.<sup>81</sup> It  
 would appear that after the suppression of the gangs of

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S.M.H., 24 Sept. 1862; N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1862.

79

N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1862; N.S.W. Blue Book, 1850.

80

S.M.H., 2 April 1861.

81

N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1862-74.

bushrangers in the west in April 1866 and in the south in May 1867, the police force was allowed to decrease gradually in strength. Martin seized upon the police issue in an attempt to discredit the Cowper government in August 1863, when in a period of seven days of debate on his motion of censure, he and his supporters accused it of ineptitude in its handling of the reorganization of police. He criticized what he described as a civilian force operating on military lines, the very faults which, he alleged, caused the dispersal of the old mounted police in 1850. The motion, however, was lost by a large margin.<sup>82</sup>

The sudden upsurge in bushranging in the south and west provided for the new police force a baptism of fire. The activities of Hall, Gardiner, Dunn, Gilbert, O'Meally, Piesley, and their associates in the west and later of the Clarke brothers in the south defied all efforts to maintain law and order as they raided their way around the country, engaging in theatrical demonstrations of their contempt for the police. At the height of their activity these gangs disrupted all communications between the bush towns, the gold-fields, and the capital, robbing and plundering at will. The prevalence of mail robberies and other armed

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82

S.M.H., 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28 Aug. 1863.

robberies caused travellers to hesitate before carrying anything of value with them on their journeys, and always the police seemed to arrive on the scene too late to be effective.<sup>83</sup> Hampered by the alleged sympathy and collaboration of the rural population with the criminals,<sup>84</sup> and by the great familiarity of the latter with the difficult country in which they operated,<sup>85</sup> it must yet be laid to the credit of Battye, Pottinger, and their colleagues in the unceasing hunt, that eventually all upon whom suspicion of bushranging activities fell were either brought to justice or destroyed.<sup>86</sup> The end of the sixties saw those areas of the colony which had been noted for crime, violence, and a lack of safety for travellers, return again to a peaceful and ordered condition. No longer, however, was the foolhardy practice of announcing in advance the departure time of the escort continued. After the Lachlan escort robbery no announcement of times or of cargo values were made until at least twenty-four hours after the actual departure,

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83

S.M.H., 4 March 1863.

84

S.M.H., 6 Oct. 1862, 28 Jan., 6, 19 Feb., 9 March 1863.

85

S.M.H., 27 Aug. 1862, 26 Feb., 4, 11 March, 2, 3 Oct. 1863.

86

S.M.H., 21 March, 14 July, 1 Oct. 1862, 25 March, 7 Apr., 6 July 1863, 13 Feb., 8, 10, 17 May 1865, 1, 4, 17 Jan., 6 April 1866.

giving the escort a comfortable start over any unduly interested party.<sup>87</sup>

Police on the diggings were seldom popular, owing to the nature of their duties. With the situation peaceful they were liable to be branded as unnecessary parasites,<sup>88</sup> but when their presence was most needed to deal with lawlessness and disorder those very conditions which they were intended to set to rights were quoted to prove their inefficiency and incompetence.<sup>89</sup> New rushes were ever of doubtful permanence, and obviously a substantial force could not be sent to each and every one of them in case trouble should arise. The two outstanding attempts to follow such a course, at the Port Curtis diggings in 1858 and at Kiandra in 1860, provided ample illustration of its associated dangers when elaborate arrangements which had been made by the government for administration, communication, and organization of the fields were nullified by the rapid exhaustion of the gold deposits, without which no field,<sup>90</sup> however well organized, could succeed. Until some

87

S.M.H., 1 July 1862.

88

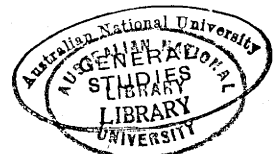
Empire, 1, 12 Dec. 1851.

89

Empire, 16 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 19 Nov. 1851, 23 Jan. 1852 (ext. from B.F.P.), 2 Aug. 1856.

90

J.L.C. 1858, vol.III, Reports from M.C. O'Connell at Port Curtis; Preschaw, p.62.



indication of the extent and permanence of a field had been received, therefore, it was not proclaimed to be within the provisions of current gold-fields legislation, and responsibility for the maintenance of law and order lay with the appropriate mounted patrol. Obviously the latter could not provide permanent protection for many areas and at the same time fulfil its intended role as a mobile emergency force. The arrival of a commissioner and his attendant troopers after proclamation put into operation current government policy for gold-fields administration. <sup>91</sup>

The interim period between the first rush to a field and the arrival of adequate forces of authority was very often a time of considerable unrest, with crime and violence following the frustration yet again of so many fondly cherished hopes as new arrivals continued daily after the occupation of most of the rich ground. It was on such occasions as these - be they at the Rocky River, the Turon, Lambing Flat, or Gulgong, and whether they occurred in 1851, 1860, or 1871 - that the authorities came in for much criticism for their failure to provide more police more quickly, and the police on the spot, though often much overworked, for their failure to keep all the elements of lawbreaking and

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91

S.M.H., 25 Sept. 1860.

92

disorder in check. The improvement of facilities for rapid communication during the period under examination, especially the spread of the electric telegraph system, made the task of the authorities easier in the more rapid transmission of information and instructions than it had been in the early years of the rush. In the most notorious outbreak of violence and defiance of authority - at Lambing Flat in 1860-1 - the facilities of the telegraph were available from nearby Yass. But little notice was taken of the opinions of the commissioners on the spot, and the Cowper government went its own blind way, withdrawing at the earliest opportunity the military forces which had been sent only two months earlier, in March 1861, to quell a previous outbreak of violence.<sup>93</sup> In leaving the field without an adequate force to preserve order and protect the Chinese the government in this instance was guilty of a grave error of judgment, and upon its head must fall much of the blame for the tragic incidents of 30 June and 14 July.

On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that the police force did almost as much as could be expected of them

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 92

Empire, 22 Aug., 17 Nov. 16 Dec. 1851, 17 July 1852, 5 July 1861, 16 Jan. 1871; S.M.H., 19 Nov. 1851, 23 Jan. 1852, 29 July 1856, 11 Sept. 1860.

93

S.M.H., 31 May 1861.

on the gold-fields, considering the difficult nature of their duties, and the difficulty also of deployment so that a sufficient force might be at the right place at the right time, while keeping numbers down to a reasonably economic level. On the settled fields, of which those around Braidwood are a good example, prompt action by police and stringent measures on the part of magistrates kept the field in a fairly ordered condition,<sup>94</sup> though it must be admitted that such fields did not seem to attract the drifting criminal element which infested the western diggings during the early sixties.<sup>95</sup> Even in this supposedly exemplary society, however, there was considerable cause for official concern, as was demonstrated by the apparent support given by the local population to the marauding Clarke brothers in the mid-sixties.<sup>96</sup> A commission was appointed by the legislature to inquire into the state of crime in the Braidwood district in 1857, after the final capture of the Clarke gang. It reported that there was indeed much misplaced sympathy with the gang in that region, and that furthermore members

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94

Empire, 20 Dec. 1854; S.M.H., 12 April, 18 June 1852, 10 July 1856.

95

S.M.H., 5 July, 15 Oct. 1861, 3 Jan., 13 May 1862 (ext. from Lachlan Observer and Burrangong Courier).

96

S.M.H., 1 June, 3 Aug. 1867.



of the police force there were on far too familiar terms with known criminals. Of the magistrates one at least, Mr Hassall, carefully avoided any performance of his duties on the bench which might antagonize the bushrangers, for fear that they would seek revenge upon him by an attack upon his property, and the members of the commission suggested that he be relieved of the position which he evidently found so embarrassing.<sup>97</sup>

The sudden outbreak of bushranging which occurred during the early 1860s was of a different nature from that which had been known before the gold discoveries. Most of the new highwaymen were natives of the colony,<sup>98</sup> and as the reputation of the masters of the trade, such as Frank Gardiner, grew, more young men joined forces with them.<sup>99</sup> None of the principal bushrangers turned to crime from want or necessity,<sup>100</sup> and from the manner in which they delighted to impress their victims and the colony as a whole with their daring and enterprise, it would appear that bushranging was not merely a means of living for them, but a way of life

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97

S.M.H., 3 Aug. 1867.

98

S.M.H., 13 Sept. 1862, 18 July 1863.

99

S.M.H., 18 July 1863, 11 July 1864.

100

S.M.H., 18 July 1863, 18 Aug. 1864.

which they thoroughly enjoyed. <sup>101</sup> In July 1863 an attempt was made in a Herald leader to explain the increase in the number of bushrangers operating within the colony as a product of the gold-rushes, by which the old interdependent bush civilization had been overwhelmed, leaving the young sons of settlers with no conviction or ideas of duties and obligations to others. <sup>102</sup> Craving excitement, and under the influence of master criminals, some took up careers of crime themselves, and for a few years held the greater part of the areas around the southern and western gold-fields to ransom, plundering apparently at will. The perseverance of the police, nevertheless, prevailed, and for a while at least the colony was almost cleared of the menace. <sup>103</sup>

Gold-fields administration was at first carried out almost entirely by the commissioners and their staffs, and their numbers grew as gold-digging operations extended, until by 1865 there were twenty in all distributed through the various digging centres in the colony - nine in the west, eight in the south, and only three in the north, where

101

S.M.H., 30 April 1862 (ext. from Lachlan Miner), 11 March, 15 June, 24, 29 Sept., 5, 9 Oct. (ext. from Bathurst Times), 12, 17 Oct. 1863.

102

S.M.H., 18 July 1863.

103

S.M.H., 6 April 1866.

gold-digging had undergone a considerable decline.<sup>104</sup> With their gold police, until the latter were merged with the main force under the 1862 Act, the commissioners were responsible for the management and protection of the diggings and of all matters connected with gold in the interior. In the early years of the gold industry they had often been called upon to exercise almost every official function on the fields, from police magistrate to postmaster,<sup>105</sup> but their task was almost impossible to perform satisfactorily until the abolition of the monthly licence fee gave them an opportunity to devote more time to other aspects of their duty. The presence of a commissioner was almost indispensable for the smooth running of gold-fields affairs. All mining disputes were to be settled by him, though he might sometimes be helped by arbitrators. Nothing could be done on a field without his sanction once the field had been proclaimed. No claims were valid unless they were within the limits of a proclaimed gold-field, so a petition for a commissioner was commonly one of the first actions of any group of diggers located on a new site. It might have been expected that the presence of appointed officials, with

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104

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1865.

105

Empire, 23 July, 27 Aug. 1851; S.M.H., 9 Dec. 1851.

almost complete powers over events and conditions at the diggings, would arouse fierce resentment amongst independent diggers. Some such hostility was indeed shown, though it was not common, and the complainant often had a personal grievance against the commissioner's actions.<sup>106</sup> On occasion complaints were made of arrogance on the part of these officials, and in the early days it was alleged that too many inexperienced young men were being appointed to what was after all a position of great responsibility.<sup>107</sup> Of the fifteen men who were appointed commissioners in the first three years, however, only six had not already seen considerable service in the employment of the colonial government, and three of these, Green, W.E. King, and J.H. Griffin, later rose to the highest positions in the gold service.<sup>108</sup> Of the 59 men appointed commissioners before 1866, only 26 served for less than three years.<sup>109</sup> Little is known about the background of most of them, but from the necessity of a commissioner or assistant commissioner

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106

Empire, 10 Oct., 21 Nov., 12 Dec. 1851, 16 Nov. 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury); S.M.H., 16 Feb., 29 Oct. 1852, 18 March 1853.

107

Empire, 12 July, 8 Aug., 21 Nov., 12 Dec. 1851, 14 Dec. 1852; S.M.H., 30 Jan. 1852.

108

N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1851-65.

109

N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1851-74.

to enter into a bond of £1,000, and a sub-commissioner of £500, for the satisfactory performance of their duties it may be assumed that the majority of them were men of no mean station of life.<sup>110</sup> Many were long-service men, whose careers in the gold service were cut short only by the Gold Fields Act of 1866 which reduced the number of commissioners<sup>111</sup> to one for each of the three gold districts. The majority of the displaced men were found alternative employment as police magistrates,<sup>112</sup> in which capacity they often had to perform similar functions to those they had been accustomed to as commissioners, though without the staff which they had formerly had to assist them.<sup>113</sup> The men chosen to fill the posts of regional gold commissioners in the 1866 reshuffle were all experienced officers. Whittingdale Johnson (western district) had first been appointed to the gold service in 1852,<sup>114</sup> George O'Malley Clarke (southern) in 1860, and Glentworth F.W. Addison (northern) in the same

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110

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1858.

111

S.M.H., 24 March, 1 Aug. 1866.

112

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1866.

113

S.M.H., 15 June 1867.

114

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1852.

115  
 year. James Buchanan, who in 1869 replaced Addison,<sup>116</sup>  
 had first been appointed in 1852,<sup>117</sup> and had served a brief  
 spell in 1863 as M.L.A. for the Northern Gold Fields con-  
 stituency.<sup>118</sup> After 1866 it was not common for a commis-  
 sioner to be paid a salary as such, for he normally held his  
 appointment in conjunction with that of police magistrate.<sup>119</sup>  
 The Gold Fields Act of 1872 restored the system of a number  
 of minor commissioners located on various fields, most of  
 the men being appointed in this capacity being those who  
 had been laid off from their similar positions in 1866.<sup>120</sup>

Despite the frequency of complaints against commission-  
 ers from parties alleging instances of omission or commis-  
 sion in what the plaintiffs considered to be the duties of those  
 officials, many of them seem to have been very popular in  
 the districts under their charge, indicating that they were  
 generally considered to have performed their duties fairly  
 and adequately, and there are several reports of testi-  
 monial dinners and addresses being given to mark the esteem

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115

N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1860.

116

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1869.

117

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1852.

118

A.W. Martin and P. Wardle, Members of the Legislative  
 Assembly of New South Wales, p.24.

119

N.S.W. Blue Books, 1866-72.

120

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1872.

in which a departing commissioner was held by tradesmen  
 and diggers alike.<sup>121</sup> The Gold Police, too, appear to have  
 been well chosen usually, although on occasion one or two  
 of its members indulged in the very crimes which they were  
 employed to prevent. On one day alone at the Bathurst  
 Assizes in August 1854, one of them was convicted of having  
 committed a murder in a public house, and another of high-  
 way robbery.<sup>122</sup> In the opinion of Commissioner William  
 Johnson in October 1855, however, the force was much to be  
 admired.

The Gold Police themselves are now a steady and  
 efficient body of men; some of them have been in  
 the service ever since the formation of the corps,  
 or very soon afterwards, and have by their good  
 conduct worked themselves up to the highest grades  
 in it; those who have joined later have their  
 example before them, and the benefit of an ex-  
 cellent 'esprit de corps'. I cannot but think  
 that, if these men were reduced to the same  
 footing as that of the ordinary police, some  
 valuable advantages would be lost.<sup>123</sup>

Although continually accused by interested parties of  
 neglect or unwarranted meddling, the government did not  
 omit to take measures, inadequate though they may have been,  
 to foster the development of the gold industry. FitzRoy's

121

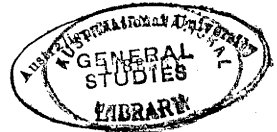
Empire, 20 Dec. 1852; S.M.H., 15 May 1852, 6, 9 Aug.  
 1853.

122

S.M.H., 1 Sept. 1854.

123

S.M.H., 7 Nov. 1855.



government at the outset appointed the discoverer, Hargraves, as 'Commissioner for Crown Lands Prospecting for Gold', a position which he held from June 1851 until the end of the following year.<sup>124</sup> The Rev. W.B. Clarke, the most noted geologist in the colony, was commissioned also to search for further auriferous indications, a task which he accepted without any reward save a guarantee of payment of his expenses while so engaged. In the meantime Samuel Stutchbury, the Colonial Surveyor, was ordered to make a complete survey of New South Wales with a view to finding the extent and value of its gold deposits.<sup>125</sup> No provision was made by the government for the offer of a reward for the discovery of new payable deposits until James Hoskins, M.L.A. for the Northern Gold Fields, successfully moved in February 1860 that such an offer should be made.<sup>126</sup> However, no successful claims upon this fund appear to have been made.

The framing of regulations for the government of the gold-fields was left in the hands of the executive by the Gold Fields Management Act of 1852,<sup>127</sup> and this power, once

<sup>124</sup>

N.S.W. Blue Books, 1851-2.

<sup>125</sup>

S.M.H., 8 May 1852; N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851.

<sup>126</sup>

S.M.H., 8 Feb. 1860.

<sup>127</sup>

Empire, 25 Dec. 1852.



the industry had become established, was used generally to regulate the actual digging operations rather than the behaviour of those on the diggings. Until 1857 the regulations appear to have been intended to provide for two systems of working - first, that of the digger taking out only the richest deposits readily obtained, and second, that of the miner where the difficulties to be encountered in working the ground were such as to require combined labour and capital. For the former small claims were provided for, either with a frontage to a river or creek bed, or in blocks away from watercourses. For the second category, extensive areas of land were allowed - as much as 160 acres or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of a river bed, on payment of 20 or 50 licence fees. If machinery was used in working these larger claims, a royalty might be charged instead of the licence fee.<sup>128</sup> The high rate of licence fees charged, however, nullified the advantages of extensive claims for the capitalist, especially when the cost and delay involved in opening the ground and testing its value were taken into consideration. For the same reason ambitious projects by working companies of miners were seldom encountered, owing to the high initial cost and the long delay which must

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128

J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

ensue before profit could reasonably be expected. Had these regulations been issued to a community of miners, they would perhaps have been taken advantage of, but as yet there were only digging communities on the fields, often ignorant of what was meant by mining. This population could only be transformed into miners gradually, taught by necessity and by the pressure of necessity consequent on the exhaustion of the richer and shallower deposits of gold.

Up to 1857 the regulations, although not completely satisfactory, were based upon certain sound principles, recognizing the desirability of improving the efficiency of working methods by providing for operations to be carried out on a large scale by means of co-operative labour. Gold-fields legislation was re-framed in March 1857 with the passing of the Gold Fields Management Act Amendment Act. The drafting of regulations was still left in the hands of the Executive, but authority was given to establish local courts in any district on the petition of one hundred miners. The courts were to consist of a chairman appointed by the government - often, in practice, the commissioner - and nine members, elected annually by holders of miners' rights. These courts had power to frame laws and regulations for

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129

S.M.H., 17, 29 Nov. 1856, 27 Feb. 1857; J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

mining in their respective districts, subject to the approval of the governor, and they also had jurisdiction in mining disputes, and in cases of mining partnerships. Mining disputes might also be settled by Justices of the Peace, with or without assessors, at the option of the litigants. Right of appeal was allowed from the decision of the justices or local courts to the next Court of General or Quarter Sessions, providing the penalty involved was at least £10. The Victorian system of management, upon which this act was largely based, soon after this date dropped the judicial powers of the local courts,<sup>130</sup> but no corresponding change was made in New South Wales. New regulations issued in 1858<sup>131</sup> superseded all previous regulations, whether general or of local courts, but they proved to be little better suited to requirements than the previous set, and imposed an unsound limitation upon the number of men who could amalgamate their claims for the purpose of joint working. This restriction was of doubtful advantage, and its main effect was alleged to be the unlooked-for one of handicapping the formation of co-operative companies.<sup>132</sup> A further

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130

J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

131

S.M.H., 9 Aug., 4 Nov. 1858; J.L.C., vol.III, pp.667-74.

132

J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

Gold Fields Act was passed in 1861,<sup>133</sup> but apart from providing for the election of local court chairmen, and an increase in the magisterial duties of commissioners, reversed by an amendment in 1866, there was little change.<sup>134</sup> A complete new Gold Fields Act in September 1866<sup>135</sup> made little change except in the composition of the Appeal Courts. The most important feature of gold-fields legislation during this period could have been the provision for the establishment of local courts, but the only districts where advantage was taken of this were Araluen, Adelong, Kiandra,<sup>136</sup> Burrangong, and the Lachlan. In these areas the laws and regulations governing gold-mining were changed and adapted to suit local conditions, but the constant issue of fresh sets of general regulations by the colonial government, which superseded any improved rules which may have been made in a particular area, reduced the efficacy of such measures. Nevertheless, the various diggings, apart from those mentioned, failed to grasp the opportunity of self-government which was offered to them, and the regulation

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133

S.M.H., 26 Nov. 1861.

134

S.M.H., 24 March 1866.

135

S.M.H., 20 Sept. 1866.

136

J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

and administration of the New South Wales gold-fields remained largely centralized.

The changes in the practical mining sections of the various sets of regulations in this period show an increasing inclination towards facilitating company mining, with more liberal allowances and leases of land being permitted for quartz mining and deep sinking as the years went by and the industry became more mechanized and capitalized.<sup>137</sup> Provision was still made for the individual alluvial miner, however, and he was still allowed to stake out his claim for alluvial gold, though it might lie on the surface above a quartz lead already leased to another group. The independent miner was still regarded as the corner-stone of the gold industry, though in later years it was in prospecting for new fields that his value lay. As time went on and the colony's production of gold declined, official recognition of the need for new discoveries was marked by increasing privileges offered to the successful prospector.<sup>138</sup> But the days of individual alluvial digging were numbered, and prospecting for auriferous quartz often involved so much initial expense that the independent working

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137

S.M.H., 10 Aug. 1866.

138

J.L.C., vol.XX, pp.249-50.

miner often appeared readier to travel north to Queensland, or across the Tasman to Otago and Westland, than to face the hardships of prospecting in New South Wales.

Government policy with regard to the disposal of Crown Lands came under heavy and continuous criticism during the gold period, as perhaps was inevitable in a question which touched so closely upon the hopes and aspirations of so many. Despite frequent allegations that successful diggers were unable to invest their profits in a section of land for agricultural purposes, the area of land under cultivation in fact increased considerably during the first twenty or so years after the first gold discoveries.<sup>139</sup> Government policy was certainly behind the difficulty many found in purchasing land, but despite the complication of existing legislation and regulation on the subject, the real difficulty which most people encountered was not technical but financial. The minimum price of £1 per acre had in earlier times been fixed in order to put a check to the unlimited alienation of Crown Lands, and now it was being<sup>140</sup> criticized for having just that effect. Though often

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139

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1851, gives land under cultivation in that year as 144,647 acres. By 1871, according to the Statistical Register for that year, it had risen to 278,247 acres.

140

S.M.H., 26 March 1853, 21 April 1855.

accused of favouring the extensive landowner or leaseholder  
 against the interests of the diggers,<sup>141</sup> the government's  
 first actions with regard to land policy showed a consider-  
 able degree of impartiality, with the measures in May 1851  
 protecting freeholders from the invasion of their privacy<sup>142</sup>  
 being followed six months later by a proclamation that  
 pastoral leases whereon payable gold deposits were being  
 worked were to be resumed by the Crown.<sup>143</sup> By November  
 1858, lands within proclaimed gold-fields, which had been  
 proved incapable of producing gold remuneratively, were  
 being offered for sale by the government at Sofala,  
 Richardson's Point, and Rockhampton.<sup>144</sup> Robertson's land  
 legislation in 1861,<sup>145</sup> apparently so favourable towards  
 the wishes of the successful digger, yet brought consider-  
 able problems in its train. Those operating within an  
 unproclaimed gold-field discovered the danger of their  
 claims being included in the chosen and legally-acquired  
 territory of free selectors with a sharp eye for a sharp

141

S.M.H., 28 Jan. 1852, 23 April 1853, 24, 25, 26,  
 27 Nov. 1857.

142

Empire, 24 May 1851.

143

Empire, 27 Nov. 1851.

144

S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1858.

145

S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1861.

opportunity. Perhaps the most blatant example of this was the attempt by William Redman, formerly M.L.A. for Queanbeyan, whose effort to cheat diggers near Forbes was thwarted by the loss of a test case which was brought against him by one of the evicted men.<sup>146</sup> Obstructive free selectors, however, remained a problem for those engaged in mining - particularly prospecting - so long as the two interests continued to exist side by side.<sup>147</sup> The need for sections of agricultural land in the vicinity of a gold-field was never challenged, for vegetables were in constant demand, but allotments were difficult to locate upon suitable land, while at the same time avoiding any clash with those who wished to search such areas for gold. Sizeable reservations were made around some gold-fields from the provisions of the Land Acts,<sup>148</sup> but the clash of interests was never solved until gold-digging eventually disappeared.

Until 1856 a policy of control and regulation of gold-fields affairs was followed by a conservative government. With the coming of responsible government, however, and the

146

S.M.H., 1, 2 Feb., 8, 11 March 1867.

147

S.M.H., 22 Nov. 1871.

148

S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1861, 16 May 1862.



rapid triumph of liberal ideas, more attention appears to have been given to the task of winning the support of the mining interest in the untidy political skirmishes which for a time dominated the political scene. With separate parliamentary representation under the 1858 Electoral Act,<sup>149</sup> and rights of self-government through the local courts, one might be excused for drawing the conclusion that the diggers formed the most important interest group in New South Wales. Much of the importance attached to them, however, is merely reflected from their more powerful colleagues in Victoria, and the emphasis in New South Wales upon securing their support was unjustified in effect. Three seats were all that could be bought by a policy of conciliation and pampering of the diggers - even if circumstances and personalities had been such that members could be controlled after election - though diggers' influence was probably felt also in the constituencies within the gold-fields areas. Under conditions of universal adult male suffrage, few of the diggers exercised their right to vote in the gold-fields constituencies, apparently preferring to take part instead in the elections in the

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149

S.M.H., 27 Nov. 1858.

150

more orthodox constituencies. The introduction of representation of an interest group was defended by an argument that by the nomadic nature of their work few could qualify by residence for orthodox enfranchisement, and though this may have been true in times of unrest and constant rushes, conditions on the New South Wales fields were seldom of such a description after 1858. It is much more likely that the creation of the Gold Fields constituencies under the Electoral Act of 1858 was a political manoeuvre by the radical Cowper government. Cowper tried a policy of wooing the diggers, which met with disastrous failure in the case of Lambing Flat in 1861. His principal opponent, Martin, was not so open in his attempts to win digger support, though one is tempted to think of his appointment in 1863 of the member for the Southern Gold Fields, John Bowie Wilson, as his Secretary for Lands, in whose sphere lay responsibility for the conduct of gold-fields affairs, as coming within the bounds of this description. 151

The official attitude towards gold-fields management underwent a considerable change during the sixties, the governments moving more and more away from a policy of

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150

J.L.C., 1860, vol.VI, p.216, report on statistics of N.S.W. for 1859.

151

Martin and Wardle, p.239.

direct control. By 1872 the Herald could accurately comment, in connection with the new Mining Bill, that 'The Government have all but withdrawn from mining affairs, and now sell the land at a merely nominal price. The only conflicts to be expected are those between the claim-jumpers and original proprietors'.<sup>152</sup> In May 1874 the recommendation of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly - which was appointed in March 1870<sup>153</sup> to examine the working of current gold-fields legislation and regulations - that a separate Department of Mines be established,<sup>154</sup> was at last acted upon. There was no immediate change, for J.S. Farnell, who as Secretary for Lands had been responsible for the gold-fields, took office also as Secretary for Mines until a suitable man could be appointed to the post.<sup>155</sup> The first full-time Secretary for Lands, Russell Palmer Abbott, was appointed at the end of July.<sup>156</sup> Having lost much of its early glamour, gold-mining had now become just another industry, supervised in the normal way by public servants.

<sup>152</sup>

S.M.H., 28 May 1872.

<sup>153</sup>

S.M.H., 5 March 1870.

<sup>154</sup>

S.M.H., 13 Dec. 1871, 20 March, 10 April 1874.

<sup>155</sup>

S.M.H., 8 May 1874.

<sup>156</sup>

N.S.W. Blue Book, 1874.

## Chapter 4

### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

'Old coaching towns already decaying for their sins;  
Uncounted "Half-Way Houses", and scores of "Ten-Mile  
Inns";  
The riders from the stations by lonely granite peaks;  
The black-boy for the shepherds on sheep and cattle  
creeks;  
The roaring camps of Gulgong, and many a "Digger's  
Rest",  
The diggers on the Lachlan; the huts of Farthest West;  
Some twenty thousand exiles who sailed for weal or woe -  
The bravest hearts of twenty lands will wait for  
Cobb & Co.'<sup>1</sup>

As in many another undeveloped country, communication between settlements was ever a pressing problem for the Australias. At first, since most major population centres were on or near the coast, sea-going vessels supplied the need, but increasing penetration of the interior required the establishment of regular lines of inland communication. Between Sydney and the inland pastures on which the prosperity of New South Wales was to be based the country was of a rugged and difficult nature. Pioneers could make their way inland, but their tortuous trails could not remain indefinitely the sole routes for transporting stores and

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<sup>1</sup>

Henry Lawson, 'The lights of Cobb & Co.'

supplies to the towns and stations of the interior. There were limits to the gradients and surfaces which could be negotiated even by bullock teams. Good roads, constructed by convict labour, existed only in and around the coastal settlements. There was, however, no apparent need for haste in the provision of satisfactory avenues into the interior. Traffic on these routes was light, and pastoralists and settlers could bring in adequate supplies when the weather and road conditions permitted. In the early thirties, a start was made on the improvement of the road to Bathurst - the main westward route from Sydney - and over gullies and water-courses stone bridges replaced the frailer wooden ones after 1832.<sup>2</sup> The withdrawal of convict labour in the 1840s, and the Constitution Act of 1842, thrust responsibility for the upkeep of roads upon district councils, empowered to levy rates for the purpose. This change met with no enthusiasm from those colonists who believed the building and maintenance of roads to be a proper charge upon the 'land fund'.<sup>3</sup> Between the arguments of the two sides, the roads were neglected and fell into disrepair. By 1851 they were in no condition to carry continuous heavy traffic.

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<sup>2</sup>E.O.G. Shann, Economic History of Australia, p.283.<sup>3</sup>

Shann, pp.283-4.

In the winter of 1851 - the worst possible time for travel in the rain-softened surface - the Bathurst road became the highway of the colony as thousands streamed westward from Sydney to see or dig for themselves at Ophir or the Turon. The road rapidly deteriorated, and complaints soon began to pour into the offices of the Sydney newspapers, complaints which were not to be appeased for many years to come.

They call the way to Bathurst a road, but it is a perfect misnomer, and a libel upon roads in general; it is a hundred miles of Sloughs of Despond, a succession of oblong sinks of liquid mud, from a foot to eighteen inches in depth, with holes of unknown depth every few yards hid under a smooth liquid surface.... The road is completely cut up in every inch of the breadth between the trees on each side, and no bullock-driver will encounter it at any price; one man had lost seventeen bullocks out of two teams.<sup>4</sup>

Reports continued of impassable roads not only to Bathurst, but from it to the various diggings at World's End, Oakey Creek,<sup>5</sup> and elsewhere, causing escort delays and many other inconveniences. The following winter, complaints were redoubled, with the frequent assertion that 'communication is almost stopped' between the Turon and Sydney.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>4</sup> S.M.H., 15 Aug. 1851.

<sup>5</sup> Empire, 30 Aug., 13, 24 Oct. 1851; S.M.H., 1, 27 Aug., 9 Sept. 1851.

<sup>6</sup> Empire, 21 June 1852; S.M.H., 4 June, 2 July 1852.

government came in for its share of the blame, as a letter from the Turon pointed out that, despite their annual payment of £18 per head for licences, tradesmen and storekeepers were not helped at all by the government in the provision of roads and bridges there.<sup>7</sup> By this time digging was taking place in other regions, and the Turon pleas<sup>8</sup> and complaints were reinforced by others from Hanging Rock,<sup>9</sup> Tambaroora, and Braidwood<sup>10</sup> - in the latter case roads were declared to be so bad that bullocks had sunk as deep in the mud that only heads and horns were visible. Reference to the unsatisfactory condition of the Western road to Bathurst - even in dry weather - continued so long as it was used intensively, and the government was frequently censured in letters and articles in the press from inter-<sup>11</sup>ested parties. However, no matter what might be done in one area, another was sure to be dissatisfied, and road provision was inadequate, in the rapidly moving kaleido-

<sup>7</sup> S.M.H., 25 May 1852.

<sup>8</sup> S.M.H., 6 July 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury).

<sup>9</sup> Empire, 23 Aug., 7 Sept. 1852.

<sup>10</sup> Empire, 27 Aug 1852 (ext. from Goulburn Herald); 21 Aug., 1 Sept. 1852.

<sup>11</sup> Empire, 21 Oct. 1852; S.M.H., 25 Feb., 5 March, 30 Nov. 1853, 18 May, 20 July 1854.

scopic pattern of the gold-rushes, from the first in 1851 right through to the Gulgong rush of the early seventies. In every new field complaints were to be heard regarding the state of the roads,<sup>12</sup> and there was little enough the government could do about it. Winter delays of escorts and mails became a common inconvenience which had to be endured and borne along with other inconveniences of rural life.<sup>13</sup>

An attempt was made by interested parties in Braidwood to evade the difficulties of road travel thither from Sydney by clamouring for a road to be opened from Braidwood to the Clyde River.<sup>14</sup> It was argued that with this ease of access to the coast, and rapid travel thence to Sydney, Braidwood would benefit considerably. Their pleas were met by the commissioning of a survey team to investigate the possibility of such a road. It reported favourably in June 1853, and suggestions were made that prisoners and diggers during the winter could possibly be used to

<sup>12</sup>

S.M.H., 21, 25 July, 2, 18 Aug., 6 Oct. 1856, 8 July 1857, 16 June 1862, 2 July, 3 Aug. 1870, 21 June 1871, 23 May 1872.

<sup>13</sup>

S.M.H., 4, 5 June, 2, 16, 24 July, 21 Aug. 1852, 31 Jan. 1861.

<sup>14</sup>

S.M.H., 21 Dec. 1852, 27 Jan., 12 Feb., 24 March 1853, 18 July 1854.



construct the road.<sup>15</sup> This latter suggestion was not followed, but by the end of the year work on the Clyde road had begun,<sup>16</sup> and in less than two years it was declared open for traffic, though not yet to drays.<sup>17</sup> In June 1858 the Herald's Braidwood correspondent insisted that the opening of the Clyde road had conferred many benefits upon Braidwood, including a greatly increased population.<sup>18</sup> The new route was not, however, used exclusively. Many continued to use the old inland road from Sydney, despite the saving in time afforded by the Clyde road, and despite the fact that pack-horses no longer had to be used, as at first,<sup>19</sup> by those who came by sea. The old road did not rapidly improve in condition, for in September 1857 a complaint was heard from Araluen that 'Provisions are very dear and scarce, owing to the impracticable state of the roads between this and Sydney, drays have been upwards of four months behind time and no prospect of their speedy arrival'.<sup>20</sup> By June 1859, pack-horses were again to be

<sup>15</sup> S.M.H., 14 June 1853.

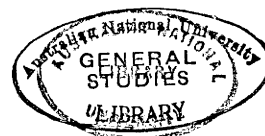
<sup>16</sup> S.M.H., 17 Dec. 1853.

<sup>17</sup> S.M.H., 3 Nov. 1855.

<sup>18</sup> S.M.H., 8 June 1858.

<sup>19</sup> S.M.H., 5 Nov. 1851.

<sup>20</sup> S.M.H., 19 Sept. 1857.



seen coming into Braidwood, this time from the Moruya River,  
<sup>21</sup>  
 further south.

The combined sea and coast-road method of transmitting goods and passengers was used for a brief period during the Kiandra rush,  
<sup>22</sup> via Twofold Bay, and also in the far north, where in January 1857 the escort also followed the coast road to Maitland, and proceeded thence by steamer to  
<sup>23</sup>  
 Sydney.

Transport from regional centres to the diggings also presented considerable problems. Roads were no better -  
<sup>24</sup>  
 and were often considerably worse - than the main highway. On occasion residents, impatient of government inaction,  
<sup>25</sup>  
 constructed their own roads and bridges as at Braidwood in 1855  
<sup>26</sup> and Major's Creek in 1860.  
<sup>27</sup> At Kiandra, when

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<sup>21</sup>

S.M.H., 8 June 1859.

<sup>22</sup>

Report of Surveyor-General of South Australia on Snowy River Diggings, May 1860, reprinted in D.G. Moye (ed.) Historic Kiandra, pp.16-24.

<sup>23</sup>

S.M.H., 19 Jan. 1857.

<sup>24</sup>

Empire, 13 Oct. 1851, 7 Sept. 1852; S.M.H., 27 Aug. 1851, 6 July, 23 Aug. 1852, 5 March 1853, 21 July, 2, 18, 19 Aug., 6 Oct. 1856, 16 June 1862

<sup>25</sup>

S.M.H., 11 Nov. 1868.

<sup>26</sup>

S.M.H., 1 Nov. 1855.

<sup>27</sup>

S.M.H., 30 Aug. 1860.

all else proved of no avail, human backs were used to carry<sup>28</sup> in supplies and equipment. Prices at the diggings were often governed by the conditions of the roads, which in turn controlled the price of carriage. In the early days of any rush scarcity and great demand combined to raise this considerably,<sup>29</sup> and by September 1851 rates were reported to be from £13 to £15 per ton from Sydney to Bathurst,<sup>30</sup> and as high as £25 to £30 to the Turon. To Braidwood prices rose as high as £40 per ton, even when roads were good.<sup>31</sup> Bad roads helped keep prices up at this high level.<sup>32</sup>

The gold-rush period coincided with what may be described as the railway age, at least so far as popular imagination was concerned in New South Wales. Roads were at best a secondary or temporary means of communication. Railways afforded much more rapid transport, were easier to maintain in all weathers, and fitted well the nineteenth

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28

C. MacAlister, Old Pioneering days in the sunny south, p.243; Preshaw, pp.55-6.

29

Empire, 19 May, 4 June, 4 Aug. 1851; S.M.H., 11 Sept. 1852, 5 April, 23 June 1856, 1 Jan. 1857.

30

Empire, 6 Sept. 1851.

31

S.M.H., 25 May 1854.

32

S.M.H., 22 June 1858, 17 Jan. 1861.

century admiration of itself as an age of illimitable progress, and the colonists' necessary optimism. Tennyson's vision of the future

'Forward, forward, let us range,  
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing  
grooves of change'<sup>33</sup>

was no less optimistic than that of N.S.W. Railways, however, demanded considerable expenditure of capital before they could be of any use in the great distances of this colony. Victoria, in her optimistic, gold-inspired surge forward, was much more prolific in railway construction than N.S.W., and there railways connected the capital with other main centres of population - namely the gold-fields. Railways did not follow the N.S.W. rushes. True, they were expected to be one of the major benefits to be acquired by the colony as a result of the gold discovery,<sup>34</sup> but it is doubtful whether gold hastened the construction of any line, and it certainly did not dictate the direction or destination of such lines. A Select Committee of the Legislative Council reported on the relative merits of roads and railways at the end of 1854.<sup>35</sup> Extended railways

<sup>33</sup>

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Locksley Hall'.

<sup>34</sup>

S.M.H., 31 May 1851.

<sup>35</sup>

Empire, 22 Nov. 1854; Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Council (N.S.W.) 1854.

did not follow. By 1861 the main southern line had reached only as far south as Campbelltown.<sup>36</sup> Intensive railway development was not to take place until the 1870s, under the governorship of Sir Hercules Robinson,<sup>37</sup> but the prospect of the better benefits to be gained from railways did have some effect in retarding road development.<sup>38</sup>

In the absence of railways and good roads, and the impracticability, from the nature of the country, of an extensive canal system,<sup>39</sup> travellers and carriers had to make what use they could of existing roads. It was early learned that the heavy colonial waggon was, though sturdy, most unsuited to muddy roads. Heavy goods were carried on drays drawn by bullocks, who ate less and made less trouble than horses, but the time they took in reaching their destination was always governed by the condition of the roads. A complaint from Araluen in September 1857 that drays from Sydney had been 'upwards of four months behind time, and no prospect of their speedy arrival'<sup>40</sup> may not have been

<sup>36</sup>

S.M.H., 2 March 1860, 18 July 1861.

<sup>37</sup>

Shann, p.294.

<sup>38</sup>

Shann, p.287.

<sup>39</sup>

S.M.H., 24 May 1865 mentions a canal being cut '160 miles down the river' from Forbes, but no further information is given as to its success.

<sup>40</sup>

S.M.H., 19 Sept. 1857.

entirely typical, but it does give a good indication of the delays which could occur. It is unlikely that four months on the road improved the quality or condition of any goods. △  
 But since there was no alternative drays continued to be the mainstay of heavy transport.

Travellers had a wide range of choice. Party because of a lack of vehicles in the earlier years, but mostly because it was cheaper, most chose the simplest form of transport - walking and camping on the way. △ Destitute migrants, Chinese, and experienced diggers could be seen at any time tramping the roads to the diggings, or following a rush to a new spot. Many paid for space on a dray to carry their swags, while walking alongside it themselves. Horses were not uncommon for travellers, but the high price of stabling and forage and the considerable theft-risk made it impracticable for most diggers to keep a horse for long, unless prospecting in an unpopulated region. <sup>41</sup>

Commercial passenger transport was of course a necessity, since there were many who could and would pay for rapid transit to the diggings, and many casual visitors and observers who were under no necessity to walk, and preferred not to travel on horseback. Enterprising men were

<sup>41</sup>

Empire, 6 June, 21 Oct. (ext. from B.F.P.), 16 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 11 June, 3, 9 Sept. 1851.

not slow to supply the need - at a price. The Bathurst  
 Mail took those who were prepared to book well in advance <sup>42</sup>  
 as far as that city. From 7 July 1851 Samuel Jenner ran  
 an 'Express service' thrice weekly between Bathurst and  
 the Turon. <sup>43</sup> Fares were assailed as 'exorbitant', yet all  
 vehicles were filled, and long advance booking was necessary  
 even as late as October. <sup>44</sup> In September, Kendal and  
 Wheatley began a service from Sydney to the Turon, which  
 was severely criticized in letters to the Herald the fol-  
 lowing month for alleged lack of civility and consideration  
 to passengers. <sup>45</sup> In November Henry Rotton began to run a  
 mail coach between Bathurst and Sofala daily, at the 'usual'  
 fare of £1 each way. <sup>46</sup> The following month Frederick Morgan  
 began a competitive service on the same route, at a fare  
 reputedly lower than other operators. Also in December the  
 Bathurst and Turon mail was advertized as running daily to  
 and from Sydney. 'Persons proceeding to Goulburn or the  
 Southern diggings' were informed that 'the new and splendid

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42

Empire, 16 June 1851.

43

S.M.H., 7 July 1851.

44

Empire, 20 Oct. 1851.

45

S.M.H., 13, 15 Oct. 1851.

46

Empire, 8 Dec. 1851.

four-horse conveyance "Golden Age" will start for Goulburn on Tuesday next, the 16th instant, at a quarter before eight, from the yard, Macquarie Street'.<sup>47</sup> This conveyance was to make two runs per week to and from Goulburn. It was soon faced with considerable competition, for a daily service between Sydney, Goulburn and Braidwood was advertised to start from 1 January 1852, with fares at £2/10/-<sup>48</sup> to Goulburn, and another £1 to Braidwood. Another service on the same route was announced to be in course of preparation, taking two days from Sydney to the southern diggings.<sup>49</sup> Despite this great rush to secure control of passenger traffic to the diggings, the Empire was not satisfied, and in its leader of 2 January 1852 appears to ignore recent developments in its eagerness to criticize.

It is really astonishing that so little in the shape of improvement has been done, since the first opening of the gold mines. The same lumbering, unsatisfactory, and unsafe conveyances carry the passengers to and from Bathurst - the old extortion and incivility - the full compliment (sic) of upsets and the same risks of a broken neck. In any other community, one or two companies would have started up ere this to supply the public with the means of economical and expeditious travelling, on a road where for many months past no coach has been driven with an unoccupied seat. It would seem

<sup>47</sup> S.M.H., 11 Dec. 1851.

<sup>48</sup> S.M.H., 26 Dec. 1851.

<sup>49</sup> S.M.H., 26 Dec. 1851.



that the narrow-mindedness and sordidness of the Government had communicated their taint to the public mind.

No new company, however, was provoked by this taunt to establish or increase immediately services to the diggings. Rivalry was not lacking, and two companies thought it worth while taking advertisements in newspapers, making it abundantly clear that in the opinion of each the other was deliberately misleading the public.<sup>50</sup> Coaching companies continued to serve major gold-fields throughout the period, and after the initial scramble for a foothold it appears that the judgement of a Herald correspondent, made in 1872 at Hill End, was substantially correct. 'No better test of the progress of a town can be had than that which is afforded by the means of reaching it, voluntarily supplied by coach masters. They are usually pretty good judges of traffic, and seldom make a mistake.'<sup>51</sup>

It was natural, perhaps, that of the many entrepreneurs and companies engaging in the coaching trade, a number should eventually withdraw, and others be taken over by larger concerns. Until June 1862 Crane and Roberts were the predominant firm operating the Sydney-Lachlan line. The

<sup>50</sup>

S.M.H., 2, 15 March 1852.

<sup>51</sup>

S.M.H., 17 Jan. 1872.

rapidly expanding Cobb & Co. offered to buy them out but were rejected. Not dismayed, Cobb & Co. began a rival service to deal with this traffic, and within a month had bought out Crane and Roberts' business between Sydney and Bathurst and Sydney and Yass.<sup>52</sup> Cobb & Co. were at this time the most outstanding Victorian road transport company. Freeman Cobb, from Boston, had brought with him from New England two Concord coaches - forerunners of the bush-coaches which were always associated with the name of 'Cobb & Co.'<sup>53</sup> - each capable of carrying fourteen passengers. In July 1853, with three other American drivers, John Murray Peck, James Swanton, and John Lamber,<sup>54</sup> he established a parcels service from Sandridge Station to Port Melbourne. The next year, with the same three drivers, he established the first regular coach communication with the gold-fields, under the name of 'Cobb & Company'. The service was fully booked, and its extension to Castlemaine and Bendigo was also a great success. Soon the business was paying so well that it was possible to use relays of horses, and to cut the time down to one day. It was not long before another

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52

S.M.H., 21 June (ext. from Yass Courier), 7, 22 July (ext. from Goulburn Herald) 1862.

53

Shann, p.284.

54

Shann, p.285.

coach was needed to help cope with the traffic.<sup>55</sup> Cobb kept to the Melbourne-Bendigo route for about eighteen months, when he sold out to another American, named Davis. Cobb returned to Boston, reputedly with a clear profit of \$250,000.<sup>56</sup> The line still operated under his name, but did not prosper. In 1861 control passed to James Rutherford,<sup>57</sup> under whom the company expanded beyond Victoria. Rutherford was one of those Americans who found a permanent home in Australia, where he spent 58 years.<sup>58</sup> He re-organized the coaching lines, and gained a monopoly of the Victorian mail contracts. Then he and Walter Russell Hall, with ten coaches, crossed over the border into New South Wales, fixing their headquarters at Bathurst.<sup>59</sup> In June 1862 they were making preparations for a direct service between Sandhurst (Victoria) and the Lachlan,<sup>60</sup> and by their expansion and absorption of other companies were soon

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C.D. Ferguson, Experiences of a fortyner in California and Australia, p.350; L.G. Churchward, 'Australian-American Relations during the Gold Rush' in Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand, vol.II, no.5 (April 1842), p.19.

56

Ferguson, p.351.

57

Shann, p.285.

58

Churchward, p.19.

59

Shann, p.285.

60

S.M.H., 5 June 1862.

the major coaching concern in the colony. Their influence spread until Rutherford controlled inland transport throughout all eastern Australia, including Queensland, until the coming of the railways.<sup>61</sup> 'By 1870 "Cobb & Co." in the three eastern colonies were harnessing 6,000 horses per day, their coaches were travelling 28,000 miles per week, their annual pay-sheet exceeded £100,000, and they received £95,000 per annum in mail subsidies.'<sup>62</sup> It was not by any means the only company,<sup>63</sup> but its predominance over the New South Wales coaching scene must be undisputed. Cobb & Co. has become synonymous with transport here as Wells Fargo has in the United States, and not all of its glamour and reputation is attributable to posterity and the poems of Henry Lawson. Even in 1871 a complaint of bad roads around Gulgong was met with the retort that Cobb & Co. seemed to manage them fairly well.<sup>64</sup>

Coaching administration and organization were not the only lessons learned from the United States in the field of inland transport. As before described, the heavy

<sup>61</sup> Churchward, p.19; Shann, p.285.

<sup>62</sup> Shann, p.285.

<sup>63</sup> S.M.H., 30 June 1863, 21 Oct. 1868.

<sup>64</sup> S.M.H., 21 June 1871.

colonial waggon, though strong, was highly unsatisfactory on bush tracks and unmade roads in adverse weather conditions. Cobb & Co. used the light American buggy and coach on their Victorian line, and were perhaps the first to introduce these into Australia. Their main feature was a light body, suspended by straps above four wheels of large diameter, and their simplicity of structure was designed to make repair possible anywhere. Comfort was not a prominent feature, since the speed at which they were driven drew attention to all the worst faults and eccentricities of the roads, but as a means of rapid and reliable transport they were without equal.<sup>65</sup> Cobb & Co. were not the first to use these vehicles in New South Wales, however. As early as 1858 an 'American spring waggon', to carry ten persons, was reported to have been put into service on the Clyde road from Braidwood,<sup>66</sup> and Crane and Roberts used 'American coaches' between the railway terminus at Campbelltown and their own terminus at Queanbeyan, as allegedly the quickest way to the Snowy diggings.<sup>67</sup> Bound for the same destination, diggers at the end of 1860 could travel

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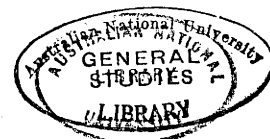
Shann, p.284.

66

S.M.H., 22 June 1858.

67

S.M.H., 2 March 1860.



in 'American covered coaches' to Russell's and New Providence, via Cooma.<sup>68</sup>

The establishment and maintenance of postal services was the responsibility of the colonial government. It was effected by the appointment of postmasters - generally storekeepers - at the diggings, and by the allocation of a carrying contract to an entrepreneur. For the latter, the mail subsidy probably enabled him to run his vehicle regularly, passengers or no, though there was no lack of these when a digging centre was thriving. Mail arrangements were not normally accorded universal approval, and complaints regarding a service so vital to all were frequent. At first, the charges imposed for the carriage of mails by Messrs Meyers and Rotton at Ophir, unauthorized by the Post Office, provoked allegations of extortion, and there is no doubt that they were acting illegally.<sup>69</sup> With the establishment of regular post offices complaints were redoubled, alleging, especially at the Turon, irregularity, blatant incivility, and general bad service.<sup>70</sup> In response

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68

S.M.H., 31 Oct. 1860.

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Empire, 26 June (2nd ed.), 4 July 1851.

70

Empire, 26 Sept., 10, 13, 25 Oct., 3 Nov. 1851.

to popular demand, a postmaster was eventually appointed at the Turon, at a salary of £150, and service improved.<sup>71</sup>

If the number of complaints are anything to build a picture upon, mail services seldom satisfied all. No new or small digging centre considered itself too small or too unproven to have a branch post office,<sup>72</sup> which view, considering the distances involved, was perhaps justified. There always remained the problem, however, of the declining gold-field, and a situation often arose such as that at Stoney Creek, whose appeal for postal communication was published in August 1856,<sup>73</sup> and about which it could be said just 16 months later that 'at present the Post Office, and a few country customers, appear to be the only means of keeping this place alive'.<sup>74</sup> The problem of serving small or declining diggings was eventually overcome by the employment of a single mounted man, calling once or twice a week. This, it seems, was first done at Ophir, where owing to the deserted state of the diggings the mail contract

<sup>71</sup> Empire, 3 Nov. 1851.

<sup>72</sup> Empire, 13 Oct. 1851, 12 Nov. (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 20 Dec. 1852; S.M.H., 19 Aug. 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 17 Jan. 1853, 29 July, 11, 23 Aug. 1856, 26 Nov. 1861.

<sup>73</sup> S.M.H., 23 Aug. 1856.

<sup>74</sup> S.M.H., 22 Dec. 1857.

was found to be unprofitable, and was terminated half-way through 1852 by 'mutual consent and desire' of the government and the contractor, Henry Rotton. Henceforth a mounted trooper was to carry the mails weekly.<sup>75</sup> This system was followed at the Dirt Hole and Tambaroora Creek diggings, in the absence of satisfactorily low tenders by civil contractors,<sup>76</sup> and elsewhere. Though the method ensured regular communication facilities for small settlements, it was not popular, since the mails were likely to suffer considerable damage in a horseman's pouch.<sup>77</sup> Irregularity in delivery and collection was a theme of constant complaint all over the colony, and often the contractor drew most of the blame in the popular mind.<sup>78</sup> The efforts of some contractors to meet their obligations, however, were recognized, and due praise given. R. Elliott, contractor between Goulburn and Braidwood, was especially singled out for commendation for his efforts to combat bad roads, swim

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75

Empire, 12 July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

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Empire, 12 July 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.); S.M.H., 15 July 1852 (ext. from B.F.P.).

77

S.M.H., 2 Oct. 1872.

78

Empire, 16 Jan., 16, 21 June, 26 July, 14, 25 Sept. 1852; S.M.H., 10 Feb., 8 June, 6 July 1852, 26 Feb., 24 March 1853, 8 Feb. 1855, 19 March, 9, 12, 15 April, 11 May, 16 Oct. 1861, 20 Oct. 1863, 9 May 1864.



across flooded rivers and creeks, and do all in his power  
 to keep good time.<sup>79</sup> At Mudgee, in the winter of 1853, it  
 was declared that hitherto irregular mails were now brought  
 on time through floods on horseback.<sup>80</sup>

In general, the government can perhaps be credited with  
 the organization of an efficient and successful postal  
 service throughout the gold-fields, and thereby throughout  
 the colony. This at least can be added to the credit side  
 of the gold-fields account. The replacement of the con-  
 fusion of hunting from store to store for letters by the  
 establishment of regular post offices was necessary and  
 inevitable, and this was a direct government move, in that  
 the first regular post office at the Turon was established  
 in the commissioner's tent, with that official as the tem-  
 porary postmaster.<sup>81</sup> In time, the system of country post  
 offices and of mail delivery services evolved into a re-  
 cognizable pattern. There were problems arising from poor  
 administration, such as the confusion at Tambaroora in  
 August 1852, when it was found that the post office had no  
 supply of the postage stamps which were necessary under the

<sup>79</sup> Empire, 27 Aug. 1852 (ext. from Goulburn Herald); S.M.H.,  
 16 July, 21 Aug. 1852.

<sup>80</sup> S.M.H., 9 Aug. 1853.

<sup>81</sup> Empire, 27 Aug. 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

new system of universal prepayment of letters. It was claimed on this occasion that customers were unwilling to send letters, in the belief that unstamped mail would be returned to them.<sup>82</sup> Other serious hindrances to the successful operation of the postal services were the frequent robberies which occurred on all routes, even from the beginning of the rush period.<sup>83</sup> The height of the bushrangers' power was reached in the 1860s, on the Western road, when chances of a mailman or coach being allowed to escape unscathed appeared to be exceedingly slim. Neither were the other roads safe, as reports of mail robberies from north and south streamed in. The government tried to counter this on occasion by the provision of a police escort,<sup>84</sup> but it was not until the late sixties, when the bushranging gangs had been broken up, that the mails could travel in reasonable expectation of safety.

The invention which shared with the railway the task of speeding the nineteenth century into the modern world was the electric telegraph. Already by December 1851 the Herald was able to report the introduction of this wondrous

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<sup>82</sup> Empire, 23 Aug. 1852.

<sup>83</sup> S.M.H., 23 May 1851, 28 July 1853, 17 Jan. 1854.

<sup>84</sup> Empire, 25 July 1851; S.M.H., 12 July 1852, 2 April, 4 Aug. 1856.

communication system between the principal cities of  
 California.<sup>85</sup> In 1854 a Bostonian, Samuel McGowan, built  
 the first line in Australia, between Melbourne and Geelong,  
 at a cost of £200 per mile, the line subsequently being  
 managed by Americans.<sup>86</sup> The New South Wales network spread  
 quickly during the sixties. If it was impracticable for  
 railways to be built to all the digging centres, the tele-  
 graph presented no such problems, and most of the colonies'  
 gold-fields were soon brought within the embrace of a  
 system which by 1874 covered distances totalling 7449 miles.<sup>87</sup>

Penetration and knowledge of the colony were increased  
 considerably by the gold-rushes. Communications had to be  
 expanded correspondingly. Freeman Cobb had been attracted  
 to Melbourne by gold, and his activities there were to have  
 beneficial effects upon New South Wales later. The gold-  
 fields were the spur behind the linking-up of most eastern  
 parts of the colony by the electric telegraph. Railways  
 were to come later, and good roads throughout her empty  
 spaces were beyond the resources of the colony. They had  
 to be traversed by diggers as well as they could. But if

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S.M.H., 27 Dec. 1851.

86

Hunt's Merchant Magazine, vol.31 (1854), p.747; Levi,  
 p.45.

87

N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1860-74.

they brought few benefits in this sphere, the gold-rushes did serve to make city-dwellers more aware of their country's interior. For purposes of supplying them with news of the inner regions, the electric telegraph sufficed. The advances in communications during this period greatly outstripped those in transport. To the city-dwellers without a financial stake in the interior, this was enough.

## Chapter 5

### THE CHINESE

The first attempt at large-scale importation of Chinese labourers into New South Wales, by the Australian Agricultural Company in 1841, was frustrated by the internal disorder then prevailing within the Chinese Empire.<sup>1</sup> By 1849, however, enough of them had been introduced into the colony to draw forth vehement protests from the democratic People's Advocate.<sup>2</sup> At ten pounds for the passage from China, and a wage of only six pounds per annum, a Chinaman under a five year contract seemed an attractive bargain for the grazier wishing to keep his production costs as low as possible.<sup>3</sup> Some even claimed that the Chinese, less sturdy than Europeans, were in fact better suited to shepherding than the latter, being more content with such an occupation.<sup>4</sup> From 1849 the need for a

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<sup>1</sup> New South Wales Immigration Papers, pp.133-4 (Mitchell Library).

<sup>2</sup> People's Advocate, 10 March, 12 May 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from C. Lawless to Mrs Pyne, from Brisbane, 15 March 1849 (Mitchell Library)

<sup>4</sup> S.M.H., 8 May 1852.

controllable labour force was more apparent, as hundreds of men deserted their employers to leave the colony for the golden promise that was California.<sup>5</sup> The labour shortage was further aggravated when, in May 1851, the news of Hargraves' discovery stopped the exodus only to replace it with an even wilder stampede into the western interior of New South Wales. It became obvious that free labourers, exposed to such temptation, were not a firm basis for the vital wool-growing industry. Nor could new arrivals from Europe be expected to remain immune from the gold-fever which gripped the whole colony. To many graziers the only hope of economic survival appeared to be the introduction of Chinese shepherds to replace the deserters,<sup>6</sup> and by August 1852 the Empire had sadly to announce that

Already, in some districts of the colony, the settlers...are entirely dependent upon Chinese for the care of their flocks, a most uncertain kind of labour at best, and one which is in every way to be deprecated; had it not, however, been for this class, we are most credibly assured, that thousands and tens of thousands of our sheep must have been surrendered to the native dogs, or otherwise only kept together at a ruinous loss.<sup>7</sup>

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From 16 Jan. 1849 to 6 April 1850, 3348 had left N.S.W. for California. Votes and Proceedings, N.S.W. Legislative Council, 1850.

6

Empire, 31 Aug. 1852; S.M.H., 8 May 1852, 5 Feb. 1853.

7

Empire, 31 Aug. 1852.

Even the supposedly docile Chinese, however, were not immune from the attractions of a quick fortune, and it was not long before they began to follow the example of their European colleagues. W.C. Wentworth, himself an employer of Chinese, showed the concern felt by this group when, in a Legislative Council debate on the Gold Fields Management Bill in 1852, he introduced two amendments. The first was in conformity with the legend of Wentworth the patriot, and called for the imposition upon all foreign diggers of a double licence fee. This was incorporated into the Bill, and later passed into law. His second suggestion, that licences be withheld from Chinese until they had proved themselves to be lawfully discharged from hired service,<sup>8</sup> was rejected.

With the spread of the news of the gold-fields the nature of Chinese immigration into Australia was undergoing a change. In place of the shepherds and domestic servants who had formed the bulk of earlier immigrants, those now arriving came mostly with some idea of proceeding to the gold-fields, and since Victoria had by 1852 proved her superior wealth in this respect, it was to Melbourne that most of the Chinese went. It was not long before problems

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<sup>8</sup>

S.M.H., 23 Dec. 1852.

arose concerning them which were to be underlined again and again in New South Wales in later years. European diggers, having discovered and nursed an intense dislike for the Chinese, forced the Victorian government to take action, and in 1855 an Act was passed with the purpose of limiting drastically any further Chinese immigration into Victoria, and of controlling the movements and actions of those already in the colony.<sup>9</sup> New South Wales, whose press had long been in the practice of commenting pompously on the lack of charity shown to the Chinese in Victoria, was soon<sup>10</sup> to experience a Chinese problem of her own.

Unfortunately there are no official records of the numbers of Chinese entering New South Wales before 1856, but it seems that they were not very numerous. There had been considerable agitation against them in the first year or two after the discovery of gold, when the possibility of large-scale importation of Chinese labourers was discussed,<sup>11</sup> and in November 1851 a motion had been put before the Legislative Council calling for a ban on Chinese

<sup>9</sup> S.M.H., 27 June 1855.

<sup>10</sup> S.M.H., 25 April, 15 June 1855, 8, 9 July 1856.

<sup>11</sup> Empire, 21, 26 Feb., 2, 11 March, 2 April 1852; S.M.H., 26 Nov. 1851.



immigration.<sup>12</sup> It was withdrawn, however, and allegations of 'slave-labour' continued to be made and denied most heatedly.<sup>13</sup> Wentworth's Alien Clause in the 1852 Gold Fields Management Bill had the effect of winning for the Chinese, as for other foreign diggers, a host of new champions. The 'steady, plodding fellows', whose industry was so much to be admired, were, it was alleged, being driven away by it to Victoria.<sup>14</sup> In December 1852 the report of the Legislative Council's Select Committee on Asiatic Labour - with the anti-Chinese Henry Parkes as its chairman - denied any immediate necessity for legislation to restrict Asian immigration.<sup>15</sup> The Herald joined the chorus of apologists with an account of the benefits which California was deriving from its Chinese population.<sup>16</sup> The influx of Chinese into New South Wales as a result of Victorian legislation against them in 1855 was looked upon as beneficial to the older colony, and drew forth a rather complacent commentary to that effect -

<sup>12</sup> S.M.H., 24 Nov. 1851.

<sup>13</sup> Empire, 26 Feb. 1852; S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1853.

<sup>14</sup> S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1853.

<sup>15</sup> Empire, 5 Dec. 1854.

<sup>16</sup> S.M.H., 1 Jan. 1855.

1854

A false step can seldom be repaired, but the people of Victoria have not known how to prize their good fortune, and they have repelled from their shores an industrious and inoffensive race, who have thus been driven upon our own. They have not come to compete with any class of labourers, in any ordinary form of industry, but to try their fortune in our mines, and if successful they will add to the common prosperity.... We have a territory so large it is impossible any immigration of foreigners can injure the Englishman. The Chinaman's gold will be quite as useful as the gold of the most thorough Anglo-Saxon, and what he can carry home will be a trifle indeed compared with what he will expend in the country.... We may justly condemn any attempt to facilitate by law the introduction of the Chinese when other emigration is possible; but we hope nothing will ever induce our legislators to disgrace the government of this colony by passing laws inconsistent with absolute justice and perfect freedom.<sup>17</sup>

Largely because of Victoria's restrictive immigration, the excess in 1856 of Chinese entering New South Wales by sea over those leaving by the same way was 453, though this dropped the following year to 220, many perhaps waiting until they heard news of the progress of the first batches.<sup>18</sup> Some, after trying New South Wales fields, proceeded overland to Victoria, thus avoiding payment of the £10 Chinese entry tax imposed there.<sup>19</sup> Others stayed

<sup>17</sup>

S.M.H., 9 July 1856.

<sup>18</sup>

J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, p.315.

<sup>19</sup>

S.M.H., 9 Sept. (ext. from B.F.P.), 17 Dec. (ext. from Maitland Mercury) 1856, 17 Jan. 1857 (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 6 March, 5 June 1858, 18 Jan. 1859 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

in the older colony, satisfied with their profits on the fields there, and their numbers increased as the Victorian boom subsided. The great year for Chinese entry into New South Wales was 1858, and the net increase from Chinese immigrants by sea in that year was 10,138.<sup>20</sup> With the increase came a change in their reception, for close contact and self-interest pushed aside such vaguely humanitarian ideals as had been expressed when criticism of Victoria's policy was fashionable. With their growing numbers also came renewed tales of their unsuitability to live amongst their European superiors.<sup>21</sup> The increase was rapid, and large groups of them were seen moving across the country, easily identifiable as an alien class,<sup>22</sup> and none the less to be feared because little was known of them, of their background, or of the numbers of their countrymen waiting to follow them.

<sup>20</sup>

Journal of Legislative Council, 1863-4, vol.X, p.237. Immigration Agent's report gives excess of Chinese immigrants over emigrants of 12,710 for the two years 1858-9. Vol.VI (1860) gives excess in 1859 as 2,572, therefore excess for 1858 must be 10,138.

<sup>21</sup>

S.M.H., 6, 20 March 1858 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

<sup>22</sup>

S.M.H., 25 July (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 14, 25, 26 Aug. (ext. from B.F.P.), 8 Dec. (ext. from Armidale Express) 1856, 17 Jan. (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 6 July (ext. from B.F.P.), 22 Aug. (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle) 1857, 6, 9 April 1858, 4 April 1859.



A major reason for the increased emigration of Chinese to New South Wales was of course the virtual closure of Victoria to large numbers of them, but few Chinese could have gone to either colony without a change in the means of financing the voyage from China. The old contract system, whereby a man was brought in by an employer to serve for a specified number of years, was no longer desirable when the immigrant thus brought in was likely to desert for the gold-fields at any time. Few could afford to pay their own fares.<sup>23</sup> To supply their need, the credit-ticket system was used. Money was advanced to cover the cost of the voyage, and was to be repaid after arrival. Arrangements varied, some paying back, with interest, out of their earnings, while others, free of interest obligations, pledged themselves instead to surrender a fixed proportion of their gold - sometimes one third - to their benefactor for the duration of their stay in Australia. The 'master' sometimes travelled with his group of debtors to Australia, remaining with them to direct their work on the gold-fields until their agreement with him was fulfilled. Agreements were usually honoured by the borrower, even to

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J.L.C., 1858, vol.III. Minutes of evidence of Select Committee of Legislative Council on Chinese immigration. Evidence of Henry Leau Appa.

the extent of sending payments to China if the 'master' or his agent were not present. 'Most men do not refuse to pay', said Chinese merchant Henry Leau Appa in evidence before a Select Committee of the Legislative Council in 1858, 'as they have a wife and mother at home. A man cannot cheat his master, because somebody with him would know how much gold he gets, then if he cheats his master his master would know it - the other person would tell him.'

There was much to distinguish the Chinese from other diggers. Their personal appearance and unusual dress, together with ignorance of the English language, at once proclaimed them to be aliens,<sup>25</sup> but even when many of them later adopted a more conventional digger's dress,<sup>26</sup> and made efforts to learn English,<sup>27</sup> they were - in any large numbers - unassimilable. Normally they kept to the company of their own countrymen. In groups they arrived in the colony, in groups they travelled to the gold-fields, and in groups they settled and worked them. They were not, however,

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid.; P.C. Campbell, Chinese Coolie Immigration to Countries within the British Empire, p.58.

<sup>25</sup>

S.M.H., 15 July, 2 Aug. 1856 (both ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>26</sup>

S.M.H., 22 June, 10 July (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle) 1858.

<sup>27</sup>

J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese Immigration, evidence of W.C. Brackenbury, warden of gold-fields in Victoria.

indiscriminate in their choice of Chinese companions, for strong factional differences existed amongst them. The most noticeable was that between the Canton and Amoy regional groups, which differed to the extent of being unable to understand each other's dialect.<sup>28</sup> Their frequent skirmishes and pitched battles were the only indication to European diggers that any difference between them existed.<sup>29</sup>

It is likely that European expressions of resentment against Chinese 'clannishness' were more examples of seizing upon any stick with which to beat the Chinese dog than expressions of a desire that the Orientals should mix more freely with them. The Chinese carried their segregation to the extent of living in their own villages, outside the bounds of any European settlement which might be near. Usually described as neat and clean, the villages often compared favourably with any European settlement of a similar nature.<sup>30</sup> To a large degree they were self-contained, with their own stores, butcheries, etc., and in one case at

<sup>28</sup>

S.M.H., 19 June 1858, 10 March 1860 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

<sup>29</sup>

S.M.H., 12 Jan. (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 4 April 1857, 28 Aug. 1861 (both ext. from Armidale Express), 25 June 1862.

<sup>30</sup>

S.M.H., 22 June, 1 Sept. 1858, 26 Jan. 5 April, 30 June 1859, 10 Jan., 24 July (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch) 1860, 3 Aug. 1861 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

least, even a Chinese bank. <sup>31</sup> In some of the larger encampments goods were ordered direct from Sydney wholesalers, and transported from the metropolis in specially-chartered drays. <sup>32</sup> Society in these settlements differed considerably from that known by European diggers, which, predominately masculine at the outset, was soon softened by the arrival of women and children as the diggings developed and became better established. <sup>33</sup> European men worked either in small, independent groups, or on a wage basis for a capitalist, large or small. Chinese society is more difficult to disentangle, as the descriptions given of their encampments seem to disregard differences just as they disregarded the distinction between Amoy and Canton Chinese. A Chinaman was a Chinaman, no more and no less, and all Chinese settlements were likewise similar to each other in all respects. Only general descriptions are given, and this makes the task of distinction more difficult. The standard description involves a 'boss' and his men, all of whom work for him. <sup>34</sup> It was also remarked that the great

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<sup>31</sup>

S.M.H., 26 Jan. 1867 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch).

<sup>32</sup>

S.M.H., 1 Sept. 1858, 30 June 1859.

<sup>33</sup>

Empire, 14 Aug. (2nd ed.), 19 Dec. 1851.

<sup>34</sup>

S.M.H., 10 April (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 11 May 1861.

Chinese capacity for co-operation stemmed from this subordination. Yet it is known that not all Chinese came from China under the supervision of their 'master'. Some must have worked for their own benefit, if in addition they were sending payments home to China. Others took employment with a company, whether Chinese or otherwise, after arrival in the colony.<sup>35</sup> But it is unlikely that there was much direction of labour within the village on the diggings. A 'master' might have authority over his debtors after working hours, but the same cannot be argued in the case of the free workers. Yet the co-operation and organization of village life, and on the diggings, deeply impressed observers.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps, misled by their own contemptuous references to the Chinese 'tribes',<sup>37</sup> they assumed that any primitive society must have a 'head man'. There were such men on the Victorian fields, but they were government appointees, responsible for the good behaviour of their charges.<sup>38</sup> Whatever the reason behind Chinese co-operation,

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S.M.H., 28 May, 15 Dec. 1860, 6 April 1870 (ext. from Gundagai Times).

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S.M.H., 22 Feb., 16 March, 8 June (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch) 1859, 5 Nov. 1860, 9 June 1862 (Western Post)

37

S.M.H., 25 June 1862.

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J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese immigration. Evidence of James Daly, warden of gold-fields at Ballarat, Victoria.



it was a more sensible system than that adopted by other diggers - at least for the Chinese themselves. A distinct minority group, without the benefits or responsibilities of family life, they could find in close co-operation the means to achieve an optimum of comfort and economy in living and working.

Since Chinese women hardly ever joined the ranks of emigrants to Australia, it being considered too costly and wasteful to bring them, as well as being contrary to tradition,<sup>39</sup> the only alternative the Chinamen had to austere living was alliance with aboriginal or European women. Some of the latter married Chinese, and lived in the camps with them, while others could be found living there without the benefit of a priest's blessing.<sup>40</sup> In an age and society when miscegenation were severely frowned upon such situations were fruitful sources for grievance against the Chinese, and were not neglected by their enemies.<sup>41</sup>

Lacking both capital and digging experience, newly-arrived Chinese, like newcomers of other nationalities,

<sup>39</sup>

J.L.C., vol.XIV, Part 1, p.543, and vol.XV, Part 1, p.381. Appendices to reports of Immigration Agent, 1865 and 1866 report two Chinese women entering N.S.W. in 1865 and one in 1866. No others are mentioned in the period 1851-74.

<sup>40</sup>

S.M.H., 22 Feb. 1862.

<sup>41</sup>

S.M.H., 24 Nov. 1851, 11 Nov. 1857, 3 Oct. 1860.

usually went straight to an established field. Most of these had already been worked over hastily in the first rush, but the Chinese found that by reworking old ground<sup>42</sup> they could often gather a satisfactory profit. Soon they came to be regarded as a race who would work hard and be satisfied with earnings which would suffice for mere subsistence.<sup>43</sup> By co-operation they were able to reach a standard of efficiency whereby they could make a profit on ground on which a digger of another race would have starved.<sup>44</sup> It was sometimes difficult to know just how well they were doing, however, for they sold their gold only according to need, and not, like most other diggers, immediately it was washed from the pan.<sup>45</sup> Their reputation for frugal living was well earned, for they often profited on poor ground, but one suspects that it was greatly exaggerated by discontented publicans and shanty-keepers, since they were comparatively free from the 'withering curse of the rum cask'

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S.M.H., 25 Aug. (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 8 Dec. (ext. from Armidale Express) 1856, 22 June 1858, 20 May 1859, 6, 13 Aug. (both ext. from Braidwood Observer), 26 Dec. 1859; Preshaw, p.76.

43

S.M.H., 12 June 1861 (ext. from B.F.P.); Preshaw, p.76.

44

S.M.H., 1 Dec. 1856 (ext. from Armidale Express), 22 Feb. 1859.

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S.M.H., 22 Sept., 14 Dec. 1858, 11 Jan. 1859, 3 Aug. 1860, 23 Nov. 1869.

which invariably hung over white digging communities.<sup>46</sup>  
 There is nevertheless ample evidence that whenever they  
 were in a position to afford it they were willing to spend  
 freely on luxury foods, such as fish, poultry, and sucking-  
 pigs, in addition to their staple rice.<sup>47</sup>

The success of the Chinese in techniques of reworking  
 old diggings, and their evident preference for easily  
 worked ground, led to much complaint that they were un-  
 willing to prospect, waiting around on their old diggings  
 until something better turned up - in short, that they  
 were 'a useless set of people for developing the resources  
 of a gold-field'.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless there were numerous  
 Chinese parties engaged in prospecting,<sup>49</sup> and, owing to  
 their efficient communications system, they often seemed  
 to learn of a new discovery long before anyone else.<sup>50</sup>  
 Their preference for ground that could be easily and inex-  
 pensively worked they shared with most other diggers who  
 were short of capital, but it was not always born of a

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S.M.H., 2 June 1859.

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S.M.H., 22 June, 31 July 1858, 11 Jan. 1859, 7 Jan. 1862.

48

S.M.H., 27 Aug. 1856.

49

S.M.H., 22 Sept. 1858, 3 Aug. 1860.

50

S.M.H., 21 July 1856 (ext. from Maitland Mercury),  
 4 April 1859.

disinclination for hard work. Chinese with sufficient capital to invest in extensive and expensive operations might have preferred to take their money home to China rather than risk it in a gamble on a deep claim which might take many months or even years before the initial outlay could be regained. But there was no shortage of examples of Chinese individuals or companies investing heavily in claims of all descriptions,<sup>51</sup> on which they generally employed parties of their own countrymen who were in less fortunate circumstances.<sup>52</sup> A Chinaman without capital possessed as his only assets his own labour and patience, and on more than one occasion these were shown to good account in such ambitious projects as the damming or turning of a river in order to turn a water wheel, or the construction of dams and reservoirs to hold the water without which

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S.M.H., 2 July 1858 (ext. from Armidale Express), 2 June (ext. from Braidwood Observer), 8 June (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 18 June, 9 July (both ext. from Braidwood Observer) 1859, 24 July (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 5 Nov., 15 Dec. (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch) 1860, 26 March (ext. from B.F.P.), 10 April (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 3 Aug. (ext. from Bathurst Times) 1861, 6 May 1862 (ext. from B.F.P.), 20 Jan. 1863 (ext. from Western Post).

52

S.M.H., 18 June 1859 (ext. from Braidwood Observer), 28 May (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 15 Dec. (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch) 1860, 13 July 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

they could not work.<sup>53</sup> Their perseverance became proverbial, and the advent of the Chinese often meant the successful continuation in production of an otherwise uneconomic gold-field.<sup>54</sup>

They were never welcomed with open arms by the other diggers. The very circumstances of their arrival, which might well have been expected to evoke sympathy from the more fortunate, instead stirred up hostility against them. Packed into vessels by the emigration brokers at Hong Kong, uncomfortable despite the regulations in force both there and in New South Wales, they often found the long voyage to Australia anything but pleasant. The vessels, with their cargoes of adult males, were denounced in New South Wales as dens of immorality and disease, and the new arrivals were looked upon with self-righteous horror by the colonists, in whose minds all were tainted. On reaching Sydney, the Chinese found themselves worse off than when on the ships. Herded together in very unsanitary conditions, they sometimes experienced a delay of as much as two weeks before arrangements could be made for them to leave Sydney for

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S.M.H., 11 Jan., 4 April, 28 July (ext. from Armidale Express) 1859, 11 Jan. 1871 (ext. from Braidwood Monitor).

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S.M.H., 26 Dec. 1859, 4 June 1873 (ext. from Gulgong Guardian).

the interior. Often penniless, shunned by Australians, and with no friends or associates other than those made on the voyage, it is not surprising that they kept together in racial groups, at least until they were in a position to show more independence.<sup>55</sup>

Opposition to them stemmed largely from prejudice, and had many roots in the recent experiences in Victoria. Here was an alien, unassimilable class, arriving to work in direct competition with Europeans. It was not only non-British, but Asiatic, and therefore inferior in the eyes of colonists old and new.<sup>56</sup> Competition from such a quarter could not be tolerated in any country where the democratic element was so powerful and so vocal as in the gold colonies of Victoria and New South Wales, and it was soon plain that toleration was not even considered by the diggers. The first disturbance came at the Rocky River field in September 1856, when diggers attacked the Chinese and drove them off the field.<sup>57</sup> Much blame for this incident can be

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J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese immigration. Evidence of Henry Leau Appa, Chin Ateak - a Chinese merchant in Sydney - and Isaac Aaron - Health Officer of City of Sydney.

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S.M.H., 22, 24 April 1852.

57

S.M.H., 8 Sept. 1856.

laid at the door of the Herald's Rocky River correspondent, whose reports were of a decidedly inflammatory and anti-Chinese nature.<sup>58</sup> Even after the riot he allowed himself no expression of sympathy towards the victims.

I greatly fear that if the Chinese are not more strictly looked after by the Commissioner they will shortly get driven from these diggings entirely, as after giving them the best of fair play, they are not satisfied. The more they are allowed, the more they want, so that one Celestial gives more trouble than twenty white men.<sup>59</sup>

No further serious outbreak occurred until in July 1857 the diggers at the Buckland field in Victoria combined to drive off the Chinese.<sup>60</sup> Wide publicity of the incident led to renewed discussion in New South Wales on the whole question of Chinese immigration. Reports of 'the annoyance of the white folks' multiplied as Chinese refugees from Victoria began to stream in.<sup>61</sup> One party made its appearance at Adelong in September, but was 'very unceremoniously and expeditiously driven off by the diggers, who eschew the Tartar company'.<sup>62</sup>

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S.M.H., 27 Aug. 1856.

59

S.M.H., 10 Sept. 1856.

60

S.M.H., 13, 14, 18 July, 3 Aug. 1857.

61

S.M.H., 22 Aug. (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 25 Sept. (ext. from Armidale Express) 1857.

62

S.M.H., 10 Sept. 1857.

The tide of Chinese immigration reached its fullest strength in 1858. New arrivals continued to pour in until the government took measures to check the influx at the end of 1861, but in no succeeding year did it reach the alarming proportions of 1858.<sup>63</sup> Spreading rapidly through the colony, the newcomers made especially for the booming fields of the Western District,<sup>64</sup> and on many diggings throughout the colony their numbers became such as to put European diggers in fear of becoming a minority.<sup>65</sup> The chorus of protests against the invasion was heard again and again in the form of petitions to both Houses of the Legislature,<sup>66</sup> letters and articles in the press, and public meetings. The old list of complaints, many of which had been inherited from Victoria, was aired and added to: Chinese depressed trade and drove away prospective diggers by their mere

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See appendix 2.

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J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese immigration. Evidence of P.L. Cloete, Assistant Gold Commissioner, and of G. Ingelow, manager of Oriental Bank, Sydney; S.M.H., 10 Feb. 1858.

65

S.M.H., 12 April, 2 July (ext. from Armidale Express), 5 July, 24 Dec. 1858, 24 Feb., 2 June (ext. from Braidwood Observer), 30 June 1859, 23 Feb. (ext. from Bathurst Times), 28 May (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 11 June (ext. from B.F.P.), 13 Oct. (ext. from Braidwood Observer) 1860, 22 May (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 3 Aug. (ext. from Bathurst Times) 1861.

66

S.M.H., 22, 31 July, 2 Sept. 1858, 1 Jan. (ext. from Goulburn Herald), 31 Jan. 1859; J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, pp.301, 303.



presence; <sup>67</sup> they wasted water, and spoiled drinking water; <sup>68</sup>  
 they were petty thieves, stealing the possessions, tools,  
 and washdirt of 'Christian diggers'; <sup>69</sup> they were heathens,  
 and not fit to mix with Christians; <sup>70</sup> they were bringers  
 of disease, inclined to dirty habits, and addicted to un-  
 speakable vices; <sup>71</sup> they were unpleasant neighbours, re-  
 joicing in any chance to jump a claim; <sup>72</sup> they would neither  
 explore nor prospect, <sup>73</sup> and were useless as colonists,  
 since most intended to return to China when they had made  
 a competence; <sup>74</sup> and in any case, European females detested  
 the 'leprous Tartars'. <sup>75</sup> Odd incidents involving the

67

S.M.H., 31 July 1858.

68

S.M.H., 20 March (ext. from Bathurst Times), 18 June  
 (ext. from Armidale Express), 22 June, 31 July 1858, 4 Sept.  
 1861 (ext. from Armidale Express); MacAlister, p.248;  
 Preshaw, p.77.

69

S.M.H., 10 April 1857 (ext. from B.F.P.), 20 March (ext.  
 from Bathurst Times), 22, 16 July (ext. from Braidwood  
Observer) 1859, 30 Aug., 5 Nov. 1860, 10 July 1861.

70

S.M.H., 7 Feb. 1853 (Supplement).

71

S.M.H., 7 Feb. 1853, 18 June 1858 (ext. from Armidale  
Express); MacAlister, p.248; Preshaw, p.77.

72

S.M.H., 16 April, 1 Oct. 1861.

73

S.M.H., 27 Aug. 1856.

74

J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese im-  
 migration. Evidence of W.C. Brackenbury.

75

S.M.H., 20 March 1858 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

Chinese were given wide publicity by the press, such as  
 their factional friction,<sup>76</sup> or the purchase of white girls  
 as wives,<sup>77</sup> and these could only serve to intensify their  
 already widespread unpopularity. An attempt to drive them  
 off the Tambaroora field was checked by Sub-Commissioner  
 Forster in March 1858.<sup>78</sup> At Bathurst a public meeting held  
 in April to press for increased representation of the  
 western gold-fields in the Assembly included in its resolu-  
 tions 'That this meeting is of opinion that an express  
 prohibition be made in the Naturalisation clause of the  
 proposed Electoral Bill, against the extension of the  
 franchise to the Chinese portion of our population'.<sup>79</sup>

Members of the Legislative Assembly were not slow to  
 catch the trend of popular opinion, and a Chinese Immigra-  
 tion Regulation Bill was introduced and passed through all  
 stages in the Lower House.<sup>80</sup> The Legislative Council sub-  
 mitted the whole question of Chinese immigration and its

<sup>76</sup>

S.M.H., 12 Jan. (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 4 April  
 1857, 28 Aug. 1861 (both ext. from Armidale Express),  
 25 June 1862.

<sup>77</sup>

S.M.H., 15 Sept. 1857.

<sup>78</sup>

S.M.H., 20 March 1858 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

<sup>79</sup>

S.M.H., 13 April 1858.

<sup>80</sup>

S.M.H., 13, 21 April, 19, 25 June, 1, 2, 3 July 1858.

81

side-effects to a Select Committee for examination, whose report was a rare example of almost impartial reasoning in a period of intense exaggeration.

The character of order, industry, and obedience to Regulations at the Gold Diggings, is fully awarded to the Chinese by witnesses whose testimony is well deserving of credit.... They seem to live apart, and avoid mixing with the people of other nations as much as possible; and your Committee approve of a clause in the present Bill which enables the Executive to establish regulations for the control, management, and protection of the Chinese located on the Gold Fields, similar to those which have been found to operate so beneficially in the neighbouring Colony of Victoria.<sup>82</sup>

As the Council rejected the Bill, however, no special re-  
83  
 gulations were yet made for the Chinese.

While their legislators were wrestling with the problem, the diggers were kept aware of its existence. Agitation, accompanied by its ever-present servant exaggeration,  
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 continued undiminished. No positive and popular suggestion was forthcoming for the easier assimilation of the Chinese, nor any strenuous efforts made to raise them from their alleged inferior condition to a level with the

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S.M.H., 29, 30 July 1858.

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J.L.C., 1858, vol.III - Report of Select Committee on Chinese immigration.

83

S.M.H., 8 Nov. 1858.

84

S.M.H., 2 Sept. 1858.

Europeans, even to the extent of attempting their conversion to Christianity. The popular cry was the negative one - the Chinese must be controlled, restricted, driven off, but not cured of the disabilities which were the alleged reason for European hostility. 'Let no Joss-houses<sup>85</sup> be erected in New South Wales' could be guaranteed to draw more applause than a plea for the salvation of Chinese souls, and the mission to the Chinese within the colony seems to have been sadly neglected. However, Chinese souls were no concern of the miners. If the government would not act in defence of the diggers' imagined interests, then the latter determined to act for themselves, and on several fields confined the Chinese to certain areas away from the workings of the Europeans.<sup>86</sup> And in the midst of all this emotional turmoil and confusion the Herald, standing bravely by the principles of impartial fairness which it had on the whole endeavoured all along to maintain on the Chinese question, pleaded for restraint. 'Whatever we do let us not disgrace the country by establishing a policy towards the Chinese which will place us below the level of the Chinese themselves.'<sup>87</sup> But in the storms of emotional

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S.M.H., 22 June 1858.

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S.M.H., 1 Sept. 1858.

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S.M.H., 1 Sept. 1858.

hostility the still small voice of reason had little chance of being heard or heeded.

No major outbreaks of violence or disorder occurred yet, however, though the peace was so uneasy as to be hardly identifiable as such, with numerous indications that the Chinese were still not welcome neighbours on the diggings. In May 1860 a new Chinese Restriction Bill was ruled out of order in the Assembly, once more bringing the subject into the light of public notice.<sup>88</sup> Another attempt was made to bring in a Bill with similar aims the following October,<sup>89</sup> which this time helped in the advance of the most violent wave of Sinophobia the colony had yet experienced. Since public opinion and official action against the Chinese were to be decided by the course of events during the next year, it is perhaps necessary to trace them in some detail. Tales of rich and extensive deposits of gold in the Snowy Mountains, at Kiandra, had attracted many hopeful diggers from both sides of the intercolonial border, and with the coming of spring they were joined by many more.<sup>90</sup> Too many, as it proved, for the field was

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S.M.H., 12 May 1860.

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S.M.H., 3 Oct. 1860, 6, 13, 20 April, 3 May 1861.

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Preshaw, pp.53-65.

limited in extent, and all payable ground was soon taken up. Fortunately a new field was being opened at this time at the Lambing Flat, Burrangong, less than two hundred miles to the north, and it was here that most of the Kiandra disappointed turned to retrieve their lost hopes.<sup>91</sup>

The society which gathered around the booming, brawling young settlement was composed mainly of men who had already experienced life in a mining camp,<sup>92</sup> though not all came from Kiandra, and the new township rapidly took shape, complete with far more than its share of parasites, all eager to find a new source of nourishment after a rather lean time at other fields.<sup>93</sup> Sinking was shallow and the deposits of gold easy to work, and by September there were reported to be a great many Chinese at the diggings.<sup>94</sup> At first they appeared to keep as much apart as possible from other diggers,<sup>95</sup> but their rapidly-increasing numbers made it difficult for them to keep in the background, while the Legislative Assembly debate on immigration restriction kept

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91

S.M.H., 8 Jan. 1860; Preshaw, p.62.

92

S.M.H., 20 April 1861.

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S.M.H., 7 May 1861; Preshaw, p.76.

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S.M.H., 25, 29 Sept. 1860.

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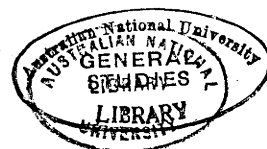
S.M.H., 29 Sept. 1860.

the whole Chinese question very much to the fore. In the firm belief that their own interests were threatened, the Europeans were not slow to take action, and late in November the Chinese were compelled to evacuate the diggings. This appears to have been solely the work of the diggers, genuinely fearful of being swamped by a large influx of aliens whose way of life was so different from their own. The district had not yet been proclaimed a gold-field, and the expulsion was excused by many, as were similar measures taken by the Buckland diggers in 1857, on the grounds that in the failure of the authorities to provide protection, the diggers must unite and fend for themselves. Reports of the intention to expel the Chinese were industriously circulated, and written 'notices to quit' were posted on the trees. At the appointed time, led by the German band, the Europeans marched through the diggings and drove all five hundred Chinese to a suitable distance from them, and then left. The latter, accepting for the moment the dictates of superior force, turned to fresh prospecting, and were almost immediately rewarded by the discovery of new gold deposits at Ironbark. Here they were permitted to stay, though it was not thought that this indulgence would continue for long.

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S.M.H., 22, 24 Nov. 1860 (both ext. from Yass Courier),  
24 Nov. 1860 (ext. from B.F.P.).



The situation at Lambing Flat was as yet far from being settled, however, and the proclamation of the area as a gold-field on 27 November, together with the accompanying appointment of a commissioner, was gloomily expected to afford protection for Chinese on the diggings.<sup>97</sup> On 12 December the diggers again rose, this time with the avowed intention of ridding the district of undesirable characters of their own race. However, after a march through the town, burning and destroying shanties, sparring saloons, and other haunts of criminals, a section of them proceeded to the Chinese camp - to which several of the latter had returned, - and continued their orgy of destruction. This occasion was not so peaceful as the last, however, for the raiders indulged in considerable physical cruelty, and not a few of them returned with collections of pig-tails, cut or torn from their owners, hanging from their belts or standards.<sup>98</sup> By early January, however, Chinese were again on the Flat, and for a short time no attempt was made to interfere with them.<sup>99</sup> Their numbers increased rapidly through that month to an estimated 1500,<sup>100</sup>

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S.M.H., 8 Dec. 1860 (ext. from Yass Courier).

98

S.M.H., 25 Dec. 1860 (ext. from Yass Courier), 5 Jan. 1861.

99

S.M.H., 5 Jan. 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

100

S.M.H., 30 Jan. 1861.



and on 27 January the diggers again reacted, giving them just two hours to leave the ground. Sub-Commissioner Dickson was powerless to intervene, and the one prisoner taken was released on bail.<sup>101</sup> This time the demonstrators used no violence, but made it very plain that they would not hesitate to gain their objective by force if necessary. Agitation took on a new form immediately after the disturbance, with the formation of a Miners' Protection League. At a fiery public meeting on 3 February, resolutions were passed binding each member of the League to aid in ridding the field completely of Chinese.<sup>102</sup> The Herald did not approve at all of the new outbreak, and its immediate reaction was characteristically and predictably stern: 'The hand of the mob is inspired by the political agitator, and the impunity of the first attack has thrown an air of legality over the last.'<sup>103</sup> Further meetings of diggers were held to discuss the situation,<sup>104</sup> but the rapid dispatch of troopers from the western patrol<sup>105</sup> ensured that

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S.M.H., 30 Jan. 1861.

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S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1861.

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S.M.H., 31 Jan. 1861.

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S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1861.

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S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1861.

moderation would prevail at least until the miners' hostility had been more actively aroused. Cloete, Chief Commissioner for the southern gold-fields, also proceeded at once to the scene with Captain Zouch and his southern patrol, and arrangements were made for dispatching special messengers to the telegraph station at Yass in order to maintain constant communication with the government in

106 Sydney. Although no further major disturbance yet occurred, the situation was still unsettled. Considerable numbers of diggers, both Chinese and European, continued to arrive at the Flat,<sup>107</sup> where the centre of digging operations was now at Stony Creek. Robbery and violence were becoming commonplace, and the Herald correspondent described Stony Creek as the headquarters of a gang of ruffians. 'The state of society is anything but satisfactory. Foot police are much wanted to assist inspectors Carnes and Scarlett, of the detective force.... Nearly every third house is a shanty.'<sup>108</sup>

The Chinese question still overshadowed all else. The fugitives were still camped about six miles from the

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S.M.H., 2 Feb. 1861.

107

S.M.H., 4, 9 Feb. 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

108

S.M.H., 12 Feb. 1861.

diggings, 'eagerly waiting to be reinstated in their claims, which are now occupied by the Europeans'.<sup>109</sup> The unsettled atmosphere was blandly blamed by the Yass Courier upon the Sydney press.

Much more has been said about the little row we had here than was necessary. Had it not been for timidity, irresolution, and foolish reports in the Sydney papers, everything would have passed off quietly. However, one good effect the false reports have had - our police arrangements are somewhat on a scale with the amount of population.<sup>110</sup>

The police force was not, however, sufficiently strong to prevent a further outbreak on Sunday, 17 February. The arrest of some of the instigators of the January disturbance led to a public meeting on that day, but by the time the demonstrators had reached the camp, the men concerned had been released on bail.<sup>111</sup> This show of strength at last provoked the government into taking firm action. On 24 February a detachment of 130 men of the 12th Regiment left Sydney, together with an artillery squad, arriving at Burrangong on 11 March.<sup>112</sup> In the meantime the Premier, Charles Cowper, hurried to the spot to conduct a personal

<sup>109</sup>

S.M.H., 12 Feb. 1861.

<sup>110</sup>

S.M.H., 16 Feb. 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

<sup>111</sup>

S.M.H., 20 Feb. 1861.

<sup>112</sup>

S.M.H., 25 Feb. 1861; W.A. Bayley, Rich Earth, p.27.

investigation of the disturbances. Arriving on 4 March, he informed the miners that the Chinese would receive protection from the government if they returned, but he made no attempt to indicate the steps by which this would be achieved.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile the Miners' League had not been inactive. By assuming police functions similar to those taken on by the 1851 San Francisco Vigilance Committee it attempted to legitimize its actions, as illustrated by its request to storekeeper Greig - who was suspected of pro-Chinese sympathies - to deliver up his arms, 'as the diggers do not permit firearms to be held by tradesmen and townspeople'.<sup>114</sup> The League then issued its prospectus.

The objects to be dealt with are, first and principle question - Expulsion of the Chinese. The League call upon men of every nation except Chinese to join their society. Repeal of the Gold Duty. Police Protection, which they say is merely nominal at present. Unlocking the public lands. Promulgation of the word of God throughout the mining districts of the colony. Protection to native industry. Representation of mining interests, based on population.<sup>115</sup>

An attempt was made by leaders of the League to present an 'address from the Burrangong miners' to Cowper whilst he

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S.M.H., 6 March 1861.

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S.M.H., 2 March 1861.

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S.M.H., 6 March 1861.

was at the diggings, but he refused to accept it unless those presenting it could show themselves to be authorized to represent the body of the diggers.<sup>116</sup> He was, however, willing and anxious to put himself in 'direct communication' with the diggers, and consented to meet them at any time. Such a meeting was arranged for Friday, 8 March, at Stony Creek, but during its course Spicer, one of the League's leaders, made an inflammatory speech on behalf of the League, and Cowper immediately withdrew.<sup>117</sup> The following day two thousand people attended a meeting to hear Cowper's views. In a speech denouncing the League, he stressed the importance of maintaining law and order, and declared that the Chinese were to be reinstated in their claims.<sup>118</sup> His visit, however, achieved little more than a temporary clearing of the tense atmosphere. Although the diggers were assured that the government was taking some interest in their affairs, they had yet to be convinced that this would be either satisfactory or beneficial to them. Rather did it seem that the government was favouring the Chinese, for one of the few concrete results of the Premier's visit was

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S.M.H., 8 March 1861.

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S.M.H., 12 March 1861.

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S.M.H., 12, 13 March 1861.

the setting apart of an area of ground to which the Chinese<sup>119</sup> were to be confined, while having the exclusive use of it. Once more the Chinese flocked into the district, and still there was 'as much dissatisfaction as ever on the Chinese<sup>120</sup> question'.

During the months of March and April the 'truce' continued, those Chinese who attempted to work outside their prescribed boundaries in Blackguard Gully being removed<sup>121</sup> by the authorities. The only major disturbance was a battle between rival groups of Chinese over the ownership<sup>122</sup> of a windlass. By the beginning of May most of the Chinese had left Blackguard Gully, presumably for Demondrille Creek, about fifteen miles away, where their numbers in-<sup>123</sup>creased rapidly from about 80 to 600. Amongst the Europeans, too, changes were taking place. Tipperary Gully became the new magnet, and its numbers also rose rapidly, including amongst them many of the most turbulent and lawless characters of Lambing Flat. The police and commissioners

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<sup>119</sup> S.M.H., 22 March, 9 April 1861.

<sup>120</sup> S.M.H., 19 March 1861.

<sup>121</sup> S.M.H., 12 April 1861.

<sup>122</sup> S.M.H., 15 April 1861.

<sup>123</sup> S.M.H., 2 May 1861.

were fully extended in dealing with what seemed to have become an almost permanent state of general lawlessness and drunkenness.<sup>124</sup> Even the Chinese at Demondrille Creek seemed to have been caught by the prevailing wind of defiance of authority, since they were reported to 'openly refuse to carry out the Commissioner's orders until the Chinese question relative to the gold-fields is settled'. It was further predicted that 'If the Chinese in this district pursue their present course, and the military leave,<sup>125</sup> it will inevitably tend to a roll-up'.

A new chapter of trouble was now opened by a serious clash between Chinese and Europeans at the Native Dog Creek, on 22 May. The correspondent of the Bathurst Free Press painted a lurid picture of a small band of 80 Europeans being savagely attacked by a well-armed Chinese mob of 2000, who killed several of their white victims in the encounter.<sup>126</sup> This account, as its author admitted four days later, was much exaggerated; no firearms were used, no European was killed, and in fact two Europeans were after-

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S.M.H., 7 May 1861.

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S.M.H., 24 May 1861.

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S.M.H., 27 May 1861 (abridged from B.F.P. report).

wards arrested as ringleaders.<sup>127</sup> Much harm had, however, been done by the first report, and more mud stuck to the name of the Chinese. Then, amid all this mounting unrest, the military forces were suddenly withdrawn from Lambing Flat on 24 May, leaving behind a police force obviously insufficient for the needs of the district.<sup>128</sup> The strong force which was sent to the Native Dog Creek<sup>129</sup> must have left the rest of the area even more seriously under-policed. A report from Jembaicumbene Creek diggings, near Braidwood, that as a result of the fight at the Native Dog Creek the Chinese there - who formed the greater part of the population - were determined to resist any attempt to remove them,<sup>130</sup> was unlikely to pacify those militants at Lambing Flat who were resolved that the Chinese on their field would never be in so strong a position. The centre of Chinese occupation here was now Little Wombat Creek, where in mid-June there were reported to be 700 of them.<sup>131</sup> Those who ventured into town did so at the risk of being bullied

<sup>127</sup>

S.M.H., 1 June 1861 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>128</sup>

S.M.H., 31 May 1861.

<sup>129</sup>

S.M.H., 12 June 1861 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>130</sup>

S.M.H., 4 June 1861 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch).

<sup>131</sup>

S.M.H., 17 June 1861.



and beaten by stockmen and shepherds, eager to miss none of the enjoyment of Chinese-baiting. 'It is only a few days since', reported the Herald correspondent at this time, 'that a man was, very much to his surprise, fined £2 for setting a dog upon a Chinaman, who tore his legs in a very serious way.'

With the military and police forces reduced from over 300 to about 20 men, and the departure of the Chief Commissioner, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of the southern patrol, the field was left in the charge of two commissioners, whose magisterial duties alone were such that 'they cannot possibly attend to one-third of the business connected with the disputes that daily occur'.

The stage was set for another drama, and only a producer was needed. His identity is uncertain, but it was known on 29 June that a roll-up would take place the following day, which was a Sunday. Reasons varied, but it was said by some to be in retaliation for the Native Dog Creek affair. Between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning the muster took place at Tipperary Gully, where over 1000

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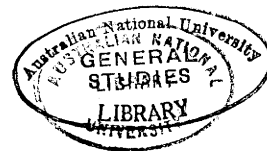
S.M.H., 21 June 1861.

133

S.M.H., 5 June, 2 July 1861.

134

S.M.H., 2 July 1861.



men, armed with bludgeons or pick-handles, formed into procession to march into Lambing Flat, flourishing anti-Chinese banners and led by a band. Any Chinese they met in the town were maltreated, and then the mob, now numbering between 2000 and 3000, proceeded towards the main Chinese camp, where its occupants had been working within the area set apart for them. Having received warning of the mob's approach, the latter had fled, and the raiders contented themselves with firing tents and destroying property before moving on to the digging site and destroying all tools and equipment they could find. Next to be visited was Back Creek, about six miles away, which they reached in two hours. Once more the Chinese had been forewarned, and had fled with as many of their belongings as they could carry. Again tents, stores of food, and personal property were set on fire. 'Not content with this, some men on horseback proceeded forward and overtook the Chinese - some 1200. They rounded them up the same as they would a mob of cattle, struck them with their bludgeons and whips, and made them leave all their swags.' Large bonfires were made, upon which were cast all the captured property, and that which would not burn was destroyed with picks and axes. Then, their task finished, the crowd once more formed into procession and returned to Lambing Flat, which they

reached at about 5.30 p.m. A report that arrests had been made brought a suggestion that the camp should be stormed to secure their release, but after being persuaded that no arrests had in fact taken place, they returned to Tipperary Gully.<sup>135</sup>

According to the report of the Herald correspondent no part was taken in these demonstrations by the Miners' League, but there was a fair sprinkling of trades-people in addition to diggers and habitual troublemakers.<sup>136</sup>

The authorities were completely powerless to check the riot, and had made no attempt to do so.<sup>137</sup> Those leaders of the mob who did not leave the field after the disturbance were reported to be openly defying the authorities to arrest them, or the government to punish them.<sup>138</sup> While Chinese refugees from Back Creek crowded into Roberts' station at Currawang, twelve miles away, to be fed and clothed to the best of his ability,<sup>139</sup> all pretence at maintaining law and order seemed to have been abandoned at Lambing Flat. A private letter, reproduced in the Herald, gave a grim picture of the collapse of authority.

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S.M.H., 2 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 2 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 2, 9 July 1861.

138

S.M.H., 4 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 4 July 1861.

Every road leading to this place is swarming with bushrangers and there is no mounted force that affords any protection. The scenes that nightly take place at Tipperary Gully are frightful - great mobs of men fighting and committing every crime unchecked - crowds of men of the very worst class taking possession of public-houses, and demanding drink without money; landlords and their servants behind the bars with loaded revolvers threatening to shoot any one that attempts to take anything, or get behind the counters; brutal fights and assaults committed upon respectable men, who dare not appeal to the authorities; robberies every day and night.<sup>140</sup>

The Herald reporter made no secret of his opinion that the situation would get worse before long, ending in another  
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and greater roll-up.

Once again Zouch was quickly on the spot, setting up his headquarters at Roberts' station until he was ready to  
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move on to Burrangong. By 13 July a considerable force of mounted and foot police had arrived at Lambing Flat,  
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and again the stage was ready.

Zouch made the first move. On Sunday, 14 July he ordered the arrest of two men - one alleged to have been a banner bearer, and one an incendiary - on charges of being  
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implicated in the riots of 30 June. It proved to be a

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S.M.H., 5 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 2 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 8 July 1861.

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S.M.H., 15 July 1861.

144

S.M.H., 17, 18 July 1861 (Telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

rash move. Sunday was a rest day, and as such had become the diggers' traditional day for the staging of demonstrations. In expectation of interference from the authorities since the events of a fortnight previously, whipped to a frenzy of Sinophobia by agitators for months, and their tempers frayed by ten days of incessant rain, the malcontents were spoiling for a fight. As had been shown in previous demonstrations at Lambing Flat, nothing could unite them more effectively than the arrest of those they counted to be their comrades. Now their determination was to be put to the test. With a force of fifty-seven on the Flat, and another ten at out-stations, together with some thirty-six specials who were hastily sworn in on 13 July, Zouch, by his arrest of the two alleged rioters, had thrown down the challenge.<sup>145</sup> Sensitive of the volume of criticism which had followed the failure of the authorities to stop the 30 June riots, he was determined to bring the demonstrators to heel on this occasion. In a telegram to the Inspector-General of Police he expressed his resolution 'to do my best to disperse any riotous assemblage - at any rate I will try force'.<sup>146</sup>

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145

S.M.H., 18 July 1861 (Telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

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S.M.H., 18 July 1861 (Telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

The opportunity was not long in coming. At 6.30 p.m., to the beating of druns, the roll-up commenced. All police took up their positions at the camp,<sup>147</sup> only seven of the specials reporting for duty.<sup>148</sup> Zouch's determination was underlined by the arrest of a third man even when the roll-up was under way.<sup>149</sup> The mob approached, and four delegates were sent in to demand the release of the prisoners. Their demand being refused by Zouch and by Commissioner Griffin, the deputation withdrew, and the mob immediately closed in, apparently intending to rush the camp. Griffin went out and read the Riot Act to them, but with no effect. Formalities thus having been completed, the foot police were ordered to fire over the heads of the demonstrators, but even this did not check their advance. Finally Captain M'Lerie was ordered forward with a section of the mounted patrol to clear the ground. They were fired upon by the rioters, and the engagement was on. Supported by fire from the foot police, the patrol charged, and with the aid of their cutlasses managed to drive the crowd back, but it was not

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S.M.H., 17 July 1861.

148

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Zouch to Minister for Lands).

149

S.M.H., 18 July 1861 (Telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

until three charges had been made, and intermittent firing had continued for more than two hours, that the rioters withdrew.<sup>150</sup>

The first round of the battle, fought throughout in heavy rain, had gone to the police. Their casualties were light - two men with bullet wounds, a third with abrasions, and a few horses injured. The rioters were not so fortunate. One, William Lupton, was shot dead, and an unspecified, though considerable, number wounded.<sup>151</sup> The situation was still very unsettled, however, as it was evident that the rioters had retired only in order to reform, and there were rumours of an expected attack early the next morning. With the garrison - for such the police force had in effect become - fatigued after a day and a night under arms, hopelessly outnumbered, and possessed of a much-depleted stock of ammunition, Zouch decided that the

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S.M.H., 17, 18 July 1861 (report from correspondent, also telegrams from Assistant Gold Commissioner Griffin to Secretary for Lands, from Superintendent of Patrol to Minister for Lands, from Commissioner Cloete to Secretary for Lands, and from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police); S.M.H., 20 July 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

151

S.M.H., 17, 18 July 1861 (report from correspondent, also telegrams from Griffin to Secretary for Lands, and from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

152  
 camp was untenable. On Monday the three prisoners were  
 committed for trial, and then released on bail,<sup>153</sup> and then  
 both police and commissioners withdrew to Yass.<sup>154</sup> They  
 were followed by the Herald reporter, whose cabled reports  
 of the struggle read more like those of a war correspondent  
 than a domestic reporter. On hearing that the rioters,  
 disapproving of the unfavourable nature of his reports in  
 recent weeks, had marked him down for execution, he decided  
 to leave Lambing Flat until order had been restored.<sup>155</sup>

The retreat was complete, and the diggings were left  
 entirely in the hands of the rioters, without police pro-  
 tection or commissioners' administration. An appeal for  
 arms was sent to Sydney by the Assistant Superintendent,<sup>156</sup>  
 and on Tuesday morning the Gold Commissioner supplemented  
 this by telegraphing from Yass for a large force of police

152

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (report from correspondent, also  
 telegrams from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General  
 of Police and to Minister for Lands).

153

S.M.H., 17 July 1861.

154

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Gold Commissioner  
 at Yass to Secretary for Lands).

155

S.M.H., 17 July 1861.

156

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Assistant Super-  
 intendent to Inspector-General of Police).



and military to be sent at once.<sup>157</sup> From Goulburn Commissioner Cloete echoed this request, adding that, since vehicles and horses had been placed at his disposal by Goulburn residents, fifty men could be taken from there to Burrangong in three days. In the meantime he ordered the commissioners who were now at Yass 'to return, and to remain at quarters, Lambing Flat, until the last extremity,<sup>158</sup> police or no police'.

By means of the telegraph line the government was able to keep in close touch with events. The Secretary for Lands, in whose department responsibility lay, sent his instructions without delay. M'Lerie was to await the arrival of further troops and artillery, and was then to proceed with them to Lambing Flat. Martial Law was to be proclaimed. Cloete was to return to Burrangong with the military. The message concluded with the information that 'the Government is determined to uphold its authority at all hazards'.<sup>159</sup>

Cloete's instructions to the commissioners to return to their quarters at Lambing Flat proved premature, as on

157

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Gold Commissioner to Secretary for Lands).

158

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Cloete to Secretary for Lands).

159

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Secretary for Lands to Cloete).

Monday night these quarters and the camp were destroyed by fire. On Tuesday Lupton was buried, his funeral being attended by an estimated three or four thousand men, but no disturbance took place. All business in the town had been suspended, and on Wednesday the managers of the three branch banks at Lambing Flat arrived in Yass, carrying with them to safety all deposits of gold and money which had been left in their keeping.

Now there was a lull in operations, the period of examination could begin. The Herald correspondent lost no time in criticizing the action of the government in suspending without full enquiry, two commissioners for their failure to check the 30 June riots. Notice of these suspensions had arrived before 14 July, but the two men in question had remained at their posts and had played a 'full and active' part in helping the police during the engagement. The Yass Courier, whose attitude had not been at all helpful to the authorities during the events leading

160

S.M.H., 18, 22 July 1861 (reports from correspondent, also telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

161

S.M.H., 17 July 1861.

162

S.M.H., 17 July 1861 (Telegram from Superintendent of Patrol to Inspector-General of Police).

up to the riots, now insisted 'that there were not many bona fide diggers engaged in the lawless acts of Sunday last, and that the mob consisted chiefly of persons who have no fixed occupation'.<sup>163</sup> The Herald reporter, whose recent experience had apparently given him somewhat of a martyr complex, continued to declaim that the Chinese must be reinstated in their claims<sup>164</sup> - they were in the meantime waiting at Yass, confident that government forces would effect their restoration.<sup>165</sup>

Even at the scene of the riot there was more moderation shown than might in the circumstances have been expected. There were reports that numbers of men were arming themselves at Tipperary Gully,<sup>166</sup> and drilling daily, but the leaders do not seem to have lost control.<sup>167</sup> On the withdrawal of the police and commissioners, a Vigilance Committee was set up. Its actions are not clearly described - apart from an accusation that it was making every endeavour to 'cast a slur on official proceedings',<sup>168</sup> but it did

<sup>163</sup> S.M.H., 20 July 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

<sup>164</sup> S.M.H., 20 July 1861.

<sup>165</sup> S.M.H., 23 July 1861 (ext. from Yass Courier).

<sup>166</sup> S.M.H., 24 July 1861.

<sup>167</sup> S.M.H., 18 July 1861.

<sup>168</sup> S.M.H., 22 July 1861.

seem to have a calming effect upon the diggers. Perhaps this would have followed inevitably, for with the representatives of the law gone, together with the Chinese, there was little for the malcontents to focus their hostility upon. Many public meetings were held to discuss the situation - one of them, to the horror of the Herald reporter, being lent respectability by the presence in the chair of the Coroner, Dr Falder.<sup>169</sup> On Sunday, 21 July, just one week after the disturbance began, a meeting was held in Torpy's public-house at Tipperary Gully, at which the Rev. Mr Mayne lectured his audience on the 'wickedness and illegality of their proceedings', and gave them 'the very best advice'. His address was answered by Spicer, Cameron,<sup>170</sup> and other leaders attempting to justify their actions. Such proceedings, after the first hot anger following the riots, do not suggest a society in tumult. When confronted with anarchy, the diggers just waited for the government to return and re-establish its authority. It would have been foolish to attempt to enter into military conflict with the government, for there was no alternative to that government unless the rebels were sufficiently organized politically

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169

S.M.H., 22 July 1861.

170

S.M.H., 27 July 1861.

to create one. There was no more wild dreaming of free and independent diggers' republics, such as had been a feature of the Ballarat rebellion in 1854. The aim of the demonstrators at Lambing Flat had been to clear the field of the Chinese, whom, for reasons which appeared to them to be good enough, they disliked. Stirred up by agitators of various kinds, they took action to effect their aim. Realizing that their action was illegal, but holding to it, they were prepared to carry through their determination to the extent of a physical attack upon the police force which stood in their way, and this, provoked by Zouch's no less equal determination to do his duty, they did. It was claimed by some that the diggers played little part in the disturbances, and that the bulk of the rioters were habitual troublemakers and criminals, and it is a fact that the inspiration for the various attacks came first from Stony Creek, and then from Tipperary Gully, each, in its time, the principal centre of lawlessness on the field. It is most unlikely, however, that a rioting crowd of 3000 could gather - even on so populous a field as Lambing Flat - without including a substantial number of diggers. Their leaders, too, were not all mere mob orators, devoid of all principle. James Torpy, chairman of the League, later

became a Member of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>171</sup> Although violently anti-Chinese, on no occasion does he appear to have encouraged actively the use of arms against government forces.

Zouch's wisdom and judgement in withdrawing from the field were praiseworthy, for not only did it save his men from serious harm, and give the government a chance to bring up necessary reinforcements, but it also gave the demonstrators time to cool down and to consider their actions. Each side having performed its duty to its own satisfaction, both now waited for the government to take a hand. The government had not been idle. A substantial force, composed of a detachment of the 12th Regiment and sailors from H.M.S. Fawn, arrived in Yass on 23 July,<sup>172</sup> and three days later, with the arrival of the artillery, the work of cleaning up after the riots began.<sup>173</sup> A quiet reception awaited the new forces at Lambing Flat, where they arrived on 31 July, and under the threat of the naval gun which accompanied them no resistance was offered.<sup>174</sup> Arrests were made on charges ranging from rioting and robbery

<sup>171</sup> Martin and Wardle, p.214. Torpy was M.L.A. for Orange, 1889-94.

<sup>172</sup> S.M.H., 24 July 1861.

<sup>173</sup> S.M.H., 30 July 1861.

<sup>174</sup> S.M.H., 5 Aug. 1861.

to desertion. But the leaders of the late disturbances were nowhere to be found, and a reward of £100 each was offered for the apprehension of Spicer, Cameron, and Stewart.<sup>175</sup>

The work of pacification was rapidly completed. On 7 August the naval detachment left, its task done. Five hundred Chinese were already reinstated at Back Creek, within the boundaries agreed upon by Cowper on his previous visit. The diggers were back at work as if no disturbance had ever taken place.<sup>176</sup> The suspensions of commissioners Lynch and Clark were revoked.<sup>177</sup> On 19 August Torpy surrendered to his bail, maintaining his innocence on a charge of being an instigator of the 30 June riot, and since the witnesses against him had disappeared, the case was dismissed.<sup>178</sup> Full freedom of speech was allowed by the authorities, and at a public meeting on 24 August Torpy condemned the reports of the disturbances which had appeared in the Herald and Yass Courier, but praised the Empire for its attitude - which after a cautious beginning

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S.M.H., 5, 8, 17, 20, 23 Aug., 9 Sept. 1861.

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S.M.H., 9, 23 Aug. 1861.

177

S.M.H., 17 Aug. 1861.

178

S.M.H., 20 Aug. 1861.

had been one of support for the diggers and their cause, of excuses for their actions, and of disbelief of the reports sent in by government officers concerning the riot of 14 July. Baker, another regular agitator, attempted at the same meeting to resurrect the Chinese scare by telling of hundreds more than reported to be landing, and a letter from the fugitive Spicer was read, urging the diggers to co-operate with the Sydney Anti-Chinese Committee.

The time for agitation and direct action, however, had passed. Attention had been sufficiently drawn to the diggers' cause, and the government could not afford to ignore it. The demonstrations of November, December, January and February could be at least partially excused on the grounds that the diggers were, in the absence of any real protection by the government, acting for the preservation of their own interests. The events of 30 June and 14 July could not be excused in any such way, but served as an example of what could happen if the government's forces on the field, and government policy in general, were believed to be not only indifferent but even hostile to these interests. The seeming impunity with which the Chinese had been driven off on earlier occasions had indeed invested



such action, in the eyes of the diggers, with a certain legality, and no interference would be tolerated, even from the police, with these 'rights'. Why, then, did three or four thousand men, who had taken up arms against the government, go peacefully back to work on the arrival of a force of little more than two hundred, allowing the Chinese to be reinstated on much the same terms as those laid down seven months before? The answer can only lie in a general weariness of conflict and uncertainty. They were on the field to dig for gold, not to fight wars, and idle claims, if left to deteriorate, consumed much silver before they began producing gold again. Perhaps, too, there was a feeling that this time the government, having been forcibly informed of the wishes of the diggers, could not fail to respond to them.

The government did not fail, though it is hard to forecast the consequences if it had. Under the stimulus of excitement produced by the recent disturbances very little trouble was experienced in pushing through both Houses, in September and October, a Chinese Immigration Regulation Bill, based on that in Victoria.<sup>180</sup> The new Act limited the number of passengers of Chinese race which could be

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<sup>180</sup>

S.M.H., 26, 27 Sept., 3, 10, 17, 18, 24 Oct., 26 Nov. 1861.

brought in any ship, in proportion to the size of the vessel, and provided for an entry tax of £10 per head on every Chinaman entering the colony. It was reluctantly allowed by the Duke of Newcastle, on the grounds that New South Wales was in a special situation which had to be considered in spite of the 1860 Convention of Peking which guaranteed freedom for Chinese coolies to enter British territories to take up service.<sup>181</sup>

A special commission was summoned to try at Goulburn the cases of those arrested in connection with the Lambing Flat riots.<sup>182</sup> All were acquitted except Claremont Owen,<sup>183</sup> who received a sentence of two years' imprisonment. Six months later William Spicer received a similar sentence.<sup>184</sup> Allegations were made that Mr Justice Wise, who conducted the Goulburn trials, was prejudiced against the prisoners,<sup>185</sup> but these were never proved. Stewart, for whose capture £100 had been offered by the government, was given up by a friend who handed over the reward money to him. Since

<sup>181</sup> G.E.P. Hertslet, China treaties, 1908 ed., vol.I, no.8, Article V, p.50.

<sup>182</sup> S.M.H., 20 Aug. 1861.

<sup>183</sup> S.M.H., 21, 30 Sept., 8 Oct. 1861.

<sup>184</sup> S.M.H., 31 March 1862.

<sup>185</sup> S.M.H., 12, 30 Oct., 2 Nov. 1861.

no evidence could be brought against him by the police, he  
 186  
 was freed.

The Chinese still remained a most pressing problem at Lambing Flat. With the return of peace they seemed to pour  
 187  
 back to this field from every quarter. Anti-Chinese feeling was still running high both here and throughout the colony. Petitions poured in from all parts of New South Wales, from Sydney as well as from the gold-fields, demand-  
 188  
 ing that measures be taken against the Chinese, and counter-petitions were presented on their behalf claiming  
 189  
 compensation for loss during the riots. At the end of September a clash occurred at Stony Creek, where the Chinese  
 190  
 temporarily beat off an attack by Europeans, but no more occurrences on the scale of 30 June took place. Time softened bitter thoughts as the Chinese problem dwindled in stature and faded from view.

186

S.M.H., 23 Nov. 1861 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

187

S.M.H., 3, 7 Sept. (both ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 24 Sept., 3, 10, 17 Dec. 1861.

188

S.M.H., 13 Aug. (ext. from Braidwood Observer), 11, 18, 19, 20 Sept. 1861; J.L.C., 1861-2, vol.VIII, petitions from Major's Creek, Rocky River, Sydney.

189

S.M.H., 4, 11, 18 Sept., 12 Oct., 2 Nov. 1861, 12 Sept., 3 Nov. 1862; J.L.C., 1861-2, vol.VIII, petitions from Su San Sing Doh, and Hu Foo, Kylong, and others.

190

S.M.H., 24 Sept. 1861.

The census returns for 1861 show how well-founded was the diggers' anxiety lest the Chinese should overwhelm them by sheer weight of numbers. Taken on 7 April 1861, it gives the number of Chinese in New South Wales as 12,988, or 3.7 per cent of the total population. In this total there were only two females. It is known that the gold-fields were the major force which attracted Chinese into the colony, and it is reasonable to assume that by far the greater number of them were engaged in digging for gold. This assumption is supported by the presence of 11,342 of them in the principal digging regions around Carcoar, Sofala, Bathurst, Tambaroora, Mudgee, Tamworth, Armidale, Tumut, and Binalong. Yet the total number of persons listed as diggers for precious metals was only 20,365. This would seem to suggest that, since Chinese on the New South Wales gold-fields are nowhere reported to have engaged in any other occupation in large numbers, approximately three out of five diggers in this colony in 1861 were of that race. On most of the fields mentioned they formed the great majority of the diggers, with one important exception. This was Lambing Flat, where at 496 the Chinese were less than one-tenth of the total digging population.<sup>191</sup> In the light of this the determination of

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191

See Appendix 1.



European diggers on that field, in the early part of 1861, to keep the Chinese out, may be more understandable. It would seem that, having found a new field, after a rather flat period on other diggings, and after the bitter disappointment of Kiandra, the Europeans were determined to keep it for themselves. Whether they subconsciously blamed the Chinese for the failure of the other fields we cannot tell, but it is significant that the only prolonged series of violent actions against the Chinese took place on the one field where their strength was lightest.

After 1861, as before, gold digging remained their principal occupation, but it was not by any means their sole employment. Storekeeping was a favourite with those possessed of capital,<sup>192</sup> but the field in which Chinese most distinguished themselves was horticulture. By careful cultivation, and liberal application of various manures and fertilizers, Chinese market-gardeners rapidly became major suppliers of fruit and vegetables, both to the diggings and to the towns.<sup>193</sup> There is, however, no record of any

192

J.L.C., 1858, vol.III, Select Committee on Chinese immigration, evidence of P.L. Cloete.

193

S.M.H., 13 April 1864 (ext. from Western Examiner), 2 March (ext. from Melbourne Age), 16 Aug. 1865, 4 Sept. 1866 (ext. from Burrangong Argus), 8 Oct. 1867 (ext. from B.F.P.), 9 June 1868 (ext. from Bathurst Times), 1 April 1870. Quotations reproduced in J.A. Perkins notes, S.M.H., 21 April 1870, 10, 27 May 1871; Town and Country Journal, 2 Dec. 1871; 13 Jan. 1872, 1 Dec. 1877.

following the example of some of their countrymen in Vic-  
 194  
 toria, and taking up commercial fishing. Chinese labour  
 gangs, such as those used in the United States during the  
 195  
 construction of the trans-continental railway, were  
 seldom seen in New South Wales. Perhaps the nearest parallel  
 was the chartering of a group of Chinese, in the winter and  
 spring of 1860, to carry freight up the difficult twelve  
 miles of track - often impassable to other means of trans-  
 port - between Russell's and Kiandra. Reports vary as to  
 the cost of this method of transport, but it appears to  
 have been in the region of £12 to £16 per ton. The Chinese  
 concerned received £2 per week each, and were thankful to  
 obtain even this employment, as they had been in a near-  
 starving condition. Some of them continued as 'camels of  
 196  
 Kiandra' right into the summer.

Once sufficient time had elapsed for the provisions of  
 the Immigration Regulation Act of 1861 to become known in  
 China, the numbers of emigrants from there to New South  
 Wales dropped sharply, and from this time the annual popu-  
 lation figures showed an exodus of Chinese which was far

194 S.M.H., 5 June 1863.

195 Campbell, p.34.

196 S.M.H., 27 July, 2, 18, 23 Aug., 6 Sept. 1860; MacAlister,  
 p.243.

greater than the quantity of immigrants by sea.<sup>197</sup> By 1871  
 the number in the colony had dropped to 7,220.<sup>198</sup> Gradually,  
 without fresh infusions of immigrants to maintain their  
 alien character, the Chinese began to find their place in  
 New South Wales society. Assimilating into colonial so-  
 ciety - so far as this was possible - they became less  
 obviously alien, and, since they were no longer coming into  
 the colony in great numbers, the dislike felt towards them  
 by other diggers was not reinforced by fear. No longer  
 were hordes of 'new-chum' Chinese to be found wandering  
 around gold-fields, ignorant of the language and customs of  
 those around them. Incidents of racial strife decreased in  
 number, and anti-Chinese feeling became less vocal. The  
 terms 'Mongolian' and 'Tartar' dropped out of newspaper  
 reporters' vocabularies, and even the patronizing 'celes-  
 tial' was seldom used again. Brief demonstrations of dis-  
 pleasure with them occurred still, such as the claim of  
 the Herald's Sofala correspondent that general 'disgust'  
 prevailed there over the Chinese practice of disinterring<sup>199</sup>  
 the bones of their fellow-countrymen for re-burial in China,

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 197

See Appendix 2.

198

Census returns, 1871.

199

S.M.H., 29 Aug. 1863.

but even on this occasion there was no hostile practical expression of this disgust. A few years before it might have caused a roll-up.

If the Chinese learned the limitations which were imposed on their rights by the 1861 Act, and the various restrictions placed upon their freedom by the Gold Fields Act, they also learned that they did have rights, and they were not slow to demonstrate this realization on such occasions as the invasion of their claims by Europeans in March 1866, at Napoleon's Reef, near Bathurst. 'Armed with saplings pointed like spears', the Chinese held off the invaders in a long fight, and then brought in the commissioner from Bathurst, who agreed with their assertions that the Europeans were in the wrong. <sup>200</sup> Again in June 1868, this time at the American Yards diggings, near Gundagai, the two races clashed over disputed ground, when the Chinese refused to have whites digging near them. <sup>201</sup> The following month, at Bingera, Europeans in their turn refused to allow any Chinese on the diggings. <sup>202</sup> Such incidents, however, were now less common, and few Chinese were

200

S.M.H., 24 March 1866.

201

S.M.H., 16 June 1868 (ext. from Gundagai Times).

202

S.M.H., 8 July 1868 (ext. from Tamworth Examiner).



molested on any diggings, unless by bushrangers. Some of them, indeed, showed how far the process of assimilation could be taken by becoming troublesome bushrangers themselves, but fortunately instances of this were not numerous. <sup>203</sup>

The work of the 1861 Act was soon done, and anti-Chinese hysteria was banished until the late 1870s. Consequently it came as no surprise when in 1866 an attempt was made to secure the repeal of the Regulation Act. The real surprise here was the change of attitude of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, who introduced the motion for repeal, for he had formerly been a firm supporter of restriction, but he explained that his change of views had been promoted by the non-appearance of the expected evils of Chinese immigration. <sup>204</sup> He was not at once successful, but repeal <sup>205</sup> was secured the following year. No great increase in immigration from China followed the removal of restrictions; the Chinese bogey, while not dead, was at least dormant for a while.

It is not difficult to account for the hostility which was everywhere expressed against the Chinese. Prejudices,

<sup>203</sup>

S.M.H., 22 Dec. 1864, 6 Feb., 8 March 1865, 15 May 1866, 24 June 1871.

<sup>204</sup>

S.M.H., 15, 16 Aug. 1866.

<sup>205</sup>

S.M.H., 21 Sept., 5, 17, 31 Oct. 1867.

on the gold-fields as elsewhere, were easily aroused, and there was no shortage of orators to leap on to the anti-Chinese platform once it had been built. Every characteristic in which the Chinese differed from the Europeans was stigmatized as a sin, and there was no shortage of real or imagined reasons for disliking them. Allegations of disease, addiction to opium, and homosexuality made them feared; their passion for gambling, their seeming lack of independence, their fondness for luxury foods, and their ignorance of the English language and of Christianity made them despised; their ability to co-operate, and the success which they so often seemed to enjoy, made them envied; above all, their numbers and their clannishness drew attention to their peculiarities, and were the real bases of the fear and resentment shown by the Europeans. To the latter, unable to accept Asians as equals, the only alternatives seemed to be exclusion, enslavement of them - unacceptable to the colonial labouring classes - or domination and enslavement by them - which the colonists were determined should not happen. Exclusion appeared to be the only way of avoiding unpleasant contact with them, and of ensuring that they did not in any way have any effect upon the existing form of society in New South Wales.

The majority of the Chinese in the colony appear to have been quiet, orderly, and law-abiding in their conduct, with the exception of a number who seemed addicted to petty stealing. Apart from one incident in 1853 on Alexander Berry's property at Shoalhaven, involving a 'Malay China-<sup>206</sup>man' and a boy, no definite evidence appears to exist in support of allegations that the Chinese were addicted to the 'unnatural practices' and vice which many attributed to them. It would seem that such general allegations were more the product of prejudice than of observation. Such major crimes as they were involved in were almost in-<sup>207</sup>variably committed against their own countrymen. Around 1860 they also acquired a reputation for defrauding buyers<sup>208</sup> by selling them spurious gold. The benefits they conferred upon the colony seem to have been limited almost to gardening, working old and uneconomic gold-fields, and providing would-be politicians with a safe election platform in the shape of attacking any subject concerned with

<sup>206</sup>

S.M.H., 7 Feb. 1853 (Supplement).

<sup>207</sup>

S.M.H., 8 Dec. 1857, 25 May 1858, 30 Jan. (ext. from Burrangong Star), 22 Dec. 1864, 10 March 1866.

<sup>208</sup>

S.M.H., 7 July (ext. from Braidwood Daily News), 10 July, 18 Aug. (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 30 Aug. 1860, 26 Feb. 1861 (ext. from B.F.P.), 16 April 1867 (ext. from Burrangong Argus).

209  
 the Chinese. In large numbers it is unlikely that they would have been of permanent value as colonists, unless they were to be employed, as in the United States railroad projects, as a labour machine. Without families to maintain, and possessing an ability to live frugally, they would, if permitted have had a harmful effect upon labour conditions in New South Wales - as when at Gulgong in 1873 the Chinese storekeepers were the only ones to refuse to join the early closing movement <sup>210</sup> - and this would undoubtedly have hampered efforts to promote immigration from Great Britain. The almost exclusively adult male composition of the influx precluded the Chinese from being considered as seeds of the nation in an age and society which looked very sourly upon miscegenation, and which already possessed a superfluity of adult males. As in most cases of racial argument, this was one of the strongest weapons of the Sinophobes, who used it fully. <sup>211</sup> Nor did the majority of the Chinese look upon themselves as permanent colonists, their aim being to secure a competence

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S.M.H., 21, 23, 25 June 1859, 6 Aug., 28 Nov. 1860, 13, 17 Dec. 1869.

210

S.M.H., 25 July 1873.

211

See note 209 above; S.M.H., 11 Nov. 1857, 30 Oct. 1860.

and return to China as soon as possible.<sup>212</sup> Their only real value to New South Wales, whilst they confined their activities to gold digging, lay in the money which they spent within the colony. This was a not inconsiderable factor in districts where there were large Chinese populations. Even at Lambing Flat it was not long before store-keepers were pleading for the return of the Chinese whom they had helped to drive off.<sup>213</sup> The exclusion policy of the early sixties left its mark, however, and even after the repeal of the Immigration Regulation Act New South Wales was no longer the goal of Chinese immigrants to Australia. Besides, the decline in alluvial mining in that colony had decreased its attractive powers, while to the north, in Queensland, prolific new fields were exercising great attraction. While these lasted, the southern colonies had little cause to worry about direct Chinese immigration into their own territory.

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212

J.L.C., 1858, vol. III, Select Committee on Chinese immigration, evidence of J. Daly and W.C. Brackenbury.

213

S.M.H., 19 May (ext. from Burrangong Star), 22 July 1864.

## Appendix 1

CENSUS RETURNS, 1861

(Only those counties and districts containing Chinese are mentioned)

County	No. of Chinese	Total no. of people	No. of miners digging for precious metals
Argyle	M. 22	5,197	23
	F.	4,516	
Bathurst	M. 1,379	7,258	1,420
	F.	4,803	
Bligh	M. 73	714	58
	F.	380	
Brisbane	M. 35	1,948	16
	F.	1,533	
Camden	M. 36	12,342	59
	F.	10,392	
Cook	M. 1	2,648	1
	F.	2,384	
Cumberland	M. 244	61,650	206
	F. 1	63,028	
Durham	M. 26	6,367	10
	F.	5,630	
Georgiana	M. 431	1,422	532
	F.	741	
Gloucester	M. 44	2,958	2
	F.	2,506	
Hunter	M. 5	773	1
	F.	609	
King	M. 19	2,213	10
	F.	1,639	
Macquarie	M. 7	2,295	-
	F.	2,068	
Murray	M. 35	3,419	68
	F.	2,647	
Northumberland	M. 97	16,648	9
	F. 1	14,623	
Phillip	M. 16	964	42
	F.	688	
Roxburgh	M. 2,165	6,112	2,986
	F.	2,820	
St. Vincent	M. 1,355	7,159	1,992
	F.	4,360	
Wellington	M. 3,318	7,768	3,938
	F.	3,521	
Westmoreland	M. 464	1,740	474
	F.	982	

Pastoral districts	No. of Chinese	Total no. of people	No. of miners digging for precious metals
Bligh	M. 38	1,450	-
	F.	755	
Clarence	M. 35	3,025	209
	F.	2,116	
Darling	M. 2	667	-
	F.	252	
Gwydir	M. 164	1,438	128
	F.	577	
Lachlan	M. 548	11,163	5,244
	F.	3,651	
Liverpool Plains	M. 439	4,254	710
	F.	2,051	
Macleay	M. 4	711	-
	F.	599	
Monaro	M. 265	5,637	819
	F.	3,598	
Murrumbidgee	M. 1,283	8,833	745
	F.	4,105	
New England	M. 412	5,811	658
	F.	3,865	
Wellington	M. 17	1,716	4
	F.	754	
Total	M. 12,986	198,488	20,365
	F. 2	152,372	
Grand Total	12,988	350,860	20,365

NUMBERS IN THE MAIN CENSUS DISTRICTS WHICH CONTAIN LARGE  
GOLD-FIELDS

Registry district	Chinese	Persons engaged in digging for precious metals
Armidale	267	465
Bathurst	956	1,161
Binalong	517	5,172 (Includes Lambing Flat)
Braidwood	1,351	1,997
Carcoar	1,592	1,651
Mudgee	1,534	1,804
Sofala	1,877	2,520
Tambaroora	1,649	1,974
Tamworth	427	708
Tumut	1,172	388

Separate figures for Burrangong Gold-field and N.E. Lachlan

	496			5,155 (Total population -
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8,996 males  
2,530 females  
11,526)

Chinese percentage of total population of N.S.W. - 3.7%





## Appendix 2

CHINESE IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION BY SEA INTO AND FROM NEW  
SOUTH WALES, 1856-75

(Figures from Journal of Legislative Council, 1857-1876)

Year	No. of Chinese entering N.S.W. by sea	No. of Chinese leaving N.S.W. by sea
1856	898	445
1857	327	107
1858	12,396	- (First 8 months only)- 558) Excess of immi- grants over emi- grants for 1858- 9 - 12,710
1859	3,022	
1860	6,958	1,098
1861	2,574	1,068
1862	1,030	1,118
1863	36	633
1864	84	1,044
1865	474	832
1866	24	926
1867	69	783
1868	123	548
1869	288	574
1870	30	525
1871	426	441
1872	229	597
1873	406	400
1874	865	933
1875	625	1,209

## Chapter 6

### POLITICS AND PUBLIC OPINION

With both self-government and the discovery of gold occurring in 1851, New South Wales had indeed reached the dawn of a new era. Henceforth she and Victoria were destined to progress in a spirit of rivalry rather than partnership. Control of both was soon to pass from the hands of conservative pastoral interests to those of radical politicians, sensitive to the fickle winds of public opinion. A new instrument of the radicals, the Empire newspaper, edited by Henry Parkes, made its appearance as a weekly in Sydney late in 1850. Becoming a daily in January 1851, it was to be used during its 18 years of life to flay the conservatives unmercifully.

In itself the new constitution of 1851 changed the government of the colony but little. Government was still carried on by the governor through a part-elective Legislative Council. This form of partial representative government had been in force since 1842, and the only immediate change wrought by the 1850 Imperial 'Act for the better government of Her Majesty's Australian Colonies'

was the creation of a majority of elected members.<sup>1</sup> The colony was still managed by the Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson, and other members still held their positions in the council by virtue of their tenure of government posts. Until 1856, in effect, an appointed oligarchy, selected by the governor and secure from the effects of external criticism, ruled in Sydney.

From the first the government determined to control directly the new gold-digging industry, and made to tie the hands of the Legislative Council by proclaiming all revenue from gold to be the preserve of the Crown. The council countered by refusing in September 1852 to vote funds for any matter concerning the gold-fields. The impasse was overcome by a directive from the Imperial Government, received a few days later, that all gold revenues were to be put at the disposal of the Legislative Council.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth that body in effect controlled the conduct of gold-fields affairs, and the government had to act through it.

It would be misleading to claim for the diggers all credit for leading New South Wales further along the path

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<sup>1</sup>

13 and 14 Victoria, cap.59, described by Shann, p.172.

<sup>2</sup>

S.M.H., 2, 8, 10, 11 Sept. 1851.

towards a democracy. By 1851 expressions of popular, rather than interest, sentiment had not formed any conscious, coherent pattern, nor were they greatly heeded. Normally they pursued a course combining colonial nationalism and anti-government invective. The Empire held to this line from the beginning, with frequent attacks upon the colonial government in general and upon Sir Charles FitzRoy in particular. The attacks were intensified as Parkes presumably saw in the gold-rushes the creation of more favourable conditions for the fulfilment of his political ambitions. In May 1851 the newspaper opened its campaign with a leader predicting that the gold discoveries would

inevitably sweep Thomson...into oblivion before long. Men cannot go to government levees; they have not time to enact little farces of ceremony, and make-believe respect to an effete Sybarite [FitzRoy], whom nobody respects.... The screws of society are loosened. The vessel has broken loose from its moorings, and drifts towards the gold mines, as the ship in the Arabian tale was irresistibly attracted by the magnetic mountain.<sup>3</sup>

Optimism knew no bounds. The following day the Empire quoted a Bathurst Free Press article declaring

View the present discovery in whatever light we may, it may be safely regarded as the basis of one of the most complete social and political revolutions through which any country ever passed. It

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<sup>3</sup>

Empire, 28 May 1851.

has a strong, an indissoluble connection with all the great questions which have for years past been agitating the public mind.<sup>4</sup>

Seven weeks later it was equally hopeful. The gold discoveries would put a definite stop to any further transportation, capital would flow into the colony, Californian critics would be silenced, and FitzRoy would be deposed.

The new era of Australian nationhood has commenced already. Our dreams of commercial and political advancement will be more than realised. The sun of Australia is rising in golden splendour.<sup>5</sup>

It is surprising to find, in a newspaper with such consistent and strongly-expressed views against government controls and in favour of increased liberalism,<sup>6</sup> a leader such as that of 13 October 1851, describing the lust for gold as basically a criminal tendency, and urging the government to control the diggings more strictly. This, however, was but a momentary aberration, and the Empire was soon back to its normal line of attack upon the government for its numerous sins of omission and commission concerning the gold-fields. All evils were the direct fault of the government,<sup>7</sup> and it seemed that 'the narrow-mindedness and

<sup>4</sup> Empire, 29 May 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>5</sup> Empire, 19 July 1851.

<sup>6</sup> Empire, 26 May, 7, 8 Aug. 1851.

<sup>7</sup> Empire, 27 Nov., 1, 12 Dec. 1851.

sordidness of the Government had communicated their taint  
 to the public mind'.<sup>8</sup>

There was as yet no need for radical action by the diggers. In an industry where the majority of labourers were self-employed there was little incentive for combination or for attacks upon capital. Only the government could arouse constant hostility by its actions, and then only in matters directly affecting the welfare and prosperity of the diggers themselves. Despite the hope of both the Herald and the Empire that gold would bring for New South Wales more political and national rights,<sup>9</sup> the immediate results of the gold-rushes seemed to point the other way. Instead of increasing political consciousness, it seemed that miners were neglecting their political rights entirely in the first frenzied rush to the gold-fields. The gold-rushes, coming as they did just before the first elections under the new constitution, seemed in the view of the Empire to be jeopardizing the newly-gained freedom by distracting attention from political issues. It was impelled to make a strong appeal to all freemen to register as electors before leaving for the diggings.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>  
Empire, 2 Jan. 1852.

<sup>9</sup>  
Empire, 7 May, 4 Aug. 1851; S.M.H., 4 June 1851.

<sup>10</sup>  
Empire, 14 June 1851.

Until the advent of responsible government, however, the gold-fields played little part in colonial politics. James M'Eachern tried vigorously in 1852-3 to organize the diggers politically, and to arouse their enthusiasm for his own form of political radicalism, but they remained apathetic. On such matters as his opposition to the new Constitution Bill of 1852, which had little direct bearing upon practical mining matters, he was unable to enlist<sup>11</sup> their active support.

In the manner of the age, the public meeting was the common means of expressing or canvassing ideas and opinions on the gold-fields. Six weeks after the arrival at Bathurst of the vanguard of the first rush, a meeting was convened<sup>12</sup> at Ophir to register protest against the licence fees. Though not the sole reason, this was a frequent cause for holding such meetings until licence fees were eventually abolished. In what can perhaps best be described as a primitive democratic manner it was customary for meetings to be called, sometimes by the gold commissioner, police

<sup>11</sup>

Empire, 23, 24, 28 Jan., 28 April, 3, 10, 21, 22, 31 May, 23 Aug., 4, 21 Dec. 1852; S.M.H., 16 Nov., 7 Dec. 1852, 5 Feb., 5 March, 19 Sept. (ext. from B.F.P.), 28 Sept. 1853.

<sup>12</sup>

Empire, 25 June 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

magistrate, or other responsible person, to discuss practical mining questions. Often these involved complaint against government regulations concerning various aspects of mining, such as quartz-crushing, draining of water-holes, and prospecting.<sup>13</sup> Others were more parochial, concerning local difficulties such as the need for co-operation to clear a river channel, or the definition of lines of reef.<sup>14</sup> Few meetings, except at election times, were frankly political. Agitators, of course, were as common on the diggings as gamblers. The unsettled nature of a gold-rush society provided both with excellent opportunities for the exercise of their talents. But for the most part the public meeting was the vehicle for local protest against local grievances or unpopular officials,<sup>15</sup> for an expression of thanks to a popular official,<sup>16</sup> or for the organization of relief work in the locality, such as prospecting on a

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<sup>13</sup>

Empire, 26 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 22 Jan., 5 Feb. 1853, 5 Oct. 1858, 11 Jan. 1870 (ext. from B.F.P.), 12 Sept. 1871.

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S.M.H., 1 Dec. 1851, 10 June 1862.

<sup>15</sup>

Empire, 26 Nov. 1851, 29 Oct. 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury); S.M.H., 2 March 1859 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch), 20 May 1862, 9 Nov. 1869, 15 June 1870 (ext. from Braidwood Liberal).

<sup>16</sup>

S.M.H., 13 Feb., 5 Oct. 1865, 24 July 1866 (ext. from Tumut and Adelong Times), 22 Oct. 1869.



a declining field,<sup>17</sup> or flood relief in stricken areas like Araluen in 1871. In the latter instance, the police magistrate convened a public meeting which resolved that the government be asked for a loan of £6,000 to help ease a situation where hundreds were unemployed and much personal and commercial loss had been sustained. A committee was formed to deal with relief work, and many families were assisted with rations of food.<sup>18</sup> Other meetings were held to help the sufferers who had joined the abortive Port Curtis rush in 1858, and efforts were made to transport them to New South Wales fields.<sup>19</sup> In general, however, the diggers' interests were narrow, and they kept their action within the limits of these interests. Their meetings and petitions to the legislature tell of their absorption with questions which may fairly be described as 'bread and butter' matters - roads and communications,<sup>20</sup> digging problems, licence fees,<sup>21</sup> gold export duty,<sup>22</sup> Chinese,<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> S.M.H., 30 Jan. 1857 (ext. from Armidale Express), 6 Nov. 1858 (ext. from Goulburn Herald), 3 Dec. 1861.

<sup>18</sup> S.M.H., 8, 26 May, 8 June 1871.

<sup>19</sup> S.M.H., 27 Oct., 6 Nov. 1858 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>20</sup> S.M.H., 20 July 1854, 26 July 1859.

<sup>21</sup> Empire, 25 June (ext. from B.F.P.), 11, 26 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 17, 21 Nov. 1851.

<sup>22</sup> S.M.H., 9 Sept. 1857 (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 14 Oct. 1859, 27 Aug. 1862.

<sup>23</sup> Empire, 2 April 1852 (ext. from Maitland Mercury); S.M.H., 31 Jan. 1859, 2 April, 12, 16 Sept. 1861, 6 March 1862 (ext. from Burrangong Courier), 10 Sept. 1866.

security (especially on new fields, and in the uneasy  
 sixties),<sup>24</sup> company monopoly,<sup>25</sup> and gold-fields management  
 bills and regulations.<sup>26</sup>

Meetings were not solely the preserve of the miners. From the nature of many of them considerable support must have come from the trading section of the community. This, having investments to protect, was normally a more stable group than the diggers. Their interest in the public meeting as a means of expressing group opinion was demonstrated at Louisa Creek in May 1855 when a meeting was followed by an agreement to abstain from Sunday trading, reportedly signed by every publican, trader, and storekeeper in the community.<sup>27</sup> Similarly they would have had more interest than any other group to extend the life of a field as long as possible, and would therefore support moves to prospect new ground in their vicinity,<sup>28</sup> and to divert gold escort

<sup>24</sup> S.M.H., 18 Oct. 1856, 31 Jan. 1859, 17, 24 Feb. 1863.

<sup>25</sup> Empire, 23 Aug. 1852; S.M.H., 27 Aug., 1 Sept. 1856 (both ext. from Maitland Mercury).

<sup>26</sup> Empire, 26 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 22 Jan., 5, 7, 14 Feb., 9, 12 March, 30 April 1853, 5 Oct. 1858, 11 Sept. 1866, 9 Nov. 1869, 11 Jan. 1870 (ext. from Bathurst Times), 12 Sept. 1871.

<sup>27</sup> S.M.H., 19 May 1855.

<sup>28</sup> S.M.H., 30 Jan. (ext. from Armidale Express), 30 June 1857, 6 Nov. 1858 (ext. from Goulburn Herald), 3 Dec. 1861.

routes through their towns in the hope of attracting more trade. In respect of the latter a considerable verbal battle was fought between the citizens of Armidale and Grafton over an attempt to re-route the northern escort in 1859.<sup>29</sup> It is likely that tradesmen were also prominent in the formation of the Grenfell Progress Committee in June 1871, which urged on the government 'the formation of streets, the establishment of a Land Office, and other local requirements'.<sup>30</sup> At Louisa Creek they were in 1859 reported to have been so hostile to the establishment of a miners' local court - though it is not clear why - that they turned out in large numbers to a public meeting and, masquerading as diggers, successfully opposed it.<sup>31</sup>

Continued use of the medium of the public meeting would seem to indicate a considerable leaning towards a basic democracy in New South Wales, especially on the gold-fields. It would be misleading to attribute this to immigrant Chartists and Irishmen only, as Shann tends to do,<sup>32</sup> for meetings were common on the gold-fields before the great

<sup>29</sup> S.M.H., 21 May, 30 Nov. 1859.

<sup>30</sup> S.M.H., 12 June 1871.

<sup>31</sup> S.M.H., 27 April, 20 May 1859.

<sup>32</sup> Shann, pp.173-4.

wave of immigration from the United Kingdom reached the colony in 1852. It may be that Anglo-Saxon tradition had some effect, for similar tendencies are in evidence in North America from the seventeenth century onward. Perhaps democracy is too strong a term to describe a system under which an appointed government ruled, but there was no bar to the diggers' free expression of their grievances and opinions, or to their elected representatives - after 1856 - pressing their interests in the Assembly.

During the greater part of the period 1851-74 the diggers, despite their keen appreciation of their own immediate interests, and their eagerness to congregate and demonstrate at the least provocation, showed a distinct aversion to organization of any kind. Whether social or political in character, societies and associations were not on most occasions strongly supported by them. There was no organized trade union movement at all during this time, though in the early seventies diggers' actions on some occasions followed a course which was later to become familiar in connection with the trade union movement generally. Militant action against working conditions and restrictions was resorted to on several occasions. The earliest appears to have been in January 1852, when diggers at Bell's Creek, near Braidwood, quarrelled with Dr Bell over his proposed

conditions and regulations for mining on his land. In contempt of these restrictions, they finally crossed the creek and began working his land without permission. This provided a great opportunity for both Herald and Empire to give full play to their respective opinions on diggers generally, and to moralize at length on the iniquities and virtues of the whole class. The Empire's reporter naturally espoused the cause of the diggers,<sup>33</sup> while the line of the Herald's Braidwood correspondent would appear to conform fairly closely to that journal's known sympathies:<sup>34</sup>

We would deprecate most strongly the growth of the spirit of radicalism among our gold-digging community, and are therefore happy to find that its development received so salutary a check....<sup>35</sup>

Eleven days later the Herald published a letter which again attacked the diggers' organized action:

The taking forcible possession of Dr Bell's private property, was another outrage that nothing could justify, more especially as a meeting was held for the consideration of and carrying out this project.<sup>36</sup>

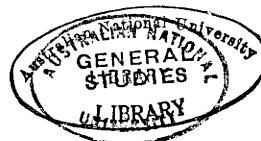
The Empire published a series of three long letters from the radical James M'Eachern, in support of the diggers'

<sup>33</sup> Empire, 14, 29 Jan. 1852.

<sup>34</sup> S.M.H., 15 Jan. 1852.

<sup>35</sup> S.M.H., 22 Jan. 1852.

<sup>36</sup> S.M.H., 2 Feb. 1852.



37 actions, but in the meantime agreement was reached between Bell and the diggers, and the struggle ended.

M'Eachern's 'Tambaroora Association', if its critics are to be believed, appears to have been principally a one-man organization.

A more compact affair was never concocted. He did all the writing, all the talking, and spent all the money which the publicans and diggers subscribed; so you see there was a nice little division of labour and responsibility. With this eloquent apostle of impracticabilities the Grand Democratic League, which was designed to straighten up the affairs of the mines, has vanished.<sup>38</sup>

The association lasted less than a year, during which time M'Eachern appears to have worked hard, visiting Sofala and Sydney in an effort to win support.<sup>39</sup> On the Turon he seems to have had some success, for some miners there banded together in January 1853 to form themselves into a 'co-operative' association.<sup>40</sup> Almost immediately, however, they drifted away from M'Eachern's advocated policy of 'moral force' in favour of a course of 'passive resistance' to the government.<sup>41</sup> This movement, too, seems to have died from neglect and apathy during 1853.

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Empire, 23, 24, 28 Jan. 1852.

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S.M.H., 28 Sept. 1853 (ext. from B.F.P.).

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S.M.H., 16 Nov. (ext. from B.F.P.), 4, 7 Dec. 1852.

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S.M.H., 4 Dec. 1852, 12 Jan. (supplement, ext. from B.F.P.),

22

Jan. 1853.

41

S.M.H., 5 Feb. 1853.

The next important body was the Burrangong 'Miners' Protection League' of 1861, leaders of which were prominent in the anti-Chinese movement of that year. It did not outlast the rush phase, however, and by the end of the year had faded into obscurity. Its sole raison d'etre, judging by its prospectus,<sup>42</sup> seems to have been the exclusion of Chinese from the Lambing Flat region. There is no real evidence of wider implications. More than seven years later at Grenfell, then in the early stages of a rush, it appeared that miners were again beginning to see some advantage in combination - at least, that certain politicians saw the possible value of digger support for their own ambitions.

A monster meeting called by advertisement was held at the Princess Theatre last night, about one hundred persons were present. Mr W.R. Watt, J.P., in the chair. The object was to organise a Miners' League, for the purpose of obtaining a revision of the laws and regulations for the management of the Gold-fields of the colony, and the establishment of local courts or mining boards. The principal speakers were E.A. Baker, editor of the Record, Marshall and Riley. The miners do not appear to be much interested in the movement.<sup>43</sup>

Baker had been active in the Burrangong League in 1861, and it is more than likely that his active participation owed

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S.M.H., 6 March 1861.

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S.M.H., 18 Dec. 1868.

much to this previous experience, to his position as editor of a gold-field journal, and to political ambition. Little more is said in later editions of the Herald of the activities of the league, apart from an invitation issued in February 1869, urging other diggers in New South Wales to join them.<sup>44</sup>

At Trunkey Creek in 1872 the Herald's correspondent reported that an effort was being made to establish a Mining Association,

...having for its object the assisting with cash and medical attendance temporarily to such of its members as may be unable to work because of any illness to which their avocation renders them liable.<sup>45</sup>

Again, however, the degree of success of the association goes unrecorded in the metropolitan press.

In the meantime direct action was finding favour among diggers on those fields where wage-labour and a relatively settled population were either established or coming into being. Freed from the responsibility imposed by self-employment, and insulated from the excitement and spur of the vision of sudden opulence which had been the great driving force in the early days of mining, the new class

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S.M.H., 4 Feb. 1869.

45

S.M.H., 4 Sept. 1872.



of diggers saw their occupation as bread-winning, and little more. Any improvement in working and living conditions could only be wrested from their employers. Consequently combinations were formed to try to win better wages and like concessions. The first of any size appears to have occurred in July 1869 at Araluen, where a number of diggers struck work, demanding £2/5/- per week. Two guineas, they claimed, was insufficient for the maintenance of a man and his family.<sup>46</sup> The strike did not last long, and the following week the Braidwood Dispatch reported:

Everything is going on steadily, nearly all the men have gone to work again, and the threatened strike has ended in a 'bottle of smoke', the men having returned to their work at from £2 to £2/5/- - the latter rate may be considered as the standard wages, where the claims in which the men are working will allow of that rate, otherwise the claims will be carried on at a lower scale.<sup>47</sup>

One year later another strike took place, this time at Major's Creek, where the workers in Thomas and Co.'s claim demanded the institution of an eight-hour day. The demand was refused by a majority of the shareholders, and the men were replaced, apparently without trouble, by others.<sup>48</sup>

On the reefing field of Hill End, the eight-hour day appears to have been granted without incident by mid-1872, when the Herald correspondent was able to report:

<sup>46</sup> S.M.H., 6 July 1869 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch).

<sup>47</sup> S.M.H., 13 July 1869 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch).

<sup>48</sup> S.M.H., 20 July 1870 (ext. from Braidwood Dispatch).

The miners, I am happy to say, have secured to themselves the advantages of the eight-hour system, and on Saturday they knock off at 12. It thus happened that when working after 'office hours' I found nobody at the claims, excepting in some cases where some unfortunate fellows had taken work by contract at so low a price that they were compelled to work a 'Scotchman's day', i.e., from daylight till dark.<sup>49</sup>

The corporate feeling among miners on this field appears to have been very strong, and militancy began to appear at Hill End late in 1872. In November a miners' meeting was convened to disapprove of a proposed extension of working hours in Krohmann's, one of the larger claims. The men had been asked to work until Saturday midnight, and to recommence just twenty-four hours later. Obediently they presented themselves for duty on the Sunday night at the required time, but were prevented from going to work by a crowd of miners from other claims, who feared that this was just the thin end of a wedge to prise them loose from their newly-won working conditions.<sup>50</sup> Soon after this the Hill End miners again met, with the object of forming a 'protection association'. They contributed, in one-shilling subscriptions, £13/12/-, and another £45 was given by 'The Prospectors, Hawkins Hill, Beyers and Holtermann,

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S.M.H., 18 June 1872.

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S.M.H., 22 Nov. 1872.

and Kerr'.<sup>51</sup> This example of good management-labour relations may be the reason why there is no mention during the next 18 months of hostile action by the miners on this field. As yet, however, colony-wide miners' movements had not taken shape in New South Wales, and until such unions had been formed, the miners' actions would be limited to attempted redress of very localized grievances, whether by direct action against employers, or by local 'vigilance committees' formed to deal with local lawlessness and disorder.<sup>52</sup>

In the colonial legislature gold-fields issues, as might have been expected, were continually attracting attention. Before responsible government the Empire could and did piously condemn the government for gross mishandling of gold-fields affairs, but the anti-administration side of its allegations outweighed genuine concern for the well-being of the gold industry. From 1856 on there were not lacking politicians willing and eager to use gold-fields issues to further their own ambitions. Election meetings took on a new interest in constituencies near gold-fields, as when Gideon S. Lang successfully bid for election from

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S.M.H., 2 Dec. 1872.

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Empire, 16 Dec. 1851; S.M.H., 17 Dec. 1860 (ext. from Yass Courier), 24 Feb. 1863, 16 Jan. 1871.

Liverpool Plains in 1856, claiming in a speech to diggers at Hanging Rock that he was 'anxious to represent a district containing a gold-field, that he might have a more immediate claim upon the Legislature when he advocated the interest of the gold-diggers'.<sup>53</sup> In respect of such earnest promises came a bitter complaint from the Rocky River field two years later:

One of our members gave a promise at a canvassing meeting held here, that he would vote against Chinese immigration. Since then he has voted against Mr Cowper's mild bill and stated 'that he did not wish to place restrictions upon the introduction of any class of immigrants.' So much for electioneering promises.<sup>54</sup>

Candidates in the vicinity of gold-fields naturally continued to exploit local issues in their campaigns as far as possible to further their popularity with the electorate. Thus, for example, anti-Chinese platforms were prominent at Braidwood and Queanbeyan in 1859,<sup>55</sup> at Mudgee in 1860,<sup>56</sup> and, when the issue became colony-wide in 1861, even at Newtown.<sup>57</sup> By 1869 this particular cry had evidently lost

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S.M.H., 24 March 1856.

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S.M.H., 18 June 1858 (ext. from Armidale Express).

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S.M.H., 21, 23, 25 June 1859.

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S.M.H., 28 Nov. 1860.

57

S.M.H., 4 July 1861.

its power, for in December of that year the anti-Chinese invective of Dr Alley at Braidwood earned him only 94 out of a total of 1497 votes cast.<sup>58</sup>

Many diggers, it was claimed, were disfranchised by their nomadic way of life, lacking the necessary residential qualification. After 1856, when the franchise in New South Wales was widespread, the position must have been all the more galling to those miners with strong political leanings. In addition, the diggers had by now become a strong - if not organized - interest group. They saw themselves as a class apart from other men, and were convinced that their problems would go unconsidered by practical politicians unless they were able to elect representatives to keep a special watch on gold-fields interests in the legislature. Agitation for such representation was heard as early as 1853, when the Maitland Mercury's Hanging Rock correspondent hinted 'We hope ere long to see miners have representatives in the Legislature'.<sup>59</sup> A stronger hint came three years later from the Louisa Creek correspondent of the Bathurst Free Press: 'I trust our new Governor General will look upon us as citizens as well as diggers, and give us before long

<sup>58</sup>

S.M.H., 13, 17 Dec. 1869.

<sup>59</sup>

S.M.H., 26 Sept. 1853 (ext. from Maitland Mercury).

the privilege of retaining a member to represent us in the  
 Legislative Council'.<sup>60</sup> This too received no reply, and in  
 1857 the Rocky River correspondent of the Maitland Mercury  
 felt impelled to ask more pointedly, 'Why have the miners  
 no representative in the Legislative Assembly?', and muttered  
 ominously of 'taxation without representation'<sup>61</sup> - possibly  
 a veiled hint of future revolutionary plans.

Unrest was growing. From Sofala in September 1856 came  
 a flat accusation that the government in Sydney was guilty  
 of neglecting necessary improvements for the gold regions,  
 although 'the trade of Sydney, as well as all New South  
 Wales, flourishes or flags, according to the success of the  
 gold-seekers. It cannot be denied that it was through their  
 labour that the colony was raised to wealth from a state  
 almost bordering on bankruptcy.'<sup>62</sup> In September 1857 a  
 public meeting at Rocky River demanded a diggers' franchise.<sup>63</sup>  
 The following April saw a similar meeting at Araluen,<sup>64</sup> and  
 a meeting at Bathurst which resolved:

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<sup>60</sup> S.M.H., 14 Aug. 1855 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>61</sup> S.M.H., 29 May 1857 (ext. from Maitland Mercury).

<sup>62</sup> S.M.H., 30 Sept. 1856.

<sup>63</sup> S.M.H., 9 Sept. 1857 (ext. from Maitland Mercury).

<sup>64</sup> S.M.H., 12 April 1858.

That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that the Western Gold-fields, numbering a large population, should be represented by a member, in addition to any members returnable under the proposed Electoral Bill for the police district in which those gold-fields may be situated; all holding a miner's right on those gold-fields being entitled to vote, and all others having the necessary qualifications.

Only the Chinese were to be excluded from rights of suffrage. 65

Gold-field electorates were established that same year, independent of the electoral districts in which they were located. One seat was allocated to each of the three gold districts, north, south, and west. Miners were entitled to vote in these constituencies on production of their miners' rights, or in the regular constituency for the area by virtue of residential qualification. Dual voting was not permitted. <sup>66</sup> In October 1865, just seven years later, a Herald leader strongly attacked the diggers' separate parliamentary representation, calling it 'a constitutional anomaly', and declaring that 'the sooner it is done away with the better'. <sup>67</sup> Another leader in 1872 called attention to the inequality of the gold-field electorates, and

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<sup>65</sup> S.M.H., 13 April 1858.

<sup>66</sup> S.M.H., 27 Nov. 1858.

<sup>67</sup> S.M.H., 6 Oct. 1865.

68  
 their changeable nature. An attempt to abolish these  
 constituencies was made in 1874 when the government brought  
 in an Electoral Act Amendment Bill.<sup>69</sup> As Saul Samuel  
 declared in the ensuing Legislative Council debate, special  
 arrangements were no longer needed, since the miners were  
 now becoming a settled part of the community.<sup>70</sup> The Bill  
 was lost,<sup>71</sup> and separate gold-fields representation remained  
 until 1880.<sup>72</sup> While they were in existence, it seems that  
 little advantage was taken of these special voting rights.  
 Seldom did more than a few hundred out of the thousands  
 eligible use them. Even in the first year of their exist-  
 ence, 1859, when interest might have been expected to run  
 high, the official report accompanying the year's statis-  
 tics showed that out of a total of 2400 on the northern  
 gold-fields who were entitled to vote, only 222 did so.  
 Of the 3300 qualified voters on the western fields the

68

S.M.H., 29 April 1872.	Gold-fields elec- torates, April 1871	Official esti- mate a few months later
	Southern 2999 electors	2500
	Northern 1240 "	1500
	Western 4591 "	1600

69

S.M.H., 2 May 1874.

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S.M.H., 28 May 1874.

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S.M.H., 25 June 1874.

72

Martin and Wardle.





following year, only 398 recorded their votes. Perhaps, as the report suggests, those diggers with residential qualifications preferred to vote in the normal way in the regional constituencies, but it is unlikely that nearly ninety per cent were so qualified. It would seem that apathy was after all the real reason.<sup>73</sup>

Of the fourteen men who between 1859 and 1880 represented gold-field constituencies, few had ever been practical miners. Only J. Hoskins, H.L. Beyers, H. Copeland, and S. Donnelly had spent much time as such. The other ten included two gold commissioners (J. Buchanan and R. Wisdom), two newspaper editors (E.A. Baker and G.F. Pickering), one barrister (D. Buchanan), one solicitor (R. Forster), a wholesale grocer (W. Church), a shipping agent (G. Thornton), and an auctioneer (J. Rodd). These last three all operated their businesses not on the gold-fields but in Sydney. The only man whose occupation is not given in Martin and Wardle's Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1856-1901, is John Bowie Wilson, though he is accredited with the title of 'Dr.' in early press reports.<sup>74</sup> Of the

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J.L.C., 1860, vol.VI, p.216; 1861-2, vol.VIII, p.416.

74

S.M.H., 9, 24 June (ext. from Adelong Mining Journal) 1859.

fourteen, no less than eleven first entered the Assembly through gold-fields constituencies, and seven of these later stayed in politics as representatives of other electorates. Only three - Forster, Thornton, and David Buchanan - had previous Assembly experience. Six of the fourteen eventually achieved ministerial rank, though only Wilson - Secretary for Lands under Martin in 1863-5, 1866-8, and 1870-2, and Baker - Secretary for Lands and later for Mines under Robertson in 1877, and for Mines under Parkes in 1878-81, reached this distinction while still representing gold-<sup>75</sup> fields constituencies.

Of the above-mentioned members, perhaps Hoskins was the most vigorous campaigner in the Assembly for diggers' rights and interests. He had an impressive record. In February 1860 he successfully moved that a reward be of-<sup>76</sup> ficially offered for new discoveries of payable gold. His outspokenness drew a reprimand from the conservative Herald<sup>77</sup> the same year. Undaunted, he fulfilled at the beginning

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Information contained in Martin and Wardle. The others were Hoskins (Public Works, Robertson, 1877), Thornton (Mines, Dibbs, 1885), Wisdom (Attorney-General, Parkes, 1879-83), Copeland (Public Works, Stuart, 1883; Lands, Jennings, 1886-7; Lands, Dibbs, 1891-4).

76

S.M.H., 8 Feb. 1860.

77

S.M.H., 29 Sept. 1860.

of 1861 one of his election pledges - to reduce official salaries, starting at the top <sup>78</sup> - by moving successfully that the governor-general's salary be reduced from £7,000 to £5,000. <sup>79</sup> He was at this time a troublesome thorn in the side of the government, demanding full explanations of measures taken to meet the Lambing Flat emergency in February, <sup>80</sup> and of reasons for the irregular payment of the northern patrol a month later. <sup>81</sup> He was conscientious in the performance of his duty of presenting petitions from his constituents, whether against Chinese immigration or against the gold duty. <sup>82</sup> During the long debate on the government's handling of the Lambing Flat crisis he seized the opportunity to denounce appointments in the gold service, and to support Wilson's motion for a committee of enquiry into the disturbances, while at the same time launching an attack upon Wilson himself. <sup>83</sup> He sought further to embarrass the administration by pointed questions on the

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<sup>78</sup> S.M.H., 24 June 1859 (ext. from Armidale Express).

<sup>79</sup> S.M.H., 24 Jan. 1861.

<sup>80</sup> S.M.H., 27 Feb. 1861.

<sup>81</sup> S.M.H., 23 March 1861.

<sup>82</sup> S.M.H., 11, 20 Sept. 1861.

<sup>83</sup> S.M.H., 25 Sept. 1861.

efficiency and competence of the gold commissioners in the performance of their duties of visiting and reporting on the fields under their charge.<sup>84</sup> When a deputation of members of the Assembly, together with James Torpy, presented a petition for the release and pardon of the agitator Spicer, Hoskins was one of them, along with the other gold-fields members, Wilson and Wisdom. John Dunmore Lang and D.C. Dalgleish, of Sydney, made up the party.<sup>85</sup> Hoskins was, it appears, a forthright radical in his thinking, though not a sentimentalist. He was firmly opposed to the abolition of capital punishment,<sup>86</sup> and a strong supporter of the principle of a unicameral legislature.<sup>87</sup> He cannot be counted an unwavering partisan of the Cowper ministry, and it is difficult to read more than political spite into the Herald's leading article of 20 February 1863, which declared:

Three ex-members of the Assembly have recently received their reward.... Mr Hoskins has been paid off with a superintendentship of minor roads at £350 a year, Mr Lewis with a mining examinership at £250 a year, and Mr David Buchanan with an overseership of minor roads at £200 a year.

84

S.M.H., 12 Dec. 1861, 19 Sept. 1862.

85

S.M.H., 13 June 1862.

86

S.M.H., 26 Jan. 1861.

87

S.M.H., 3 April 1861.

Wilson's period as member for the southern gold-fields coincides roughly with his period of irresponsibility, before he became Secretary for Lands in October 1863. His behaviour in the Assembly was for most of this time opportunist, though from time to time he did attempt to improve the position for miners. His 'Limited Liability in Mining Partnerships' Bill in 1861,<sup>88</sup> and his proposal the same year for the abolition of the gold export duty<sup>89</sup> can be counted on the credit side of his record, as can his enquiry in 1862 into the propriety of a Burrangong magistrate's exclusion of a newspaper reporter from an open court.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps his motion for a committee of inquiry into the Lambing Flat disturbances<sup>91</sup> was really inspired by a genuine concern to discover the truth, and not by desire to embarrass the Cowper administration. Nevertheless there is little doubt that he was following a policy of political, vote-catching expediency in supporting the petition to pardon Spicer, and in his lashing attacks upon the country police.<sup>92</sup> Here he was undoubtedly jumping on to

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S.M.H., 18, 20 April 1861.

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S.M.H., 20 April 1861.

90

S.M.H., 4 July 1862.

91

S.M.H., 25 Sept. 1861.

92

S.M.H., 27 June, 16 July 1863.

the bandwaggon of popular protest against the police which followed the successful robbery of the Lachlan escort in 1863. His appointment to office later that year calmed his heated protests, and thereafter he was no longer to be found siding with irresponsible rabble-rousers.

James Rodd appears to have been a constant advocate for mining interests during his tenure of the southern gold-fields seat after the 1865 election, and of that for the northern gold-fields after 1872, each for one term of office. He was the only member to sit for more than one of the mining constituencies.<sup>93</sup> His actions were mostly dictated by what he considered to be the interest of his constituents, from the presentation of a petition from Adelong and Kiandra against the 1866 Gold Fields Amendment Act,<sup>94</sup> and his unsuccessful proposal in the same year for the sum of £10,000 to be set aside as a reward fund to promote the discovery of new gold-fields,<sup>95</sup> to another unsuccessful motion at the end of 1867 to secure government responsibility for gold carried by the official escort.<sup>96</sup> He took a considerable

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<sup>93</sup> Martin and Wardle, p.183.

<sup>94</sup> S.M.H., 1 Aug. 1866.

<sup>95</sup> S.M.H., 17 Oct. 1866.

<sup>96</sup> S.M.H., 4 Dec. 1867.

personal interest in the gold industry, and soon after his election in 1872 purchased three 'first-rate' claims at Hill End, thus identifying himself positively with the district and the industry as more than a mere politician. <sup>97</sup>

It would be hard to describe David Buchanan as anything but a mere politician, though in this field he showed himself to be a man of no ordinary ability and perseverance. He had been, on and off, a member of the Assembly for twelve years before he secured election for the western gold-fields in 1872 and again in 1875. <sup>98</sup> Throughout his career he employed the tactics of an agitator and character-assassin to gain notoriety, and there is little evidence of any real concern for the people he was supposed to be representing. After the Lambing Flat rioters had been acquitted at Goulburn in September 1861, Buchanan wrote to the Herald <sup>99</sup> accusing Judge Wise of bias and partiality against them, and followed this up by moving in the Assembly - unsuccessfully - that the judge be deprived of office for 'gross <sup>100</sup> partiality and one-sidedness'. The gold-fields again

<sup>97</sup> S.M.H., 2 May 1872.

<sup>98</sup> Martin and Wardle, p.23.

<sup>99</sup> S.M.H., 12 Oct. 1861.

<sup>100</sup> S.M.H., 30 Oct. 1861.

provided him with useful self-advertizing material towards the end of 1870, when he launched a campaign against the government-appointed Commission of Inquiry into the gold-fields, seeking its abolition as an unnecessary waste of public money.<sup>101</sup> Here, however, he was fighting a lone and unsuccessful battle. But having thus demonstrated his interest in mining affairs, he secured election by the western gold-diggers in 1872. The following year, to underline his opposition to a government-sponsored Gold Fields Bill, he brought in a rival bill of his own, but was compelled to withdraw it on the grounds of informality.<sup>102</sup> From 1879 he represented Mudgee, in the western district, until he moved to Central Cumberland. He remained in politics until his death in 1890.<sup>103</sup>

The only other member whose main interest can be identified with the gold-fields was E.A. Baker. Having arrived in New South Wales in 1853 as mineralogist to a mining company, he retained his connections with the gold-fields for most of his political career.<sup>104</sup> He played a

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101

S.M.H., 18, 23 Nov. 1870, 8 March 1871.

102

S.M.H., 14 July, 4 Oct. 1870, 8 April 1871.

103

Martin and Wardle, p.23.

104

Martin and Wardle, pp.8-9.



leading part as an agitator during the Lambing Flat disturbances in 1861,<sup>105</sup> and was, as editor of the Grenfell Mining Record, instrumental in the formation of a Miners' League in that township during the rush of 1868.<sup>106</sup> In 1870, 1872, 1875, and 1877 he was elected as member for the southern gold-fields, and in 1880, 1884, and 1885 for Carcoar - a mining area. His interest was recognized by an appointment as Secretary for Mines in the Robertson ministry of 1877.<sup>107</sup> In 1870 he was appointed a member of the Gold Fields Commission of Inquiry, and was soon compelled to defend himself against Buchanan's vicious attacks in relation to this.<sup>108</sup> Baker was primarily a politician, but he appears to have had a genuine interest in the well-being of the gold industry. He was a 'career man', whose career was bound up with the gold-fields.

Though gold-fields affairs were mainly the concern of governments and of the miners' elected representatives, a considerable number of members of the Assembly had at one time or another experienced gold-fields life either as

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- 105 S.M.H., 27, 28 Aug. 1861.  
 106 S.M.H., 18 Dec. 1868.  
 107 Martin and Wardle, pp.8-9.  
 108 S.M.H., 23 Nov. 1870.

digger or commissioner. But it cannot be claimed that the gold-rushes in New South Wales had any effect on political life comparable with that in Victoria. New South Wales was a settled, orderly community with a more or less stable history of over sixty years when its first gold-rush took place. Victoria, in contrast, was young, underpopulated, and far from stable when caught by the great immigration wave of the early fifties. The census of 1851, taken just before the first rush in New South Wales, showed a Victorian population of 87,345, in contrast with 187,243 to the north. By 1861 these totals had risen to 540,322 and 380,919 (350,860 without Queensland) respectively. Into the young Victoria came hundreds of thousands of adventurers, drawn by the lure of gold. It was she who offered the greatest attraction to the digger. Her fields were by far the wealthier, and hers was the more nearly a diggers' society. Before gold there had been little but a pastoral society. Most of the newcomers' interests were at some stage connected with the gold industry, and with this lack of historical

Martin and Wardle. Members between 1851 and 1901 who had been diggers included A. Campbell, W. Davies, G. Day, J. Fletcher, A. Forsyth, T. Garrett, J. Gormby, B.O. Holtermann, J. Hoskins, C.E. Jeanneret, J. Lucas, A. Renwick, J.B. Reymond, J. Torpy, and F.A. Wright; ex-commissioners included J. Buchanan, J. Douglas, R. Wisdom.

background, and of other industries, it was not surprising that diggers swamped the colony, controlling and directing its course of destiny. Their interests and Victoria's were deemed to be one and the same, inextricably bound together. The Sydney Morning Herald, from its comparatively undisturbed vantage-point, looked upon the problems created by the turbulent Victorian population with complacent pity. Victoria was depicted as an unstable community where, according to a Herald leader on 9 July 1856, the 'notions of the principle of government seem always to take shape and form from the passions of the moment....' Only at Lambing Flat did a like situation arise in New South Wales. It is therefore rather strange to find that the reasons given by the Herald's reporter there attribute the absence of agitation and unrest early in 1862 to the drawing-off of the unstable elements to the Lachlan rush - and to the presence of a greater number of Victorians than previously. These, it was claimed, tended as a rule to 'look upon Commissioners' decisions as final', and were altogether a desirable addition to the population.

From the apparent lack of interest on the part of the New South Wales diggers in anything not directly concerning

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S.M.H., 26 Nov. 1853, 9 July 1856, 8 May 1857.

111

S.M.H., 12 Feb. 1862.

them, and the absence of any desire to direct the government's policy in non-mining issues - always excepting the Chinese question - it may be assumed that their interest in politics lay far behind their quest for personal gain and pleasure. It would be absurd to attempt to distinguish their character from that of the Victorians. They came of similar stock, had similar ambitions, and were of a like nomadic nature in their search after gold. The difference in the level and intensity of diggers' political activity in New South Wales from that in the 'Golden Colony' probably owes much to the stability of the former in pre-gold days, and to the diversion of the main current of the rush to Victoria. New South Wales was a colony in which gold was discovered; Victoria was a gold-rush out of which a colony was built.

Henry Parkes' Empire, as described above, lost no opportunity to embarrass the government whenever possible, making full use of the chances provided by the disorganization of the gold-rushes, and by the gold issues themselves. Motives are not clear, though Parkes was an ambitious politician and exploited his newspaper as a political organ. As a businessman, of course, he wanted to sell as many copies of his newspaper as he could. The great flush of excitement engendered by the early discoveries provided him with

a ready market upon which he seized, publishing each afternoon, from 19 November 1851, a special 'gold-fields edition', at double the normal price of 3d. <sup>112</sup> It is probable that he was at least partly sincere in his fervent declarations of the inevitability of Australia's future greatness. It is certain that he disapproved violently of FitzRoy as governor. It seems likely, however, that the Empire was used primarily as a means to political self-elevation, and that its extreme radical position was largely designed to attract attention and to draw the support of the dissatisfied. Whatever his intention at the outset, the Empire served to keep Parkes in close contact with all aspects of colonial politics, and his policy of encouraging radicalism ensured his continued interest in gold-fields issues and the Chinese question.

The Herald, senior newspaper of New South Wales, seems to have been seen by its proprietors at this time as an Australian Times. It endeavoured to maintain an editorial dignity which the Empire lacked, and followed a conservative, independent line, generally approving of governments which showed themselves equally conservative. It was, in short, the supporter of constituted authority. The Herald's

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112

Empire, 17 Nov. 1851.



accounts of gold-fields affairs throughout the period are consistent and normally fair. On the gold question it was at first understandably cautious - even if this was only a reaction against the buoyant radicalism which the discoveries evoked from the Empire. The differences between the two journals are nowhere more clearly shown than in their contrasting treatment of news from Lambing Flat in 1861. Here the Empire's irresponsible contempt for authority can be traced in its development from an early unwillingness to believe the official reports from police and commissioners of the disturbances, to a denial that a serious riot had taken place at all - and if it had, it was the fault of the government. In contrast, the Herald reacted with appalled righteousness against the horrors and indignities perpetrated by the rioters upon the police forces.

It is not known who acted as correspondents to these newspapers from the various gold-fields, but all followed in their reports the official line of the journal concerned, though it cannot be shown whether this was deliberate on their part or the result of editorial censorship. Both drew extensively upon country newspapers for news stories,

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113

Empire and S.M.H., July-Sept. 1861.

though not quite so extensively after the establishment of a telegraph network in the sixties. In the early days the Bathurst Free Press was the principal source of information from the western fields, the Armidale Express and Maitland Mercury for the north, and the Braidwood Observer and Dispatch for the south. During the Lambing Flat crisis, despite the telegraph station at Yass, the Yass Courier was drawn upon heavily. Most of these country newspapers were naturally subject to considerable bias in favour of local interests, of which the mining interests were the most outstanding.

Newspapers were quickly established in most large gold centres, especially in the 1860s. At Kiandra, the first really large rush outside a populated area, the Alpine Pioneer was established by the proprietors of the Illawarra Mercury in 1860.<sup>114</sup> Lambing Flat boasted three newspapers, the Burrangong Argus, Star, and Courier, the last of which was edited by John Dunmore Lang's son George.<sup>115</sup> Forbes, too, had its local journals, the Miner<sup>116</sup> and the short-lived Lachlan Observer - which, having begun its existence

114

D.G. Moye, Historic Kiandra, p.28.

115

S.M.H., 6 March 1862.

116

S.M.H., 29 March 1862 (ext.from Bathurst Times).

as the Bathurst Times, closed at Forbes with a circulation of 800 and returned to its old name and home in April-May 1863.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes newspapers were transferred in pursuit of their customers from rush to rush, as illustrated by a report in August 1864 from Forbes that 'The Burrangong Star has ceased to exist, and the plant, staff, and other usual accompaniments of a newspaper are to be transferred to this township'.<sup>118</sup> Hopeful editors were not deterred by the failure of others any more than diggers were, and new journals appeared early at the Weddin Mountain rush in 1866 (Emu Creek Miner), Gulgong in 1873-4 (Gulgong Guardian, Miner's Right), and Parkes in 1874. Mortal as the fields they served, few of these newspapers survived for long, but they do give an interesting and valuable picture of life at the height of a gold boom. However, none of them has the continuity of the larger Sydney and older country journals, and few of them can have wielded much influence outside their immediate local sales area. The Sydney press is perhaps the only reliable source of colony-wide information throughout the period 1851-74, and it recorded faithfully the opportunism of politicians in the legislature

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117

S.M.H., 29 April, 26 May 1863.

118

S.M.H., 31 Aug. 1864.



and in the field, and the generally apathetic attitude of the miners themselves to all save issues immediately bearing upon their own welfare. In the gold-fields, politics was never wedded to public opinion, merely carrying on a brief flirtation in order to win a renewal of status for a few more years. That rough but persistent plebeian girl, Labour, had not yet entered upon the scene demanding marriage.

## Chapter 7

### EFFECTS OF THE GOLD DISCOVERIES UPON RURAL NEW SOUTH WALES

A sudden and unexpected influx of thousands of men from all over the colony into one unprepared rural centre could not fail to change radically the nature and tempo of social conditions and life there. Echoes of Bathurst were to be heard throughout New South Wales as local interests fought desperately to keep or attract a population which had ears only for tales of easily-won fortunes in gold. The city of the west was, if possible, to be denied a monopoly of the wealth which diggers and tourists would bring, and before long rewards were offered for the discovery of gold in other regions, as townships struggled for a bite at the golden apple.<sup>1</sup> Though the prizes - greatly increased land and property values, and greater retail turnovers - were considerable, these measures were probably as much defensive as profit-seeking, for retention of original population was the only means by which traders

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<sup>1</sup> Empire, 28 May, 5 June 1851.

and property owners could save themselves from considerable financial loss.

First reactions to the gold-rush from country centres were understandably pessimistic. As the Bathurst Free Press correspondent in Bathurst noted, 'Every village of the surrounding country is emptying itself or sending forth its quota to the great gathering'<sup>2</sup>. Reports of diminishing populations and deserted townships were received from Carcoar, Camden, Yass, and other regions, even the flourishing town of Goulburn being very vulnerable to the effects of gold fever.<sup>3</sup> Though not so devastating in later years, gold fever continued to disrupt normal life for a while in any town near the centre of a rush, and in many of these - such as Mudgee and Tumut in 1855, and Mudgee again in 1873, shortage of labour during the early stages of a rush proved a common inconvenience.<sup>4</sup> Even the experience of the great rush from Bathurst in 1851 did not immunize that town against another serious outbreak of gold fever in 1856.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>

Empire, 27 May 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>3</sup>

Empire, 24, 28 May, 4, 6, 10 June (ext. from Goulburn Herald) 1851; S.M.H., 23 May 1851.

<sup>4</sup>

S.M.H., 29 Sept., 4 Dec. (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle) 1855, 13 Feb. 1873.

<sup>5</sup>

S.M.H., 22 July 1856 (ext. from B.F.P.).

Loss of trade through a diminishing population was, though serious, not the principal cause for concern. It affected only the merchants. Far more important was the disruption caused by the withdrawal of much of the labour force to join a rush. Shepherds deserted their flocks, labourers their fields, and servants their masters.<sup>6</sup> To the impressionable - especially the employer class - the country outside the auriferous areas looked in danger of depopulation.<sup>7</sup> Letters poured into newspaper offices from worried pastoralists, suggesting ways and means of controlling the shifting population, and two magistrates at Orange staunchly did their share to discourage participation in the rush by declaring their intention to impose the greatest penalties allowed under the Masters and Servants Acts in any desertion case which might come before them.<sup>8</sup> Only the areas immediately around a gold-field escaped a general and prolonged shortage of labour, for on every field, after the first flush of excitement, there was a large number of disappointed and discontented diggers,

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Empire, 17 May 1851, 31 Aug. 1852; S.M.H., 8 May 1852.

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Empire, 4, 5, 6, 10 June 1851; S.M.H., 23 May, 10 Dec. 1851, 26 Feb. 1852.

8

S.M.H., 27 Nov. 1851.

all in need of money.<sup>9</sup> Experience of many years of the pattern of fortunes at the diggings did not eliminate this problem, and there were still great numbers of unemployed diggers in New England in 1856, Araluen the following year,<sup>10</sup> and generally in 1861. In the colony as a whole, however, the rushes had the effect of increasing the demand for labour, and newly-arrived immigrants sometimes found ready employment in positions for which they allegedly had few qualifications save that of availability, at rates of pay which they could never have expected at home.<sup>11</sup> Competition for labour and the increased cost of living forced the payment of higher wages for almost all types of employment, an increase which spread even to the gold-field areas where labour was comparatively plentiful.<sup>12</sup>

Seasonal employments, such as shearing and reaping, did not suffer unduly as a result of the gold-rushes, since many diggers made a practice of leaving the gold-fields to shear and reap, as a holiday from their normal tasks,

<sup>9</sup> Empire, 10 June (ext. from B.F.P.), 11 Oct. 1851; S.M.H., 22 Jan. 1852.

<sup>10</sup> S.M.H., 15 Sept. 1856, 8 Dec. 1857, 29, 30 Jan. 1861.

<sup>11</sup> S.M.H., 29 Oct. 1852.

<sup>12</sup> Empire, 13 Oct. 1851; S.M.H., 22 Jan. 1852, 24, 27 Jan., 11 March 1853.

often travelling considerable distances in order to do so.

The necessity for this double employment was highlighted by a report from Oakey Creek in October 1851 that it was accorded official approval.

Great inducements are being held out by the authorities to get sheep shearers and agricultural labourers to their various pursuits. Notices of excellent wages are posted here and there along the River, and those who leave for either purpose, can register their claims, and thus secure them against inroad. A limit of four months has been fixed for the gathering in of the harvest, and the shearing unitedly.<sup>14</sup>

Official estimates of the numbers of sheep and cattle each year show that the pastoral industry did not decline in any way through the gold-rushes, but that stock increased steadily throughout the period in New South Wales. Likewise the cultivated area increased greatly, almost in proportion to the increase in population.<sup>15</sup> The statement of the Empire's Tambaroora correspondent, in 1852, that

<sup>13</sup>

Empire, 11 Oct. 1851, 29 Oct., 3 Dec. (ext. from Maitland Mercury) 1852, 19 Nov. 1853; S.M.H., 2 Nov. 1857 (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 19 Sept. 1862.

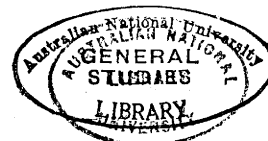
<sup>14</sup>

Empire, 13 Oct. 1851.

<sup>15</sup>

N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1851-75.

	<u>Population</u>	<u>horses</u>	<u>cattle</u>	<u>sheep</u>
Dec. 31, 1851	197,168	116,397	1,375,257	7,396,895
March 31, 1875	606,652	357,696	3,134,086	24,382,536
		<u>acres under crop</u>		
Dec. 31, 1851		153,117 $\frac{1}{4}$		
March 31, 1875		451,138 $\frac{3}{4}$		



the gold-rushes had in fact introduced more labour into  
 the interior rather than causing a general scarcity,<sup>16</sup>  
 remained in substance true even into the seventies. This  
 was partially disguised by the diversion of many into new  
 occupations, not the least considerable of which was gold-  
 digging. But however strongly the pastoralists and settlers  
 complained, they were able to find ways and means, by  
 Chinese labour or otherwise, of maintaining and even in-  
 creasing the colony's livestock population.

In those towns which enjoyed a position sufficiently  
 central to become the metropolis of a gold-digging region,  
 such as Bathurst, Braidwood, and Armidale, the rewards of  
 enterprise were worthy of the effort to attain them.  
 Profit, and that as high as possible, was the dominating  
 aim. Almost the first action of Bathurst tradesmen after  
 the beginning of the first rush was to raise their prices,  
 even before they could lean on the excuse of high carriage  
 costs from Sydney for such measures.<sup>17</sup> Nor did prices drop  
 until falling trade and keener competition forced them down.  
 This procedure was followed in each of the new gold-field  
 townships as it arose. Property values soared as men  
 struggled to obtain a share of the profits being made in

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Empire, 29 Oct. 1852.

17

Empire, 20 May 1851 (ext. from B.F.P.); S.M.H., 21 May,  
 2 July 1851.

these towns.<sup>18</sup> Old residents found themselves caught up in the inflationary whirl as rents in Bathurst increased by 12 to 25 per cent - one storekeeper reportedly being confronted with a demand for 50 per cent more than previously!<sup>19</sup> The old centres survived this early inflation, however, and under the stimulus of traffic to and from the nearby diggings they expanded and flourished,<sup>20</sup> even to the extent of repaying, in part, their debt to the diggers by whom their prosperity was founded and maintained. For example, at Mudgee in November 1852, after a report of increased building activity, it was reported: 'Many unfortunate men have been thrown on our township, without any pecuniary resources, and had it not been for the praiseworthy exertions of our respected clergymen, medical men,<sup>21</sup> and others, they must have perished from absolute want.'

Not all were so charitably disposed towards the unfortunate. Profit was still a powerful motive, and there was more than one way to achieve it. The most obvious was soon pursued, as speculators cornered supplies of wheat

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<sup>18</sup> S.M.H., 18 June 1852.

<sup>19</sup> Empire, 11 Oct. 1851.

<sup>20</sup> S.M.H., 19 June 1855 (ext. from B.F.P.).

<sup>21</sup> Empire, 9 Nov. 1852.



and flour in Bathurst and Goulburn, forcing up prices.<sup>22</sup>  
 Both the principal Sydney newspapers urged farmers to sow and harvest as much as possible in order that food supplies might be maintained,<sup>23</sup> but under the impact of the rushes production of wheat, maize, barley, oats, potatoes, and hay for 1852 fell below that of the previous year, though the decrease was not long-lasting.<sup>24</sup> In certain areas, notably around Meroo, it was claimed that agriculture was in anything but a thriving condition: '...there has been no cultivation at any of the sheep stations in this neighbourhood, where last season they had beautiful crops of wheat and hay. This is one of the results of gold digging'.<sup>25</sup> But others heeded the advice to keep to farming in preference to joining in the rushes, and some areas, especially in the Fish River and O'Connell Plains region, were reputedly doing well.<sup>26</sup> Around Mudgee, also, 'Cultivation is progressing apace; the rich and extensive flats adjoining the town and river, known as Lawson's Paddocks,

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<sup>22</sup> Empire, 20, 24 May, 4 June 1851.

<sup>23</sup> Empire, 22 Nov. 1851; S.M.H., 26 May 1851.

<sup>24</sup> N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1851-60.

<sup>25</sup> S.M.H., 12 March 1853.

<sup>26</sup> S.M.H., 27 Jan., 25 April 1853.

are being for the first time broken up by the plough and sown with wheat, and great is the encouragement in prospect for the industrious settler'. One man in this district, with 15 acres of wheat and maize, had realized £600.<sup>27</sup>

The gold-rushes undoubtedly created a demand in the interior for more food, and for more land to be taken under cultivation around the diggings to supply the need. Suitable and available areas were soon taken up in these regions, often owned and worked by successful ex-miners. Bathurst, Braidwood, and Wellington each became a centre of agriculture as well as gold digging as more and more land enclosure took place.<sup>28</sup> The Herald's ideal of a nation of small land-owning peasants<sup>29</sup> appeared to draw ever nearer to fulfilment as ex-diggers took up and worked land in the neighbourhood of their former labours, though its Braidwood correspondent was perhaps allowing this ideal to affect his judgement when, at the end of 1854, he accounted for the great decrease of the mining population in that region by alleging that the majority had been successful, were now independent, and were investing their money in small farms

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S.M.H., 27 July 1854.

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S.M.H., 15 May, 19 June, 3, 24 July (last three all ext. from B.F.P.) 1855, 29 July, 3 Aug. 1857.

29

S.M.H., 8 Oct. 1853.

in the vicinity of the diggings.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, land was taken up wherever possible by members of this class, and the gold-fields provided a ready market for their produce.<sup>31</sup> By 1858 the demand was such that the Secretary for Lands announced that proved non-auriferous land on the Sofala, Richardson's Point, and Rockhampton fields had just been advertized for sale, and that more was to follow.<sup>32</sup> Since many of the new agricultural areas were dependent upon the gold-fields to absorb their products, farmers were necessarily gamblers, for these were often subject to sudden desertion in favour of other fields which the high price of carriage would put beyond reach of the smaller farmers. The Tumut farmers in 1860-1 were fortunate indeed.

In anticipation of a fine market at Kiandra, the farmers on the rich land in the valley of the Tumut strained every nerve to put in as much wheat as they could manage. But before the harvest time came round Kiandra was deserted, and the disappointed growers were beginning to call out lustily, when the Lambing Flat fortunately turned out attractive, and gave them a market on the other side.<sup>33</sup>

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S.M.H., 6 Jan. 1855.

31

Empire, 17 April 1852 (ext. from B.F.P.); S.M.H., 1 Aug. 1859, 11 Jan. 1860, 7 June 1861.

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S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1858.

33

S.M.H., 20 March 1861.

While meat and flour were usually readily available at most gold-fields, even in the early stages, fresh vegetables were often both scarce and expensive. Consequently, on most established fields where the diggers aimed at any degree of permanency, gardens were formed around huts and cottages, and sometimes pigs, poultry, and cows were kept to vary the diet still further.<sup>34</sup> At Braidwood in January 1861 it was claimed that all settled diggers were self-sufficient in vegetables, and that 'Dairy produce is so plentiful that it is next to impossible to effect sales'.<sup>35</sup> Other fields were not so well provided, with the miners growing little for themselves, relying largely on neighbouring settlers to bring in and sell such luxuries as vegetables, fruit, and freshwater fish.<sup>36</sup> Enterprise in providing themselves with fresh food on the part of the miners was generally commended, but it was possible for them to be trapped by their own forethought. For instance, at the Peel River field, ten months after the Herald reporter had seen the establishment of gardens as evidence of

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S.M.H., 1 March, 21 June (ext. from Maitland Mercury), 7 Nov. 1855, 11 March (ext. from Goulburn Chronicle), 26 June, 22 Dec. 1857, 28 Jan., 23 Aug. 1859, 11 Jan. 1860, 9 Jan. 1861 (ext. from Armidale Express).

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S.M.H., 10, 17 Jan. 1861.

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S.M.H., 22 Dec. 1857, 17 March, 2 June, 21 July 1859.

37  
 permanent settlement, the diggers were reported to be doing poorly, but unable to move their families for fear of worsening their position. In this position they continued to struggle, just managing to exist with the aid of their gardens.<sup>38</sup>

Private gardens were of course not the only sources of vegetable supply for rural New South Wales, nor could they be with such a large itinerant population as congregated around the gold-fields. As early as February 1853 a party of Germans was reported to be engaged in market-gardening in Albury.<sup>39</sup> Six months later the first recorded instance of similar enterprise on a gold-field began at Tambaroora, where Commissioner C.H. Green granted William Wade two acres of land to grow vegetables, which were in very short supply in that district. It is interesting to note that James M'Eachern in this case turned his persuasive powers to useful, rather than destructive, purpose, in urging Green to agree to make the grant.<sup>40</sup> The garden flourished, and by mid-1854 Wade was reported to be making

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37 S.M.H., 11 Jan. 1860.

38 S.M.H., 9 Nov. 1860.

39 S.M.H., 5 March 1853.

40 S.M.H., 11 Aug. 1853.

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 large profits. The idea spread to the Turon and Braid-  
 42 wood, and to Rocky River, where it was urged that 'Shep-  
 herds and others who have facilities for growing vegetables  
 should keep in view that there is always a ready and pro-  
 fitable market to be met with here for anything green'.  
 43  
 During the 1860s market gardening became substantially the  
 preserve of the Chinese, who brought their skill and  
 patience in cultivation to the service of digger and towns-  
 44 man all over the colony.

The interests of gold-seeker and pastoralist were perhaps more likely to clash than those of any two other groups. Both wanted the use of the same land. Digging and washing operations did not improve the already scanty water supplies. Both sides looked to the government for protection and, after several restrictive measures apparently favouring the pastoralist, a startling proclamation was issued in November 1851, seeming to put the whole support of the government behind the cause of the diggers.

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S.M.H., 8 Feb. (ext. from B.F.P.), 30 June 1854.

42

S.M.H., 22 Aug., 20 Sept. 1855.

43

S.M.H., 8 Dec. 1856 (ext. from Armidale Express).

44

S.M.H., 13 April 1864 (ext. from Western Examiner),  
 13 Jan. (ext. from Deniliquin Chronicle), 16 Aug. 1865,  
 4 Sept. 1866 (ext. from Burrangong Argus), 8 Oct. 1867 (ext.  
 from B.F.P.), 9 June 1868 (ext. from Bathurst Times).

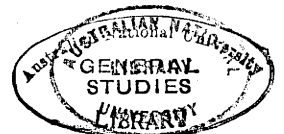
His Excellency the Governor-General directs it to be notified, that inconvenience being felt from the occupancy under lease, in terms of the Regulations of the 29th March, 1848, of such portions of the Crown Lands as are now being worked under licenses for digging gold, it has become necessary to terminate the leases in all such cases as shall be reported by the Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner to be desirable for securing to the Licensed Miners the undisturbed prosecution of their employment. On receiving such reports the necessary notice will be given to the Lessees by the proper Officer, of one month; and the sum paid by such Lessees for the lands resumed, or the proportion payable for the remainder of the term, will be refunded, as provided for in the Regulations referred to. In acting on this regulation, no greater interference with the interests of the Lessees will be sanctioned, than may be absolutely necessary to ensure the object contemplated.<sup>45</sup>

The practical effects of this proclamation are not clear, and no further mention is made of it in the press, but resumption of leases does not appear to have been the general practice. In 1864, and again in 1871, claims were made to the government by pastoralists for compensation for damage inflicted on their leased runs by gold-diggers.<sup>46</sup> On private lands, as at Peel River, Frederick's Valley, Major's and Bell's Creeks digging was permitted under pre-stated conditions.<sup>47</sup> The controversy between digger

<sup>45</sup> S.M.H., 27 Nov. 1851.

<sup>46</sup> S.M.H., 25 May 1864, 10 May 1871.

<sup>47</sup> Empire, 17 Sept. 1851, 23 Jan., 15 Nov. (ext. from Maitland Mercury) 1852; S.M.H., 5 Dec. 1851, 30 Sept., 26 Oct. 1852.



and pastoralist was still at its height in August 1852,<sup>48</sup> when in the one issue of the Herald two letters appeared. One, from 'A Suffering Squatter', bewailed the losses which gold-diggers inflicted upon pastoralists.

It is but too palpable the lands from which men are drawing such great riches are virtually the property of the colonists, the diggers of which should be subjected to strict fiscal laws, securing not only a rental, but also a seigniorage upon the metal abstracted, equal to an ample provision to ensure a large permanent income to be applied to the importation of labour to meet the emergency that has so unexpectedly overtaken us....

Very different were the demands of Gideon S. Lang, a prominent figure in early gold-fields administration and politics, in his letter.

The settlers should hold their runs subject to the operations of the gold diggers; reserving only their huts, yards, and right of way to them, and a waterhole for the use of each where it can be done without interrupting the operations of the diggers.

It was fortunate indeed that not all squatters felt their sufferings so acutely, and that all diggers were not so conscious of their moral rights, or the colony might have witnessed more violent scenes on the gold-fields.

Pastoral production did not, in fact, decrease as a result of the rushes.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, as a Herald

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<sup>48</sup> S.M.H., 21 Aug. 1852.

<sup>49</sup> N.S.W. Statistical Registers and Blue Books, 1850-75.



leader writer claimed,

In the three main articles of our pastoral production, wool, tallow, and hides, the year 1852 shows results superior to those of any of the five preceding years.... Here are incontestable proofs that in N.S.W., at any rate, whatever may be the case in Victoria, the gold fields have caused no serious detriment to our pastoral interests.<sup>50</sup>

Farmers and pastoralists whose land was near a gold-field soon learned to appreciate the opportunities this proximity afforded them as suppliers of meat and grain to the newly-opened gold-field markets, at higher prices than they could formerly have expected.<sup>51</sup> Some profited with even less effort by sub-letting sections of their property in the vicinity of a gold-field to butchers and others who required land on which to graze beasts awaiting slaughter.<sup>52</sup> Fattening for the Victorian gold-fields market seems to have been a favoured enterprise throughout southern New South Wales, and from Bathurst, Goulburn, Forbes, and other centres, beef and working cattle and horses were raised and sent south all through the gold-rush period.<sup>53</sup> A Herald

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S.M.H., 1 Jan. 1853.

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S.M.H., 14 April 1853, 31 Jan. 1861, 17 June 1862.

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S.M.H., 4 May 1868.

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Empire, 9 June (ext. from B.F.P.), 10, 17 Nov. (ext. from B.F.P.) 1852; S.M.H., 28 Sept. 1865.

leader in 1863 even claimed that Victorian gold had been responsible for the opening up of south-western New South Wales by providing such an attractive market as to induce more pastoralists to take up much new land in the plains.<sup>54</sup>

The question of land occupation and acquisition was not a new one at the time of Hargraves's discovery in 1851, nor was it solved by 1874. Gold neither created nor eliminated the problem. Nevertheless, it was a very real problem to many who, coming into the interior to dig, wished to stay as farmers or pastoralists. By the 1847 Order in Council dealing with land acquisition, squatters had gained a considerable security of tenure, with rights of pre-emption over much of the 'intermediate' and 'unsettled' lands in which the gold-fields were later to be situated. A Committee of the Legislative Council, with Robert Lowe as Chairman, reported in 1847 that the Order in Council was fundamentally wrong, for it had sacrificed all other classes of settlers to the large squatter.<sup>55</sup> But the system remained unchanged for a further fourteen years. The popular cry was still aimed at 'Unlocking our public lands', and the major newspapers continued their agitation in this

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S.M.H., 21 Jan. 1863.

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S.H. Roberts, History of Australian land settlement, pp.186-8.

direction until their wishes were fulfilled in 1861.<sup>56</sup>

'Successful' diggers were prominent in the discussions as to the need for increased and easier access to land, either as principals or as subjects,<sup>57</sup> and complaint was frequently put forward that only disability from buying land caused them to waste their money in dissipation.<sup>58</sup> Not all, however, were unable to buy land. Settlers at the Wentworth Field who engaged in part-time digging were reported to have improved their material circumstances so considerably as to be able to buy 40 and 50 acre patches of land.<sup>59</sup> At Braidwood, where prices of land rose as a result of the gold discoveries,<sup>60</sup> it was claimed to be the 'duty of Government' to encourage a desire to purchase small pieces of land,<sup>61</sup> and it was later claimed that a majority of the diggers had in fact been successful and invested their money in this manner.<sup>62</sup>

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S.M.H., 26 March 1853, 21 April 1855, 16 Sept. 1856, 11 Dec. 1857, 26, 27, 29 Oct. 1860.

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S.M.H., 28 Jan. 1852, 14 Aug. 1855 (ext. from B.F.P.).

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Empire, 1 Dec. 1852; S.M.H., 1 Dec. 1860 (ext. from Yass Courier).

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S.M.H., 17 April 1852 (ext. from B.F.P.).

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S.M.H., 18 June 1852, 12 Oct. 1853.

61

S.M.H., 23 April 1853.

62

S.M.H., 6 Jan. 1855.

The land question was thrust into gold-fields politics in a rousing election speech made in 1856 at Hanging Rock by Gideon S. Lang,<sup>63</sup> but no move was made to improve the system until late the following year when a Crown Lands Bill was withdrawn after extensive debate in the Assembly.<sup>64</sup> 1860 saw the next attempt, and after more than a year of struggle,<sup>65</sup> Robertson finally managed to force through his Crown Lands Alienation and Occupation Acts in October 1861.<sup>66</sup> Diggers, like all other classes, were in theory beneficiaries from these Acts, and many of them presumably became free-selectors. For once land was available to them at a price they could afford. The system, however, was not perfect. From the Peel River, as early as February 1862, came a complaint that

Free selection, which has been the cry and curse of the country for the last two years or more, is but a dead letter among the working classes here; for the very reason that they have not got the means to carry them through. The only ones likely to benefit by free selection will be the settlers in the vicinity of Crown lands. The only land clause that could benefit the body of miners would

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S.M.H., 24 March 1856.

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S.M.H., 19, 24, 25, 26, 27 Nov., 3, 4, 11 Dec. 1857.

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S.M.H., 30 Sept. 1859, 4 July, 25, 26, 27, 29 Oct. 1860.

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S.M.H., 4 Nov. 1861; Roberts, pp.222-3.

be one that would open small allotments of ground on old established gold-fields; not township allotments, but similar to the suburban land clause, where a man with a family around him might make himself a permanent home - then between mining and cultivating his piece of ground he might find a comfortable living for his family; and also employment for many of them, which otherwise must be doomed to a life of idleness. I believe that free selection extends to the gold-fields in some shape, but how, and in what shape, I think it would puzzle the Secretary of Lands himself to tell.<sup>67</sup>

The same cry was still issuing from the same quarter seven months later.<sup>68</sup> Free-selection and digging came into conflict early in 1867 at Emu Creek, where a government delay in proclaiming the gold-field enabled William Redman, an attorney of the Supreme Court and formerly a member of the Legislative Assembly, to select 100 acres within the boundaries of the field. He enclosed a number of mining claims, the owners of which he then attempted to evict. He was defeated in court, and his attempt showed that the Land Acts were indeed intended and designed for honest men, and not for rogues.<sup>69</sup>

The general pattern for digger settlement appears to have been similar to that described at Mudgee in 1868.

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S.M.H., 18 Feb. 1862.

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S.M.H., 19 Sept. 1862.

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S.M.H., 1, 2 Feb., 8, 11 March 1867; Roberts, p.226.

Those remaining on the old fields are they who have made homes for themselves, and who are gold-diggers, farmers and gardeners combined. They now have a chance of extending their operations in farming, as a great deal of the land has been thrown open to free-selection. The opening of the whole of the Meroo to free-selection is anxiously expected by many would-be purchasers of places they already inhabit, and have cultivated for years.<sup>70</sup>

This was not new, for even ten years earlier it was reported from the Upper Turon field that many of the diggers were settlers from the Blue Mountains, seeking gold only in such time as they could spare from farming.<sup>71</sup> Free-selection became widespread in suitable areas as miners and others took up land. Around Grenfell the selector interest was active enough in 1871 to form a Progress Committee urging, among other things, the establishment of a Land Office.<sup>72</sup> By April 1874 selectors had taken up as much as 20,000 acres in this district.<sup>73</sup> There is no evidence, however, to suggest the extent to which diggers took up land once their demands for easier acquisition had been met.

Although the gold-rushes did cause New South Wales to look inwards to the developments taking place in her own

<sup>70</sup>

S.M.H., 1 Feb. 1868.

<sup>71</sup>

S.M.H., 14 Dec. 1858.

<sup>72</sup>

S.M.H., 12 June 1871.

<sup>73</sup>

S.M.H., 29 April 1874.

interior, and did stimulate the rapid population of what had been waste or sparsely populated pastoral land,<sup>74</sup> the effects were not so marked or so permanent as in Victoria. The digging centres were so scattered, and so liable to sudden migrations, that as a Herald leader in 1867 said, 'None of our gold-fields have as yet given us a great inland township, but they have given us villages which, if concentrated, would make a great township'.<sup>75</sup> A description in the same newspaper, eight years earlier, of an exhausted gold-field with scant population, adds to the picture.

These villages must grow with the necessities of the district, and any effort to force them into an unnatural importance will recoil upon the speculators, and result in failure. Movements are occasionally made to get particular localities proclaimed as townships, which sometimes originate in the desire of certain parties to dispose of property to the best advantage when it has ceased to be profitable. Inland towns in a non-manufacturing country must be called into existence by the necessities of the inhabitants; they are the children, not the parents of agriculture.<sup>76</sup>

Gold gave men an interest in the interior, and it is most probable that the experience of Nundle, where 'most of the settlers and farmers are men who have earned their

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<sup>74</sup> S.M.H., 5 April, 17 May 1856.

<sup>75</sup> S.M.H., 16 Feb. 1867.

<sup>76</sup> S.M.H., 17 March 1859.

comfortable little homesteads by sweat and toil amongst the creeks and gullies of this auriferous region', was not uncommon.<sup>77</sup> Gold did establish towns, many of which remained after the gold was gone, such as Nundle, Forbes, Young, Grenfell, and others, but closer rural settlement should perhaps be accounted more to the credit of the 1861 Land Acts than to the gold-rushes, which at best were temporary and transitory. Gold stimulated increased immigration, alleviating labour shortages and helping to swell rapidly the colony's permanent population. It brought too the problem of Chinese immigration on a large scale. It caused companies to increase rural transport facilities, but indirectly caused the harassing rise of bushranging in the sixties, which disrupted them. In themselves, the gold-rushes could not have enriched New South Wales permanently. They were the immediate cause rather than the means for its rapid development in the second half of the century. They pointed to Australia, and here immigrants came; they pointed inland, and there adventurers went; they pointed out agricultural land, and farmers settled and stayed. Gold was the catalyst, unchanging and of relatively little value in itself, which transformed the interior of New South Wales.

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<sup>77</sup>

S.M.H., 11 Jan. 1860.



## CONCLUSION

New South Wales had been fortunate in having before her in 1851 the example and warning of California. Australia was equally fortunate that her first rush should occur in the oldest and most stable of the colonies. As a result, Victoria, young and raw, had at least some precedent to guide her when the revelation of her own wealth transformed her into the goal of the world's adventurers. The first contribution of the mother colony was a code of administration and conduct of gold-fields affairs which Victoria first adopted and then adapted to meet her own needs. The tradition of paternal government which had been the mark of development in New South Wales for the past sixty years was therefore perpetuated not only in her own gold-fields, but in the more extensive and important fields of Victoria.

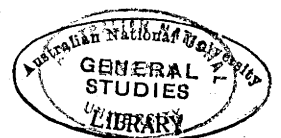
It was to be the last time New South Wales was to lead the way in the story of Australian gold. Victoria's greater gold endowments, and her consequently greater attraction of potential diggers, led to the south taking

over the initiative. Gold always meant more to Victoria than to New South Wales, and after the attainment of responsible government her diggers had potentially a greater power than their colleagues in the north. Victoria preceded New South Wales in most reforms of gold-fields administration, such as the abolition of the licence system, and also in the passing of the popular will into legislation, as in the restriction of Chinese immigration. Most appraisals of the results of the Australian gold-rushes are therefore naturally overshadowed by Victoria, and this has to be borne in mind even when reading the accounts given by Morrell, Shann, Portus, Churchward, and Ward, who are among the best writers on the subject. All are so seduced by the predominance of the Victorian diggings as to ignore almost entirely the story of New South Wales. They are painting on the wider canvas of Australia, and to them the story of Australian gold is basically an account of events south of the Murray. And so, basically, it is.

What, then, was the contribution of New South Wales? Perhaps this may be summed up in two words - White Australia. With the anti-Chinese Henry Parkes in control of one of Sydney's two principal daily newspapers it may have been that the Chinese question would have received equal prominence even had the colony possessed no gold-fields. But

it was gold which drew most of them to Australia, and it was the diggers who forcibly convinced the government that they should not stay. Although Victoria had moved first to restrict Chinese immigration in 1855, it was without doubt the insurrection at Lambing Flat in 1861 which underlined the 'Chinese menace' in the popular mind. Total exclusion could not, for reasons of state, be considered yet, but there was no mistaking the determination that New South Wales was not to be considered a large-scale recipient of Chinese.

If the initial administrative pattern and the anti-Chinese movement were the only contributions of the New South Wales gold-rushes to Australian history as a whole, the effects of these rushes upon the colony itself were more extensive. Immigration was of course stimulated, and to the interior went many who would otherwise have spent their entire lives in Sydney or the coastal regions. The increased volume of traffic in the interior led to the extension of road transport and postal facilities, though not to an improvement of roads. New regions were opened up to closer settlement, though few gold towns were to remain as permanently large population centres. Outside the material sphere, this period showed an increasing tendency towards democracy. This cannot be attributed solely



to the gold-fields, though there is no doubt that a form of fundamental democracy existed there, encouraged by the government in the shape of local courts. There was hardly any formal party organization in New South Wales at this time, and no real division except between conservative and liberal - with these words being used adjectivally rather than as nouns. It is fairly safe to claim that the inspiration towards Australian democracy came from sources other than the gold-fields. Until the more extensive development of large-scale company mining in the 1870s there was little organization of any description among the miners, and the only political tendency they showed was apathy. Democracy undoubtedly developed during this period, but the gold-fields were not responsible. The only political issues which interested the miners were those immediately affecting their own interests, and it is significant that it was the Chinese question rather than any argument between free-trade and protection which roused them to positive action.

In the evolution of a colonial ethos the diggers of New South Wales played no mean part. Ward claims that the fundamental theme in the development of a national 'legend' is the desire of the newcomer to conform with and be assimilated into society as he found it.<sup>1</sup> To a large extent

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<sup>1</sup>

Ward, p.107.

this was so. It was a great disadvantage to be easily discernible as a new-chum in a society which affected to despise inexperience. It is therefore very likely that, though immigration during the gold period gave immigrants the benefits of large numbers, their lack of cohesiveness led them to imitate rather than initiate, and that the pattern of the independent, freedom-loving, noble-savage-type digger is a direct development of a similar theme centred on pre-gold bushmen. Certainly it was largely mythical. Just as the bushman legends omit mention of the poverty-stricken shepherd and his wife vegetating in a miserable shack in the bush, so the digger legend leaves out all account of the married digger on an old field who manages to feed his family only as a result of combining small-scale farming with gold-digging. The traditional digger, hard-living, hard-drinking, hard-swearing, free-spending, certainly existed. He was to be found either in the van of a new rush, or far ahead of it, prospecting. According to contemporary reports there was no lack of such characters. But New South Wales was, as Rodman Paul suggests, possessed of diggers more law-abiding than those of California.<sup>2</sup> They appear to have been quieter than those

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<sup>2</sup>

Paul, pp.166-7.

in Victoria. The typical digger may have been rough in his style of living, and careless in his dress, but he was not, in New South Wales, a major law-breaker. The typical digger of 1861, in fact, was not a man around whom the colonists would wish to build heroic legends. The typical digger of 1861 in New South Wales was Chinese!

Perhaps the most striking of the attitudes which Russel<sup>3</sup> Ward attributes to the digger is a hatred of the police. Certainly the nature of their duty did not serve to make them more popular with the unruly element which was present on every gold-field, and licence-inspection in the early years did not help either. The attack upon the police at Lambing Flat in 1861 would also seem to bear out allegations of hostility. Moreover, there was considerable opposition to and hindrance of the police in the south and west, where settlers often refused to co-operate in efforts to bring to justice the gangs of bushrangers which sometimes included their own sons. On most occasions, however, the police performed their duties with competence, and letters and reports in newspapers seem to show that their efforts did not go unappreciated. Theirs was a difficult task in times when the gold-fields attracted more than

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<sup>3</sup>

Ward, p.119.

their share of criminals and parasites, and it would seem that Ward's conviction that the police were universally hated - though in fairness it must be allowed that he was speaking also of the more turbulent colony of Victoria - owes much to personal prejudice.

Before 1851 New South Wales had been the leading colony of the Australian group, and Sydney had been the leading city. As a result of the gold discoveries both had for many years to be content with second place, though her progress, despite the shadow cast by Victoria's surge forward, was by no means unimpressive. By 1874 her population had more than trebled, from 187,243 to 584,278,<sup>4</sup> and the increase had been absorbed fairly comfortably. Her politicians, after eighteen years of responsible government, were maturing, and her future was reasonably secure. Gold had speeded up the growth of the colony, and had turned the thoughts of her people inward to the west, bringing about a greater awareness of her potential. The golden age of New South Wales had not glittered like that of Victoria, but it had seen a steady and positive advance. Victoria's ladder may have been of solid gold, and that of New South Wales possessed only of golden rungs, but the latter

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<sup>4</sup>

Figures from 1851 census and 1874 Statistical Register.

provided no less sure a means of climbing, and was, if anything, more flexible.



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