

A Good Sheep Run.
Letters from New South Wales in Scottish newspapers between 1820 and 1850
with potential to influence decisions on emigration.

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Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to contribute to ongoing historical research into migration to and settlement in Australia by Scots. It achieves this by identifying and examining letters sent from the colonies in New South Wales which were printed in historic Scottish newspapers between 1820 and 1850. In examining the material, this thesis argues that the letters had potential to influence emigration decisions by Scots.

The study shows some of the ways in which New South Wales was reported in the Scottish press and compares those reports with conditions in Scotland at the time. The comparisons and analyses of the letters, with consideration of their authors and likely readers as well as the newspapers in which they were printed demonstrate that the letters did have potential to influence emigration decisions.

Its particular contribution to knowledge arises from demonstrating how mostly private letters which became publicly available through publication in newspapers had potential to influence emigrants' decisions about moving to Australia. Rather than claiming direct evidence of the publication of particular letters as having influenced emigration, it shows how reporting of conditions in Australia when set into a context of contemporary events and conditions in Scotland had potential to influence decisions. It is grounded in the body of historical research about colonial Australia and sits within this Australian historiographical context. Given the motivations and attractions of Scots to colonial Australia this thesis also engages with techniques and theoretical approaches associated with Scottish diaspora studies, an area of research that often emphasises other Scottish migration patterns to Canada, New Zealand and the USA. When considered together both of these historiographical approaches lend themselves to primary source material analysis and a methodological approach that this doctoral study uses to examine the motivations of Scots who migrated to colonial Australia.

Statement of authorship

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis. No editorial assistance has been received in the production of this thesis. This thesis does not include material with copyright provisions or requiring copyright approvals.

This certifies that this thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography and footnotes.

Graham Hannaford
Canberra
1 June 2020

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This thesis was written while I lived on lands where the traditional custodians are the Ngunnawal people, and I record my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

The primary source material used in this thesis has been drawn from the British Library's British Newspaper Archive which has endorsed use of the letters in transcribed form. The Library retains copyright on the original images. I have received assistance over several years from staff at the National Library of Australia in Canberra who have been unfailingly helpful in meeting my many requests for access to material and in suggesting further items for consideration. The Library's Trove has proven to be invaluable as a source of information and reference. Other archives as shown in the bibliography have helped to bring this work to fruition.

I am indebted to my academic supervisors. Professor Keir Reeves welcomed me into the CRCAH community of Federation University Australia and has encouraged and guided this work. Associate Professor Fred Cahir has helped me to a better and more balanced understanding and appreciation of the parts of the history of Australia which concern the interactions between the original custodians of the land and the arriving Europeans. Over a number of years I have benefited immensely from the rigorous approach to much of my written work by Dr Elizabeth Ritchie of the Centre for History at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland. To each and all of these, I say thank you for your encouragement, support and assistance.

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1 June 2020

Abbreviations

AACo.	The Australian Agricultural Company
AJCP	Australian joint copying project [microform]: microfilm of material in the Public Record Office, London, and manuscript material in other repositories, relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific filmed under the auspices of the National Library of Australia and the State Library of New South Wales.
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSA	<i>The New Statistical Account of Scotland by the Ministers of the Respective Parishes, Under the Superintendence of a Committee of the Society for the Benefit of the Sons and Daughters of the Clergy.</i> (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1845)
OSA	<i>The Statistical Account of Scotland, Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes, by Sir John Sinclair, Bart.</i> (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791-1799) (“The Old Statistical Account”)

Introduction

The primary aim of this thesis is to contribute to ongoing historical research into migration to and settlement in Australia by Scots. It achieves this by identifying and analysing approximately seventy letters, or extracts from them, or other items sent from the colonies in New South Wales which were printed in historic Scottish newspapers between 1820 and 1850. Nearly a decade ago, Malcolm Prentis made a progress report on that historical research, identifying a relatively late start to much of the work.¹ By identifying and analysing a hitherto under-utilised source of primary material, this thesis adds to the corpus of knowledge of Australian colonial settlement and of Scottish migration. In addition to letters, a small number of other items have been taken from the Scottish press of the period and included to provide coverage of significant events in New South Wales in the period under examination.² The majority of the letters can be classified as private while a few were clearly intended for publication.

In examining the material, the question this thesis asks is whether it had potential to influence emigration decisions by Scots.

This doctoral study shows some of the ways in which New South Wales was reported in the Scottish press. The central argument in this thesis is that by analysing these reports and then comparing the conditions described in the colony with those being experienced by readers in Scotland it is clear that the correspondence had potential to influence emigration decisions. It is impossible to prove that any of this material directly influenced people to migrate to Australia or prevented them from doing so. However when the material is considered in the context of conditions in Scotland at the time, its potential to influence decisions can be identified readily. The historical investigation in this thesis acknowledges that the reasons why Scots emigrated to New South Wales and then wrote letters to family and friends remaining behind are almost as numerous as the emigrants themselves. While some Scots responded to having been pushed out of their previous

¹ Malcolm Prentis, “‘It’s a Long Way to the Bottom’: The Insignificance of ‘the Scots’ in Australia”, *Immigrants & Minorities* (2011), 29: 2, 195.

² Transcripts of the letters and other items in Scottish newspapers which are examined have been made by and are in the possession of the author. They are available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gRi-1-7oqXEeVZqyZ2gBcm6USRN0yVpF/view?usp=sharing>.

habitations by emigrating, others responded to the pull of opportunities abroad. In many cases, both sets of factors operated.

This thesis adds to the existing body of knowledge about factors influencing the emigration of Scots to Australia. Its particular contribution to knowledge arises from its focus of using primarily private letters about conditions in the various parts of the colony of New South Wales. These later became publicly available as a source of information by virtue of their publication in Scottish newspapers. Rather than claiming direct evidence of the publication of particular letters as having influenced emigration, this thesis demonstrates how reporting of conditions in Australia, when set into a context of contemporary events and conditions in Scotland had potential to influence decisions. These are push-pull factors of emigration. As such, the thesis straddles the historical fields of both Australian colonial history and Scottish diasporic studies, drawing links between the two.

Nothing in this thesis contradicts any of those who have written of Scottish emigration to Australia. Instead it adds to the existing literature on the colonial experience in New South Wales as well as emigration from Scotland, providing some close details not previously available to Australian and Scottish historians. To use Peter Novick's metaphor, it is the intention of this thesis that the study of these letters will become bricks added to the edifices of knowledge of Australian colonial settlement. This includes conditions which may have influenced the emigration of Scots to Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century.³

Unlike those sent to Australia as convicts or in the military by the British government of the day, the Scots who chose to emigrate to New South Wales migrated as free settlers. Nevertheless, they were subject to circumstances which influenced their decisions. Those circumstances were both an acknowledgment of conditions in Scotland and prospects for the future. Whether honest or biased in some way, the reports described the conditions awaiting immigrants of various classes in the colony. There is little direct evidence in the letters of the motivation behind the writers' descriptions of how they viewed conditions

³ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "objectivity question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.

in the colony although other sources do provide some indication of the accuracy of reports. In some cases it is possible to speculate on why circumstances were described as they were but not in all cases.

It was mostly not until Governor Lachlan Macquarie (1 January 1810 — 15 February 1822), with his Scottish regiment and the Scots officials in his entourage, had been in the colony for a time that impressions of Australia and its prospects were conveyed back in letters written to friends and relations at home in Scotland. Some of those letters were published in newspapers of the time.⁴ The extent of the influence of the letters is difficult to gauge, but it is recognised as being probably an important factor in providing information for those contemplating emigration.⁵ Writing of the experience of emigration from Scourie in north west Sutherland between 1841 and 1855, Eric Richards commented how “[b]eyond the goad of destitution, the critical factors included the flow of news from previous emigrants. ... Emigrant letters enhanced the promise of emigration”.⁶ More broadly, it was not only destitute Highlanders who reacted to news of conditions in other countries including America or Canada, Australia or elsewhere in the British empire and information in the public press provided part of that news.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis investigates how New South Wales was portrayed over time and the issues for potential emigrants from Scotland identified in material captured in the study. By necessity much of that material appears to be narrative but fragmentary. Letters are examined mostly in the sequence in which they were printed. Most letters and items examined contain material of interest under more than one head of investigation and often the letters do not fit neatly under discrete headings.

⁴ Eric Richards, ‘Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914’ in R. A. Cage (ed.) *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750 – 1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 119.

⁵ David S MacMillan, *Scotland and Australia 1788 – 1850: Emigration, Commerce and Investment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 26.

⁶ Eric Richards, ‘Highland Emigration in the Age of Malthus: Scourie 1841 – 55’, *Northern Scotland* 2, 2011, 75.

Chapter one examines the extent of properties and the size of flocks and herds and considers whether this would have been attractive to Scots considering emigration. It includes some issues of dispossession of rural populations in Scotland and also touches briefly on some of the issues of dispossession of the Indigenous peoples of New South Wales. As a first chapter, it is mostly here that letter writers and recipients are identified from information available in or deduced from the letters. It is also where some assessments on the nature of the newspapers being quoted are made.

Chapter two reports the ways in which land in the colony came to be taken, granted or bought and considers whether this could have been attractive for potential emigrants. Government attempts to regulate the expansion of the colony and to derive revenue from the sale of land brought settlers into conflict with the governor and this is reflected in some letters in the press, potentially impacting on emigration decisions.

Chapter three recognises that farming in the many areas of colonial Australia involved significantly different approaches to farming in Scotland. Not the least of these differences was the necessity for close watching of sheep by shepherds. Droughts on a scale unimagined in Scotland also impacted on the viability of pastoral pursuits in the colony. Again these issues were reflected in letters sent from the colony to family and friends in Britain before those letters found their way into the newspapers. Reports of differences in the climate in Australia compared to that of Scotland would have been of great interest to anyone contemplating an agricultural or pastoral future in the colony and some recorded data allows the climate in New South Wales to be compared with that of Scotland.

Chapter four examines paid employment in New South Wales. Evidence of employment conditions and opportunities in the colony would have been of great interest for some in Scotland and these opportunities could have impacted on decisions by potential emigrants. This chapter concerns itself with how employment conditions in the colony were reported in the Scottish press, including issues such as wages, rations and housing. Prices of commodities were frequently commented upon and this was clearly important when considering the purchasing power of the wages on offer. The chapter also considers other issues concerning remuneration, including mentions of the trades and professions often desperately required in the colony and, for some settlers, the relevance of former occupations.

In the period covered in this study, New South Wales was rapidly evolving from a convict settlement into a society in which many of the aspects of a settled society were emerging. Chapter five evaluates the social issues apparent from the letters sent home. These include morality; children and educational opportunities in New South Wales; general relations with the Aboriginal people; retention of former links while in the colony; and access to opportunities for denominational worship using a language of choice (for some this was Gaelic). In a colony where European males vastly outnumbered European females, the gender imbalance was frequently mentioned. Some of these gender specific issues for women and their prospects in the colony are considered here. Poor matrimonial prospects for many men were also remarked upon. The opinions and advice from married women emigrants are mostly absent from this study because only a few letters from this class of emigrants were captured in the material disclosed in the historical Scottish newspapers providing the primary source material for this thesis. Mention was also made of tensions arising from sexual relations between Aboriginal women and European men. It was rare for newspapers in either the colony or Scotland to make any mention of sexual relations between Aboriginal men and European women and what existed was in terms of rape and violence, possibly in retaliation for what was suffered by Aboriginal women at the hands of European men.⁷ All of these matters had potential to influence emigration decisions.

Any study of conditions in the colony at this time would be incomplete without considering how European settlers considered their safety and reports of safety are dealt with in Chapter six. The issues include concerns for safety on the voyage from Britain to the colony; safety in remote locations or when travelling within the colony; bushrangers; and friendly or hostile interactions with the Aboriginal peoples.⁸ These issues would have been prominent in the minds of potential emigrants. Any mention in the Scottish press of safety in the colony had potential to influence migration decisions.

⁷ For examples, see 'Rape and Attempt to Murder, by the Aborigines', *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 23 February 1848, 2; 'Abduction of a Black Lubra by Two White Men', *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 August 1850, 2.

⁸ "Bushranger": a bandit or criminal who hid in the bush and led a predatory life. *The Macquarie Dictionary*, second revision, 1982, 266-7.

Finally, the emerging themes are drawn together and summarised in the conclusion that emphasises the way various strands of information flowing back to readers in Scotland had the potential to influence emigration decisions. Where emigration was a likely option, emigrants had to consider whether this was to be by the long voyage to New South Wales or perhaps by taking one of the shorter options of moving to the Cape Colony or to America or British North America (Canada), or even elsewhere in the empire such as India. This thesis leaves open for further study a wider investigation into other agents of influence which had been brought to bear on emigrant Scots during the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as in-depth case studies on some of the individuals identified in the letters considered in this thesis.

“New South Wales”

In the earlier part of the period between 1820 and 1850, the official territory of New South Wales included the island of Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania) where British settlement had commenced in 1803. The legal separation of that colony commenced with the appointment of Colonel Arthur as Lieutenant Governor in 1823. Even if many reports emphasised the differences between Van Diemen’s Land and the colony based around Sydney, for many intending or prospective migrants, that distinction would be either unknown or irrelevant. If proof were needed of this, then the *Inverness Courier* provided it in July 1840.⁹ Under the heading ‘New South Wales’ the paper printed extracts from two letters which had come into its possession. One was from Western Australia which had been an established colony by then for well over a decade and the other came from Van Diemen’s Land. Although the two colonies were more than two thousand miles and many days sailing apart, with vastly different climates and conditions, in Britain the label New South Wales was applied generically and indiscriminately.

Similarly the *South Australian Colonisation Act* had been passed by the British Parliament in 1834 and the Proclamation of the Colony was read on site on 28 December 1836, but New South Wales was still used in Britain to name that territory. Matthew Flinders had used *Terra Australis* to describe the entire continent and adjacent colonies and Macquarie was to champion adoption of Australia as the name of the entire country.¹⁰

⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 2.

¹⁰ Despatch from Macquarie to Under Secretary Goulburn, 21 December 1821. Fredk Watson (ed.)

However the term New South Wales continued to be used to describe all of the British colonial presence in the antipodes in the period under consideration. To the extent that letters in the Scottish press made particular mention of the Port Phillip colony or Gipps' Land (which together evolved into the modern state of Victoria), South Australia, the Swan River colony (now Western Australia), Moreton Bay (now Queensland) or Van Diemen's Land as distinct from New South Wales, relevant developments in all colonies are explored as part of this study. At this time, the Governor in Sydney was responsible for affairs in New Zealand/Aotearoa and some letters in the study described conditions there. None of the letters in this study originated from Norfolk Island which was a penal settlement garrisoned from Sydney. Each of the separate colonies can be identified in Figure 1 below.

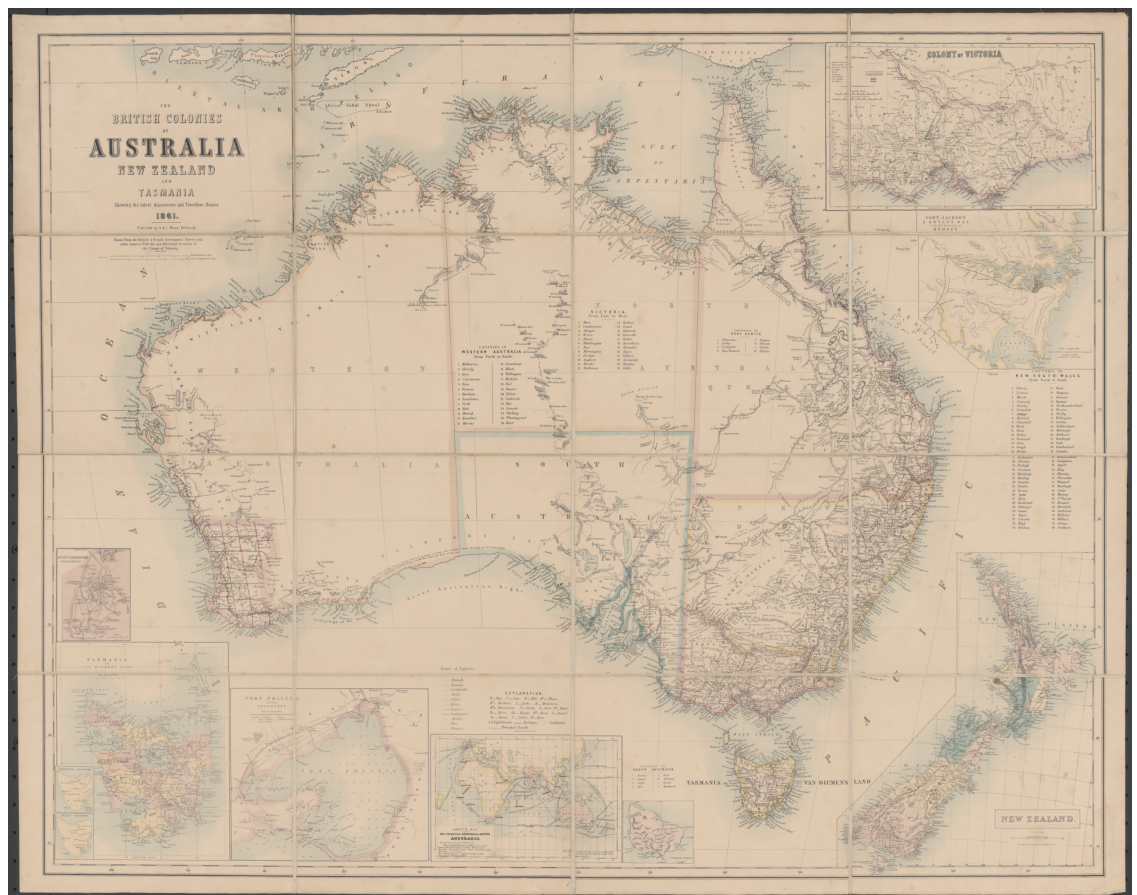


Figure 1: The British Colonies of Australia and New Zealand.¹¹

Historical Records of Australia, Series I: Governors' Despatches to and from England (HRA), Vol. 9 (Sydney, 1914), 747.

¹¹ Adam and Charles Black (Firm). 1861, *The British colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania shewing the latest discoveries and travellers' routes [cartographic material]* <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231349636>>.

Sheep

The first arrival of large numbers of sheep in any area always caused significant changes in that area. As early as 1802 “the hill country of Perth, Dumbarton and Argyll [which includes estates of the Campbell Dukes of Argyll] and the entire west coast from Oban to Lochbroom were already under sheep”.¹² “It was industrialisation [in Britain] which drove the demand for wool which in turn stimulated the creation of large scale sheep walks in the late eighteenth century” and this demand for wool continued into the nineteenth century in Scotland and Australia.¹³ Sometimes the arrival of sheep, with the consequent need to clear the existing inhabitants from areas to make way for extensive sheep walks was accompanied by riots. One of the more infamous of these occurred at Culrain in Easter Ross in the spring of 1820 when small tenants tried to resist removal from the Munro of Novar estates by agents of their landlord. With women at the forefront of the protest the authorities were humiliated and eventually required military forces to suppress the rebellion.¹⁴

The violent situation in the Highlands of Scotland in 1820 stands in stark contrast to events five years later in the colony of New South Wales. This provides a sound introduction to comparisons between events in New South Wales and in Scotland. In 1825, under orders from another Campbell – this time Robert Campbell, merchant of Sydney Cove – the Scottish shepherd James Ainslie brought Campbell’s flock of over 700 sheep from Bathurst to the Limestone Plains without overt resistance from the Indigenous custodians of the land. The reactions of those custodians, unfamiliar with the

¹² T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters’ War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 34. See also James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1995 paperback edition); James Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World: The Sutherland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2015), T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (London: Fontana Press, 1985) 328–338; I. F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, 1975 paperback edition), 78.

¹³ Ewan A Cameron, ‘The Highland Clearances: History, Literature and Politics’, *Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History*, Vol. XV 2015, 69.

¹⁴ E. Richards, “A highland Quest, 2014”, <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/a-highland-quest-2014/>.

white men and their animals invading the country and altering the environment, certainly would not have been as positive as those of Ainslie, Campbell and other Europeans even if those reactions have not been documented. This was an area of the colony that had only recently been visited for the first time by Europeans but is now the site of Queanbeyan and of Canberra, the national capital. Ainslie had arrived in the colony four months before he responded to an advertisement seeking an “overseer for an establishment about to be made in the interior for sheep”.¹⁵ Arriving in the general area of the Limestone Plains with the sheep, Ainslie met an Aboriginal woman who guided him eastwards to a place now called Pialligo.¹⁶ Some stories give the name of this woman as Ija (or Jya) and claim that she and Ainslie were the parents of a child born in 1826 and called Ju.nin.mingo, or Nanny. At Pialligo Ainslie established Campbell’s property, later named *Duntroon*.

While recognising the importance of sheep in both Scotland and Australia in the early to mid-nineteenth century, this thesis is not a study of the importance of sheep. It uses interest in land and sheep as a springboard to explore themes that emerge from the study of letters in Scottish newspapers and their potential to influence migration from Scotland to New South Wales.

Primary sources

As stated already, the central argument in this thesis is that by analysing reports of the colony which came through from letters sent home and printed in newspapers, and then comparing the conditions described in the colony with those being experienced by readers in Scotland it is clear that the correspondence had potential to influence emigration decisions. As well as their ability to disseminate information widely, newspapers are recognised as providing a contemporary record of events and opinions and as such constitute a primary source of information for historians. This is even if the time between the composition of the information and its publication may have been extended by the time taken for the material to reach the place of publication.

¹⁵ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 16 June 1825, 1.

¹⁶ D Meyers, *Lairds, Lags and Larrikins, An Early History of the Limestone plains*, (Pearce, ACT: Sefton Publishing, 2010), 59; Rowan Henderson, ‘James Ainslie: Stranger than fiction’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (Dec 2012), 227-248.

However, limitations on the reliability of newspapers, when their reporting is taken in isolation, are also well recognised. “While their contemporaneity is important ... this is, unfortunately, counterbalanced by a whole string of defects ... [including those] ...inherent in the medium itself”.¹⁷ In particular, there exists the question of bias and writers have drawn attention to the possibility of bias both in how an event was reported and also whether it was reported at all in newspapers. In discussing the reporting of collective action, Jennifer Earl et al have noted how events may be reported selectively and how that reporting may be “structured by various factors such as competition over newspaper space, reporting norms, and editorial concerns”.¹⁸ In the case of the letters or extracts dealt with in this thesis, the matter published will have reflected also the pragmatic need to fill each newspaper before printing what were in most cases text-heavy four page folded-single-sheet publications issued on a set day or days each week.

Bias extends also to the selection of letters for inclusion in newspapers, since editors frequently chose to include letters which reflected their own or their proprietors’ opinions, values and interests without necessarily giving a balanced view.¹⁹ It will be demonstrated how the *John O’Groat Journal* sometimes favoured emigration to British North America/Canada in its selection of material and in its comments on emigration, while other publications gave support to New South Wales as a suitable destination for Scottish emigrants. Almost inevitably, newspaper editors will have made a judgement on what they considered their readers wanted to learn from the published letters but what is important here is neither the selection nor any editing, but what appeared in the press. This is what was seen by readers of newspapers in this period. It had potential to influence emigration decisions particularly where readers may not have had significant other sources of corroborative evidence of conditions in the colony.

Fifty-five separate newspaper titles from the United Kingdom were consulted in the preparation of this historical analysis. It was not unusual for the same material to appear in more than one newspaper and newspapers were not reticent about plagiarism “as they

¹⁷ Joseph Baumgartner, ‘Newspapers as historical sources’, *Philippine Journal of Culture and Society*, Vol. 9 No. 3 (September 1981), 256.

¹⁸ Jennifer Earl, et al, ‘The Use of Newspaper Data in the Study of Collective Action’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30 (2004), 69.

¹⁹ Denise Bates, *Historical Research Using British Newspapers* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword History, 2016), 32.

routinely copied ... from other publications verbatim, perhaps [but not always] with an acknowledgement of the source”.²⁰ A further forty-three separate newspapers from the colony have provided corroboration or supplementary or alternative information.²¹

The Scottish newspapers from which the letters in this study were taken ranged from regionally focused press which included the northern based *John O’Groat Journal* and the *Inverness Courier*; to publications in the central belt and southern Scotland such as the *Fife Herald* and the *Dumfries Courier*; while newspapers such as *The Scotsman* or the *Caledonian Mercury* achieved a wide readership across large parts of the country. Commenting on regional Scottish press, Marcus Harmes et al reminded readers that “Scotland has a long history of print journalism” and many papers had “high literary pretensions derived from Enlightenment thought shaped by writers based in Edinburgh”.²² Moreover, many newspapers covered events in a level of detail unthinkable to twenty-first century print journalism.²³

James Loch, MP for Wick and several other Highlands and Islands burghs in the House of Commons asserted in March 1847 that the working classes of the towns and villages in the north of Scotland were great readers.²⁴ Even beyond the towns and villages Scots had been accustomed for more than a century to at least basic education through schools run by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (the SSPCK) as well as the parish schools which had operated in Scotland since the sixteenth century and at least basic literacy was wide-spread. Richards, citing T. C. Smout refers to a “high level of literacy among both peasants and artisans” in Scotland.²⁵

²⁰ Bates, *Historical Research*, 17.

²¹ All ninety-eight newspapers have been listed by the author at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oudWiXS1NToyKvIvG8l-LXqZNqOQMc_i.

²² Marcus K. Harmes, Barbara Harmes and Meredith A. Harmes ‘A Disunited Kingdom: Expressions of Scottish Nationalism in the Twentieth-Century Regional Press’, *Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History*, Vol. XVIII 2019, 63.

²³ *Ibid*, 64.

²⁴ Quoted in James Hunter, *Insurrection: Scotland’s Famine Winter* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2019), 60.

²⁵ Richards, ‘Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914’, 139.

At least three in ten of all the convicts sent from Britain were totally illiterate: this confirms that at least sixty per cent of all convicts, a significant proportion, were literate.²⁶ The earliest letter in the study, while appearing in the Scottish press, originates from a convict and former Derbyshire resident.²⁷ The internal evidence in that letter suggests that it may have been scribed by an amanuensis and the author was probably part of the illiterate thirty per cent. It is the only letter in this thesis collection with an internal structure which suggests that it was scribed by someone other than its author.

It is quite possible that some of the letters appearing in this study may have been altered, edited or even translated before publication. Some of the items included are only extracts but some letters appear to have been printed in entirety even where this involved a significant part of a newspaper's print space on the day of publication. None of the content or form of the letters suggests that they had been commissioned by the newspapers printing them although this remains as a possibility. All letters appeared in type and the opportunity to tidy or improve content, spelling and grammar may have been taken by the person who arranged the letters from their original hand-written form ready for the type-setter.

As far as has been possible, other archival or contemporary sources have also been drawn upon in an attempt to enhance an assessment of the contemporary factors applying to consideration of emigration decisions by those reading the newspapers in Scotland. Prominent among those sources particularly for then-current local and detailed information concerning Scotland are the old and new *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* while other sources have also been consulted.

The letter writers

The primary source material on which this thesis is based mostly originates from those people perhaps covered by Joyce Appleby's term "the unexceptional men and women of the past".²⁸ Some of the letter writers or recipients whose correspondence forms the basis

²⁶ Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol. 2, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), 71.

²⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

²⁸ Joyce Appleby, 'The Power of History', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (Feb. 1998),

for this thesis are known by name. Others are described in more general terms such as “a young man”; “a shepherd”; “a professional gentleman”; or “a female emigrant”. They are “hitherto [mostly] obscure people”.²⁹ In many cases the best that can be achieved is a description of situation, occupation or location. These details have mostly been included in an early chapter to assist with placing the letters into some context for an understanding of where, how or why each letter came to be written.

This thesis does not concentrate on an intensive study of particular individuals’ lives to reveal the fundamental experiences of ordinary people. It does not focus on a particular tightly defined group of people such as were examined by Le Roy Ladurie at Montaillou.³⁰ Indeed, the relatively short time span covered by this thesis – effectively, thirty-one years – takes it out of the realms of colleagues of Le Roy Ladurie in the *Annales* School with a focus on the *longue durée*. Notwithstanding that exclusion, like some historians of the *Annales* School it does draw on a range of scientific records such as population reports and climate records in support of its conclusions. “As historical research is rarely able to provide coherent statistics for unstatistically-minded ages, the researcher is obliged to proceed by extrapolations and inferences. Often it means skating on very thin ice”.³¹ A principal inference in this thesis is that letters in the Scottish press were read by those considering emigration or who may have been influenced to consider it by the reports in the press. It notes Richards’ belief that among all the written records, particular attention should be paid to those left behind by individual emigrants.³² The letters in this study are part of that legacy even if publication gave them a far wider readership than most of the writers could have envisaged.

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²⁹ Quoted by Jill Lepore, ‘Historians who love too much: reflections on microhistory and biography’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June 2001), 131.

³⁰ Lepore, ‘Historians who love too much’, 131; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294 – 1324*, translated Barbara Bray, 1978.

³¹ Michael Harsgor, ‘Total History: The Annales School’, *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan. 1978), 3.

³² Eric Richards, ‘Annals of the Australian Immigrant’ in Eric Richards, Richard Reid and David Fitzpatrick (ed’s), *Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989), 17.

Using letters in newspapers as the basis for a study

Letters from Australia in this study were written by men and women, tradesmen and professional people originating from urban centres and from the countryside. Some had financial capital to invest while others had very little on arrival in the colony; some received assistance but many travelled independently. Beyond the original addressees, appearance of these letters in the press of the day greatly expanded the range of readers who had access to the information and opinions in the letters. This provided an opportunity to consider whether that information enhanced or detracted from the promise of emigration. Marjory Harper has noted that letters need to be understood in the wider context of their making and has cautioned against taking letters at their face value which were

not as straightforward as they might seem at first glance. The line between description and propaganda was often indistinct ... letters were used to deter and attract their readers, as well as simply to inform them about emigrant life. One emigrant from north-east Scotland clearly saw the provincial newspaper back home as a means of updating his acquaintances on his progress in Australia in the early 1850s: “You will show this letter to as many of our friends as possible. I often think of you all; perhaps the best way would be to send it to the ‘Aberdeen Journal’, as all our friends on the Dee, the Don, the Spey and the Deveron, will then have an opportunity of seeing that I am living and liking the Antipodes well.”³³

For other correspondents, the experience of being in Australia was not happy and some letters sent home reflect this.

The majority of these letters appear never to have been destined for publication. Their frankness often gives them a certain open, candid quality which stands in contrast to the often impersonal nature of official correspondence between colonial administrators. As the material originates from a large number of writers it gives a far broader impression of the colony than would be gained by a reader perusing a collection of the

³³ Marjory Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London: Profile Books, 2004), 238-9. The letter quoted was sent by “Mr John Mackie, late of Turriff, to his brother”, from Clare in South Australia on 22 December 1851. It appeared in the *Aberdeen Journal*, 12 May 1852, 6.

correspondence of one author. It offers the opinions of many ordinary people involved with events and situations shaping the colony.

In reporting on a letter “written by a young man, a carpenter from Nairnshire”, the *Inverness Courier* of 9 September 1840 claimed that the letter was a private one. Rather unusually, it chose to paraphrase parts of the letter and only appears to have quoted approximately forty words of the original. One speculative explanation for the unusual treatment of the letter is that it may have been written in Gaelic with the printed lines taken from a translation made by staff at the newspaper although there is no firm evidence for this. While Gaelic was spoken in Nairnshire it is not noted as a major language there. If it were written in Gaelic this would reinforce the view that the private letter was never intended for publication and the information contained in it was intended solely for the benefit of the addressee/s. Its capacity to influence emigration decisions was, by its publication, greatly enhanced due to the much wider readership it enjoyed. This letter is only one of two in the collection which has been identified as possibly written in Gaelic and then appearing in English-language newspapers. As a parallel to the issues which could arise when letters are translated into English, the nature and uses of immigrant letters which appeared in the Welsh-language press and possible editorial changes to the original texts have been identified by William Jones.³⁴ Jones’ comments were about correspondence written in English and translated into Welsh but the issues are equally valid.

Richards discussed Australian emigrant letters generally while noting the nature of collections of Australian emigrant letters.³⁵ These letters “give voice to proletarian colonial Australia as the migrants adjusted themselves to remote overseas conditions” while the letters’ key characteristics are their individualism and their localism.³⁶ He cautioned that among the various collections of letters claimed to have been written by

³⁴ William D. Jones, “‘Going into Print’: Published Immigrant Letters, Webs of Personal Relations, and the Emergence of the Welsh Public Sphere’ in Bruce Elliott, David Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (eds), *Letters across borders: the epistolary practices of international migrants* (Houndmills:Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

³⁵ Eric Richards, ‘The Limits of the Australian Emigrant Letters’ in Bruce Elliott, David Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (ed’s), *Letters across borders: the epistolary practices of international migrants* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

³⁶ *Ibid*, 59.

convicts, only half have been authenticated as written by actual convicts. In the present study the earliest letter included was from a convict whose name and trial have been clearly documented but it is the only letter obviously sent by a convict.³⁷ Richards further claimed that the Scots were the most literate of the migrants in the colonial era.³⁸ Prentis notes that while the literacy rate for urban Scots convicts was sixty-one percent this is “too low to reflect the Scottish working class as a whole”.³⁹ This thesis appreciates the high level of literacy providing a suitable body of work for a study of migration from Scotland to Australia. Access to migrant letters is considered important in the cultural history of the Anglo migrations throughout the English speaking world.⁴⁰ While author Madeleine Bunting believed that the first generation of emigrants from the Hebridean island of Lewis were usually illiterate and that letters were few, the evidence even just from the letters which found their way into Scottish newspapers shows that her claim was not universally true across Scotland.⁴¹ Scottish emigrants did write letters in large numbers if the sample in this study is any indication. In reviewing Belich’s 2009 book on the rise of the Anglo-World, Richards remarked that the migration of millions of people may be at the centre of how this world was made “and of these people we need to know much more”.⁴² This thesis provides from their letters more historical analysis and information on a small number of those who migrated.

Richards drew attention to the collection of the letters of Rachel Henning as indicative of the bias among collections of published emigration letters.⁴³ Other published

³⁷ Richards, ‘Limits of Australian Emigrant Letters’, 63; *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4; W. B. Gurney (transcriber), *The Trials of Jeremiah Brandreth, William Turner, Isaac Ludlam, George Weightman and others for High Treason under a special commission at Derby* (London: Butterworth and son, 1817).

³⁸ Richards, ‘Limits of Australian Emigrant Letters’, 65.

³⁹ Prentis, ‘It’s a Long Way to the Bottom’, 205.

⁴⁰ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth, The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 8; 120-1.

⁴¹ Madeleine Bunting, *Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey* (London: Granta Publications, 2017), 233.

⁴² Eric Richards, review of Belich *Replenishing the Earth*, <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/895> accessed 28 November 2018.

⁴³ Rachel Henning, *Letters of Rachel Henning* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1986).

collections of letters conforming to a particular theme if not by the same author or closely related family members include *Dear Fanny, Women's Letters to and from New South Wales, 1788 – 1857*.⁴⁴ The selection and analysis of the letters under examination in this thesis continues the practice of selection by a theme – in this case that of publication in the Scottish press and providing information for potential emigrants. In *Dear Fanny* or in another contemporary collection, *The Truth*, the letters are reproduced with only brief comment on each.⁴⁵ A somewhat different approach has been taken in a more recent publication where groups of letters provide the basis for collective analyses and summaries before the actual letters are reproduced behind each summary.⁴⁶ Separately again, this thesis takes the letters only as the basis for an historical analysis and discussion.

Letters as a source of news in the formation of public opinions has been acknowledged by Nicholas Brownlees who validated use of letters as an approach to the study of a particular area and time period.⁴⁷ Publication gives to private correspondence an enhanced importance. It is “when it is printed that news [or letters] receives that step-change in publicness that grants it the ability to affect crowds, influence politics, and shape debates in the public sphere”.⁴⁸ Certainly, it was accepted in 1830 that personal letters gave a better insight into conditions in the colony with “communications of actual settlers [giving] impressions more accurate and vivid of the difficulties and advantages of colonial life ... than from more formal and elaborate statements”.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Helen Heney (ed.), *Dear Fanny, Women's Letters to and from New South Wales, 1788 – 1857* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1985).

⁴⁵ J. G. Johnston, *The Truth: Consisting of Letters Just Received from Emigrants to the Australian Colonies* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1839).

⁴⁶ David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1995).

⁴⁷ Brownlees, Nicholas, “‘Newes also came by Letters’: Functions and Features of Epistolary News in English News Publications of the Seventeenth Century”, in Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (eds) *News Networks in early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2016).

⁴⁸ Raymond and Moxham, ‘News Networks in early Modern Europe’ in *News Networks in early Modern Europe* op.cit., 13.

⁴⁹ Committee of the Emigrants’ School Fund, *Emigrants’ Letters: Being a Collection of Recent Communications from Settlers in the British Colonies* (London: Trelawney Saunders, 1830), vii.

Beyond the actual publication of letters, passing newspapers from hand to hand was an established convention.⁵⁰ Subscribers to non-local papers sometimes gave them to newspaper publishers and editors, as did travellers. One Banffshire minister noted that newspapers were circulated “as long as the texture of the paper holds together”.⁵¹ The practice of passing along newspapers also suggests a far wider readership for letters in the Scottish press than would otherwise be indicated solely by subscription rates or prices. The price of each copy of newspapers varied although a typical price of 7d per issue in the 1820s had reduced to 4½d by about 1850 reflecting a reduction in stamp duty. The last stamp duty on newspapers in Britain was finally abolished in 1855.⁵² At a time when rural workers were not well paid in Scotland, a copy of a newspaper was still an expensive item for many and papers which may have been days or even weeks old would still have been eagerly received. In an era when this would have been customary practice, passing along letters also containing news and items of interest to a local readership would not have been unusual. It helps to explain how many of the letters with news from the colony of New South Wales appeared in the Scottish press in the period under study.

This study is a social history, providing a “close reading of source documents, [with] the ability to see not isolated facts, but rather ... structural factors that affect events”.⁵³ Its primary sources have been relatively unexplored until now. Some letters contain material that is sometimes emotive and often it is subjective.⁵⁴ The research approach fits within the general description of qualitative historical research. It uses both a series of what are in effect case studies and content analysis reviewing forms of human communication including newspapers to identify patterns, themes, or biases.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Morrison, *Engines of Influence: newspapers of country Victoria, 1840 – 1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 41.

⁵¹ Referenced in Hunter, *Insurrection*, 139.

⁵² Bates, *Historical Research*, 17.

⁵³ Hallden (1994) and Wineburg (2001) quoted in Anne Beaufort and John A Williams, ‘Writing History: Informed or Not by Genre Theory?’ in Anne Hetherington and Charles Moran (eds.) *Genre Across the Curriculum* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005).

⁵⁴ Novick, *That Noble Dream*.

⁵⁵ Carrie Williams, ‘Research Methods’, *Journal of Business & Economic Research* Vol. 5, Number 3, (March 2007), 67 - 69.

The period covered in this thesis

The exploration by Charles Throsby south-south-west of Sydney in 1820 into the area which became known as the Limestone Plains was the first recognised European incursion beyond the County of Argyle. Throsby ventured into the area which would become the County of Murray, the most southerly of the nineteen counties of New South Wales.⁵⁶ Settlers were only allowed to take up land within these nineteen counties. In brief, in modern terms, the area of the nineteen counties stretched roughly from Taree in the north, west to Wellington in the Central West of New South Wales and south to Yass before passing through parts of the Australian Capital Territory to the coast at Moruya. The counties appear on the map at Figure 2 below.

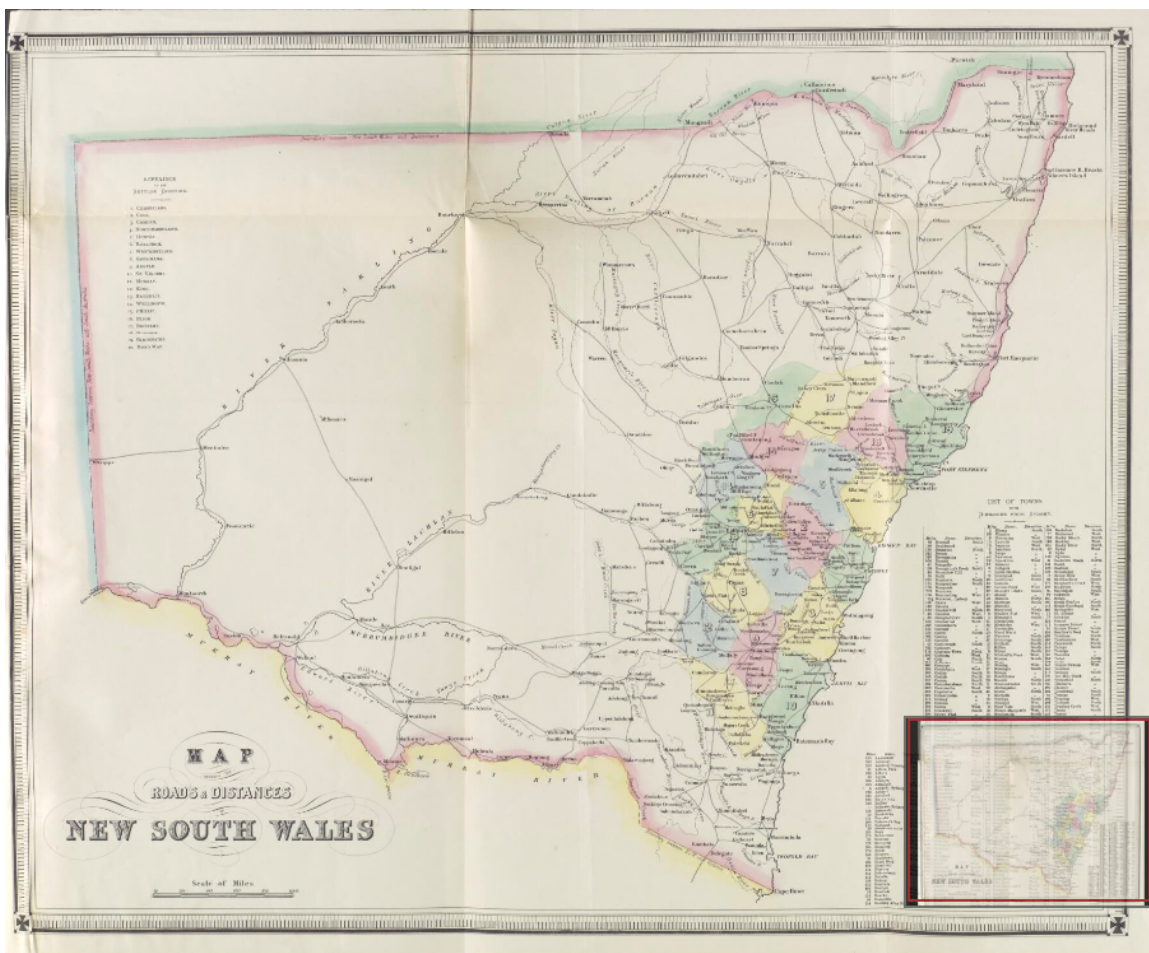


Figure 2: Map showing the original nineteen counties of settlement.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ NSW State Archives and Records <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/magazine/onthisday/14-october-1829>.

⁵⁷ *Basch & Co. & George Bishop & Lenthall Bros. 1872, Atlas of the settled counties of New South*

There was only a small trickle of Scottish migrants prior to the 1820s and this both limited Scottish free settler interest in the colony and limited the number of migrants whose letters home would have been available for publication in the Scottish press.⁵⁸ 1820 is therefore an appropriate starting date for a study considering some of the issues involving colonial expansion both geographically and in terms of the numbers of free immigrant settlers.

1850 marked the closure of a phase of colonial settlement. Convict transportation to the colony of New South Wales was abolished officially on 1 October 1850. This followed considerable public and political pressure calling for its cessation, notwithstanding the desire of some colonists to retain the source of cheap labour which the convict system had provided. 1850 also marked the effective end of the settlement period before the announcement in 1851 of the discovery of gold by Hargreaves on 12 February 1851.⁵⁹ The New South Wales colonial government made the official announcement of the discovery of gold in May 1851.⁶⁰ Gold had been discovered in Australia as early as the 1820s, but discoveries were kept secret for fear of sparking unrest among the convicts. However, as more people left the Australian colonies to join the gold rush in California, it became apparent that the outward tide of manpower would need to be stemmed. "Gold provided an incentive for people to make the journey to Australia; increasing demand for ocean shipping prompted companies to introduce clipper ships and faster sea routes".⁶¹ Surges of population growth saw Victoria's non-Indigenous

Wales [cartographic material] : this valuable series is complete in nineteen numbers, with the addition of a road and distance map of the entire colony : these maps have been compiled with great care from the latest government surveys; the mineral information has been obtained from the government survey and others; and the geographical and geological information from the works of the following authors, viz.: Wentworth, Lang, Hovel and Hume, Bennett, Mitchell, Wells, the Rev. W.B. Clarke and W. Wilkins <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231003223>>. See also the map following page 4 of T. M. Perry, 'The Spread of Settlement in the Original Nineteen Counties of New South Wales: 1788-1829', 1957 PhD Thesis, Australian National University.

⁵⁸ Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 240; Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), 175.

⁵⁹ Keir Reeves, 'A golden legacy: the historical implications of Edmond Hammond Hargreaves' discovery of gold in May 1851', in Crotty, M. and Roberts, D. eds. *Crucial Moments in Australian History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008).

⁶⁰ For examples of public comment see the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1851, where four items concerning gold appeared on page 2 and another on page 3.

⁶¹ Keir Reeves, Lionel Frost and Charles Fahey, 'Integrating the Historiography of the Nineteenth-

population, for example, grow rapidly from a starting point of 77,000 in 1851 to 540,000 a decade later in 1861.⁶² These changes altered the face of the country irrevocably with significant social disruption as many workers proceeded to the gold fields, while occupations and pursuits previously held were abandoned in at least the short term. On 1 July 1851 the Legislative Council of the newly created colony of Victoria was established and this marked the end of the initial larger colony of New South Wales that had until then covered the whole of south-eastern mainland Australia.

Dispossession by legal means or settlement

At the start of the period studied, clearances were raging across the Scottish Highlands and although not as popularly known, in the Scottish Lowlands as well.⁶³ Devine has explained “clearance” as:

“Clearance” in terms of nineteenth century social history implies the displacement of people and that displacement of people usually has at its root a commercial element and that is, the people concerned who are going to be moved either for long or short distances often have little say in their situation. It’s the people above, it’s the courts, it’s the landlords, the estate owners who are the primary agents of this development.⁶⁴

Described as one of the great traumas in British history, the Highland clearances were responsible for the forced dislocation of tens of thousands of people. They triggered off a diaspora second only to that of the Irish in relation to the size of the population.⁶⁵

Clearances in Scotland resulted from the agrarian reforms by many land-holders in Scotland seeking to make estates more profitable by replacing large numbers of small

Century Gold Rushes’, *Australian Economic History Review* Vol. 50, No. 2 (July 2010), 113.

⁶² Reeves et al, op. cit., 117.

⁶³ Eric Richards, *Debating the Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 23; Peter Aitchison, and Andrew Cassell, *The Lowland Clearances: Scotland’s Silent Revolution 1760 – 1830* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003, 2012 edition reprinted 2017).

⁶⁴ T. Devine, *Tom Devine on the Highland and Lowland Clearances*, Crosslands Lifelong Learning Partnership, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7u5YOiOZIM> (at 6.05 - 6.40).

⁶⁵ Tom Brooking, *Lands for the People? The Highland Clearances and the Colonisation of New Zealand. A Biography of John McKenzie* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1996), 17.

tenants and sub-tenants with larger farms held by a single tenant.⁶⁶ In the Lowlands this consolidation was done particularly into large arable farms but in the Highlands it was mostly as sheep walks or, as they came to be known in Australia, sheep runs.⁶⁷ Some Scots emigrated to Australia at least partly because of changes to the rural economy in Scotland. Others came from urban areas where there had been early and rapid industrialisation of parts of the Lowlands in the late eighteenth century.⁶⁸ The period is noted as being one of significant social change in Scotland.

Devine has commented further on how “[m]ass European settlement in the new lands of the Americas, Africa and Australasia could not have been achieved without the extensive dispossession and expropriation of the land of the native peoples, often carried out by brutal and violent means”.⁶⁹ The 1617 *Act of Sasines* of the Scottish Parliament had established that

uninterrupted exclusive possession of lands for forty years under a charter and sasine ... is sufficient to exclude all enquiry, and to protect the person in possession against anyone holding even an express title, prior in date, to the whole or any of the parts of the lands.⁷⁰

It can be seen that the legal principle of occupancy for forty years as the start of some protection against dispossession was totally ignored in both Scotland and New South Wales. This may be because there were few written charters or sasines in Scotland. There were none in New South Wales even if some notional recognition of prior ownership was afforded by so-called treaties such as the purchase by Batman of land in the Port Phillip

⁶⁶ Stana Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007).

⁶⁷ Aitchison, and Cassell, *The Lowland Clearances*; “Sheep run”, a property on which sheep are grazed for wool or mutton production. *The Macquarie Dictionary*, second revision, 1982, 1560.

⁶⁸ Richards, ‘Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914’, 112.

⁶⁹ T. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland’s Global Diaspora* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 173.

⁷⁰ J. Rankine, *The Law of Land Ownership in Scotland*, quoted in A. Wightman, *The Poor Had No Lawyers: Who owns Scotland (and how they got it)* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010), 2. An instrument of sasine is an historic Scottish legal document that records the transfer of ownership (usually a sale or an inheritance) of a piece of land or of a building. (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/sasines>).

area or the agreement concluded at Waitangi in New Zealand/Aotearoa.⁷¹ In any case, English land law was applied in the colony but the distinctions between Scots law and English law were unlikely to concern potential Scottish migrants. Recognition of prior occupation of land by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia was only given proper acknowledgement in the Australian High Court judgement in the 1992 Mabo case.⁷² Some settlers did at least recognise parallels between the dispossessions in Scotland and in the colonies. Writing from Westown, New Plymouth, New Zealand/Aotearoa in 1883, Hugh Hughson (“Perie Huie”) commented that “I am out here among the natives ... on the whole they are a kind hearted people - altho the government is taking there [sic] lands ... we all in Shetland was treat the same way with the Lairds ...”.⁷³

A young man of Dumfriesshire when corresponding from the colony of New South Wales to family and friends at home in October 1838 wrote that “though their hunting grounds have been transformed into ... productive sheep walks, one cannot think of these primitive fathers and possessors of Van Diemen’s Land, without a feeling of pain and regret”.⁷⁴ The site of Canberra, the modern national capital, has occasionally been described as a good sheep run or station spoilt.⁷⁵ The Aboriginal people who had been

⁷¹ Batman's purchase is described by Marcia Langton as fraudulent. Marcia Langton, ‘Prologue’ in Rachel Perkins and Marcia Langton (eds), *First Australians, An Illustrated History* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University, 2008), xxvii. See also Alastair Campbell, *John Batman and the aborigines* (Malmsbury, Vic.: Kibble Books, 1987).

⁷² High Court of Australia, *Mabo v Queensland (no 2)* (“Mabo case”) [1992] HCA 23; (1992), 175 CLR 1 (3 June 1992). See also Miller, Robert J. et al *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁷³ Shetland Archives (Lerwick, Scotland). Letter from Hugh Hughson to A. D. Mathewson, Jnr, 6 May 1883, reference D23/193/41/1.

⁷⁴ *Fife Herald, and Kinross, Strathearn, and Clackmannan Advertiser*, 25 October 1838, 4.

⁷⁵ The comment is possibly first attributed to Charles Hawker MP, see Jim Davidson, ‘Return of the Native’, *A Three Cornered Life: The Historian W.K. Hancock*. (UNSW Press, 2010), 374-420. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vkpr.15. It was used by Senator James Guthrie in debate, 7 February 1929, *Hansard*, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22hansard80%2Fhansards80%2F1929-02-07%2F0031%22> but misquoted the following day, *Canberra Times*, 8 February 1929, 3. See also speech by Dr John Gaha 26 June 1946, https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1946-06-26/0139/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf. The Australian Government’s National Capital Authority acknowledges existence of the sentiment, <https://www.nca.gov.au/attractions-and-memorials/r-g-menzies-walk>. As ‘Canberra: A good sheep station ruined’ it was the title of a 2017 essay by Catherine Mauk,

living in the area before the arrival of Europeans might have described it as a good run ruined by sheep. Ruined by sheep is also how many Scots could have described their lives during the Highland clearances.⁷⁶ For shepherds recruited and shipped out in steerage class by pastoralists such as the Campbell family, Benjamin Boyd or the Australian Agricultural Company then sent to remote stations in the bush, the opportunity of working with sheep in a new country may have provided the prospect of a new life. For all contemplating emigration, the prospects or even just the possibility of acquiring land and stock in a new country must have had a powerful allure with reports of conditions in the colony available from letters in newspapers contributing to discussion about moving to the antipodes.

Historiography

This thesis intersects with two key historiographical approaches. It sits as part of a longer historical discussion about the experience of Scots in colonial Australia, one that has been less prominent in terms of research than other major colonial migration patterns to Australia including for instance, the Irish-Australian, communities. In this respect the relatively under researched history of the Scots in Australia shares an intellectual watermark with the Cornish and Welsh-Australian historiographies.⁷⁷ In 2011, Malcolm Prentis published an insightful “progress report on historical research into Scottish migration to and settlement in Australia”.⁷⁸ He did recognise the important work by David Macmillan in the mid-1960s. MacMillan's 1964 thesis was published in 1967 as *Scotland and Australia: 1788–1850* and dealt particularly with the commercial activities of Scots who migrated to Australia.⁷⁹ Prentis claimed that Macmillan's work might be regarded as

https://www.terrain.org/2017/unsprawl/canberra/?fbclid=IwAR2CL3_YdsP_D-a2kTuqwKtIzKDc51EmSsiWky7BNviJFIwmHrnigStXMKo.

⁷⁶ Prentis refers to this process as a “theme of double dispossession”. Malcolm Prentis, ‘The Scots and the Aborigines’, *Quadrant* (1998), Vol. 42, Issue 6, 37. The resumption of pastoral land to permit building the national capital might be seen as a triple dispossession.

⁷⁷ See for example, Jones' discussion of Welsh immigrant correspondence, Jones, William D., “Going into Print”: Published Immigrant Letters, Webs of Personal Relations, and the Emergence of the Welsh Public Sphere in Bruce Elliott, David Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (ed's), *Letters across borders: the epistolary practices of international migrants* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

⁷⁸ Prentis, ‘It's a Long Way to the Bottom’, 195.

⁷⁹ MacMillan, *Scotland and Australia 1788 – 1850*.

virtually the starting point for modern scholarship on Scottish–Australian links. He noted in his key publication *The Scots in Australia* that it attempted “a general survey of a large, complex, varied, highly dispersed and highly assimilated group within Australian society for over 200 years”.⁸⁰ It discussed a number of the matters of interest in this thesis, including the important impact of the Presbyterian church as well as the emigration to Australia by Scots. While Prentis claimed that “few diaries and letters of steerage passengers are available” many of the letters historically analysed in this thesis were almost certainly written by steerage passengers. Letters written and sent from Australia by steerage class passengers remain as an under-researched resource which have not been adequately studied before now. The identification of the letters studied here allows a broader view of the experiences of the poorer class of Scottish emigrants. Benjamin Wilkie’s 2017 monograph, *The Scots in Australia 1788 – 1938* provides an overview of the activities of Scots over a century and a half commencing with the arrival of the earliest settlers. Other scholarship on the Scots’ experience in Australia has tended towards localised area studies or a focus on migration narratives. Among those localised studies, *Caledonia Australis* by Don Watson focuses on the arrival of Scots in Gippsland and the dispossession of the Gunai Kurnai peoples particularly through the actions of the Skye-born Angus McMillan.⁸¹

This thesis is also informed by Scottish diaspora and Gaelic studies historiography. David Fitzpatrick has studied the patterns of Irish emigration and his *Oceans of Consolation* looks at personal testimonies of Irish migrants to Australia, mostly from the 1850’s onwards.⁸² As a parallel to studying Scottish emigration to Australia, Patrick O’Farrell also has discussed how Irish emigrants had brought their Irish background to Australia. He suggested that “against a depiction of emigration as a torrent of poets and

⁸⁰ Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, vi.

⁸¹ Watson, Don, *Caledonia Australis: Scottish Highlanders on the frontier of Australia*. Sydney (Vintage Books, 1997).

⁸² David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*. Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1995 See also David Fitzpatrick, ‘Irish Emigration and the Art of Letter Writing’ in Bruce Elliott, David Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (ed’s), *Letters across borders: the epistolary practices of international migrants* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006; David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801 – 1921*, Studies in Irish Economic and Social History series, Dundalgan Press Ltd, 1984; David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Home or Away? Immigrants in Colonial Australia*. Canberra: Division of Historical Studies and Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Australian National University, 1992.

misfits, is the thesis of common sense. The best left, not the worst, leaving behind the broken, the dispirited, the ineffectual, those who could not, or would not leave”.⁸³ For the Scots identified in this study, those who left and the influences which come through in their letters were more varied. Among people recruited from places such as the Isle of Skye were some who had nowhere else to go. The evidence for this is in the detailed records of ships such as the *Willian Nicol* and some of the letters analysed in this thesis. The thesis therefore provides a Scottish balance to better known and more widely studied motivations for Irish migration to Australia.

Among the eminent modern Scottish historians who have written on the subject of Scotland’s emigrants in recent years are Tom Devine, James Hunter and Marjory Harper.⁸⁴ Harper in particular has written extensively, alone or in collaboration with others, on broad issues around Scottish emigration. Her *Adventurers & Exiles: The Great Scottish Diaspora* helped to set nineteenth and twentieth century emigration into the context of the history of a nation with a long experience of emigration. Harper dealt in depth with both the pushing out of unwanted population as well as efforts in other countries to attract migrants, activities that often over-lapped. The letters in this present thesis sit alongside Harper’s research and provide more granular detail on particular aspects of migration to Australia as well as their causes and their outcomes.

Working collaboratively, Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton have also produced important work dealing with Scotland’s diaspora.⁸⁵ They have written on

⁸³ Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1986), 57.

⁸⁴ Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*; see also Marjory Harper, “‘Quite Destitute and ... Very Desirous of Going to North America’: The Roots and Repercussions of Emigration from Sutherland and Caithness” *Northern Scotland* 8, 2017 (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 49-67; Marjory Harper, *Emigration from North-East Scotland* volume one *Willing Exiles* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988); Marjory Harper, *Scotland No More? The Scots who left Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2012); Marjory Harper (ed.), *Footloose in Farm Service: Autobiographical Recollections of John Dickie* (Aberdeen: Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, 2012); Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); T. M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland’s Global Diaspora* (London: Allen Lane, 2011); T. M. Devine. and W. Orr, *The Great Highland Famine: hunger, emigration, and the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988); James Hunter, *Scottish Exodus: Travels Among a Worldwide Clan* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2007); James Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World: The Sutherland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2015.)

⁸⁵ Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton, *Ties of Bluid, kin and countrie: Scottish associational culture in the diaspora* (Markham Ontario: Stewart Publishing, 2009); *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

the themes in diasporic studies, noting demographics, citing statistics and recognising the importance of ties which saw many emigrants return to Scotland.⁸⁶ In many ways, elsewhere in countries of the Pacific rim, as a parallel but contrast to Scottish migration to Australia, Scottish diasporic connections to New Zealand/Aotearoa have been well studied. Angela McCarthy, Lyndon Fraser and Tom Brooking are prominent among the academics studying these links.⁸⁷ Bueltmann has also written on Scottish links to New Zealand/Aotearoa. She included in *Scottish Ethnicity and the Making of New Zealand Society, 1850-1930* a chapter, 'Feeble Pen and Paper? The personal Correspondence and Epistolary Practices of Scottish Migrants'.⁸⁸ It dealt with many themes similar to those covered in this thesis but over a far longer period than the thirty-one year focus of this work. This thesis sits within the general field of Scottish diasporic studies as outlined here in this southwest-Pacific context.

Possibly the most important writing on the topics covered in this thesis is that of Eric Richards. Richards wrote extensively on conditions in Scotland in the nineteenth century and particularly on those in the Highlands where clearances left a large pool of people considering emigration. He also wrote more generally on emigration from Britain, with an emphasis on migration to Australia and a small sample of his work is listed below.⁸⁹ This

⁸⁶ Bueltmann, Hinson and Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora*, 38.

⁸⁷ Lyndon Fraser and Angela McCarthy (eds), *Far from 'home': the English in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012); Angela McCarthy (ed.), *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and identities since the Eighteenth Century* (London/New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006); Angela McCarthy, *Scottishness and Irishness in New Zealand since 1840* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Tom Brooking, *Lands for the People? The Highland Clearances and the Colonisation of New Zealand. A Biography of John McKenzie* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1996); Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004); Tom Brooking and Jennie Coleman, *The Heather and the Fern: Scottish Migration & New Zealand Settlement* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2003); Lyndon Fraser, *To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth-century Christchurch*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997; Lyndon Fraser *Castles of Gold: A History of New Zealand's West Coast Irish*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2007; Angela McCarthy *Irish Migrants in New Zealand, 1840 – 1937 'The Desired Haven'*, Woodbridge UK: The Boydell Press, 2005; Angela McCarthy, *Migration, Ethnicity, and Madness: New Zealand, 1860 – 1910*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015.

⁸⁸ Tanja Bueltmann, *Scottish Ethnicity and the Making of New Zealand Society 1850–1930*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

⁸⁹ Eric Richards, 'Highlanders Colonising Australia', *History Scotland*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (July/August 2009), 27-34; 'Highland Emigration in the Age of Malthus: Scourie 1841 – 55', *Northern Scotland* 2, 2011 pp. 60-82; 'Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914' in R. A. Cage (ed.) *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750 – 1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); Review of James Belich *Replenishing the Earth, The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/895> accessed 28 November 2018; *History of the Highland Clearances: agrarian transformation and the evictions, 1746-1886* (London: Croom Helm, 1982);

thesis adds a small dataset to the compilations by Richards and others of why, how and where Scots emigrated to Australia.

James Belich has claimed to discount the push-pull theory of the causes of migration from Britain. He noted how early large-scale enclosure in England had not produced a flood of emigrants. He claimed that poverty “can only go so far in explaining mass migration from the richest country in the world”.⁹⁰ Scotland, however, was far from sharing equally as part of the richest country in the world and there is clear evidence of hardship in Scotland in this thesis. Many letter writers refer to hardship at home and the opportunities available for those willing to emigrate to New South Wales. The years from 1820 to 1850 provide a window of opportunity when the operations of the push-pull mechanisms are shown as significant for Scots willing to take the long journey to New South Wales.

None of the historians listed above has engaged in detailed historical analysis of the source documents for this thesis, the letters written from Australia to family, friends or others in Britain and circulating in the newspapers in Scotland. It is this unique focus which sets this thesis firmly as a new contribution to existing knowledge of both Australian colonial settlement and the Scottish diaspora.

Some material in this thesis touches on relations with the Aboriginal peoples of the colony but reveals little which would add to the existing historiography of Aboriginal-settler relations. Some events, such as the Myall Creek massacre, were reported in Scottish newspapers or mentioned in letters published in those newspapers. Those reports were copied from Sydney newspapers or were mentioned only in passing in letters. The only addition to the Aboriginal-settler historiography is that some mention of these issues was made in Scottish newspapers.

Debating the Highland Clearances (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Eric Richards, Richard Reid and David Fitzpatrick (eds), *Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989); Eric Richards (ed.), *Poor Australian Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1991); Eric Richards (ed.), *Visible Women: Female Immigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995.); Eric Richards, ‘A Highland Quest, 2014’, <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/a-highland-quest-2014/>.

⁹⁰ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 128-9.

Beyond these diasporic and settlement studies, these historiographical approaches intersect with methodological discussions about the use of the primary sources and how historians approach them. It might be noted that while access to letters in their original state can provide a reader with significant additional context and information about the writer and recipient, this is frequently not the case for much of the material published in newspapers.⁹¹ Editorial selection of extracts of varying extent from letters presents a filtering screen preventing the more normal detailed analysis which might have been possible in accordance with usual historiographic approaches to migrants' letters. The particular and important questions which surround the use of published, rather than unpublished, private letters and how historians should approach such letters with caution have been canvassed above under the headings "Primary sources", "The letter writers" and "Using letters in newspapers" (p. 9).

Methodology

This thesis concentrates on material in the Scottish press and supplements this with content from contemporary Australian newspapers where this provides amplification or correction of the Scottish content. A large amount of published primary source material of variable reliability exists containing comments on conditions in the colony made by the Europeans who visited or settled in Australia. However unless specifically mentioned or necessary for investigation of particular letters or themes, this existing material is not included in this examination.⁹²

Correspondence forming the primary source record of this study has been identified using machine-readable historic newspapers in the British Library, a process described

⁹¹ David A. Gerber, 'Epistolary Masquerades: Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters' in Bruce Elliott, David Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (eds), *Letters across borders: the epistolary practices of international migrants*. Houndmills:Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

⁹² As examples, this published material includes, in the thirty year period being considered in this thesis, the three reports of Commissioner John Bigge (*The State of the Colony of New South Wales*; *The Judicial Establishments of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*; and *The State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales*); HRA; *Twenty Years Experience in Australia, being the evidence of disinterested and respectable travellers ...*; *The Handbook for Australian Emigrants*; *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies*; or *Rambles and Observations in New South Wales with ... some hints to emigrants*.

by Bates as requiring “a relatively new skill for a historian to master”.⁹³ The search term “New South Wales”, limited to Scottish newspapers, identified a large amount of text for the period 1820 to 1850, provided in raw Optical Character Recognition format. This was refined into the letters and other material used as the focus of this study. All the letters identified by this process have been included although it is acknowledged that the electronic search used may not have identified every letter printed in the press. In the earlier years being studied, as noted on p. 3 above, relatively few letters were available for publication in Scottish newspapers. Writing about his 2014 time as Carnegie Visiting Professor at the University of the Highlands and Islands’ Centre for History, Richards mentioned finding in Gairloch in the north-west of Scotland a collection of emigrants’ letters which he described as “pure gold, the direct voice from ‘people below’”.⁹⁴ Use of digital technology to identify a collection of letters is in many ways a parallel experience to finding previously unexplored bundles of papers, providing a direct voice of ordinary people recounting their experience of migration.

Some newspapers such as the *Inverness Courier* could appear to be over-represented in the study. Like all historical studies, this thesis has remained the captive of the primary sources available and these sources are initially those letters identified in the British Library’s newspaper archive. The availability and to some extent the almost randomly selected nature of the letters included in this study have in many ways shaped the course of this doctoral study. However, there is little doubt that the totality of the package of correspondence appearing in this wide variety of Scottish newspapers over thirty-one years has allowed a sufficiently broad and accurate assessment of reporting on conditions in many parts of the colony of New South Wales for this period. It was a period of unabated European expansion in the colony while dispossession of the Aboriginal inhabitants mirrored that expansion in tragic reverse.

This thesis focuses on the consideration of the material in these letters for potential to influence emigration decisions. It accepts that many in Scotland were interested in emigration during this period. The *Inverness Courier* claimed that emigration “now

⁹³ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>; Bates, *Historical Research*, vii.

⁹⁴ E. Richards, “A highland Quest, 2014”, <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/a-highland-quest-2014/>.

agitates the public mind throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland and the means afforded for enabling parties to emigrate seem quite inadequate to the great and increasing requirements of the people, both at home and in the colonies".⁹⁵ The approach taken also allows for reporting of changing and developing portrayals of conditions in the Australian colonies of the period and how those were affected by developing colonial policy and social trends.

In some letters being studied, there are explicit references encouraging relatives, acquaintances and others to join the letter writer/s in Australia. Sometimes encouragement was for those with capital to invest, or for mechanics, tradesmen, shepherds and labourers whose skills were sorely required in the colony. A number of letters encouraged migration by single women as domestic servants but principally as prospective wives to help redress the European gender imbalance in the colony. In other instances, editorial comment has been added advocating emigration. Some comments have been made in this thesis on the likely readership, both political and social, as well as geographic, of the publication/s where items of correspondence were published. This allows some discussion of the nature of some of the newspapers which may help with understanding the potential of particular letters for influencing emigration decisions.

More often than not, the correspondence being examined in this study omits partially or entirely any mention of the Aboriginal people who saw their lands being occupied by settlers with livestock and agricultural practices imported from Britain. Where possible, discussion of some letters seeks to understand why this omission may have occurred. Issues also often absent from the correspondence include the distances involved for settlers seeking to take up land and issues of isolation, particularly for women. A lack of education for children was often important for Scots emigrants. Vagaries of the climate included floods and droughts and the difficulties of farming where methods and practices, long observed or even newly introduced into Scotland, were frequently wrong for the colony. All this information was important for potential emigrants and is addressed throughout the thesis.

⁹⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

A study of letters from Scottish settlers in New Zealand/Aotearoa has shown that while life was not always easy, immigrants who were flexible and showed perseverance were able to succeed.⁹⁶ The present study of the letters sent from New South Wales is too small to permit an adequate statistical analysis, but at least some of the letters in this study are consistent with the analysis from New Zealand/Aotearoa. Those most satisfied with the colony appear to be those who were prepared to learn to respect and work with the conditions rather than complain.

In some ways, the Scottish emigrants to Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century were an unusual body of men, women and children. Whether they came from urban or rural backgrounds, there is evidence of a level of literacy which was greater than that of many of the other settlers in the period. This allowed them to read newspapers and to write letters home to friends and relatives. In Scotland it was a time of significant social disruption and consolidation of land holding into the hands of a relatively small number of people. Reports of ready availability of land in New South Wales would have been read with great interest by many attracted by the possibility of land ownership with secure possession. The extent of land holdings in the colony and the size of flocks and herds which could be pastured on them is the subject of the first chapter that follows.

⁹⁶ Bueltmann et al, *The Scottish Diaspora*, 86.

Chapter One: How much land is enough; how many beasts?

This first chapter considers the extent of land and stock holdings in New South Wales. In highlighting the availability of land and the extent of flocks and herds in the colony, letters in newspapers will have been of interest to those in Scotland who had an interest in acquiring land in the colony. This would include those who had already lost land in the clearances or were at risk of doing so. By contrast, at least initially in the colony there was no suggestion that land would be held by lease. This was to change as settlers moved to take up what was often vast acreages of land by the simple expedient of squatting on it and subsequently seeking official sanction of their actions.

In early nineteenth century Scotland, very few farms were available for purchase because landlords were in many cases consolidating property into larger units. Most changes to occupancy of farms was by lease and a common lease was for nineteen years only. An offer to let farms for “such number of years as may be agreed on” would have been unusual.¹ Whether leases were for nineteen years or some other period, the extent of farms was generally reckoned in tens of acres (sometimes English acres, sometimes Scotch acres), rather than the hundreds or thousands of acres common in New South Wales.² When the *Fife Herald* and the *Dumfries Courier* in October 1838 commented extensively on material sent from Australia and mentioned “a boundless tract of well-watered and thinly wooded territory at South Australia and Port Philip, which can be got at a minimum rate” it is easy to see why readers may have been influenced by this description.³

Even those already in possession of farms in Scotland would have read with interest the reports of large areas of grazing and farming land available at no or comparatively little cost and able to be held permanently rather than by lease. The relatively recent arrival of large flocks of sheep particularly in the Highlands of Scotland would have been prominent in the minds of many in Scotland. Sheep were seen as providing opportunities

¹ ‘Estate of Tarradale’, *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 1.

² ‘Close Neighbourhood of the Burghs’, ‘Estate of Gladfield’, *ibid.* A Scotch acre was almost 1.25 English acres, Dictionary of the Scots Language, https://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/acre_n.

³ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

for wealth in Scotland and the possibilities for sheep to provide wealth in Australia were of great interest to settlers. Similarly, reports in published letters told of significant increases in numbers of cattle. In Scotland where cattle had sometimes been the mainstay of a rural population providing some cash income each year, the extent of herds would have been read with great interest.

Dividing up the land

Applying old terms to completely new uses, a Royal Instruction to the Governors of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land in 1830 ordered a survey of each colony to be conducted. This was to result in each colony being divided into districts, counties, hundreds, towns, townships and parishes.⁴ Each county was to comprise, as nearly as possible, forty miles square (1600 square miles), each county to be divided into hundreds of which each was to be one hundred square miles and each parish to be twenty-five square miles. The terms county and parish bore no relation to their traditional usage in either Scotland or England and were purely administrative.

As the colony developed, the administrative processes for allocating land changed. While Phillip as the initial governor had almost total discretion for a wide range of activities including land usage, by Macquarie's tenure there were clearer guidelines laid down allowing the governor to allocate thirty acres of land to emancipists and one hundred acres to free settlers. Subsequent changes required settlers to demonstrate that they held sufficient capital, mostly £500, to be able to work the property. Further changes were implemented requiring direct purchase, from the government or at auction, while the practice of "squatting" on unoccupied land was wide-spread.

A wide variation in acreage and stocking

The hopes or expectations for holding land in the colony varied widely among those whose letters were printed in the Scottish press and some of those hopes and expectations can be tracked through the letters appearing in the press from time to time. Convict Edward Turner thought that a farm of thirty acres of land would be sufficient to allow his wife and himself to end their days in happiness particularly if his wife could arrange for

⁴ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers:1830, Vol. 21: Colonial Grants: copy of the conditions under which lands are granted in ... the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.

the Secretary of State to allow her a passage to Sydney free of all expenses.⁵ Turner and his wife were not Scots but at a time when there may have been a shortage of first-hand news of conditions in the colony available to the Scottish press, both the *Inverness Courier* and the *Caledonian Mercury* published a letter copied from elsewhere.

The parts of Turner's letter home to his wife which may have been of greatest interest to readers in the area reached by the *Inverness Courier* and the *Caledonian Mercury* are those concerning the availability of land. This would have provided some quite strong encouragement to those contemplating emigration. It was already some nineteen years since, in 1801, 3,000 persons had been cleared from the land which they had previously occupied in Inverness-shire and in that time there had been no restitution of land holdings to small farmers and peasants.⁶ Turner's exhortation to his wife to join him in New South Wales, noting that the "passage is nothing to what it used to be, as they reach us in about four months", also sought her help in convincing his brother, Joseph, to emigrate with her. He, Joseph, would be granted a farm free of rent or taxes, and would be supplied with provisions from the Government stores for six months on arrival if he wished to avail himself of this. Edward himself had already partly agreed with the couple to whom he had been assigned that he would receive a farm of thirty acres. Thirty acres was specified in Macquarie's instructions as the amount of land which was to be given to a single emancipist, while free settlers were to be granted 100 acres beyond this.⁷

Some evidence for a possible heightened interest in farming land in the colony free of cost might be taken from the report contributed to the NSA by Rev. Alexander Rose, minister of the parish of Inverness a decade and a half later. He wrote in January 1835 that the

gradual increase of population ... exceeds a little the general ratio of increase throughout the kingdom, in consequence of Inverness having been resorted to by a great number of labourers during the formation of the Caledonian

⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 24 January 1820, 4.

⁶ Richards, *Debating the Highland Clearances*, 220. Further details of clearances in, for example, Glenorchy at the far end of the Great Glen, Glen Quoich, the Braes of Taymouth, or the Isle of Arran are given in Chapter 3 of Richards' work.

⁷ John Ritchie, *Lachlan Macquarie: a Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), 109.

Canal, and now by the poor tenants and cottagers removing to it from the country.⁸

Similarly, Rev. James Doune Smith, minister of the united parishes of Urquhart and Glenmoriston in Inverness-shire wrote that the “decrease in [population] in the district of Glenmoriston has been occasioned by emigration, consequent on the introduction of sheep-farming”.⁹ Other contributors also to the NSA ascribed decreases in population to the introduction of the system of sheep farming which had seen families cleared from the land which they had occupied, in many cases for generations. The people affected were perhaps those covered by Hunter’s description of “A Redundant Population”.¹⁰

In the western Highlands and Islands the kelping industry in the coastal areas had provided employment for many of those affected by clearances on the estates in the Highlands, even if that employment had been in truly appalling conditions. Isobel Grant has estimated that some 40–50,000 people in the Highlands and Islands had been dependent on kelping.¹¹ These people were to be further disadvantaged by ongoing reductions of the tariffs on imported barilla after the end of the Napoleonic wars. The eventual removal of these duties by President of the Board of Trade William Huskisson had made the industry uneconomic and the workers were left without employment. A prospect of an allocation of land would have had great allure for such disadvantaged Highlanders. A farm of thirty acres such as had been promised to Turner even as an ex-convict, free of rent and taxes and, most importantly, free of the threat of removal at the whim of a land-holder or a landlord’s factor, would have been almost beyond the dreams of most poor Highlanders. If Turner’s letter had been read by such people it would have been with considerable interest.

The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* reported on 7 March 1821 “the indefatigable exertions of Mr Throsby” in opening up for occupation huge areas of land, both west of

⁸ NSA Vol. 14, 17.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 34 – 49. Harper refers to the process as “Expelling the Unwanted”, Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 32.

¹¹ I. F. Grant, *The MacLeods, The History of a Clan* (Edinburgh: Spurbrooks, 1981), 568.

the Blue Mountains and south-south-west of the settlements around Sydney.¹² Its claim that Charles Throsby, whose letter it published that day had “ascertained the route to the fine country beyond the Blue Mountains” was not entirely accurate and appears to take credit from those who were in 1813 the first Europeans to find a route for crossing the mountains. Perhaps the newspaper introduction to the letter refers to the journey taken in April 1819 when Throsby made a tour from the Cow Pastures (now Camden) to Bathurst. It is possible that this journey went via the area north of the present city of Goulburn and then west of the Cookbunden Ranges.¹³ The proclamation of 31 May 1819 [sic] by the Governor’s Secretary and reproduced in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* of both 5 and 12 June 1819 which announced the pioneering of a new route between the Cow Pastures and Bathurst did not give details of the actual route used. However this is in Throsby’s Journal covering the period 25 April 1819 to 11 May 1819.¹⁴ Certainly, Throsby is acknowledged as being the leader of the first party of Europeans to reach “large extensive downs, not plains, some as large as from fifty to sixty thousand acres, without a tree, every where covered with fine grass for sheep or cattle, and well watered, partly by rippling streams, partly by chains of ponds, in all directions”.¹⁵ They reached the lake known as *Werrewaa* south-west of Goulburn but subsequently called Lake George by Macquarie who named it in late 1820 for the recently crowned George IV.¹⁶

Throsby’s letter in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* described the region as a “beautiful country ... fully equal to ... the necessary purposes of colonisation”. The image of the lake and its surrounding countryside which Throsby’s letter would generate in the mind

¹² *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 March 1821, 4.

¹³ ‘History of *Richlands* Homestead’ obtained from <http://richlands.vpweb.com.au/About-Us.html>, 6.

¹⁴ National Library of Australia, Throsby, Charles, Item 9/2743, Special Bundle, ‘Papers of Charles Throsby, including various journals of exploration 1810 - 21’.

¹⁵ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 March 1821, 4.

¹⁶ Various spellings of this name are used by early European explorers but today it appears on some signposts as *Weereewaa*.

of a reader might well be judged from the Lycett picture shown in Figure 3 below. The original is held in the National Library of Australia.



Figure 3: View of Lake George, New South Wales, from the north east.¹⁷

Lycett, who never saw the lake, composed a picture which is consistent with Throsby's description but appears almost to be a country estate in Britain, complete with two gentlemen hunting using two hounds; their quarry on this occasion was an emu. No evidence is given of any presence of the people responsible for the creation of this landscape but who had been encountered by Throsby and his party.

The description by Throsby of the area being eminently suitable for both sheep and cattle would have appealed to a readership in the county of Aberdeen and its hinterland. By this time, Aberdeen was becoming a significant port for the export of fat cattle to markets in England and the citizens of Aberdeenshire would have been well aware of the value and importance of a trade in cattle.¹⁸ Similarly, readers of the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* could not help but be aware of the importance of land suitable for the raising of

¹⁷ Joseph Lycett. 1825, *View of Lake George, New South Wales, from the north east* Published by J. Souter, London (73 St. Paul's Church Yard) viewed 24 October 2017 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135703154>.

¹⁸ A. R. B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011 reprint of 2008 edition), 218.

sheep. By 1821 a significant part of the north of Scotland had been affected by the Highland clearances to make way for extensive sheep walks. Numerous mentions of the sheep economy appear in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* during the decade before publication of Throsby's letter from the colony. These mentions were in the form of, for example, advertisements for farms available to rent and suitable for sheep, or market prices for wool and animals and animal products. A description of well-watered downs of upwards of fifty thousand acres of fine grass in unoccupied country likely to be available at little cost and easily converted to good sheep walks, cannot have failed to attract the attention and excitement of those considering emigration and a future in a pastoral industry. This may have been as land holders or simply as workers in occupations such as shepherds or farm labourers. The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* claimed that the [Sydney] *Gazette* of the 4th of September had reported that "210 grants of land were then awaiting delivery at the Secretary's office" but there is no indication of the size of these grants nor of the intended beneficiaries of these grants. For some large land-holders in Scotland, the prospects of land of from fifty to sixty thousand acres ready for occupation as reported by Throsby must still have seemed very enticing.

Later in 1821 a letter appeared in the *Perth Courier* from a "Missionary resident at Paramatta [sic]" who appears to have taken a considerable interest in farming in the colony.¹⁹ It is likely that this missionary was the Methodist Walter Lawry whose presence in Bathurst in October 1820 is consistent with other details in the letter published in Scotland.²⁰ Much of the missionary's detailed and enthusiastic commentary on agricultural and pastoral matters would have been of great interest to readers in Perthshire. Perthshire straddles the Highland line and includes rich farming country. For farmers and would-be farmers in 1821 considering emigration the news in this letter that "[l]and is granted by Government to individuals, according to their means of improving it. A farmer, who could rent two hundred acres in England, would probably obtain a grant of one thousand acres here" would have been very attractive. This would be particularly so for those facing increases in rent or forced removal from a farm at the end of a lease but able to take some capital to invest in the new colony where land available would be granted, not leased. A multiple of five to one for potential landholding increases would

¹⁹ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

²⁰ <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lawry-walter-2337>

for many have been almost beyond realistic aspirations. Instead of renting two hundred acres in Britain, a farmer stood to receive an outright grant of one thousand acres in the colony. By contrast, the same Perth newspaper of 1 November 1821 advertised for only nineteen year lets by tender of farms ranging in size from eight to 130 acres.²¹ Each of these lets could, on the straight comparison of acreage and ownership, be far less attractive than a grant of 1,000 acres freehold in the colony with the understanding that all improvements made to that property would be retained by the settler, not passed back to the property's owner after the expiration of a lease.

A recurrent theme which emerges in descriptions of the colony is the extent of land available for pastoral pursuits. The missionary (Walter Lawry) whose letter was printed in the *Perth Courier* of 1 November 1821 noted the "vast extent of the country, and the comparative paucity of the inhabitants" as an explanation for the prevention of any limits being affixed to the extent of pasturage allowed to settlers.²² This letter would have been written at about the same time as Commissioner John Bigge was still conducting his investigation into conditions in the colony.²³ Any changes to land usage resulting from Bigge's investigations were still some time off and the letter's descriptions of almost unlimited available land would have been honest. Almost certainly of great interest to any reader of the *Perth Courier* would have been the news that "[n]one of the excellent land situated beyond the Blue Mountains has yet been granted to private individuals; it is probably reserved for future emigrants". The letter added that there was at this time nothing to prevent landholders from depasturing their flocks on unappropriated land. Landholders were already doing so, with the letter commenting how some of these newly discovered pastures were "already occupied by herds of cattle belonging to our wealthier graziers" who were expanding their estates by the simple expediency of occupation.²⁴

²¹ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 1.

²² *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

²³ Bigge, *State of NSW*.

²⁴ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

A letter dated 8th May 1823 “from a professional gentleman in New Norfolk, Van Diemen’s Land to his sister in Scotland” finally appeared in the *Inverness Courier*.²⁵ Unlike other settlers already occupying large extents of land this man rented a house and farm of only twenty-two acres at New Norfolk, for which he paid £30 per annum. This letter differs from earlier letters examined in that it originated in the sub-colony of Van Diemen’s Land. While Van Diemen’s Land formed part of the official colony of New South Wales but with its own Lieutenant-Governor, its geographic remoteness, its distinct climate, and its settlement pattern all contributed to make the experience of a settler different from that encountered on the mainland. Moreover,

[p]eople were not encouraged to immigrate to Tasmania prior to 1820. They needed a letter of recommendation from the Secretary of State unless they were a convict or involved in [administration of] the penal system. Some people could not land in Van Diemen’s Land because they did not have these papers.²⁶

With Under-Secretary Goulburn sending authority in 1820 to Lieutenant-Governor Sorrell to make land grants without reference to Sydney, the process of making these grants was speeded up.²⁷ Immigration to the colony increased allowing those in Scotland contemplating emigration to consider Van Diemen’s Land as a possible destination in which to seek a land grant.

The settlement by Europeans of Van Diemen’s Land can be traced to the Commission to Lieutenant John Bowen signed by Governor King on 28 March 1803 directing him to select a suitable site for a settlement and there to read the Commission establishing the settlement.²⁸ When the letter from the professional gentleman in New Norfolk explained that because “almost all the explored country is now occupied [a settler] has a great way to go into the interior” it is an indication of how rapidly the European settlement had taken over northern and eastern parts of the island in twenty years. Again, the

²⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

²⁶ <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/Immigration.aspx> accessed 26 October 2017.

²⁷ Goulburn to Sorrell, 24 July 1820, HRA Series III Vol. 3 p. 39, cited in <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/Immigration.asp>.

²⁸ Governor King to Lieutenant Bowen, HRA Series III Vol. 1, 189.

preoccupation reported in the letter was with the acquisition of land for the breeding and rearing of sheep and cattle. Sheep were said to be a most profitable concern. That would not have been a surprise for readers of the *Inverness Courier* who had observed or experienced, at first hand in many cases, the profits made or expected to be made from the large-scale farming of sheep in Scotland. It would have been reassuring, however, for that letter to confirm for prospective settlers that an investment in sheep farming would be at least as profitable in the colony as in the Highlands. While for over a century, sheep had grown in importance to the Highland economy, the trade in cattle also remained strong and this trade in beef cattle was certainly replicated in the colony in Van Diemen's Land where the country was described as full of cattle. However, a cautious reader of this published letter would have recognised a clear warning in it. Although there could be large grants of land made by government to settlers, and significant profits made, those without sufficient capital to exploit a land grant could expect to face difficulties beyond those which they might have been led to expect. All who had arrived as settlers with small capitals of £500 or £600 were said to have been much deceived.

The *Inverness Courier* announced in December 1824 the incorporation by royal charter of the Australian Agricultural Company.²⁹ The AACo. had been given a grant of one million acres in fee simple, the largest to date of any grant made in the colony. The incorporation was considered of sufficient importance that the story of the formation of the company was carried in both *The Times* and the *Evening Mail* of 1 December 1824. Although not a letter sent from the colony, this item has been included briefly in this study because of the announcement of a grant of one million acres of land, with the power to select the actual acres from land not already allocated and to sell or lease, under certain conditions and after five years, one half of the grant. The size of the grant may have been hard to comprehend by those reading the newspapers in Scotland. In January 1835, the whole of the parish of Inverness was reported as being about fourteen miles long by an average of two and a half miles wide, or, if that were a perfect rectangle, about thirty-five square miles, approximately 22,400 acres.³⁰ The parish of Dornoch, containing the cathedral town for the county of Sutherland, was said to be about nine miles by fifteen

²⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 9 December 1824, 3.

³⁰ NSA Vol. XIV, 1.

miles, or 135 square miles, some 86,400 acres.³¹ The grant in New South Wales could have contained the parish of Inverness more than forty four times over and that of Dornoch more than eleven times over. A grant of a million acres, even under conditions, would have seemed beyond the comprehension of most readers of the *Inverness Courier*. It would have served to emphasise to any readers who might have been concerned about the availability of land for occupation that large amounts of land existed and were being made available by the British colonial power.

A letter printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* in November 1825 acknowledged that it was reprinted from the *Dumfries Courier* with facts in it arranged for the readers' benefit.³² Its appearance in the *Caledonian Mercury* ensured a much wider readership than it might have received had its circulation been restricted to a readership in Dumfries or even the wider Dumfriesshire. "The *Mercury* is addressed to the Liberals of the aristocracy ... [and is] extensively seen throughout Scotland".³³ By 1817 the effects of a significant reduction in the armed forces of Great Britain after the Napoleonic wars were being felt throughout Scotland. Beyond those whose military careers were cut short by peace, the often traditional career openings for gentlemen's sons to enter the military, particularly younger sons who would not expect to inherit, were notably curtailed.³⁴ Other options including emigration had to be found. This letter from one who was described as having gained a very comfortable livelihood cannot have failed to attract some attention from the readership of the *Caledonian Mercury*.

The writer of this letter was a native of Galloway who had emigrated in 1817 to Van Diemen's Land. During the preceding few years, he had gained a very comfortable livelihood. He kept a store and cultivated a farm about two and a half miles from Launceston. There he had built a very neat house and laid out a large garden. With the labour of one convict for which he paid only £10 a year (plus rations), he was able to cultivate as much of the farm as it took to keep themselves in flour and potatoes. Although

³¹ NSA Vol. XV, 1.

³² *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

³³ *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine for 1836* Vol. III, 191.

³⁴ Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury*, 89; Richards, 'Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914', 119.

the writer had, about a year previous, purchased a further hundred acres of land contiguous to that already owned, by the time of writing he had done nothing for it in the way of improvement.³⁵ This is, however, an exception to the usual mention of the need for ever-larger holdings of land which were sought by settlers in the colony.

A map now in the National Library of Australia and dated 1872 gives some idea of the County of Argyle, centred on the town of Goulburn.³⁶ It was from here that “a person who was formerly resident in the neighbourhood of Inverness, but who, being unsuccessful in business, left this country about three or four years ago” wrote a letter that appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in May 1832.³⁷ The distance to Sydney markets cited in that letter as being 220 miles may have been slightly exaggerated, even were it to be from the most south-westerly parts of the County. Nevertheless, readers in the circulation area of the *Inverness Courier* would have appreciated the great distance involved. A distance of 220 miles would take a traveller starting at Inverness almost to the border of England, on roads, many of them made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by General Wade and others, of considerably better standard than the indifferent roads in the colony used by bullock drays. The poor condition of the road to Sydney was confirmed as late as 1839 by George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, when he recorded in his diary a meeting with two settlers who had travelled from Sydney. One of these had said that “the settlers for more than half the way [from Port Phillip] to Sydney had resolved to send their wool to Port Phillip, for from this side of Yass [ie the south of Yass] it was as it were a gentle declivity and good roads. Between Yass and Sydney roads bad and hills very steep”.³⁸ From the County of Argyle where the letter originated, however, there was really no choice but to use the bad roads to Sydney. The editor of this particular letter published in the *Inverness Courier* commented in conclusion, “[w]hether the details correspond with those given by our old friend, Mr Peter Cunningham, in his admirable account of a Two Years’ Residence in New South Wales,

³⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

³⁶ <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231004334/view>, Figure 1 above.

³⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

³⁸ G. A. Robinson *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate*, edited I. D. Clark, Vol. 1 (Ballarat: Heritage Matters, 2000, 2nd edition Revised edition 2014). Entry for 25 April 1839, 49.

we have not leisure to ascertain, but we may safely say that their correctness may be relied on”.³⁹ Cunningham does suggest some differences, noting a distance of 120 miles in a straight line with possibly another twenty to thirty more due to the indirect nature of the road but otherwise in his description of Argyle says little to contradict the letter writer.⁴⁰

The correspondent writing from Argyle declared that the estate which he managed was one of the most beautiful that could be imagined. It was an area rapidly taken over by settlers seeking pastoral properties with good grass and water. Further to the south, settlers had long progressed beyond Lake George/*Werrewaa* and Argyle would no longer have been considered in the colony as being at the extreme limits of European occupation. The soil and climate in Argyle may not have been such as to provide, as the writer claimed, “many of the luxuries of a tropical country”.⁴¹ There is, however, confirmation of the quality of the soil for agriculture in the 1823 report by Commissioner Bigge. Bigge stated that the “only parts of the County of Argyle that were known or had been examined prior to my departure from the colony were found to contain a tract of land the soil of which is of peculiar fertility and richness”.⁴² Unlike many other letters from New South Wales or Van Diemen’s Land appearing in the Scottish press at this time, the writer now managing an estate in the County of Argyle, made no mention of the availability of land to be taken up or purchased by prospective settlers. This was most likely because all the available land in the county had already been taken over by Europeans. In at least some cases there had been disputes requiring one or another party to relocate.⁴³ A person in Inverness reading this letter would have been alerted that while the County of Argyle had

³⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3; P. Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales; A Series of Letters Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in That Colony; Of Its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants; Of Its Topography, Natural History, &c &c*, in two volumes (London: Henry Colburn, 1827).

⁴⁰ Cunningham, *Two Years*.

⁴¹ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

⁴² Bigge, *State of NSW*, 5-6.

⁴³ Gwendoline Wilson, *Murray of Yarralumla* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968), 28 – 32. Captain Murray had to relocate twice because of conflicts over occupation of lands.

been settled by Europeans by this time, anyone planning on moving to the area would have to take employment or be prepared to purchase land.

A young Highland shepherd, employed at *Bonawe* in New South Wales, whose letter was quoted in the *Inverness Courier* in November 1837 presented a very attractive picture of life in the colony.⁴⁴ He had apparently gained favourable employment from a gentleman whose origins were at the far end of the Great Glen from his own, but near enough to be considered close, particularly when separated from those origins by half a world. It is not surprising that the young shepherd had found employment with an Argyleshire gentleman since like many migrant communities abroad, settlers from a region or nation often settled together. In the case of those from the Highlands of Scotland, the common link was often the Gaelic culture and language. It is possible that at least some Highlanders spoke no other language.

It is likely that the extensive property on which he found employment was in what is known today as the Central West of New South Wales and was at that time on the edge of the limits of the nineteen counties of settlement.⁴⁵ The property was described as being to the value of nearly £100,000, carrying 50,000 sheep; 1,000 head of cattle; and about 500 horses. While the purchase price of *Bonawe* was not disclosed, had it been purchased for 5s an acre, which was the price of land set by Government regulation in 1832 or being paid in the Port Phillip colony, it would have extended over much of 400,000 acres, a huge area compared to most properties in Scotland.⁴⁶ Even at £1 an acre, the property would have extended to 100,000 acres although it is uncertain whether a property of this size would have been able to sustain the stock numbers mentioned. The description of the owner's extensive property would have served as notice to those reading this and with capital to invest that large holdings of land could be gained and fortunes could be made.

An item in the *Inverness Courier* in June 1838 was copied verbatim from an article headed 'The Highlanders per the *Mid Lothian*' in the Sydney newspaper the *Colonist* of

⁴⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

⁴⁵ An investment company, Bonawe Holdings, has its office registered in Orange. The rich pastoral and agricultural nature of that district would fit with the description given. The nineteen counties are marked on the map at page 19 above, taken from <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231005543/view>.

⁴⁶ HRA, Vol. XVI, 599.

10 January 1838.⁴⁷ The *Mid Lothian* had arrived in Sydney on 12 December 1837 but only some of the passengers had been engaged by Andrew Lang, brother of Rev. J. D. Lang, to work on his farm.⁴⁸ This article was also mostly repeated in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* of 11 January 1838. This latter newspaper was apparently the most recent paper from the colony received by the *Inverness Courier* before its own article on 13 June 1838.⁴⁹ While the *Inverness Courier* claimed that the contents of the article would “be found interesting to many families whose relations emigrated to New South Wales ... in the ship *Mid Lothian*” it was likely to be of interest to a wider readership. Although Governor Gipps claimed to be entirely ignorant of the circular letter written by Rev. J.D. Lang giving promises of land on which an entire community might be settled, the article publicly reported the honouring of a commitment claimed to have been given to allow the Gaelic-speaking emigrants from the *Mid Lothian* to be settled in the same location “to enable them to enjoy the regular dispensation of the ordinances of religion in their native language”.⁵⁰ The Highlanders were to be accompanied by their minister, Rev. W. Macintyre and when the church which was planned for the community was built, it would become the first Celtic church in the southern hemisphere. The issues concerning worship will be addressed below but at this stage, the matter of sufficient land being available on which to build a complete community is the focus.

Although the ostensible reason given for the Highlanders to be settled in one place was to allow the enjoyment of religion in their native language, there were wider considerations of community which were being respected. For centuries much of agriculture in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland had been based on the runrig system of land allocation. Each family in a community shared in the good and less good agricultural strips of arable land by annual allocation in a “mingle-mangle of dispersed strips”.⁵¹ This meant that houses were clustered together with the land to be farmed being

⁴⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 13 June 1838, 4.

⁴⁸ http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5313&item=4_4780&ship=Midlothian

⁴⁹ *Colonist*, 10 January 1838, 2 and *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 11 January 1838, 3-4.

⁵⁰ Glenelg to Gipps, Despatch 253, 4 December 1838, HRA Vol. 19, 692.

⁵¹ Malcolm Gray, ‘The Abolition of Runrig in the Highlands of Scotland’, *The Economic History Review*,

spread around with members of each nucleated village, the *baile*, living and working together.⁵² The runrig system had disappeared by the time the *Mid Lothian* carried its passengers from Skye to New South Wales. Replacement of runrig with the newer crofting townships meant that each family lived on its allocated land rather than in a cluster and was likely to reduce the feeling of community previously existing.⁵³ That the strength of community feeling remained is evidenced by the desire of the emigrants to be resettled together. A potential migrant's ability to live and farm among members of one's kin and community would have been of great interest and probably attractive to other Highlanders reading this report and considering emigration to Australia. It meant that enough unallocated land existed to permit the establishment of entire farming communities.

However, the plans for the Highland emigrants to settle together failed to materialise. A deputation from the Highlanders inspected that land and found it unsuitable for the purposes planned. The reasons have not been recorded. Nevertheless, a number of the migrants were eventually settled together in a community in the same region on *Dunmore*, the land being farmed by Andrew Lang, younger brother of Rev. John Dunmore Lang.⁵⁴ Others of the original party found employment with other settlers. At the time when the *Inverness Courier* published its encouraging report of the community being enabled to stay together, the disappointment of the original plan was yet to occur and readers of the newspaper would have been led to believe that sufficient land existed to transplant an entire community. The eventual settlement was noted in Sydney in the *Colonist* of 27 January 1838 which described the settlement of the "101 souls" in glowing terms, even if the land allocations were not disclosed.⁵⁵

Vol. 5, No. 1 (1952), 46.

⁵² For an example of this see the photograph and notes in Angus & Patricia Macdonald *The Hebrides, an Aerial View of a Cultural Landscape* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010), 38 - 39.

⁵³ For an example of a typical newer crofting township see the photograph and notes in Angus & Patricia Macdonald, *op. cit.*, 228 - 229.

⁵⁴ 'The Free Settler or Felon database' of references to people and places in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley https://www.jenwilletts.com/john_eales.htm and https://www.jenwilletts.com/andrew_lang.htm accessed 27 January 2018.

⁵⁵ *Colonist*, 27 January 1838, 3.

As has been discussed above, the *Inverness Courier* devoted an appreciable amount of space to describing in very positive terms the conditions and outcomes for emigrants from the western Highlands and the Hebrides who were said to have made the move successfully and settled in New South Wales. Whether all the reports were accurate is not the issue here but it is the encouragement to emigrate which was given in the various newspapers which is of interest. Those reports made a strong case for emigration by the surplus population of the area, even in the case of those who, like the migrants on the *William Nicol*, the *Mid Lothian* and the *Brilliant*, could not afford their passage costs and needed assistance from the government's emigration scheme.⁵⁶ The readership of the *Inverness Courier* would have been largely within Inverness-shire. Extensive overpopulation by the late 1830s combined with clearance from many large estates and a lack of alternative employment had resulted in considerable distress for a significant part of the local population left landless by the clearances.⁵⁷ As noted already, the reports of land readily available stood a strong chance of convincing landless Highlanders to emigrate.

By contrast, a different class of settler was encouraged by the *Caledonian Mercury* and the *John O'Groat Journal*. Each newspaper afforded considerable space to the same long article on emigration to New South Wales, taking as the primary source the recently published book, *Three Years Practical Experience of a Settler in New South Wales*.⁵⁸ This book said that:

The class of persons to whom New South Wales is peculiarly well adapted as a place of settlement, are those belonging to the middle ranks of society - individuals who are in uneasy circumstances, or whose prospects are not very cheering, yet who still possess *something*, which will not only carry them to their new locality, but set them fairly a-going there on their proposed new line of industry.

⁵⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 30 May 1838, 3.

⁵⁷ Graham Hannaford, 'The 1845 New Poor Law for Scotland: a Fundamental Change', *Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History*, Vol. XVII 2018, 48 et seq.

⁵⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4; *John O'Groat Journal*, 14 September 1838, 4; David Lindsay Waugh, *Three years' practical experience of a settler in New South Wales: being extracts from letters to his friends in Edinburgh from 1834 to 1837* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1838, available <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52764062>).

Such persons were exhorted to arrive in the colony with not less than £50 and ideally £1500 to £2000 to allow them to engage in cattle-rearing and sheep-farming, said to be “the paramount object of pursuit” of all those from the middle ranks of society settling in the colony.⁵⁹

The readership of the *Caledonian Mercury* was likely to include those with an amount of capital to invest in the colony, including farmers and tacksmen. These could liquidate stock and other assets and emigrate rather than face significant rent increases on negotiation of lease renewals by modernising landlords.⁶⁰ While the article printed in August/September 1838 included a paragraph largely taken from Cunningham’s *Two Years in New South Wales* it mostly contained extensive material extracted from a compilation of extracts from letters and published as *Three Years’ Experience of a Settler*.⁶¹

The approaches taken in the two books were quite different. Cunningham believed that several small investors could usefully combine their capital to greater practical effect, with the *Caledonian Mercury* suggesting that this would also allow settlers to reside “at no great distance one from the other”.⁶² This would allow “pleasure in the enjoyment of the society of old acquaintances in the district selected for settlement”, reflecting the sentiment of those from the *Mid Lothian* who had so earnestly sought to be settled together in the colony.⁶³ It would also have permitted some degree of cooperation by groups of settlers, in effect turning modest sized farms into larger operations with extensive acreages, to some extent mirroring the ongoing consolidation of farms in Scotland.

David Waugh’s approach in *Three Years’ Practical Experience* was rather different. Unlike Cunningham who recommended immediate investment with others but ultimately did not remain in the colony as a permanent settler to prove the wisdom of his own advice,

⁵⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4; *John O’Groat Journal*, 14 September 1838, 4.

⁶⁰ Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury*, 23.

⁶¹ Cunningham, *Two years in NSW*; Waugh, *Three years’ practical experience*.

⁶² *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

the younger Waugh chose not to invest his capital of £300 on arrival in Sydney.⁶⁴ Waugh recognised on arrival that although trained for the law, like many others, his best prospects were in farming. He took advice from those already in the colony before proceeding to familiarise himself with conditions in the country beyond Sydney. He was advised in great detail by an old established settler whose guidance must have resonated with the young man. That advice, likely to be appreciated also by other Presbyterians still in Scotland but considering emigration, extolled the benefits of prudence; hard work with a willingness to toil equally alongside those whom he governed and to share their living conditions; thrift; careful management of property and finances; and abstinence. The advice from the old settler explained in great and precise mathematical detail how capital, wisely invested in stock and managed, could accumulate. That advice was acted upon and the article records that, in a letter of February 1836 to his father, Waugh tells of the success which this advice had brought him.⁶⁵ He had been able to rent *Gatton Park*, the farm next door to that of his employer. The extent of that farm is not recorded but on renting it Waugh had been able to move to it 665 sheep, eight milk cows and about ten head of other cattle. The ten other cattle may have constituted a team of eight working bullocks with two spares. By following the advice given to him, within a few years Waugh had been able to turn his initial £300 capital into a farm equal to or more extensive than many farms in Scotland.

Waugh's earlier letter to his mother and quoted at some length in the newspapers, recounted how he had already been made overseer of his friend's farm at Goulburn Plains and this would have been of some interest to other young men reading his extensive advice and considering whether to emigrate. While trusting management of a farm to a relatively inexperienced young man may seem unusual, for the times perhaps it was not so and may have been a common practice. Not far from Thomas Barker's farm of *Mummel* near Goulburn being managed by Waugh, on the Limestone Plains the property now known as *Yarralumla* was being jointly owned and solely managed by a young Terence Aubrey Murray.⁶⁶ In 1839 Murray in turn left the property and its workforce of

⁶⁴ Waugh, *Three years' practical experience*.

⁶⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4; *John O'Groat Journal*, 14 September 1838, 4.

⁶⁶ Wilson, *Murray of Yarralumla*, 101 et seq.

assigned convicts and other staff in the charge of seventeen year old Stewart Mowle while Murray was engaged elsewhere. To those in Scotland reading the *Three Years' Practical Experience* book itself or the newspapers reporting on it and quoting from it, the prospects for a young Presbyterian man of the educated middle class must have seemed enormous with the acquisition of land and stock being the proven reward for hard work.

Although the writer of a letter which appeared in the *Inverness Courier* on 17 April 1839 and elsewhere is not identified by name, its recipient is.⁶⁷ The writer may have been from the same area as the letter's addressee, Mr John Cameron, manager for Captain Ross of Arnisdale. Arnisdale is in the parish of Glenelg in the County of Inverness from where so many of the inhabitants had emigrated that it is remarked upon in both the old and new Statistical Accounts of Scotland. Both Rev. Colin Maciver, contributor to the OSA who referred to emigration as an evil, and Rev. Alexander Beith, contributor to the NSA, related the significant decline in population in the parish to emigration and each cited the change in land use occasioned by the coming of sheep as a major cause.⁶⁸ The writer of this letter, who emigrated in 1834 as the NSA was being compiled is likely to be among those considered as having emigrated by Rev. Beith although Beith referred only to America as the destination of Glenelg's emigrants.

The writer, a shepherd from Lochaber in the western Highlands of Scotland, had left there in 1834 but by February 1838, having spent two years in Van Diemen's Land managing sheep had moved to the new establishment of the Port Phillip district where European settlers had arrived in 1835.⁶⁹ With this change in status in his new land of adoption from shepherd to manager with improved prospects, it is little wonder that he desired anxiously that his father and other relations would join him. Although there are apparent contradictions in the letter which claimed both that there was no rent to pay for the land but also that it was sold at five shillings an acre, it is clear that the former shepherd had managed to improve his capital to the extent that he expected to be able to

⁶⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2.

⁶⁸ OSA, Vol. 16; NSA Vol. 14.

⁶⁹ "The Europeans, Henty Batman and Fawkner",
<https://guides.slv.vic.gov.au/Victoriasearlyhistory/europeansettlement>.

take up land on his own account within two years. It would have been encouraging news for readers of the *Inverness Courier*.

The descriptions given of the land in this letter writer are consistent with those of John Batman, who led the initial body of settlers to Port Phillip. The countryside where the settler was managing a property in 1838 is described by him as “beautiful, with a considerable extent of plains, hills, and glens”. Those who had been far into the interior said that the country was well wooded, without too many trees.⁷⁰ In his journal, Batman commented on the state of the countryside through which he was travelling while investigating its suitability for European settlement.⁷¹ He reported it to be of the finest description for grazing purposes, with “the richest grass and verdure, so delightful to the eyes of the sheep farmer” and thinly-timbered.⁷² These reports of the nature of the countryside will have been noted by those remaining in Scotland where, in the parish of Glenelg, it was said that the “climate of the north-west coast of Scotland generally unfits it for the purposes of agriculture ... [and] an agriculturist might calculate on losing almost every fourth crop”.⁷³ The readers of this letter in the *Inverness Courier* cannot have failed to note the ready availability of land in the new settlement of Port Phillip stated here as selling at five shillings an acre. Some 300,000 sheep and 41,000 head of cattle had already been shipped to the area from the increasingly-overcrowded Van Diemen’s Land colony. At five shillings an acre a settler of modest means could purchase a square mile of land, or 640 acres, for £160.

The climate was said to be so good that each ewe reared two lambs a year and the writer claimed that the sheep he had bought had increased in numbers to the point where he believed he had as many sheep as would stock a good extent of land. The estimates of carrying capacity available in twenty first century calculations vary considerably and would have borne no relation to what was accepted in the mid-nineteenth century for

⁷⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2.

⁷¹ John Batman, *The settlement of John Batman in Port Phillip: from his own journal* (Melbourne: George Slater, 1856, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-489640091>).

⁷² Batman, *The settlement of John Batman in Port Phillip*, 11. Similar but increasingly enthusiastic descriptions are found in the same journal on, for example, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19.

⁷³ NSA Vol. 14, 138, 136.

untested pasture in the Port Phillip area. It is clear that the initial stock of sheep and cattle, increasingly rapidly, would have taken over a large amount of the land previously available to its traditional custodians and acquired from them by Batman on Sunday 7 June 1835. Batman claimed he had purchased the land from its custodians.⁷⁴ This purchase has long been accepted as fact and the use of the land by settlers would have been regarded by them as a legitimate acquisition. In an almost contemporary biography of Batman, James Bonwick has claimed that in Van Diemen's Land, Batman had enjoyed good relations with the native peoples there and that "[h]is interest in the aboriginal inhabitants alone entitles him to gratitude".⁷⁵ Bonwick added that "[t]his is not the man to be sneered at for his treaty with the Port Phillip Blacks".⁷⁶ However 120 years later Alastair Campbell reported a close examination of the Port Phillip Association papers and other documents which suggest a different version of events.⁷⁷ He found that "Batman forged the deeds acquiring the Port Phillip land allegedly signed by the aborigines and that he and others fabricated an account of events".⁷⁸ Whether the treaty was a forgery or not, readers of the *Inverness Courier* in Scotland would have had no reason to question the availability of excellent farming land in Port Phillip.

By contrast with that report, readers of the same edition of the *Inverness Courier* on 17 April 1839 would have seen advertisements on the first page of that newspaper offering the let of several local farms. The carrying capacity of each of these farms varied considerably with two of them described as being well adapted for two retiring shepherds and rearing from 200 to 400 sheep each. Most of the other offerings that day were far more extensive and reflected the trend in the county for consolidation of small farms into larger units. None of these farms was available for purchase, and with the exception perhaps of the farms suitable for shepherds with small flocks only, would have been out of consideration by someone in the class of the shepherd from Lochaber, then working in the Port Phillip district and planning on taking up land in his own name. The opportunities

⁷⁴ Batman, *The settlement of John Batman in Port Phillip*, 20 - 22.

⁷⁵ James Bonwick, *John Batman, the founder of Victoria* (Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1867), 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Campbell, *John Batman and the aborigines*, 3.

⁷⁸ Campbell, op. cit., 3; 99-105.

for those with even a modest amount of capital would have been far greater in the colony than in the home county in Scotland and this cannot have failed to attract the attention of anyone reading the report in the newspaper.

In November 1844 the *John O’Groat Journal* printed what it described as extracts from a very long and apparently entertaining letter from Mr Robert Battley, acknowledging the *Gateshead Observer* as its source.⁷⁹ The letter had been written over some four months during the southern summer, when the colony was recovering from an extended drought while simultaneously in some areas dealing with flooding rains. In January and February 1844 there had been rain on thirty days, leaving crops to rot on the ground. The newspaper explained that only extracts from the letter were printed which helps to explain the scattered, random nature of much of what was published in a stream-of-consciousness missive as does the extended period of the letter’s compilation during which circumstances and attitudes will have altered. Unusually in this study both the writer and the recipients are identified by name.

Battley’s letter described small farmers in the colony as having from five to one hundred acres. On these he claimed that the farmers lived and dressed well but nevertheless grumbled. He claimed that by buying the good-will of a farm for as little as £30 or £50 and paying rent of £1 per acre per annum, a man with family could take possession of a fully stocked and equipped farm, complete with a house in which the family could live. This appears to sit at odds with his own business premises of an acre and a quarter for which he paid £350 for a lease for eight years with an annual rental of £5, even if the premises were reported as consisting of a number of buildings for processing animal products. In the letter Battley mentioned how a topic of boasting in the colony related to who had the most land. He reported on larger properties, citing one gentleman with 75,000 sheep, 15,000 oxen and 3,000 horses, while living 300 miles from his property of 3,000 to 4,000 acres. To this acreage was added about twice as much under a government lease for twopence per acre per annum. Even at 12,000 acres it is impossible that the property could have carried the stock numbers quoted and readers of the *John O’Groat Journal* almost certainly would have recognised the statement as

⁷⁹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 22 November 1844, 4.

misleading and wrong. It is also not clear how Battley obtained the rental costs reported which are inconsistent with Government regulations.⁸⁰

As a fellmonger and tanner Battley would have taken a close interest in the output of the pastoral sector. He reported that the industry, like everything else, was “going to nothing”. He noted that only a lack of capital prevented him from buying 10,000 fine skins while he was already retailing thirty sheep a day on occasions. Reflecting the downturn in the colonial economy at the time, he reported the boiling down of large numbers of sheep just for the tallow.⁸¹ Experiments on boiling down stock for tallow were published in 1843 and the process was quickly taken up in the colony. It allowed surplus, diseased, old or unproductive animals to be converted into a product for export, proving the salvation of pastoralists facing economic distress since the late 1830s. These problems were said to be due to falling wool prices, droughts, and increased labour costs following the reduction in transported convicts being available as labour.

Battley also reported attacks by native dogs which sometimes killed up to 40 sheep in a night. These reports would have sent very mixed messages to readers of the *John O’Groat Journal*. Anyone likely to consider emigrating to work in the pastoral industry would be left uncertain of a future where the management of sheep seemed to be in decline yet clearly needing shepherds to prevent attacks on the sheep.⁸² Battley’s letter makes many comments on the nature of workers and other residents in the colony, all of which would have been of concern to readers in Britain. It is not clear how, or even if, readers of the *John O’Groat Journal* might have reacted to this report sent from the colony, not by a Scot but by a former resident of South Shields. Any reader taking the time to examine it closely would have been given more questions than answers by it. It is unlikely that the information in this letter would have influenced any emigration decisions, either in favour of emigration or against it.

⁸⁰ HRA, Vol. XVI, 599.

⁸¹ K. L. Fry, ‘Boiling down in the 1840s: A Grimy Means to a Solvent End’, *Labour History*, No. 25 (Nov. 1973), 1-18.

⁸² In June 1841, the Immigration Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council had taken evidence from many witnesses citing the lack of shepherds to manage flocks as hampering further development of the rural sector in the colony.

A letter sent from “*Richlands* by Goulburn” was written after the start of recovery from a severe downturn in the fortunes of the colony of New South Wales that had involved the bankruptcy of many who had failed in business.⁸³ One such bankrupt is described in the letter, being a young gentleman about to depart permanently for Britain having lost several thousand pounds by buying sheep at a time when prices were high although at the time thought to be moderate, and then being forced to sell during a term of depression.

However, the letter claimed that pastoralists who had been able to hold onto their flocks had seen a significant and rapid increase in the prices of livestock and particularly those for sheep which had more than doubled in value in six months. The writer attributed this to enhanced prices for wool in England, apparently due to decreased imports of wool from France and Belgium. This was at the same time as increased mechanisation of the fabric industry was resulting in greater demand for raw materials.⁸⁴ Newspaper readers in Glasgow and elsewhere would have recognised the increased imports from the colony.⁸⁵ With increasing wool prices, it is unlikely that the correspondent writing from *Richlands* was basing the optimistic tone of his/her letter on the process of rendering sheep for tallow, so recently remarked upon by another correspondent in this study. While recounting the sad situation that had beset many in the colony who had lost heavily, the letter was generally positive in its assessment of the colony’s future. In this it may have offered hope to potential migrants who were better prepared by this advice for the vagaries of an economy which was so solidly dependent on the rural sector and in particular the wool clip from large numbers of sheep.

A Scottish gentleman in Glasgow had handed to the *Glasgow Citizen* a letter received from his son which had been written on 10 February 1845 from Boydtown at Twofold Bay in New South Wales.⁸⁶ Twofold Bay is on the east coast of Australia, close to the

⁸³ *Glasgow Citizen*, 28 December 1844, 4.

⁸⁴ Cameron, ‘The Highland Clearances: History, Literature and Politics’.

⁸⁵ ‘Price of wool’, *South Australian Register* 13 July 1844, 3; ‘The wool market’, *The Australian* 17 December 1844, 2; Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844, with a Preface written in 1892*, Translated by Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky (George Allen & Unwin 1952 reprint of the March 1892 edition), 9-10.

⁸⁶ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 1.

present border with the state of Victoria. Benjamin Boyd, originally from Wigtown in the south of Scotland had established Boydtown soon after his 1842 arrival in the colony. The town and port were intended to service Boyd's extensive pastoral interests on the Maneroo/Monaro area and to provide for his steamships plying the coastal trade route between Van Diemen's Land and Sydney. The Monaro region is an extensive high altitude region but reaching down to the coast; its principal town is Cooma. Boyd's interests at Maneroo consisted in May 1844 of fourteen stations covering an estimated 231,000 acres, which were in addition to another four stations of 150,000 acres in the Port Phillip district, a huge holding which had been acquired within a few years of Boyd's arrival in Sydney.⁸⁷ Boyd had been "animated by an insatiable attack ... of earth hunger, and was not satisfied with less than what would comprise several English counties".⁸⁸

Neither the letter's addressee nor writer are identified, but it is worth considering whether the letter writer was one of Ben Boyd's family or a close associate. John Curwen Christian Boyd, a younger brother of Ben, had married Margaret Campbell in Florence and in 1841 Curwen and Margaret had sailed for Sydney where her father, Robert Campbell, was a leading merchant and prominent citizen.⁸⁹ James Boyd had arrived in Sydney with his brother in July 1842; by 1844 Archibald Boyd had been sent to London to represent the Pastoralists' Association; while in 1847 it was a cousin but not the brother with the same name, William Sprott Boyd who was appointed to try and sort out the financial affairs of the various companies associated with Ben Boyd.⁹⁰ Therefore at least four Boyd brothers were in the colony at some time, with a cousin to follow in 1847; the "father in Glasgow", recipient of the letter, may have been the sons' father Edward who was still alive at the date of this letter.⁹¹ The point may be important because, if the writer were a close associate of Boyd, that could explain the attitudes obvious in the letter. Marion Diamond has reported Boyd's ability to recruit enterprising young men, even if not all such appointments would be as fortuitous as his appointment of Augustus Morris,

⁸⁷ Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, Despatch 107, 17 May 1844.

⁸⁸ Richards, 'Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914', 127.

⁸⁹ Marion Diamond, *Ben Boyd of Boydtown* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 15.

⁹⁰ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*, 170 et seq.

⁹¹ http://www.anatpro.com/index_files/John_Christian_Curwen_Boyd.htm.

former owner of Colac Station, to be Boyd's manager of that station newly purchased by Boyd.⁹² Even if the letter writer were not part of the Boyd group, it raises issues of likely concern to many readers of the *Glasgow Citizen* with an interest in the question of emigration, deploring as it does the prospects in the colony for well-educated and respectable young men who were unlikely to be able to progress to the acquisition of large properties as otherwise many might have expected.⁹³ Boyd's treatment of some of his South Seas Islander workers is described below in the section of this thesis dealing with pay rates (pp. 151-152).

Some good news from New South Wales was contained in the second paragraph of an item printed in the *Banffshire Journal* in April 1847, reporting an expedition of the colony's Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell.⁹⁴ Mitchell had earlier published in Sydney in 1834 a detailed map of the colony of New South Wales".⁹⁵ This was a long expedition into the interior which Mitchell had conducted and his despatches, addressed to Governor FitzRoy, had been sent on to FitzRoy at Bathurst.⁹⁶ These despatches were then printed on 7 December 1846 in a supplement to the *New South Wales Government Gazette*, a copy of which was sent by FitzRoy to Secretary of State Earl Grey but without comment on the matters contained in those reports.⁹⁷ In reporting the expedition, the *Banffshire Journal* mentioned the discovery by Mitchell of immense tracts of fertile land, well-watered by rivers including one which Mitchell considered (wrongly) discharged into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Mitchell had declared that the aim of his expedition had been to find a route from Sydney to the Gulf which he believed would provide an alternative transport link between Sydney and Europe, joining up with steam ships plying the route to India. In this he was disappointed but his report of vast areas of luxuriant

⁹² Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*, 34.

⁹³ Similar concerns to those raised in this letter were raised also in a letter which appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* of 2 April 1845 but written from Carcoar, some thirty-odd miles west-south-west of Bathurst. It is possible that the same young man wrote both letters.

⁹⁴ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

⁹⁵ <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232180396/view>.

⁹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1846, 2.

⁹⁷ Despatch No. 3 of 3 January 1847, HRA, Vol. XXV, 299.

pasturage in what is now central Queensland would have had some appeal to readers of the paper with capital to invest and the courage to venture into new areas of the colony. Any readers who had followed the fortunes of the colony and were aware of the droughts which had caused such hardship to settlers and their stock would have been reassured that there were at least some areas with plenty of rivers and fodder sufficient to supply the whole world with animal food.⁹⁸

Taking almost two of the seven columns of closely spaced type on page 3 of its edition of 23 May 1848, the *Inverness Courier* made clear that it had seen a copy of a memorial to Lord John Russell concerning the need to move the starving population of Britain to Australia.⁹⁹ It included testimonials from several persons who had emigrated successfully to New South Wales and went further than had the *Fife Herald* a few weeks earlier when it too had written on the topic.¹⁰⁰ The testimonials had been provided to Mrs Caroline Chisholm and she had in turn made them available to the British Parliament and public. The *Inverness Courier* also used considerable space to offer the newspaper's own opinions on the benefits of emigration to Australia. It linked the political unrest in Britain and more widely in Europe with the need to find solutions to the pressing social problems caused by unemployment and genuine destitution.

The first of the written testimonials reporting the benefits of emigration was from "Alexander Mac-", originally from the parish of Strathconon west of Inverness.¹⁰¹ He claimed to have prospered in New South Wales although it is uncertain whether the initial employment of twelve months by Sir George Mackenzie which he mentioned had been in Scotland or in the colony. Having arrived in 1836, by May 1845 Alexander Mac- said he was in possession of a farm and considerable numbers of sheep and cattle, had received wages and rations far beyond what were available in his home parish, and was employing

⁹⁸ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

⁹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3; Henry White, Secretary to the Committee, et al, *Competence in a Colony, Contrasted with Poverty at Home; or, Relief to landlords and Labourers Held Out by Australian Colonization and Emigration. A memorial Addressed to The Right Hon. Lord John Russell, etc. etc.* (London: John Murray, 1848).

¹⁰⁰ *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848, 4.

¹⁰¹ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3; mentioned also in Richards, 'Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914', 127.

labourers at up to £20 a year plus rations. Given that in nine years he had obtained his own farm, it was a very positive outcome for readers to consider.

This testimonial was followed by an item written by a man originally from about sixty miles from Fort William and therefore within the readership area of the *Inverness Courier*, possibly known to some of the readers of the paper.¹⁰² He acknowledged that he had been enabled to emigrate to the colony by banker Thomas MacDonald Esq. The writer of this letter would probably have been employed on the estates of Cameron of Lochiel in Lochaber for which MacDonald had been the factor, or as a worker on the construction of the Caledonian Canal which went through Lochaber.¹⁰³ In May 1835, the diet of the peasants in the area consisted of potatoes, with herrings or milk, although a few in better circumstances may have had a little meal or mutton.¹⁰⁴ This correspondent had been seven years in the colony and was share-farming with his brother-in-law on a farm of which fifteen acres were already under cultivation. He was also working as a carter using his own wagon and oxen, had forty head of cattle and had “not the same care as at home; [and was] not in debt to the landlord. I am a good deal better off here than I could have been at Fort William, it’s far better for my children”.¹⁰⁵ Given the stated diet of the peasants in Fort William, his claim that “it’s far better for my children” in New South Wales can be believed easily, while his report that he and his brother-in-law shared a farm successfully without any debt to a landlord would have found an appreciative reception among the readers of the *Inverness Courier*.

The newspaper summarised the information it had collected and expressed the view that in Scotland for many the best which could be expected was nothing more than a decent subsistence and the hope that a healthy, hardworking son might sustain his parents’ old age. Compared to this the prospects and opportunities in Australia were far better. “[W]hen did the shepherd become the owner of the hills on which he tended his master’s

¹⁰² *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3.

¹⁰³ Lochaber Archives, CL/A/8/1/5, Charge and Discharge of Thomas MacDonald, WS, Agent and Factor, of the Estate of Lochiel, with arrears and rents. 28/01/1817 - 8/12/1818.

¹⁰⁴ NSA Vol. 14 parish of Kilmallie, Inverness-shire, 123.

¹⁰⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3.

flocks?” asked the *Inverness Courier*.¹⁰⁶ In Australia, for a hardworking man and his family, the opportunity to become the owner of land seemed certain to be realised. Land was stated to be available for purchase at only twenty shillings an acre.

The paper also commented on the situation for the owners of property in Scotland. These were bearing the burden of increasing rates to provide support for the poor through the Parochial Boards. It noted that in 1847 the registered poor in Scotland totalled 85,971 with another 60,399 casual poor receiving benefits for varying periods for a total expenditure of £372,885.¹⁰⁷ This relief had to be provided by the heritors/land-owners and others in each parish. Emigration of the excess labouring population would help to relieve the burden of taxes for land-holders and others of the propertied classes. The report in the *Inverness Courier* that day in May 1848 would have spoken to readers in a number of stations of life.¹⁰⁸ To peasants working for others or holding on to a small holding at the whim of a landlord or a landlord’s factor, the prospect that settlement in the colony might lead to acquisition of a farm of their own held out the hope of a secure future. For landlords such as Sir George Mackenzie of Strathconon or factors such as banker Thomas MacDonald of the Cameron of Lochiel estate it offered the prospect of removing the needy from their charge. This allowed further clearing of an unprofitable population from the lands which land holders were seeking to make profitable by improvements including consolidation into larger units.

In April 1849, the *Inverness Courier* continued its coverage of emigration to the Australian colonies.¹⁰⁹ It claimed that “[e]migration now agitates the public mind throughout England, Ireland and Scotland, and the means afforded for enabling parties to emigrate seem quite inadequate to the great and increasing requirements of the people, both at home and in the colonies”. It included further statements provided in late 1845

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ The Board of Supervision for Relief of the Poor established under the 1845 new Poor Law for Scotland maintained meticulous records and received twice-yearly reports from each of the 880 Parochial Boards throughout Scotland. NRS, HH23/1-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

and early 1846 by three former residents of Inverness-shire, settled in New South Wales and again supplied to the paper by Mrs Chisholm.¹¹⁰ Of the three people supplying these statements, it appears that the two men whose statements appeared in the press that day had each travelled from Skye on board the *William Nicol*, leaving Skye in July 1837 and reaching Sydney on 27 October 1837. The *William Nicol* was the first to arrive in Sydney of three vessels carrying Highlanders to the colony at this time, the others being the *Brilliant* and the *Mid Lothian*.

The first statement was from John Gillies, shown on the ship's passenger manifest as John Gilles aged 32 with a wife and three children, engaged for two years by "Sir J[ohn] Jamison, Capertee" as an overseer at the salary of £40 and rations.¹¹¹ Gillies claimed to be well known to Mr Gibbons, factor for the Macleod of Macleod estates in the parish of Duirinish on Skye. However, noting his claim to have learned his trade in Portree on Skye, that he had half an acre of town allotment rather than a farm in New South Wales and that he made a pair of shoes for the schoolmaster now and then, it is likely that he was working as a shoemaker in New South Wales. Half an acre of town allotment would have allowed a family sufficient ground for a large vegetable and fruit garden. It is possible that he had been employed on the Macleod estates of Duirinish as a shoemaker even if that would have been less relevant to his gaining employment as an overseer for Jamison.

Gillies/Gilles believed that he had clearly improved his lot in life. He owned a half acre town allotment and his own house, had plenty of poultry and his ten head of cattle were on agistment on a squatter's run. For each of these cattle he was by 1846 only paying eight shillings a year, down from the previous ten shillings. Given that he claimed to be using milk from his own cows, they must have been nearby. Living on a town allotment with access to cattle on a nearby squatter's run indicates that Gillies was living in a country town rather than in Sydney. The town must have been large enough that his children were able to attend school, for which there was no charge. He noted the

¹¹⁰ Other statements had been published by the paper nearly a year before, *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3.

¹¹¹ http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5313&item=4_4780&ship=William%20Nicol.

quantities of tea, sugar and meat which the family consumed every week, which together with the poultry and eggs he owned, and almost certainly produce from cultivating much of his half acre of ground, would have ensured that all of his family were well fed.

The other man's statement was from John Macguinness, from Skye in Inverness-shire who said he had arrived in Australia in 1837 with eight very young children. The passenger lists for ships arriving in Sydney in 1837 suggest that he was the passenger on the *William Nicol* named there as John McInnes, age 35, with no occupation or employer listed but married with seven children.¹¹² He said that he had worked for the Government in Sydney for eighteen months rather than moving immediately to an independent employer and this assignment in service to the government rather than a private employer confirms the identification. He commented that "[t]his country is the place for a family man" and he had prospered from the time of his arrival as a poor man. In the eight years since arrival he had been able to earn enough to acquire a good house to live in and had 100 acres on lease for £10 a year. Of these he had twenty-five acres under cultivation. He also had about twenty-five cattle, together with two pigs and various poultry and had bought a dray for which he had one team of eight oxen. As Gilles did later in his statement, Macguinness noted in December 1845 the quantities of tea, sugar and meat which the family ate every week. This, with the produce of his cultivated land, his poultry and his cattle, ensured that he was able to keep his children in far better circumstances than he could at home on Skye. He said also that he had hopes of being able to assist with the establishment of a school nearby.

Although it is not clear from which parish on Skye either Gillies or Macguinness had emigrated, it is likely that at least one was from Duirinish since that parish included the Macleod estates. Contributing to the NSA in February 1841, Rev. Archibald Clerk provided an extensive commentary on the conditions in that parish which the emigrants on the *William Nicol* had left behind when the ship sailed in 1837.¹¹³ It is likely that conditions in other parishes on Skye and elsewhere in Inverness-shire were similar. Clerk recorded that in thirty years, the population in the parish had increased from 3,227 in

¹¹²

http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5313&item=4_4780&ship=William%20Nicol.

¹¹³ NSA, Vol. XIV Inverness-shire, 322-360.

1811 to almost 5,000 in 1841, a figure “far greater than the soil can support” where “the people generally live on the poorest and scantiest fare”.¹¹⁴ They existed for some of the year on shell fish, or by begging or stealing from their wealthier neighbours. The end of military service in the Napoleonic Wars and other earlier outlets for the superabundant population, coupled with the end of the kelp trade, had resulted in an excess of inhabitants for whom there was insufficient food. Rev. Clerk commented that when land had been purchased by new owners, those owners had given no leases to their lotters, keeping them as tenants at will, subject to removal at the landlord’s whim. It is easy to see why many had felt they had little option but to emigrate and anyone reading the reports in the press would have been encouraged to consider following this path. Clerk later made it clear that he supported the removal of part of the population suggesting that if this happened, education would help to solve much of the rest of the problems caused by over population.¹¹⁵ It is quite possible that he had encouraged his parishioners to emigrate on the *William Nicol* or another of those vessels chartered by the Government “for the conveyance of the distressed Highlanders” to New South Wales.¹¹⁶ Rev. Clerk also recorded that the rate of grazing for a cow varied from £1 to £3.10s a year, many times the eight shillings per beast being paid by Gillies.

The third statement published was from Mrs Margaret Pringle née Bremner, originally from Nairn in Inverness-shire. It does not identify the year when she arrived in Sydney or even whether she married before or after her arrival. Searches of ships’ passenger lists have not identified when she or her husband had arrived in the colony. Her statement in the newspaper does identify her husband and his trade of shoemaker. William and Margaret Pringle, like John Gillies and John Macguinness and their families, had prospered in the colony. By March 1846 they owned their own very comfortable house in the colony. William always received good wages and was able to employ two men to assist him. They had reached a stage of financial security where they were able to contemplate opening a country store. Unlike the entry in the NSA for Diurinish, that

¹¹⁴ Rev. A Clerk, statement of 24 October 1883 to the Napier Commission, *Her Majesty’s Commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, Appendix A.

¹¹⁵ Rev. A Clerk, statement of 24 October 1883 to the Napier Commission.

¹¹⁶ *Colonist*, 2 November 1837, p. 3.

submitted by Rev. James Grant for the parish of Nairn in February 1842 is brief and gives little or no information of the daily lives of the ordinary folk of the parish such as Margaret Bremner or her sister Isabella.¹¹⁷ Similarly, when discussing the parish from which William Pringle had emigrated, Rev. David Dewar gave little information in January 1842 about the condition of the ordinary people such as William's mother Mary Pringle in Fochabers or its parish of Bellie.¹¹⁸ Apart from noting the general economic and employment conditions in the Highlands and more generally across Scotland at this time, there is little on which to base speculation into the reasons why William and Margaret had left Scotland. However, it would have been clear to readers of the *Inverness Courier* perusing these three testimonials that prospects for a better life in the colony were good, including for the acquisition of land and property.

Extracts of a letter sent from "Black Range, near Yass" in the colony appeared in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* in November 1850.¹¹⁹ A property known as *Black Range* continues to exist although whether this is the original property from which this letter was sent or is merely a smaller part of it is uncertain.¹²⁰ The property is situated near Yass in southern New South Wales, the modern focus for a number of prominent sheep studs and wool growing properties. If the correspondent had as he claimed bought from 16,000 to 20,000 acres of very fine grassed land in that area then it was in all likelihood a good purchase, particularly at a price of only £100. The clue to this price may rest with a practice of buying stock "with station" whereby the purchaser paid a higher price for the stock but acquired the property on which the animals were kept. The letter from Yass noted this different pricing scheme when commenting on the prices for cattle in mixed herds, suggesting that cattle "with station" cost approximately fifty percent more.¹²¹ Otherwise, the price quoted seems unlikely and may be an accidental or deliberate misprint by the newspaper. Even had the writer bought the property at the depths of the economic depression and during drought, the description that it was fairly

¹¹⁷ NSA, Vol. XIII Nairnshire, 1-6.

¹¹⁸ NSA, Vol. XIII Elginshire, 115-123.

¹¹⁹ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3.

¹²⁰ <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au>.

¹²¹ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3.

grassed and well-watered suggests that it could not have been bought for that price unless it were part of a stock purchase with a notional £100 extra for any buildings or yards existing. Moreover, being then outside the limits of the colony, formal title could not have been obtained to the land. It is possible that the writer was anxious to impress his brother in Manchester with the prospects for a settler in the Yass area. Certainly, anyone reading the report in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* could not have failed to be impressed by the scale of the land purchased and its quality.

However, the good impression made on readers would have been tempered by the admission that the writer had had a very severe loss from catarrh of about 1,500 sheep which had died. “Catarrh” had first appeared in the winter of 1834 at Boorowa, county of King, about thirty miles from Yass.¹²² In 2005, Dr J. Auty argued that catarrh was not a disease as such but the end result of a lack of experience of masters and men, a rapid increase in the numbers of sheep in each shepherded flock, and the use of new and unacclimatised sires, with the whole overlaid by a series of drought years.¹²³ “Catarrh or influenza in sheep occupies a unique position in livestock diseases in Australia. The condition [was] recognised in 1834 ... special legislation [was passed] for its control. Within thirty years it had disappeared”.¹²⁴

The writer from *Black Range* acknowledged that some good share of his loss may have been attributable to neglect on his own part. It is not known how he had contributed to the losses, although it may have been the result of having too few shepherds to take care of his sheep. A scarcity of shepherds was a recurrent theme in public discussion in the colony at this time. An alarming deficiency in the supply of shepherds was cited as the first of the causes of the increase in the disease reported to the Victorian Legislative Council in 1852.¹²⁵ It is possible that by 1850 the writer of this letter from *Black Range*

¹²² ‘The catarrh in sheep’, *Perth Gazette and Western Australia Journal*, 22 June 1839, 100, quoting *The Australian Magazine*.

¹²³ J. H. Auty, ‘Australian Sheep Catarrh: The disease That Never Was’, *Australian Veterinary History Record*, March 2005, Number 42, 12-20.

¹²⁴ J. Mylrea, ‘Catarrh in sheep’, *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 69 (1993), 298-300. See also ‘Report from the Select Committee on Scab and Catarrh in Sheep’, Legislative Council, Melbourne, 20 July 1852.

¹²⁵ ‘Report from the Select Committee on Scab and Catarrh in Sheep’, Legislative Council, Melbourne, 20

recognised that he had taken insufficient care to isolate infected sheep, possibly by not engaging enough shepherds to manage his flocks effectively. He conceded that although he had engaged three single men and one married couple, he was still only paying from £17 to £18 a year plus rations. Probably a refusal or inability to pay higher wages had left the employer short staffed and contributed to the spread of an infection. At this time, some other employers had taken alternative steps to manage their properties with fewer staff. When the labour problem became acute in the late 1840s, Russell of Clyde Co. adopted several remedies, mounting his shepherds on station-bred horses, providing quarters for married couples and sponsoring migrants through the London agents of the Company.¹²⁶

It is unlikely that readers of the letter from *Black Range* printed in the *Montrose Review* or any other newspaper in which it appeared would have appreciated the issues concerning the management of catarrh in flocks of sheep, a condition which was unknown in Scotland. They would certainly have recognised that the loss of 1,500 sheep from disease was a significant issue which presented a severe caution and risk to any potential immigrants considering investing in the colony.

This chapter has used the information in letters sent from New South Wales to allow a comparison between the extent of land holdings in the colony with those in Scotland. It argues that the comparison had significant potential to be influential when Scots were contemplating migrating to New South Wales. With a land area of 7,656,127 square kilometres, Australia must have seemed unbelievably vast to those coming from Scotland where the total land area of 78,789 square kilometres including the islands was dwarfed by the opportunities for possession of land in the colony.¹²⁷ Whether a migrant were to be negotiating for a farm of perhaps thirty acres, as convict Edward Turner was expecting, or seeking a grant of one million acres (approximately 4,000 square kilometres) as the AACo. had achieved, the prospects may have been breath-taking. Similarly, the opportunities were enormous for accumulation of huge numbers of sheep where flocks

July 1852.

¹²⁶ Fry, 'Boiling down: A Grimy Means', 17.

¹²⁷ Geoscience Australia, <https://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/national-location-information/dimensions/area-of-australia-states-and-territories>; <https://www.scotlandinfo.eu/scotland-facts-and-figures/> accessed 3 May 2019.

doubled every year or so, notwithstanding the vagaries of the climate where droughts and flooding rains brought challenges rarely met on such a scale in Scotland.

Much of the information about land availability and potential for growth in flocks and herds which became available through letters in newspapers stood to be very influential for emigration decisions. That information clearly influenced the *Inverness Courier*. By the late 1840s, it was recommending emigration to Australia, linking its advocacy with letters from the colony which it was printing as a way of ameliorating a population crisis in Scotland.¹²⁸ Other newspapers were not as openly advocating emigration to New South Wales. Items such as that in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* of 8 November 1850 reporting significant losses from disease were printed without comment. In many instances, the potential for influence of letters in newspapers came through clearly from the reports in the letters themselves.

While the availability of land and potential for growth in flocks and herds were crucial for many potential migrants, other challenges for settlers and those contemplating settling remained. These included the difficulties inherent in navigating through the competing demands by government and the market to gain possession of land at a price that was within the means of the hopeful settlers. Those challenges are explored in the following chapter.

¹²⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3; *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

Chapter two: Obtaining land

As outlined in Chapter one, some settlers thought in terms of the thirty acres allowed by Macquarie's administration to emancipated convicts, while others dreamed of extensive holdings. In Scotland, where land was not usually held freehold, it was leased with very few leases extending beyond nineteen years and sometimes it was let at will with tenants having no guarantee of continued occupancy.¹

There is little doubt that the price which a new settler would have to pay for land would have been a serious consideration for anyone contemplating emigration and the reality of aspiration set against capacity to pay was likely to influence emigration decisions. Prices of land in the colony changed widely between 1820 and 1850 and land costs varied significantly depending on location. The very early settlers, including those who arrived while Macquarie was governor, were able to possess land mostly through free grants under government authority. However this changed and prices set for land allocation led to unrest and serious disagreements between the government and many in the pastoral industry. This unrest reached a stage in the 1840s where sections of the colony were in almost open revolt against the attempts of Governor Sir George Gipps to bring order and regulation to the activities of some in the pastoral sector. This chapter looks at how changes to land possession in New South Wales can be tracked through a study of the letters reaching Scottish newspapers, potentially encouraging some settlers but also providing warnings for those expecting large grants of land. It starts with an announcement of a change of policy.

In a letter originating most probably in the Australian Office in Manchester and appearing in various newspapers in early February 1832, readers were advised of a recent change in land policy in the colony.² This would most likely be of interest to a different class of potential emigrant from the artisans or shepherds who were sought for the colony. The class of emigrants mentioned on this occasion would be those with at least a small store of capital to invest in the colony. Readers were advised that no more free grants of land would be available in either New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land. Plenty of

¹ Wightman, *The Poor Had No Lawyers*.

² *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6; *Scotsman*, 4 February 1832, 3.

cleared land, ready for cropping, could be purchased at a price of from 5s per acre and upwards. At that price, the thirty acre farm contemplated by Edward Turner in about 1820 (see above) would have cost only £7/10/- and even a farm of one square mile (640 acres) would have cost only £160. A prospective settler with sufficient capital learning of this new policy could contemplate purchasing land from the colonial government equivalent to at least the entire cultivated land in a small parish in Scotland for about £500.³

A major issue raised in a letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* in 1840 concerned the availability of land for a settler or the lack of it.⁴ Certainly, the statement in that letter that there were no more land grants given was accurate, with all acquisitions of land by this time being through purchase of surveyed land, at auction or otherwise. Governor Bourke had already written in 1837 to Secretary of State Glenelg denouncing the activities of “Land Sharks and Land Jobbers” who speculated in land bidding at public auctions.⁵ Bourke noted that the Crown Lands in the market were those which in past years were not saleable at any price and were not sought after even as free grants. Given that the correspondent wrote that if “I had £500 to expend on stock, I might perhaps do well” and “wages given shepherds are not half so much as we anticipated” it appears that the letter writer had arrived in the colony without sufficient capital and may have been working as a shepherd.⁶ The writer was probably referring to an earlier arrangement whereby a settler of good character and respectability as well as proven capital could seek a grant of land and upon identifying the land wanted and having it surveyed, could apply for the land to be granted. “Lands [were] to be granted in square miles, in the proportion of one square mile, or 640 acres, for every £500 sterling of capital which the applicant can immediately command”.⁷ The capital which a settler could command beyond actual funds included

³ In the parish of Newburgh in Fifeshire, for example, the NSA records at April 1836 a total of only 1145 farmed acres (737 under cultivation; 280 waste or pasture; 88 woods; and 40 under fruit trees). NSA, Vol 9, 73. In the colony, that acreage at 5/- per acre would cost only £286/5/-.

⁴ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

⁵ HRA Vol. 1; Vol. 19, 77-8.

⁶ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

⁷ Instruction from the Colonial Office, Downing Street, dated April 1827 in *Accounts and papers, Thirteen Volumes, Relating to Diplomatic and Consular Establishments: Colonies &c. Session 5 February – 23 July 1830*. Vol. XXI, item 16, 166.

the value of, for example, machinery and implements for farming brought with the settler. In this writer's own estimation, all the worthwhile land had already been taken. It is more likely that the writer of the letter in the *John O'Groat Journal* was not prepared to do what others had done and move beyond the official settlement to an area where the land had not already been taken over by Europeans. Instead he may have had to settle for a shepherd's life, working for inadequate wages without the prospect of being granted any land of his own.

A letter written from "Mungonah, Guildford" was printed in the *Inverness Courier* in July 1840.⁸ *Mungonah*, on the Swan River near Perth in Western Australia was originally assigned to Richard Wardell on 6 November 1829 and was known then as "Golden Grove". It was subsequently assigned to George Williams and then to RW Nash in about October 1834.⁹ Land grants in the area are described as ribbon grants, being long and narrow to give each a frontage to the Swan River. These are reminiscent in their general layout of that of many post-clearance crofting allocations in Scotland but on a much larger scale and with a river frontage rather than a sea frontage.¹⁰ This river access was to allow as equitable an access to the river water as possible for all settlers and no settler was to be allowed water frontage of more than a quarter of the total external boundary of the land granted.¹¹ It is likely that the letter writer was employed by Nash as the only employee or one of a small number of employees and possibly including assigned convicts working on what was, by the standards of the time in the colony, a modestly sized property of one thousand acres (about one and a half square miles) only, but under the supervision of an enthusiastic farmer in Nash himself.¹² The letter concerns itself particularly with the conditions which might be expected by agricultural workers and

⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 3.

⁹ See Michael J. Bourke, *On the Swan: a history of Swan District, Western Australia*. (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1987), 327. The property is #29.

¹⁰ Bourke, *On the Swan*, 324. For an example of a typical newer crofting township with their own ribbon grants see photograph and notes in Macdonald *The Hebrides*., 228 – 229.

¹¹ Bourke, *On the Swan*, 31.

¹² David Mossenson, 'Nash, Richard West (1808–1850)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/nash-richard-west-2500/text3373>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 3 July 2019.

domestic servants but the size of the property and the conditions for grants of land in the Swan River colony would have been of interest in Scotland. The letter's contents stood to influence potential migrants to consider the Swan River colony as an alternative to the eastern settlements. This letter is referred to as a private letter with indifferent handwriting. It was therefore clearly not written primarily for public perusal. By the letter's publication, it stood to provide information likely to have some influence on emigration decisions among the readership of the *Inverness Courier*.

There is a very strong note of optimism in this letter from *Mungonah*, holding out the promise of Australia becoming, in a very few years, a great and powerful country. While the letter mentions a very successful sheep farmer in the colony, it focuses particularly on the agricultural prospects for new settlers. It mentions the quality of the soil which could be brought into tillage easily, the abundance of crops which could yield "every kind of produce, and some three or four times in a year" and the prospects for herd boys. These are all indicative of farming in an intensive manner on a reasonably small scale such as on those properties near Guildford. A farmer intending to move to Western Australia might be reassured by the comment that there was still an abundance of land available. The Regulations governing land grants were quite clear on how the process was to be managed:

The Colonial Office regulations for Western Australia issued in December 1828 and January 1829 offered land to any emigrant in proportion to the value of property, equipment and stock brought with him, land being reckoned as being worth 1s 6d/acre [£48 per square mile]. All grants of land were made on the condition that they were improved within ten years [to the value of at least 1/6d per acre] or handed back to the government. This system of free land grants continued until December 1830 and the sale of unoccupied Crown Lands by auction was introduced in January 1832.¹³

The Colonial Office regulations for Western Australia issued in December 1828 and January 1829 appear to have been generous compared to those set out at about the same time for the eastern colonies where a land grant for one square mile required a grantee to

¹³ State Library of Western Australia
http://cms.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead_reckoning/government_archival_records/k-o/land_grants_leases_and_licences accessed 12 July 2018.

possess capital of £500, more than ten times that required in the Swan River colony.¹⁴ The difference reflected the different stage of settlement in the western colony *vis a vis* other colonies elsewhere in Australia where significant infrastructure and facilities had been developed by this time. Nevertheless, if one might judge from an advertisement in the *Inquirer* of 12 August 1840, it appears that at least some sheep runs had been taken up in the Swan River colony more in keeping with the £500 requirement that was in place in the east and there were others considerably larger with consequently much larger land allocations.¹⁵ However, the cheaper land price in Swan River was clearly meant to encourage many settlers including those of limited means and the grant of 1,000 acres at *Mungonah* would have required Richard Wardell, the original grantee, to have held capital of £75, an amount probably within the reach of many of the likely readers of the *Inverness Courier*.

Like so many other letters in the Scottish press which were sent by Scots who had arrived in the colony of New South Wales, a letter from a carpenter from Nairnshire printed in the *Inverness Courier* in September 1840 also commented on the prices for land as well as costs of provisions and board and lodging¹⁶. With some fourteen to nineteen shillings each week left after paying board, and before any other expenses could be met, it was unlikely that the writer of this letter was going to be able to invest in land to any extent suitable for taking up sheep farming. It is difficult to estimate the amount of land that a prospective sheep farmer would need to possess to be able to progress economically, but perhaps some idea might be gleaned from earlier official policies where it had been stipulated that lands were to be granted in square miles for every £500 sterling of capital which the applicant could immediately command.¹⁷ That figure of one square

¹⁴ Instruction from the Colonial Office, Downing Street, dated April 1827 in Accounts and papers, Thirteen Volumes, Relating to Diplomatic and Consular Establishments: Colonies &c. Session 5 February – 23 July 1830. Vol. XXI, item 16, 166.

¹⁵ See 'Sheep pasture, Northam', *Inquirer*, 12 August 1840, 1.
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/65582538?browse=ndp%3Abrowse%2Ftitle%2FI%2Ftitle%2FI181%2F1840%2F08%2FI2%2Fpage%2F6593775%2Farticle%2F65582538> which referred to a run of over 6,000 acres (6000 acres @ 1/6d = £450). Two weeks later, the same paper was advertising on page 1 the sale by auction of a deceased estate in the same area of 18,500 acres
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/6593785>.

¹⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 9 September 1840, 2.

¹⁷ Instruction from the Colonial Office, Downing Street, dated April 1827 in Accounts and papers, Thirteen Volumes, Relating to Diplomatic and Consular Establishments: Colonies &c. Session 5

mile might be taken as the bare minimum for a sheep run but by all reports it is unlikely to be even that. Were a tradesman such as a mason or wright as mentioned in this letter able to save from his wage practically everything left over from board and lodging then it would take 600 weeks or twelve years to save enough to buy only one square mile (640 acres) at the cheapest price of 12s. per acre quoted. Better land was quoted at up to £2 per acre. A lesser acreage would be needed for an agricultural small holding suitable for intensive cropping but prospects for an intending emigrant wanting to earn enough to buy land and become independent without bringing substantial capital to the colony were bleak indeed. The situation as detailed in this letter would be impossible for a married man supporting a wife, even without children, although a married couple might find employment together in the same establishment given the urgent need for female employees in the colony at this time. Readers of the *Inverness Courier* should have noted the cautionary tone in this letter if interested in emigrating from Scotland to New South Wales.

A letter appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* in November 1840 from a gentleman originally from Caithness-shire but by 1840 settled in Sydney.¹⁸ It included the advice that land “cannot be purchased now under £1, and the average price may be quoted at 40s per acre, except in case of cleared and improved descriptions, and even £3 10s to £20 are sometimes asked in such cases”. The statement in this letter that “droughts continue sometimes for three years” was quite accurate and not an exaggeration. Drought in the colony of New South Wales was a regular topic mentioned in letters appearing in the Scottish press in this era. It had been mentioned in a letter sent from Bathurst and appearing in the *John O’Groat Journal* in 1836.¹⁹ The chronology of drought for South-Eastern Australia shows almost continuous drought from January 1835 through to October 1839 and again beyond this, a situation almost certainly unheard of in the north of Scotland.²⁰ Notwithstanding these severe climate conditions, the price of land

February – 23 July 1830. Vol. XXI, item 16, 166.

¹⁸ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

¹⁹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

²⁰ Claire Fenby and Joëlle Gergis, ‘Rainfall variations in south-eastern Australia part 1: consolidating evidence from pre-instrumental documentary sources, 1788-1860’ *International Journal of Climatology*, published online 28 December 2012 in Wiley Online Library,

remained high and likely to be beyond the financial capacity of many of the class of emigrants which this letter sought to recruit to the colony. However men of capital and experience were encouraged to migrate to New South Wales as it would be “a splendid theatre to operate in”.²¹ At the prices quoted for land, when added to the costs of stocking, buildings, yards, employing shepherds and other workers, a man of capital would have needed considerable funds to allow the taking up of a suitably large sheep run to generate an income sufficient to repay the investment. Readers of this letter would have been well advised to note the overall picture of costs and conditions.

For the first time in this study, a correspondent has mentioned some conditions for emigrants to New Zealand/Aotearoa which was at this time still governed formally as part of the colony of New South Wales.²² The writer lamented the misunderstanding existing in regard to some early settlers in New Zealand who had purchased land from the Maori only to have the legality of their holdings cast in some doubt by the more recently concluded Treaty of Waitangi. This had set up a different set of relations between settlers and the existing population. On 30 January 1840, two proclamations had been read in the Church of Kororarika.²³ The first of these, dated 15 June 1839 extended the boundaries of the colony of New South Wales to include any part of New Zealand which might be acquired in sovereignty by the Crown of England and appointed Captain Hobson RN as Lieutenant-Governor. The second proclamation stated that

her Majesty ... does not deem it expedient to recognize as valid any titles to land in New Zealand, which are not derived from, or confirmed by her Majesty ... After the date of the proclamation ‘all purchase of land in any part of New Zealand, which may be made from the Chiefs or Native Tribes, will be considered absolutely null and void’.²⁴

<https://rmets.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/joc.3640> accessed 12 April 2018, 2961-2.

²¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

²² *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

²³ *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 25 April 1840, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion of the Treaty of Waitangi on 6 February 1840 following these proclamations was described at the time as being “the first formation of the union between a civilized and a savage state by treaty”.²⁵ As such, it contrasts strongly with the conditions in the Australian colonies where no treaty has been concluded and where all lands were considered empty until the 1992 Australian High Court ruling in the Mabo case.²⁶ In the period covered in this study, any land first occupied by European settlers was either granted by or bought from the Crown under conditions determined by the Colonial authorities without reference to its original custodians or occupiers.

It is clear that the writer of the private letter from which extracts appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* in December 1840 was a man who had travelled to the colony of New South Wales with a reasonable amount of capital.²⁷ He had been able to speculate successfully on the purchase of a farm of forty-five acres on the Illawarra or south coast of present day New South Wales, outlaying £9 an acre and achieving a turn around by selling the property quickly, making a profit of almost twenty-five per cent in a few weeks. He was also able to invest in shares in the Sydney Bank and since he purchased them at the rate of one pound per share per quarter it may be assumed that either he had not expended his entire capital on the initial purchase and retained sufficient to meet future calls on the share-holders, or else was in receipt of a regular income from Britain sufficient to meet the ongoing quarterly payments for the shares.

The purchase price of land at £9 per acre may have been of concern to many reading this account in Scotland, as would the price paid by the subsequent owner. This had added more than £2 per acre to the previous cost of good land which had originally been received as free grants from Governor Macquarie. Macquarie advised Earl Bathurst in December 1817 of the first European visit to this land and other areas further south along the coastal strip between the sea and the enclosing mountain range.²⁸ By 1840 the area

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ High Court of Australia, Mabo case.

²⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1.

²⁸ Despatch marked No. 40 of 1817, Macquarie to Bathurst, 12 December 1817, HRA Vol. 9, 713.

had been extensively settled and land was being bought and sold on the open market including, it appears, by speculators.

It appears that in presenting an article on 23 March 1841, the *Dundee Warder* drew on parts of perhaps two letters originally appearing in *Witness*, an evangelical pro-Free-Church Scottish newspaper established in 1840 by Highlander Hugh Miller.²⁹ Each letter concerns issues relating to Melbourne or the Port Phillip settlement. The first letter appears to have been broken into four extracts with each extract dealing with a separate topic.

The first extract from the first of these two letters reports mainly on issues of finance and land purchase and speculation. The writer's comment about profits to be made by purchase of urban land at Government sale or auction and immediate resale in whole or broken down into small lots at a profit is substantiated by advertisements appearing in the colonial press. On Tuesday 1 September 1840, which is likely to be around the time when the letter was sent from Port Phillip, a number of notices appeared on page 1 of the *Port Phillip Herald* offering land for sale.³⁰ One offered for sale by private treaty allotment no. 17 on the south side of the Yarra. It was described as one of the most beautiful and desirable of all sold last June, less than three months previously. Another offered suburban allotment no. 47 describing it as well worthy of the attention of the newly arrived emigrant or speculator. A further notice offered for sale suburban allotment no. 71 in lots varying from a quarter of an acre to twenty acres. The clear conclusion is that a settler with capital to invest had the possibility of increasing that capital by speculating in land but with the warning that land prices had doubled in the preceding eighteen months. If the speculation had continued, then prices would be likely to be raised further. Were a person contemplating emigration to count on quick profits then there was a warning in this letter also about the cost of borrowing money at very high interest rates.

In the final concluding sentences of this extract, the writer commented also on speculation in sheep, referring to speculation in sheep as a drug but still expressing an intention to purchase more if the price continued to fall. Again, the trade in sheep is amply

²⁹ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

³⁰ *Port Phillip Herald*, Vol. I, No. LXX, 1 September 1840, 1.

demonstrated in the press with many advertisements offering sheep for sale. It is clear from the extract supplied that the writer was one who had moved to the Port Phillip district with access to sufficient funds to permit speculation in land and in sheep. At the very least, he wished those receiving the letter to believe the success of his move to Australia.

In the second part of a letter, published in parts by the *John O’Groat Journal* on 30 September 1842 but not in other newspapers which had printed the letter in whole in one edition, the attention of the reader is drawn to Sydney and its environs, before returning mostly to other areas in Victoria.³¹ In one brief paragraph the writer of this letter dismissed the prospects for anyone contemplating agriculture in the Sydney district. He noted that many in the Hunter River settlements were already in a state of insolvency and ruin. He also commented on the poor situation for pastoralists, claiming that a stocking ratio of one sheep for every three acres coupled with interest rates of ten per cent with many purchases of land being made on credit, were daily proving to be the ruin of many. His letter then proceeded to “the catalogue of these Sydney incurables”, the squatters. He claimed to describe the occupiers of Crown lands lying beyond the limits of the nineteen counties but did so in very derogatory terms. He suggested that the term settler was coined ironically because they settled debts as rarely as possible, preferring a social life in Sydney to attending personally to their rural concerns. He noted earlier profits made by those who grazed stock on unoccupied Crown lands paying only a licence fee of £10 per annum and “trifling head money” for the stock using the land.

The “trifling head money” mentioned was an annual levy for stock at the rate of 1d. per head of sheep, 3d. per head of cattle, and horses at 6d. per head.³² Had the writer of this letter been paying the “head money” for his own 7,000 sheep rather than purchasing land, his yearly grazing rights would have cost him the annual licence fee of £10 plus £29.3.4. This would have been a small sum when wool was exporting at 1s.2d per pound less freight of 1½d per pound.³³ According to the testimony of T. A. Murray before the Immigration Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council on 7 July 1841,

³¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 30 September 1842, 2. The whole letter appears in, for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 16 September 1842, 3; *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 September 1842, 4.

³² *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 May 1844, 3.

³³ Sample prices taken at random from *Port Phillip Gazette* 24 September 1842, 1.

each sheep fleece weighed 2¼ pounds. Murray also provided evidence of a range of other costs for sheep farming in New South Wales. In doing so, Murray estimated the number of sheep shorn in the colony in 1840 as 3,408,426 of which two-thirds were estimated as being beyond the boundaries of settlement. Murray then estimated the costs to the pastoral industry of maintaining these sheep, citing wages, shearing, carriage etc. but not including the £10 annual licence fee payable by each licence holder. He also mentioned a “depasturing fee” for two-thirds of the sheep but in this his calculations were wrong. Two-thirds of the sheep would be 2,272,284 and if an annual fee of 1d. per sheep were paid, this would amount to £9,467, not the figure of half that as stated by Murray. Although quoting much of Murray’s evidence that day before the Committee, Murray’s biographer has omitted any mention of this error.³⁴ The profits being made in the colony had ceased with the downturn in the economy caused partly by a long drought; the view of the writer of the letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* of 30 September 1842 was that the older colony of New South Wales proper was in a state of decline. That situation was said to be at variance with the prospects for the newer colonies in Gipps’ Land and Port Philip, and for Van Diemen’s Land.

In the areas of colonisation other than the nineteen counties, as well as “youth and stamina” those areas were said to have richer soil and a moister climate allowing greater prosperity than earlier areas occupied. New South Wales was said to have relied on the system of assignment of the labour of convicts, equivalent to a bounty or gift to the value of £600,000 until the abolition of the assignment system. In reality, convicts were still being assigned to masters although transportation to New South Wales had petered out by this time and it is likely that it was transportation, rather than the abolition of assignment, to which the writer was referring. The other issue confronting the Sydney district was claimed to be a lack of land for expansion coupled with the overstocking of much of the land. The writer was almost certainly accurate in describing much of the land as overstocked, particularly at a time when the colony was enduring the extended drought

³⁴ Wilson, *Murray of Yarralumla*, 132-5.

which started in the mid-1830s and continued for more than another year after despatch of this letter in early 1842.³⁵

It is worth considering some of the issues surrounding the letter writer's views on the different areas of occupation of the Australian continent. The letter surveyed all the east coast settlements of mainland Australia and found objections with most of them. Moreton Bay was said to suffer because of the tropical heat although it had prospects for tropical produce. The nineteen counties surrounding Sydney and the lands taken up by squatters were dismissed for reasons of soil degradation, overstocking, the nature of the soil and timbers and the attitudes and behaviours of those occupying the land. The Port Phillip area (now the general area of Melbourne) suffered from hot winds and a lack of reliable water. Gipps' Land (now known as Gippsland) which is located in the south-eastern portion of the present state of Victoria, by contrast, was considered so desirable that "there has not yet been discovered any portion of Australia so calculated to insure a certain and large profit to the industrious agriculturalist of moderate capital".³⁶ In its article on 23 March 1841 (see above), the *Dundee Warder* had noted the ongoing land speculation in the Port Phillip districts where land had doubled in value in eighteen months. Having already despatched 7,000 sheep by an overland expedition, the writer of this later letter had clearly secured a sufficiently extensive run with which he intended to stock his sheep. He had done so despite the ongoing drought and falling prices for wool in the colony. By making Gipps' Land appear to be "better calculated than any of the older Australian colonies, to insure ... a certain and large return", the writer was clearly seeking to direct potential settlers to that area. His investment in land and stock thereby stood to gain considerably in value against the time when he would choose or be forced to sell. In that endeavour, the newspapers printing his letter had provided valuable support by uncritically encouraging potential migrants to consider Gippsland ahead of any of the other colonial settlements. It is uncertain how much of this might be understood by potential emigrants but some readers following reports should have been able to appreciate the motives behind these reports.

³⁵ Fenby and Gergis, 'Rainfall variations', 2961-2.

³⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 30 September 1842, 2.

Turmoil over land prices

In a brief item of only some nine lines of print, the *Perthshire Advertiser* in September 1844 noted turmoil over proposed changes to management and sale of land in the colony.³⁷ The item has been included here because of the importance of examining the land sale issue and its potential to influence those contemplating emigration. The item mentioned “accounts ... to the 2d of May” and even a cursory examination of the colonial press of just that one day, 2 May 1844, supports the contention that the colony was in a state of ferment.³⁸ Almost sixty years after the arrival of the First Fleet, Sydney had an active and forceful free press unconstrained by laws of defamation or libel. The press openly served the interests of those to whom the papers were beholden, and those newspapers travelled freely to Britain and as this item showed, allowed access by those still in Britain to the opinions of people in the colony. At least some readers of the *Perthshire Advertiser* may have been aware of at least part of the matters being discussed freely in the colony.

The particular issue likely to be of concern to potential emigrants revolved around a decision of Governor Gipps taken with the advice of the Executive Council, to bring in significant changes to the system of licences for those occupying a number of stations.³⁹ The previous regulations charged each person occupying a station or stations an annual fee of £10 with no account taken of the number or size of the station/s held. The new regulations were issued from the Colonial Secretary’s Office in Sydney, were dated 2 April 1844 and required payment of the licence fee for each station. Further, the regulations set out to limit the size of any one station including charging more than one licence fee where a property could reasonably be assessed as consisting of more than one station.⁴⁰ A colony said to be in a state of unrest would have been of concern to all potential migrants.

³⁷ *Perthshire Advertiser*, 19 September 1844, 2.

³⁸ *Perthshire Advertiser*, 19 September 1844, 2; *Colonial Advertiser* 2 May 1844, 38; *Australian*, 2 May 1844, 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1844, 2, 4.

³⁹ Gipps to Lord Stanley, Despatch 215, HRA, Vol. 23, 810-844.

⁴⁰ ‘Depasturing Licences’, in HRA, Vol. 23, 763.

In May 1844 the *Geelong Advertiser* announced, erroneously, the “Recall of Sir George Gipps”, claiming that the news of this recall had “broke on the gloomy city like a gleam of sunshine”.⁴¹ The article proceeded to impugn the Governor’s character and motives, noting particularly the pleasure of squatters anticipating frustration of the Governor’s plans to reform the system of land tenure and purchase. Public meetings seeking to have the regulations rescinded or changed were reported as being held in, for example, Goulburn on 24 April 1844.⁴² Another meeting was held at West Maitland on 30 April 1844.⁴³ A further meeting had been held at Jerry’s Plains in the Hunter region from where the *Australian* reported plans to draw up petitions to the Governor and the Legislative Council. Discussion of the issue was not confined to the area around Sydney, with the *Geelong Advertiser* reprinting on 2 May 1844 an item from the *Sydney Herald* purporting to “show the vast importance to the colony of the pasture grounds beyond the limits of location” with an analysis of the revenue which should have been payable by the stations beyond the boundaries to 1 December 1843.⁴⁴ It noted a shortfall of nearly twelve percent, or arrears of £2,335, which the article claimed was proof that if the licence holders could not pay their arrears under the existing rates, they could not afford to meet the new charges. The concern here is not whether the regulations were appropriate, but how they were reported. Although the *Perthshire Advertiser* made only brief mention of the issue, the news had the potential to destabilise those who had capital to invest in settling themselves into the colony and hoping to pursue a pastoral career. In retrospect, the regulations were fair and the public opposition seems unreasonable. Small and medium-sized squatters were to lose nothing by them, and security of tenure was certainly granted to all by the purchase regulations.⁴⁵ Any person interested in taking up land in the colony but reading the very brief item in the *Perthshire Advertiser* of September 1844

⁴¹ ‘Sydney. Recall of Sir George Gipps’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 May 1844, 2.

⁴² Reported in the *Herald*, the *Australian*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 May 1844.

⁴³ Reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Maitland Mercury*, and the *Colonial Observer* of 2 May 1844.

⁴⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 May 1844, 3.

⁴⁵ Samuel Clyde McCulloch, ‘Gipps, Sir George (1791–1847)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gipps-sir-george-2098/text2645>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 15 October 2018.

could well have been deterred from making the move to a colony described as being in a state of ferment over the raising of land prices.

A letter of 18 June 1844 but published six months later in the *Inverness Courier* carried very mixed messages.⁴⁶ Whether the messages were perceived as good or bad depended on the interests of the reader. The writer reported from Moreton Bay how a deceased estate had been sold just for the amount of the existing mortgage and while the extent of the property was not disclosed it had carried 6,000 sheep, working bullocks, horses, huts, houses, and equipment. It would therefore have been of at least several thousand acres and probably much more to carry this stock, even if the grass available far exceeded that in southern properties where a stocking ratio was sometimes reckoned in acres per sheep. An emigrant with capital to invest may have found such an opportunity attractive although there could be no guarantee that on arrival a similar bargain purchase would be possible. The colony at this time was still recovering from a recession that had led to discussion in committees of the New South Wales Legislative Council over whether immigration to the colony should be restricted while the price of land remained higher than settlers believed was fair.⁴⁷ At the same time, the Committee on Immigration was considering a serious shortfall in the number of shepherds and agricultural workers required.⁴⁸ The letter in the *Inverness Courier* of 4 December 1844 carried a comparison of the likely return on a capital investment of £700 or so if invested in Scotland at a rate of four percent, or invested in a property such as that described which would have returned at least thirty-five percent in the first year.

Another letter from late 1844 provided an account of Australia of interest to many of its readers.⁴⁹ It had been sent by Henry Paterson to Paterson's uncle at *Borlum* in Caithness in the far north of mainland Scotland. Henry Paterson lived in New South Wales at a property about 150 miles from Sydney known as *Ulbster*, belonging to James Sinclair and named for his employer's family, probably linked to the Sinclair Earls of

⁴⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3.

⁴⁷ Doust, R. F. (ed.), *New South Wales Legislative Council 1824 – 1856, The Select Committees*. Sydney: New South Wales Parliamentary Library, 2011, 92.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 93-4.

⁴⁹ The letter was dated 12 November 1844, it appeared in the *John O'Groat Journal*, 25 April 1845, 3.

Ulbster. Henry recorded his view that it would be a sin to give £1 per acre for land in New South Wales and that the colonial government did not appear to be at all inclined to reduce the price. In this, he may have been somewhat unrealistic particularly in comparison with conditions in Scotland. In the parish of Reay where his uncle was farming at *Borlum*, the average annual rent — not purchase — of arable ground per acre was £1 and for grazing £1.1s. The ordinary food of the peasantry here was described as consisting of oatcakes, potatoes, fish, milk and on particular occasions, mutton and beef.⁵⁰ Henry Paterson acknowledged that although he had not made the quick fortune he had expected, the colony was a good country for some people. Provided people were prepared to work, there was little risk of starvation. All of these matters would have had to be weighed up by anyone in Caithness contemplating emigration, either to make a fortune or, like many of Henry's fellow passengers on the *James Moran* who were victims of the Highland clearances, simply seeking a future with better opportunities than those available at home.⁵¹

Many but not all of the passengers on that vessel had left the north-west coast of Scotland around Loch Broom or were from Sutherlandshire. By the time that Henry Paterson had left Scotland most of the clearances in Sutherland had been completed and it was clear that few opportunities remained for those continuing in Sutherland. Hunter describes in great and sympathetic detail the effect on the ordinary people of the area.⁵² A letter to the editor of *The Age* also mentions the almost total de-population of the region as the explanation of the virtually total failure of the militia to recruit in the parish of Rogart in Sutherlandshire.⁵³ It is clear that anyone reading Henry Paterson's letter would have noted the greatly enhanced opportunities for employment and a better life in the colony.

Perhaps the main issue here is an acknowledgement by Henry that he had been misled about the prospects for making a quick fortune even if he did acknowledge that his future

⁵⁰ NSA, Vol. XV, Caithness, 18.

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http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4_4780/James%20Moran_11%20Feb%201839/4_478000098.jpg&No=1.

⁵² Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World*.

⁵³ *The Age*, 17 January 1856, 4.

was still better than it would have been at home. In his comment that it would be a sin to pay £1 an acre for land he was repeating earlier protests from many of the squatters who were outspoken in their complaints of the new regulations recently introduced by Governor Gipps. Henry's letter acknowledged that he would be unlikely to be able to accumulate enough money to purchase much land and this would have struck a cautionary note with readers of his letter.

By the mid-1840s, investor and pastoralist Ben Boyd had been outspoken in his views on the price of land in the colony, leading to the dismissive comment by the Governor that "Mr Boyd's opinions, in respect to Crown Lands, are too well known to require comment or observation".⁵⁴ Hancock's history of the Monaro was also dismissive of Boyd describing him as a financial wizard who "merits no place on this or any other map of Monaro".⁵⁵ The historical figure of Boyd, his attitudes and views are emblematic of many in this phase of the development of the economy of New South Wales.⁵⁶

Flocks and herds had grown rapidly as had the acreages of land occupied by them, much of it beyond the limits of settlement. However, the number of pastoral workers required to care for the animals had not kept pace. Many land holders, particularly during the extended drought of the late 1830s and into the 1840s had been forced to render down their surplus stocks for tallow because they were unable to find enough shepherds to manage the animals. Many had been bankrupted, including "the Speculators between the years 1835 and 1841, the persons ... who have been all ruined by their speculations".⁵⁷ By early 1845 when a letter was sent from Twofold Bay, at least some stations had reduced workers' wages. Many employers still deplored a great reluctance to quit the

⁵⁴ Gipps to Lord Stanley, Despatch 215, HRA, Vol. 23, 810-844.

⁵⁵ W. K. Hancock, *Discovering Monaro: A Study of Man's Impact on his Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 46-8.

⁵⁶ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*.

⁵⁷ Gipps to Lord Stanley, Despatch 215, HRA, Vol. 23, 810-844.

temptations of town life by unemployed mechanics and artisans who were said to be unwilling to become shepherds for the conditions offered.⁵⁸

By copying an article which appeared originally in the *Inverness Courier* of 6 August 1845, the *Aberdeen Journal* two weeks later ensured that the contents received wide exposure through the north east of Scotland.⁵⁹ The article had been composed from several sources: a private letter dated 15 January 1845 from a former resident of Inverness; copies of the *Sydney Morning Herald*; and another letter, written from Murrurundi in the Upper Hunter Valley and dated 4 February 1845.

The letter of 15 January opened on an optimistic note, citing a marked improvement in the general affairs of New South Wales. In claiming that the lack of suitable terms for land tenure and an abundant supply of labourers were the only impediments to wool growing in Australia, the writer identified himself with the pastoral interests in the colony. At this time, as mentioned above Governor Gipps was in conflict particularly with squatters who sought access to lands at a different price to that which both the Governor and the British Government had determined. The squatters had sent representatives to London to lobby the Government and reports of these disagreements would have been known in some circles in Britain. This newspaper article mentioned the efforts of the squatters and their influence in the New South Wales Legislative Council, describing the squatters as a “numerous and important body”, but failed to offer any comment on the position taken by the Governor or the Colonial Office.⁶⁰ In this, and by suggesting that the efforts of the squatters were focused only on the return of the colony to prosperity, it presented a promising picture of the colony, conditional on the squatters achieving their aims of obtaining lands on favourable terms. It is clear that in their reporting of this issue, each newspaper was offering uncritical and perhaps biased opinion on matters in the colony with potential to influence those contemplating emigration to or investment in New South Wales.

⁵⁸ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1843, 4.

⁵⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 6 August 1845, 2; *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

⁶⁰ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2. Gipps’ position was outlined in his Despatch 215 to Lord Stanley, HRA, Vol. 23, 810-844.

By commenting on financial matters, this article assisted those with capital to invest in the colony to understand likely returns for that investment. Discount rates for bills, rates of commission on advances given and freight costs are commented on, as is the fact that only two banks had a monopoly/duopoly at Sydney. The introduction of an Insolvent Law had allowed some 600 persons to avail themselves of its provisions to relieve themselves of obligations. The article, in referring to this Law, failed to disclose whether insolvency for some had had a flow on effect creating more insolvencies from unpaid debts. With insolvency on the wane, business confidence was said to have been restored and the dreams of speculators had given way to a more measured way of business. It did moreover state a belief that establishment of an elected Legislative Council had improved prospects in the colony. It failed to record that a significant percentage of those elected were land holders with vested interests in minimising arrangements for payments to the Crown for use of land in the colony and in opposition to the Governor.⁶¹ This biased reporting gave a distorted view of conditions in the colony.

In publishing an open letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the *Caledonian Mercury* devoted to it more than two and a half of the seven columns of print on its back page on Monday 20 July 1846.⁶² Publication of this letter by the paper was a remarkably generous gift to a group of stockholders in New South Wales seeking to influence public opinion and actions of the Westminster Government. In making this open letter available to the *Caledonian Mercury* and doubtless many other influential British newspapers, squatters in New South Wales were harnessing an additional vehicle to influence actions of the British Government in deciding how to react to Governor Gipps' attempts to regularise the acquisition of vast areas of grazing land in the colony by a relatively small number of pastoralists.

It is difficult to appreciate the possible reactions to this letter by readers of the Scottish press. So much of the reactions would have depended on the particular interests or connections which readers had with the colony, through family or business links and what information was available beyond that in this letter. A number of points emerge however which may have caused some worry. The initial one of these is an implied threat of

⁶¹ Gipps to Lord Stanley, Despatches 112 and 113, 18 July 1843.

⁶² *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 July 1846, 4.

disturbance in the first paragraph noting that the decision on land policy to be taken by the Government would determine both the fortunes and the eventual tranquillity of the colony.

The big issue in this letter concerned access to land and the terms on which it could be acquired and held. The letter claimed to explain how squatting on land unoccupied by Europeans had commenced by necessity with emigrants, encouraged by the Imperial Government, finding all the land in the nineteen counties already taken up. To obtain land they found that they had had to move beyond the limits of settlement and establish properties on Crown lands. This involved building huts, yards, residences for the squatters, stores, barns and shearing sheds. All of these, being on Crown land, could have been resumed by the Government without compensation. The letter complained that the squatter was “a mere vassal, and like the vassals of old held his right at the will of his lord”.⁶³ Readers of the *Caledonian Mercury* would have recognised an environment where an owner felt empowered to remove from his lands those whom he desired gone and may have drawn parallels with the Lowland and Highland clearances. Whether this would have lent sympathy to the squatter as occupier or the Crown as owner or gave concern to potential migrants to or investors in the colony is difficult to judge. What this letter does emphasise is a large degree of uncertainty in the colony over the conditions under which a newly arrived settler might obtain and retain lands after arrival.

It is important to note also the scale of land holding being discussed in this open letter to the Secretary of State. The squatters were not those recently arrived settlers possessing goods and capital to the value of perhaps £500-600, hoping to establish a small farm, but were those with the resources to invest in building the aforesaid requirements of what would become in time the nuclei of small villages or settlements, and then to stock those stations. The scale of initial stocking might be gauged from advertisements appearing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* at about the time this letter from Sydney was being composed. An advertisement directed to “Parties Sending Cattle to Port Phillip or South Australia, Capitalists, Grazier, etc” offered a “Most Valuable Herd of Cattle” of 650 head, more or less with calves under six months given in, while “600 Well Bred Sheep with the

⁶³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 July 1846, 2.

lambs given in” were to be sold without reserve on 10 January 1846.⁶⁴ Readers of this letter were told that the land required in New South Wales could be twenty-five acres for the support of a bullock and four acres to support each sheep. The squatter was not to be compared to a small holder on the scale of many farms in Scotland. The readers of the *Caledonian Mercury*, who were said to be among the wealthier citizens of Scotland, if following the events outlined by the Pastoralists Association would have noted considerable uncertainty for investment in the colony.⁶⁵ Beyond these, others would also have noted the unsettled situation with leading colonists in almost open revolt against the Governor and his policies. It would not have been an environment conducive to investment in or migration to Australia.

The letter also sought to portray squatters as the leading citizens of the colony but disadvantaged and unfranchised by an unfair electoral system. “A new constitution was given to New South Wales; but it was arranged that we, who in education were second to no class in the colony, and who supplied the great proportion of those exports by which it existed, should have no share in it. We could neither elect nor be elected”.⁶⁶ Diamond has explained how this operated.

The qualification for election to the [New South Wales Legislative] Council was freehold property to the value of £2000 or of £100 annual rental value, while the qualification for electors was freehold property of £200 or of £20 rental per year. Those who only held licences to Crown Land were thus excluded from the franchise, and other country dwellers, living in areas where few houses would attract such a rental value, were similarly excluded.⁶⁷

What this letter failed to explain was that those who could be elected were those who, as well as having urban occupations and assets qualifying them for voting and elections, were mostly also involved in the pastoral industry. “Most were to at least some degree squatters ... [whose] numbers were such that [Governor] Gipps would inevitably be

⁶⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1846, 4.

⁶⁵ *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine for 1836*, Volume III (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1836), 191.

⁶⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 July 1846, 4.

⁶⁷ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*, 69.

thwarted if he attempted to introduce measures to control squatting through the Legislative Council”.⁶⁸ The impression which would have been given to those in Scotland was a colony failing to advance in any electoral reform and where a potential migrant who perhaps may have qualified for the franchise under the initial reforms in Britain taking place at this time, may not have enjoyed the franchise in New South Wales. The letter asked the British Government for “a Legislative Council representing not merely a limited number of landholders and towns-people, but everyone who has an important stake in the colony”.⁶⁹

Readers of the *Caledonian Mercury* perusing this open letter to Lord Stanley could not fail to be influenced by the description of the difficulties and danger involved by the first squatter to take up a particular run. These included extensive travel through unmapped regions, “in hourly danger from the savages in his track”. Beyond this there existed the necessity of selecting land with suitable soil, water and vegetation, lengthy journeys both for moving materials, stores and stock to the run, and then getting produce to markets. The letter commented also on the cost of finance, the issue of better runs falling into the hands of speculators with special mention of “the English banks, which are now investing in sheep”, and the length of proposed leases. It claimed that in Scotland where leases were best understood and where farms were leased on the basis of fully set up and ready for occupancy, the proposed length of leases would be inadequate. In a colony where everything had to be constructed *ab initio* the terms were totally inadequate. What was sought was the right of pre-emption (automatic granting to the present occupiers) of leases for twenty one years, without auction, and at a fixed and moderate rent. The memorial also claimed that the arrangements presented “an insurmountable obstacle to the immigration of a married population of the middle class. Families are little locomotive, and it is only where there is the certainty of a permanent residence, and a settled if not brilliant future, that they will resort for the purpose of seeking a home”.⁷⁰ The letter to Lord Stanley concluded with what may have been seen as a veiled threat, claiming that the system of land management pursued by the local Executive had done

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 July 1846, 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

much to alienate from the British Crown the affections of the pastoral population. This was only seventy years since the start of the American war of independence and the implied threat would not have gone unnoticed.

It is difficult to assess the impact which this letter from the recently formed Pastoral Association of New South Wales would have had in Scotland. Those with financial or family links to the colony, particularly among the wealthier citizens in the colony or those with extensive pastoral interests perhaps through investments, may have found the impassioned arguments compelling. This group used whatever influence could be brought to bear in support of the desires of the pastoralists. However, those considering emigration, with or without significant capital to invest, would have seen a colony in which some political instability and significant issues concerning access to land were unresolved. They would have noted hardships for many forced to move into the interior in search of land or work. It was also clear that the electoral system did not provide a sufficient franchise, at least by the standards of those who sought greater representation. Whether all these difficulties presented together an insurmountable impediment to emigration would have depended on the difficulties being faced in Scotland. Beyond this, any prospective migrant would have had to assess whether s/he had connections and resources available which would be sufficient to overcome the problems described.

In conclusion, it is clear from the reports coming home through letters in the press that the conditions under which settlers could obtain land in the colony had changed considerably by the middle of the nineteenth century. Any prospective emigrant interested in acquiring land would have been wise to take note of the conditions at the time as reported and also seek further, perhaps independent, advice on what to expect. The letters therefore stood to be important at least as an initial source of information and hence influential to readers' decisions on whether to emigrate.

The period between 1820 and 1850 saw a major shift in how the government in the colony regulated acquisition and possession of land in the colony. It moved from a system of straight land grants to grants dependant on a settler's ability to demonstrate sufficient funding to work the land adequately. The government moved further requiring the payment of fees for use of land, sometimes for outright ownership and sometimes for occupancy without ownership. At the same time, many settlers were taking independent action by moving beyond the official limits of settlement and taking up vast squatting

runs which brought them into conflict with the authorities in Sydney and in London. All these changes were reflected in letters appearing in the newspapers in Scotland and elsewhere and would have given potential emigrants much food for thought. It is likely that some emigrants were discouraged by reports in those letters, particularly the letters appearing in some editions of the *John O’Groat Journal*, but other letters were more encouraging.

The extent of land holdings and how land was obtained were of course only some of the factors for consideration by potential settlers. How it could be used to provide the income sought was another issue for consideration by those reading the newspapers in Scotland. The climate of Australia and land use are significant issues that are addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter three: Climate and land use

Any potential settler from Scotland studying newspapers containing letters and other reports of conditions in Australia had a lot to consider. As well as the size of any possible future land holding and how it might be obtained —by grant, purchase, lease, or simply by occupation — potential emigrants had to consider how land might be exploited to provide a secure living and satisfy any dreams of future prosperity. This chapter follows on the discussion of land ownership issues discussed in the earlier chapters and looks at how the nature of pastoral and agricultural land and the Australian climate might impact on settlers' plans for the future in the colony.

The inversion of seasons was only one of many climate differences requiring adjustment by settlers in New South Wales. Droughts lasting years, sometimes followed by significant floods, all impacted on the colony and influenced how settlers reported their fortunes in letters to family and friends in Britain. Those reports had significant potential to influence decisions on emigration from Scotland where, even if the climate were often harsh, most Scots were able to survive. However, crops in Scotland did sometimes fail, as happened several times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most spectacularly in the failure of the Highlands and Islands potato crops from 1846. At such times many Scots saw themselves as having little choice except emigration, even to a land where conditions were known to be very different. The Australian climate as described in letters would have been a matter of serious consideration for many.

According to the missionary (Walter Lawry) at Parramatta whose letter appeared in the *Perth Courier* in November 1821, the breeding of sheep, cattle and horses in New South Wales would abundantly repay the attention of the grazier.¹ It appears that cattle bred in the colony were considerably heavier than those sold at markets in Scotland, and based on the figures given by Haldane, anything up to fifty per cent heavier.² This reflected the year-round ability of breeders to feed the animals on pasture rather than having to keep them indoors on limited feed during the winter. Had readers of the *Perth Courier* in 1821 turned from reading the missionary's letter on page three to the trade and

¹ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

² Haldane, *Drove Roads*, 59 - 61.

agriculture reports on page four that day, they would have been encouraged to see that in the colony markets were clearly paying higher returns. They would have read that Perthshire horse prices continued to be low at the markets.³ In Herefordshire, moreover, the prices for cattle offered by the buyers were “supposed not to have averaged more than 4d per pound” with many cattle remaining unsold to be driven home again.⁴ Meanwhile, in New South Wales with beef at 9d a pound at the market, cattle prices were considerably better and horses were also selling at better prices. The real gains to be had were, according to the missionary, in the breeding of sheep with fleeces averaging five shillings each. He claimed that an experienced farmer investing £1,000 might gain that same amount as annual income after five years and rise to wealth and respectability. Again, the report from the colony would have been very supportive of the prospects in New South Wales, particularly for those with capital to invest who would be repaid abundantly by the breeding and sale of livestock and wool in good seasons.

For over a century, sheep had grown in importance to the Highland economy but the trade in cattle also remained strong. This trade in beef cattle was replicated in the colony in Van Diemen’s Land where the country was described as full of cattle.⁵ The mildness of the climate allowed plants to grow at three times the rate at home in Scotland. The possible surprise in a letter from a man at New Norfolk to his sister in Scotland is the lack of dairy products in the region. Highlanders had for generations paid at least part of their rents in butter and cheese, and dairy products had long provided part of many Highlanders’ diet. “Dairy products were the main source of food for a considerable part of the year and the beasts were almost the only way in which the Highlanders could earn money to supplement the inadequate produce of their poor little holdings and for other needs”.⁶ With the writer of this letter telling his sister that the only cheese available was that brought from England, the message suggested that no closer supply existed and that even in the regions around Sydney and the settlements there, no surplus existed which

³ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

⁶ Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 65.

would reach New Norfolk.⁷ This information may have seemed strange to many in Scotland. Anyone contemplating emigration but used to a diet including dairy products and concerned to maintain that diet element would have had to seek further information and possibly consider other options for a migration destination if the advice were confirmed.

While praising the use for wool production of the one million acres of land obtained by the AACo., the article in the *Inverness Courier* in December 1824 and elsewhere announcing the huge land grant noted how the land could be used and other products brought forth in New South Wales by cultivation of olives, vines, hemp, flax, silk and opium.⁸ This reflected a growing optimism in the future of the colony which may have been attractive for potential emigrants.

A different view of the scale of land use in the colony is offered in a letter which appeared in a letter in the *Caledonian Mercury* in November 1825.⁹ It had been written by a native of Galloway, who had emigrated in 1817 and settled in Van Diemen's Land. During the preceding few years, he had kept a store while cultivating a farm about two and a half miles from Launceston. He wrote that he undertook the occasional slaughter as necessary of a grumphy (a pig). The explanation for the storekeeper's lack of concern for using his unimproved land may lie in his keeping of at least some pigs for meat. Pigs require far less acreage for maintenance than the more popular herbaceous feeders such as cattle and sheep and can reach a suitable condition for slaughter in less time. Pork is also particularly suitable for preservation by salting and the use of pig meat suggests it was a sensible alternative to beef. By keeping swine, the writer of this letter suggested a different view on the often-cited need for large acreage for sheep runs or cattle farms even if the keeping and eating of pigs would have seemed unusual to many in Scotland.¹⁰

⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 9 December 1824, 3.

⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

¹⁰ For discussion of the keeping and eating of pigs in the Highlands, see http://www.royaldunfermline.com/Resources/SCOTTISH_PORK_TABOO.pdf; Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 7; 87.

It is far from clear how readers in Scotland might have reacted to this practice or recognised the value of farming on a smaller scale than many had possibly intended.

A claim by a Manchester correspondent that the “climate is considered the best in the world; and indeed, when the fact is known, that the out-door labourer can work all the year round” appeared in newspapers in February 1832. It was clearly meant to encourage a reader to view the weather in the colony favourably.¹¹ Significantly, this occurred only eighteen years after weather in Britain was so cold that an impromptu frost fair was staged on the Thames in London in February 1814.¹² Inevitably memories of that spectacular event remained in the consciousness of many Britons and with global cool conditions remaining until 1850 other cold winters may have induced readers to think of warmer climes. The follow-up letter a month later went so far as to describe the climate of New South Wales as “the best in the world, in every sense in which the word can be taken”.¹³ It cited the average temperatures for every month of the year from October 1829 to September 1830 with averages from December to March in the mid-70’s (around 24°C) and the colder months of June through August in the mid-50’s (around 13°C). Either the letter writer was ignorant of the journals of Watkin Tench or chose to ignore Tench’s lists of some quite low temperatures during a brief expedition near Rose Hill in July 1791.¹⁴ The claimed warmth of the climate in the early 1830s was not, however, considered as important solely for the comfort of the population but was important because the out-door labourer could work all year round. In a statement of 24 October 1883 to the Napier Commission, Rev. Clerk reported that in his time as minister of Duirinish on Skye from 1840 to 1842, day labourers received 1/6 in summer and 9d or 10d in winter.¹⁵ That seasonal variation reflected the number of daylight hours for working but for labourers in Scotland, the prospect that the weather would allow year-round working days on something approaching full daily rates would have been very attractive. Even common

¹¹ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6; *Scotsman*, 4 February 1832, 3.

¹² <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25862141> accessed 16 November 2017.

¹³ *Scotsman*, 14 March 1832, 2.

¹⁴ Watkin Tench, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*, accessed 26 April 2017 as a Project Gutenberg EBook, Chapter XIV 'Travelling Diaries in New South Wales'.

¹⁵ Clerk, Statement to Napier Commission, 29 – 33.

labourers were said to be able to “have £30 a year, besides board and lodgings”.¹⁶ The length of the working day could have been confirmed by reference to Tench’s journals, notwithstanding his observations on the colder temperatures experienced.¹⁷ The same correspondent from Manchester also noted in March 1832 that in 1826 ninety acres of sugar cane had been planted at Port Macquarie and that crops of sugar had been planted further north of that. Tobacco crops were also thriving. The situation in the colony for all classes of inhabitants was said to be so prosperous that pigs were fattened upon peaches and melons. This repeats the mention of an abundance of peaches in Edward Turner’s letter published in the *Inverness Courier* in January 1820.¹⁸ In the north of Scotland, peaches could only be grown in hot-houses as a luxury item for the privileged few. It is clear that the letters sent from Manchester were intended to paint as attractive a picture of the climate in the colony as possible for a wide range of potential migrants and particularly those from rural areas.

By May 1832, the *Inverness Courier* reported that agriculture in the colony was progressing well.¹⁹ A letter of 24 September 1831 sent from the County of Argyle cited the production of six tons of cheese made and sold by the writer, while some settlers had commenced vineyards and one at least had made 1200 gallons of good wine in a season. This was a significant addition to the earlier focus on owning sheep for wool and cattle for beef. It would have been welcome news for farmers following developments in New South Wales and interested in emigration. Beyond these additional crops and despite the poor wheat harvest mentioned in a letter to a gentleman in Leith, primary produce exports were reported to have increased by one third over those of the previous year.²⁰ Whaling and sealing had been conducted for years by this time and more than twenty-five ships had been loaded in Sydney in the previous year for export with oil, wool, whalebone, skins, wood, etc. becoming additions to the staple export trade by 1832. Vessels such as the *Sophia*, owned by Campbell and Company of Sydney, had been used to collect whale

¹⁶ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6.

¹⁷ Tench, *Narrative of Expedition*.

¹⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

¹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

²⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1833, 4.

and seal oil and for sealing at the beginning of the nineteenth century.²¹ The sea had begun to be farmed just as the land had been already and this would have brought a need for skilled coopers to supplement supplies of imported casks and barrels.

The first edition of the *John O’Groat Journal* is dated 2 February 1836. The second, one month later, quoted a letter sent from Bathurst in June 1835.²² Since it carried news from New South Wales so early in its publishing career this may be indicative of the importance placed on news from the colony for this fledgling publication. Although rainfall records for the early nineteenth century have not been found, more modern weather data from 1914 onwards for more than a century of rainfall records at Wick, publication place of the *John O’Groat Journal*, do not record one month without at least some rainfall.²³ In many months in that period the rainfall was considerable. In Bathurst, by contrast, drought was not infrequent, with drought being recorded also a decade earlier than 1835.²⁴ The chronology of drought for South-Eastern Australia shows almost continuous drought from January 1835 through to October 1839 and again beyond this, a situation almost certainly unheard of in the north of Scotland.²⁵ Whether the readers in the north of Scotland would have comprehended fully how extensive a drought like that mentioned in the letter of 27 June 1835 could be remains a moot point, but it must have been a consideration for any thinking of trying their hand at farming in the colony.²⁶ In March 1839 the *John O’Groat Journal* was again reporting drought in Australia, quoting a letter dated 28 September 1838.²⁷ It is likely, but by no means certain, that the gentleman who later received that letter dated 28 September 1838 and provided an extract of that letter to the *John O’Groat Journal*, was the same person who received the 27 June 1835 letter from Bathurst, an extract of which had appeared in the second edition of the

²¹ <http://trove.nla.gov.au/list?id=40987>.

²² *John O’Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

²³ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/stationdata/wickairportdata.txt>.

²⁴ Grace Hendy-Pooley, ‘Early History of Bathurst and Surroundings’, *The Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, read before the Society 28 November 1905, 231.

²⁵ Fenby and Gergis, ‘Rainfall variations in south-eastern Australia’, 2961-2.

²⁶ *John O’Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

²⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3.

newspaper.²⁸ Each extract commenced with news of the want of rain in the colony and how this lack was affecting stock in the area. The correspondent's views of the drought in the region are confirmed by the advice in the *Australian* of 23 February 1839 reporting that "Wellington Valley is in a most distressed state; not a blade of grass is to be seen in any direction; the cattle and sheep are dying in considerable numbers".²⁹ While the drought had eased a few months later, with a report in the *Colonist* noting that "we have had abundance of rain here, and the grass sprung up soon after" matters had not improved for farmers because "the severe frost has nipped it".³⁰ The drought would have been of concern to readers of the *John O'Groat Journal* in a region unaccustomed to a lack of rainfall, particularly over a period of more than three years with a resultant impact on supplies of grass for stock. Almost certainly, it would have had an impact on any reader contemplating emigration but uncertain of the affect of such a different climate on the prospects for farming in the colony.

In 1836 Scottish papers reported a rare occurrence of snow in Sydney.³¹ Snow had fallen in Sydney on 28 June 1836.³² Once again what is of importance in this study is why it could have been of more than casual interest to readers in Scotland. Readers in Scotland were accustomed to snow in winter and the need to provide shelter for animals during the worst of the winters. They would have been reassured to know that a heavy fall of snow in the colony was an extremely rare occurrence and unlikely to concern most of those considering a pastoralist's future in the colony.

It would have been interesting to know in what profession the "Sydney friend" whose letter was quoted in those December 1836 papers earned his living. Although he appeared dissatisfied with his circumstances in Sydney, he acknowledged that the success he enjoyed was much better than he had any prospect of achieving had he remained in

²⁸ *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3; 2 March 1836, 12. An enquiry to the modern publishers of the newspaper for clarification of the writer and recipient of each letter remains unanswered.

²⁹ *The Australian*, 23 February 1839, 2.

³⁰ 'Original Correspondence. Wellington Valley', *Colonist*, 21 August 1839, 4.

³¹ *Inverness Courier* 14 December 1836, 4; *Caledonian Mercury* 12 December 1836, 2; *Dumfries Times*.

³² *Colonist*, 30 June 1836, 4.

Britain.³³ Whatever the circumstances, it was the lure of pastoral activity in the interior which suggested the most likely means of advancing his fortunes. Although the writer lamented rapid increases in stock prices and how his circumstances on arrival had prevented him from taking advantage of what were, by July 1836, good prices for sheep and cattle it was clearly his intention to try to establish himself somewhere in “the *Bush*”, settling on a sheep or cattle property.³⁴ Readers in Scotland where there existed an extensive network of cattle trading for export to southern markets would have recognised the wealth which might accumulate from a trade in cattle.³⁵ The profits to be made from sheep would also have been well known to Scottish readers of the newspapers, where many small farmers had been removed from the land in landlords’ drive to maximise profits. While the then-current high prices of sheep and cattle in the colony were mentioned as a caution, the writer suggested that a reaction would settle prices at which time it would be advantageous to move to the country. An issue for readers in Scotland noting these circumstances would have been the lack of accurate advice on conditions, with this current letter, for example, providing its limited information more than four months after despatch. A lead time of a year or more was likely to be required for a prospective emigrant to decide to move, to settle affairs in Scotland, take passage for the colony and then to make arrangements in Sydney or elsewhere for a property on which to seek to settle.

In commenting on a letter from a Caithness-shire gentleman then resident in Bathurst, the *John O’Groat Journal* suggested on 1 June 1838 that the information it contained would be found interesting.³⁶ The newspaper circulated in an area which was then, as now, mostly rural. Inevitably many of its readers were involved in agricultural and pastoral industries whether those readers were land-owners, large or small tenant farmers, or peasant farmers for whom one copy of the newspaper might have been read aloud to a gathering of neighbours after passing through a number of hands. The letter was dated 27 December 1837 and the contents would have served to remind the readers of the *Journal*

³³ *Inverness Courier*, 14 December 1836, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 December 1836, 2; *Dumfries Times*.

³⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 14 December 1836, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 December 1836, 2; *Dumfries Times*.

³⁵ Haldane, *Drove Roads*.

³⁶ *John O’Groat Journal*, 1 June 1838, 12.

that the seasons in Australia were inverted from those in Scotland. Shearing in New South Wales had been completed only in mid-December. Shearing in Caithness in December would be fatal for the sheep and possibly also for the shearers, since shearing in the Highlands and Islands was mostly performed in the open air.

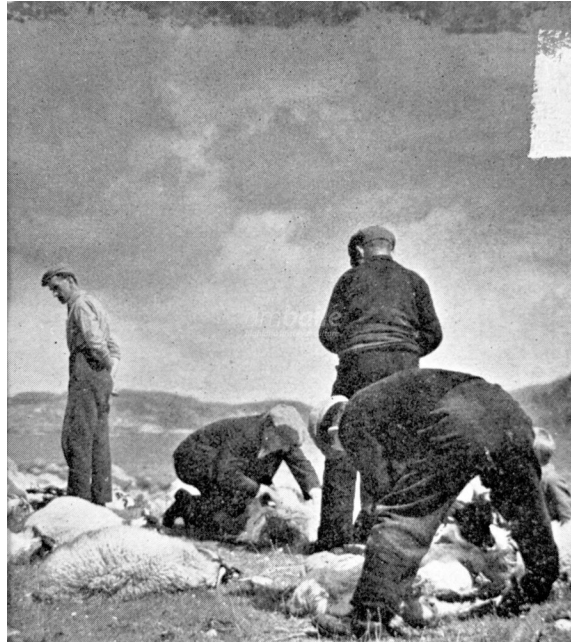


Figure 4: Shearing in Lewis in the Western Isles.³⁷

The letter writer's comments about prices for wool and ewes would have been of interest to readers, particularly those hoping to emigrate and farm in the colony. Of similar interest would have been comments about crops suffering from want of spring rain, mentioned also in the comments on drought published in the *John O'Groat Journal* of 2 March 1836 referred to above, but also the calculation that "wheat will produce about 15 bushels per acre".³⁸ Records of wheat production in Caithness in the mid-nineteenth century are not readily accessible although in the parish of Latheron in Caithness there is a record of wheat being raised of good quality even if it was not a consistently profitable crop, owing chiefly to the want of sufficient good weather to bring it to maturity.³⁹ The comment about fifteen bushels per acre might be seen in the context of some statistics

³⁷ See this and other images provided by *Am Baile*
http://www.ambaille.org.uk/en/search/do_quick_search.html?q=shearing&mime_type_Image=on&mime_type=image accessed 15/1/2018.

³⁸ *John O'Groat Journal*, 1 June 1838, 12.

³⁹ NSA, Vol. 15, Caithness-shire, 98.

which are more readily available. In 2007, which the Australian Bureau of Meteorology states was a drought year, the wheat crop in New South Wales yielded only the equivalent of about 6.7 bushels per acre cultivated.”⁴⁰ A crop yield of fifteen bushels of wheat per cultivated acre in a dry year, even if inaccurate, would have been of considerable interest in Caithness where the growing season was shorter than it would be in New South Wales.

The clue to the generally favourable rural production may lie in the nature of the rich country for farming in the Bathurst area from where this letter was sent. In the extensive plains west of the Blue Mountains, it had for many thousands of years supported the local Wiradjuri People with a wide and varied diet. By 1825, Bathurst was the location for the Government flocks of sheep from where James Ainslie had collected sheep to establish Robert Campbell’s property on the Limestone Plains.⁴¹ By 1838 when the Caithness-shire gentleman’s letter appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal*, the Bathurst area was extensively taken over for pastoral and agricultural pursuits. In such country, it is unsurprising that poverty was described as being little known in the colony. By contrast, in the north of Scotland at this time, the Highland clearances had been under way for decades, removing from their accustomed habitations and occupations many of the people who often found themselves set adrift upon the world and facing an uncertain future.⁴² Besides the small holders and peasantry, those turned off their farms sometimes included “the higher-ranking social group known in Gaelic as *daoine uaisle*, a phrase best, if not quite adequately translated as ‘gentry’. Called tacksmen in English ... the *daoine uaisle* ... stood just below chiefs in clanship’s pecking order.”⁴³ These were the men who often had the capital to invest in relocating to a new country where certainty of possession of land was much greater than prevailed in Scotland. They were also frequently the leaders among their communities with some potential to influence decisions on emigration by those below them in the social order. As far back as 1771,

⁴⁰ <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/annual/nsw/archive/2007.summary.shtml> and http://www.ausgrain.com.au/Back%20Issues/177ybgrn08/30_Wheat.pdf both accessed 15/1/2018.

⁴¹ John C Orr, *Trooper Ainslie: the settling of the Limestone Plains (Canberra) and its hero* (Sydney: Koa Productions, 1978), 34.

⁴² Hunter, *Set Adrift Upon the World*.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 86.

Captain Alexander MacLeod was warning his father that many of the MacLeod tacksmen were attracted by the idea of emigration and “like a Disease ye infection is caught by one person from Another”.⁴⁴ Information from the colony, while acknowledging a downturn in prices for stock and wool but which indicated a good return from crops and denying wide-spread poverty, should have been of great interest to the *daoine uaisle* of Caithness and others in the region reading the report from New South Wales.

Writing from Paterson River, north of Sydney, on 2 February 1838, Donald MacLeod assured his correspondent that the soil was so fertile that two crops might be grown in a year with potatoes growing in the winter with no use for manure.⁴⁵ This would have been welcome news for many in the Highlands and Islands who needed to spread dung on their fields every year. Animal manure was allowed to accumulate in the buildings where the animals were sheltered, often shared with humans, for four or five months over winter until it was carried out in spring to be laid on the land, mixed with rushes and bracken which constituted the animals’ bedding.⁴⁶ The issue which would have been noted by readers in Scotland was the difference in weather, with conditions in the colony not requiring the stock to be kept indoors over winter. Animal manure could be deposited naturally, without extra work.

A gentleman in Edinburgh received a letter sent from a friend at Bathurst; the letter subsequently appeared in *The Scotsman* from where it was reproduced in the *Inverness Courier*.⁴⁷ Although neither writer nor recipient of this letter of 9 March 1839 from Bathurst is named, an early mention in it of Major Mitchell’s map suggests that the recipient had some prior knowledge of the colony. The 1834 map of New South Wales prepared by Surveyor General Major Sir Thomas Mitchell, depicting features, roads, tracks and places of the nineteen counties had been published in Sydney and republished in London the same year.⁴⁸ It is likely that the letter writer was only fairly recently arrived

⁴⁴ Grant, *The MacLeods*, 569.

⁴⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

⁴⁶ Clerk, Statement to Napier Commission, 29.

⁴⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 10 July 1839, 4.

⁴⁸ <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232180396/view>.

in the colony, saying that s/he was unable yet to give much information regarding the country, but that sheep farming appeared to be the staple concern of the country. The ongoing drought in the area was commented on as it had been in earlier letters appearing in the Scottish press. On this particular occasion, the letter writer noted that the drought had extended not only as far away as the Macquarie marshes, nearly 300 miles from Bathurst, but from Morton [sic] Bay in the north of the colony to Port Philip [sic] in the south, and west to the extremity of the South Australia colony. The drought was so bad that “to give you an idea, fifty acres will hardly support a single sheep”. To put this comment into some context which might have been appreciated in Scotland’s Highlands, the *Aberdeen Journal* on 3 July 1839 advertised for a nineteen year let, that being a standard letting period for the times, the farm of *Windyhills* in the parish of Peterhead which extended to “25 acres, 1 rood, and 30 falls, or thereby, Scots measure”.⁴⁹ An acreage equivalent to almost two farms of this size being required to support a single sheep would have been almost beyond the comprehension of many readers of the Scottish press. It cannot have failed to impress any reader with the severity of the drought.

Consistently with many letters already appearing in the Scottish press, the writer corresponding with the gentleman in Edinburgh noted that good fortunes could be made from sheep with sure and speedy returns to be expected. However, “the chief difficulty is to live ... without encroaching on your stock” and this was considered difficult in the drought conditions.⁵⁰ Although stock could be bought cheaply, the challenge lay in keeping them alive. Much of this letter is taken up with comments on the drought, and the problems this created for the pastoral and agricultural industries. These comments are consistent with those of other correspondents and writers. It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the impact on its readers which this letter from Bathurst may have had but it was likely to have been of concern to some.

The extent of the country and some of the difficulties encountered in travel are also mentioned, including problems with travel by the mail coach. The description of the whirlwind encountered in the bush would have attracted attention. When another traveller

⁴⁹ *Aberdeen Journal*, 3 July 1839, 1.

⁵⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 10 July 1839, 4.

also encountered one in 1839 she devoted more than two pages of her book to it.⁵¹ The phenomenon was clearly not widely known in Britain where the heat conditions to create such a wind rarely occur. It would have been recognised in the minds of readers as another of the peculiarities of the colony. However, for all its concerns, the letter in the *Inverness Courier* advanced several positive comments about the prospects for those considering settlement in New South Wales. The writer conceded that the drought and its misery would prove transitory, and with prudence and care fortunes could be made relatively quickly.

The description of the country and its farming potential in the area around and south of Wollongong, known as the Illawarra or the Five Islands, was that it was a paradise where more rain fell than anywhere else in the country.⁵² A reader of the *John O’Groat Journal* following the various letters from the colony which appeared in that newspaper may have been reassured to know that, notwithstanding regular reports of drought elsewhere in the colony, there was at least one area where rainfall could be counted on.

In its entirety, another letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* is almost a survey from one man’s point of view, either from first hand or as reported, of several of the separate settlements which together comprised the colony.⁵³ The writer was only able to offer second hand reports of Moreton Bay, but acknowledged that for those who could stand the near-tropical heat, it offered some inducements, being suitable for tropical fruits and agricultural products. The elevated land in the interior was considered suitable for sheep although there was limited land with sufficient water. Even coal and limestone were reported as being available.

This letter writer made it clear that he had chosen to settle in Gipps’ Land. He was clearly one who sought to exploit the natural resources of the country in a manner contrary to the Governor’s policies of reforming land tenure and sale which had aimed to extract increased revenue from squatters on unoccupied land. As noted above (p. 71)

⁵¹ Mrs Charles (Louisa Anne) Meredith, *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales during a residence in that colony from 1839 to 1844* (London: John Murray, 1844), 86-8.

⁵² *John O’Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1.

⁵³ *John O’Groat Journal*, 23 September 1842, 4.

Governor Bourke was actively working to stop settlers from profiting improperly from land speculation. Having already despatched 7,000 sheep by an overland expedition, the writer claimed he was about to take ship to Port Albert, the then-sea port for Gipps' Land and in what was believed to be a land promising a rich future for settlers.⁵⁴ Readers in the Scottish Highlands may have read with envy the description of soil, mostly of a chocolate loam that was free from even the smallest stones. The area was said to be well and constantly watered, fed from the dissolving snows of the alps which gave a permanence of water supply not found elsewhere in Australia. It had belts of noble trees waiting to be split and sawn, and large areas suitable for every type of agriculture, guaranteed to produce a large profit to an industrious farmer of moderate capital. It was sheltered from the hot winds which were said to be as baneful as the *simoom* of the Arabian desert. While this description was aimed at those like the letter writer who apparently had some capital to invest, the flow-on was that workers would also be needed to do the ploughing, timber felling and other work involved in settlement. This offered some opportunities for those facing an uncertain future in Scotland where clearances were leaving many rural workers with little option but to move. Many Scots had been forced to relocate from the straths and glens to make room for sheep. They were often offered barren coastal soil which could only grow potatoes or cereals after the creation of "lazy beds" or *feannagan* by the laborious work of cutting and carrying turves and improving this with seaweed and animal manures.⁵⁵ In many instances, land offered in the Highlands on these coastal strips was too small to support a family even after the improvements described, forcing the people settled there to seek additional outside work in kelping or as day labourers. Even these small holdings were sometimes reclaimed by the landlords. For these people, the prospects of farming in soil such as was described in this letter in the *John O'Groat Journal* must have created a strong desire to emigrate.

Having dismissed the future prospects for the Sydney districts, the writer commented on "that portion of Australia Felix, of which Port Philip [sic] may be considered the nucleus". He noted how it had proved to be highly suitable for the increasing flocks and

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Hunter, *Making of the Crofting Community*, 47; 118.

herds of the early colonists since its luxuriant lightly-timbered and park-like scenery had allowed those fortunate enough to take land there to become immensely rich.⁵⁶

Unlike Gippsland, the value of the Port Phillip district as an agricultural and grain growing province was said to be severely curtailed owing to hot winds which a newly arrived settler would not anticipate or consider. These were able to blast in a day the hopes and labour of the work of many months. Port Phillip district's other big disadvantage was claimed to be the lack of reliable potable water, a deficiency said to have been stifled and concealed by those already settled there but which would eventually "put a check to that prosperity which has hitherto existed at Port Philip [sic]".⁵⁷ Confirmation of weather conditions is provided in the contemporary Sydney papers. A correspondent from Goulburn in October 1839 described "a blazing hurricane, enough to burn anything out by the roots".⁵⁸ In January 1840, Van Diemen's Land had experienced scorching heat but not such as to have injured the crops in any important degree since "it was not accompanied by that bane to vegetation, the hot wind, or *Sirocco*".⁵⁹ The dry and destructive weather at this time continued with a report dated 1 October 1841 complaining that "[t]he weather continues dry and windy — travelling very uncomfortable, owing to the dust, &c".⁶⁰ Again from the County of Argyle it was reported in February 1842 that "we have had extraordinary warm weather ... particularly on the 20th, when a hot wind from the north-west was so overpowering, that all out-door work was at a stand still".⁶¹ By contrast and as noted above in the *John O'Groat Journal*, Gippsland was said to be sheltered by a mountain chain that also precipitated moisture from the ocean, being watered by many large and deep rivers gathering numerous streams

⁵⁶ For comment on the lightly timbered and park-like scenery, see Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2012) and commentaries on that work.

⁵⁷ *John O'Groat Journal*, 30 September 1842, 2.

⁵⁸ *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 1 November 1839, 1.

⁵⁹ *Commercial Journal and Advertiser*, 18 January 1840, 3, quoting *Colonial Times* 7 January 1840.

⁶⁰ *Sydney Free Press*, 9 October 1841, 2.

⁶¹ *Sydney Free Press*, 26 February 1842, 2.

“fed by the never-failing moisture of dissolving snows”.⁶² It is clear that, even without the reports in the Sydney papers commenting on the hot winds affecting the colony, the report from the man preparing to settle in Gippsland would have alerted any readers in Scotland to the need to consider weather conditions in the different areas of New South Wales before deciding where to settle.

A letter written in winter in 1844 from *Richlands* near Goulburn in southern New South Wales and appearing in the following mid-winter in Scotland in at least the *Dumfries Courier*, the *Glasgow Citizen* and the *Stirling Observer* would have been available to many of those in the Lowlands and central belt of Scotland.⁶³ The Lowland clearances had been underway for many years in this region matching, or perhaps in some ways exceeding, the clearances in the Highlands.⁶⁴ There is no indication of the identity of the letter writer or whether this was a man or a woman. What may have surprised newspaper readers was the description of the very cold weather being experienced. *Richlands* is located in rich grazing country and although it is only at 35° south latitude, and Glasgow is by comparison further north at about 56° north, it sits at about 1,000 metres, or 3,280 feet elevation. This puts it at a greater elevation than most of Scotland and quite exposed to winds and weather from the Antarctic. Whether or not the comments about nightly frosts and daily chills would be believed in Scotland is uncertain since New South Wales was regularly reported as being a land of heat and frequent droughts. Notwithstanding this reassurance of short winters, anyone contemplating emigration to work in the pastoral industries and reading this letter may have had occasion to reconsider where to seek employment in the colony and to ask more questions about areas of residence and employment as well as general living conditions. A shingle or bark roofed timber slab shepherd’s hut of one or two rooms with a dirt floor would have offered little comfort in such conditions.

⁶² *John O’Groat Journal*, 23 September 1842, 4.

⁶³ *Glasgow Citizen*, 28 December 1844, 4; *Stirling Observer*, 2 January 1845, 2; *Dumfries Courier*.

⁶⁴ See Aitchison and Cassell, *The Lowland Clearances*.

1844 was reported as the year when the fortunes of the colony had seen a significant improvement.⁶⁵ This resulted from several factors, including a succession of fine seasons with an overall improvement in the weather which had benefited the pastoral and agricultural industries. It was also the year when the colony realised the value of its surplus flocks for tallow. Although rendering good sheep for tallow was elsewhere reported as a waste of a resource, it had enabled landholders to dispose of the parts of their flocks which they could not otherwise retain profitably.

A letter in the *Inverness Courier* of 4 December 1844 also commented on the practice of boiling down sheep and cattle for the tallow available.⁶⁶ The writer suggested that this was a way of managing surplus stock and turning them to profit. The practice was also seen as enabling pastoralists to avoid the ravages of over-stocking, with pressures on the surviving sheep reduced by culling and enhancing the survivors' value.⁶⁷ Although the writer claimed that 1,500 good fat sheep could be boiled at once, this was an exaggeration. Some fifty years later when processes had been refined, the estimate was of 700 to 800 carcasses at a time in a boiler with steam providing the heat necessary for the reduction process. The financial estimates of taking surplus sheep, and reducing them to shorn wool, skins, mutton hams and tallow were outlined in Launceston's *Teetotal Advocate* on 17 July 1843 taking calculations from the *Sydney Herald* but urging caution against over-doing the exercise in culling.⁶⁸

With an average price of 45s per hundredweight and around a million hundredweights imported annually to Britain, tallow was a lucrative trade. The import duty, which was normally 3s. 2d. was reduced to 3d per hundredweight when imported from British possessions.⁶⁹ In this, the paper was consistent with the man writing home on 18 June 1844 who saw the production of tallow as a great outlet or safety valve for the settler

⁶⁵ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

⁶⁶ See Fry, 'Boiling down: A Grimy Means'.

⁶⁷ *Australasian Pastoralists' Review*, 15 June 1892, 680; 15 May 1893, 140.

⁶⁸ *Teetotal Advocate* 17 July 1843, 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

allowing regulation of flock sizes to suit the circumstances of seasons.⁷⁰ This was achieved by building up flocks when times were good and grass was plentiful but culling less useful animals to reduce flock and herd sizes when conditions were adverse. The advice showed a willingness to adapt ways of farming and may have had great appeal for Scottish investors making them aware of alternatives for making money. This was better than, as the *Teetotal Advocate* described it, relying on sheep solely for food and clothing. Less than nine months after the ‘Sheep farming in New South Wales’ letter had appeared in the *Inverness Courier*, that paper was proclaiming that it was “glad to perceive that the brightening prospects of New South Wales ... continue to advance”.⁷¹ Sheep farming was reported as again being the most profitable investment in the country with wool and tallow shipped as extremely valuable cargoes to Britain, a reassuring prospect for readers of the *Inverness Courier*.

While applauding the rendering of sheep for tallow, newspapers described the slaughtering of cattle merely for their hides and fat as being “a rather remarkable piece of intelligence”.⁷² This use of only parts of cattle would have almost certainly been surprising to readers in the north of Scotland. Here the cattle trade, involving the annual collection and droving of beasts had been a significant staple of the Highland economy for many years.⁷³ The waste of the beef would have been, as the papers described, rather remarkable.

There is no indication of who wrote or received a letter in the *Aberdeen Journal* in December 1845.⁷⁴ The writer was probably in business of some nature. Since he quoted prices only for sheep, cattle, horses, hides and sheep skins, it would be reasonable to assume that the business had a connection to the pastoral sector, perhaps in the nature of a stock and station agent. It is possible that Captain G—, to whom reference was made,

⁷⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3.

⁷¹ *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3 and article in *Inverness Courier*, 28 August 1845, 3, quoting ‘The Brightening Prospects of New South Wales’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1845, 2.

⁷² *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3.

⁷³ Haldane, *Drove Roads*, particularly 133-149.

⁷⁴ *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 December 1845, 4.

was either a client or member of the firm employing the gentleman who wrote this letter to his father, but there is insufficient information in the extract to identify him.

The letter was very positive in tone, noting the improvement in the economic prospects for the colony. In particular, confidence was said to be improving, marking a significant difference from earlier letters appearing in the Scottish press. These had described depressed prices, difficulties of recruiting employees for the pastoral industry, reduced wages and an inability to utilise much of the colony's livestock, except for tallow. This letter mentioned the sale of horses for export to India and is the first mention of this export trade in the letters in this study although prices in the colony for horses for local use had been reported regularly. By the time this letter was written in August 1845, horses were being exported to India. The "Waler", a cross-bred style of horse originating in New South Wales was being accepted as a good all-round mount with endurance and stamina suitable for a heavy workload in a variety of situations. Mention of these horses, "fit for India" was only as part of a list of improvements in the colony but it was a significant initiative that would prove to be of increasing benefit to the colony.⁷⁵ Diamond notes that horses were shipped from Boyd's runs, and a trade developed supplying remounts for the cavalry of the East India Company.⁷⁶ While not as widely acknowledged as the development of the merino breed of sheep, development of the Waler horse marked a significant additional line in animals bred in and for the Australian conditions. This provided a notable export trade taking advantage of the particular opportunities offered in Australia. The climate in Australia and the overall conditions in what was still at this time an economy reliant on the rural sector were beginning to be acknowledged in Britain and the newspaper reports reflected this. This brief extract from a letter, noting the improvements in the returns from animal husbandry, cannot have failed to provide encouragement to those concerned about emigration after so many reports lamenting difficulties for investors and workers in the colony.

The climate of the various colonies in New South Wales was a frequent topic in letters appearing in Scottish newspapers. It was described as allowing a wide variety of animal

⁷⁵ *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 December 1845, 4.

⁷⁶ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*, 103.

and agricultural products but drought was clearly a major concern in some of the years under review in this thesis. Even the occasional mention of severe cold was recorded as being of only short duration, unlike Scottish winters which required animals to be housed indoors for months at a time. The processing of sheep and cattle for tallow on a large scale allowed the settlers to vary how they managed their flocks and herds in a way which would have been very different from farming in Scotland. All of these matters were reported in letters seen by newspaper readers in Scotland and the information in those letters stood to influence decisions by potential emigrants to Australia.

When reviewing the totality of the comments about climate and farming in the letters examined, the clear conclusion is that those comments stood to be quite influential in making decisions by anyone considering a move to Australia. The central argument claimed by this thesis is that, by analysing reports in these letters and then comparing the conditions in the colony with those being experienced by readers in Scotland, it is clear that the correspondence had potential to influence emigration decisions. The information on climate and farming practices in letters reviewed in this chapter supports the assessment of the importance of these letters to the decision making of potential emigrants.

Not all emigrants, however, were in a position to farm on their own account immediately on arrival. Many of those looking at openings in the colony were more concerned to learn of opportunities available in trades and occupations and the conditions offered by employers. These people too would have taken a keen interest in the reports on wages and conditions in the papers from those who had already taken the step to emigrate. The reports of these openings and conditions are covered in the following chapter.

Chapter four: Working for wages

The extent of land and stock holdings, and how land might be acquired and then exploited were mentioned in a number of letters in Scottish newspapers and these issues have been discussed in earlier chapters. At least some people in Scotland reading reports from the colony would have included those with hopes of acquiring land and stock at some time in the future. Many settlers, however, were not able to take up land on arrival and did not expect to do so. The reality was that until they had built up some capital many who made the voyage would need employment in their trades or usual occupations, or as unskilled or lowly skilled workers, or in a new occupation altogether. For many, continued employment in the service of others was to be their ongoing future. This chapter shifts the focus from reports of those able to hold land in the colony and profit from it. It looks at the information available from letters and press reports for those destined to work for wages if, how and when they might obtain employment in New South Wales.

As noted below, convicts had been sent to New South Wales without any consideration of whether their skills, or lack of them, equipped them to contribute to building the colony. In one particularly poignant example of how a free emigrant had to take up new skills, albeit outside the time span covered by this thesis, in 1853, the *Stirling Observer* reported the case of one of these, a hand-loom weaver who had migrated on the *Ticonderoga* with his wife and two children. His wife died of typhus on the voyage and to support himself and his children, the former weaver had had to find labouring work in a foundry in Melbourne.¹ Weavers were only one class of worker in Scotland facing unemployment at home due to increasing industrialisation. Many rural workers had been displaced by the clearances. Both urban and rural workers would be among the readers anxious to learn of openings and conditions possibly available in the colony for single women and men and married couples with or without children. At the same time in Scotland, there was a growing awareness of political activity by workers and a long list of Working Men's Associations, Political Unions and Radical Associations existed by November 1838.² It is clear that information in letters stood to influence decisions on whether to emigrate to New

¹ *Stirling Observer*, 15 September 1853, 4.

² W. Hamish Fraser, *Chartism in Scotland*. (Pontypool: The Merlin Press, 2010), 40.

South Wales. Even those without hopes of acquiring land would have read with interest reports of employment conditions to allow an assessment of the prospects for improved futures *vis a vis* remaining in Scotland.

Trades and occupations

The workforce consisting mostly of convicts which arrived on the First Fleet in 1788 had to manage as best as possible to build a settlement and farm for food. The convicts and their guards had not been selected with a view to sending to Australia a competent workforce with a diverse range of suitable skills for building a new colony. However, by 1820 the colony had grown in size so that at least in the towns particular trades were required to carry out building work and other activities needed for a growing town. In the rural areas, where pastoral interests predominated, shepherds were in great demand. Those in Scotland interested in migration and concerned for employment in the colony would have taken advice from whatever sources were available to them, including newspaper reports and those reports had good potential to influence emigration decisions.

When convict Edward Turner wrote to his wife in Britain significant construction was underway in Sydney during Lachlan Macquarie's governorship and under the guidance of convict architect Francis Greenway. The building work was being carried out despite a lack of good tradesmen.³ Turner claimed that the Irish workmen who comprised the bulk of the workforce knew little about building and any masons or builders reading his letter may have been encouraged to consider openings in their trades. Good building workers were obviously needed although within a few decades many handsome stone buildings had already been erected in Sydney such as those shown in Figure 5 below.

³ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4; Morton Herman, Greenway, Francis, Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/greenway-francis-2120>.



Figure 5: Bullock team, George Street, Sydney, ca. 1860 with fine stone buildings.⁴

Almost as an aside at the end of an 1825 letter from near Launceston occurs an unusual insight into some of the difficulties faced by settlers: “No class of tradesmen is so wanted as hatters, as there is not one in the whole colony”.⁵ Whether the letter spoke to those in specialised trades in Scotland or possibilities in the colony is uncertain but it does point to a need for a wide range of trade skills. Against that claim, however, is the later evidence that in the “List of Assignments of Male Convicts to Private Service from 31st January to 10th February, 1835”, Fred A. Hely, the Principal Superintendent of Convicts’ Office in Sydney recorded on 22 May 1835 the assignment of a hatter’s labourer to John Connor of Prospect, indicating that hatters may not have been as rare in the mainland colony as they were in Van Diemen’s Land.⁶

In early February 1832 a letter from Manchester appeared in various newspapers suggesting a number of trades that were needed in New South Wales. The emigration assistance in the nature of a *loan* (the emphasis is in the original) of £20 available to

⁴ NLA <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-148146687/view?searchTerm=George+street+Sydney+1839#search/George%20street%20Sydney%201839>.

⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

⁶ <https://remembering-the-past-australia.blogspot.com.au/2018/03/list-settlers-assigned-male-convicts-31-jan-10feb-1835.html> accessed 11 March 2018.

“pensioners, mechanics, artizans [sic]” may have been attractive for workers in a range of occupations and would have been indicative of a growing and diversifying economy in the colony.⁷ In the 1830s leading iron-works like the Carron Company and the Shotts Iron Company were to expand their business with the Australian colonies, exporting pig-iron and manufactured goods. It was in the mid 1830s, too, that the large-scale import of Australian wool began to supply the rapidly expanding woollen mills of the Scottish Border districts. With an expansion of trade with the colony occurring about this time, the opportunities for mechanics and artisans to exploit the movement of materials and processes to Australia could have been significant. Possibilities for employment would have been attractive to those reading this letter from Manchester and seeking a better future for themselves and their families. While the writer of this letter was clearly engaged in encouraging migration, there would have been some basis in fact for the call for tradesmen to emigrate.

A correspondent, writing at Christmas 1832 from Sydney to a friend in Leith, noted the arrival of a large number of mechanics.⁸ This appears to have been the result of earlier shortages of tradesmen which had resulted in high wages being paid to these men. The *Sydney Gazette* of 1 November 1832 had devoted an entire column to the subject of wages and working hours of mechanics in both the colony and in England. The home country suffered in comparison while the appointment by the Government of a recruiting agent was sought to provide factual information to intending mechanics.⁹ Any mechanic reading the extract printed in the *Inverness Courier* of 9 October 1833 would have been assured of the confirmation that such employees were guaranteed to do well.

By 1838, Hobart was described as a pleasantly set out town on the Derwent River.¹⁰ Beyond this pleasant aspect, however, would be the welcome news of a town busy with industry and activity sufficient to warrant use of the metaphor of “the hive” to capture the feeling of work being undertaken. This would have been welcome news to citizens at

⁷ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6; *Scotsman*, 4 February 1832, 3.

⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1833, 4.

⁹ Columns 3/4, *Sydney Gazette*, 1 November 1832, 3.

¹⁰ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4, acknowledged as being reprinted from *Dumfries Courier*.

least reading the newspaper report in Dumfriesshire where, apart from the majority rural industry, the trades of manufacture of bonnets, hats and stockings; tanning; both wool and cotton spinning; weaving; brewing; shoe making; saw milling; and corn milling are all recorded as occurring in one or more parishes in Dumfriesshire.¹¹ Other readers in the even more industrialised parts of Scotland, such as those likely to access the *Fife Herald*, would also have been encouraged by the news of a thriving colony. While the letter writer noted that Tasmania held out many inducements to men of capital and to agricultural workers, the greatest attractions were for tradesmen and mechanics. The range of trades working in Dumfriesshire suggests that there could be a good potential supply of such skilled workers available to emigrate. Emigration was certainly being encouraged with the *Fife Herald* commenting that its “readers will scarcely think that we can give them too much on the subject of Australia, considering the space which the subject occupies in the attention of the industrious and enterprising classes of the community”.¹²

Given the importance of Scotland’s trade in cattle, readers of the *Fife Herald* and the more widely read *Caledonian Mercury* may have been aware of the concepts and many of the practicalities of droving large numbers of cattle over extended distances.¹³ Some would have recognised at least part of the achievement of Joseph Hawdon and Charles Bonney in moving about 300 cattle from New South Wales to Adelaide.¹⁴ Hawdon had previously taken a mob of about 300 cattle to Port Phillip in 1836 in company with John Hepburn and John Gardiner although he did not acknowledge their contribution in later years.¹⁵ In printing Hawdon’s letter of 5 April 1838 to the Governor of South Australia, Scottish newspapers were justified in commenting that the facts announced in the letter were important and in describing it as a successful expedition across the interior of New

¹¹ NSA, Vol. IV.

¹² *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

¹³ Haldane, *Drove Roads*, 240 - 241.

¹⁴ *Fife Herald*, 20 December 1838, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 December 1838, 4; Joseph Hawdon, *The Journal of a Journey from New South Wales to Adelaide (the Capital of South Australia) Performed in 1838 by Mr Joseph Hawdon* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1952), 3; 13; 10-11; 53.

¹⁵ Lucille M. Quinlan, *Here my home: the life and times of Captain John Stuart Hepburn, 1803-1860, master mariner, overlander and founder of Smeaton Hill, Victoria* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 51.

South Wales.¹⁶ Drovers in Scotland may well have recognised the potential that existed in the colony for experienced men to be employed to move large numbers of stock to take up newly settled areas. Hawdon's letter claimed that he and his party had to find their way over unfamiliar country for a journey lasting more than two months from Howlong on the Murray river to Adelaide. However, his letter acknowledges the presence in the party of "ambassadors sent from one [native] tribe to another" who ensured the friendly intercourse with those through whose territory they passed and who would have guided the party. The party covered a distance approximately equal to that which would be involved in moving a mob of cattle from Inverness to the markets at Smithfield in London although Hawdon claimed it was a longer journey of a thousand miles.¹⁷ It would have been recognised as a major undertaking even if those in Scotland reading the account were unlikely to have appreciated some of the issues involved in droving during some of the hottest months of the year. These were not mentioned in Hawdon's letter to the Governor but are recorded in his *Journal*.¹⁸ Hawdon noted in his letter that although his party had consisted of nine men he believed that this was too small a number to travel with safety to the stock over the same country again.¹⁹ This advice reflected the difficulties he had faced with stock straying, finding water and feed en route, and the possibilities of confrontation with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the country through which his party had travelled. Confrontation had largely been avoided thanks to the intercessions of the ambassadors sent from one native tribe to another.

At a practical level, drovers in Scotland and reading or hearing of this journey would have recognised the importance of being able to ford the Murray and Darling Rivers safely. Fording rivers on drove routes was common practice and often preferable to using bridges where the sound of feet on timber bridges was liable to make cattle panic. The report given in this letter from Hawdon would have contained practical information on

¹⁶ *Fife Herald*, 20 December 1838, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 December 1838, 4.

¹⁷ The route is shown on a map included at Hawdon, *Journal*, 66; 55.

¹⁸ Hawdon records in his diary for 12 February 1838 that the heat was so great that it peeled [sic] off the skin of his nose. Hawdon, *Journal*, 27.

¹⁹ *Fife Herald*, 20 December 1838, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 December 1838, 4.

the movement of cattle over long distances in the colony. As such it was likely to be of some interest to anyone in Scotland interested in working with stock in the colony.

Anyone reading the *Inverness Courier* in April 1839 or the *Fife Herald* two weeks later and perusing a letter to John Cameron of Arnisdale reproduced there would have seen that in the new colony of Port Phillip there were good opportunities for tradesmen who were assured of doing well.²⁰ Servants, sheep managers and shepherds were also all said to be in demand and the openings recorded in this letter were likely to be attractive to readers of the newspapers.

An extract from a letter which appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* in November 1840 gave a long list of trades required in the colony and pay rates which could be expected for each.²¹ Tailors appear to have been the most highly paid among the trades, confirming comments in other correspondence which had been published before this letter appeared. The long list of tradespersons wanted in the colony is indicative of a thriving economy and most of those said to be wanted were for building and construction trades. Ship carpenters reading this letter may have been left uncertain of the wages likely to be on offer, since pay rates are quoted at both ten shillings per week and £9 per month, a difference which a casual reader would have difficulty reconciling.²² As confirmation of the call for tradespersons wanted, on the same day as the letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* was written, the *Sydney Monitor* had carried on its front page advertisements seeking “a few good boiler makers”; “a respectable woman to do the washing and cooking of a small Family [sic]”; a shopman; a working assistant; a good butler; and “a steady sober man as house-servant, or a married man and his wife”.²³ Unfortunately, since none of these advertisements cited pay rates, the information in the correspondent’s letter of 13 November 1840 has to be relied upon for accuracy without a convenient means of checking. The list in this letter of employees wanted was not limited to skilled artisans, most of whom might possibly be recruited from the towns and cities of Britain but also

²⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2; *Fife Herald*, 2 May 1839, 1.

²¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 5 June 1840, 1.

farm workers, shepherds and virtuous young women, as dairymaids and general house servants.²⁴ The young women of Caithness were mentioned as being particularly suited for New South Wales although no explanation was offered. In reality, since there continued to be more European males in the colony than females, the young virtuous women of Caithness had excellent chances of marriage if that were what they sought. It was clear also that the letter writer was concerned to attract emigrants to the colony from what might be termed a suitable social class, noting that such emigrants should be well connected. Clearly, this was intended to be applied not only to the young women sought but to all migrants in all occupations.

Just as Australia had an ongoing need for both capital and skilled and unskilled labour, so New Zealand/Aotearoa was said to require these also.²⁵ In an odd piece of editing by the *John O’Groat Journal* when selecting the extracts from its correspondent’s letter of 6 June 1840, the paper included, almost as an after-thought the information that brickmakers “may average 15s per day, also bricklayers”.²⁶ It is not clear whether this applied to Sydney which was the focus of most of the letter, and where those trades had already been mentioned as potentially earning 10s a day, or to New Zealand. If the latter, then the need for these tradesmen is confirmed by some advertisements in the *New Zealand Gazette* seeking “three steady workmen” for brick making and “a number of BRICK-MAKERS [sic]”.²⁷

There is no indication in a letter sent from Sydney on 6 October 1840 of who wrote it, although it does appear to have been directed to the *Aberdeen Journal* and reproduced from there in the *Inverness Courier* of 10 March 1841.²⁸ It is also unclear which journal added the endorsement that the “writer is a gentleman well known and highly respected in this his native county; and what he states for the information of his countrymen, may be most confidently and implicitly relied on”. Readers of either newspaper may have

²⁴ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 May 1840, 1; 3.

²⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 10 March 1841, 4.

been reassured that the information and encouragement in the letter was reliable and could be trusted.

The report of the committee on immigration for 1840 mentioned in the letter was a committee instituted by the Legislative Council of New South Wales. That report was dated 2 September 1840 and signed by its Chairman, “W. G. Australia”, Bishop W G Broughton, the only person ever to hold the title of Bishop of Australia of the Anglican Church. The full text of the report appeared in New South Wales in, for example, the *Australasian Chronicle* and its contents would have been freely available in the colony.²⁹ Since copies of Sydney newspapers were by this time being received regularly in Britain, it would have been readily available there also. The committee’s report stated that the

principal object of your committee has accordingly been to continue, in connexion with previous reports, a review of the working and result of the system under which immigrants have been during some years past introduced into the colony. They will endeavour, at the same time, to promote the extension of accurate information concerning the prospects which may be reasonably entertained by the industrious classes in removing from the United Kingdom to this colony.

The report concerned itself in great detail with the problems faced by the local economy owing to the severe shortages of labour, the exorbitant rates of wages and the “inconceivable difficulty in procuring workmen, servants or mechanics upon any terms whatever”. It made particular mention of the distress of sheep farmers and their inability to rear lambs arising from the lack of shepherds to guard the flocks. The report endorsed the sale by public auction of waste lands belonging to the crown as a means of obtaining funds to continue bringing migrants to New South Wales to meet the colony’s industrial and rural needs. It commented in considerable detail on the practice of allowing pastoralists to occupy lands on a depasturing licence in areas beyond the settled limits of the colony. It also noted the discrepancy between the costs of purchasing land and the annual payment of a per head licence fee.

Leaving aside the details in the full committee report, the letter of 6 October 1840 itself would have been very encouraging to anyone with an interest in emigration from

²⁹ *Australasian Chronicle*, 19 September 1840, 4.

the areas reached by both the *Aberdeen Journal* and the *Inverness Courier*.³⁰ The writer claimed to be well aware of conditions in Aberdeenshire and neighbouring counties, and to have travelled through a great part of the colonies as well. The letter is emphatic that those whose prospects at home were bleak but willing to emigrate with or without government assistance would be well rewarded for their industry with prospects unimaginable in Scotland. Frequent moves at this time in Scotland, whether local, further afield or even overseas, were often necessary for agricultural and other workers seeking employment to sustain themselves and their families.³¹ The suggestion that it would be necessary to travel to gain employment and to improve one's lot in life would not have come as any surprise to those in Scotland. The mention of high rates of wages and rewards in New South Wales far beyond what could be obtained at home must have seemed very enticing.

The writer of this letter from Sydney also took the trouble to contradict those who may have given an adverse report on conditions in the colony. He noted that these disaffected immigrants may have been influenced by difficulties or temporary inconvenience on arrival. The report of the committee on immigration had mentioned issues faced by some immigrants but these were issues arising from the clamour of colonists to recruit newly arriving migrants even before they had landed from the ships bringing them to the colony.³² That report claimed as a general truth that no person willing to work in the colony had been unable to find advantageous employment. The only note of caution in the letter from the colony reflected the difficulties for employers of entering into or completing undertakings because of the want of suitable labour with which to carry it through. For those reading this letter, and being willing to work, the prospects of supplying that want must have been attractive indeed and encouraging of emigration.

As well as praising Melbourne and the Port Phillip colony, the writer of a letter sent from Port Phillip which was printed in the *John O'Groat Journal* in August 1841 expressed concerns for his fellow Scots remaining in Scotland, "many of whom ... are

³⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 10 March 1841, 4.

³¹ Harper (ed.), *Footloose in Farm Service*.

³² *Australasian Chronicle*, 19 September 1840, 4.

but barely supplied with the necessities of life”.³³ He expressed a belief that the state of affairs had come from an excess of population in Scotland. In March 1838 the *Inverness Courier* had editorialised on the unspeakable misery which resulted from a bad season or two in the Highlands and Islands where the population was undoubtedly too numerous.³⁴ As Bueltmann et al have noted, discussion of the apparent over-population in the Highlands and Islands *vis a vis* the food available had really commenced with the 1798 publication of Malthus’ *Essay on the Principle of Population on Human Happiness*.³⁵ In the Preface to the second edition of his work, Malthus had written how “[i]t appeared to account for much of the poverty and misery observable among the lower classes of people in every nation, and for those reiterated failures in the efforts of the higher classes to relieve them”.³⁶

The letter of 24 February 1841 from “R.D.” printed in the *John O’Groat Journal* restated the general understanding that over-population was a serious issue but claimed that the prospects for his fellow countrymen would be enhanced by migration to Port Phillip.³⁷ It is clear that this letter appearing in the *John O’Groat Journal* and doubtlessly elsewhere as well was part of a coordinated plan to recruit suitable agricultural labourers, shepherds, mechanics, house servants, etc. and the letter was part of the advance publicity for the recruitment action planned. It was therefore a letter intended for publication rather than an item of private correspondence. The letter noted that George J. [sic] Brodie had been selected to act in effect as an emigration or recruiting agent for the wealthier citizens of Melbourne. At a meeting held at the *Lamb Inn* in Melbourne on 22 February 1841, these citizens had acknowledged the conditions under which their advances would be repaid should George Sinclair Brodie fail to land back in the colony within eighteen months from his departure with the number of workers he had engaged to procure.³⁸

³³ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 August 1841, 3.

³⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2.

³⁵ Bueltmann et al, *The Scottish Diaspora*, 39 et seq.

³⁶ Rev. T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population, or a View of its Past and Present Effects on Human Happiness*, sixth edition, in two volumes (London: John Murray, 1826). Vol. I, iv.

³⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 August 1841, 3.

³⁸ *Port Phillip Gazette*, 24 February 1841, 2.

Brodie was said to have lived in the colony of New South Wales for seventeen years which put his arrival in the colony prior to European settlement in Port Phillip. The letter from “R.D.” concluded with a statement that “the indolent, the profligate, and the drunkard, may remain at home, for here such will only find an untimely grave”.³⁹ Clearly this warning was intended to discourage the dissolute from applying since these would have wasted Brodie’s time and efforts in the fairly short period of eighteen months available to him for travel and recruitment.

Further to the committee on immigration for 1840 mentioned above, another immigration committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council had been established in response to a motion of 18 August 1843 to consider the means of reviving immigration and to ensure a continuing supply of shepherds and agricultural workers.⁴⁰ It examined twenty three witnesses including the pastoralist Ben Boyd and reported on 5 December 1843. As the similar committee had reported in June 1841, the committee concluded that

the present supply of agricultural and pastoral labour is far from being adequate to the wants of the Colony; that the rate of wages is beyond what the master can, from the amount of profit, afford to give; and that the demand for pastoral labour is progressively on the increase. At the same time, there was high unemployment in Sydney itself, those unable to find work being chiefly mechanics or men with large families who were unwilling to seek work in the interior where it was plentiful, unless they received high wages (of the order of £23–25 when employers said they were unable to pay more than £10–12 per annum).⁴¹

The report was attacked in the Sydney press as being “not a report from legislators full of wisdom and philanthropy, but a compilation of the short-sighted opinions of stockmen, and dealers in wool and cattle, upon the subjects of profit and loss connected with the different branches of their trades”.⁴² Four weeks before this attack on the report, *Duncan’s*

³⁹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 August 1841, 3.

⁴⁰ Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

⁴¹ Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

⁴² *Duncan’s Weekly Register of Politics, Facts and General Literature*, 16 December 1843, 313.

Weekly Register in Sydney had compared unfavourably the practices of proprietors of estates in New South Wales to the wisdom of Cicero's maxim to take care of one's estate workers.⁴³ The employment practices of pastoralists were said to explain the unwillingness of workers to proceed into the interior where they would be poorly housed, short rationed and inadequately clothed.

A letter on the front page of the *Glasgow Citizen* followed that report.⁴⁴ It reflected many of the concerns of both the pastoralists seeking shepherds and other agricultural workers, and those like the writers of *Duncan's Weekly Register* who believed that the pastoralists sought only their own profits. The letter focused particularly on the situation of better educated or more-highly-born young men who found themselves in the colony with little or no prospect of achieving the goals with which they had departed Scotland. These men were said to have been reduced in many cases to employment as shepherds and hut keepers, some receiving only rations. Others received rations with "the petty sum of £10 or £12 per annum", the same figures as the immigration committee had reported as being by this time the standard on offer.⁴⁵ Shepherds and hut keepers were, according to that committee, the only occupations for which there existed any demand at this time. Rations provided by employers to these men were the same as those given to convicts, and in this the writer is consistent with others who acknowledged the levels and standards of rations. It would have been clear to anyone reading this letter in Scotland that in about 1845 the only occupations open to most new migrants in New South Wales were said to be in the pastoral industry and were generally poorly remunerated.

The discovery of lead ore at Yass in New South Wales was given wide coverage in the British press in December 1847.⁴⁶ That discovery is confirmed by an advertisement on page 1 of the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 July 1847 offering employment at the Yass

⁴³ *Duncan's Weekly Register*, 18 November 1843, 249.

⁴⁴ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 1.

⁴⁵ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 1; Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 24 December 1847, 6; *The Morning Post*, 25 December 1847, 2; *Belfast News-letter*, 28 December 1847, 1; *Northern Whig*, 28 December 1847, 1; *The Taunton Courier*, 29 December 1847, 6. The *Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser*, 28 December 1847, 1 reported the article which, although brief, cited a private letter from Sydney dated 20 July 1847 and which subsequently appeared in *The Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* of 31 December 1847, 2.

Lead Mine to a Grass Captain “thoroughly competent to smelt lead ore, and to extract silver”.⁴⁷ Lead and copper ores were already by this time being shipped from South Australia for smelting in Britain. The *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* of 30 January 1847 reported the prices obtained for two parcels of ore shipped from the Wheal Watkins lead mines at Glen Osmond in South Australia and sold at Liverpool.⁴⁸

The development of lead mines in Australia may have been of considerable interest to men in Scotland willing to work in the dangerous industry and reading Scottish and other newspapers. In the early nineteenth century there had been lead mines in every county in Scotland even if there were only six significant mines, but after about 1820, competition from cheap imports from Spain had led to a serious decline in employment.⁴⁹ One of the six significant mines was at Minnigaff, from where Rev. Michael Stewart Johnstone reported in February 1842 for the NSA.⁵⁰ He recorded that the lead mines in the parish had been worked for many years producing several hundred tons of lead annually, but were by this time “almost abandoned, there being only three or four individuals occasionally employed” and producing less than twelve tons annually.⁵¹ In recording the population in the parish at various points from 1748 to 1841 Johnstone wrote that the “decrease for the last ten years is 29, which is to be accounted for by the stoppage of the lead mines, which formerly gave employment to a large number of persons”.⁵² It is possible that at least some of those unemployed lead miners would have been encouraged to seek employment in New South Wales by the report in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*. The announcement of the discovery of lead at Yass, as well as the “almost daily” discovery of other metals in New South Wales promised the chance of employment for those willing to become miners. While the prospects for employment as miners might be assumed from the letter in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*

⁴⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 1847, 1. A grass captain is an aboveground supervisory employee of a mine.

⁴⁸ *South Australian Gazette*, 30 January 1847, 3.

⁴⁹ <https://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/activities/heritage/industrial-heritage-sites/lead-mining>.

⁵⁰ NSA Vol. IV, Kirkcudbrightshire, 117 et seq.

⁵¹ NSA Vol. IV, Kirkcudbrightshire, 120, 138.

⁵² NSA Vol. IV, Kirkcudbrightshire, 134.

of 31 December 1847, there were no guarantees of employment for any person considering emigration.⁵³

However, Rev. Johnstone also noted that farm-servants “when boarded in the house” received wages from £4 10s to £6 per half year; married servants received from £18 to £20 per year plus meal and potatoes; while “herds” (shepherds or cowherds) received “meal, potatoes, wool &c” and income ranging from £16 to £24 annually and were allowed to graze and take fodder for a cow and calf.⁵⁴ In Australia at this time pastoralists were still seeking to keep wages for shepherds — the employees most often sought in the colony — as low as possible and to no more than £10 to £15 per annum. The pay available in the parish in Scotland for those who could obtain a position was considerably more attractive than then-currently on offer in Australia and did not involve the lonely and sometimes dangerous shepherd’s life in the Australian bush. If mining proved unsuccessful there was only the obvious alternative which was to become a shepherd with worse conditions than prevailed in parts of Scotland.

In a short item with the title of ‘Foreign Intelligence’, the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* had extracted information from pages 4 and 5 of the *Adelaide Observer* of 18 September 1847.⁵⁵ The first item reported was a brief mention of the discovery of another mineral deposit. Had the item in the *Adelaide Observer* been quoted in full it stood to have excited greater interest in Scotland than it probably did. The *Adelaide Observer*’s report had detailed information about a range of discoveries, including lead ore, and the yields expected. It also commented on employment prospects, writing that “knowing as we do, that all of the miners in the province [of South Australia] are not employed in what may be termed their legitimate field of labour, it becomes our duty to afford what insight we can into the assured and unfolding prospects of our mineral kingdom”. With the ending of most of the lead mining activity in Scotland, including in, for example, Wanlockhead in Dumfries and Galloway, the opportunity presented by the opening or extension of mines in the colony may have been attractive to those contemplating emigration but would have been less so had they been given the information that numbers

⁵³ Montrose, *Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 31 December 1847, 2.

⁵⁴ NSA Vol. IV, Kirkcudbrightshire, 135.

⁵⁵ *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 23 February 1848, 3; *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4.

of miners in the colony were already not employed in their trade. It is possible that the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* was more concerned to encourage emigration by unemployed miners than to provide complete and accurate information to its readers.

The notice placed in the *Inverness Courier* on 14 March 1848 by emigration agent Andrew Rutherford of Golspie in Sutherlandshire confirms information in letters which had appeared earlier in Scottish newspapers.⁵⁶ Rutherford's advertisement made it clear that only agricultural workers and associated tradesmen were wanted by the promoters of the government emigration scheme. These were the categories of employees who had been sought for many years by employers with large land holdings in the colonies. Married men were sought since these were believed to be more stable in work and behaviour than bachelors, while wives were also believed to be useful in the role of hut keepers supporting shepherds or as domestic servants for station owners. It is worth noting that the offer of passage was being made simultaneously in this advertisement to those willing to migrate to the Cape of Good Hope, to South Australia and to New South Wales. For those hesitant about the voyage, the Cape would have been attractive and to a lesser extent, so would the voyage to South Australia which was shorter than going all the way to Sydney. The ongoing imbalance in the genders in the colony was reflected in the announcement that young single women willing to work as servants were also wanted. The shortage of young single European women in the colony was an issue which had been discussed in reports over many years and was still without adequate resolution by the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is clear from this advertisement that the British emigration commissioners viewed conditions in the Cape Colony as being similar to those in Australia, perhaps with the twin hopes of moving surplus population out of Britain as well as finding the workers sought by the colonies. But it is also clear that work was available for those willing to undertake it on the pastoral stations in New South Wales, as shepherds or in the associated trades necessary for operating large properties and those in Scotland seeking new opportunities would have read this advertisement with some interest.

⁵⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 14 March 1848, 1.

In 1848, food riots had occurred in Glasgow and elsewhere and many people were dependent on poor relief at a time when the failure of the potato crop in Ireland and in the Highlands and Islands had stretched relief efforts to breaking point.⁵⁷ At the same time, the *Inverness Courier* carried a long article headed ‘Emigration the True Question for the Working Man’.⁵⁸ It recorded that the poor in the cities were often in a pitiable condition with a medical gentleman (almost certainly Dr WP Alison, a prominent campaigner for poor law reforms) reporting that in one district in Paisley alone, there were 300 houses where the occupants had no furniture, bedding, cooking implements or food except what was provided by charity.⁵⁹ The question asked by the paper was whether the young and vigorous would be better off seeking to work at home or abroad. It noted that Canada was then the emigration destination often favoured because the voyage was short and where employment was almost certain.

However, it also promoted what it said were the three Australian colonies of New South Wales, Port-Phillip [sic], or South Australia as suitable destinations for the unemployed of Scotland and drew attention to the St Andrew’s Society in Adelaide. That Society had been “instituted for the purposes of promoting the interests of Scotchmen and others connected with Scotland in the province, and of disseminating among their fellow-countrymen at home authentic information respecting the colony, with the view of enabling such of them as may contemplate emigration to form a just opinion for themselves on that important subject”.⁶⁰ The *Inverness Courier* mentioned an address to the Governor in Adelaide by the Society which it hoped His Excellency would forward to the Colonisation Commissioners in support of a renewal of emigration to the colony.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Fraser, *Chartism in Scotland*, 152 et seq.; Hunter, *Insurrection*.

⁵⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3.

⁵⁹ See W. P. Alison, *Observations on the Management of the Poor in Scotland, and its effects on the health of the great towns* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; Thomas Cadell, 1840) including in that volume *Reply to the Pamphlet Entitled ‘Proposed Alteration of the Scottish Poor Law Considered and Commented On’ by David Monypenny, Esq. of Pitmilly* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; Thomas Cadell, 1840) and *Reply to Dr Chalmers’ Objections to an Improvement of the Legal Provision for the Poor in Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; Thomas Cadell, 1841).

⁶⁰ *South Australian*, 7 December 1847, 3.

⁶¹ *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal*, 15 January 1848, 2.

In repeating the claims in that address, the *Inverness Courier* offered readers almost guaranteed employment prospects with wages and conditions likely to be far in excess of those which could be obtained in Scotland. It noted that among the trades wanted in the colony, seamstresses were in great demand, while gardeners could enjoy £50 a year with a free house. It acknowledged that there was little demand for clerks and shopkeepers but these could find ready employment as shepherds, notwithstanding a lack of knowledge or experience in this field of employment. Although reporting the wages, rations and housing available to shepherds, this long article failed to mention to its readers other conditions such as loneliness and sometimes danger in remote stations which had been the subject of negative comments elsewhere.

Three days after the *Inverness Courier* had published its long article extolling the benefits of emigration by working men, the *John O’Groat Journal* published extracts of a letter sent from Melbourne on 16 December 1847 to the far north of mainland Scotland.⁶² The differences in how the two articles described conditions in the colony of New South Wales are curious. The *Inverness Courier* had claimed that there was little demand for clerks and shopkeepers in the colony and these had had to adopt the shepherd’s life, while its northern neighbour publication reported that shopkeepers received from £60 to £100 depending on qualifications. The *John O’Groat Journal* also reported noticeably higher wages in the Port Phillip district than had the other newspaper. The reasons for the discrepancy are not obvious although the prospects of gaining employment by those willing to work in the pastoral industry were consistent.

The difference may rest in the audiences to whom the two items were directed. The *Inverness Courier* had exhorted the unemployed in Scotland to emigrate to the colonies rather than remaining in poverty, often relying on support from the poor law funds. These funds were being supplied by taxpayers for whom the increasing burden had become a serious expense. By contrast the letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* was written by a person more likely to be in the business and employing class rather than one employed as, for example, a shepherd or artisan. There is no indication whether the writer was a woman or a man. The letter commented on ongoing difficulties for those who had invested capital in the new colony of Port Phillip and noted the very high prices of labour

⁶² *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3; *John O’Groat Journal* 26 May 1848, 2.

with wages and rations at levels not previously recorded in the colony. It did mention the success which had been enjoyed by some who had arrived as shepherds and had by that time achieved wealth through careful management and hard work.

The letter included a brief list of those tradesmen wanted in the colony. The Melbourne newspapers at about the time this letter was written did not carry any advertisements offering employment in any of these nominated trades, probably because it was believed that there were none available to hire. This is surprising since in December 1843 the immigration committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council had reported high levels of unemployment in Sydney itself with those unable to find work being chiefly mechanics.⁶³ It is possible that employment prospects had improved in Sydney since that time, or that people in Sydney were reluctant to move to Melbourne for work, responding to perceived uncertainties arising from the anticipated separation of Port Phillip from New South Wales.⁶⁴

It is possible that the “leading colonist in Sydney” who wrote a letter, part of which appeared in the *Greenock Advertiser* on 27 June 1848, was associated with Ben Boyd or his various enterprises.⁶⁵ Although by the time this letter was written Boyd had been replaced as director of the Royal Australian Bank, the writer still gave him credit for being the owner or operator of the steamship *Juno* which was plying the coastal trade in the colony. The issues raised are also consistent with the concerns of the Pastoral Association among which various members of the Boyd family were prominent. Shepherds and other pastoral workers were in great demand in the colony. Boyd had been active in his attempts to recruit them but with limited success because workers had been unwilling to accept the conditions and wages on offer.⁶⁶ The suggestion in this letter was that workers should be landed at ports such as Towfold Bay in New South Wales or Portland Bay in western Victoria, near to the areas where they were in demand rather than being “obstinately located” in Sydney. This was clearly meant as advice for emigration

⁶³ Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

⁶⁴ Separation occurred formally on 1 July 1851.

⁶⁵ *Greenock Advertiser*, 27 June 1848, 1.

⁶⁶ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*.

and shipping agents operating out of Greenock and other ports in Scotland and England. It was seen as sufficiently important to the *Greenock Advertiser* that it received special mention in its introduction to the letter. Its effect on potential emigrants is not obvious although the possibility of being landed at a place over which emigrants had no control may have caused uncertainty in the minds of some.

It is difficult to accept the accuracy of the claim in that letter in the *Greenock Advertiser* that a shepherd in Australia received wages and rations equivalent to £200 a year in England. It is likely to be the sort of exaggeration which characterised much of Boyd's activity and which led ultimately to his financial failure. Rations allowed each week for a shepherd in the colony were of the order of fifteen pounds of flour; seven pounds of fresh beef or mutton (or possibly salted meat which was less perishable and more easily distributed from a station's central store to the outlying shepherds each week); two ounces of tea; and a pound of sugar.⁶⁷ These amounts would increase for a married shepherd and be further increased for each dependent child. Boyd had deleted tea and sugar from the rations claiming these to be an extravagance, but many other employers continued to provide them. There were riots in Scotland in 1847 over the prices of food and the potato crop failed again in 1848, with riots breaking out in that year in England as well as in many other countries in Europe.⁶⁸ In Highland parishes in Scotland, paupers were expected to survive on no more than £6 a year and generally less where the income might be supplemented by charity from family and friends.⁶⁹ At about this time, in 1843 day labourers in the parish of Morvern were paid 1s 3d when they could find employment and day labourers would be lucky to average a four day paid working week over all the seasons of the year to yield on average 5s each week, with which a man may have had to support a family even if some food could be produced by the family on a small plot of ground.⁷⁰ In Caithness in 1846-47, despite cheap government loans under

⁶⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

⁶⁸ Fraser, *Chartism in Scotland*, 149, 152. Helge Berger and Mark Spoerer, 'Economic Crises and the European Revolutions of 1848', *The Journal of Economic History* Vol. 61, No. 2 (June 2001), 293-326; Hunter, *Insurrection*.

⁶⁹ Lochaber Archives, C1/L7/22/1 Minutes of the Parochial Board of Kilmallie, 15 October 1845 and CA/L7/3/1 Minutes of the Parochial Board of Morvern, 20 November 1845 and 18 December 1846.

⁷⁰ Philip Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed: a Highland parish in the nineteenth century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 42.

the terms of a recently passed Drainage Act which was intended to facilitate employment for unemployed workers, landlords were only paying 2d an hour resulting in a daily wage of 1s 4d if conditions even permitted an eight hour day. The Wick Town Council was told of efforts to reduce that hourly rate by a further ¼d.⁷¹ While conceding that shepherds in New South Wales had a more substantial diet than paupers or day labourers in the Highlands, given that people did survive on the amounts cited above, it is unlikely that the colonial shepherd was receiving pay and rations equivalent to £200 a year in Britain. The letter may be seen as part of a concerted effort to attract pastoral workers to the colony where they would face a lonely and isolated existence in the interior, or, should they not take up a shepherd's life, unemployment in Sydney or one of the other larger towns. It is possible, of course, that anyone reading this item in the *Greenock Advertiser* would have recognised the almost impossibility of the claim of a wage and conditions equivalent to £200 a year and been discouraged from emigration by the apparent unreliability of the information supplied.

The letter which appeared in the *Falkirk Herald and Stirlingshire Advertiser* in September 1848 was clearly placed there with the intention of encouraging emigration from Scotland to New South Wales.⁷² It had been sent to the Provost of the Falkirk Burghs, leader of the local council. Provost Adam had passed the letter to the local paper, no doubt with the twin aims of advising those in the Burgh of the departure of Mr Sprott Boyd who had not availed himself of the public dinner offered in his honour and also of encouraging emigration from Scotland at a time when the nation suffered from a surfeit of population.

Sprott Boyd had bought shares in the Royal Bank of Australia and stood to lose his investment if the operations of the bank could not be turned around from the serious mismanagement under which it was suffering by 1848. The extent of this mismanagement has been detailed in a biography of Ben Boyd, which describes him as a “scoundrel, adventurer, entrepreneur ... enigma”.⁷³ Sprott Boyd had attended a meeting in London on

⁷¹ Hunter, *Insurrection*, 54-5.

⁷² *Falkirk Herald*, 14 September 1848, 2.

⁷³ Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown*.

16 December 1847 to promote emigration to Australia.⁷⁴ That meeting followed a meeting on Saturday, 11 December 1847, held to discuss how best to transfer “those persons in the United Kingdom who were unable to procure the means of subsistence, to a clime where they could find a capital soil, and where they could obtain food and clothing for a moderate amount of labour”.⁷⁵

The passing of Sprott Boyd’s letter to the *Falkirk Herald* appears to have been an attempt to reinforce the messages being given in the resolutions of the meetings in London. The comment on the colony commenced with a description that it was in a most wretched condition resulting from a shortage of labour. A shortage of workers willing to be employed at the wages which the pastoralists were prepared to pay had been the subject of much discussion and agitation in the colony. It had occupied the attention of committees of the New South Wales Legislative Council where some witnesses had claimed that rations plus wages of £10 per annum, or sometimes just rations, represented the maximum which they could afford, while noting how unemployed tradesmen in the towns were unwilling to work as shepherds in the interior for those conditions.⁷⁶ Sprott Boyd’s cousin, Ben Boyd whom he had been sent to replace as director of the Royal Bank of Australia, was among the most vocal of those pastoralists and by this time was head of the Pastoral Association.

The suggestion in this letter that there was employment for thousands as shepherds in the colony was probably accurate. However, the suggestion that they might be paid as much as £15 to £20 per annum, “besides as much bread, meat, tea and sugar as their families could consume”, if believed and acted upon, could have led to considerable dissatisfaction by anyone arriving from Scotland in Sydney or other ports and expecting those wages to be confirmed.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the picture of New South Wales painted by this brief letter was of a colony suffering from a want of labour and hence where good

⁷⁴ *The London Evening Standard*, 17 December 1847, 5. This article was copied in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1848, 4, and *The Australian*, 7 April 1848, 3. It was reported in *Bell’s Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 8 April 1848, 2.

⁷⁵ *The London Evening Standard*, 17 December 1847, 5.

⁷⁶ Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

⁷⁷ See the conditions reported in the Immigration Committee as being those on offer from pastoralists, Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

employment prospects awaited those willing to become shepherds. The contrast was drawn between “so many at home dying of starvation” and the ability to keep millions in comfort in the colony.⁷⁸ That there were many dying of starvation in Britain at this time was accurate, at least in Ireland. Although relatively few in Scotland had actually starved to death, many were in desperate circumstances and very hungry.⁷⁹ The prospect of the colony being able to keep millions in comfort and well fed must have been very attractive to those with few options in Scotland and reading this report.

Pay rates

From most of the letters in this study, it appears that pay rates in New South Wales were notably higher than those on offer in Scotland. In many letters it is mentioned that rations were provided as well, including for each member of an employee’s family. However, particularly in urban employment, rations were not provided and it is remarked on in several places how little was left over from a weekly wage after paying for housing, food and clothing. In times of economic downturn, particularly in the countryside, employers had a virtually captive workforce and could reduce wages significantly, with some correspondents noting this in letters home. The messages being taken from these letters by readers would have been encouraging for potential emigrants in good times but far less so in the bad times.

Convict Edward Turner noted his disappointment at not receiving his freedom on arrival in Port Jackson/Sydney as he had expected but was required to work for the Government from day-light until two o’clock in the afternoon.⁸⁰ Governor Phillip in the earliest days of the colony had set working hours at 5 am to 3 pm.⁸¹ However, Turner acknowledged that after his government duties he was able to work for himself and could earn as much in the time remaining as he would earn for a whole day in England. His work as a stonemason involved building a Methodist chapel and he was paid for this

⁷⁸ *Falkirk Herald*, 14 September 1848, 2.

⁷⁹ NRS: HH23/1-4 Records of the Board of Supervision. See also *Inverness Courier*, 23 May 1848, 3, and Hunter, *Insurrection*.

⁸⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

⁸¹ Cited in Jennie Jeppesen, “‘Within the protection of law’: debating the Australian convict-as-slave narrative”, *History Australia*, Vol. 16, Issue 3 (September 2019), 541.

rather than his government service. Anyone in Britain reading this explanation and able to work in a building industry would have been encouraged by the news that the equivalent of a full day's pay in Britain could be earned in an afternoon in the colony.

A settler at New Norfolk whose letter appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in January 1824 claimed that pay rates in Van Diemen's Land were such that an artificer of any kind could easily earn between ten and twenty shillings a day.⁸² Servants were said to "think less of a shilling than a man of the same class at home would of a penny" even if most of the money was spent in dram houses. Another settler, earning his livelihood as a storekeeper resident near Launceston and whose letter appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* (after being printed in the *Dumfries Courier*) had an employee, "a crown servant man who only costs me £10 a year".⁸³ This arrangement may well have appeared attractive to farmers in the parish of Dumfries. In the report of Dumfries for the OSA, a labourer at the very end of the eighteenth century would have earned slightly more than £10 a year, even if only averaging work on four days each week throughout the year, while a carpenter or mason might earn perhaps double that amount.⁸⁴ Forty years later, the rates had risen by some twenty-five to fifty per cent.⁸⁵ A convict assigned by the Government, able to be worked six days a week, with only the Sabbath free from work, and costing only £10 a year with rations, could have been attractive for an employer and such an arrangement might well have been influential in a decision to emigrate by a range of people looking to employ or use staff in the colony.

Relying on reports from the *Sydney Gazette* a correspondent from Manchester assured readers of the *Fife Herald* in February 1832 that many artisans could earn, all the year round, 10s a day and upwards, while engineers and millwrights earned 20s a day and upwards.⁸⁶ Even common labourers could have £30 a year, besides board and lodgings.

⁸² *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

⁸³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

⁸⁴ OSA Vol. V, 129.

⁸⁵ NSA Vol. IV, 17.

⁸⁶ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6.

This claim may have been extravagant but at face value it would have been attractive for anyone in Scotland and reading it with an interest in travelling to Australia.

In publishing a letter of 16 November 1831 from an unnamed writer in Sydney to a gentleman in Leith, *The Scotsman* continued its enthusiastic commentary on the fine conditions available for a wide range of skilled tradesmen.⁸⁷ In particular, those engaged in trades supporting the whaling industry were singled out as being in demand. Whaling had become an important industry in New South Wales by this time, but the need for tradesmen extended also to a wide range of trades in the building industry and useful tradesmen could expect at least seven shillings a day.⁸⁸ At the same time, the retail prices of food were quoted and if accurate at the time the letter was written – the prices for bread and meat in particular are low by comparison with other reports – then the costs for food could be easily met by a man in full regular employment. Agricultural labourers and farmers were said to be not as well remunerated, but the letter writer failed to mention that farm workers such as shepherds were also provided with at least basic accommodation together with rations for themselves and their families in addition to wages. However, a six day working week for fifty weeks a year with pay of seven shilling a day would indicate an annual income in excess of £100, a figure which could have caused readers to question the veracity of the report. It was, however, not inconsistent with other reports appearing at about this time when some tradesmen were reported as being paid up to £2 a week.

The letter mentioned also a valuable accession of emigrants who had arrived by the *Stirling Castle* under the auspices of Dr Lang.⁸⁹ The *Stirling Castle* arrived in Sydney in October 1831 from Greenock with twenty-one adults and six children in cabin class, and a further eighty-one adults and thirty children in steerage.⁹⁰ All passengers were identified as coming from Scotland. Those in cabins included Rev. and Mrs Lang, while the steerage

⁸⁷ *Scotsman*, 31 March 1832, 3.

⁸⁸ <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/marine-species/cetaceans/whaling>; *Scotsman*, 31 March 1832, 3.

⁸⁹ *Scotsman*, 31 March 1832, 3.

⁹⁰ http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5310&item=4_4823&ship=Stirling%20Castle.

passengers were stonemasons, carpenters, cabinetmakers, coopers, etc. They had been chosen by Lang to build the planned Sydney College and Lang was deducting regular instalments from wages to recoup the cost of passages. It was expected that when that building had been completed, they would be able to move on to other construction work in the burgeoning economy of Sydney. Anyone reading this letter in Scotland in 1832 would have been reassured to know that Scottish craftsmen were appreciated in Sydney and fully employed. Moreover, their wages were sufficient that they could repay passage costs while still able to feed and accommodate their families. This report would have been very encouraging for tradesmen interested in emigration.

It is worth noting a comment about employment made in a letter from a female emigrant which appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in May 1834.⁹¹ Although she recorded that masons were paid about £2 a week and the same for house carpenters, cabinet makers possibly ten shillings less and ship carpenters up to ten shillings a week more, constant employment was not guaranteed. Engineers were paid up to £3 a week but good hands were hard to find. Although these pay rates were good in comparison to those on offer in Scotland, there was a cautionary note added that house rents were high and even a small house would cost ten shillings a week.

A young shepherd at *Bonawe* in New South Wales reported also that he and his colleagues could earn additional income.⁹² This was by washing and clipping/hand shearing sheep, and by making *flakes* for fanking the sheep at night.⁹³ A shepherd could supplement his income nicely by making even just a few of these *flakes* each week in his spare time from materials in the nearby bush and be paid 1s 6d each for them. The additional income mentioned would have been beyond the probable standard wages and rations, the ability to keep a cow and to grow wheat for his family's own use.

To this could be added a significant supplement for each shepherd willing to undertake, in collaboration with another, to take care of the flocks at night. This worked

⁹¹ *Inverness Courier*, 21 May 1834, 4.

⁹² *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

⁹³ In Scotland, a fank is a pen or sheep fold and "fanking" is the enclosing of sheep. A flake is similar to a hurdle made of withies or whatever local material were available and a number of these together would be used to construct a temporary or semi-permanent but movable fank.

to the advantage of both employee and employer. In many stations in the early period of settlement a property would employ a number of shepherds who with the help of collie dogs took care of the sheep during the day and returned them to be counted and enclosed at a central hut for close supervision at night. This supervision was by the man, often an older or somewhat incapacitated employee, who took care of the communal hut by day and supervised the combined flocks of two or three shepherds at night. The arrangement with a married shepherd whose wife took care of the hut in return for rations, and with the shepherd and his dogs taking care of the flocks at night also saved the employer the wages and rations for a hut keeper. It contrasted with the requirement for many small holders, or sub-tenants, in Scotland to provide unpaid labour in return for part of the rent on their land. In Australia the shepherd had no rent to pay and was provided with a hut, guaranteed rations for himself and his family and the opportunity for extra income earned on the employer's time, guaranteed like the rations. Beyond the income, it has been remarked elsewhere that employees also had the option of having a garden and keeping one or more cows on their master's land. It would have been an attractive option for those in Scotland particularly those forced off the land by improving landlords but willing to work with sheep in the new country.

The letter concluded by noting that labourers in the colony could earn from 3/6 to 7s a day, while mechanics could earn from 5s to 12s a day according to their ability.⁹⁴ Wages for labourers in New South Wales had risen significantly, with the Manchester correspondent, quoted in the *Fife Herald* in February 1832, suggesting that labourers could earn £30 a year.⁹⁵ By 1837, with the wages quoted immediately above and assuming a five day working week even for only forty weeks in a year this yielded an income between £35 and £70 a year. The figures would have served as both an encouragement to some looking to emigrate as labourers and a caution to those of some capital contemplating becoming employers in the colony.

One of the passengers from the *Mid Lothian* on its 1837 voyage from Skye to Sydney who found employment with a settler in the interior, rather than remaining with the group who settled on *Dunmore*, was Donald Macleod. His letter home was reported in the

⁹⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

⁹⁵ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6.

Inverness Courier in July 1838.⁹⁶ It appears that the paper remained ignorant of the actual person of correspondent Donald Macleod, mentioning “Norman [perhaps his son]”. The passenger list for the *Mid Lothian* identifies Donald McLeod, a ploughman who emigrated from the parish of Kilmuir on the Trotternish peninsular on Skye. Macleod/McLeod was accompanied by his wife Ann, a house maid, together with 16 year old Norman, 14 year old Angus, Donald aged 10, John aged 8, and Christie aged 6.⁹⁷ McLeod, who could both read and write, had been engaged by Mr Hardy of Paterson River for £50 plus rations. It appears from the passenger list that Ann may have been paid £35 also, probably as housekeeper, cook, laundry maid and general housemaid, particularly if aided by her daughter. The father’s pay would have included an allowance for the work done by Norman as table boy and at least 14 year old Angus who was old enough to assist his father on the farm.

Intending emigrants would have been reassured by the report that newly arrived settlers in Sydney would be able to stay for a month without expense at the Sydney barracks, with their luggage being transported there from the landing place by convicts assigned to the task. Similarly, the speed at which Macleod and his family had been able to secure employment would have been of considerable interest among those who every summer had had to leave their families to seek seasonal work in southern Britain. The report in Macleod’s letter that “we have ... as much as we want of beef, mutton, pork, flour, tea and sugar, tobacco” would have appeared to many in the Highlands to be almost beyond belief given the almost total dependence on potatoes as a staple food in the Highlands. Similarly almost beyond belief were the wages being paid, with his estimate of £35 to £40 for a gardener while Macleod, aided by his boys, was receiving £50 plus rations for the entire family with possibly a further £35 for his wife and daughter. Donald Macleod’s letter would have been very encouraging to other Highlanders contemplating emigration. The wretched condition of many on Skye prior to departure on the *William Nicol*, the *Mid Lothian* and the *Brilliant*, was described a couple of years later in an article in the *Sydney Herald*.⁹⁸ It cited entries for parishes on Skye in the NSA, possibly

⁹⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

⁹⁷ <http://stuart.scss.dyndns.info/FamilyTree/source.php?sid=S175> accessed 29 January 2018.

⁹⁸ ‘Condition of a Cluster of Highland Emigrants in New South Wales’, *Sydney Herald*, 1 March 1842, 4.

including the parish of Kilmuir from where Macleod had obtained his character reference for emigration.

When compared with the wages available in Kilmuir, the parish left by Macleod, the rates would have seemed almost impossible. A male servant there is recorded as being paid only £5 per annum, and a female received only half that.⁹⁹ Against that however are the figures for farm stocking in the colony with prices for horses at £40 to £50 rather than £8 as recorded at home in Kilmuir. It should be noted also that the comment in the letter that “we are all in the kitchen” could be misleading. In Scotland at this time, even in relatively modest employers’ homes, the kitchen would have been somewhere within the main building. In the colony by contrast the style of architecture necessitated by the climate, the building materials and general conditions would almost certainly have had the kitchen in a separate building. This was partly because of the heat but also to guard against a fire starting in the kitchen and spreading immediately to the main house.¹⁰⁰ For a ploughman and his family to be allowed the kitchen as a normal place of eating and socialising would not be the generous and egalitarian allowance which the phrase might have led some to expect.

The many complaints in a letter printed in the *John O’Groat Journal* in February 1840 probably stemmed from a more general malaise in the colony.¹⁰¹ In Sydney on Saturday 3 August 1839 the *Colonist*, in an editorial, a news item, and a letter to the editor; the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*; *The Australian* in an editorial comment and a report; and the *Commercial Journal and Advertiser* all reported a public meeting held on 1 August 1839 to discuss relief of the poor in the colony. Society’s responsibility to provide relief for the poor was well accepted by this time. New Poor Laws were enacted by the British Parliament in 1834 for England and in 1838 for Ireland although Scotland had to wait until 1845 for its new Poor Law. The response in the meeting in Sydney had been to take up a public collection from the wealthier citizens. The Governor

⁹⁹ NSA, parish of Kilmuir, Vol. XIV, 237.

¹⁰⁰ Christiana Jane Blomfield to her in-laws, sent from Newcastle, Hunter’s River, 2 June 1825 in Klaus Stierstorfer (general editor), *Women writing home, 1700 - 1920: female correspondence across the British Empire*, Vol. 2 *Australia* (ed. Deirdre Coleman) (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 96.

¹⁰¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

subscribed £25 and others more or less than that, raising in total nearly £1,000. In England and Ireland a willingness to enter a Poor House was the initial test of suitability to receive poor relief. In Sydney the plan only sought to have the funds available to provide relief in cash or kind without needing to house paupers. This recognised that the problems in the colony would be short lived and should improve once the drought had broken. Nevertheless, it is clear from these reports that conditions were severe throughout the colony, with prices of flour reaching extreme heights and the Government and the Governor himself being criticised for not anticipating the shortage or arranging imports to alleviate it.¹⁰² Although none of this is mentioned in the letter published on 28 February 1840, there can be little doubt that the depressing state of affairs in the colony would have influenced the writer to send a report so discouraging of emigration to New South Wales at this time and likely to impact on emigration decisions by those reading this letter.¹⁰³

It is almost certain that the writer of this letter was married. The writer could have been either a man or a woman. There is a clear distinction drawn in this complaining epistle between the prospects of making “a little more money than at home” for a single man and those for a man with a family.¹⁰⁴ With the comment that the wages paid to shepherds were less than half those anticipated, it may be safely inferred that the writer was a shepherd or was married to one. Without more detail it is difficult to assess whether the writer was aware of shepherds receiving wages which were less than half those promised or being received by others in the colony. To try and put the matter into some perspective, the NSA provides in many cases the wages paid in parishes, including those in the readership area of the *John O’Groat Journal* at around the same time as the date of this letter. In the parish of Dornoch, for example, a principal farm-servant was said to receive

£8 per annum, six bolls of oatmeal, a pint of skimmed milk [without the chance to make cheese or butter from the cream] per diem ... some eight, some ten, barrels of coals, a certain extent of land for potatoes, and a free house. Young men hired by the half-year have from £2 to £2.10s, with cost and lodgings

¹⁰² *Colonist*, 3 August 1839, 2.

¹⁰³ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

while in the neighbouring parish of Golspie a ploughman received £10 in money, some provisions, house and fuel.¹⁰⁵

In the colony of New South Wales, at this time the Australian Agricultural Company was paying wages at least equivalent. The *Lady McNaughton* arrived in Port Jackson on 16 December 1840 carrying in steerage twenty two apparently unmarried labourers aged between eighteen and twenty-five, each of whom was to receive £15, and one assumes, rations and accommodation also.¹⁰⁶ The *London* had arrived in Sydney on 18 March 1842 carrying in steerage twenty-one shepherds, aged between eighteen and thirty-five, many of them accompanied by families. These included, as examples, Edward Hannaford who travelled with a wife, son and daughter, and George Perring who was accompanied by a wife, son and 2 daughters. Each of these was to receive £25, while William Hardy, unmarried, was to receive £30, the difference probably reflecting the cost to the employer of the increased rations to be supplied for families of married shepherds.¹⁰⁷ In evidence to the Immigration Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council, various witnesses recounted the cost of rations. These witnesses included Captain P. P. King R.N., the Commissioner of the AACo. who explained on 8 July 1841 that by that time for a married employee the wife received two thirds and each child one half the ration for a man. A man's ration cost the employer about £20 per annum. Compared to wages in Scotland, it appears that pastoral workers were being well paid but perhaps not as well as the writer of the letter printed on 28 February 1840 had anticipated. Other benefits such as the climate and the quantum and nature of rations were also being ignored by the dissatisfied letter writer although whether this would have been noticed and responded to by readers of the *John O'Groat Journal* is uncertain.

¹⁰⁵ NSA, Vol. XV, 10, 36. See Scottish Archive Network for conversion rates of these quantities <https://www.scan.org.uk/measures/capacity.asp>.

¹⁰⁶ P. A. Pemberton, *Pure Merinos and Others: The Shipping Lists of the Australian Agricultural Company* (Canberra: Archives of Business and Labour, The Australian National University, 1986/web version 2011), 57.

¹⁰⁷ Pemberton, *Pure Merinos and Others*, 60.

A letter in the same newspaper ten weeks later suggested that its writer's employment conditions were quite satisfactory, perhaps even generous.¹⁰⁸ With wages of £28, full provisions, two cows to give dairy produce, a garden which provided vegetables, fruit and tobacco, and the right to keep as many cattle as he wanted, the writer appeared content with his living. This was once the initial loneliness of the situation had been accepted. Given that his home parish of Clyne in Sutherlandshire was entirely laid out in sheep walks the shepherd writing home had probably found good conditions reflecting at least some experience working with sheep.¹⁰⁹ It may be also that his conditions reflected his employment being with another northern Scot, Major Innes, who was by then a police magistrate at Port Macquarie and rapidly becoming a major figure in the colony. His willingness to employ Highlanders as shepherds on generous terms may have been welcomed by those in Scotland reading this report and encouraged to emigrate.

The *Inverness Courier* conceded that a letter from Mangonah in the Swan River settlement which it printed on 29 July 1840 contained little that was new.¹¹⁰ It added that the extracts "may be of use to some of those who may cast an eye on the columns of the *Courier*". By this time, the paper was priced at fourpence halfpenny, which may seem to be an expensive item at a time when a labourer in Inverness-shire was earning from one to two shillings a day and a wage of up to three shillings was paid for artisans.¹¹¹ The newspaper was therefore costing about as much as a pound of beef.¹¹² However, the paper was a weekly item, was likely to be passed around to a readership of more than one household and may well have passed through several sets of hands descending through the social scales. In any case, without assistance it was unlikely that a shilling-a-day man would have been able to afford either passage to New South Wales or the newspaper. The claims that the information in the letter would be of interest may have been more likely therefore to be directed to those higher in social standing — perhaps small holders, tacksmen, or their families. These would be the well conducted young men and young

¹⁰⁸ *John O'Groat Journal*, 8 May 1840, 3.

¹⁰⁹ NSA Vol. XV, 158.

¹¹⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 2.

¹¹¹ NSA Vol. XIV, 20.

¹¹² NSA Vol. XIV, 21.

women who could anticipate good wages and suitable employment by gentlemen and farmers.¹¹³ Even herd boys could anticipate good wages with food and lodging well in excess of what a ploughman or farm-servant might expect to receive in Scotland. The suggestion implied in the letter was that employment opportunities awaited entire families and this would have been encouraging news for those contemplating emigration.¹¹⁴

A long extract from a letter from Port Phillip printed by the *Dundee Warder* in March 1841 indicates that the writer was an employer rather than an employee.¹¹⁵ In mentioning the enormous cost of wages and how “our men are engaged at £40 per annum” plus victuals, or how masons and joiners had struck for higher wages, the writer clearly offered the view of conditions taken by a manager rather than of a worker. This would have added a cautionary note for those considering emigration. The writer reported the difficulty of maintaining suitable master/servant relations, noting how difficult it was to attract and retain good employees, all of whom grumbled and were dissatisfied however well treated. The writer claimed in a broad generalisation that all employees immediately spent all their wages on drink and would not re-hire until everything was consumed. It is a view of colonial Australia often repeated and stemming not least from the early colonial days when rum was a major factor in the economy of New South Wales. The extract concluded with a description of the difficulties faced by a newly arriving settler with no contacts to assist on arrival. These problems included being susceptible to losing money on ill-advised speculation in acquiring a sheep station.

However, anyone reading this letter and considering emigration to seek employment as, for example, a mason or mechanic or agricultural worker, or even a labourer, may well have been encouraged by the conditions described. With men said to be receiving wages of £40 per annum plus rations which cost the employer £30 to £40 more, an agricultural worker or shepherd in Scotland would have found this an almost unbelievable level of remuneration. The quoted wages and the cost of rations appear to be high, compared to those mentioned elsewhere. In Dundee at about the same time, the common wages of

¹¹³ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

men-servants employed in agriculture were from £10 to £14 a-year, with two pecks of oatmeal per week, and a Scotch pint of sweet milk daily for the winter half year and one and a-half Scotch pints for the summer half year.¹¹⁶ Similarly, a mason in Scotland with a daily wage of up to 2s. 6d., or a carpenter earning perhaps 2s. 2d. a day, may well have been attracted by reports that masons and joiners who could receive 14s. a day had struck because 12s. was considered insufficient.¹¹⁷ This letter provides the earliest example in this study of an early growth of trade unions in Australia even if the Australian Council of Trade Unions charts industrial activity as early as a strike by convicts in 1791, noting formation of a formal stone masons' union in 1850.¹¹⁸ This may have been encouraging to any of the working classes reading the letter, rather than the wealthier members of society.

A working class man, with or without family, and with little capital available to invest in the purchase of land, stock and equipment could well have been deterred from emigrating by the advice in a letter from Brisbane printed in the *Inverness Courier* in December 1844.¹¹⁹ The writer noted that wages had been as high as £30 to £40 but had fallen to half that and rations, which by other accounts were costing perhaps £20 or more, had been similarly halved. Conditions in Scotland by this time were poor for many working people and often squalid in the extreme, in the towns and cities as well as for those forced to relocate by the Highland and Lowland clearances.¹²⁰ However, the prospect of a significant reduction in wages and support in New South Wales would have been a serious consideration for those contemplating emigration, particularly with the need to spend increased amounts of a diminished wage on supplementing the rations provided. There was also no guarantee that pay and conditions would not fall further given that a halving of conditions had occurred already within a few years. Nevertheless, for those willing to take a risk or with few other options than to move to the cities, the

¹¹⁶ NSA Vol. XVII, 22. A Scotch pint was the approximate equivalent of 1.7 litres, <https://www.scan.org.uk/measures/capacity.asp>.

¹¹⁷ NSA Vol. XVII, 22; *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.actu.org.au/about-the-actu/history> accessed 25 September 2018.

¹¹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3.

¹²⁰ Evidence of the squalid nature of existence can be taken from page 6 of Alison, *Observations on the Management of the Poor in Scotland*.

prospect of emigrating to Moreton Bay where the weather was splendid, the crops were good and the costs of keeping sheep were half those in other parts of the colony, may well have held out some attractions.

The big concern for those in Caithness reading a letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* in April 1845 and contemplating emigration would have been the conditions of employment or investment then in force in the colony.¹²¹ The three unmarried Paterson men identified in the letter, and a fourth married relative, Michael and his family, had all arrived at a time of serious downturn in the colony’s economy. Henry, the letter writer, recounted how he had expected to be able to make a fortune soon after arrival in the colony but had been disappointed. He noted that wages received were at this time very small and barely sufficient to pay for clothing. In this, the report is consistent with that printed in the *Inverness Courier* on 4 December 1844 and mentioned immediately above.¹²² Unlike that report, Henry’s letter does not suggest that rations had been reduced by half. It recognises that the wages paid were those which settlers could afford to pay because of bad times but were barely sufficient to allow a worker to stay decent and out of debt. The letter suggested that the wages were comparable to those at home. Wages for a man-servant at this time in the parish of Reay in Caithness where the *John O’Groat Journal* circulated were said to be from £3 to £4.10s per half year but advertised employment opportunities at this time did not state pay rates.¹²³ However, if wages had been reduced by fifty percent in the colony, then a wage of £20 being reduced to £10 gives credence to the claim that wages in the colony were similar to those in Scotland but fails to allow for the value of any rations or accommodation provided by an employer in either country.

An article in newspapers in northeast Scotland repeated a claim by squatters, expressed previously in a variety of fora including in evidence to the immigration committee of the Legislative Council, that the wages demanded by shepherds and agricultural workers were too high.¹²⁴ This cost of labour was stated to be detrimental to

¹²¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 25 April 1845, 3.

¹²² *Inverness Courier*, 4 December 1844, 3.

¹²³ NSA Vol. XV, Caithness, 19.

¹²⁴ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2, reprinted from *Inverness Courier*; Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

the prosperity of the colony. The first correspondent quoted in this article acknowledged paying £20 per annum to each of his shepherds but claimed that other properties closer to main centres were able to hire shepherds for £12. This would have been in addition to rations. This was only a few years since the AACo. was bringing considerable numbers of shepherds to Australia at wages of at least £20 per annum and labourers at £15 per annum.¹²⁵ The writer of this letter was repeating the view of the squatters that at least part of the blame for the downturn in prosperity in the colony rested on the shoulders of the workers who would not accept low pay for working as shepherds. None of this discussion about pay rates and unwillingness of workers in towns to accept the life of shepherds acknowledged in any way the possibility that the difficulties faced by pastoralists had arisen from any of their own actions. These included the continuing rapid expansion of properties, flocks and herds often without adequate planning and preparation. Readers in Scotland would not have been given this information and in the absence of other sources of information, would have been reliant on the one-sided view of employment arrangements in the colony conveyed by this item. It had considerable potential to influence anyone considering emigration to New South Wales.

In September 1845 a correspondent from Carcoar near Bathurst in central western New South Wales cited difficulties for potential emigrants.¹²⁶ These included a lack of employment opportunities except for shepherds and stockmen and even for these the pay rates cited were below those being received years earlier in the colony. Even good tradesmen were said to be unable to obtain sufficient work in their trades. The letter advised all those who were not actually starving to remain at home. Although the letter writer could not have known it, by the time his letter appeared in Scotland in April 1846, some in the Highlands of Scotland would soon be facing starvation. In 1845 the first signs of the failure of the potato crop had emerged and in 1846 there was widespread failure of the crop. Even though only a few people were to starve to death, for many throughout the region, the hunger and desperation were serious. The Board of Supervision for the Poor Law in Scotland, and a range of charitable bodies, had to take urgent action to avoid a

¹²⁵ Pemberton, *Pure Merinos and others*.

¹²⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 April 1846, 4.

death-toll on the scale of that in the infamous Irish potato famine.¹²⁷ The letter appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury*, a paper which had been described as being addressed to the liberals of the aristocracy.¹²⁸ It is possible that at least some of those reading this report, while noting the depressing tone in much of it, would have noted better prospects in the colony for those actually facing starvation in Scotland. These comments may have motivated some of those in dire straits at home to consider emigration.

In April 1847, the *Banffshire Herald* reported discussion from the colony on the matter of resuming transportation of convicts.¹²⁹ This had been raised with Governor FitzRoy in an address delivered to him in Bathurst in November 1846.¹³⁰ The address to FitzRoy made it clear that the clergy, magistrates, land-holders, and inhabitants of the town and district of Bathurst expected that the views of the Governor during his visit would be beneficial to their interests and the colony at large. The Governor obliged them by replying in part that “I feel pleasure in hoping that the tour I am now making, may be beneficial to your interests”.¹³¹ It would appear that he had appreciated their concerns, for on 1 April 1847, he wrote to Earl Grey that “it is impossible not to entertain the conviction that the continuance of [the colony’s] prosperity must mainly depend on a supply of labour sufficient to enable the Settler to pursue his avocations at a reasonable expense, and with a prospect of adequate remuneration”.¹³² However, transportation was discussed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* where it was suggested that there had been no public meeting held to discuss the question but the “prevailing opinion appears to be most decidedly against this measure ... [although] ... great stockholders ... have been taking soundings, and trying to feel their feet on the subject, at Bathurst and the surrounding neighbourhood”.¹³³ It was reported that the proposition would be generally received with

¹²⁷ Hannaford, *New Poor Law*, 59-61.

¹²⁸ *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine for 1836*, Volume III (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1836), 191.

¹²⁹ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

¹³⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1846, 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Despatch 74, HRA, Vol. XXV, 445.

¹³³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1846, 2.

disgust and the only motive for the stockholders was cheap labour, caring “nothing as to the evils and immorality inflicted on the population”.¹³⁴ This taking of soundings continued the efforts of bodies such as the Pastoral Association to drive down wages in the colony, preferring to use bonded convicts working as shepherds and labourers for rations only. Meetings had been held to discuss whether transportation should be resumed. FitzRoy forwarded to Grey on 30 March 1847 memorials from citizens in Goulburn praying that transportation not be resumed, and a copy of the resolutions passed by the meeting at which the memorials were adopted.¹³⁵

Some transportation was subsequently resumed, although the arrival of convicts in the *Hashemy* in June 1849 was met with a public protest at Circular Quay in Sydney.¹³⁶ In 1847, however, only the possibility of transportation being resumed was being discussed. Readers of a report in the *Banffshire Journal*, if they were aware of the implications of a resumption of the supply of convict labour, would have been left uncertain of prospects for employment in a colony where free immigrants might have had to compete with bonded convicts for places.¹³⁷

In providing comment on the labour situation in New South Wales, including the then-present level of wages, and statistics on stock and population numbers, the *Fife Herald* in March 1848 drew heavily on an article in the *Australian Journal* of 29 October 1847 concerning the Masters and Servants Act.¹³⁸ That article had occupied a considerable part of the page and covered a far wider range of opinions and matters than were reproduced in the Scottish press. The item in the *Fife Herald* concerned itself with problems in the supply of labour in the colony. These included efforts by Ben Boyd to import South Sea Islanders as indentured labourers for his various farming and maritime enterprises. It noted that those labourers had eventually left Boyd’s service and although it is not

¹³⁴ ‘Bathurst’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1846, 2.

¹³⁵ Despatch 66, HRA, Vol. XXV, 439.

¹³⁶ *Colonial Times*, 29 June 1849, 4 taken from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 June 1849; *People’s Advocate and New South Wales Vindicator*, 9 June 1849, 2.

¹³⁷ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

¹³⁸ *Fife Herald*, 3 March 1848, 2; *Australian Journal*, 29 October 1847, 2/2832.

recorded in the *Fife Herald*, most of the Islanders had had to be sent back to their homes by the end of 1847. As did the *Australian Journal*, the *Fife Herald* wrestled with the conflict between an easy supply of cheap labour through the resumption of transportation, and the attendant evils which the ongoing influx of convicts would bring to the morals and standing of the colony. Among the parts of the original article which was not provided to Scottish readers was the assessment that “we, ourselves, regard with disfavour the introduction of the South Sea Islanders into our labour-fields, where remunerative employment offers for thousands and tens of thousands of our own starving countrymen” could be made.¹³⁹ Had that assessment of the employment prospects for starving countrymen in Britain been included, it may have presented a more favourable impression of the chances of employment in the colony. Instead, readers in Scotland were presented with a picture of a colony with major political and legislative issues impeding the supply of labour to a market desperate for it. Moreover, readers would have become aware of powerful members of the citizenry in New South Wales embroiled in serious differences. It was not the image of a stable and strong economy likely to attract potential emigrants.

An article appearing in the Scottish press in April 1848 under the headline ‘Competence in a Colony versus Poverty at Home’ was a compilation of extracts taken, mostly verbatim, from a memorial to the British Prime Minister.¹⁴⁰ It did not explicitly acknowledge its source or the vested interests of the committee which authored it. It drew comparisons between the populations of Ireland and England to that of Australia and the average population density of each, while it claimed that three million Irish were dependent on charity. It claimed also that New South Wales instead could feed that number but had only 180,000 people. The article repeated the reports of stock being reduced for tallow with the resultant waste of meat. It also claimed that conditions in the colony for working men were so good that, besides accommodation and generous rations, workers would disdain to work for less than 2/6 a day, the equivalent of at least £30 per annum. The article summarised its view of the situation by claiming “[w]e have tried and failed to bring food to the starving man - therefore convey the starving man to his food,

¹³⁹ *Australian Journal*, 29 October 1847, 2/2832.

¹⁴⁰ *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 24 April 1848, 3; White, *Competence in a Colony*.

the labourer to his hire, and you may restore the lost balance”.¹⁴¹ It was an approach which may have resonated with workers unable to gain employment in Scotland. Notwithstanding the new approach to poor relief embodied in the 1845 new Poor Law for Scotland and the £295,000 claimed by the memorial to be the poor rates in Scotland in a single year, many in the Highlands had recently been left destitute by the failure of the potato crop.¹⁴²

As well as commenting on the dichotomy of poverty at home and opportunities said to be available in Australia, the *Fife Herald* also printed material culled from colonial newspapers as foreign intelligence.¹⁴³ It quoted from “a private letter which has obligingly been communicated to us” reporting ongoing issues concerning shortages of labourers in New South Wales.¹⁴⁴ It mentioned the actions of the Colonial Secretary in Sydney in enacting changes to the labour laws affecting Ben Boyd’s engagement of South Sea Islanders to work in his various enterprises. The hopes of colonists that the British Government would carry out an extensive scheme of emigration to the colony by use of imperial funds was also reported in this so-called private letter. It was said that to pay for such a scheme through colonial funds would be a serious drain on funds raised in the colony. This letter is almost certainly part of the campaign being waged by Ben Boyd, his family and supporters to influence the colonial administration in how it dealt with Boyd’s hopes for changes to land and labour laws for his own financial gain.

Anyone in Scotland thinking of emigration and reading the *Fife Herald* would have had a lot to consider. The information in ‘Foreign Intelligence’ spoke of conflict between officials and citizens over a range of issues including how to address labour shortages. A later item contrasted the food available in the colony and the need for it at home. Clearly newspapers intended to encourage emigration by emphasising the resources available in the colony to help support a starving population in Britain. It is likely that for many in

¹⁴¹ *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 24 April 1848, 3; White, *Competence in a Colony*.

¹⁴² White, *Competence in a Colony*, 6; Hannaford, *New Poor Law*, 59-61.

¹⁴³ *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848, 2.

¹⁴⁴ The letter has not been identified.

difficult circumstances in Britain these opportunities in the colony would have outweighed most other considerations.

From reports in letters and other material printed in Scottish newspapers in the early to mid-nineteenth century, it is clear that wages and conditions available to workers in New South Wales varied widely and were affected by a range of factors. Not the least of these were the economic conditions in the colony at the time. Prospective emigrants considering moving to Australia would have had to balance those reports against their own situations and prospects before making decisions.

Daily necessities

Much was made of the provision of rations to many employees in Australia, particularly in the pastoral sector, with reports in the papers emphasising quantities of items such as meat, flour, tea and sugar. Housing of at least a basic standard was also supplied for many workers. For others, however, the cost of accommodation and food was important with these having to be bought from wages received. Costs of other necessities such as clothing were also frequently reported in letters sent from New South Wales and all of this information would have had to be weighed up by potential emigrants.

Edward Turner's letter to his wife covered living conditions, even those observed by himself as a convict.¹⁴⁵ Prices of clothing and foodstuffs including items such as wheat, Indian corn, peaches, lemons and oranges, beef, mutton and pork, and issues about the construction of buildings in the colony were all mentioned. Lemons were far from uncommon in Inverness and had been so for at least a century before this time and therefore unlikely to be of great significance. Their mention in the *Inverness Courier* certainly provided evidence of an abundance of fresh fruit to encourage any reader in Inverness to expect that food in Sydney would be plentiful.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, "Lemons are seldom wanting here" in *Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland* Vol. I (Edinburgh: William Paterson 1876 edition), 139.

It appears that two pricing structures may have prevailed in the colony in 1821, with prices at the open market higher than those charged at the Government stores.¹⁴⁷ With beef selling for 9d a pound at the markets and only 5d a pound at the Government stores, either the Government stores sold food at subsidised prices, or else sold only inferior goods. Walter Lawry, the missionary whose letter in the *Perth Courier* recorded this variation in 1821 did not give any further explanation beyond reporting prices and the variation may not have attracted attention from readers in Scotland. What may have attracted more attention was the advice that English goods cost twice what they did at home and migrants should take a supply of essential goods with them when moving to the colony.

The settler in Van Diemen's Land, originally from Galloway, who wrote home in 1825 claimed that colonists were rather partial to substantial feeding.¹⁴⁸ Flour and flesh were so plentiful that it was always "bread and meat, bread and meat". However, according to this Gallovidian gentleman, bread and beef were the only items which were sold cheaply, with almost every other article selling "exceedingly high". His letter gave examples of costs for potatoes, butter, eggs, fowls, green tea, rum and clothing. It is difficult to judge how readers in Scotland might have reacted to these costs. Potatoes, dairy and probably poultry products were likely to have been part of the food of at least rural Scots and a warning of high prices would have been of concern for potential emigrants. While the settler in Van Diemen's Land claimed in 1825 that nearly everything was expensive, a few years later an officially sponsored letter in February 1832 claimed that provisions were very cheap, citing prices for beef, mutton, tea, sugar, Indian corn, fine and second grade flour, and oats and barley.¹⁴⁹ Had they been tracking prices in New South Wales, it must have been confusing for those in Scotland trying to understand the costs of living in the colony where prices had gone from expensive to very cheap in the space of seven years.

A former resident of Inverness-shire, in a letter printed in the *Inverness Courier* in 1832 reported the weekly rations for convicts as one peck of wheat, weighing 15 lb; 7

¹⁴⁷ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6.

lbs. of beef or mutton, 2 ounces of tea, 1 lb of sugar, 2 oz. of tobacco, with a quart of milk in the day with shoes and clothes also provided.¹⁵⁰ This contrasts strongly with the diet of many in the Highlands of Scotland where as late as 1845 the Kirk Session of Kilmallie in Inverness-shire recorded that “from their knowledge of the general mode of living among the working classes of the Highlands, many families ... subsisted on potatoes and milk with fish occasionally and using but very little meal”.¹⁵¹ For those purchasing their provisions in the colony, these are described as being reasonable in price with details of basic foodstuffs (meat, sugar, tea) being given. For those struggling to obtain a living in the region of Inverness, or to better themselves and the prospects for their families, these conditions even for a convict could well have seemed attractive.

A gentleman in Leith who had earlier been in Sydney was reassured by a correspondent.¹⁵² Those in the colony were said to be “as happy in ourselves as we can wish; beef at 1d a lb. the 2 lb. loaf 3d, sugar 2¼d, tea 1s 6d, and I may say almost every other article in proportion”. These prices are well below those quoted in other correspondence appearing in the press over several years and there is no indication why this might be so. Regular readers of the *Inverness Courier* following reports from the colony with a view to emigration would have been left uncertain of the reliability of reports coming from New South Wales.

The quantities of flour, fresh meat, tea, and sugar being received by a young shepherd at *Bonawe* in New South Wales were listed in a letter in the *Inverness Courier* in November 1837.¹⁵³ These quantities were exactly three times that mentioned as convict rations in a letter from a correspondent writing from Argyle New South Wales which appeared in the same newspaper five years earlier.¹⁵⁴ The explanation may lie in the writer’s comment on wages, where the young shepherd was allowed “£20 for myself and £10 for Dannie, to give him education”. A shepherd with a capable son would receive an

¹⁵⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

¹⁵¹ Lochaber Archive, Fort William, CH 2/719/1 Minutes of the Kirk Session of Kilmallie, 7 May 1845.

¹⁵² *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1833, 4.

¹⁵³ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

extra half pay for each son contributing to the shepherd's work with an extra half ration for each child.¹⁵⁵ If Dannie were the shepherd's son, and also accompanied by the shepherd's wife and one other child, then the rations for two adults and two children, not one, would account for the seemingly generous allocation, an allocation likely to be attractive to anyone reading this letter.

The property on which this young man was employed would have been extensive since it was described as carrying 50,000 sheep, 1,000 head of cattle, and about 500 horses. A small part of this appears to have been made available to the workers employed allowing them to engage in a limited form of self-sufficiency. With a cow's grass, and two acres of land under wheat, the writer would have been able to supplement the flour, fresh meat, tea and sugar provided as rations for himself and family. Having the opportunity to keep a cow gave the family some ability to replicate in part at least a traditional Highland diet with dairy products being significant in that diet. For many small tenants in the Highlands, rents had often been paid at least in part in butter and cheese and some work on the laird's lands. While the amount of land allowed for keeping a cow was not specified, it was apparently sufficient for the shepherd's needs and this, combined with two acres of wheat, must have been of interest to any readers without land of their own. A shepherd contemplating emigration to New South Wales would have been encouraged by this favourable report with the prospects also for at least a modest access to land as part of a remuneration package.

In a letter in the *John O'Groat Journal* in July 1840, house carpenter Andrew Ross' description of Sydney presents a very mixed picture.¹⁵⁶ He noted that his employment at Parramatta had been with an excellent master with good wages but which did not include rations and accommodation. These were so dear that he could hardly live and pay house rent. His estimate of the cost of a pair of moleskin trousers "from 15s. to 18s." is consistent with the advice in another letter from Port Macquarie that tailors would get

¹⁵⁵ See the memo dated 2 November 1837 from Charles Campbell of *Ginninderra* on the Limestone Plains: "I have engaged James McIntosh as a shepherd ... He is to receive £20 a year payable quarterly and his two boys Malcolm and John if found qualified to take care of sheep, Ten Pounds each to be added to their father's wages. The family to receive the same rations as my other Highland shepherds." NLA, James McIntosh papers, MS 3995.

¹⁵⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4.

“14 shillings for a pair of trousers”.¹⁵⁷ The final, quite long, paragraph in Andrew Ross’ letter of Boxing Day, 1839, however, is the one most likely to have swayed migration decisions by those reading it. His letter had appeared in an Inverness paper (possibly the *Inverness Courier* but that item has not been identified and there were other Inverness-based papers at the time) before being reproduced in the *John O’Groat Journal*. Unusually, this letter does appear from internal evidence that it had been intended for publication rather than a personal letter which had been handed to a newspaper. Ross made it clear that he wanted its contents distributed as widely as possible in an attempt to dissuade others from joining him in the colony. He pointed out the difficulties for someone who brought “most of this world’s goods with him” and said that the situation was almost impossible for those who arrived with nothing.¹⁵⁸ The letter claimed that a married shepherd would only receive a single man’s rations rather than rations for the whole family but this is at variance to earlier practices. Whether this is accurate or not it may have had a serious effect on those considering migration.

A report in the *Inverness Courier* in September 1840 was generally positive about conditions in Sydney.¹⁵⁹ The paper noted that the young carpenter who wrote the letter which was printed that day seemed to have a comfortable situation and that steady tradesmen did well. A cursory check on the prices quoted for provisions appears to indicate their accuracy. Potatoes were cited there as costing 1½d per pound, while in a list specially compiled for the *Colonist* of ‘Wholesale Prices of Goods March 27, 1840’ the price of Derwent (Van Diemen’s Land) potatoes is quoted as £12 per ton (1.28571d per pound).¹⁶⁰ The price for provisions was described in the *Inverness Courier* as being high, resulting in a young man having to pay sixteen shillings a week for board, out of a potential thirty to thirty-five shillings weekly wage for a five day working week. The Sydney press regularly included advertisements offering board in private houses for suitable lodgers of sober and quiet habits.¹⁶¹ A reader of the *Inverness Courier* might,

¹⁵⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 8 May 1840, 3.

¹⁵⁸ *John O’Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 9 September 1840, 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Colonist*, 28 March 1840, 4.

¹⁶¹ ‘Board’, *Colonist* 28 March 1840, 3.

after reading the letter carefully, take some positive messages from it. The first was that an unmarried tradesman would be likely to find employment in his trade at a good wage, although there is nothing on which to base any estimate of the prospects for a single or married woman. The second was that a migrant “possessed of some money and a few young lads, stout and healthy, may do remarkably well by taking land in the country”.¹⁶² The possession of at least some money would be critical in the pursuit of success.

In a letter in the *Inverness Courier* in November 1840, the writer claimed to pity shepherds recruited from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to work in the colony for having ever started for “this land of Goshen”.¹⁶³ There, moved from their native homeland they were placed in an alien land and left to tend flocks from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. The writer claimed that these shepherds were paid no better than they would be at home and, unlike the rest of the working classes, it was claimed that they were not better fed than at home. This claim is surprising when considered against the records of the almost contemporary NSA where it is recorded that in the parish of Diurinish on the Isle of Skye, “[t]he ordinary food of the peasantry is potatoes and fish, sometimes potatoes and salt, and sometimes potatoes alone. Butchermeat is almost unknown to them, and very little meal is used”.¹⁶⁴ The quantities and nature of the rations provided to shepherds in New South Wales have been commented on elsewhere in this thesis and suggest that the writer of this letter was, deliberately or unintentionally, attempting to mislead his readers.

Responding to that letter and rejecting its claims, a writer from Queanbeyan in southern New South Wales wrote in great detail for the *Inverness Courier* in December 1841 describing the conditions for shepherds employed in the colony.¹⁶⁵ He noted how conditions required a different way of shepherding than at home because of the need to bring the sheep in every night to secure folds. It was not stated in this letter but it would have been to protect the sheep. He explained the duties for both shepherds and the

¹⁶² *Inverness Courier*, 9 September 1840, 2.

¹⁶³ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Rev. Clerk, NSA, Vol. XIV, 347.

¹⁶⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

watchmen who took over the care of the flocks at night and their pay, rations, the supplements available by being able to keep their own stock and plant crops, and the extra pay flowing from the labour of sons who helped with the sheep.

I have no wish whatever to inveigle people out here with false statements; for I consider it as much for the good of people who are so often starving at home, to know what they have really to expect from coming out here, as it is for the colonists who require their services. ... Is this, I would ask, being worse paid and worse fed than at home? In what part of the United Kingdom will shepherds receive such wages and rations? most certainly in no county or district that I know of.¹⁶⁶

In concluding his long letter, the writer expressed a desire to be able to invite the young man who had emigrated from Inverness in 1838 to visit him up the country. There he would be able to see and meet with the shepherds and watchmen and ask their opinions regarding their comfort and means of making money in New South Wales and at home. He would meet several who possessed anything up to forty head of cattle who, with their sons, were receiving from £100 to £130 per annum, instead of starving with large families on 8s., 10s., or 12s. per week in Scotland. At this time, paupers in Scotland were often expected to survive on the charity of family and neighbours perhaps with an allowance of a shilling or so a week from the parish.¹⁶⁷ Even after the 1845 poor law reforms in Scotland, a pauper receiving the highest rate of relief from a local Parochial Board in Lochaber would receive no more than £6 per annum.¹⁶⁸ It is clear that the correspondent from Queanbeyan wanted his readers to believe that conditions in the colony were far superior to those for many remaining in Scotland. In this letter he mounted a compelling case for rations and conditions in New South Wales being far superior to what was available in Scotland.

Just as the writer from Queanbeyan speculated on the motives for the young man writing from Parramatta, it may be useful to speculate also on the motives or imperatives behind this second letter. A note from Charles Campbell at *Ginninderra*, also within the

¹⁶⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Lochaber Archives, CH 2/7/19/1 Cash book of the Kirk Session of Kilmallie, 14 December 1844.

¹⁶⁸ Lochaber Archives, C1/L7/221/1 Minutes of the Parochial Board of Kilmallie, 15 October 1845.

general area of Queanbeyan, shows that he was employing Highland shepherds, some of whom had arrived on the *William Nicol* in 1837.¹⁶⁹ From the contents of that note it is clear that those on the *William Nicol* were additional to those already in service at *Duntroon*, established by Campbell's father Robert, and at nearby *Ginninderra*. It might reasonably be assumed that Campbell was keen to employ further Highlanders as shepherds. As they had been found suitable at *Ginninderra* and *Duntroon* other employers in the area would have been willing to employ further Highlanders as well. From his evidence before the Immigration Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Committee on 5 July 1841, it is clear that Charles Campbell's first preference for hiring shepherds was from among the freed convicts who had been trained to the charge of sheep during their servitude, then Scotch Highlanders who were better qualified than English immigrants. The writer from Queanbeyan protested that he would not inveigle people with false promises. However it is likely that he would be willing to give as positive a picture of conditions and prospects in the colony as he could. This would ensure a ready acceptance in the Highlands of the idea of migration to New South Wales. With the ongoing expansion of the sheep runs in the general area, there would have been a commensurate need to expand the number of shepherds and other farm workers available in the colony, including in the Queanbeyan/Limestone Plains area. Witness after witness appearing before the immigration committee of the New South Wales Legislative Committee in 1841 had emphasised how a lack of shepherds was hindering development of the colony.¹⁷⁰ By refuting the earlier negative picture of poor pay and conditions, the writer enhanced the prospects of attracting to the area more willing workers of a type already proven to be suitable. This also served the interests of his countrymen at a time when conditions and prospects in Scotland were often poor. In seeking to attract migrants to the colony, this letter would have worked to support emigration as part of a cure for some of the difficulties in Scotland.

A letter in the *John O'Groat Journal* of 13 November 1840 provides a succinct summary of conditions on emigration ships.¹⁷¹ It is not clear whether the writer's

¹⁶⁹ Memo of Charles Campbell dated 2 November 1837, NLA, McIntosh, James, papers, MS 3995.

¹⁷⁰ Doust, *New South Wales Legislative Council*, 93.

¹⁷¹ *John O'Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

recommendation to travel by Government ships rather than by bounty ships is based on a particular experience or reflects the experiences of others and relayed by word of mouth. The advice given that travel by Government ships assured accommodation and support in the Government barracks was accurate although there was an ongoing debate in the Sydney press at this time over whether bounty emigrants also should be given access to this support. The *Colonist* of 25 July 1838 begged to “call the attention of Government to the reasonableness of receiving into the Immigrants’ Barracks the passengers introduced on the bounty by private ships, as well as those sent out by Government”.¹⁷² The long article appearing in the press that day concluded with the advice that lodging new arrivals in the Barracks would obviate their need to seek shelter and accommodation in the most depraved parts of the city from where potential employers would be loath to seek employees. The wisdom of the *Colonist*’s suggestion that housing all immigrants in the Government barracks until employed is perhaps backed up by an item in the *Sydney Herald* the following year listing the occupations of the emigrants then in residence in the barracks and apparently available for immediate hire.¹⁷³ These were two agriculturalists, one dyer, one brickmaker, one bricklayer, one gardener, one plasterer, one laundress and twelve labourers. Despite these twenty persons, the barracks were said to be nearly empty although some passengers from the *Juliana* were expected, as were those on the *Asia* which had been delayed by storm damage.¹⁷⁴ By September 1841, the *Sydney Free Press* was lamenting the closure altogether of the Immigrants’ Barracks, claiming that the closure had been an invidious move to lessen expenses of the Government system of assisted emigration.¹⁷⁵ The benefit of being lodged in Government accommodation being available only to those in Government ships was therefore to disappear shortly after the appearance of the letter which was printed in the *John O’Groat Journal* in November 1840. Unfortunately, news of the closure would not have been available to those considering emigration in November 1840 and considering the options

¹⁷² *Colonist*, 25 July 1838, 2.

¹⁷³ ‘Domestic intelligence’, *Sydney Herald*, 1 May 1839, 2.

¹⁷⁴ For the story of the *Asia*, see <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2018/04/05/the-shipping-news/>.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Immigration Barracks’, *Sydney Free Press*, 9 September 1841, 2.

for travel. Up to four weeks in supported accommodation on arrival in Sydney would have been an additional inducement for potential migrants.

A letter written by a carpenter from Nairnshire printed in the *Inverness Courier* quoted the cost of board and accommodation of some sixteen shillings a week for a young man.¹⁷⁶ The *John O’Groat Journal* two months later quoted rates of from twenty to thirty-five shillings for board and lodging, with tradesmen likely to be able to obtain rates at the bottom end of those scales.¹⁷⁷ It is difficult to understand the variation, with the higher rates being from some twenty-five percent to more than one hundred percent higher. It is possible that the gentleman from Caithness-shire whose letter appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* lived in a more expensive social circle than the young carpenter from Nairnshire and each was reflecting conditions and prices as he found them. As well as the cost of board and lodging, this later letter also claimed that house rents were some six times those prevailing in Caithness-shire.¹⁷⁸ Like many other correspondents writing from Australia to Scotland, he saw fit to include a list of prices for basic commodities such as bread, butter, eggs, meat, tea and sugar. This allowed readers to consider whether the prospects for a better or more comfortable living would be enhanced in the colony, taking into account the wages likely to be earned and the costs of housing and provisions.

In March 1841, the *Dundee Warder* passed on some practical advice on equipment suitable for a young man emigrating.¹⁷⁹ It is likely that the writer came from a different social class from many of those who emigrated from Scotland at this time. In the case of those recruited by Government emigration agent Dr Boyter for travel from Skye on the *William Nicol* in 1837, Boyter had recommended that each intending passenger procure a new suit of plaid with several other little articles required for the voyage.¹⁸⁰ The writer of this particular letter recommended bringing a few dozen shirts, plenty of moleskins,

¹⁷⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 9 September 1840, 2.

¹⁷⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Susan and Kevin McIntosh, *The highland shepherd: the story of James McIntosh and his family who sailed aboard the William Nicol in 1837 and settled on the Limestone Plains* (Gilmore, ACT: Gladefield, 2016), 15.

“a few decent things to appear in at Melbourne”, a gun, pistols and a saddle which would be sufficient without burdening the settler with excess luggage.¹⁸¹ This list together with the discussion of speculation in land and sheep presents a picture of the colony aimed at a different class of intending settler from many of those who travelled with government assistance as bounty migrants. Appearing in a Dundee-based newspaper, it suggests that the comments were aimed particularly at people coming from a more affluent background in the manufacturing areas of Dundee. These may have been younger sons unlikely to inherit family businesses but still with some access to family funds. Appearing in the press in Scotland more than fifty years after the arrival in Sydney of the First Fleet the letter is likely to have been of interest to a class of young men interested in experiencing the opportunities in the colony at a time when reports still circulated of opportunities for fortunes to be made.

When writing of commodity prices and uses in his long letter sent from Morpeth in the Hunter region of New South Wales, Robert Battley claimed that working men would buy half a dozen suits of clothing at a time and that rags or patches were never seen.¹⁸² This would appear to be such an extravagant statement that it was unlikely to have been given much credence by anyone reading this letter. He does comment on the quantities of tea, sugar, meat, fruit, and other consumables used and while his claimed quantities also may be extravagant, there is some general consistency with other letter writers who comment on the large quantities of tea and sugar consumed in the colony. His citation of pay rates and availability of work as shepherds are generally accurate. The prices quoted for a range of consumables, including items such as oysters, wheat, flour and bread, butter, milk, tea, sugar, eggs, fowls and ducks, potatoes, fish, beef, mutton, pigs, wine, fruit, candles and coals may have provided a topic for much discussion among his readers.

A letter of January 1845 provided prices from the Sydney markets and gave readers the opportunity to assess prices for food with, for example, a two pound loaf costing 2½d.¹⁸³ This was the same price as a larger quartern loaf of about four pounds which had been quoted in a letter from Donald MacLeod, formerly of Skye, in a letter which

¹⁸¹ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

¹⁸² *John O’Groat Journal*, 22 November 1844, 4.

¹⁸³ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in 1838.¹⁸⁴ Prices reported could have allowed readers to appreciate price rises in recent years and helped them to understand whether wages potentially on offer would be sufficient to justify relocation. The August 1845 article in the *Aberdeen Journal* did not recite the levels of rations being given to pastoral workers. However it might be assumed that rations were sufficient to allow workers to avoid starvation, particularly if they could supplement these with vegetables grown at the station or by game taken from a surrounding area. The actual rations were detailed in a second letter sent from Murrurundi about 120 miles northwest of Newcastle.¹⁸⁵ It indicated that the wages being paid to shepherds, watchmen/hut keepers and labourers averaged at some £14 to £15, consistent with the earlier advice quoted of between £12 and £20 depending on location. An astute reader intending to emigrate might have taken note of the variations mentioned and looked at what guarantees s/he could secure for the actual conditions on offer. Of course, some in Scotland at this time may not have been in a position to hold out for wages at the higher end of the range, facing unemployment and distress at home.

In quoting prices at the Hobart markets, the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* of 23 February 1848 had taken its details from the *Adelaide Observer* which had in turn copied the report verbatim from Launceston's *Cornwall Chronicle*.¹⁸⁶ Readers in Scotland may have been interested in the price of flour, quoted at £11 per ton. At about the same time, in Scotland Parochial Boards for the relief of the poor were paying the equivalent of £14 per ton of meal to relieve distress resulting from the failure of the potato crop but this was for the inferior and unpopular meal made from Indian corn.¹⁸⁷ It could be taken that provisions in the colony were available at comparable or better prices than at home in Scotland making the costs an attractive option for those reading the report and weighing up the benefits or otherwise of emigration to New South Wales.

¹⁸⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

¹⁸⁵ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 23 February 1848, 3; *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 4 September 1847, 2.

¹⁸⁷ Price calculated from the 19 July 1847 minutes of the Parochial Board for Morvern, Lochaber Archives, CA/L/7/3/1.

The writer of a letter from Yass dated 22 April 1850 cited prices paid by consumers and those paid to producers for a wide range of goods in the colony.¹⁸⁸ He noted significant variations in wool prices but expected some stability in the future. The price received from the sale of his tallow was said to have been very fair since he could not expect to produce a first rate product. It is likely that at least some and probably most of the catarrh-infected sheep on his property had been converted to tallow.¹⁸⁹ It is difficult to be certain of the prices cited by this correspondent and it may again be that he was anxious to impress his reader/s. He cited 8s. as the price for 100 lbs of second grade flour and 9s. for first. These equate to £8 for the standard short ton of 2000 pounds, and £9 for first quality. Eight months later, his local newspaper at Yass was quoting prices of “£15 for fine and £14 for seconds, per ton of 2000 lbs”.¹⁹⁰ Elsewhere in the colony at the same time, flour was quoted as “15s. per 100 lbs. for fine, and 13s. for seconds”, or £15 and £13 for the short ton and these prices are consistent with the Goulburn prices but not with those cited by the writer.¹⁹¹ At the same time, wheat was quoted at from 4s. to 5s. a bushel, again considerably dearer than the prices listed in the letter. Readers in Scotland were unlikely to have available the accurate figures and would have had to rely on those quoted in the newspaper.

The range of manufactured and primary products available to residents at this property at Yass, outside the official limits of the colony, would have reassured readers worried about a lack of such items in the interior of New South Wales.¹⁹² Unless having access to other information on prices, the detail presented here would have reassured a reader that conditions even on this edge of the colony would be tolerable. There was a great deal of very excellent fruit said to be available even if prices were high while advice that articles of British manufacture would cost perhaps forty percent more than in Britain would have given this report an appearance of honesty and accuracy. As noted above, the writer’s

¹⁸⁸ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3.

¹⁸⁹ See discussion of catarrh in earlier chapters.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Sydney Markets - December 21’, *Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser*, 28 December 1850, 2. Prices for flour were quoted for “short” tons of 2,000 pounds, rather than the standard ton of 2,240 pounds. See for example, *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 25 June 1927, 19.

¹⁹¹ ‘Commercial and markets’, *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 28 December 1850, 2.

¹⁹² *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3.

claim that labour was still expensive with his workers receiving £17 to £18 a year, sits uneasily beside the wages being paid by at least some others. The writer was unaware, of course, what would happen very soon after this letter was written. When the discovery of gold became public knowledge many workers throughout the colony left employment to seek fortunes on the gold fields. The wages he was offering then would have been unlikely to keep his workers from those gold fields.

There is no doubt that economic conditions for many people living in Scotland were difficult during the first half of the nineteenth century. This was not only in rural areas where clearances had driven many from their traditional homes. In the cities, industrialisation drove the changing nature of work. Increasing poverty and hardship drove others to contemplate emigration to new lands where their skills, or even just their unskilled labour, would be sought by employers willing to pay wages and provide housing and rations. For yet others the end of the Napoleonic wars had closed off traditional military occupations which had so often provided employment for younger sons and others without alternative prospects. All these would have read with interest the reports coming home in letters to family and friends and printed in newspapers, allowing them to glean what information they could about employment conditions in the colony.

While many letters provided information on openings and conditions for domestic servants, tradesmen, skilled workers and labourers the occupation most likely to be available was that of shepherd. The economy in the colony suffered some significant downturns before picking up towards the middle of the century and some employers varied wages and conditions for employees as a result. At the same time there was a mention in the press suggesting the start of collective bargaining by workers dissatisfied with the pay being offered in some occupations. All of these matters were reflected in the letters appearing in Scottish newspapers and had potential to influence emigration decisions. By reporting the range of food, rations and wages available in Australia some newspapers sought to convince their readers that emigration was the best option.

The conclusion which must be drawn from the evidence of the letters in the press is that the frequent discussion of wages would have been of great interest to many readers. Were wages not a topic of interest, it is unlikely that newspapers would have devoted so much space to giving the reports of wages and conditions. Moreover, sharing details of wages and conditions in New South Wales would have been important for the newspapers

which aimed to provide information which had some potential to help people decide whether to emigrate.

Potential migrants would also have had to come to terms with the reality that the nature of society in the colony, a society founded as a penal settlement and where many of the European inhabitants had been or were still convicted felons, was going to be very different from their existing life in Scotland. The development of society in Australia as reported in letters in newspapers is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter five: Society

As explored in earlier chapters and demonstrated by the letters sent from the colony, some migrants from Scotland arriving in Australia had a clear focus on achieving a pastoral or agricultural life in the new country. The extent of land holdings and the stock which could be carried there were reported in letters published in Scottish newspapers. Similarly, the climate and how land could be used were also the subject of a number of reports. Others, recognising that land ownership was unlikely to be their lot, reported the conditions of employment available in the colony and these details would have been of interest to many readers of the letters appearing in the Scottish newspapers. Some of those reports had quoted levels of wages and rations in excess of what was available for many in Scotland at the time. However, for all those who were contemplating emigration, the nature of the society which would await them must have been a matter of interest. This chapter explores the reports of the colonial society conveyed back to Scotland, firstly to the direct recipients of letters but subsequently to a much wider readership with access to the letters printed in the papers.

Increasing industrialisation, evictions of rural residents in the Scottish clearances and the English enclosures together with the loss of career opportunities continued to change the nature of British society, providing “push” factors which inclined people in Britain to consider emigration. These disruptions operated notwithstanding an existing social order which included elements such as religious observances, education, postal services and transport. However, over the years since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, by 1820 these elements of society in Britain were beginning to appear also in New South Wales, even if the standard of morals in a colony originally established as somewhere to send convicted criminals was often described as low. The emerging society in Australia failed to acknowledge the nature of the “invasion of [the] country by English soldiers and then colonists”, even if some parallels could have been drawn with the post-Culloden attacks on the social order of the *Gàidhealtachd*.¹ Settlers’ relations with the Indigenous custodians remained problematic. Many aspects of the developing society were reported

¹ Kevin Gilbert, *Because a White Man’ll Never Do It* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1994), 2.

in letters in the period with potential to influence emigration decisions, depending on the individual letter/s as well as the situation of readers of the Scottish press.

Morality and the nature of society

The *Inverness Courier* printed in January 1824 a letter written by a gentleman in New Norfolk, Van Diemen's Land, noting how a newly arrived settler had many privations to endure.² These included the prevalence of vice in all classes of society accompanied by a lamentable attitude to the sanctity of marriage. Marriage was said to be regarded as a mere ceremony rarely involving conjugal fidelity. However, the writer did acknowledge that greater attention to public morals was by that time being paid by Government officers and this had led to improvements. That early view of the colony was repeated by a storekeeper near Launceston whose letter in the *Caledonian Mercury* in November 1825 suggested that the arrival of two hundred Scotch within the preceding two years should have assured a new Scottish settler of the chance of sympathetic society.³ However, this was balanced with the view that "[t]his to be sure is a fine country but a cursed people. All the sweepings of all the jails of Britain are sent out here, and the colony is a nursery of vices of all sorts." He noted that in six years he had heard of only ten people whose deaths were not caused by dissipation while at the most recent criminal court sixty people had been sentenced to death. Twenty four of these were hanged with the rest sent to work in irons for the balance of their lives. Anyone contemplating emigration if expecting a settled and moral society but reading these reports would have had serious issues to weigh up before committing themselves to leaving Scotland.

Drunkenness in New South Wales society was often commented on by correspondents writing home. It was described as the prevailing evil of the country by one former resident of Inverness-shire.⁴ Although this correspondent claimed that while settlers generally preferred to purchase spirits, brewing and distilling were unregulated. Cape wine, gin, brandy and rum were all sold by the gallon. As had the correspondent whose letter appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 7 November 1825, the letter in the *Inverness*

² *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

Courier of 16 May 1832 claimed that the convict population seldom reformed although again the writer failed to cite any evidence of his claim. He noted how convicts remained subject to the lash and to being worked in irons on the public roads, while liable to the tyranny of unfeeling taskmasters. The possibilities for convicts to earn a ticket of leave were cited with these possibilities providing evidence of motivation to retain a good character. This would have been important information for those intending free settlers wanting to understand the nature and at least some parts of the structure of society in the colony.

In one respect conditions were considered worse in the colony than they were even in Inverness, the Highland capital. “The greatest evil in New South Wales, according to our self-expatriated countryman, is the immense number of lawyers, with which it abounds, and these he describes being higher in their fees, and worse in their mode of conducting business than the writers of Inverness!!”⁵ The situation must have changed since the days of Jeffery Hart Bent, judge of the Supreme Court created under the colony’s new Charter of Justice granted in 1814. Even though there was only one free lawyer in the colony at that time Bent kept his court closed rather than admit ex-convict attorneys to practise.⁶ It would be open to a reader to surmise that this letter writer at Argyle, being unsuccessful in business in Inverness, regarded lawyers as having some responsibility for his failure and, as a class, to be avoided in the colony if possible. It was certainly a negative view of one aspect of society in the colony and one unlikely to attract potential migrants.

A comment printed in the *John O’Groat Journal* in February 1840 that the colony was wicked, since “the very dregs of society are sent here” was also consistent with the often expressed views of others.⁷ However, this ignored the reality that while a total of 113,816 convicts had been embarked for transportation to New South Wales by 1840, significant numbers of free settlers had also arrived.⁸ The British government had begun assisted

⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

⁶ N. D. McLachlan, ‘Macquarie, Lachlan (1762–1824)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macquarie-lachlan-2419/text3211>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 6 February 2018.

⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

⁸ Charles Bateson, *The Convict Ships, 1787 – 1868* (Sydney: The Library of Australian History, 1983), 379.

migration schemes to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land in 1831 and already by the late 1830s free emigration had overtaken the numbers of transportees. Between 1835 and 1839, there were about 40,000 free emigrants compared to about 25,000 convicts.⁹ The 1841 census recorded a total of 145,303 persons in New South Wales at that time and free settlers and free-born currency lads and lasses clearly outnumbered the entire accumulated total of 113,816 convicts who had been landed since January 1788.

Both the letter writers whose words appeared in the *John O'Groat Journal* on 8 May and 10 July 1840 – a shepherd at Port Macquarie and Andrew Ross a house carpenter also at Port Macquarie – shared the view of an earlier writer whose letter had also appeared in that newspaper, on 28 February 1840.¹⁰ The shepherd and the carpenter claimed that the colony was a sinful place, even to being one of the wickedest places in the world. For Highlanders accustomed to an environment where the church's teachings were central to much of everyday life, the reported conditions in New South Wales must have come as a shock. Entries in the NSA mention how the inhabitants of Scotland were religiously disposed. They were punctual in attendance at public worship, observed the Sabbath day, believed the divine authority of the Bible, and took it for the rule of their faith and practice.¹¹ When this is compared to the statement that "a great number of the people are convicts, and they work on Sunday as on any other day ... they will tell you that there is no Sunday in New South Wales" it is easy to see why the writer of the letter published on 8 May 1840 thought fit to describe the colony as one of the wickedest places in the world. Perhaps the writer had missed the reality of a convict's working life. This was commonly a six day working week leaving only Sunday on which the convict could attend to any personal matters such as laundry, repairs to accommodation, or tending to any land allowed for growing vegetables. Unless under the control of an enlightened master who might have allowed perhaps a Saturday afternoon free from assigned work in which to attend to these matters, a convict had little opportunity to attend religious

⁹ Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth Century British Emigrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 6.

¹⁰ *John O'Groat Journal*, 8 May 1840, 3; 10 July 1840, 4; 28 February 1840, 4.

¹¹ NSA Vol. XIV, 67.

services, even had these been available. Readers of the *John O’Groat Journal* perusing these letters would have received a distorted view of conditions in the colony.

A letter which appeared in the *Inverness Courier* of 22 December 1841 refuting an earlier one which had appeared on 4 November 1840 comments in great detail on matters of moral behaviour and public order and safety.¹² By accepting that the colony had problems needing to be addressed, the writer of the later letter was likely to be accepted by readers of the paper as being one who could give a balanced and probably accurate report on conditions. He conceded that he did not assert Sydney to be “a highly moral colony; either in town or country”. His letter did note that there was as little, or less, drunkenness and licentiousness in Sydney than in cities or towns such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Greenock, or even Inverness. The report would have presented as a balanced and probably accurate view. He denied that there was more open crime in Sydney, thanks to the vigilance and strictness of the police, and suggested that police reports from Sydney would confirm this. Similarly, the claim made in the earlier letter that “robberies and murders to a most frightful extent prevail” in the rural districts was emphatically denied, particularly when the number of convicts sent to the colony were taken into account.¹³ The writer confirmed that his personal experience of travel over many districts in the bush had occurred without any molestation at all and this would have provided a level of comfort to those worried about the nature of colonial society.¹⁴

The often-repeated caution against drunkenness expressed in letters from the colony appeared also in a letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* of 13 November 1840.¹⁵ This included an unusual point expressed where it was suggested that high temperatures “rarely under 56 generally from 76 to 110 and 120 degrees” would help to hasten the “idle, profligate and drunkard ... to the place appointed for all living”. Also unusually, there was a practical suggestion given that all potential emigrants to the colony should, before departure, join a Total Abstinence Society. The presentation of an abstinence

¹² *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4; 13 November 1840, 3.

¹³ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 3.

¹⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

¹⁵ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 November 1840, 3.

pledge card was said to guarantee employment in the colony where alcohol and its over-use were known to be a significant social issue. It would have been useful advice for intending emigrants.

A rambling letter written in 1844 by Robert Battley also comments on the general morality of the colony.¹⁶ Battley resented the wealth of some who had been transported as convicts but had since improved their lot in life, appearing at the races in carriages while noting that some had even been elected to parliament, where they “generally have more to say than honest men”. He mentioned swindling of merchants, heavy drinking, dissipation and a poor attitude to honest work. Inexperienced emigrants were said to be vulnerable to being plundered, while many youths were described as debauched and liable to being “flogged and worked on the roads” [sic]. Horse and cattle stealing were said to be common particularly in the practice of placing one’s own brands on previously unmarked stock belonging to others. “Old hands” were said to be especially prone to loose marital arrangements, although this was different with respectable emigrants. Emigrants frequently married transported criminals. One such was the marriage of convict George Murray in the Presbyterian church in Goulburn in July 1841 to bounty immigrant Margaret Cameron.¹⁷ Battley noted the hanging of a man named Knatchbull, a member of a high English family, but described as a most depraved villain and in this description at least he was accurate.¹⁸ He also noted the presence at Morpeth of Helen McDougal, mistress of William Burke the infamous grave robber and murderer in Edinburgh.¹⁹ Readers in Scotland would have readily recognised the names of Burke and Hare and wondered at the general moral state of the colony where a person with such a notorious connection was at liberty in the country.

¹⁶ *John O’Groat Journal*, 22 November 1844, 4.

¹⁷ <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2016/03/14/a-man-of-letters/>.

¹⁸ ‘Knatchbull, John (1792–1844)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/knatchbull-john-2313/text3001>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 18 October 2018.

¹⁹ For the identification of McDougal as being the female associate of Burke and Hare see <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofScotland/Burke-Hare-infamous-murderers-graverobbers/>.

As well as danger to wealth and property, Battley's letter mentioned "swarms of highwaymen" but also commented with pleasure on the absence of taxes, stamps or excisemen. However, Battley did express a positive view of the future of the colony suggesting that by the year 2000 it would be a leading nation, even if the then-present extravagance and waste of produce surpassed belief. This article, printing just extracts from a long and variable letter, could have generated discussion and debate among its readers. In the mid-nineteenth century in the north of Scotland the Presbyterian Church held sway. Discussion of and debate over even small detailed pieces of scripture was not only possible but often actively encouraged. A letter such as this would have provided a basis for much conversation in communities accustomed to discussion and debate and fuel for serious consideration of emigration decisions.

Henry Paterson's letter of 12 November 1844 to his uncle at *Borlum* concludes on a curious note.²⁰ He reported that his cousin James had "not seen the inside of a public house for the last 20 months [and did not] care if he never sees a house of that description. He has been saving money lately". This may suggest that James, who had been engaged on arrival in Sydney to work for £27 and rations had at least initially wasted his wages by spending significantly in pubs and grog shanties in the colony. Apparently, he had reformed his habits after more than three years in the colony. Whether Paterson of *Borlum* or anyone else at home had been aware of James' drinking is not known but readers of the newspaper would have been reassured to know that conditions in the colony did permit a young man such as he to stay away from public houses and start to save money. Beyond this good news of course, was the salutary advice to young men intending to migrate to be wary of the inside of public houses if they were to have any hope of saving money.

A letter in the *Glasgow Citizen* in August 1845 acknowledged that at least some unfortunate young men who had found themselves in difficult circumstances had not taken the trouble to inform themselves adequately about conditions in the colony before emigrating.²¹ For others, some of their troubles were said to be of their own making, being too idle to work and expecting previous connections and letters of introduction to

²⁰ *John O'Groat Journal*, 25 April 1845, 3.

²¹ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 2.

supply an easy path to income and the means to realise their belief in their own prospects. In this, they had been mistaken and the letter recounted examples of people working below the station for which they had been trained or raised. These included an Edinburgh University surgeon working as a groom and the son of a Scotch clergyman working as a common labourer. Beyond the failure to achieve financial and career aspirations, the letter commented on the slide in standing of these young men resulting from the society which they were required to keep. It claimed that employers were sometimes stockholders who were as uncultivated and illiterate as the sheep they owned. In some cases, former convicts had by honest work or less honest means become the owners of stations and stock. The workers with which these well born young men were obliged to associate were often convicts or former convicts, whose habits, attitudes and behaviours they themselves eventually acquired. One young man, with whom the letter writer remonstrated over his behaviour, claimed that the total lack of realization of his hopes had so broken his spirit that he had lost all respect for himself and had begun to behave like his fellow workers.

Given that the letter in the *Glasgow Citizen* had been written from Boydtown, it is likely that the writer was offering a comment on the properties in the Maneroo/Monaro region, some of which had been taken over by Ben Boyd and his commercial interests. Boyd had been outspoken in his belief that the wages being paid to pastoral workers were too high and claimed that the colony would only prosper if wages could be kept at the petty sum actually mentioned in this letter.²² It is likely that behind this description of the disappointment facing many young men with unrealistic or unrealizable expectations of the colony was an intention to discourage others from joining them and swelling the ranks of a growing body of discontented men in the colony. The letter claimed that some had been assisted by family and friends to return home and this may have been offered as a suggestion to readers to seek to repatriate young men who had gone to the colony in search of fortunes. At the same time, the letter implied almost guaranteed employment for those of the labouring classes who were in great demand in the colony but only if prepared to accept the conditions on offer. These conditions were significantly less than those lauded by earlier correspondents reporting to family and friends in Britain. The other potential migrants likely to be successful in the colony were said to be young men of capital and energy. Capital was clearly essential for success, and the letter made it clear

²² Diamond, *Boyd of Boydtown; Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 2.

to all readers of the *Glasgow Citizen* that those with education and breeding, but no capital, were certain to be reduced in station far beyond their expectations.

An article in the *Aberdeen Journal* also cautioned against migration by one class of potential settler while renewing calls for an increased level of migration by another.²³ Consistently with the views of the young man writing from Boydtown in February 1845, a correspondent from Murrurundi in the Upper Hunter Valley made it apparent that he was averse to seeing more young adventurers arriving in the colony. While the reasons were not articulated here, they would no doubt have been consistent with the other contemporary writer who described the state to which many had been brought by the lack of prospects. Prospects for these young adventurers fell far short of expectations and the warnings given by that earlier letter would be the same as could be taken by readers of this later letter.

There is no indication in a letter from Carcor/Carcoar, some thirty-odd miles from Bathurst, of its author but clearly it was written by one for whom good society was important. Parts of it were printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* in April 1846.²⁴ It may well have been written from a property in the district such as *Coombing*, the estate of Thomas Icely. The most prominent property in the area, it was to be visited by Governor Sir Charles FitzRoy in November 1846.²⁵ As described by the Governor's cousin Charles Mundy, *Coombing* was a significant establishment not far from the village of Carcoar with many employees, stores, buildings, a comfortable residence, herds and flocks.²⁶ It also had what would have passed for suitable society and appropriate entertainment which was lacking in the writer's own existence. It is likely that the young Scotsman writing to his friends was one of the class of young men who had travelled to the colony, encouraged by early reports of fortunes to be gained easily. Many had found themselves wandering from property to property seeking employment appropriate to their self-

²³ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

²⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 April 1846, 4.

²⁵ Godfrey Charles Mundy, Lt Colonel, *Our Antipodes: or Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies with a Glimpse of the Gold Fields* (London: Richard Bentley, 1855, 130-1); 140-151.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

perceived station in life. These are the ones, as described in an earlier letter from Boydtown and which had appeared in the *Glasgow Citizen* on 16 August 1845 as those “who, too idle to work, are to be found wandering about from station to station, staying a night or two at each merely for the purposes of procuring a situation”.²⁷ The writer of this letter from Carcoar claimed to be respectable but without plenty of money, unable to find suitable employment and disdainful of the prospects of obtaining work as a shepherd or stockman.²⁸ He had arrived in the colony at the beginning of 1844, by which time the worst of the economic downturn or adjustment had already taken place and when, as he noted, there had been a marked improvement in overall business activity. Wages had risen, at least for shepherds and other pastoral workers with business proceeding on a less speculative or irresponsible basis. The descriptions and concerns of many of the matters in this letter and the earlier one from Boydtown are so similar that it is possible that the same young man wrote both letters. Each writer is described as a young Scotchman or Scotsman.²⁹ Each letter appeared in a newspaper based in the south of Scotland, one in Glasgow and the other in Edinburgh, with the earlier letter written to a father, and the slightly later one to friends at home. The places of sending the two letters, Boydtown and Carcoar, are some 300-odd miles apart, depending on the route taken, and a traveller could have moved easily between them in the seven months between sending the two letters.

The letter from Carcoar carried warnings against emigration to New South Wales by ill-prepared but educated young men expecting a respectable lifestyle in the colony, without sufficient capital to ensure a start in business or to buy a property. The letter dedicated some space to describing the habits of those workmen in the colony who drank all they made. It noted how many would spend all their wages at the nearest public house. Some would be cheated out of part of those earnings. The writer, who could have only been reporting by hearsay since he had been in the colony for less than two years, claimed that three or four years previously some would spend £50 or £60 at a time on drink. He claimed that these men were formerly convicts. At the same time the writer acknowledged

²⁷ *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 1.

²⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 April 1846, 4.

²⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 April 1846, 4; *Glasgow Citizen*, 16 August 1845, 2.

that many former transportees had acquired herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and other property. These were “in a comfortable middling way” rather than, the writer assumed, having been in all likelihood hanged or having otherwise died miserably at home. He warned against using the term “convict” for those who were Government men, suggesting that use of that term could result in serious assault by “lags”, a description which he claimed was acceptable in the colony. While the *Caledonian Mercury*’s editor claimed that the writer of the letter was extremely discomfited by having to associate with “the rabble of convicts who are the labourers employed in farming operations in the interior” this is inconsistent with the writer’s own comment. He noted that he had slept in a hut with a dozen Irish former convicts but had slept soundly and safely. It must have been an unusually large hut to accommodate so many at once, given that most shepherds’ or stockmen’s huts had one or at most two rooms.

The life for those who did take employment as shepherds was described in some detail and was designed to deter anyone reading this letter from taking up that lonely life. With accommodation consisting of an isolated hut built of wood with a bark roof and dirt floor, with food of salt beef or mutton, bread and tea three times a day, no amusement or society, and no schooling for children or church available, the monotonous life of a shepherd in the bush of New South Wales was not considered suitable for this young man or others of his ilk. He did acknowledge how some had, with patience and perseverance, managed to build up a small herd of cattle from which they were able to make and sell butter and cheese.

Regardless of who wrote this rather long letter from Carcoar, with its publication in the *Caledonian Mercury* it was likely to be seen in the families of young men of the better classes in Scotland. As noted in the list of newspapers referenced as footnote 21 on p. 11 above, the *Caledonian Mercury* circulated among a wealthier class than the other Edinburgh newspapers.³⁰ There is little in this letter which is positive and taken as a whole it would, as its writer intended, discourage all potential emigrants except those for whom starvation at home was the only future. The picture of the colony presented in this letter offered little encouragement to the potential emigrant from Scotland.

³⁰ Tait’s *Edinburgh Magazine for 1836*, Volume III (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1836), 191.

Notwithstanding the shortage of labour in the colony, the writer of a letter sent from Melbourne on 16 December 1847 regretted the necessity for settlers to bring to Port Phillip those who had formerly been convicts in Tasmania, referring to them as the refuse of Van Diemen's Land.³¹ The writer also complained about the ship loads of convicts or exiles being sent out from Pentonville prison and the children's prison of Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. This is the first reference made in this collection of reports in the Scottish press to the transportation of children convicts although there were some children transported well before 1848. It is possible that the reference to Parkhurst concerned the voyage of the *Mandarin* which in 1843 transported thirty-eight teenaged boys and younger lads from Parkhurst to Tasmania, including twelve year old Angus Weir who appears to have been the only Scot in the cargo.³² It is not clear from the letter whether the writer intended to mean that the Parkhurst exiles were the worst of the convicts, but any reader of this letter would have been warned that robberies and forgeries were rife and part of everyday life in Melbourne.

Female emigrants

Letters appearing in the press sometimes described marriage prospects for female emigrants to the colony, but also the lack of such prospects for many men in New South Wales. This intelligence would have been of interest to many prospective emigrants.

The "Instructions for our Trusty and well beloved Arthur Phillip Esq. Our Captain General and Governor in Chief" document dated 25 April 1787 held in the Secretary of State collection of papers in the Colonial Office files is clearly a draft.³³ With changes indicated, it was probably meant as a near final version by the then responsible Home Secretary, Thomas Townshend (later Lord Sydney) and subsequently clarified as printed. This document contains a great deal of minute guidance on a wide range of matters. It includes the instruction that

³¹ *John O'Groat Journal*, 26 May 1848, 2.

³² <https://www.libraries.tas.gov.au/convict-portal/Pages/before-transportation.aspx>;
<https://convictrecords.com.au/ships/mandarin/1843>.

³³ Instructions to Arthur Phillip, AJCP Colonial Office files, CO 201 Reel 1; HRA Vol. 1.

from the great disproportion of Female Convicts, to those of the males [in the new colony] you are, whenever the *Sirius* or the tender shall touch at any of the islands in these seas, to instruct their commanders to take on board any of the women who may be disposed to accompany them to the said settlement [but not to] exercise any compulsive measures or make use of fallacious pretences for bringing away any of the said women from the places of their present residence.³⁴

The subsequent paragraph specifically stated that such women were not to live “in common with the convicts” and that every effort should be made to secure matrimonial connexion [sic]. It is an early indication that the Government in London was cognisant of a serious imbalance in the gender ratios in the new colony which could give rise to serious promiscuity and immorality. Despite subsequent efforts to address this imbalance, the most notorious of which was the 1789/90 female transport the *Lady Juliana*, the colony lacked eligible women. Anyone reading correspondence from the colony printed in the Scottish newspapers over some decades would have been aware of this imbalance. Whether it was a serious concern would very much depend on gender and individual circumstances of readers.

At this time, reflecting losses to Britain’s wars and emigration by men seeking work, Scotland had slightly more than one hundred and twelve women for every hundred men.³⁵ Assistance for women ready to undertake the journey to a land where the population imbalance was significantly the reverse of that in Scotland and of a long standing nature could have been a significant consideration. There existed a serious gender imbalance in the European populations of the Australian colonies, with a masculinity ratio being three to two.³⁶ The ratio of the first settlers was 347.27 males to each 100 females, exclusive of forty children.³⁷ In 1824, the *Dublin Evening Post* had recorded the population of the colony of New South Wales, not including the military or those in Van Diemen’s Land as

³⁴ ‘Instructions’ to Arthur Phillip, AJCP Colonial Office files, CO 201 Reel 1; HRA Vol. 1.

³⁵ James Gray Kyd (ed.), *Scottish Population Statistics, including Webster’s analysis of population 1755* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1952), xvii.

³⁶ HRA Vol. XVII, x - xi.

³⁷ HRA Vol. XVI, 717.

totalling 24,188, of whom 15,199 were convicts, children or “In Colonial vessels”.³⁸ Of the adult population recorded as free by whatever means, 5,689 were males and 3,300 were females. A serious imbalance in the free population of females to males in the ratio of 2:3.5 had probably fallen slightly to 2:3 in the years between the report in the Dublin press and the early 1830s but remained a serious issue for the colonial administration. It may have been a significant issue for anyone reading reports in the correspondence sent from the Australian office in Manchester and printed in Scottish newspapers.³⁹

Efforts had been made to address this beyond those suggested in Lord Sydney’s original instructions to Phillip. On 10 October 1831 the Commissioners of Emigration reported to Viscount Goderich, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies who in turn transmitted copies of the report to Governor Bourke.⁴⁰ In effect, the Commissioners received approval from the Treasury to appropriate £10,000 to contribute £8 per head towards the passage costs of single female emigrants. This was estimated to be about one half of the fare for each emigrant. It would have financed 1,250 female emigrants, providing a significant increase in the free single female adult population of the colony. The assistance was initially noted as being a loan but subsequently corrected to “a present” of £8 to assist women emigrating.⁴¹ The funds were to come from money raised by the sale of crown lands in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. It was considered to be an investment in the future of the colony.⁴² In the Regulations made by the Commissioners, females aged between fifteen and thirty could be subsidised for emigration where they were accompanied by family members, while those unaccompanied had to be between eighteen and thirty and were obliged to await the readiness of a sufficient number to allow the Commissioners to “take up a vessel (into which no other passengers [would] be admitted for the conveyance of these Emigrants to

³⁸ *Dublin Evening Post*, 31 July 1824, 4.

³⁹ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6; *Scotsman*, 4 February 1832, 3; 14 March 1832, 2.

⁴⁰ HRA Vol. XVI, 408 - 416.

⁴¹ *Scotsman*, 14 March 1832, 2.

⁴² HRA Vol. XVII, xi.

their destination)".⁴³ Entire shiploads of single female emigrants would have attracted considerable attention in Britain and it is unsurprising therefore that a Manchester correspondent's letter of February 1832 was able to make special mention of assistance to unmarried females of good character.⁴⁴

An extract from a letter sent by a female emigrant to her friends in Glasgow may be considered to have vindicated the stance taken by Viscount Goderich and the Commissioners of Emigration.⁴⁵ She had arrived on 7 May 1833 and was married on 28 June the same year to a baker from the Carse of Falkirk. He had arrived in Sydney barely nine months before her but had already established himself in business and was doing very well. Pragmatically, the lady correspondent noted how "a good bargain is as well made in one night as in one hundred" and she was happy with the arrangement which they had made between themselves. The letter offered a positive view of matrimonial opportunities in New South Wales.

It is impossible to determine the situation of the lady correspondent before emigration, who came most probably from Glasgow, but if she had travelled as one of the beneficiaries of the Government scheme providing half the passage money, she would still have had to find at least £8 passage costs, possibly even more to cover travel to join the ship, plus other money for expenses on her arrival in Sydney. This suggests that she, or her family, may not have been entirely destitute or in the same desperate circumstances as some in Scotland at this time. Rather, she and they may have been of a class where her reports on the prices of housing and foodstuffs such as butchermeat (beef), mutton, green and black tea, and sugar would have been of interest to those even remotely considering emigration. This would allow comparisons to be made of conditions in the colony *vis a vis* those in Scotland. The report on the wages which she described as obtainable by various classes of tradesmen would also have been of interest to those in Glasgow where her friends lived and also in the area reached by the *Inverness Courier*. This suggests a reason for the letter's inclusion in that publication. The prices of food are mostly consistent with those quoted by other letter writers and it is worth noting that interest in

⁴³ Regulations, Colonial Office, 1831. In HRA Vol. XVI, 409.

⁴⁴ *Fife Herald*, 9 February 1832, 6; *Scotsman*, 4 February 1832, 3.

⁴⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 21 May 1834, 4.

the price of food was not confined to either gender, with both seeing fit to cite actual details of prices of basic items. Where a gendered note does appear is in the comment on the behaviour of women in the colony. These “think nothing of running away from their husbands for a fortnight at a time”. This was a comment not made by many of the men whose letters have been discussed already in this study although one earlier correspondent had commented on the apparently indifferent attitude to the sanctity of marriage in the colony.⁴⁶ The newly married lady from Glasgow also noted, unlike most male letter writers, the physical condition and health of the European children who were all very tall and slender. Healthy conditions for children would have been of interest to parents in Scotland where children faced a serious risk of illness or death.⁴⁷

A letter from Sydney, dated 27 July 1836 and appearing in the Scottish press in December of that year was from among the many men discomfited by the lack of a wife.⁴⁸ He even suggested that his correspondent at home might be required to undertake a commission to send one out to Sydney for him. Certainly, single women contemplating emigration in search of a husband might have drawn comfort and confirmation from the comments of this professional man in Sydney whose search for a wife appears to have been sincere and so far, unsuccessful.

The desperate need for more migrant women in the colony was repeated in a long item in the *Caledonian Mercury* in 1838.⁴⁹ The article praised the prospects for sober hard working young men with at least a small amount of capital. It drew much of its material from a booklet recently published by David Waugh.⁵⁰ Almost all of a recent shipload of 350 females had been married, engaged or hired as servants within a week or so of

⁴⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

⁴⁷ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level/table1-le-1861-2013.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 14 December 1836, 4.

⁴⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4.

⁵⁰ Waugh, *Three years' practical experience*.

arrival.⁵¹ The five hundred thousand surplus females of Great Britain mentioned by Waugh may well have been encouraged by the marital prospects in the colony.

In the newly settled colony at Port Phillip, according to a letter in the *Inverness Courier* of 17 April 1839, decent young industrious women were greatly wanted and could expect to earn £20 a year. While this was not stated it was likely that marriage prospects could be counted on as well.⁵² In May and June 1836 Police Magistrate George Stewart had counted the white population in and around what was to become Melbourne and showed a total of 142 males and 35 females. Later that year, in October and November 1836, Constable James Dwyer concluded a census which showed a total of 186 male Europeans and 38 female Europeans.⁵³ While there is some discrepancy between the two counts, the ratio of males to females in the European population was consistent at between four and five males for each female. An unmarried woman in Scotland willing to emigrate to the new colony would have been very pleased with the information in this letter, particularly the report of good marriage prospects in the colony.⁵⁴

Although much of Robert Battley's letter copied in the *John O'Groat Journal* in November 1844 was rambling, self-contradictory and sensationalist, there are some scattered areas where readers may have gleaned some information even if it were at variance from other reports.⁵⁵ He claimed that women were plentiful in the colony, citing both early marriages and amazing fecundity, apparently due to the climate and general living conditions. Early marriages would not have seemed remarkable to readers in the Highlands. Poor law reform campaigner Dr Alison observed that "early and improvident marriages are more complained of [in the Highlands] than in any other part of Scotland"

⁵¹ 'Emigration to New South Wales. Experiences of a Settler'; *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4.

⁵² *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2.

⁵³ Michael Cannon and Ian MacFarlane (eds) and Victoria Public Record Office, *Historical Records of Victoria*, Foundation Series, Vol. Three 'The Early development of Melbourne' (Melbourne, Victorian Government Printing Office, 1984), 419.

⁵⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838, 4.

⁵⁵ *John O'Groat Journal*, 22 November 1844, 2.

although Battley's claim that women married in the colony at the age of twelve or thirteen may have been difficult for Scots to accept.⁵⁶ Earlier correspondence from Australia appearing in the press in Scotland often cited a serious gender imbalance but by 1844 Battley was satisfied that this was insignificant. His own daughter had married well in the country and never intended to return to Britain, although his wife longed for home. While Battley believed that by the mid-1840s European women were plentiful in the colony, this view was not universal and official population statistics show that he was incorrect.⁵⁷ Indeed, a man writing from Murrurundi in February 1845 commented on the ongoing shortage of potential partners for many of the men in the colony.⁵⁸ He suggested that a good matrimonial speculation existed for a number of young ladies who would, by migrating to New South Wales, save the men there the trouble and expense of travelling home to get married and his comments would have been noted by potential emigrants, both male and female.

In his letter, Battley described the treatment of Indigenous women by their men in negative terms and his general descriptions overall of the behaviour and habits of the Aboriginal people were in derogatory terms. He reported that some of the bushmen were said to "keep young women savages - fine limbed girls, but with very ugly faces".⁵⁹ As so often happens in a war, the women of a conquered people "are assumed to become the property of the conquering. Just as the invading colonists saw Aboriginal land as theirs for the taking, so too they assumed they could do as they wished with Aboriginal women".⁶⁰ In printing without comment Battley's remark about bushmen keeping young women, the *John O'Groat Journal* while not actively endorsing the practice, took no stance on the matter and gave no suggestion to its readers that there was anything amiss with this attitude.

⁵⁶ W. P. Alison, 'Notes on the Report of the Royal Commissioners on the Operation of the Poor Laws in Scotland, 1844', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. 7 No. 4 (Dec. 1844), 318.

⁵⁷ Cannon and MacFarlane, *Historical Records of Victoria*, 419.

⁵⁸ *Aberdeen Journal*, 20 August 1845, 2.

⁵⁹ *John O'Groat Journal*, 22 November 1844, 2.

⁶⁰ Larissa Behrendt, 'Consent in a (Neo)Colonial Society: Aboriginal Women as Sexual and Legal 'Other'', *Australian Feminist Studies* Vol. 15, Issue 33, 353-367.

It is important to contrast the different attitude to white men keeping young Aboriginal women with the outrage expressed when there was a report of a white woman being kept among the Aboriginal population. Although recent scholarship has almost totally disproved the story of the White Woman of Gippsland being held as a captive by the Gunai Kurnai people and shown it to be a myth, “searches [in the 1840s] for the White Woman provided a justification for the practice of driving Aborigines further from white settlement or killing them”.⁶¹ There were clearly two standards prevailing. The idea that some of the bushmen kept young Aboriginal women was acceptable but even a remote possibility of a single European woman being held by the Gunai Kurnai was sufficient to spark formation of search parties and further massacres of the Indigenous population. Julie Carr has argued that “speculation and anxiety about a possible female captive among Gippsland Aborigines both legitimated acts of violence against them and justified further dispossession”.⁶² It is likely that the rumours of this captive, who was thought to be one of only a very small number of white women in Gippsland, were used to justify, if justification were thought necessary, further outrages against the Indigenous population.

Although the article on page 2 of the *Banffshire Journal* of 13 April 1847 was composed from newspapers from the colony of New South Wales and not from letters sent from there, it has been included in this study because it continues the narrative of a number of issues raised earlier in published letters.⁶³ Critically, the census figures for Europeans in the colony in 1846 had revealed that there remained a serious gender imbalance in the colony and to remedy this, on crude figures, “nearly thirty-eight thousand females were required”.⁶⁴ While there had been a slight improvement over the previous five years, a significant gap remained. It reflected the concerns expressed by, for example, the writer of an earlier letter in the *Inverness Courier* who had written that

⁶¹ Kate Darian-Smith, ‘The White Woman of Gippsland: A Frontier Myth’, in Kate Darian-Smith, Roslyn Poignant and Kay Schaffer, Kate Darian-Smith (ed.) *Captured Lives: Australian Captivity Narratives*. (London: Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1993), 25.

⁶² Christina Twomey, review of Julie Carr, *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend*, in *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, No. 10 (2001), 184-5.

⁶³ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

I have already mentioned that a bachelor's life in Sydney is not the most agreeable, and its discomforts, together with the prospect of being left quite alone, perhaps tend to lead me to think on this subject. If chance would throw a wife in my way, it might alter all these intentions; but of this I see very little prospect, as ladies are very scarce here...⁶⁵

While some who wrote from New South Wales had expressed dismay at the morals and behaviour of some of the women in the colony, there was a generally accepted belief that a man with a wife was less likely to waste his wages by drinking. In many cases also, the wife of a shepherd could act as hut keeper and some pastoralists saw this as an opportunity to save on wages. Efforts to redress the imbalance remained a matter of serious concern to the colonial administration and items in the Scottish press such as that in the *Banffshire Journal* of 13 April 1847 would have been noted by prospective emigrants. In Melbourne, in an ongoing effort to correct the imbalance, a government notice of 9 September 1847 advised that exiles who wanted to bring out their wives and children could apply to the Superintendent's Office for their conveyance to the colony⁶⁶. This required payment of a fee of £10 each for a wife and child above 14 years of age and half that fee for each child under 14. The marriage prospects for single Scottish women continued to be good well into future decades. Catherine Dickson, a domestic servant had left Scotland in about 1846. "14 years later she recommended Victoria to her girlhood friends – Tell them they will all get married if they come out here. Cripple ones, deaf and dumb females, all get married over here."⁶⁷

A settled society

Although Sydney in 1820 was still recognised as a convict settlement, there were traces of the trappings of a settled society appearing in the letters in the Scottish press. Writing home to his wife to encourage her to join him, convict Edward Turner suggested that if she could bring the works of an eight days' clock it would fetch a good price in the

⁶⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 14 December 1836, 4.

⁶⁶ "Exiles" is the term which was then current for convicts. *Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser*, 15 December 1847, 4.

⁶⁷ Richards, 'Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914', 137.

colony.⁶⁸ This suggests that for some residents, there had started to appear some of the touches of a settled domestic scene in the colony where there was money to spend on these significant but not vitally important touches. Even at this relatively early stage of settlement, this suggests an advance on earlier times and would have been noted as an encouraging sign by those reading this letter.

A different level of colonial society from a convict's correspondence produced a letter to a gentleman in town and printed in part by the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* in March 1821, together with some additional comments gleaned from the Sydney press.⁶⁹ The letter had been sent by Charles Throsby, a surgeon, settler and explorer reporting his journey in search of more land for settlement. In case those contemplating moving to the antipodes were concerned about a lack of suitable society and companionship in the colony, the *Journal* assured its readers that many respectable settlers had lately arrived. Moreover, 120 gentlemen had dined recently at the Governor's table on 4 June to celebrate the birthday of King George III. Finally, the letter advised the newspaper's readers that a wide range of commodities from India and European items for domestic consumption were readily available. These were at prices either lower than in Britain — those from India — or only slightly above prices expected at home. The newspaper article would have been of interest to those responsible for both business and domestic management in family units. Those concerned for some of the comforts of a civilised life may have been further heartened to learn also that by 1831 imports to New South Wales included Cape wines, tobacco, India calicoes, nankins, silk, sugar, and teas to a value of about £250,000.⁷⁰

A comment in a letter in the *Fife Herald* in October 1838, reprinted from the *Dumfries Courier*, may have been of interest to those reading it in southern Scotland and perhaps particularly in Dumfriesshire.⁷¹ The writer noted that on the road from Hobart to New Norfolk macadamization had been introduced to good purpose enabling good coach

⁶⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

⁶⁹ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 March 1821, 4.

⁷⁰ *Scotsman*, 14 March 1832, 2.

⁷¹ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

connections between the two centres. John McAdam would have been considered as a local man in south west Scotland and by the mid-1830s the advantages of macadamized roads were appreciated by readers of the local Scottish press. Rev. John Yorstoun of the parish of Torthorwald, synod of Dumfries, writing for the NSA in December 1833 commented how the “system of making and repairing the roads with broken stones, as introduced by Mr Macadam, prevails universally here”.⁷² It would have been reassuring to note that relatively modern developments in engineering were being practised in the colony.

Even in the relatively recently settled colony of South Australia, sufficient society existed that a public dinner could be offered to Joseph Hawdon. This acknowledged his pioneering drive of a mob of cattle from New South Wales to Adelaide and his reception by the Governor. Hawdon’s arrival in Adelaide was noted in, for example, the *Caledonian Mercury* in December 1838.⁷³ Scottish cattlemen may well have been surprised had they been told at the time that as well as being successful in the endeavour, Hawdon had, the day following his arrival in the colony of South Australia with his beasts, dined with Sir John Hindmarsh, the new colony’s Governor. From what is contained in Hawdon’s letter in the *Caledonian Mercury*, it is clear that this letter was composed in response to a direct request from the Governor for details of the journey.⁷⁴ It would have been unusual for a drover from the Highlands or Lowlands of Scotland to have been so feted. Most drovers, having completed their task, simply had to find their own way home and either seek employment or work their own small holdings until their next assignment. Instead, the trappings of a settled society were appearing even in the new colony of South Australia and this would have been recognised by readers in Scotland and provided some reassurance for potential emigrants.

A letter from a correspondent newly arrived in the colony, sent to a gentleman in Edinburgh claimed that George Street, being the chief street in Sydney would bear

⁷² NSA Vol. 4, 34-5.

⁷³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 December 1838, 4; also *Fife Herald*, 20 December 1838, 4.

⁷⁴ ‘The Overlanders’, <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1322> accessed 12 March 2018.

comparison with most towns in Scotland, except Glasgow.⁷⁵ Although a photograph of George Street, Sydney which is held in the National Library of Australia collection is dated to about 1860, some twenty years after this letter appeared in the Scottish press, the quality of the stone buildings in the street is obvious and supports the claim.⁷⁶ The comments on the nature of the town of Sydney, being “not closely built”, may well have appealed to the gentleman in Edinburgh. In the Scottish capital, the closeness of buildings in the Old Town had led to significant over-crowding and hygiene issues for many of its population.⁷⁷ Three great epidemics of contagious fever began in Edinburgh in 1817, 1826 and 1836, each continuing for nearly three years, and each of the last two affected nearly ten thousand persons.⁷⁸ As a town, Sydney was described in positive terms, standing in good comparison to almost every town in Scotland, providing a healthier environment for most and having good accommodation for shipping and hence commerce. This would be welcome news for anyone reading this account and contemplating a mercantile future in New South Wales.

On 24 February 1841, a correspondent identified only as “R.D.”, a native of Caithness who had emigrated lately to the colony of New South Wales, wrote from Melbourne, Port Phillip praising conditions in the colony and in Melbourne in particular.⁷⁹ The letter was published in the *John O’Groat Journal* of 13 August 1841. R.D. noted that Melbourne already extended upwards of two square miles and commented on the nature and quality of the buildings with merchant stores comparable to most of the large shipping ports at home. In Caithness where the *John O’Groat Journal* is still published, the largest town is Thurso. Melbourne had grown to a comparable size in only a few years since Batman’s acquisition of the site from the traditional custodians of the land. Thurso, as its Norse name indicates, was a town dating back to Viking times. In 1831 the population of the

⁷⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 10 July 1839, 4.

⁷⁶ See Figure 4 above.

⁷⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 10 July 1839, 4; Alison, *Observations on Management of the Poor*, 8.

⁷⁸ Alison, *Observations on Management of the Poor*.

⁷⁹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 13 August 1841, 3.

parish of Thurso was 4,679 of whom just over half lived in the town.⁸⁰ In Melbourne, the 1841 census for the colony showed Melbourne having a population of 4,479 even if the *Port Phillip Gazette* did comment on figures in the official return to the effect that “[i]f they are all as incorrect as Melbourne, the document is utter humbug”.⁸¹ The growth of Melbourne in the few years since its establishment appears to have supported the enthusiasm of R.D. for the future of the colony. His letter also commented on the growth in trade, citing exports of wool. He noted how many tradesmen had been able to become land and extensive stock owners, acquiring large fortunes before retiring and returning to the country of their birth to live out their days with their relations. It would have been welcome news for at least some of the paper’s readership.

In December 1841 the *Inverness Courier* reminded its readers that, when printing a letter in November 1840, it had hoped that the information in that letter was not generally true.⁸² It took the opportunity provided by a later letter, sent from Queanbeyan to correct the earlier misleading information. It is not apparent who the gentleman was who wrote the letter from Queanbeyan nor on which property he was resident at the time. Queanbeyan Palerang Council dates the establishment of European settlement in the area to the 1820s, with the commencement of a post office in 1836 and the appointment of a resident police magistrate in 1837.⁸³ A writer giving his address as Queanbeyan in April 1841 could have lived anywhere in the large region served by that post office. This area included the Limestone Plains properties owned by Robert Campbell. Campbell would have been one of the two men at whose expense it was reported in the letter published in December 1841 that a church was being built in the district. He is credited with having paid for over half the cost of the church of St John the Baptist in what is now the Canberra suburb of Reid. St John’s dates its commencement to 1841.⁸⁴ In reality, there were two

⁸⁰ NSA Vol. XV.

⁸¹ *Port Phillip Gazette*, Wednesday 29 September 1841, 3.

⁸² *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4; 4 November 1840, 2.

⁸³ <http://www.visitqueanbeyan.com.au/queanbeyan-history>.

⁸⁴ Margaret Steven, ‘Campbell, Robert (1769-1846)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-robert-1876/text2197>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 2 October 2018; <https://www.stjohnscanberra.org>.

churches being built in the area at the time, the other being Christ Church at Queanbeyan although construction of this latter was delayed due to the severe depression and financial embarrassment in New South Wales. Notwithstanding that delay, Bishop Broughton did consecrate both churches in March 1845 and the erection of these churches brought another element to the feeling of a settled society in what was still largely a frontier of European settlement in the colony.⁸⁵ Although both churches were for Anglican congregations, their construction provided further evidence of a growing society and this would have been recognised by readers of the *Inverness Courier* when considering the letter printed on 22 December 1841.

The *Banffshire Journal* noted briefly on 13 April 1847 that Governor Sir Charles FitzRoy, accompanied by Lady Mary FitzRoy had set out on a promised tour through the colony.⁸⁶ On 14 November 1846 with the Governor driving his own carriage, they had reached Bathurst and were greeted with enthusiasm. It would have been reassuring for readers of this item to know that the country was sufficiently settled that the Governor and his wife were able to undertake this tour to some of the outer reaches of the colony. If Lady Mary were able to travel there then the implication would have been understood that entire families could also travel securely within the colony, providing reassurance for potential migrant families.

Separation of the Port Phillip colony was the subject of a distinct mention in a letter from Melbourne that was published in May 1848.⁸⁷ It expressed the hope that independence from Sydney would prove of the greatest advantage. The letter suggested that, having its own seat of Government, the area's concerns and affairs would be more visible to the British public. The separation of the colony was realised shortly afterwards and proved that the former penal colony of New South Wales was acquiring the elements of a settled society with independent local legislatures. These legislatures were to remain in place after federation half a century later.

⁸⁵ See *Sydney Monitor*, 13 January 1841, 2; *Australian*, 22 May 1841, 2; *Sydney Herald*, 25 November 1841, 2; *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 26 November 1841, 2; *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 27 November 1841, 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 May 1845, 2.

⁸⁶ *Banffshire Journal*, 13 April 1847, 2.

⁸⁷ *John O'Groat Journal*, 26 May 1848, 2.

Children and education

Potential emigrants concerned for the welfare of children on arrival in the colony would have been reassured by the advice given in 1825 from Van Diemen's Land that fevers were almost totally unknown there.⁸⁸ The same held true for a long list of illnesses that afflicted children in Britain. This was ascribed to the healthy climate, similar to that of Britain but without the intense cold in winter.

Beyond the level of wages and decent rations for the times, what is important in a letter from a young Highland shepherd employed at *Bonawe* in New South Wales is the comment that part of the wages received was to be applied towards education for Dannie.⁸⁹ Education of the young had long been an important aspect of life in the Scottish Highlands, including through the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

The SSPCK ... was formed by Royal Charter in 1709 for the purpose of founding schools "where religion and virtue might be taught to young and old" in the Scottish Highlands and other "uncivilised" areas of the country. Their schools were a valuable addition to the Church of Scotland programme of education in Scotland, which was already working with support from a tax on landowners to provide a school in every parish.⁹⁰

Acts of Parliament had earlier ordained the setting up of a school in every parish in Scotland.⁹¹ Devine refers to this education of the young as the famous traditions of Scottish elementary and secondary education.⁹² It would have been important for potential emigrants to know that schooling could be available for their children even in remote areas given that special mention of education was made in this letter. Richards

⁸⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 2.

⁸⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

⁹⁰ <http://www.sspck.co.uk/page4.html> accessed 12 December 2017.

⁹¹ Grant, *The MacLeods*, 229, 240.

⁹² T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, a Modern History* (London: Penguin, 2012), 472.

has drawn attention to “the rapid growth of superior Scots schools in the colonies”.⁹³ The ongoing prominence of schools such as Knox Grammar School in Sydney and The Scots Schools in Albury, Bathurst and Sydney, or the Presbyterian Ladies’ Colleges in Sydney, Perth and Armidale are evidence of the importance placed on education by Scots who settled in Australia.

A letter from a female emigrant to her friends in Glasgow, dated from Sydney on 28 November 1833 commented on the health and growth of locally raised children in the colony.⁹⁴ This is reinforced by a man writing of Van Diemen’s Land a few years later who noted that “the native youth at 16 or 18 years of age have sprung up to be tall, thin, lanky plants”, reflecting imagery used of European children in the colony being known as corn stalks.⁹⁵ It must have been common to use such metaphors for children. A mention of healthy children raised in the colony is consistent with the lines quoted in the introductory remarks of the *Dumfries Courier* which had itself borrowed verses from *Lines on the Departure of Emigrants for New South Wales* by Scottish-born poet, Thomas Campbell (1777 – 1844).⁹⁶ Campbell had written how the difficulties and pain of departure could be compensated by the pleasures of raising children in a happy and healthy environment, well fed by “unborrowed bread”. Children in the colony, readers of the newspapers would have been assured, could expect to grow up well nourished.

A letter from Alex MacDonald, formerly a tenant of William Robertson, Esq. of Kinlochmoidart, Inverness-shire was quoted in the *Inverness Courier* in December 1850.⁹⁷ The paper described him as an intelligent Highlander writing from “Maneroo [Monaro], by Sydney”. While the MacDonald name would be a fairly common one, it is possible that he is the same person mentioned as Sandy McDonald, a shepherd on *Myalla*, owned since 1872 by Edward Pratt but which had been originally settled in about 1850.

⁹³ Richards, ‘Australia and the Scottish Connection 1788 – 1914’, 128.

⁹⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 21 May 1834, 4.

⁹⁵ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

⁹⁶ *Dumfries Herald*, copied into the *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4. A copy of the poem is contained in James Sheridan Knowles, *The Elocutionist, a collection of Pieces in Prose and Verse, etc.* (Belfast: William Mullan, 1831), 261 - 264.

⁹⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 18 December 1850, 2.

Myalla is near the village of Nimmitabel in the present Cooma-Monaro shire. Pratt recorded in 1872 that “Sandy McDonald is anxious to get a school in the neighbourhood.”⁹⁸ The identification of *Myalla* as being the location from where Alex MacDonald wrote in 1850 to William Robertson of Kinlochmoidart would be consistent with both the description of the weather in the area and the stated distance to the east coast of New South Wales. The concern of Sandy McDonald for the education of children in the area would also be consistent with the evidence in this 1850 letter that Alex MacDonald himself had received sufficient education to write such a coherent letter. Given the assurance from the *Inverness Courier* that apart from omitting some family matters it had otherwise left the letter untouched, it can be assumed that no editorial hand had intervened to improve grammar or expression. The letter as published was as it had been sent from Maneroo. Alex MacDonald and Sandy McDonald may have been one and the same person, or perhaps even father and son given the years between this letter and the note about Sandy McDonald wanting a school. Nevertheless, it is likely that at least some of those reading the *Inverness Courier* in December 1850 would have recognised the emigrant and been interested in and encouraged by his description of life and conditions in the colony and the prospects for families to do well.⁹⁹

Religion

There is evidence from the start of the period in this study that worship in a range of religious denominations occurred in the early colony and not just in the official state church, the Church of England. As he reported in a letter to his wife, convict stonemason Edward Turner was employed on cutting stone for building a Methodist Chapel, probably the one built in Macquarie Street Sydney on land granted by the Government.¹⁰⁰ It was completed in 1819 which is consistent with the timing of Turner’s letter to his wife. He wrote that religion was strongly patronised by the Governor and heads of the colony. This view was confirmed by a comment printed by the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* in March 1821 recording that duly qualified pastors had been sent out to the colony while chapels

⁹⁸ Quoted in Hancock, *Discovering Monaro*, 125.

⁹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 18 December 1850, 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4; <http://www.churchhistories.net.au/denominations/> accessed 8 January 2019.

for the performance of the Catholic rites of worship were then being erected at Sydney and to the north-west at Windsor.¹⁰¹

The identity of the missionary whose letter appeared in the *Perth Courier* in November 1821 is not known for certain.¹⁰² Almost certainly the writer was male, given the claim to ride several miles every week along a road at night. Regina Ganter has written of “the very first missionary”, William Walker from the Wesleyan Mission Society who arrived in 1821.¹⁰³ The letter in the *Perth Courier* was not by him since he arrived in the colony only on 16 September 1821 and a letter from him would not have reached Britain between then and 1 November 1821. Even if it could have done so, he would not have had time to travel into the interior of the colony and write that letter. It is likely instead that the missionary was one whose work involved him in the Native Institution at Parramatta and Ganter’s claim that Walker was the first missionary is wrong. The Institution, described as the first of its kind in the colony had been established by William Shelley, a Congregationalist missionary.¹⁰⁴ Shelley was appointed superintendent and principal instructor by Governor Macquarie under whose patronage the Institution had commenced in 1814. Shelley had died in 1815 leaving his wife Elizabeth to continue the work of the Institution until it closed in 1825. Macquarie had expressed the hope that “from the progress the Children [in the Institution] have already made, [it] gives me great Hope that it will ultimately pave the way for the Civilization of a large Portion of the Aborigines of the Country”.¹⁰⁵ The missionaries at the Native Institution were Anglicans, Methodists and Congregationalists but none of this suggests how a letter from one of them reached

¹⁰¹ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 March 1821, 4.

¹⁰² *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

¹⁰³ <http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/resource/earliest-missions-australia>; S. G. Cloughton, ‘Walker, William (1800–1855)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/walker-william-2768/text3933>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 June 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Niel Gunson, ‘Shelley, William James (1774–1815)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/shelley-william-james-2653/text3701>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 June 2018; Jessie Mitchell, “‘This Land of Barbarians’: Missions and Protectorates Begin.” *In Good Faith?: Governing Indigenous Australia through God, Charity and Empire, 1825-1855*, vol. 23, ANU Press, 2011, pp. 13–38. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24h7xh.6.

¹⁰⁵ Macquarie to Earl Bathurst, Despatch 18 of 1817, 4 April 1817, HRA Series III Vol. 9, 342.

the *Perth Courier* and none of this detail would have been known to readers of the paper. What is most likely is that the missionary was the Methodist Walter Lawry. Both Samuel Marsden and Lawry were active in the Parramatta area at this time and both were young enough that the writer's comment that "every week I ride during the night, several miles along a road ..." would fit either man. However, the writer mentions that "About three months since I penetrated across the Blue Mountains ...". If we assume that, with the letter being published in Scotland on 1 November 1821, it was probably written some six or eight months previous, that would put its composition at about March or April 1821 which then fits with Lawry having conducted the first Methodist service west of the Blue Mountains in the Court House at Bathurst on 29 October 1820. Lawry was Shelley's brother-in-law. The most which those readers would have learnt was that there were missionaries working to provide religion in the colony. This would be reassuring for readers concerned for the spiritual development of the colony.

The original St Stephen's Presbyterian church in Bathurst could claim to be the third Presbyterian church founded in Australia, with completion and opening mentioned in a letter sent from Bathurst and copied in the *John O'Groat Journal*.¹⁰⁶ The opening of the church in mid/late June 1835 was accompanied by an impressive sermon from the congregation's (second) minister, Rev. Kirkpatrick Dickson Smythe, a Dumfriesshire-born ordained minister, apparently known to his parishioners as "Parson Smith".¹⁰⁷ By that surname he was mentioned in the letter in the *John O'Groat Journal*. The existence of an established congregation of worshippers would have been well appreciated by readers of the *John O'Groat Journal* and considering emigration from an area where public worship was well attended.¹⁰⁸ While not immediately apparent to those still in the north of Scotland, the importance of this Presbyterian parish in Bathurst can be judged by its minister having been, uniquely among the clergymen in the colony from either the

¹⁰⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

¹⁰⁷ John Waugh, *St Stephen's Bathurst, 1832 – 1932: A Century's Retrospect* (Bathurst: St Stephen's Centenary Committee, 1932).

¹⁰⁸ NSA Vol. 15, 116; 127.

Established Church of Scotland or the Roman Catholics, granted a glebe of forty acres of valuable land by Governor Bourke.¹⁰⁹

The *Inverness Courier* reported in June 1838 that the Highland emigrants who had arrived in Sydney on the *Mid Lothian* were to “be settled in the same part of the colony, so as to enable them to enjoy the regular dispensation of the ordinances of religion in their native language”.¹¹⁰ This would have been reassuring news for Highlanders interested in emigration to the colony. The newspaper was not to know that the inducement of the Gaelic-speaking community having its own minister living and preaching among them had failed to materialise. For various reasons, it had been decided that the colony’s only Gaelic-speaking minister, Rev. M’Intyre, would be based in Sydney and would visit the other Gaelic communities from time to time.¹¹¹ This would allow those on *Dunmore* and nearby estates to have their spiritual needs met by regular sermons preached in English with a visit from Rev. M’Intyre perhaps once a quarter. Beyond this, the *Inverness Courier* and its readers were not to know also that the settlement of many of the Highlanders together had been the subject of official correspondence between Governor Gipps and Secretary of State Lord Glenelg.¹¹² Gipps reported considerable dissatisfaction being expressed in the colony about how the Highlanders had been allowed to become occupiers of land rather than agricultural labourers. Glenelg in turn denied responsibility for any “proposal by which the condition of these people on their arrival was to be changed ... [Of] the Circular letter written by Dr Lang to these Emigrants prior to their embarkation, I was entirely ignorant”.¹¹³ Further, the *Inverness Courier* was not to know also that in coming years the condition of the settlers at *Dunmore* would become the subject of acrimonious debate in the Sydney press and elsewhere.¹¹⁴ The

¹⁰⁹ HRA, Vol. 17, 226.

¹¹⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 13 June 1838, 4.

¹¹¹ *Colonist*, 7 March 1838, 2.

¹¹² Gipps to Glenelg, Despatch 114, 20 July 1838. HRA Vol. 19, 506-8.

¹¹³ Glenelg to Gipps, Despatch 253, 4 December 1838, HRA Vol. 19, 692.

¹¹⁴ See ‘Highland Emigrants - Australia’, a letter from S. M. D. Martin, M.D. in *Inverness Courier*, 24 August 1842, 3. Dr Martin had already sent this letter to the *Sydney Herald* and copied it to the *Inverness Courier*, defending the reputations of his Skye compatriots.

experiment of settling a number of emigrants from Skye was described as a cruel failure with the settlers having given three years labour to Andrew Lang besides incurring a debt to him of £2,000. All of this disappointment and bitterness was in the future and unknown to those for whom the potential for sermons in Gaelic could have been important when deciding if and where to emigrate.

Even before the 1843 disruption in the established church in Scotland, there were nearly 900 separate parishes in mid-nineteenth century in Scotland. Access to organised worship was therefore possible even if not always convenient for most in Scotland. To provide just one random example, the entry in the NSA for the parish of Pettie in Inverness-shire records that the “church is by no means conveniently situated for the greater part of the people, even for the parish of Pettie”.¹¹⁵ At least the parish had a church. By contrast, the Presbyterians in New South Wales, particularly beyond the principal towns, would rarely have had easy access to formal worship and the difficulties mentioned above for Gaelic speakers is indicative of the problem. The difficulties for Presbyterians, even in the towns, were highlighted in an article in the *Fife Herald* in October 1838 and elsewhere.¹¹⁶ The writer whose ‘Notes from Australia’ provided the base for the article recorded the presence in Hobart of two English churches, one Scotch church, together with Catholic, Methodist and independent chapels. An engraving dated during the time the writer had visited Hobart shows the presence of one church with a significant bell tower, an indication of its size and importance.

¹¹⁵ NSA Vol. XIV, 411.

¹¹⁶ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.



Figure 6: Hobart Town, Towards the Barracks, 1835.¹¹⁷

However,

[t]he Episcopalians claim their religion as the Established one, and thousands have been expended to nourish and support it, while other sects have been cast out of the pale of the Government bounty: but the able pamphlet of Mr James Thomson, A.M. has attracted the attention of the General Assembly to the injustice done to the *Kirk*, and it is hoped that at least an equal meed of justice will be done to Presbyterianism, the adherents of which are, in every sense of the word, as intelligent, upright, and industrious, as their neighbours who favour Episcopacy.¹¹⁸

Established places of worship may have been an important consideration for potential emigrants. For those whose strict adherence was to the Presbyterian forms of worship,

¹¹⁷ 'Hobart Town, towards the barracks', an 1835 print by Louis De Saison, available through <https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=191671&PICTAUS=TRUE> accessed 10 March 2018.

¹¹⁸ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

the article provided a cautionary note that their church was still struggling for equal recognition in the colony generally and in Van Diemen's Land in particular.

However, it does appear from a letter in the *Inverness Courier* in April 1839 and elsewhere that the township at Port Phillip, surveyed at a thousand acres of which two hundred had already been sold off, was portrayed as thriving with much of the personnel and other infrastructure needed for a new town already in place, even including a minister from Aberdeen.¹¹⁹ While the minister's denominational affiliation was not stated, his origins in Aberdeen suggested that he may have been a Presbyterian. If so, that minister was Rev. James Forbes and it would have been welcome news for potential emigrants to know that a Presbyterian minister was in residence so soon after the arrival of European settlers to support the spiritual needs of settlers in the district.¹²⁰

It is not clear if readers of the *John O'Groat Journal* of 1 June 1838 would have appreciated much of the full story behind the comment from Bathurst that "Rev. Dr. Lang from Scotland, arrived out here a short time since ... Since his arrival he has separated from the Presbytery, and ... formed a Synod distinct from the Presbytery".¹²¹ While the suggestion in the letter from Bathurst that Lang had just arrived in the colony could easily be mistaken for his first arrival, it was actually the arrival from Lang's fifth journey from Britain to Australia. Earlier arrivals had been in 1823, 1825, 1831 and 1834. It appears from his own newspaper that Lang voyaged in the cabins of the vessels rather than in steerage with the artisans and agricultural and other labourers he had recruited for the colony.¹²² Lang's name appears several times in the Scottish press after this date and the history of this multi-faceted clergyman has been told by others.¹²³

¹¹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2.

¹²⁰ E. L. French, 'Forbes, James (1813 — 1851)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/forbes-james-2052/text2547>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 18 February 2020.

¹²¹ *John O'Groat Journal*, 1 June 1838, 12.

¹²² 'The Immigration Ships', *Colonist*, 17 March 1838, 2.

¹²³ See for example, D. W. A. Baker, *Days of Wrath: a Life of John Dunmore Lang* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985).

Readers who had been following developments in the colony would have been aware that Lang had recruited a number of Presbyterian ministers from Scotland and from the Synod of Ulster to join him in New South Wales.¹²⁴ He had concealed from these recruits the state of affairs in the church as he had seen them until nearly the end of the voyage to the colony on the *Portland*. Lang's formation, in December 1837 and in conjunction with some of the newly arrived ministers, of a Synod of New South Wales separate from the Presbytery of New South Wales, placed his actions in the middle of what is memorably known as "The Ten Years' Conflict", terminating in 1843 with the formation of the Free Church of Scotland.¹²⁵ As well as ministers, Lang had also been actively recruiting Scottish migrant workers for the colony and may have been known as far north as Caithness, although many of his recruits were from Skye and other western parts of Scotland.

Subsequently, in reporting that the Synod of New South Wales had declared itself independent, the *Caledonian Mercury* was copying its article from Lang's own newspaper, the *Colonist*.¹²⁶ The *Colonist* was also the source of most of the earlier reporting on the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. That there was friction and dissension in the colonial church would not have come as a surprise to many of the readers in Scotland of the *Caledonian Mercury* or other newspapers reporting on the issue at this time.¹²⁷ The *Caledonian Mercury* had already noted how the discarded Presbytery had been left in possession of all State endowments in New South Wales.¹²⁸ The newly arrived ministers who had elected to join Lang in the new body therefore would have had to rely on voluntary contributions from their congregations for their support.

¹²⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 July 1838, 4.

¹²⁵ Rev. J. J. Stewart, *The Disruption Conflict and its Present Commemorators* (Geelong: E. J. Hall & Sons, 1893), 5. Also Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption with Extracts from the Narratives of Ministers who left the Scottish Establishment in 1843* (Edinburgh: MacNiven & Wallace, 1892).

¹²⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 June 1839, 2; *Colonist*, 29 December 1838, 3.

¹²⁷ See for examples articles in the *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 July 1838, 4; and 28 February 1839, 3; and *The Belfast News Letter*, 17 July 1838, 2; and 4 December 1838, 2.

¹²⁸ *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 July 1838, 4.

The *Caledonian Mercury* cast some doubt on the motives and actions of Lang.¹²⁹ It noted his claims that his intention had been to deal with the scandalously corrupt in point of discipline behaviour of the existing Presbytery of New South Wales, to which the new recruits had expected to belong. The newspaper recognised that Lang, with his new colleagues, should have been able to exercise democratic processes to force change on the body but had opted instead to split the church rather than to work around existing processes.¹³⁰ Lang had dismissed these processes as permitting miscreants to be shielded from discipline. Various parish reports for Caithness-shire indicate that there remained at this time almost total adherence to the Christian Church in its various forms and any discussion of matters likely to affect a potential migrant's ability to worship in an acceptable congregation could have been of great concern to readers of the *John O'Groat Journal*.

In a separate article, the *Caledonian Mercury* raised also the divisive issue of church governance and Erastianism.¹³¹ It claimed that the Episcopalian Bishop, Broughton, had attempted to have the newly constituted Synod proscribed by the Government. The issue of state control of the church, or its absence, had been a fundamental issue for Presbyterianism in Scotland. Dissent and division in the church in Scotland had already commenced by this time with the Veto Act of 1834.¹³² This Act had confirmed the powers of congregations to call their own ministers but it was now coming under attack, commencing with the situation in Auchterarder where the congregation's expressed views were set aside by civil courts.¹³³ In both Scotland and New South Wales, theological arguments were raised around the disruptions and schisms, and although the Disruption in the Church of Scotland is formally dated to 1843, by 1839 many members of the established church had already chosen to separate from it. The reports of Dr Lang's attempts to restore moral purity to the colonial Presbyterian church may have been

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 July 1838, 4.

¹³¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 February 1839, 3.

¹³² For a discussion of this Act in the UK Parliament see <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1840/may/05/church-of-scotland>.

¹³³ Brown, *Annals of the Disruption*, 20 et seq.

attractive and encouraging for some potential emigrants. It is difficult to determine or even guess at the likely effect which this division and dissension in the Presbyterian church in New South Wales would have had on those considering migration from Scotland to the colony and reading the reports coming out of Australia. For some, perhaps tired of in-fighting at home but concerned to continue to enjoy the accustomed forms of worship, the situation could have been of considerable concern.

It is possible, perhaps even likely, that the writer of a letter which appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* in February 1840 was among those who had migrated on the *William Nicol*, the *Brilliant* or the *Mid Lothian* from the west coast of the Highlands.¹³⁴ These emigrants had hoped to establish a Gaelic speaking enclave in New South Wales but some had not remained with the main body of settlers in the Hunter region. The link is drawn from the writer’s claim to be among a group of emigrants who had travelled to the colony “with the view of living near each other, yet we are already separated about 300 miles”.¹³⁵ This likely connection is reinforced by the comment that the writer had “now been for some time employed in this colony” since the letters concerning some of those emigrants on the ships named above had appeared about eighteen months prior to this letter.¹³⁶ It is also possible that the writer was among a group of passengers some of whose letters appeared also in the *John O’Groat Journal* in May and July 1840. At least one of these had sailed on the *Asia* from the east coast Cromarty Firth on 17 September 1838.¹³⁷

Certainly, some of the concerns expressed in this letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* in February 1840 are similar to those expressed elsewhere, with issues of the lack of sermons being preached or separation from friends and family added to a depressing account of life in the colony. The writer lamented that in the sixteen months since leaving home, in the colony where no regard was paid to “Sunday, week-day, God, or devil” s/he had heard only one sermon and did not expect to hear another until returning home, “if

¹³⁴ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2; 13 June 1838, 4; 18 July 1838, 2.

¹³⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 8 May 1840, 3; 10 July 1840, 4. For the story of the *Asia*, see also <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/?s=the+shipping+news>.

that will ever be”.¹³⁸ Preservation of the Sabbath is the third of the Ten Commandments and the strictures against Sabbath breaking would have been well understood by Scottish Presbyterians with the penalties for this being articulated in the Old Testament.¹³⁹ Some understanding of the effect which this lack of sermons might have had on potential emigrants reading this paper might be judged from the same page of the *John O’Groat Journal* on which that letter appeared.¹⁴⁰ Religious affairs, particularly the divisive issue of church patronage, were reported that same day in three separate letters or articles. The quality of ministers’ sermons was an important issue for members of the Presbyterian church and the lack of them could have been a serious consideration for potential emigrants.

The lack of a society of professing Christians in Port Macquarie, as reported by Andrew Ross in the *John O’Groat Journal* in July 1840 is not surprising.¹⁴¹ Port Macquarie was at this time still mostly a penal settlement but the assessment of the “stated parson of the Church of England”, Rev. John Cross, while accurate in remarking on the parson’s infirmity, does appear to have been lacking in charity.¹⁴² Again, however, it may have been a Presbyterian’s reaction to having only an Anglican minister available for spiritual support which influenced Ross’ attitude. The strength of colonial Presbyterians’ antipathy to other religions might be measured by an anecdote recounted by Prentis. He records that Johnnie Campbell, an Aboriginal named after a storekeeper, refused to act as guide for the Irish Roman Catholic Bishop of Brisbane on the grounds that Campbell was a Presbyterian.¹⁴³ If Andrew Ross had stayed in Sydney, then he may have had a different outlook. By contrast, a positive report was given in the *Inverness Courier* in September

¹³⁸ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

¹³⁹ Numbers XV, 32-36.

¹⁴⁰ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

¹⁴¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4.

¹⁴² See Herbert Marshall, ‘Cross, John (1781–1858)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cross-john-1937/text2315>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 4 July 2018.

¹⁴³ Prentis, ‘The Scots and the Aborigines’, 42.

1840 in a letter from a young carpenter from Nairnshire.¹⁴⁴ For those for whom having regular sermons preached in Gaelic was important and who stayed in Sydney, then these were available. Indeed, according to this later correspondent, since clergymen of all denominations were to be found in Sydney, spiritual support in a denomination of the worshipper's choice would be available. It might be noted however that there were no prospects suggested of suitable religious support in the countryside in places such as Port Macquarie. For any potential emigrant interested in moving to the countryside beyond Sydney but concerned to be able to continue worship in Gaelic, Ross' letter from Port Macquarie could have been a serious disincentive.

Sunday work is mentioned in a letter in the *Inverness Courier* in November 1840 in the context of the situation of shepherds recruited particularly from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.¹⁴⁵ In a later letter in the same newspaper, written from Queanbeyan more than a year later, the explanation for those not attending church services is stated very clearly in terms of the practical impossibility in a scattered population where there were for many no churches or ministers.¹⁴⁶ However, when referring to Sydney, that later correspondent claimed that the city was at least as quiet and orderly as in any Scottish town on a Sunday.

Desecration of the Sabbath is a theme often encountered in letters and articles of the period under consideration. It was, for example, the subject of an exchange of letters to the editor of *The Australian* in 1840, with "A Bank Clerk" writing about the practice of banks requiring their staff to work on Sundays to reconcile accounts and ledgers.¹⁴⁷ A reply from "Observer" a couple of weeks later suggested that the solution lay in the clerks working longer hours with the banks remaining open to their customers longer than the then-current twenty-seven hours spread over five and a half days each week, allowing the

¹⁴⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 9 September 1840, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

¹⁴⁷ *The Australian*, 21 April 1840, 3.

clerks to do weekly reconciliations on Saturday afternoon instead of Sunday.¹⁴⁸ In his *Historical and Statistical Account* Lang also mentions the issue of maintenance of the Sabbath in accordance with the Commandments and the likely causes of non-observance were dealt with in some detail.¹⁴⁹ In a pastoral letter written in 1855, Rev. Dr Mackintosh Mackay wrote that “it has long been the glory of Scotland, that its Sabbaths were hallowed and of the Presbyterian church, that wherever it has been planted it has especially honoured the day of the Lord”.¹⁵⁰ Questions concerning the observance of the Sabbath and implications for readers of accounts sent back to Scotland but contemplating emigration would have impacted variously on those readers. Whether it was significant or not depended to a large degree on the religious views of those readers.

An extract from a second of two letters printed in an article in the *Dundee Warder* in March 1841 concerned morality and religion, noting the bleak prospects for the colony if these were not given due attention.¹⁵¹ The Church of Scotland’s General Assembly had appointed a Committee for Promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Presbyterians in the British Colonies.¹⁵² In accepting the Committee’s report for 1839 it had authorised the Committee to seek out funds and potential ministers willing to emigrate to the colonies to minister to emigrants. The Committee’s report had noted with surprise and regret the division in the Presbyterian Church in Sydney resulting from the formation by Lang of a Synod distinct from the existing Presbytery.¹⁵³ In mentioning the Colonial Committee of the General Assembly in this letter, it is clear that the author of the article

¹⁴⁸ *The Australian* 7 May 1840, 4.

¹⁴⁹ John Dunmore Lang, *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales from the Founding of the Colony in 1788 to the Present Day (in Two Volumes)*, Volume I (London: Cochrane and McCrone, 1834), 17, 18, 34, 228; *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Mackintosh Mackay, *Pastoral Letter from the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria: to the members, adherents, and families of the several congregations; and to all the members, adherents, and families of their church, throughout the colony of Victoria*. (Melbourne, 1855).

¹⁵¹ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

¹⁵² *Report of the Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for Promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Presbyterians in the British Colonies, 23rd May 1839, and Deliverance of the Assembly* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone printer, 1839).

¹⁵³ *Report of the Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 6,7.

in the *Dundee Warder* was well informed of both the workings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the difficulties in attracting suitable ministers to the colony.¹⁵⁴ In printing this extract which encouraged the public to provide funds, and probationers to offer their services as ministers in the colony, the *Dundee Warder* was in effect supporting the work of the General Assembly. It was also acknowledging the serious situation for the vast numbers of young men in the countryside in New South Wales without access to religious support. Whether this would have been a serious consideration for young men seeking their fortunes in the colony is uncertain.

On Tuesday 27 March 1849, the Free Presbytery of Stirling unanimously nominated Mr P. Drummond, Seedsman, a ruling elder, to be a Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland.¹⁵⁵ Drummond was a regular writer to the *Stirling Observer* and had a particular interest in strict observance of the Sabbath. It is not surprising that he chose to pass to his local newspaper a letter from a near relative residing in New South Wales, a colony described as being a place “where the means of grace are scarce”.¹⁵⁶ It is likely that the near relative was P. Drummond of Geelong who was notified as being one of those in 1846 selling the new publication the *Port Phillip Christian Herald*.¹⁵⁷ That newspaper was described as having as its mission the inculcation of Gospel truths and was to be published weekly on Saturday to be available for reading on Sunday.¹⁵⁸ “Presbyterians themselves ... will on no occasion conceal these principles [of the Scottish Reformation], and when they deem it necessary, will expound and enforce them” that newspaper proclaimed.¹⁵⁹ Whether Drummond of Geelong was the writer of the letter of 18 November 1848 from which extracts were published in Stirling on 31 May 1849 is not certain. However, the behaviour of that writer in enforcing upon his neighbour in Sydney, a cabinetmaker originally from Dundee, the strict

¹⁵⁴ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Stirling Observer*, 29 March 1849, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Stirling Observer*, 31 May 1849, 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*, 11 February 1846, 4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*, 11 February 1846, 4.

observance of the Sabbath, is consistent with the principles espoused by the *Port Phillip Christian Herald* and by Drummond of Stirling. Some readers of the *Stirling Observer* may indeed have been encouraged by reports of strict Sabbath observance.

The letter from Seedsman Drummond's relative presented a mixed view of the conduct of the citizens in the colony when it came to Sabbath observance.¹⁶⁰ Citizens were described as having taken up profane habits and working on Sundays, with one gentleman actively seeking reapers to work for him on a Sunday. That gentleman, having failed to recruit Sunday workers, resorted instead to sailing and was drowned. The report implied that this was a punishment for his attempt to desecrate the Sabbath. Other readers may have been encouraged to note that although the Scots in general were counted as being among the worst of the Sabbath violators, Highlanders were mentioned as those who did not reap on Sundays. This would have been a reassuring attitude for those who, like Drummond of Stirling and Drummond of Geelong, believed that no work should be undertaken on the Sabbath. This reassurance suggests that while grace may have been scarce in New South Wales, fundamental Presbyterian principles were still to be found being actively observed at least in the Port Phillip colony and emigrants would not find a colony totally devoid of Christian principles.

A letter sent from Yass in April 1850 concluded with a damning commentary on Rev. Lang whose career was not without controversy.¹⁶¹ The writer noted that Lang had been given a good reception in visits to Britain, although in the opinion of the letter writer, this was unfortunate. Lang had asserted that he had aimed to promote the best interests of the colony of New South Wales by promoting the emigration of reputable families and individuals to its territories.¹⁶² The writer from Yass mentioned particularly Lang's Moreton Bay Emigration scheme, which involved three ship loads of emigrants. On arrival in 1849, these emigrants had found that the colonial authorities had refused to honour Lang's assurances that they would be given land grants.¹⁶³ An assessment that

¹⁶⁰ *Stirling Observer*, 31 May 1849, 4.

¹⁶¹ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3; See various references above concerning Lang.

¹⁶² Lang, *Historical and Statistical Account*, Volume I, vii.

¹⁶³ A. G. Davies, 'Immigration and the Immigrant Ships (Moreton Bay)', paper read at a meeting of the

Lang had been reckless of the interests of others would appear to be justified. The writer noted that as a result of his failed endeavours, Lang was trying to excite the colony to rebellion and separation from Britain. In his assessment that Lang would find greater influence in Melbourne than in Sydney, the Yass correspondent appears to have shown considerable perspicacity. Lang's 1857 book calling for independence for the Australian colonies was dedicated "to the inhabitants of the colony of Victoria, as being likely to take the initiative in the great national movements of the Australian future".¹⁶⁴ It was in Sydney that Lang had led the creation of a Synod of New South Wales, separate from the existing Presbytery of New South Wales, and where he would be more closely known than in Melbourne. The strength of emotion expressed by the sheep farmer at Black Range near Yass suggests that he followed closely the progress of Presbyterian affairs in the colony. He declared that his language was "rather warm, but it is not half what I feel".¹⁶⁵ It is likely that British readers would have been surprised at this local reaction to Lang who enjoyed a high profile during his many visits there. However, whether it would have sounded a warning about the state of religious affairs in the colony is difficult to assess.

Relations with the Aboriginal people

By the time a letter from a professional gentleman in New Norfolk to his sister in Scotland appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in early 1824, the occupation of Van Diemen's Land by British settlers had been proceeding for twenty years.¹⁶⁶ This official settlement was preceded by the activities of sealers, whalers and others exploiting maritime resources, particularly on a seasonal basis.¹⁶⁷ Inevitably, this had led to clashes between the Indigenous population and the incoming Europeans. "The height of the conflict was between 1824 and 1834, when increasing areas of land were being exploited by sheep farmers. ... Specific revenge killings progressed to general attacks on the British

Historical Society of Queensland, 26 March 1935, 306-8.

¹⁶⁴ John Dunmore Lang, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia; the Rights of the Colonies, and the Interests of Britain and of the World* (Sydney: F Cunningham, 1857).

¹⁶⁵ Montrose, *Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 8 November 1850, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

¹⁶⁷ James Boyce, 'What business have you here?' in Perkins and Langton, *First Australians*, 73-4.

as a whole”.¹⁶⁸ Yet this quite extensive letter from New Norfolk to the writer’s sister, which occupies seventy-eight lines of type in a single column of newsprint, makes absolutely no mention of the Aboriginal population and the inter-actions between the two communities. It is unclear whether the omission was deliberate to avoid worrying a dear sister. Perhaps it reflected attitudes similar to those responsible for the incoming flocks of sheep who cleared entire communities from the land in Scotland. Either way, readers of the *Inverness Courier* would not have been troubled by any reports of conflict.

A letter from Manchester was dated 5 March 1832 and appeared in the press shortly thereafter.¹⁶⁹ It makes only passing, and insulting, mention of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia even if that mention was unlikely to attract censure by the standards of the time. The correspondent wrote that “Here [in New South Wales], where forty-four years ago, no human voice was heard, with the exception of the bellowing of the savage in the desert, we now have from 60 to 70,000 happy inhabitants”.¹⁷⁰ Whether this brief mention in 1832 would have attracted much attention from readers is unclear but it was clearly not intended to have been of concern to prospective settlers. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, how other newspapers such the *Caledonian Mercury* reported seven years later the massacre in 1838 of a group of Aboriginal women, men and children at Myall Creek by white settlers.¹⁷¹ In outraged and graphic terms, the *Caledonian Mercury* at that time reported the cold-blooded massacre of the group of Aboriginal people, without any recognition of any earlier derogatory reports of bellowing by “the savage in the desert”.

An aspect of a letter in the *Inverness Courier* in May 1832 which is perhaps unusual for the time is in the comment on the report concerning the Aboriginal population.¹⁷² It reported that the “aborigines are described as a hardy, enatic race, idle but harmless”. The comment is brief and typical of those of the period, and consistent with the views

¹⁶⁸ Ann McGrath, ‘Tasmania: 1’ in Ann McGrath (ed.) *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 316.

¹⁶⁹ *Scotsman*, 14 March 1832, 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 June 1839, 2.

¹⁷² *Inverness Courier*, 16 May 1832, 3.

expressed elsewhere at this time about the Aboriginal people being both harmless and idle. That they were described as an enatic race suggests an understanding, however superficial, of some aspects of the nature of Aboriginal society and family structures. The explanation of an enatic society may have resonated with readers of the *Inverness Courier* in 1832. Despite the years of efforts by the Government in London since 1746 at the end of the Jacobite risings to destroy the Highland way of life and clan systems, remnants of a clan and family social structure remained. That another society, however foreign and different, was described as having a similar structure may have been understood by the readership of the *Inverness Courier*. The view in that letter that the Aboriginal people constituted an idle race was typical of views expressed by Europeans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Shino Konishi has explored the roots of the view that the Aboriginal people were idle and has demonstrated how it arose from a blinkered and non-informed perception by European travellers who totally failed to appreciate the nature of Aboriginal society, its gendered roles, and its culture.¹⁷³

Unusually among correspondence of the period, the writer of a letter dated 27 June 1835 commented on missionaries' efforts to convert and provide schooling for Aboriginal people.¹⁷⁴ The correspondent claimed not to have heard of "the Missionaries having made any converts among the blacks". Notwithstanding the collapse of Macquarie's attempts to operate a school for the native children, efforts continued in other quarters by missionaries, such as those involved with the Church Missionary Society's Mission to Wellington Valley, New South Wales from 1830 to 1842.¹⁷⁵ These missionaries at Wellington Valley are most likely to be those referred to in the letter.¹⁷⁶ With the opening of a Presbyterian church in Bathurst being reported in this letter, those in Scotland who

¹⁷³ Shino Konishi, 'Idle men: the eighteenth-century roots of the Indigenous indolence myth' in Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys, and John Docker, (eds) *Passionate Histories: Myth, memory and Indigenous Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁴ *John O'Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

¹⁷⁵ See Hilary M. Carey and David A. Roberts (ed's.). *The Wellington Valley Project. Letters and Journals relating to the Church Missionary Society Mission to Wellington Valley, NSW, 1830-45. A Critical Electronic Edition*. 2002. <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/research/publications/the-wellington-valley-project> (accessed 7 December 2017).

¹⁷⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

were God-fearing and contemplating emigration to New South Wales may have been reassured by the report of missionary efforts among the natives. This would be for the sake of the souls being converted and more pragmatically for the likely improvement in the safety of settlers. Like so much of the information provided by letters appearing in the newspapers, this detail would have formed part of a wider discussion of the state of affairs in New South Wales. The weight which would have been put on such information inevitably varied from person to person and reflected individual needs, priorities, opportunities and values.

Later correspondence dated 28 September 1838, almost certainly between the same writer and recipient, suggested that the missionaries' efforts to convert the Aboriginal peoples at Wellington Valley, were beginning to achieve the desired result.¹⁷⁷ Wellington Valley by 1838 had become more than just a missionary establishment. A painting in the National Library of Australia shows that it included a penal settlement as well as land taken up by pastoralists and other farmers.¹⁷⁸ Almost all of the extract from the letter of 28 September 1838 which the *John O'Groat Journal* chose to publish concerned the report of the Church Missionary Society's Mission to Wellington Valley.¹⁷⁹ It presented a very favourable account of the mission, and one which would have been of interest to a readership where, as suggested earlier, the promotion of the Christian religion was of some importance. It noted, for example, that during 1837 six children had been added to the mission family "given by their parents wild from the bush".¹⁸⁰ It commented on progress made in reading the Holy Scriptures, in attending Divine Service and in profession of faith. It is unclear however, how well this information might have been received by the Presbyterian members of the Church of Scotland had they known, as

¹⁷⁷ *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Augustus Earle, (1826). *Wellington Valley, New South Wales, looking east from Government House*. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-134496732>

¹⁷⁹ *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3.

¹⁸⁰ *John O'Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3.

reported in the *Colonist* in Sydney, that it was the episcopal rites of the Church of England which were being employed at Wellington Valley.¹⁸¹

Both the *Fife Herald* and the *Caledonian Mercury* printed on 20 December 1838 a letter from Joseph Hawdon to the Governor of South Australia following Hawdon's successful delivery of a large consignment of cattle from New South Wales to Adelaide.¹⁸² Hawdon's own *Journal* was not printed until 1952 but it recounts in considerable detail his party's encounters with the Aboriginal peoples through whose territories they passed. His letter to Governor Hindmarsh, however, mentions this only briefly, in three sentences. Anyone considering emigration and reading this brief mention may have been reassured by the report of only friendly intercourse between the local tribes and a party droving cattle through their territories.

A report from New South Wales was carried in a number of identified publications, and probably others as well throughout Scotland. It was carried more widely in the United Kingdom beyond the *London Observer* whose report was the source for at least the articles in the *John O'Groat Journal* and the *Inverness Courier*.¹⁸³ The report was of the massacre of a number of Aboriginal men, women and children at Myall Creek in New South Wales, and the subsequent trials in Sydney of the alleged perpetrators of the crime. This culminated with the execution of seven men who had been convicted of the killings. The Myall Creek massacre is the only such outrage discussed in detail in this thesis, even though many massacres are now documented. As the University of Newcastle states in its report on the project to document all of the many hundreds of massacres perpetrated on Aboriginal people, a "frontier massacre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people usually takes place in reprisal for the Aboriginal killing of a colonist, usually a male, in response to the abduction and sexual abuse of an Aboriginal woman, or for the alleged Aboriginal theft of colonial property such as livestock which have occupied Aboriginal hunting grounds".¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ *Colonist*, 27 July 1837, 6.

¹⁸² *Fife Herald*, 20 December 1838, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 December 1838, 4.

¹⁸³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 June 1839, 2; *John O'Groat Journal*, 21 June 1839, 3; *Inverness Courier*, 3 July 1839, 4. Also in *The Charter*, 23 June 1839, 16, and *Weekly Chronicle*, 23 June 1839, 5.

¹⁸⁴ <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/introduction.php>. Other coverage of the murders of

It is sometimes mistakenly believed that the trial and executions of the seven men convicted of the Myall Creek massacre was the first occasion when a European was executed for killing an Aboriginal person in the colony of New South Wales or its daughter colonies. However, Macquarie University's Law School cites the much earlier trial and execution in 1820 of John Kirby for the murder of an Aboriginal man, Burragong, also known as "King Jack". It records that

[t]his is the earliest record we have found of a European being convicted and executed for the murder of an Aboriginal native. This trial took place more than 30 years after British colonisation began, but well before the Myall Creek executions in 1838. There were a number of similarities to *R. v. Powell* and others ... but with a dramatically different legal result. Kirby was tried and executed not least because he was a convict and had killed an important indigenous chief and ally of the penal settlement. Ford argues that he was executed for his breaches of the protocols of diplomacy that existed outside the formal judicial framework, as much as for his breach of the law.¹⁸⁵

Like Kirby, the seven men executed for the Myall Creek massacre were all convicted felons. Charles Kinnaister, William Hawkins, James Perry, Edward Foley, Jas. Cates, John Russell, and John Johnson had been sent to the colony and had been assigned as stockmen or shepherds to some of the settlers in the interior.¹⁸⁶ Some of the convicted men had regained their liberty in the colony by service but others were still serving as convicts, albeit with the freedom of movement of those assigned to work as shepherds and in other pastoral occupations. In passing sentence on the convicted men, Mr Justice Burton said that he

Aboriginal people is in, for example: Michael Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?* (Melbourne: William Heineman Australia, 1990); Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St Leonards, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995); A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The question of genocide in Australia's history* (Ringwood: Viking, Penguin Books, 2001); C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Australian National University Press, 1970; reprint as Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1972).

¹⁸⁵ http://www.law.mq.edu.au/research/colonial_case_law/nsw/cases/case_index/1820/r_v_kirby/.

¹⁸⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 21 June 1839, 3; *Inverness Courier*, 3 July 1839, 4. The report in *The Australian* of 27 November 1838, 2, gives the names as Charles Kilmaister, James Oates, Edward Foley, John Russell, John Johnstone, William Hawkins and James Parry.

believed that all the prisoners had originally been transported and sent to a station, 150 miles away from any religious instruction — to where the ordinances of religion were never observed, if they were even thought of — and where they could give way to their uncontrolled feelings. He greatly deplored this.¹⁸⁷

The Scottish press reported the crime in outraged terms, with both the *John O’Groat Journal* and the *Inverness Courier* repeating the headline of an ‘Atrocious Massacre of Thirty Unoffending Natives of New South Wales’.¹⁸⁸ The details of the crime were recounted in full, with only the *Caledonian Mercury* attempting to limit itself to a description of the events. Other papers embellished the reporting with the full arsenal of Victorian hyperbole using words and phrases such as “cold blooded”, “barbarous”, or “monsters in human shape”. It is clear that any Scottish reader of the reports would be left in no doubt of the attitudes of the authorities in New South Wales or of the press at home towards those who sought to commit unprovoked murder of the Aboriginal peoples of the colony. Of the three reports being considered together here, however, only the *Inverness Courier* made mention of the earlier trial of these men which had resulted in their being acquitted and of the efforts by some sections of the Sydney press and other citizens of the colony to provide support and assistance to the accused men. That mention reflected also an item which appeared on page 2 of the *Sydney Gazette* of 20 December 1838 under the heading ‘The Aborigines’. This article had claimed that some in the colony had already resorted to poisoning the native tribes in their districts or shooting them as they would kangaroos.¹⁸⁹ The *Inverness Courier* also noted suggestions from the colony that the seven executed men had been acting on the orders of their masters. Although no evidence to this effect had appeared, “many of the stock-holders, some of them magistrates, joined in the contributions to defend their servants — a fact from which a conclusion the most appalling is drawn”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ http://www.law.mq.edu.au/research/colonial_case_law/nsw/cases/case_index/1838/r_v_kilmeister2/.

¹⁸⁸ *John O’Groat Journal*, 21 June 1839, 3; *Inverness Courier*, 3 July 1839, 4.

¹⁸⁹ *Sydney Gazette*, 20 December 1838, 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 3 July 1839, 4.

Prior to publication of the press reports of the Myall Creek massacres in New South Wales, the most recent legal case involving a trial for murder in an unequal contest and likely to be well known in Scotland would have been that involving Patrick Sellar in 1816.¹⁹¹ That trial resulted from actions which occurred during the infamous Strathnaver clearances when a pregnant woman fell from a roof and went into premature labour. In another incident an elderly woman remained in a house where the roof was about to be set on fire. Sellar's trial presented him as a "member of a powerful class, inured to legal proceedings owing to his experience as lawyer and Justice of the Peace and supported by the clergy and gentry. The implication is that from the start, the confrontation was unequal and the verdict could not be but biased".¹⁹²

The outcome of the trial in New South Wales, notwithstanding the comment in the *Inverness Courier* of 3 July 1839 that "many of the stock-holders, some of them magistrates, joined in the contributions to defend their servants", indicates a significant shift in attitudes towards legal protection of the weak from the powerful. Lt. Col. Munday, who had lived in the colony for several years wrote about how settlers and stockmen had moved to murder the Aboriginal populations in the countryside culminating with the infamous Myall Creek massacre¹⁹³.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the writer of a letter, dated from Sydney and appearing in the *John O'Groat Journal* in December 1840 may have been a remittance man.¹⁹⁴ This view of the writer is reinforced by the final paragraph printed in which the writer, having already mentioned his speculation in land on the Illawarra coast, commented on his lack of direction in New South Wales. He wrote of how, "after spending my time very unprofitably" he had travelled to New Zealand/Aotearoa in

¹⁹¹ Laurence Gourievidis, 'Patrick Sellar', *Études écossaises* 10 (2005) accessed through http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/148_75.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, 107-110.

¹⁹⁴ *John O'Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1. "'Remittance man' (formerly) an Englishman in Australia whose presence was no longer acceptable in England and who was supported by remittance from his family". *The Macquarie Dictionary*, second revision, 1982, 1438.

company with two young men looking about for a few weeks.¹⁹⁵ His comments on the native Maori population appear insensitive even by the standards of his time and patronising by today's standards. The remarks about the idleness of the Maori stand in stark contrast to those published in May 1840 by the local press in New Zealand which would have been based on more than an involvement of a few weeks.

The native population here are well behaved and useful, – the happiest relations having been established between them and us, through the mild and judicious conduct of Colonel Wakefield; and to our credit these relations have been maintained to the present moment. From all appearances, we think these natives bid fair to become civilized rapidly.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, the comments by the correspondent of 27 July 1840 concerning conditions in New Zealand do not stand up to comparison with those published in a rough journal of travel through part of the country by E. Jerningham Wakefield from March 1840.¹⁹⁷ While the correspondent to the *John O’Groat Journal* claimed that he and his companions could get “nothing better to eat than potatoes and pork”, Wakefield recorded in his diary that on 31 March 1840, in a *pah* called Te O, “[t]hey placed before me food of all sorts: the ovens having been filled immediately that I was perceived coming along the beach”.¹⁹⁸ It is also possible that the regular offering of potatoes and pork reflected a desire by the Maori to honour their guests with important foods and thought to be considered desirable by Europeans. These two food sources were initially the most important foods brought by Europeans to New Zealand.¹⁹⁹ Wakefield also recorded a meeting at Puki Rua with an idiot (sic) and described the encounter in some detail.²⁰⁰ The behaviour described is comparable to that described in the letter in the *John O’Groat*

¹⁹⁵ *John O’Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1.

¹⁹⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 May 1840, 2.

¹⁹⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1. ‘Letter to the Editor’, *New Zealand Gazette*, 9 May 1840, 3; 16 May 1840, 3-4; 30 May 1840, 4; etc.

¹⁹⁸ A Maori *pah* is a village, sometimes fortified with a palisade and gateway. Extract from the journal of E J Wakefield, in *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 May 1840, 4.

¹⁹⁹ See ‘Story: Kai Pākehā – introduced foods’, *The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/kai-pakeha-introduced-foods/page-2>.

²⁰⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 9 May 1840, 3.

Journal when a native “came into the house and licked our plates after we had finished”.²⁰¹ It is possible that the lack of dignity, if reported accurately, was in fact the behaviour of an isolated individual among the Maori, perhaps such as the idiot encountered at Puki Rua.

An item which is not a letter but which did appear in the Scottish press has been included in the study to attempt to correct a serious shortage of mentions in the press in the study period of the Indigenous custodians of the lands of New South Wales.²⁰² It is not clear why the *Glasgow Herald* has chosen to print this extract from *Wilkes’s Narrative*, although three weeks earlier on 3 February 1845 it had published another piece of curiosity from the same source when it had commented on the ‘Brazilian Law of Losing and Finding’.²⁰³ *Wilkes’s Narrative* was the report of an exploring expedition conducted between 1838 and 1842 under the command of Captain Charles Wilkes USN.²⁰⁴ The expedition, consisting of *Vincennes*, *Peacock*, *Porpoise* and *Flying Fish*, visited Sydney from 29 November to 26 December 1839. The publication *Wilkes’s Narrative* was not advertised for sale in either of the two editions of *Glasgow Herald* of 3 or 24 February 1845 so its mention apparently was not intended to boost sales of the *Narrative*.

It is also not clear why the *Glasgow Herald* chose to publish this particular extract from a book of about 400 pages. The report of the expedition’s visit to Sydney took over twelve pages of closely typed double column print.²⁰⁵ The extract copied here occupied approximately half of one column on page 124, or about a quarter of that page. However, the full report of the Aboriginal people recorded by Wilkes went from page 123 to page 126, or a bit over three full pages of text, much of it containing information and views of interest at least equal to that printed. Wilkes does not acknowledge the source of most of

²⁰¹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 11 December 1840, 1.

²⁰² *Glasgow Herald*, 24 February 1845, 4.

²⁰³ *Glasgow Herald*, 3 February 1845, 4.

²⁰⁴ Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., *Narrative of the United States’ Exploring Expedition, during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, Condensed and Abridged* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1845).

²⁰⁵ *Wilkes’s Narrative*, Chapter XVI, 116 - 128.

his information concerning Australia. Apart from reporting a visit to an agricultural exhibition in George Street where personal observations are recorded, it must be assumed that all his information was taken from others, second hand at best. The only clue available is that a missionary, “Mr Watson”, is mentioned and it may be that Wilkes has accessed information recorded by Watson, in either written or oral form. William Watson was a missionary of the British Church Missionary Society working at the Wellington Valley mission between 1832 and 1840 and this mission had previously been noted by the *John O’Groat Journal* on 15 March 1839. Neither Wilkes nor the *Glasgow Herald* on this occasion referred to any prior publication of matters at Wellington Valley. None of the Watson papers in the Wellington Valley Project at the University of Newcastle mention any contact with Wilkes.²⁰⁶ Although modern readers are able to access *Wilkes’ Narrative* and the Wellington Valley papers, almost certainly this would not have been an option for those in Scotland in 1845. In any case, the matter of interest here is what readers of the *Glasgow Herald* would have learned of the Aboriginal people of New South Wales from the views presented here.²⁰⁷

The article commented on the structure of Aboriginal society noting what would be described in twenty first century terms as an egalitarian society without hierarchy of positions or leadership. It also made it clear that attempts to jest at another’s expense would be misunderstood and could provoke a violent reaction: anyone likely to be in this situation should be careful to avoid giving offence in this way. The other message given here was that European approaches to work were either not understood or not appreciated by the Indigenous people. Any new arrival believing that a workforce of Aboriginal people could be employed by a new settler would be disappointed. The article claimed that the Aboriginal people were frequently timid or nervous about contact with the whites in the colony who could easily disperse large companies of the natives. This timidity was said to result in attacks on Europeans because of fright taken at the sudden appearance of the strangers. It was also said to result in unwillingness by people of one area to venture

²⁰⁶ <https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/cultural%20collections/the-wellington-valley-project/watson/>.

²⁰⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 24 February 1845, 4.

into the territory of others lest the incursion be viewed as a major transgression sufficient to justify attacks and death.

It is not clear whether this brief article would have satisfied any questions about likely contacts between newly arrived settlers and the Indigenous custodians of the land, or even whether many potential emigrants might have contemplated such contacts. At the very least, it would have helped to make any potential emigrants aware that the colony was populated not only by Europeans and that very different attitudes and standards prevailed in the two communities.

Migrants' networks

Modern writers on the Scottish diaspora have commented on the way in which many large groups of Scots banded together in their new countries of settlement to retain cultural and social links.²⁰⁸ The ability of at least some groups of Scots to retain these links would have been reassuring for prospective migrants.

Notwithstanding the comment by Malcolm Prentis that the Scots in Australia were highly dispersed, this thesis asserts that the possibility of finding an enclave of familiar society would have had some attractions for anyone contemplating emigration and reading a letter in the *Inverness Courier* of 8 January 1824.²⁰⁹ The writer of that letter, a professional gentleman in New Norfolk, Van Diemen's Land writing home to his sister, claimed that the nearby country was almost entirely occupied by Scots families.²¹⁰ Most of these had received large grants of land of a thousand acres or more. An immense number of settlers were arriving in Van Diemen's Land at this time and a great many of the immigrants were from Scotland. This would have been welcome and encouraging news for those considering emigration.

²⁰⁸ See, for example, "Wandering Scots" in Harper, *Scotland No More*; Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth*; Bueltmann et al, *The Scottish Diaspora*.

²⁰⁹ Prentis quoted by Fred Cahir in "The Songlines of the Scots in Australia", Fred Cahir, Anne Beggs-Sunter and Alison Inglis, (eds.) *Scots Under the Southern Cross* (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Series, 2015).

²¹⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

It was not only worker emigrants themselves, of course, who saw benefit in staying close together. Writing in 1837, Charles Campbell, son of Robert Campbell and at this time the proprietor of *Ginninderra* on the Limestone Plains, confirmed the engagement of James McIntosh and his two sons as shepherds with “the family to receive the same rations as my other Highland shepherds”.²¹¹ The passenger list of the *William Nicol* which sailed from Skye in 1837 reveals that McIntosh and six other families were recruited by Campbell to work on his property.²¹² They would have almost certainly formed a tightly bonded Gaelic-speaking community. Other passengers from that ship, however, may have been mostly separated from previous neighbours. Donald McKinnon, his wife and three children went to work for Sydney Stephen Esq. at Jervis Bay in the county of St Vincent on the south coast of New South Wales, accompanied only by Donald’s sister, a dairy woman. If potential migrants from among readers of the *Inverness Courier* of 8 January 1824 were concerned to remain in a familiar community then the letter printed on that day would have provided reassurance.²¹³ The later reality has been shown to have been less certain.

On Christmas Day 1832 in Sydney a letter was written to a gentleman in Leith and an extract from the letter was published more than nine months later in the *Inverness Courier*.²¹⁴ Almost certainly the letter would have been also published elsewhere, probably in a metropolitan newspaper such as the *Caledonian Mercury* or *The Scotsman* and copied into the more northerly newspaper but it is not immediately obvious where that was. Christmas Day in Australia, even with the seasons inverted, would have been a day for reflecting on family and distant friends, and almost certainly a day free of the usual round of work, leaving time for letter writing. It would also have been a day for reflecting on news from home, such as the calamities referred to in this Christmas Day letter: cholera and reform. Since reform was remarked upon as a calamity it gives an indication of the politics of both the letter writer and its recipient. *The Reform Act (Scotland) 1832* was passed by the UK Parliament at about the same time as *The Representation of the People Act 1832*, known as the first Reform Act or “Great Reform

²¹¹ Memo of Charles Campbell dated 2 November 1837, NLA, McIntosh, James, papers, MS 3995.

²¹² <https://www.ozigen.com/exhibits/passenger-list---william-nicol.pdf>.

²¹³ *Inverness Courier*, 8 January 1824, 3.

²¹⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1833, 4.

Act” which had seen a significant reform of the electoral systems of England and Wales. In Scotland, the Act expanded the electorate from 4,239 in the 1820s to over 65,000 after 1832.²¹⁵ This 16-fold expansion also increased the Scottish burgh representation in Parliament from 15 seats to 22, and for the first time, Glasgow and Edinburgh each elected two MPs. A man likely to view unfavourably the extension of the franchise may have envied the political arrangements in the colony. Those of similar political views reading this letter when it appeared in the press may also have envied the colonial political scene and been attracted to the possibility of being part of it. It would be some years yet before even limited suffrage would be introduced in New South Wales and readers of this Christmas letter in the Scottish newspapers could have reacted to the news that “we have had nothing of the kind” according to their own political stance, either being attracted to the colony because of its lack of suffrage or else disappointed in that lack.²¹⁶

The other calamity mentioned by the writer in Sydney, cholera, had caused its first fatality in Scotland on 23 December 1831, two days before Christmas. It would have inevitably weighed upon the consciousness of the correspondent in Sydney a year later, where happily there had been no outbreak of the disease. News of the incidence in Scotland would have reached the colony sometime in 1832. The Sydney correspondent who had friends and probably family in Scotland was not to know that cholera would re-appear in Scotland also in 1833 at about the same time as the letter from the healthy environment of Sydney was being seen in Scotland’s press. A report in the *Caledonian Mercury* of 3 October 1833 did claim great efficacy in changing “the state of the atmosphere” to prevent cholera spreading but notwithstanding this attempt at prevention and cure, there was cholera in many parts of the capital.²¹⁷ The gentleman in Leith who received this Christmas letter from Sydney, having cholera in areas all around him, may well have wished he were safely among friends in cholera-free Sydney, as indeed may

²¹⁵ ‘Parliamentary Reform and Extending the Franchise’, National Library of Scotland, http://maps.nls.uk/towns/reform/further_information.html accessed 24 November 2017.

²¹⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1833, 4.

²¹⁷ ‘Re-appearance of cholera’, *Caledonian Mercury*, 3 October 1833, 3.

have others reading this letter. It was a powerful inducement to emigrate to a healthier environment.

It is not surprising that a young shepherd from Inverness-shire had found employment with an Argyleshire gentleman on *Bonawe* in New South Wales.²¹⁸ The property from which the young shepherd had written was named for its owner's place of origin, at the other end from Inverness of the Great Glen in the Highlands. Like many migrant communities abroad, settlers from a region or nation often settled together and this is clearly what has happened here. In the case of those from the Highlands of Scotland, the common links were often religious affiliations and Gaelic culture and language. It is reported variously that at least some Highlanders spoke no other language. The advice in this letter that common links would be likely to ensure employment would have been encouraging for potential migrants.

The *Inverness Courier* printed on 22 December 1841 a letter copied from the *Glasgow Argus* and devoted one and a half columns, or a full quarter of its back page, to bringing to the public a refutation of a letter printed by itself on 4 November 1840, nearly fourteen months before.²¹⁹ The delay in this reflects the time involved in correspondence when official despatches, mail and newspapers to and from Britain went by whatever sailing ship was available to carry them. The HRA series records the name of the vessel by which each official despatch was carried showing how the carriage of mail was an almost ad hoc arrangement. Within the colony mail and papers to the more remote areas of European occupation sometimes went by bullock cart or other land transport and could take several weeks to reach areas like Queanbeyan on the Limestone Plains. So, a letter written from Parramatta on 5 June 1840 appeared in the newspaper printed in Inverness in November 1840, was read by a gentleman in the Queanbeyan area of the colony in April 1841, almost a full year later, and that gentleman's response appeared in a newspaper in Glasgow on 13 December 1841. It was finally published in Inverness nine days later to correct the earlier item. While this delayed correspondence would have been

²¹⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 1 November 1837, 2.

²¹⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4; 4 November 1840, 2; the letter of 22 December 1841 was said to be taken from *Glasgow Argus*, 13 December 1841.

accepted by readers of the newspapers at the time, it did serve to remind them of the distances and difficulties involved in maintaining contact with family at home in Britain.

An extract from one of a number of letters printed by the *Dundee Warder* in March 1841 is very brief.²²⁰ It gives little information except to explain how remote Port Phillip was from Sydney and even more so from Britain. As noted above in comment on a letter appearing in the *Inverness Courier* of 16 May 1832, the roads between the colony of Port Phillip and Sydney were very difficult, particularly on the part of the journey between Sydney and Yass. With the appointment in 1836 of John Batman as postmaster, Port Phillip gained its first official postal officer but mail between there and Sydney still relied upon the occasional vessel or a series of riders who passed bundles of mail along the route.²²¹ The letter writer's estimate of five or six months to receive a letter indicates that it would take up to a year between the despatch of a letter and the receipt of a reply, even though sailing times had been significantly reduced from the eight months it had taken the First Fleet to travel from England to New South Wales. Publication of the news of this timing would have helped to make potential emigrants aware of how isolated the colony was from those left behind. In most cases, a decision to emigrate would have included an acceptance that departure involved a permanent separation from family and friends unless these too were to emigrate.

Henry Paterson, a shepherd aged twenty-nine from Caithness had arrived in Sydney on 11 February 1839 on the *James Moran*, a ship of 600 tons which had sailed under Captain Ferguson with Dr McNee as medical officer.²²² It left Loch Inver and Loch Broom on 21 October 1838 and arrived at Port Jackson on 11 February 1839.²²³ When it arrived, 210 passengers disembarked, including infants born on the voyage. Some passengers had left the ship at Cape Town and a small number had died on the voyage. Most of the 229 passengers on board at the time of sailing were victims of the Highland

²²⁰ *Dundee Warder*, 23 March 1841, 1.

²²¹ National Archives of Australia, Fact sheet 50, <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs50.aspx>.

²²² Extracts from Paterson's letter to his uncle were printed in the *John O'Groat Journal* of 25 April 1845, 3.

²²³ http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4_4780/James%20Moran_11%20Feb%201839/4_478000098.jpg&No=1.

clearances. They came to Australia under a bounty scheme managed by Rev. Lang. It appears that Henry Paterson was employed on arrival by a Mr Pagan for £28 per annum with rations at *Dalswinton*, a property named for the birthplace in Scotland of its owner, Peter Cunningham.²²⁴ John Pagan, nephew to Cunningham was the manager for his uncle and fellow Scot. *Dalswinton* is in the Hunter Valley region, about 150 miles from Sydney.

It is not wholly clear where Henry Paterson had been for the four years or so before he wrote to his uncle from *Ulbster* noting that he had had few opportunities for writing but also suspecting that some of his letters had never been sent from Sydney.²²⁵ John Pagan had obtained a license for depasturing stock in the Gwydir district in 1838, beyond the boundaries of the colony at this time. It is likely that he had sent the young shepherd there on, or shortly after, arrival notwithstanding the engagement for *Dalswinton*.²²⁶ Gwydir today is in the very north of the state of New South Wales, adjacent to the state boundary with Queensland but in the early 1840s it would have been very remote from the settled parts of the colony. If this is where Henry was located, it would explain the lack of correspondence home in that time, particularly if any letters written were not sent on by those to whom they were entrusted for delivery to the postal services. This difficulty of communication could have been of some concern to readers of the *John O’Groat Journal* who would have been aware of the time taken for news of family and friends to reach across the world but could have expected mail carriage in the colony to be more reliable than was disclosed by a total failure spanning four years.

The messages about Paterson’s employment by the time he wrote from *Ulbster* were mixed. He wrote that, notwithstanding poor prices for cattle and horses, sheep continued to be the source of much of the wealth in the colony if properly managed and his then-current employer Sinclair had purchased 2,000 sheep.²²⁷ These were being managed by “Michael and his boys”.²²⁸ Michael Paterson, a shepherd aged 33 had also arrived in 1839

²²⁴ Cunningham wrote *Two Years in New South Wales*.

²²⁵ *John O’Groat Journal*, 25 April 1845, 3.

²²⁶ https://www.jenwilletts.com/peter_cunningham.htm.

²²⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 25 April 1845, 3.

²²⁸ *Ibid*.

on the *James Moran*, accompanied by his 26 year old wife, daughter and four sons.²²⁹ Although Michael Paterson was initially engaged to work for Mr Cowper at Werribee (now a suburb of Melbourne) for £20 per annum and rations, by November 1844 Henry Paterson with Michael Paterson and family, were working together on the property owned by James Sinclair. The shipping lists show Michael as originating from Alnwick in Northumberland, and Northumberland is where James Paterson, referred to in Henry's letter as his cousin, originated.²³⁰ The fourth Paterson named, William, was Henry's brother, also from Caithness, but employed in the Port Phillip district.²³¹ It is known that Henry and William were brothers, and it is likely that Michael and James were brothers, cousins to Henry and William. At least some of these men and their families were known to readers of the local paper in Caithness and were mentioned in the introduction to the letter's extracts. What the relationship of Paterson of *Borlum* was to Michael and James is unclear, but he was at least their uncle if not closer. It would have been reassuring for those reading this letter to learn that close family could sometimes remain together and at least could keep in contact even if scattered through the larger colony. All four men, having migrated as shepherds, were still employed in the pastoral industry in New South Wales with at least Henry and possibly William in managerial roles.

The extract of a letter printed on 31 December 1845 provides some additional evidence of a slight speeding up of mail between New South Wales and the north east of Scotland, since the publication appeared just under four months from the letter's composition.²³² In 1819 and 1820 it could take seven months between the writing of a letter and its appearance in the press, but by 1840 this had been improved to four months or so. Nevertheless, it would be recognised by those reading the *Aberdeen Journal* at the end

²²⁹

http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4_4780/James%20Moran_11%20Feb%201839/4_478000098.jpg&No=1.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹

http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4_4780/James%20Moran_11%20Feb%201839/4_478000099.jpg&No=2.

²³² *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 December 1845, 4.

of 1845 that communication with family, friends, and business associates still took some months to reach the intended recipients.

It may be a coincidence that of the three statements taken by Caroline Chisholm and presented in April 1849 by the *Inverness Courier* one is from a man (John Gillies) who apparently was or had been a shoemaker while the woman (Margaret Pringle) providing another statement was married to a shoemaker.²³³ A possible explanation may lie in the networks or links developed by Mrs Chisholm throughout the colony. She had for a number of years escorted parties of young women to new employers throughout the inland districts of New South Wales and Margaret Pringle from Nairnshire could well have been one of these.²³⁴ If Chisholm were collecting statements for publication, the networks of Margaret's husband William may have included a fellow shoemaker, Gillies. Gillies in turn would be able to recommend his Skye compatriot, Macguinness as another who had prospered since arriving in the colony. Macguinness, who provided the third of the three statements published by the *Inverness Courier* would possibly be known, in general terms at least, to some reading the accounts in the north of Scotland.²³⁵ Whatever the links, if any, between these three people providing statements to Mrs Chisholm, it would be clear to all readers that each had reached a standard of living and a future which would almost certainly never have been achieved by remaining in Scotland.

It is important to recognise the attachment to their native land and families maintained by emigrants. Rev. Clerk of the parish of Diurinish on Skye recorded that the population "feel a blind, and, therefore, a very powerful attachment to the rocks and glens amid which they were brought up - an almost invincible aversion to abandon them".²³⁶ This attachment is repeated in the statements by the men from Skye. Gillies commented that "[i]t is a critical thing to advise my relations to emigrate. Well I don't know what to do. I

²³³ *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

²³⁴ Judith Iltis, 'Chisholm, Caroline (1808-1877)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chisholm-caroline-1894/text2231>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 18 June 2019.

²³⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

²³⁶ NSA, Vol. XIV Inverness-shire, 344.

would like to see them. Oh! no, I would not like to advise them”.²³⁷ In his turn, Macguinness wrote that “I don’t like to advise my relations to come out; they might blame me if they did not like the country”.²³⁸ It is clear from these statements that each man felt a very strong attachment to his family and his native country. However, each man was reluctant to take responsibility for giving advice if that advice did not deliver the results which he himself had achieved in the colony. The *Inverness Courier* clearly had no such hesitation in advocating emigration by its readers and its strong advocacy had considerable potential to influence readers when deciding whether to migrate.

Writing in 1850 from the high plains of the Monaro, Alex MacDonald assured his readers that he avoided exaggeration in his praise for the colony.²³⁹ He noted his pain from the reports of changes, deaths and destitution which had occurred in his home country in his absence. The reality of the pain of separation would always have been a factor for those contemplating leaving, and the writer returned to it in the final published paragraph from the letter. He noted there his hope that his father would be encouraged and enabled to migrate to New South Wales. He was concerned that his father would be left unassisted if all his (Alex’s) brothers chose to move to Australia. Sometimes those who emigrated had nowhere else to go such as the men, women and children who sailed from Skye on ships such as the *William Nicol*. In many other cases however, as Philip Gaskell has noted, often “it is the young and active who leave first” and these were those on whom the elderly most depended for support.²⁴⁰ Had all the siblings emigrated, MacDonald’s father may have been left reliant on charity and poor relief in his old age. Certainly the realities of poverty and misery in his native land were in the mind of MacDonald when he wrote this persuasive letter, wondering why families would persist in poverty rather than emigrate to Australia. It was clearly a message which the *Inverness Courier* was eager to promote.

²³⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 26 April 1849, 4.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 18 December 1850, 2.

²⁴⁰ Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, 47.

In the aftermath of the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746, the nature of society in Highland Scotland had undergone massive change and not just through the 1747 Act of Proscription which had set out to destroy the ancient clan system of society.²⁴¹ Change continued throughout the following century and both urban and rural communities across Scotland were affected, forcing many Scots to look elsewhere to re-establish their lives. Important considerations for those contemplating emigration — whether to New South Wales, North America or elsewhere — would have been the nature of the society which settlers might expect to find. For many single women, marriage prospects would have been important and there is clear evidence in letters studied in this thesis that such prospects were prominent in the minds of many in the colony. More widely, for both men and women, single or married, the opportunity to continue to observe the Presbyterian forms of worship are shown to have been a serious consideration. Those reading the letters in newspapers, particularly without direct access to reports from their own family or friends in the colony, would have given those letters serious consideration. Most likely, reading letters in the newspapers would have led to discussion of how to be certain that the society to which they might move, almost certainly for the rest of their lives, would be a society at least compatible with and preferably better than that being left.

The firm conclusion which can be drawn here is that the information given in letters and as discussed in this chapter provided at least some of the information sought by those contemplating the nature of the society to be found in New South Wales. It stood to have influence in the decisions made by many Scots in the early to mid-nineteenth century, influence far greater than that intended by most of those who wrote home to family and friends in Britain.

Beyond the prospects for an acceptable life in the colony, however, for many the reports coming back to Scotland concerning a safe future would have been an initial hurdle to overcome. Evidence of safety for emigrants to New South Wales was mentioned in a number of letters printed in the newspapers in Scotland and is discussed in the final chapter which follows.

²⁴¹ Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury*.

Chapter six: Concerns for a safe future in New South Wales

The previous chapters in this thesis explored issues around land and stock, how land was acquired and used and how the climate might have affected people's attitudes to emigration. Letters in newspapers provided to potential emigrants — those seeking to own land or those destined to work for wages — some information about the nature of the society in the colony including with information about access to worship. This final chapter analyses reports in printed letters of the safety considerations for potential Scottish migrants. These safety issues were very different from those which concerned people in Scotland. In Scotland, concerns over safety were more likely to focus on security of land tenure or employment where the loss of these could mean a risk of starvation and/or exposure to the elements.¹

In the earliest days of European settlement in New South Wales the settlers came close to starvation. Rations had reached a low point when six of the marines were caught stealing food from the stores and after a trial were hanged in late March 1789.² This situation had been resolved as regular resupply vessels arrived and as the settlers began to understand the practices needed for farming in the colony. These farming practices were in many cases vastly different to those used or needed in Britain. By 1820, the safety issues which concerned people who wrote letters to family and friends in Scotland did not usually relate to starvation for the population. Instead, concerns were expressed relating to safety on the voyage to Australia as well as after arrival in a number of the areas of settlement in the colony particularly in the inland. These issues are explored below.

Safety on the voyage to Australia

Some emigrant ships never reached their destination and questions over a range of safety issues would have concerned many potential emigrants. However, by the time

¹ See for example, speech by Mr Sharman Crawford MP, House of Commons, 12 June 1845, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1845/jun/12/poor-laws-scotland>; <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/hall-of-fame/hall-of-fame-a-z/sellar-patrick>. Also <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2014/12/17/the-mysteries-of-croick-church/>.

² Watkin Tench, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, accessed 26 April 2017 as a Project Gutenberg EBook, Chapter III.

Edward Turner wrote to his wife in June 1819 that ships reached Sydney from Britain in about four months, he was reflecting a great improvement in sailing times from those experienced by the First Fleet.³ Those first ships had made a rendezvous at the Mother Bank off the Isle of Wight on 16 March 1787, sailed from there two months later and finally disembarked the passengers in late January 1788 at Port Jackson. The convicts and the marines guarding them had been on board for over ten months.⁴ A voyage of about four months as reported in Turner's letter in newspapers in January 1820 was a significant improvement. In Turner's case, the ship on which he arrived, the *Isabella*, only lost three of the convicts en route, two from illness and one drowned.⁵ A statement that "very few die in the passage" was a reasonable assurance of safety at that time for those travelling to New South Wales and may have helped allay the fears of potential emigrants.⁶

In March 1832, *The Scotsman* reported the arrival of "a valuable accession" of migrants to Sydney on the *Stirling Castle*.⁷ Those who travelled to Sydney in 1831/32 could well have been grateful that there were only 111 in steerage at that time. A later voyage of this ship carrying emigrants from Scotland to Canada was significantly more crowded. The ship's 1834 voyage to Canada was reported as carrying its 368 passengers from the island of Isla/Islay "with a row of berths, down the centre of the lower deck; so that the passengers were stowed ... 'like herrings in a barrel'. The space between the berths was *not three feet*, and many of the berths assigned to females, contained eight or ten, in number".⁸ Those who travelled to Sydney enjoyed better and hence safer conditions for the voyage, notwithstanding the longer sailing time. *The Scotsman's*

³ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

⁴ Tench, *Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*.

⁵ https://www.jenwilletts.com/convict_ship_isabella_1818.htm. This reference claims that the voyage was actually 230 days, not the four months suggested by Turner.

⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 27 January 1820, 4.

⁷ *Scotsman*, 31 March 1832, 3.

⁸ James Marr Brydone, *Narrative of a Voyage with a Party of Emigrants sent out from Sussex, in 1834, by the Petworth Emigration Committee, to Montreal ...* (Petworth: John Phillips, 1834), 61.

readers in 1832 would merely have noted the safe arrival in Sydney of a cargo of migrants.

Ostensibly a letter by Duncan Murchison in the *Inverness Courier* in March 1838 concerned emigration to New South Wales from the Highlands.⁹ It was in reality about conditions on an emigrant ship, the *William Nicol* which had sailed for Sydney from Skye on 6 July 1837 carrying 311 emigrants. The letter was written midway on the journey when the vessel called at Table Bay (also known as Simon's Bay), the port for Cape Town. Notwithstanding that the letter was sent only halfway through the journey, it would have been of considerable interest to readers contemplating emigration to New South Wales. Unusually, it was prefaced by a long commentary from the editors of the *Inverness Courier*, taking up well over half of one of the page's six columns, and considerably more space than it took to print the letter itself. The passengers when arriving in Sydney were described at that time as being in excellent health on arrival. The ship, a 408 ton three masted timber Greenock-built mixed passenger and cargo vessel, was relatively new, having been launched only in 1834. It was about the same length as one and a half railway cars of modern design.¹⁰

In the commentary on the letter both Murchison and the paper were at pains to assure readers that any anguish of departure was only temporary. The prospect of advantages in the new land far outweighed any regrets at leaving a place where the "population in the Highlands and Isles is undoubtedly too numerous compared with the means of subsistence, and hence the unspeakable misery which occurs when there is (sic) one or two bad seasons".¹¹

The letter and commentary took care also to assure readers that the voyage out was both safe and comfortable with only a few deaths having occurred on board in the ten weeks between departure and arrival at The Cape. These resulted from "a flux" brought on board by a woman from Skye.¹² Further, "the emigrants wanted nothing that could

⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2. See also *Colonist*, 2 November 1837, 3.

¹⁰ http://www.heathsmith.com/genealogy/maxwell/mclennan_alexander_mary_voyage.htm.

¹¹ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

make them comfortable, having each plenty of beef, pork, bread, oatmeal, flour, pease, tea and sugar, and water in great plenty".¹³ Murchison's letter depicted an almost ideal voyage from the Hebrides with neither calm nor gales and only a relatively few deaths. It would have been comforting and encouraging for those still considering emigration. Comments published with the letter conceded that the vessel was crowded but claimed that passengers enjoyed comforts which too many of them could never have enjoyed at home.¹⁴

It is possible to draw a direct correlation between publication of this letter on 7 March 1838 and events described in the same paper occurring nearly eleven weeks later.¹⁵ At that time, the *Inverness Courier* reported in two separate articles on the same page that emigration agent Dr Boyter had visited Fort William. He had

intimated his intention of meeting with intending emigrants on Monday the 21st [May 1838]. The news of his arrival, like the fiery cross of old, soon spread through every part of the district; and at an early hour on Monday thousands of enterprising Gaels might be seen around the Caledonian Hotel, anxious to quit the land of their forefathers, and to go and possess the unbounded pastures of Australia.¹⁶

Positioned on the corner of the High Street and Cameron Square in the centre of Fort William, the Caledonian Hotel would have been an ideal location with space to accommodate the waiting thousands of enterprising Gaels anxious to quit the land of their forefathers.

There can be no doubt that the report of so recent and successful sailing of an emigrant ship would have been welcomed by those in Lochaber and surrounding districts anxious to join emigrants believed to be making a better life beyond Scotland. It has been difficult in this study to draw a direct correlation between the publication of letters in newspapers and actual decisions taken by potential emigrants. The study has had to rely on

¹³ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 30 May 1838, 3. See also Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 50; 133.

¹⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 30 May 1838, 3; Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 50.

demonstrating the potential in those letters to influence decisions. However, the events in Fort William strongly indicate a connection between publication of the letter on 7 March 1838 in a newspaper circulating in Lochaber and events nearly eleven weeks later on 21 May.¹⁷

This report of a smooth passage from Skye to Table Bay sits at some variance with information not disclosed to readers. In an article headed ‘The Immigration Ships’ published in Sydney rather than Inverness it was reported that

[o]f the three ships that were sent out by the Home Government with the Highland Immigrants, the *William Nicol* was obliged to touch at Simon’s Bay for refreshments from the sickly state of the Highlanders generally.¹⁸

When the ship berthed at Table Bay on the Cape of Good Hope ... to replenish fresh water supplies, Governor Sir Benjamin D’Urban instigated a private collection to help the emigrants, after he and several of the inhabitants came on board and were horrified by the conditions. 150 pounds was raised in one day and used to buy supplies including sago, rice, fresh meat, vegetables and changes of clothing. ... Although Dr Boyter had recommended that each intending passenger “procure a new suit of plaid with several other little articles required for the voyage” [this had not happened], other supplies [obtained at Cape Town] included material for clothing ... many of the poor creatures being without a change”.¹⁹

Governor D’Urban’s report on conditions on board was referred to the Secretary of State comparing conditions unfavourably to those on the convict ship *Platina* which had arrived at the same time. Dr Boyter’s comments in turn on the report included a statement that the arrival at The Cape with so many of the souls who had embarked still living was “a far happier result than I had any reason to anticipate”!²⁰ It is impossible to know why Duncan Murchison, who by his own account was “appointed by the [ship’s?] Doctor to

¹⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2; 30 May 1838, 3.

¹⁸ *Colonist*, 17 March 1838, 2.

¹⁹ McIntosh, *The highland shepherd*, 15.

²⁰ Quoted in C. Bede Maxwell, *Wooden hookers: epics of the sea history of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1940), 57 - 59.

see the provisions served out to the passengers” chose to send on 13 September such a glowing report on the voyage to that point when facts demonstrate that it was otherwise.²¹ It can be assumed with certainty that potential emigrants in Inverness-shire would have looked forward to a long voyage to Australia with somewhat less enthusiasm had they been given a true picture of conditions on board. Had Murchison waited until arrival in Sydney to send his report, given that the passengers on board were described at that time as being in excellent health, he could have sent a more honest account as well as recording his own good fortune on arrival. The passenger list shows that he had been recruited by H C Semphill to work as a shepherd at the Hunter River for £25 p.a. plus rations.²²

A successful voyage to Australia in an era when ship losses at sea were not uncommon, is described in a letter which appeared in the *Inverness Courier* of 18 July 1838.²³ It was, if it can be believed fully, almost ideal with the hatch requiring closing on only one night. In fact, the writer, Donald Macleod claimed to have had “sometimes more trouble going to Fladachuin” than on the whole voyage to Australia. Fladachuin is identified in the NSA as the island of Fladda-chuàin, rented by a tacksman for grazing, about six miles off Skye and separated from the main island by a deep and rapid channel.²⁴ Travel to Fladda-chuàin would have been by small boat, and if travelling from Macleod’s home on Skye known as Mugstot (Moydstat, Monkstadt) on the other side of the Trotternish Peninsular, would require an excursion out into the sometimes dangerous waters of The Minch. The *Inverness Courier* wrote that the ship on which Macleod was a passenger, the *Mid Lothian*, anchored in Java Bay (probably it was Jervis Bay), and that men went ashore there and got a cask of milk (at a time before European settlement in that area had commenced).²⁵ It is most likely that it was instead a cask of fresh water, with unpolished handwriting and translation issues causing confusion. This suggests that some caution is

²¹ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838, 2.

²² http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?Page=NRS5313/4_4780/William%20Nicol_27%20Oct%201837/4_478000009.jpg&No=2.

²³ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

²⁴ NSA Vol. XIV, 240.

²⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

needed by readers before accepting the printed letter at face value.²⁶ Use of Gaelic in the original letter may be the explanation of why the letter was not simply quoted in full. It was instead summarised with comments made such as “in his own simple style”, or “[s]ome of honest Donald’s observations are amusing” or the patronising use of italics when quoting passages about the man in the moon.²⁷ Published in English, the *Inverness Courier* may have regarded Gaelic as an inferior language from which a summary would suffice for its readership, including those with an interest in travelling to New South Wales.²⁸ Nonetheless the detail in these questionable entries would have been missed by any reader of the newspaper in July 1838 who would have been reassured by the report of a safe and comfortable journey and that a cask of milk had been obtained so easily on the voyage up the coast of New South Wales.

Technically, the item ‘Notes from Australia’ appearing in the *Fife Herald* in October 1838 is not a letter but given that it is described as

notes ... thrown together from an MS which has been kindly forwarded to us by a young friend who left this neighbourhood [probably Dumfries where the news article most likely originated] three years ago and is now located in New South Wales, following the all-important occupation of sheep-farming

it has been included with this study.²⁹ The newspaper claimed that, although containing little new information, the writer’s impressions of the colony “may not be uninteresting to the numerous class who either intend to emigrate, or are already connected with that growing country”.³⁰ It is tempting to interpret his comment about being “confined in a gloomy prison — gloomier still that our keeper gloried in our sufferings, and rejoiced in our annoyances” to suggest that the writer was a convicted felon under sentence of

²⁶ Dwelly’s Gaelic/English dictionary indicates how some of the Gaelic words for “milk” and “water” are of similar length and structure.

²⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 18 July 1838, 2.

²⁸ Devine, *Clanship to Crofters’ War*, in particular “Gaelic, the great symbol of their different culture, had to be subordinated and removed”, 119.

²⁹ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

transportation. However, there is nothing else in the piece to support that and much to contradict it.³¹ The reference is probably to the practice of securing hatches in stormy weather, locking non-cabin passengers below decks. The keeper was the weather. It serves as a warning to possible emigrants that life onboard ship could be uncomfortable and potentially dangerous. An additional danger rarely mentioned is disclosed in the comment about needing to lie off from the town until the Government powder had been landed: only then was the ship allowed to dock.³² Travel on a passenger ship containing explosives appears to have been so routine as to require barely a mention and certainly no comment. It was therefore unlikely to have any impact on potential travellers' decisions on whether to emigrate on such a ship.

In presenting Andrew Ross' letter of 26 December 1839, the *John O'Groat Journal* made it very clear that it was using the letter in furtherance of its strong preference to see emigrants travel to the United States and British America (Canada) rather than to Australia.³³ The paper did not verify for its readership the accuracy of Ross' statements. Instead it limited itself to a general endorsement of the writer's moral character which it said guaranteed the truthfulness of what he stated. Ross' views, it believed, were sufficient to cause concern to potential emigrants and to the families of those who had already left for the antipodes.³⁴ Ross had sailed on the *Asia* and this voyage particularly was mentioned in a mid-twentieth century history of the Highland clearances.³⁵ Thanks to Ross' letter written at Christmas from Port Macquarie that history has been proved to be incomplete. The facts of the voyage as printed in that letter in the paper, describing how the ship had nearly sunk on the start of its voyage between the Firth of Cromarty and Devonport, would have caused concern to potential migrants. Ross did concede that after repairs the ship had had a satisfactory journey non-stop from "Davenport" to Sydney.³⁶ Ross also conceded that Sydney harbour was exceptional, declaring that "I

³¹ *Fife Herald*, 25 October 1838, 4.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *John O'Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (Harmondsworth UK: Penguin, 1963, 1976 reprint), 198-9. See <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2018/04/05/the-shipping-news/>.

³⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4. "Davenport" is Devonport, or Plymouth, the principal port for

thought there was not such a harbour in the world” and suitable for vessels of any size. Anyone reading Ross’ letter in the *John O’Groat Journal* of 10 July 1840 would have been given very mixed messages about safety on the voyage and it stood to have a far greater influence on emigration decisions than Andrew Ross probably intended.

In prefacing an extract from a letter “recently received from Van Diemen’s Land” the *Inverness Courier* commented on the proliferation of letters submitted to it but noted that it did not “at all times avail ourselves of the whole of their communications”.³⁷ It recognised the increasing importance to Scots of the general question of migration and promised to write at considerable length on this matter. In the interim it confined itself to quoting from this letter from Van Diemen’s Land, a letter which raised serious concerns about safety on a voyage from Britain to Australia, “tempting the dangerous deep”.³⁸ The vessel on which the writer travelled was the “*Minerva*, Capt. F.”. Captain “F” was Thomas Furlong and extensive coverage of this episode, contemporaneous and subsequent is available.³⁹ The vessel was referred to in the Sydney press as “the fever ship *Minerva*”.⁴⁰ There is no internal evidence in the letter of the writer’s gender, age, or occupation, nor of the origins of this person although it may have been from somewhere in the Highlands or Islands since some passengers on that voyage are identified as originating there. Other passengers on the ship included Angus McMillan, explorer and pastoralist, another Scot from the Highlands and Islands who came to Australia seeking a better life than was possible in his birthplace. Unlike the hapless passengers who

Devonshire in England.

³⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 2. The newspaper that day printed in one article headed ‘New South Wales’ extracts from two separate letters, one from Western Australia and one from Van Diemen’s Land.

³⁸ The quote was used also in ‘The June Gale, 1841’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*” Vol. 50, July 1841, 75. Its origins have not been identified.

³⁹ See for example <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.694.6466&rep=rep1&type=pdf> which also references the reports in the Sydney papers, and other matters.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Monitor*, 7 February 1838, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 30 January 1838, 2; 8 February 1838, 2; 10 February 1838, 2; 8 March 1838, 2.

travelled below decks, McMillan travelled to Australia in cabin class and was able to avoid the typhus which affected so many of the other passengers.⁴¹

For its voyages to Australia the *Minerva* was principally a convict transport, sailing with cargoes of convicts in 1799, 1817, 1819 (two voyages), 1821, 1824, 1838 and 1839.⁴² These voyages were all to Sydney except for those in 1817 and 1838, both of which took cargoes of convicts to Van Diemen's Land. As well as its voyages as a convict transport, the voyage which carried typhus had left Greenock with a cargo of Scottish emigrants and some German missionaries on 13 August 1837 and arrived in Sydney on 23 January 1838. On arrival in Sydney, it was reported that

[t]he *Minerva*, from Greenock, with 235 emigrants on board, arrived on Tuesday, but in consequence of the existence of typhus fever on board, she has been placed in quarantine. ... The emigrants by the *Minerva* were selected by the Rev. Dr. Lang during his recent visit to the mother country, and have come out under the superintendence of Capt. McAusland, the Dr.'s brother-in-law.⁴³

Under the heading 'The Quarantine Station – Spring Cove', Sydney newspapers published the names of thirty-one passengers from the ship who had died, either en route to Sydney or at the Quarantine Station.⁴⁴ The names were published for the information of their friends in the mother country.⁴⁵ Apart from the second officer of the ship, a gardener from Belfast, and a German missionary, all those who had died were Scots. The letter published in the *Inverness Courier* on 29 July 1840 claimed a loss of thirty-five lives, and the Sydney papers tallied four fewer, but the result either way would have been of serious concern for intending travellers.

⁴¹ Cal Flyn, *Thicker than Water*. London: HarperCollins/Fourth Estate, 2016.

⁴² <https://convictrecords.com.au/ships/minerva>.

⁴³ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 25 January 1838, 2.

⁴⁴ *Sydney Gazette*, 10 March 1838, 2; *Sydney Monitor*, 14 March 1838, 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

While the correspondent claimed the cause to have been bad treatment and provisions without mentioning typhus, these were probably more easily understood by readers in Scotland than a disease which was spread in unsanitary conditions. Unsanitary conditions on a ship, particularly those experienced below decks, would often have been a familiar part of daily life for many emigrants on board long before departure and it was more easily understood when causes were said to be bad treatment and poor provisions.⁴⁶ It was also implied that the master of the vessel was to some extent responsible, and that “no one should be captain of an emigrant ship but a character peculiar for tenderness and humanity”.⁴⁷ The *Inverness Courier* closed its reporting on the matter with an admonition to intending emigrants that they should “look narrowly after their own interests” when planning to travel, noting that much had been said on the subject. Passengers should satisfy themselves about conditions before travelling. For many, of course, such as those starting from remote parts of the country, it would not have been possible to check conditions before agreeing to travel and these had to take what was organised on their behalf. Anyone reading the *Inverness Courier* of 29 July 1840 and learning of deaths on board the emigrant ship would have had cause for concern for their safety on a voyage to New South Wales. By sharing this letter, the *Inverness Courier* gave its readership serious matters to consider although whether this would have deterred any potential emigrants is impossible to estimate.

An extract taken from the *Adelaide Observer* was reprinted in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* in February 1848.⁴⁸ Parts of the original news from Australia were omitted although some of this information would have been of interest to readers in Scotland. The information was extracted variously from an article headed ‘Arrivals of the week’ which had included news of the expected arrival at Adelaide within a month of the *Lady McNaughton* filled with Scotch emigrants.⁴⁹ These had been recruited by Dr Kelly, probably Dr Alexander Charles Kelly, originally from Leith and embarked as

⁴⁶ Lucille Campey, *The Scottish Pioneers of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2004), 153 quoted in <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2018/04/05/the-shipping-news/>.

⁴⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 29 July 1840, 2.

⁴⁸ *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4; *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 23 February 1848, 3.

⁴⁹ *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4.

ship's surgeon on that voyage.⁵⁰ The information which was not reported in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* but would have been of interest to readers in Scotland was the news that the emigrants expected from Leith and Glasgow had been obliged to embark in London. This was "in consequence of the high terms demanded by Scotch shipowners (£5 per head more than London)".⁵¹ Prospective emigrants were not advised by the Scottish press of this extra step in migration, involving a journey of some 400 miles through what was probably unfamiliar territory for many. If a similarly long sea voyage from Scotland to London had been undertaken before joining their emigrant ship in one of the busiest ports in the world, it too might have been a significant disincentive to emigration. There is no indication in the material printed by the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* of why the paper did not report this additional step or whether it was a deliberate attempt to gloss over some of the difficulties for emigrants.

As well as the issue of safety for intending Scottish emigrants, there was also the cost of this additional travel. In July 1849, widow Mrs Isabella MacMillan of Lochy Side near Fort William, seeking to travel as an assisted migrant from Lochaber to Australia with her four children sought assistance from the local poor relief authorities, claiming that she needed help obtaining the passage money for the family.⁵² At the time, MacMillan claimed that the full passage cost was £13 and she already had £7. The Parochial Board made an ex gratia payment of £3 with the balance being supplied by Lochiel, the local heritor. Given that MacMillan travelled on the *Blonde* which loaded at Gravesend, a Thames River port in Kent, it is likely that the £13 was the cost of travel from Fort William to London for the family. If so, this indicates one of the additional costs faced by Scottish emigrants who were not all able to travel directly from near their homes.

When Alex MacDonald wrote to William Robertson from Maneroo/Monaro in July 1850, he wondered why families would persist in poverty in Scotland rather than

⁵⁰ Valmai A. Hankel, 'Kelly, Alexander Charles (1811–1877)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kelly-alexander-charles-13020/text23541>, published first in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 21 November 2018.

⁵¹ *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4.

⁵² Lochaber Archives, Fort William, C1/L7/22/1 Minutes of the Parochial Board of Kilmallie, 20 July 1849.

emigrate to New South Wales.⁵³ He speculated that it might have been fear of the voyage but hastened to assure his readers that the voyage would prove to be safe and happy. He also suggested avoiding the expense of buying new clothes and other things for the voyage. In this, he was mirroring the attitudes of those who had sailed ill-prepared from Skye on the *William Nicol* in 1837 but whose condition was discovered on arrival at Cape Town to be so impoverished that Governor D'Urban had instituted a public collection to satisfy the most pressing wants.⁵⁴ For the *William Nicol*, Government emigration agent Dr Boyter had recommended that each intending passenger "procure a new suit of plaid with several other little articles required for the voyage" but this had not happened.⁵⁵ Either MacDonald, writing in July 1850 had not heard of the experiences of those on the *William Nicol* a decade or so earlier, or if he had heard of it had either forgotten or had deliberately chosen to ignore the reports. He did assure readers that clothing could be purchased in New South Wales at the same cost as in Scotland and reassured them that homespun clothes would suffice. Any newly arrived migrant ending up at Maneroo would certainly have been grateful to have homespun clothing suitable for the Highlands, particularly in winter. Much of the Maneroo/Monaro district is at considerably higher elevation than most of Scotland and exposed to winds from the Antarctic. As in the advice concerning avoiding the expense of buying new clothes which could have been misleading, so was MacDonald's advice that emigrants would be maintained by the Government until employment had been secured.⁵⁶ By September 1841, the *Sydney Free Press* had lamented the closure altogether of the Immigrants' Barracks, claiming that the closure had been an invidious move to lessen the expense of the Government system of assisted emigration.⁵⁷ Accommodation in the Government barracks in Sydney would not have been available for new arrivals but this discouraging information was not included with MacDonald's letter for those reading the *Inverness Courier* in late 1850. Given that the newspaper claimed to have left the letter largely untouched when preparing it for

⁵³ *Inverness Courier*, 18 December 1850, 2.

⁵⁴ McIntosh, *The highland shepherd*, 15; Maxwell, *Wooden hookers*, 57 - 59.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 18 December 1850, 2.

⁵⁷ 'Immigration Barracks', *Sydney Free Press*, 9 September 1841, 2.

publication, it is most likely that the positive messages included were those sent by MacDonald rather than any editorial effort by the newspaper to influence opinion.

Safety in the lonely interior

A missionary (probably Walter Lawry) at Parramatta wrote in 1821 that he rode every week at night along a road on which over 100 convicts were employed, without ever experiencing the slightest molestation.⁵⁸ He ascribed this safety to the good order which prevailed throughout the colony thanks to the Governor and the officials under him. The Governor was Lachlan Macquarie who would have been recognised by readers of the Scottish press. They would have been reassured by this mention in the press that the colony was indeed a safe destination for emigrants.

It is worth speculating on the motives of a young man, an emigrant from Inverness-shire in 1838 who wrote from Parramatta on 5 June 1840.⁵⁹ He claimed to have a detailed knowledge of a wide range of issues, from lawlessness in towns and countryside, to the quality of the workmanship of a range of mechanics or tradesmen, or the state of education for children of the working classes. Certainly his comments on the need for a shepherd to have a gun “to frighten the blacks” might be seen to be consistent with the then-Governor’s view that

numerous depredations ... have been of late committed by the Aboriginal Inhabitants of this Country on the Flocks and Herds of the Colonists, depastured beyond the Settled Limits of the Colony, and of the atrocities which in return have been committed on the Aborigines by the Shepherds and Stockmen in charge of those flocks and herds.⁶⁰

The young man’s statements in his letter of how convicts were treated by the masters to whom they were assigned appear to be broad generalisations and not universally accurate. While many were maltreated even by the standards of the day,

⁵⁸ *Perth Courier*, 1 November 1821, 3.

⁵⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 2.

⁶⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 2; Governor Gipps to Lord Glenelg, Despatch No. 32, 20 February 1839, in HRA, Vol. 20, 6.

Australian felons, male or female, could, much to their benefit, be potentially ‘assigned’ to their spouses. In addition, many convicts, although sometimes ‘loaned’ — as property — by their masters to others, eventually came to hold ‘elite jobs’ such as lawyers, merchants and architects.⁶¹

In any case, the system of assignment of convicts was being gradually abolished with a view to its ultimate abandonment and the abolition of transportation of convicts was imminent.⁶² It is difficult to assess also the writer’s claims that Highland and north country masons were considered inferior in their skills, describing them as “botchers and cobblers in their trades [sic]”.⁶³ The comments are however consistent with the clear intention of the writer to discourage those reading the *Inverness Courier* from emigrating to New South Wales. Whether this was from motives of care for his fellow-countrymen or otherwise it is impossible to discern.

In great detail, the Queanbeyan writer of a letter which appeared in the *Inverness Courier* in December 1841 rejected those earlier suggestions of dangers from convicts.⁶⁴ From personal experience he assured readers of his ongoing safety from attack or violence even when totally surrounded by convicts. Similarly, danger from snakes was described as minimal and Indigenous people were generally more frightened of whites than the whites were of them. Moreover while bushrangers did sometimes rob huts this was no more likely to happen than robberies in Scotland. The writer from Queanbeyan suggested that the earlier letter writer may never have been further up the country than Parramatta where some people, noting that man’s susceptibility to believe anything outrageous, had gammoned him.⁶⁵ The convicts near Queanbeyan were said to be in

⁶¹ ‘Extracts: Becoming a penal colony’, <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/php/BecomingTasmania/Convictsystems08.pdf> accessed 7 August 2018.

⁶² Marquess of Normanby to Gipps, Despatch No. 46, 11 May 1839, in HRA, Vol. 20, 152. See also ‘Assignment Regulations’ issued by the Colonial Secretary’s Office on 15 August 1838 and printed in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* the same day and repeated in the same paper on 22 August and 29 August 1838, notifying that the assignment of various classes of convicts was to be discontinued.

⁶³ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 2.

⁶⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

⁶⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 4 November 1840, 2 and *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

general well fed and clothed and received the same rations as a free man.⁶⁶ As noted earlier in this study, those rations far exceeded in quantity, and mostly in quality, what a worker could expect at home anywhere in Scotland generally, and certainly in Inverness-shire.⁶⁷ Also, in the reply to the earlier letter is an assurance that those in the free population of the colony were well regarded and treated their employees well. Maltreatment of convicts should not have been an issue likely to generate danger to settlers. Each of these two letters in the *Inverness Courier* stood to have some influence on potential emigrants concerned about conditions of safety in the colony. Whether those reading both letters would have been reassured by the second one is uncertain although it does make a more telling, detailed and reassuring case for safety than the earlier.

In December 1847, the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* reported the unsuccessful outcome of an expedition by Prussian-born Dr Ludwig Leichhardt in northern Australia.⁶⁸ Leichhardt had conducted a number of expeditions in Australia, including “one of the longest journeys of exploration by land in Australia, and one of the most useful in the discovery of ‘excellent country available ... for pastoral purposes’”.⁶⁹ This longest journey was not that from which he had returned in late July 1847 but was the earlier one reported in Leichhardt’s *Journal of an overland expedition in Australia, from Moreton Bay to Port Essington*.⁷⁰ That *Journal* had been published in early 1847 in London and from March 1847 a steady stream of newspaper articles commenting on the book and Leichhardt’s travels had appeared in the British press. In reporting his

⁶⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 22 December 1841, 4.

⁶⁷ See NSA Vol. 14, Parish of Kilmallie, Inverness-shire, 123.

⁶⁸ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 31 December 1847, 2. The article was taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1847, 2, which had in turn copied it from the *Moreton Bay Courier*, 31 July 1847, 2.

⁶⁹ Renee Erdos, ‘Leichhardt, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1813–1848)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leichhardt-friedrich-wilhelm-ludwig-2347/text3063>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 20 November 2018.

⁷⁰ Ludwig Leichhardt, Dr (Friedrich Wilhelm), *Journal of an overland expedition in Australia, from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, a distance of upwards of 3000 miles, during the years 1844–1845* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1847).

unsuccessful return to Darling Downs in southern Queensland, there would have been no need for the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* to explain who Dr Leichhardt was.

This letter in the *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* made it clear to readers in Scotland that exploring the vast continent of Australia was still a perilous undertaking.⁷¹ The mention of the loss of cattle, goats, horses and mules would have provided some indication of the scale of the transport and provisions needed for an expedition into the interior of the colony. It identified some of the illnesses which could beset travellers. Even the experienced Dr Leichhardt himself had become separated from his party for eighteen days, being given up for lost before finding his way back to the main expedition. This report would have served as a cautionary warning to anyone contemplating migrating to New South Wales that travel to find and take up land in the colony may not be safe and convenient.

In a news item rather than a letter, the *Fife Herald* provided details in April 1848 of the accident in Sydney which had claimed the life of Lady Mary FitzRoy, wife of Governor FitzRoy, and that of the Governor's *aide-de-camp*, Lieutenant Chester Masters.⁷² It has been mentioned in an earlier chapter that the Governor was accustomed to drive his own carriage.⁷³ The fatal accident was reported in a factual manner as was, without comment, a finding of accidental death by the inquest into the deaths. With the Governor having driven the carriage, the inquest could hardly have decided otherwise. Governor FitzRoy had driven his carriage extensively throughout the colony but this accident occurring near Government House would have reminded readers that conditions in the colony could still be dangerous even for those in senior positions.

Bushrangers

The problem of bushrangers' depredations in the western districts had been so bad that in 1825 a special troop of cavalry had been raised and equipped from the 3rd Regiment

⁷¹ *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review*, 31 December 1847, 2.

⁷² *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848, 2.

⁷³ See the description of the tour made to Bathurst and Carcoar in Mundy, *Our Antipodes*.

by Lieutenant-Governor Stewart and sent to Bathurst.⁷⁴ The pursuit of bushrangers in the district was reported by the Sydney press in 1825. The introduction to an article in the *Sydney Gazette* which read “We have been favoured with the following interesting letter from a Gentleman of rank in the Bathurst county”, is followed by a detailed description of the actions taken against the bushrangers in the area.⁷⁵ One member of the mounted police, James Stephens of the 39th Regiment died of gunshot wounds on 29 November 1830 sustained during an action against the bushrangers at what came to be known as Bushrangers Hill near Bathurst. However, it does appear that the efforts of the special troop sent to Bathurst had been largely successful by the mid-1830s, although the mention in a letter from Bathurst of bushrangers combining with “the blacks” and headed by a few soldiers may suggest that some issues remained.⁷⁶ Clearly this was meant to be of little concern to readers of the *John O’Groat Journal*.

General Stewart’s efforts to restrict the activities of bushrangers were not entirely successful. In a couple of lines, extracted from a letter of 28 September 1838 and appearing in the *John O’Groat Journal* the following March, the robbery of General Stewart himself by a bushranger was reported.⁷⁷ In noting the event, the letter writer recorded the ongoing issue of safety in the colony. Stewart was highly likely to be known by, if not personally to, readers of the *John O’Groat Journal*. William Stewart (1769-1854), soldier and lieutenant-governor, was the son of William Stewart of Caithness, Scotland, and grandson of Donald Stewart of Appin, one of Prince Charles Edward’s officers.⁷⁸ By 1838 the former Lieutenant-Governor of the colony was living in retirement on his property near Bathurst known now, but not then, as Abercrombie House. A large, granite built house on three levels, it reflected Stewart’s background and would not look

⁷⁴ Hendy-Pooley, *Early History of Bathurst*, 231. See also MS9741 in the NLA, papers of David Murphy, re the New South Wales mounted police.

⁷⁵ ‘Bathurst Bushrangers’, *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 20 October 1825, 2.

⁷⁶ *John O’Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

⁷⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 15 March 1839, 3.

⁷⁸ Theo Barker, ‘Stewart, William (1769–1854)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stewart-william-2700/text3787>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 9 April 2018.

out of place in the Scottish Highlands.⁷⁹ In recording the robbery, the correspondent was indicating the danger from bushrangers, but also, perhaps, the relative safety felt by such a former senior high official travelling around the countryside, possibly without an armed guard. Whether this would have been reassuring or of concern to readers of the *John O'Groat Journal* certainly depended on the reader's own plans, if any, for travel to and within New South Wales. Safety from bushrangers was certainly an issue with robberies receiving mention in the Sydney papers throughout 1839 but not in later letters in this study appearing in the Scottish newspapers.⁸⁰

Clashes with the Aboriginal peoples

In a letter sent in 1825 from near Launceston and appearing in the *Caledonian Mercury* in November of that year, the writer failed to record any deaths on either side occurring from clashes between Aboriginal people and settlers.⁸¹ Whether this was deliberate to avoid alarming readers in Scotland or for any other reason, or because he was unaware of them, is uncertain. Clearly, as a storekeeper on the new road between Hobart's Town (sic) and Launceston he would have been ideally positioned to receive and transmit travellers' news as well as within his more local area. Relations between the existing Indigenous population in the area and settlers were deteriorating as evidenced by an article published only a few years later as 'The Natives':

These black savages commenced the new year and their depredations together, by setting fire to the forest, which did much damage about Bagdad [on the road to Hobart, about 100 miles from Launceston]. ... They have on several other occasions acted with great violence and outrage, killing and persuing [sic] the stockmen and shepherds in all directions. On Monday se'nnight, they made their appearance at Bagdad, surprised and attacked three of the road party, one of whom was speared to death ... Another man ... was killed by them on the preceding Saturday ... the sable murderers had fled, after stripping their victim of all his clothes. Another tribe, which infests the neighbourhood of Launceston, attacked a number of

⁷⁹ <https://www.abercrombiehouse.com.au/home>.

⁸⁰ See, for examples, *Australian* 23 February 1839, 2 and 10 September 1839, 2; *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 19 August 1839, 2; and *Colonist*, 21 August 1839, 4.

⁸¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 1.

women who were washing clothes ... A few hours previously, a tribe of blacks robbed a hut on the North Esk, about two miles from Launceston⁸²

Henry Reynolds has described the years between 1826 and 1833 as a period of intense frontier conflict in Tasmania. The correspondent writing in 1825 from his very neat house situated about two and a half miles from Launceston failed to mention any conflicts, or even the presence of the island's original inhabitants⁸³. It was as if they had vanished from his consciousness already and any reader of this letter in the *Caledonian Mercury*, or the *Dumfries Courier* from which it had been copied, would not have been given by its contents any cause for concern over safety.

It may have been reassuring for potential emigrants and families of those already in the colony to read in March 1836 that no white men had been murdered in the vicinity of Bathurst by blacks or bushrangers, notwithstanding the killing of many white men elsewhere.⁸⁴ A decade or so earlier, the extent of hostilities between European incomers and Aboriginal inhabitants had led to the proclamation of martial law on 14 August 1824 by Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane.⁸⁵ Brisbane was able to report on 3 November 1824 to Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, that the fairly short military operations in the area bearing the Earl's name had achieved the desired result for the Europeans. Brisbane noted that only seven Europeans had lost their lives in the conflict and that, with some conjecture, the number of Aboriginal people killed was not likely to exceed significantly double that number.⁸⁶ C. D. Rowley examines the situation in the Bathurst district more even-handedly than Brisbane's report to Earl Bathurst does but acknowledges that "after 1824 it is the familiar story of a dying race".⁸⁷

⁸² *Colonial Advocate, and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register* (Hobart Town), 1 March 1828, 43.

⁸³ Henry Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain? The question of genocide in Australia's history* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, Penguin Books, 2001), 52; *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 November 1825, 1.

⁸⁴ *John O'Groat Journal*, 2 March 1836, 12.

⁸⁵ HRA, Vol. 11, 410-411.

⁸⁶ HRA, Vol. 11, 409.

⁸⁷ Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 30.

Were a letter in the *Inverness Courier* or the *Fife Herald* the only source of information on settlers' integration into the new colony of Port Phillip, readers of that letter could well have been excused for believing that safety and acceptance were not an issue.⁸⁸ Potential emigrants reading it would have been reassured of safety from confrontation with the native inhabitants. They were told that the "native gives us no trouble; they have no leaders, and always retire into the interior of the country".⁸⁹ The writer said also that he had not seen a sheep injured by the natives. This is consistent with the account of John Batman whose diary recorded peaceful contacts with the Aboriginal people while investigating the area around Port Phillip.⁹⁰ Batman's initial journey to the area did not involve any stock other than horses and at that time there was no lack of suitable food supplies for the Indigenous population. Therefore there would have been little inducement for the local people to seek to take sheep or cattle from the incoming Europeans. The situation was in contrast to that in parts of the mother colony of New South Wales, with the *Sydney Gazette* of 6 February 1838, only days before the letter was sent to John Cameron in Arnisdale, commenting on ongoing violent conflicts between "the Port Macquarie Blacks" and "the White residents in that district".⁹¹ The only murders recorded by the *Sydney Gazette* around this time in the Port Phillip district were committed by one or more Europeans against other Europeans.⁹² These did not involve the Aboriginal people and this should have been an important consideration for intending Scottish emigrants. Efforts were being made to achieve peaceful co-existence between the Aboriginal people of the district and the European settlers in Port Phillip where the first school established was for Aboriginal children.⁹³ This school was established in late 1836 on the order of Governor Bourke. It closed in 1839 although other schools for

⁸⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2; copied with acknowledgement to *Inverness Courier* in *Fife Herald*, 2 May 1839, 1.

⁸⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2.

⁹⁰ Batman, *Journal*.

⁹¹ Letter in *Inverness Courier*, 17 April 1839, 2; 'Port Macquarie Murders', *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 6 February 1838, 2.

⁹² 'The Port Phillip Murderers', *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 23 January 1838, 2.

⁹³ Edward Sweetman et al, *A History of State Education in Victoria*, (Melbourne: Critchley Parker, 1922), 2.

Aboriginal children were later established in the district. However, notwithstanding these official attempts at peaceful co-existence, it is clear that relations between the Aboriginal people and the European incomers in the Port Phillip district quickly followed the pattern established elsewhere. Violence on both sides occurred with the overwhelming loss of life being among the Indigenous population. Michael Cannon has documented this conflict and its outcomes, describing it as the “true terrible story of Australia's founding years” and while Cannon’s work is focused on the Port Phillip district it serves also as a grim record of events elsewhere.⁹⁴

A letter from a disenchanted settler in New South Wales appeared in the *John O’Groat Journal* in February 1840.⁹⁵ It included the assumption that many people, lost in the bush, had been massacred by the natives. This ignored earlier stories of lost Europeans being helped by the Aboriginal people they encountered.⁹⁶ A letter appearing only ten weeks later on 8 May 1840 also in the *John O’Groat Journal* is clearly at odds with the view that lost Europeans were likely to be massacred.⁹⁷ The later correspondent noted that he had learned the local language and that the Indigenous people at Port Macquarie would do anything for him.⁹⁸ The difference in how the Indigenous population was viewed is probably accounted for by the willingness of the later correspondent to learn from the local Aboriginal peoples. Any readers contemplating emigration might have been reassured by this indication of safety in a remote region. They may have been less reassured had they read an even later report from the colony in which two sawyers on the Tweed River, near to the present border with Queensland, had been killed.⁹⁹ That report claimed that the “murdered men were known to be exceedingly kind to the blacks, and

⁹⁴ Cannon, *Who Killed the Koories?*

⁹⁵ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4.

⁹⁶ See for example <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-12/lost-story-of-early-sailors-first-contact-with-aboriginal-people/8113458>.

⁹⁷ *John O’Groat Journal*, 8 May 1840, 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ ‘News from the interior’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1846, 3.

constantly employing them”. The extent of potential for newspaper reports to be influential for possible emigrants clearly depended on which report were read.

An article in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* in February 1848 is noteworthy for what it failed to repeat from its source in the *Adelaide Observer*.¹⁰⁰ The report in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* of the apparent attainment of pre-eminence by a native chief in New Zealand/Aotearoa, recorded that he was outwardly quiet and peaceable in his demeanour. The original report however continued by quoting that chief, Heki: “I am not going to be caught like an unfledged *tui* ... I thoroughly understand the game the Governor is playing; his cards are great guns and muskets; his words are as soft as down, but they mean cannon balls, soldiers, sailors, and leaden bullets”.¹⁰¹ The report in the *Adelaide Observer* continued with news of various Maori leaders and what would have been classed by the Europeans in New Zealand as civil unrest and rebellion. Had the full report been copied into the Scottish press, it would have introduced a note of uncertainty for anyone hoping to migrate to that part of the colony.

Safety for anyone intending to migrate from one area or country to another must always be an issue of concern and it remained so for those who emigrated by choice or necessity from Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century. This chapter has demonstrated how letters in the press had a great potential to be of interest and perhaps concern to potential emigrants from Scotland. Although some letters in the press recounted favourable voyages to Australia, this was balanced by other accounts of difficult voyages. Similarly, while some letter writers reported safety in the colony, or failed to mention dangers after arrival, others reported matters of concern for safety. These dangers would have included attacks by bushrangers or by the Aboriginal people who saw their traditional lands being taken from them. The picture of safety in the colony for emigrants very much depended on the reports available at any one time and where prospective emigrants hoped to settle. The conclusion that can be drawn from this material is that the motivations for those considering emigration would have been complex. Assessing safety from the information in the newspapers would have added another element to their decision making.

¹⁰⁰ *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4; *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 23 February 1848, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Adelaide Observer*, 18 September 1847, 4.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to contribute to ongoing historical research into migration to and settlement in Australia by Scots. It has achieved this by identifying and analysing letters sent from the colonies in New South Wales and printed in historic Scottish newspapers between 1820 and 1850. As an under-studied collection of primary source material, the letters examined in this thesis have provided a new and valuable addition to available sources describing conditions in the colony together with the experiences of Scots who migrated to Australia.

The central argument in this thesis is that by analysing these reports in the letters printed in newspapers and then comparing the conditions described in the colony with those being experienced by readers in Scotland it is clear that the correspondence had potential to influence emigration decisions. In examining the material, the central question this thesis asked was whether those letters did have potential to influence emigration decisions by Scots. The short answer is that the evidence in the letters has proved that these letters did have that potential. Whether the likely influence was in favour of emigration or against it would have depended partly on conditions described as being experienced in Australia at the time of any letter or letters having been written. It would also have reflected the conditions in Scotland at the time of publication of any particular letter or group of letters. All potential emigrants would have had to weigh up their personal circumstances against the conditions reported from time to time including in these letters in the press. It is highly unlikely that the luxury of a study of reports over an extended time or of a wide choice of settlement destinations was afforded to many.

Although David MacMillan observed that the extent of the influence of letters sent from New South Wales and read in Scotland can be difficult to gauge, this thesis has argued that the information in letters could have been an important factor in some emigrants' decisions.¹ It has considered Harper's methodological opinion on sources that letters often blurred the distinctions between reporting and

¹ MacMillan, *Scotland and Australia*, 26.

propaganda.² Examination of the letters studied has provided an appreciation of how newspapers developed coverage of matters related to the colony. Some newspapers took a stand on whether or not Scots should emigrate to Australia. This is clear in both the newspapers' comments on letters as well as in editors' selection of which letters or portions of letters were to be published. Beyond tracking developments in the colony, the letters were clearly instrumental in forming opinions on opportunities for emigrants.

The creation of colonies was sometimes determined by the imperatives of governments and the establishment of the colony of New South Wales was a prime example of this. However, the colonies themselves were brought into being because ordinary people — convicts and their guards, soldiers, shepherds, artisans, labourers, house and dairy maids, merchants and traders, respectable young men, or ministers of religion, to name but a few — turned the government vision into reality by settling in those colonies. This thesis has identified the potential for published letters to have influenced the movement of some of those ordinary people. Richards claimed that the migration of millions of people may be at the centre of how this world was made “and of these people we need to know much more”.³ In looking at this collection of letters, this thesis has provided a little more information on some of those who migrated, considered their experience of life in Australia and examined the potential for their reports to influence others to follow them.

Conditions in Scotland in the early to mid-nineteenth century are acknowledged as being frequently desperate for parts of the population with industrialisation and evictions of tenants creating a significant pool of Scots interested in emigration. Many of those emigrating went to America and Canada where the voyage was shorter and less expensive than it was to Australia and where the emigrant paths were well-trodden by the 1850s. Numbers of others however took the southern route to a new land, often, as shown in some of the letters studied, with hopes of staying close to family and friends. The success or otherwise of the plans to stay close to

² Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 238-9.

³ Richards, review of Belich *Replenishing the Earth*, <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/895> accessed 28 November 2018.

kin as relayed back in letters would have been a matter for serious deliberation by those contemplating emigration. In one case, a direct link has been drawn between a letter in the *Inverness Courier*, shown in this thesis as providing a positive but misleading report, and heightened interest in emigration from Lochaber. That episode provides clear evidence of the effect which these letters had for people considering emigration.

Chapter one considered how pastoral interests were the primary focus of many who wrote back to Scotland and this is prominent in many of the letters examined. Comments about the acreages needed for settlers to survive and prosper varied enormously. Thirty acres was specified in Macquarie's instructions as the amount of land which was to be given to a single emancipist and free settlers were to be granted 100 acres beyond this.⁴ At the other end of the scale of land grants is the allocation of one million acres allowed to the Australian Agricultural Company. The extent and conditions of land grants, purchases or occupations of land were all the subject of comment in the letters sent home. Similarly, the opportunities were enormous for accumulation of huge numbers of sheep and cattle where flocks and herds doubled every year or so. The information available from the letters analysed shows clearly the potential for it to influence emigration decisions by Scots.

Following from the discussion of the extent of property and the sizes of herds and flocks, Chapter two considered the conditions under which land might be acquired in the colony and whether those conditions, as they were reported from time to time, had potential to influence prospective emigrants. The period between 1820 and 1850 saw a major shift in how the government in the colony regulated acquisition and possession of land in the colony. It moved from a system of straight land grants to grants dependant on a settler's ability to demonstrate sufficient funding to work the land adequately. The government then moved further requiring the payment of fees for use of land, sometimes for outright ownership and sometimes for occupancy without ownership. At the same time, many settlers were taking independent action by moving beyond the official limits of settlement and taking up vast squatting runs which brought them into conflict with the authorities

⁴ Ritchie, *Lachlan Macquarie: a Biography*, 109.

in London and in Sydney. All of these events were reported in letters printed in newspapers in Scotland. Many of these reports had clear potential to attract settlers but the reports of disputes with the Governor over conditions for ownership of land stood to impact adversely on decisions by some potential settlers. Any prospective emigrant interested in acquiring land would have been wise to take note of the conditions at the time as reported and to seek further, perhaps independent, advice on what to expect. The conclusion which is obvious from the letters is that they stood to be important at least as an initial source of information and hence influential to readers' decisions on whether to emigrate.

Chapter three looked at the climate and the nature of farming in Australia and in parts of Scotland. Some readers may have been greatly encouraged by reports of the natural increases in flocks and herds allowing settlers to become prosperous. However, over a number of years drought conditions had nearly brought the colony to its economic knees. It was perhaps only the discovery of the worth of the tallow obtainable by boiling down carcasses of both sheep and cattle which allowed many settlers to survive. To those in Scotland aware of the clearances particularly in the Highlands to make way for enlarged sheep walks, the reports in published letters of boiling down large numbers of animals must have been an almost unbelievable story. It was one which had the potential to draw into question other newspaper reports which might otherwise have encouraged emigration. The clear conclusion which must be drawn from comments about the climate and the nature of farming in the colony is that those comments stood to be quite influential in decisions by anyone considering a move to Australia, whether those comments were supportive of emigration or clearly counselling against it.

Other correspondence examined in this study provided information about the wages and general working and living conditions in the colony together with the trades and skills needed in the colony. These matters were examined in Chapter four. For many people considering emigration, wages and conditions would have been of serious concern. The letters in the press showed that these often stood in stark contrast to living conditions in Scotland providing a level of income and living standards often unobtainable in Scotland.

Australian conditions required a very different way of managing sheep, requiring many more shepherds than in Scotland. Reports that were made of opportunities for shepherds would have been of interest for those seeking a level of employment security not available in Scotland. However, a number of letter writers also drew attention to the loneliness of a shepherd's existence and for at least some readers those reports had the potential to influence their emigration decisions adversely. Moreover, in the middle of the period under examination, some pastoralists reduced the wages paid, on occasions offering only rations to a captive work force. This deterioration in employment conditions was reported in letters home to Scotland. It was a reduction which would have been noted and the conclusion which can be drawn is that for some readers of the newspapers at least it stood to lessen the appeal of voluntary emigration at that time.

Chapter five has examined some of the myriad of factors involved in the nature of the evolving society in New South Wales and whether these factors stood to influence decisions around migrating to Australia. There was very little information in the letters examined which would have spoken directly to women in Scotland of the details of a future life should they choose to emigrate. One young woman from Glasgow recounted how she had made a satisfactory marriage soon after arrival, noting pragmatically that a good bargain could be made as well in one night as in a hundred.⁵ A number of men writing home deplored the opportunities for marriage in a colony which had a serious gender imbalance among the settler population. It may have been particularly to women reading or listening to these letters that the prices of foodstuffs and other goods would have been of considerable interest although many men followed developments here too. Of likely interest also would have been the comments in correspondence concerning education or the lack of it, the healthy climate for children, and religious support in the colony. One correspondent complained about the absence of sermons being preached where he could attend them, while for others, issues of religious and social community based around the Gaelic language are reported as being significant. In some matters such as the healthy climate, the information identified in the correspondence studied herein clearly had potential to impact positively on emigration decisions while other

⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 21 May 1834, 4.

issues identified by some correspondents such as the lack of Gaelic language religious services had the reverse potential.

A number of letter writers reported issues of safety which may have been of concern to those reading the letters in the newspapers. Concerns for a safe future in New South Wales were analysed in Chapter six. The evidence identified in this study has confirmed that it was sometimes anything but an easy passage to Australia and reports of voyage difficulties would have been noticed by those considering leaving home. Identification of a letter from Port Macquarie together with items in Sydney newspapers has allowed a correction to be made to a report by the popular historian John Prebble. Prebble had written that the record of the fate of all the passengers on the *Asia* had been lost after the disastrous first four weeks of its voyage to Australia.⁶ The passengers' safe arrival in Sydney was recorded in a letter published in Scotland but it is not clear how this letter would have been received by readers there. This item notwithstanding, it is clear that the Scottish press carried a wide range of reports concerning the safety or otherwise of travel to the colony and these reports individually or collectively had potential to be of concern to many likely emigrants. Safety after arrival in the colony was mentioned in various letters and these reports also would have been weighed up by potential emigrants concerned for their future in what was for many a once-in-a-lifetime choice about moving or remaining. In a number of cases safety issues have been ignored by correspondents and the reasons for this have been considered and explored where possible in an attempt to show how such omissions had potential to sway emigration decisions. The conclusion which is drawn from these issues around safety for emigrants is that the letters provided over time a wide range of information to inform and influence emigration decisions.

Some letters in this study encouraged emigration to New South Wales but others discouraged it. As the nineteenth century proceeded, it was becoming increasingly clear that many areas in Scotland were unable to support a growing population. Some newspapers took the opportunity of publishing letters to encourage

⁶ Prebble, *The Highland Clearances*, 198-9; *John O'Groat Journal*, 10 July 1840, 4.

emigration to relieve this burden of over-population. When it is seen that the *Inverness Courier* presented an item headed ‘Emigration to New South Wales from the Highlands’, the *Caledonian Mercury* headlined an item ‘Emigration to New South Wales. Experiences of a Settler’ or the *Fife Herald* offered ‘Competence in a Colony versus Poverty at Home’ it is clear that the newspapers sought to influence emigration decisions, mostly recounting conditions which it was hoped would benefit those accessing reports in the papers.⁷ By contrast in attitudes, the *John O’Groat Journal* used three letters in 1840 to support its claim that emigrants would be far better off travelling to British North America and the United States than to any of the Australian colonies.⁸ There is no evidence of direct editing of any of these three letters although clearly, at least for the letter appearing on 8 May 1840, some selective use of part/s of the letter was undertaken. There does not appear to be a noticeably favourable reporting on matters in the Americas elsewhere in the *John O’Groat Journal* at this time. It did print in 1841 an ‘Extract of a letter from Upper Canada, important to emigrants’ from Alex Douglas, formerly of the parish of Watten in Caithness, which praised conditions in Montreal and in Kingston in Upper Canada.⁹ Harper has commented on that letter that Douglas “clearly over-egged the qualities of the country” but whether readers of the *John O’Groat Journal* would have recognised that exaggeration or what was sometimes the newspaper’s biased reporting is uncertain.¹⁰

Approximately seventy letters, or extracts from them, or other items in the press of the period in Scotland dealing with the colony of New South Wales were studied in the preparation of this thesis. It draws attention to the under-utilised resource of letters published in newspapers throughout Scotland and the effect which those newspapers may have had on a widely literate population facing a climate of

⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 7 March 1838; *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 August 1838; *Fife Herald*, 27 April 1848.

⁸ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 February 1840, 4; 8 May 1840, 3; 10 July 1840, 4.

⁹ *John O’Groat Journal*, 19 February 1841, 3.

¹⁰ Marjory Harper, “‘Quite Destitute and ... Very Desirous of Going to North America’: The Roots and Repercussions of Emigration from Sutherland and Caithness”, *Northern Scotland* 8, 2017 (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 61.

significant social disruption. For many in that population, exile may have been an option of last resort.

The fate of many of the people encountered in this survey appears to be that they remained in Australia. Whether it was by choice or circumstances beyond their control, it is clear that most of the letter writers accepted that their future rested in the colony. Two of the letters analysed in this thesis provide opposing conclusions to the question of whether Scots should have emigrated to New South Wales and each of those letter writers was clear in his intention to influence the decisions of others about emigration. The motives of a letter writer in September 1845 at Carcor/Carcoar remain unclear but his intention is clear.¹¹ He was one of those who had sent home bad reports of the country having failed to make an immediate fortune. What is clear is that his intention was to deter potential migrants by using the medium of the newspaper to reach a wider circle of readers. His intentions may have been public spirited, hoping to save others from making the same mistake of emigrating which it is clear he believed he had already made. It is also possible that, having noted an improvement in economic conditions in the colony but recognising that there would continue to be limited opportunities for respectable young men such as himself, he had sought to reduce the numbers likely to be seeking any opportunities which he might be seeking. Whether he succeeded in deterring others by publication of his warning letter is not known but the potential to do so is very clear.

The final letter examined in this thesis was sent by Alex MacDonald, a free settler, a shepherd and a Highlander. New South Wales was, in the view of MacDonald, set for a sound and prosperous future and his very positive report had great potential to bring others to Australia. The firm conclusion stated in his letter was that anyone in his home region of Moidart who could manage to emigrate would be well advised to do so but had to be prepared to work hard and not expect an easy fortune to be made. Publication of MacDonald's letter in the *Inverness*

¹¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 April 1846, 4.

Courier would have made this clear to many Highlanders and others well beyond the private addressees of the letter.

The central argument in this thesis has been that by analysing reports in the letters in Scottish newspapers and then comparing the conditions described in the colony with those being experienced in Scotland it is clear that the correspondence had potential to influence emigration decisions. In support of that argument, it has drawn on a variety of sources, including discussion of the nature of information disseminated through newspapers. It is grounded in the history of colonial Australia as well as the history of nineteenth century Scotland. By focusing on a body of material not previously studied it has added to the historiography of both Australia and of Scotland.

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