

New settlements and new pastures

c. 1821–50

Between 1821 and 1851, important new colonies were founded on remote parts of the Australian coastline, much of the habitable interior was effectively explored and then stolen from the Aborigines by pastoralists and their men, and a distinctively Australian ethos began to take shape – at least among the mass of the population, if not so much among the more cultivated minority. At the same time, the colonies were moving steadily towards self-government. We shall consider these major developments and some of the relationships between them – the planting of new settlements, political reform, the great “squatting rush” to the interior, and the growth of a characteristic outlook. All were strongly influenced in one way or another by the convict system, for the importation of felons to mainland eastern Australia continued until 1840, and to Van Diemen’s Land until 1852 (after which the island colony was known as Tasmania). In fact, the great majority of all convicts sent to Australia were transported during these years.

“Botany Bay” had been chosen as the first site for British occupation partly because it offered a suitably remote “dumping ground” for felons. In the same way, many of the first settlement sites beyond Hobart and Sydney were chosen because they were suitably remote from the two colonial capitals, and it was thought that escape from them would be difficult – as it usually was. Thus when Newcastle was settled in 1804, and for at least fourteen years afterwards, there was no possibility of communication with Sydney except by a sea voyage of 160 kilometres. Macquarie Harbour, founded on Van Diemen’s Land’s west coast by Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell in 1822, was separated from the settled districts by mountains and rainforests so dense that the Aborigines avoided them for 20000 years and they still resist white occupation today. Such penal stations were established as places of “secondary punishment” – remote goals for transportees convicted of further crimes or misdemeanours in Australia. Legend has perhaps exaggerated the quantity, but not the severity, of the inhumanly cruel and often illegal tortures inflicted on prisoners at these places. Hundreds of men preferred to die rather than to go on living in them.¹

As white settlement spread, it tended to make one penal station after another no longer remote enough. Thus when Benjamin Singleton, a Currency lad from Windsor, discovered a passable overland route to the lower Hunter valley and Newcastle in 1818,² he greatly reduced the usefulness of “Coal River” as a place of secondary punishment. So another was established in 1821 at Port Macquarie, a further 160 kilometres or more to the north, and yet another three years later, further north still, at “Moreton Bay” on the Brisbane River. Port Macquarie in its heyday was reported to be a comparatively pleasant place of exile, while Moreton Bay under its second commandant, Captain Logan, was believed to be an earthly hell for its inmates. Apparently Logan treated the Aborigines equally harshly, for he was “murdered” by them after only five years in office. According to legend, the black Australians were privily egged on to the deed by the whites, who also suffered under Logan’s rule. As the old convict ballad, *Moreton Bay*, has it:

Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews,
We were oppressed under Logan’s yoke,
Till a native Black lying hid in ambush
Did give our tyrant his mortal stroke.
My fellow prisoners, be exhilarated
That all such monsters such a death may find,

And when from bondage we are extricated,
Our former sufferings shall fade from mind.³

The most notorious of all penal stations were Port Arthur in Tasmania and Norfolk Island. The latter, as we have seen, was first occupied a few weeks after the arrival of the First Fleet at Port Jackson, but it was intended as a flax farm, not as a place of secondary punishment. Abandoned in 1813, it was reoccupied as a penal station from 1825 to 1856. For four years from 1840, Norfolk Island men were ruled by Alexander Maconochie, one of the greatest penal reformers and humanitarians of his day. For seven years from 1846 its luckless prisoners were flogged and tortured mercilessly by John Price, one of the most severe disciplinarians ever to disgrace the Queen's uniform. In 1857, as Inspector-General of Prisons in Victoria, he was battered to death with picks and shovels by a group of convicts, which included some of his old charges from Norfolk Island.⁴ When the penal establishment was closed in 1856, the island was settled by some of the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers, for whom there was no longer living space on Pitcairn Island.

Port Arthur was established in 1830 by the newly appointed Governor Sir George Arthur, a devout Anglican who believed with Samuel Marsden that to spare the rod would be to spoil the prisoners in this life and condemn them to hell in the next one. Though only about 100 kilometres from Hobart, the place was deemed suitable because it was situated on a peninsula joined to the mainland by a strip of land only 70 metres wide and known as Eaglehawk Neck. Guards and savage dogs were kept in a line across the Neck and it is said that only four convicts ever escaped from Port Arthur. The peculiarly evil reputation of the place probably derives from the fact that it continued to serve as a purgatory for criminals until 1876, a full twenty-five years after transportation to Tasmania had come to an end.

Beyond the farthest penal stations, other coastal outposts were established, as Sydney had been, partly for strategic and commercial reasons. After the Napoleonic Wars, Britain continued to fear a French *revanche* and to compete with the Dutch for a greater share of the rich trade of the Malay Archipelago; Penang was founded by a British East India man, Francis Light, father of Colonel William Light, the surveyor of Adelaide. In 1824, to support Penang, Fort Dundas was built among sandbanks and mangrove swamps on Melville Island, a little north of the present site of Darwin. Naturally not one Asian ship was seen by the Fort's soldiers and convicts before those who survived scurvy, fever and malnutrition left in 1829. Undaunted, London sent Captain James Stirling in 1827 to found a second trading post at Raffles Bay about 300 kilometres east of Fort Dundas. As Stirling chose a place where the Macassar men clearly came regularly to fish for trepang, Fort Wellington promised success. In the 1829 trepang season, thirty-four proas, carrying more than 1000 men, visited the fort, but in that very year London, still believing that not one Malay ship had been seen there, ordered its abandonment.⁵ Within a decade there was another French scare. To frustrate the desperately clever continentals and also to capture some of the Southeast Asian trade, another outpost was established at Port Essington in 1838. It was abandoned in turn in 1849, a few years after Leichhardt's first expedition had made its way overland from the Moreton Bay district. So the first permanent white settlement was not made until 1868 at Palmerston (Port Darwin), after the territory had been handed over to South Australia by the New South Wales government. Two other settlements were planted from Sydney in 1826, not so much as trading outposts as to forestall supposed French designs. Early in that year a French expedition under Dumont d'Urville visited Australian and New Zealand waters, reconnoitring, among other places, Shark's Bay on the western edge of Australia and Western Port on the northern shores of Bass Strait. Governor Darling was promptly ordered to despatch soldiers and convicts from Sydney to raise the flag at both places. Western Port was abandoned when the "French scare" receded after only two years and Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State, changed his mind about Shark's Bay almost as soon as his

orders had been despatched. Shark's Bay after all had practically no wood, water or fertile soil, but it did have what Englishmen thought a beastly hot climate. King George's Sound near the southern tip of Western Australia had plenty of the desired commodities, was "in the track" of ships to Sydney, had arguably a finer harbour than Port Jackson and also a splendid, or at least reasonably cool, climate. Major Lockyer's garrison hoisted the Union Jack there on Christmas Day 1826.⁶

While these official efforts to attract Asian trade to three north Australian ports all failed abjectly, unofficial trade with the South Seas and with Asia flourished. By 1851 few Melanesian Islands remained unvisited by Australian ships seeking (not always in the gentlest or most honest ways) cargoes of sandalwood for China, and there were few parts of the whole Pacific and Southern Oceans which had not been searched for whales and seals by sailors from Sydney and Hobart Town. One of their most bizarre exploits was carried out by the crew of the Sydney brig *Lady Rowena*. On April Fools' Day 1831, Captain Bourn Russell anchored in a bay on the east coast of Hokkaido, northernmost of the main islands of the Japanese Empire, and opened what could justly be described as undiplomatic relations between Australia and Japan. Going ashore next day the Australians met "a few inotched [innocuous?] creatures, the Aborigines of the land of Tartars." As these Ainu people and their Japanese overlords were less than enthusiastic in supplying the *Lady Rowena* with wood and water, Russell and his crew sacked the local fort, burnt the village, robbed the temple and took prisoner one unlucky samurai who had fallen off his horse. Then, with that stupendous cheek that many thought the distinguishing feature of Currency men, with all the flashness of Captain James Kelly of Hobart Town or that later wild colonial boy, Ned Kelly of Glenrowan, Captain Russell packed the prisoner off to his Emperor bearing a threatening letter:

To his Most Celestial Highness
The Emperor of Japan.

Sir,

...We only wanted Wood and Water and shelter from bad weather to repair our ship; which we should have willing paid for; but as they were so inhospitable: as not to supply us; but show fight after waiting many days; I chastised them for their perverseness; by fighting them.

We took one Japanese prisoner and their flags; and the rest ran away! and for presuming to fire on a stranger instead of supplying his wants; I burnt their village, and took what I wanted.

I hope all my countrymen will do the same, burn and destroy all your towns and Villages that refuse, that hospitality which is due to every man; which they are well able to do even in your city Jeddo [Tokyo] until [sic] you order that they may enter any of your ports ...

With all respect you may conceive to be due you without degrading formalities,

I am,
Your obedient servant an Englishman,
Agitana, April, 15, 1831.

Like most Australians of the last century, Russell, we note, could not abide "degrading formalities". Like most of our ancestors, too, whether British-born as he was or not, he was quick, when dealing with those he considered ignorant foreigners, to claim British citizenship. After more voyaging in the South Seas he opened a store in West Maitland in 1835 and became one of the most respectable members of the Australian community – from 1858 to 1880 a life member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales.⁷

Exploration of inland Australia can hardly be said to have begun until the first track across the Blue Mountains was found, more probably by their Aboriginal "guide" than by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson in 1813. Thereafter the discovery and mapping of southeastern Australia, the area between Tasmania, southern Queensland and central South Australia where more than three-quarters of all white Australians still live, proceeded apace. John Oxley, surveyor-general of New South Wales and G.W. Evans, his assistant, followed the rivers downstream south, west and northwest from the Bathurst district. Each time, because they were

travelling in good seasons, progress ended in “an ocean of reeds”. So by 1820 Oxley had fathered the myth of an inland sea into which, he believed, the western rivers must flow. In 1827 Allan Cunningham, a gifted botanist, journeyed from the Hunter Valley north across the Liverpool Plains and the New England Plateau to discover the Darling Downs and to view “Cunningham’s Gap” which, he correctly guessed, would give access to the coastal plain and the recently established penal station at Moreton Bay. In 1824-25 a Currency lad named Hamilton Hume joined William Hovell, an immigrant sea-captain, to find an overland route to the northern coast of Bass Strait. The government provided them with a tent and a few pack-saddles, but little else. They reached Corio Bay by a track through the bush, roughly along the line of today’s Hume Highway. They discovered and named the mighty river which has, since 1850, formed the boundary between the two most populous Australian colonies. They called it the Hume, but Sturt later renamed it after an undistinguished but gentlemanly Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir George Murray. Hume and Hovell spent much of the rest of their lives quarrelling over their shares of the credit for their discovery, as they had quarrelled through the journey. They both thought they had reached Western Port, not any part of Port Phillip. Hovell was eleven years older than Hume and a much more respectable person. He was the better navigator while Hume was a better bushman. A reading of the pamphlets they both published makes it clear that Hume thought Hovell a pretentious and impractical “new chum”, while Hovell considered Hume a coarse and low colonial.⁸

The myth of an inland sea was finally laid to rest by an English army officer, Captain Charles Sturt. Sent to Sydney in charge of the guard on a convict transport in 1827, he used his influence with Governor Darling to gain command of the next expedition sent to explore the new country to the west of the Blue Mountains. The newly appointed Surveyor-General, T.L. Mitchell, objected vigorously, holding that his position entitled him to the control of all exploration in the colony. This crusty and quarrelsome Scottish Tory hated Sturt for the rest of his life. Though no less conservative in temperament than Mitchell, Sturt had the wisdom to choose the native-born Hume as second-in-command of his first expedition. They followed the Macquarie River westward and then swung north along the Hogan until it joined “a noble river” which they named after the governor. They followed the Darling downstream for a week, returned to their base and then traced the course of the Castlereagh River northwestwards until it too joined the Darling. A year later, in November 1829, Sturt led a second expedition from a station near Gundagai to trace the course of the Murrumbidgee. At its junction with the Lachlan, the party boarded a small whaleboat and rowed downstream until it joined a “broad and noble river” which Sturt named the Murray. Coming to its junction with the Darling, Sturt rowed northwards far enough to convince himself it was indeed the lower end of the river whose higher reaches he had discovered earlier. Then they rowed on to Lake Alexandrina and gazed sadly at the shifting, narrow channel through which the water of all the western rivers flows to the sea. There was no sign of the ship Sir Ralph Darling had promised to send, and no possibility that it could have approached the shallow, surf-covered shore if he had kept his word. So the convict hands, exhausted and half-starving as they were, rowed back 1500 kilometres against the current to safety.

In 1830 Sturt was sent to command the garrison at Norfolk Island penal station. While there he suppressed a convict rising, but with such humanity as to retain the respect even of the mutineers. After a period of leave in England, where he married the daughter of an old friend, Sturt returned to Sydney, emigrated to the new “province” of South Australia and set out from Adelaide in 1844 on his last journey of exploration. Having done more than anyone else to show that the western rivers flowed into the Southern Ocean, Sturt, oddly, still believed in the existence of an inland sea; and yet not so oddly, as we now know the Diamantina, the Finke, Cooper’s Creek and other rivers do drain inland to Lake Eyre. Sturt, like others of the time, was not to know that the rivers and the inland sea to which they flowed were usually bone dry. The

expedition struck out northwestwards from the Darling and established a base on permanent water at Depot Glen in the far northwestern corner of the present state of New South Wales. Pinned down there for six months by a terrible drought, Sturt then pushed forward 700 kilometres to the red sand-dunes of what is now known as the Simpson Desert before admitting defeat. The rest is anti-climax. Half-blinded by what our ancestors called “sandy blight”, he failed to secure a colonial governorship or any other position to which his achievements and services to the state entitled him. His failure to impress the great people of the world was balanced by the honour in which he was held by subordinates, convict servants, Aborigines and posterity. As we have seen, even mutinous convicts, whom he punished at Norfolk Island, respected the man.⁹

When Governor Darling left New South Wales in 1831, Sturt lost his patron and the cantankerous Mitchell immediately succeeded to the *de facto* position of explorer-in-chief. He led four expeditions into the interior, of which only the last two opened up substantially new areas, respectively what has long been known as the Western District of Victoria and as south-central Queensland – the country around the Warrego, Belyando and Maranoa rivers. Mitchell himself thought his discovery of magnificent grazing and agricultural country between the Murray and the Victorian coast west of Port Phillip was his greatest achievement. He called it Australia Felix. Future generations have agreed to regard this area as the richest pastoral district in Australia, the citadel of wealthy “squatting” families such as that of the Prime Minister from 1975 to 1983, Malcolm Fraser. Contemporaries agreed, and even the faraway Colonial Office recommended that the intrepid Scot be dubbed a knight in 1839. Mitchell thought the country so beautiful that he wrote in his journal a passage which revealed, quite unconsciously, what a different kind of man he was from Sturt.

The scene was different from anything I had ever before witnessed, either in New South Wales or elsewhere, a land so inviting and still without inhabitants. As I stood, the first intruder on the sublime solitude of those verdant plains as yet untouched by flocks or herds, I felt conscious of being the harbinger of mighty changes there.

Aboriginal “intruders” had inhabited the country for tens of thousands of years but Mitchell’s actions, like the above words, showed that he may not have considered them to be fully human. On all his expeditions he treated them like wild animals to be shot or frightened out of his way. In all probability he first used the word “dispersion” as a white Australian euphemism for the murder of Aborigines. At any rate he named the place where the bloodiest affray occurred Mount Dispersion. It cannot be said that Sir Thomas was only a man of his times, no worse, in this respect, than most others. His behaviour was such that in 1836 the Legislative Council of New South Wales, a body not in the least distinguished by its tender regard for Aboriginal rights, was moved to set up an official inquiry into the events at Mount Dispersion. In the time-honoured manner of such bodies before and since, the inquiry white-washed Mitchell, finding merely that he could not be blamed for showing “a want of coolness and presence of mind which it is the lot of few men to possess”.¹⁰

The two most notable explorers, who first traversed new country far beyond the southeastern corner of the continent and the Murray-Darling basin, were E.J. Eyre and Ludwig Leichhardt. Born in an English vicarage, Eyre arrived in Sydney in 1833 at the age of 18 and immediately went “up the country” to gain bush experience. He also gained excellent training for the work of exploration by becoming one of the first “overlanders” in Australia, taking stock from the Liverpool Plains to the Monaro district. Thence he drove another mob to the newly opened Port Phillip district, and in 1838 followed Joseph Hawdon’s track along the Murray to become the second overlander to deliver stock to the new Adelaide market. Moving stock between colonies seems to have got into Eyre’s blood. He spent the next few years in South Australia searching incessantly for what has never yet been found – a practicable stock-route between that colony and Western Australia. On two probes into the parched north of the

province, he discovered Lake Torrens and Lake Eyre and learnt enough to know that in that part of the world the word “Lake” should always be printed in inverted commas. Then, after several probes westwards along the shore of the Great Australian Bight, he set out in 1841 from Fowler’s Bay for King George’s Sound. About nine weeks later two of the three Aborigines in the party murdered Baxter, Eyre’s only white companion, and decamped with most of the supplies and firearms. With Wylie, a King George’s Sound Aborigine, Eyre struggled on until they had the incredible luck to find a French whaler, the *Mississippi*, anchored in Thistle Cove near the present site of Esperance. The Frenchmen gave them a few days’ rest aboard and a new supply of provisions which enabled them to walk to Albany. The whole journey had taken five months and should have proved that no stock-route from South Australia to the west would ever be found.¹¹

Leichhardt was the son of a petty bureaucrat in Prussia. He was also what some later Australians would have called a university “dropout” and “con-man”. He studied languages, philosophy and science at the Universities of Gottingen and Berlin, but left both places in 1836 before taking any degree – not, however, before making friends with a wealthy young Englishman on whose generosity he lived for the next few years. He seems indeed to have been supported for most of his life by the subscriptions, gifts, loans or hospitality of the rich and gullible. This is not to say that he was an ignoramus. Though he had no more legitimate claim to the designation of “Doctor” than Ned Kelly later had to that of “Archbishop”, the title was thrust upon him by imperfectly lettered Australian colonists who were deeply – and rightly – impressed by his wide-ranging scholarship. Like a few later “dropouts”, he was undoubtedly a genuinely learned man. Like more, he also had a genius for charming those on whom he depended for dinners and drinks. One of his Australian hosts described him as “the most amiable of men”. It should not be surprising that most of those who depended on him, the men brave enough to accompany him in the field, found him careless, dirty, suspicious, jealous, almost incredibly gluttonous and hopelessly unfitted for the leadership of even a weekend bushwalk.¹² Nevertheless, he led three exploring expeditions, the first to glory, the second to abject failure and the third to mysterious but total disaster.

In 1845 Leichhardt led a party from Moreton Bay to Port Essington near the present site of Darwin. He covered about 3000 kilometres in less than fifteen months and returned by sea to a hero’s welcome in Sydney, a government grant of £1000, and private gifts amounting to £1500. In the excitement, no one noticed that the whole journey had been made through reasonably well-watered country and that this lavishly equipped expedition had never had to face the problems surmounted by Eyre’s much more Spartan band. A year later Leichhardt again set off from the Darling Downs with the grandiose plan of striking across the continent to the west coast and then following it south to the Swan River settlement. In the event he turned back after covering only about 900 kilometres through country quite close to his earlier route in what is now central Queensland. Still thirsting for glory with six men, he left again for the Swan River from Cogoon, then the farthest-out station on the Darling Downs, on 3 April 1848.

They may have been killed by Aborigines defending their soil. They may have been drowned in a flash flood sweeping down a dry creek bed. Leichhardt was certainly quite capable of camping in such a place. Most likely they simply died of thirst in desert country of some kind the Doctor had not previously studied. No certain clues to their end have ever been found. Yet many believe Leichhardt’s greatest achievement is, by his final folly, to have inspired that mighty work of Patrick White’s imagination, *Voss*.¹³

Before the gold rushes which began in 1851, Leichhardt’s expeditions were the last to probe the mysteries of what lay beyond the Great Dividing Range as the successful crossing of the Divide itself, in Governor Macquarie’s time, had been the first. Macquarie is sometimes called “the last of the tyrants” because representative institutions increasingly limited the governor’s powers during the thirty years or so following his retirement. In accordance with Bigge’s

Report, an act of the British parliament in 1823 instituted certain legal reforms in Australia, separated the administration of Van Diemen's Land from that of New South Wales, and gave both colonies a Legislative Council. True, the Council consisted of only a few officials nominated by the governor himself, and he could ignore their advice if he thought it wise to do so; but the chief justice now had to certify that every new ordinance was "consistent with the laws of England, so far as the circumstances of the colony will permit". That the governor's powers were no longer absolute was shown in 1827 when a liberal-minded chief justice of New South Wales, Sir Francis Forbes, refused to certify a law which sought to censor the colonial press.¹⁴

Partly as a result of this squabble, another imperial act of 1828 increased the size of the Council to fifteen. The act also deprived the chief justice of the power of veto. Instead it provided that if all the judges of the Supreme Court considered an act repugnant to English law, the Council must reconsider it. Then, however, the Council could promulgate the new law, if it wished to do so, pending a final decision by the secretary of state in London. All the Council members were still nominated by the governor. Eight of them were to be his chief administrative officials and seven were "unofficial" members, usually in practice leading exclusionists. Since the governor alone could introduce legislation, it is not surprising that disagreements between him and the Council were at first unusual.¹⁵

This remained the constitutional position until 1842, but throughout the period agitation for a greater measure of self-government increased. Most prominent in the movement was William Charles Wentworth (1790-1872) who, as a young Currency lad, had helped to find a way across the mountain barrier. His father, D'Arcy Wentworth, a connection of Earl Fitzwilliam, after being acquitted at the Old Bailey of high-way robbery, had volunteered to join the Second Fleet as a surgeon. In New South Wales bond and free workmen thought him one of the best masters "that ever lived in the world". Young William Charles was educated at Cambridge University where he was runner-up for the Chancellor's Medal for poetry in 1823, but his mother had been a convict girl. By the 1840s he had become the most famous living Australian, yet such was the exaggerated *hauteur* of the exclusionists that as late as 1863, T.S. Mort, a successful Sydney businessman of middle-class but "untainted" background, could speak thus, without intentional humour of Wentworth:

I have never met him in society as he did not move in the same spheres as myself. Had he visited with the principal families in the colony at that time I must have met him, as I exchanged visits with nearly the whole of them.¹⁶

Thus, as long as the convict system lasted, the bitter faction strife between emancipists and exclusionists helped to defer the granting of more liberal political institutions. Having already started a newspaper, the *Australian*, Wentworth in 1835 took a leading part in founding the Australian Patriotic Association. Composed mainly of emancipists and their sympathisers, this body yet established an influential lobby in the House of Commons and agitated for a representative legislature and other liberal institutions. Led by James Macarthur, son of the "grand perturbator", the exclusionists lobbied parliament even more effectively. If reform was inevitable, they wished to limit it, seeking at most extension of the powers of a larger, but still nominated, Council. Both factions desired the continuation of the convict system which provided the cheap labour on which their wealth depended, yet the British government remained obstinately of the opinion that free institutions should not be granted to a society whose population still comprised a majority of convicted or emancipated felons and their descendants. Some of these who, with a few immigrant artisans, made up the embryonic working class of Sydney, had not much influence on events. When the Patriotic Association declared for the continuance of transportation in 1838, most working men withdrew their support. At the same time, the wealthy emancipists and the exclusionists began to find more common ground in politics, if not yet in social life.

The impasse was resolved in London rather than Sydney. In 1837-38 a select committee of the House of Commons, under the chairmanship of Sir William Molesworth, heard voluminous evidence and recommended the abolition of transportation to New South Wales.¹⁷ Strongly influenced by Malthusian and Wakefieldian ideas, the committee was much more concerned to provide in New South Wales for the surplus population of the United Kingdom than it was with colonial self-government, but its recommendations led to the end of transportation to the eastern mainland, as well as to the assisted immigration in the 1840s of some 30 000 free immigrants, many of them paupers from the workhouses and most of them unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The committee's recommendations also prepared the way for a larger measure of representative government. Practically no more convicts were sent to eastern mainland Australia.

In 1842 the membership of the Legislative Council was increased to thirty-six, two-thirds of whom were to be elected. Moreover, elected members might introduce topics for debate. However, the franchise was fixed so that only a minority of male citizens could vote, and no one could be elected to the Council unless he owned property worth at least £2000 – equivalent to something like \$500 000 in terms of 1990 money values. The governor retained the power of nominating the twelve official members who remained responsible to him, and he retained control of Crown lands and the right, in the last resort, to veto any measure. Thus the new Council was not a very democratic body. Because of its composition, it was often far more conservative in outlook than the Queen's representative himself. It was sometimes termed the "Squatters' Council" because wealthy pastoralists tended to dominate its deliberations and its members spent a disproportionate amount of time wrangling with Governor Sir George Gipps (1838-46) over the conditions under which Crown lands were to be leased to themselves and their friends. It habitually went into recess for the shearing season. Nevertheless, the "Squatters' Council" did provide valuable training in the art of self-government. It acted, to some extent, as a genuine sounding board for public opinion. Its debates were fully reported in the newspapers and discussed, sometimes with passionate interest, by the colonists.¹⁸

Since convicts could no longer be sent to the mainland, many more – relatively – were shipped to Van Diemen's Land during the 1840s. For a period at the beginning of this decade, New South Wales suffered from a severe labour shortage at the very time when insufficient work could be found for the mass of convict and emancipist labour in Van Diemen's Land. The island colony, since convictism continued, had to remain discontented with its nominated Legislative Council.

In 1840 the territory of New South Wales still included most of eastern Australia – roughly the areas of present-day Queensland, Victoria and the eastern part of the Northern Territory, in addition to that which still constitutes the mother colony; but by that date all the other major colonies had been founded in fact if not in legal form. Oddly enough, Britain laid no formal claim to the western third of New Holland until nearly forty years after the Wales was beginning first settlement at Sydney. Possibly there was a vague feeling that it belonged to the Dutch who, however, continued to show no interest in it. As we have seen, the British government eventually claimed Western Australia in 1826, when it established an outpost at King George's Sound. Albany, as the King George's Sound settlement came to be called, was about 3000 kilometres distant by sea from the nearest white settlement at Hobart. It was even farther by land from the eastcoast settlements near Sydney, but until 1917, when the transcontinental railway was built, there was no land communication between Western Australia and the rest of the country. Waterless deserts barred the way to all but a handful of hardy explorers and their camels. No one repeated Eyre's and Wylie's feat. Western Australia's extreme physical isolation is perhaps the main reason why it was developed so much later than all the other colonies. Another was the generally sandy, barren nature of the coastal plain on which the main settlement at Perth was founded three years after the first outpost at King

George's Sound. A third handicap was the absence of a "convict establishment" – and of the cheap labour and government investment of capital which convictism brought with it.

In the 1820s the growth of the wool industry in New South Wales was beginning to attract the attention of private British investors. A group of capitalists, of whom the most important was Thomas Peel, a second cousin of the statesman Sir Robert Peel, thought that money might be made in Western Australia. The government was persuaded that the scheme might absorb some of the unemployed in Britain. It agreed to grant capitalists land at the Swan River settlement, at the rate of forty acres for every £3 invested, if they would pay the passages of free labourers. No convicts were to be sent. In return for a promise to land 400 settlers, Thomas Peel was granted 250 000 acres. Most of the land he selected is still worth little today. The government's only role was to pay the civil and military officers. Not surprisingly, many contemporaries thought the establishment of the Swan River colony a "job" – what later generations termed a "racket" – engineered by powerful politicians for their own and their friends' benefit. It probably was, but if so it was also a job contrived for, and partly by, James Stirling, the first governor of Western Australia and son-in-law of a powerful director of the British East India Company.¹⁹ Having set up an outpost of empire at Raffles Bay in 1827, Stirling had the initiative to explore the Swan River area for the first time since Vlamingh's visit 130 years earlier. Unlike the Dutchman, he thought, or persuaded himself, that the country was, like Mitchell's Australia Felix, a veritable garden of Eden.²⁰

Back in London, he spent many months impressing upon the government the surpassing virtues of the Swan River and his own fitness for the post of governor of the new colony. He was appointed and became the only governor of any Australian colony to win the dubious distinction of personally leading troops against the Aborigines. On 29 October 1834, a party of about eighty Aborigines was attacked by Stirling and about twenty-five soldiers and police at the so-called Battle of Pinjarra. Though they fought bravely, about half of the Aborigines, including a woman and several children, were killed.²¹

The Swan River settlement long remained a sickly infant. Because the land was almost given away, the few labourers who came to the new colony generally chose to scratch a subsistence from their own blocks rather than to work for increasingly impoverished employers. Most of the latter had no experience of conditions in Australia, and they were too far away from the older settlements to learn very much from earlier colonists. Some of the most able and enterprising immigrants, like the Henty brothers, who pioneered sheep-raising in what was to become Victoria a few years later, moved on to the more prosperous eastern colonies. Under Edward Gibbon Wakefield's influence, land became progressively more expensive after 1831, but the shortage of labour and capital persisted. In the whole of Western Australia, an area of about 2.5 million square kilometres which is mostly desert, there were only 2760 white people in 1841 (twelve years after the first landing), and in 1851 there were only 7186. By that time, however, the colonists themselves had petitioned the Home government to send them convicts. The first shipload reached Fremantle in June 1850, and Western Australia received 10 000 male convicts between that date and 1868, when transportation was finally abandoned. The labour of these men helped to set the colony on its feet, but development continued to be relatively sluggish until the Western Australian gold rush of the 1890s brought a sudden influx of immigrants from the eastern colonies.²²

The story of white settlement in South Australia is inseparably linked with the name of Wakefield, the leading spirit among the reforming "theoretical colonisers", who considerably influenced British colonial policy at this time. Wakefield was a polished blackguard whose deeds throw a vivid light on the low status of women in nineteenth-century British society. He was also a brilliant publicist who needed money to forward his ambitions for himself and for new British colonies overseas. So in 1816 he married a beautiful young heiress. When she died after he had spent her money, he abducted from a boarding-school in Lancashire a very wealthy

15-year-old-girl, carried her post-haste to the Scottish border and married her at Gretna Green. The child's uncle caught up with the fugitives on the quay at Calais where Wakefield had the effrontery to declare, "Then, sir, you may dispose of your niece as you think proper, but you receive her at my hands as a pure and spotless virgin."²³

It was too much even for the sexist mores of Regency England, and Wakefield was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. There is no evidence that either his crime or its punishment made most of his male contemporaries think any the less of him. Since he could afford to pay the gaoler for good food and quarters, he passed the time in Newgate pleasantly enough writing his bogously titled *Letters from Sydney*. These newspaper articles, published in 1829 as a book entitled *A Letter from Sydney and Other Writings*, set forth his leading ideas on "systematic colonisation". The blessings of British civilisation must be transferred *in toto* to overseas settlements. To achieve this, land must be sold at a "sufficient price" to ensure that labourers and mechanics could not too readily acquire land of their own. Thus, he argued, due subordination of men to their masters and a proper, or British, relationship between the classes would be maintained. At the same time, the "sufficient price" would prevent that dispersion of settlement which was tending so much to the encouragement of lawlessness in New South Wales, for no man would buy dear land situated far away from towns and markets. Finally, the proceeds of land sales should be used to bring out labourers so that the process should be self-sustaining. Wakefield was too shrewd ever to translate his "sufficient price" into a cash equivalent, and he died holding that his theory had never been given a fair trial in South Australia or later in New Zealand. Nevertheless, his ideas had some effect on policy. The minimum price of Crown lands in New South Wales was raised to five shillings an acre in 1831, to twelve shillings in 1838, and in 1842 to £1 an acre in all the Australian colonies. The extent of Wakefield's influence on South Australia is suggested by the fact that, from the landing of the first settlers there in 1836, the minimum price of land was £1.²⁴

In the founding of South Australia, Wakefield notwithstanding, there was a greater measure of idealism than in that of the other Australian colonies. It was not a colony, but a "province", and transportation of convicts was to play no part in its history – facts which many South Australians are still quick to mention today. Radical politicians, systematic colonisers, non-conformist bankers and "reforming" speculators all played a part in its establishment, and some of them settled there. Among the immigrants there were relatively fewer penniless, unskilled labourers, and many fewer Irish people, than among those who shipped to the other colonies. There were relatively many more artisans and other respectable, industrious middle-class people, radical or liberal in politics and piously non-conformist or evangelical Anglican in religion. As with the New England puritans, the passage of time has served only to confirm some of these traits while changing others.²⁵

The provincial capital was named after Britain's reigning queen, Adelaide, wife of William IV, generally known to the vulgar as "Silly Billy". It was planned by South Australia's first surveyor-general, Colonel William Light, the bastard son of Francis Light, the founder of that other imperial city, Penang, and a Eurasian woman. At a time when town-planning was little regarded in Britain, Light laid out the most magnificent civic ground-plan the world had yet seen. The city occupied a square mile and was to be surrounded forever by a belt of parklands half a mile wide. Across the northern parklands, which bordered the River Torrens, was another half-square mile of city area also bounded by parks. The city itself was intersected by straight streets, most of them still considered amply wide in the age of motor transport. The main north-south axis was named King William Street after the "sailor King", and the east-west one Wakefield after the kidnapper and propagandist of systematic colonisation. Today Light stands in bronze on an eminence north of the river looking out over the still-beautiful city he created. His own words, engraved on the plinth of the statue justly sum up his achievement:

The reasons that led me to fix Adelaide where it is I do not expect to be generally understood or calmly judged of at the present. My enemies, however, by disputing their validity in every particular, have done me the good service of fixing the whole of the responsibility upon me. I am perfectly willing to bear it; and I leave it to posterity, and not to them, to decide, whether I am entitled to praise or to blame.²⁶

For many years Adelaide was praised by some of its own citizens as “the City of Churches”, and sometimes referred to ironically by non-South Australians as “the Holy City”: for the material success which often rewarded virtue helped to make South Australians increasingly staid and conservative socially and politically. In South Australia’s first decade of responsible government (1856-66), the premiership of the province changed hands thirteen times. For the twenty-six-year span from 1938 to 1965 there was no deviation at all by the electors from Sir Thomas Playford’s Liberal-Country Party government. It should be added that this state of affairs owed something also to the most notorious gerrymander up to that time in Australian political history. Playford retired on 5 July 1966. In December 1969 the electoral boundaries were redrawn in such a way as still to favour the Liberal-Country Party League, though less dramatically. After that some Labor governments, led by Mr Don Dunstan, made the state in many ways the most innovatory one in the Commonwealth.

The relative stability of South Australian life probably owes as much to accidents of geography as to the character of her immigrants. Adelaide was built on the southern end of a coastal plain some 250 kilometres long and up to about 80 kilometres wide. Soil and climate were ideally suited to growing wheat as well as vines, olives and other Mediterranean-type crops. Moreover, Spencer’s and St Vincent’s Gulfs penetrate this area so deeply that they provided cheap sea transport almost from the farmers’ boundary fences. Beyond this small area between the Flinders Ranges and the Gulfs, most of the remainder of South Australia is very like the out back parts of New South Wales, Queensland or Western Australia – semi-desert or desert country which can support only a sparse and precarious existence for pastoralists. Conditions in the restricted area between the Flinders Ranges and the Gulfs were far more favourable than in any other part of Australia to the successful application of Wakefield’s ideas.

The sage of Newgate denounced the plan, declaring that the £1 per acre was not a “sufficient price”. Nevertheless, after initial setbacks caused by delays in the land survey, by speculations, and by a division of control between the governor and the commissioners representing the founding investors and theorists, the new province prospered steadily unspectacularly. Unlike the Swan River settlement, it was near enough to the eastern colonies to profit by trading and other contacts with them. “Overlanders” drove thousands of head of stock to the new Adelaide market, and with them came hundreds of “old hands”, as experienced ex-convict bushmen were called at the time. Their arrival was deplored by those who wished to keep the province free from the convict “taint”, but with their pioneering skills the old hands could command higher wages than the free immigrant labourers could earn, and so most of them stayed on to merge with the general mass of the new colonists.²⁷ From the outset, most people derived their livelihood directly or indirectly from wheatgrowing, while the discovery in 1841 of rich copper mines at the Burra, Wallaroo and Moonta added to the province’s prosperity. By 1851, when the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria brought hundreds of thousands of new immigrants there, South Australia was firmly established as the granary of the whole continent. The relatively sober and industrious character of her citizens may still strike even a casual overseas visitor. To a greater degree than is common elsewhere in Australia, South Australians came to work, to build and to live; they did not come because they had to, or to make a quick pound before moving on. Even their barns and farm outhouses were commonly made of stone or brick, while in other colonies a great many dwelling-houses were built of wood.

Western Australia and South Australia were conceived, to use a horse-breeding metaphor, out of the British government by English capitalists and theorists. The latter colony, as we

have seen, would not have prospered as it did without the unforeseen, unofficial, and in some respects illegal, help of the overlanders. The Port Phillip district of New South Wales, or “Australia Felix”, as Victoria was variously known until 1850, was founded entirely without official sanction by those who came to be known for the next hundred years as “squatters”, trespassers upon Crown lands. To understand, we shall have to retrace our steps a little.

By the 1830s, W.C. Wentworth’s vision of a great woolgrowing industry on the transmontane plains of New South Wales was being realised. Pastoralists were streaming south and west and north to the unsettled, and largely unexplored, districts to grow more wool for the seemingly insatiable demands of the Yorkshire textile industry. Governor; Sir Ralph Darling (1825-31), a conscientious and formal-minded soldier, felt that his subjects were straying beyond the reach of government. In addition, he was much troubled by hundreds of convict “bolters”, or absconders, many of whom had become bushrangers. To remedy these evils, Darling decreed in 1829 that people might live only within the nineteen counties which had been surveyed. Further, the outer boundaries of the counties farthest away from Sydney constituted the “limits of location” beyond which no one might graze their flocks and herds (see Table 1). Even the most respectable colonists, alas, were unimpressed. A few years later it was said that half the sheep in New South Wales were feeding illegally beyond the boundary line about 300 kilometres distant from Sydney. Ten years later Governor Gipps, still plagued by the problem of governing squatters, declared:

As well might it be attempted to confine the Arabs of the Desert within a circle traced, upon their sands, as to confine the Graziers or Woolgrowers of New South Wales within any bounds that can possibly be assigned to them.²⁸

Meanwhile, the liberal-minded Governor Sir Richard Bourke (1831-38) had attempted to compromise with reality. In 1836 he had his Legislative Council enact regulations which recognised a squatter’s right to temporary occupancy of as much Crown land as he pleased beyond the “boundaries of location”, provided he paid £10 annually for a “squattling licence”.

While the best grazing land within 500-900 kilometres of Sydney was being taken up in this distressingly unsystematic way, Van Diemen’s Land pastoralists were becoming cramped for room in the island colony, much of which was in any case mountainous, heavily forested and unsuitable for pasture. Among them were the Henty brothers, who had tried their luck briefly in the new Swan River settlement before moving on to Van Diemen’s Land. In November 1834, Edward Henty, with labourers and stock, crossed Bass Strait and squatted at Portland Bay in the then-almost completely unexplored Port Phillip district.²⁹ He was followed a few months later by two other parties of Vandiemonians led by John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner, who settled at Port Phillip Bay itself on the site of the present city of Melbourne. There they were astonished to find living with the Aborigines a “wild white man”. His name was William Buckley and he had absconded from a party of convicts which for three months in 1803, under the command of David Collins, had made an abortive attempt to settle at Port Phillip. Most living Australians have never heard of William Buckley, but they still speak of a person’s having “Buckley’s chance”, or merely “having Buckley’s”, when they mean that the odds against him or her are so heavy as to leave practically no chance at all.³⁰

Another member of Collins’ visiting party in 1803 had been J.P. Fawkner, one of the two pioneer settlers of Melbourne. As a small boy of 12 he had been brought out with his convict parents in the *Ocean* and had been carried on to Van Diemen’s Land with the rest of the party. His childhood experience gave little Johnny Fawkner a lifelong sympathy for underdogs and a carpingly critical attitude towards authority. These traits in his character were deeply ingrained by the scourger’s cat-o’-nine-tails in 1814 when, though a 22-year-old free man, he was given 500 lashes and three years’ imprisonment for having helped a party of convicts to make an escape attempt from Hobart. He lived on to become an unusually vituperative radical politician in Victoria. The other pioneer of the Port Phillip Bay area was John Batman, a Van Diemen’s

Land squatter. Born in Parramatta, this Currency lad grew up to be a fine bushman endowed with a full measure of the “flashness” of his kind. In 1835 he crossed Bass Strait and returned triumphantly bearing a treaty, “signed” by a number of Aboriginal “chiefs”, which purported to give him and his heirs forever outright possession of 600 000 acres of land contiguous to the Bay. The bare-faced effrontery of this attempted confidence trick was surpassed only by that of the first of all Currency lads, William Charles Wentworth, who five years later claimed to have bought from some Maori chiefs most of the whole South Island of New Zealand. By that time Batman had died an agonising death from syphilis.³¹

Meanwhile, officialdom was catching up with events. In 1836 the surveyor-general of New South Wales, Thomas Mitchell, was astonished to find the Hentys’ station already established when he reached the coast near Portland after passing through “Australia Felix”, and his reports accelerated the rate at which squatters crossed from Van Diemen’s Land to the new settlement, while others overlanded their flocks south from New South Wales proper. Though Governor Bourke in distant Sydney warned these unlicensed trespassers on the lands of the Crown, he knew the movement could not be stopped. By the end of the year he had secured London’s authorisation of the settlement as a district of New South Wales and had dispatched to it some government officials, soldiers and convict servants. Australia Felix proved as rich a pastoral district as the “first-footers” had thought. Soon free immigrants began arriving direct from Britain. Many were hardy Lowland Scots farmers and some brought capital as well as brawn and brains to invest in the new settlement. Those whose sobriety and perseverance were proof against colonial habits profited mightily. By 1850 the human and stock population of the Port Phillip district considerably surpassed that of South Australia.³² In the same year, the Imperial Parliament set up the Port Phillip district as the new and separate colony of Victoria. Only Western Australia, where convictism was beginning instead of ending, remained as a Crown colony ruled directly from London.³³ Meanwhile squatters had also moved into the northern part of New South Wales, later to become Queensland.

We have seen that in 1824 a new penal settlement had been established near the mouth of the Brisbane River in Moreton Bay. Remoteness, it was hoped, would give added security to this prison for doubly convicted felons. But by 1840 the first squatters had overlanded their flocks to the rich Darling Downs district on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range inland from Moreton Bay. Two years later officials in Sydney again bowed to the inevitable and declared the northern district open for settlement. As the northerners grew in number, they agitated, like the inhabitants of the Port Phillip District before them, for separation from New South Wales. Following the example of the Port Phillipians, they chose John Dunmore Lang to represent them in the Sydney legislature. Presbyterian divine, self-righteous moralist, radical politician, newspaper publisher, pamphleteer and republican, Lang was surely one of the most energetic Australians of the last century. Though he probably did more than any other single man to secure separation and self-government for both Victoria and Queensland, his pugnacity made him so many powerful enemies that his name is not widely known today.³⁴ The new colony of Queensland was proclaimed in 1859. Before thirty years had passed, many observers were agreed that it was certainly the “most Australian”, or most nationalistic, of all the colonies. To discover why, we shall have to examine more closely the nature of the great squatting rush which was largely responsible for the creation of the two new colonies to the north and south of the mother colony.

This movement first gathered momentum in the 1830s. By the 1880s few areas capable of supporting one sheep to every 2 hectares or so remained unoccupied, though the occupation was and still is extremely sparse. Even today, over much of this area, a person’s nearest neighbour may live 40 or 50 kilometres away. The American historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s “frontier thesis” is germane to our understanding of this process. Though his theories have been subjected to searching criticism, the soundness of his basic idea is certainly borne out

by Australian history. Adaptation to a strange environment naturally proceeds farthest and fastest on the advancing frontier of settlement, where conditions are most unlike those in Europe whence the settlers or their forefathers came. In the middle of the last century, new attitudes to life, new skills and new manners were acquired far more rapidly by prairie buffalo-skinners, or by stockmen on the dry inland plains of Australia, than they were by relatively newly arrived immigrants in the eastern coastal cities of both continents. The frontier settlers' very lives often depended quite directly upon their capacity for rapid adaptation. As Turner wrote in a famous passage, "the wilderness masters the colonist". On any frontier of settlement, civilised refinements and specialist services of all kinds tend to be scarce. It is far more important to do than to speculate, to make do than to bemoan the absence of proper facilities. Thus in both countries the frontier settlers tended to acquire rough-and-ready manners along with a wide range of practical skills. They became in most ways more self-reliant, more "independent", and more "democratic" than they or their ancestors had been in Europe. At the same time, their life taught them to undervalue, if not actually to scorn, intellectual, spiritual and artistic pursuits. All this does not mean, however, that we should expect frontier conditions to evoke completely identical reactions in the two continents. After all, the two "wildernesses" differed in important ways and so tended to generate different responses.

Turner thought that the two most important effects of the frontier in the United States were to promote national unity and nationalism and to promote democracy. There is abundant evidence that in Australia, too, frontier conditions fostered nationalist sentiment.³⁵ In both countries in the last century, the proportion of native-born citizens was markedly greater in the "outback" than it was in the urban areas near the coast, and these frontier settlers, mingling together in the wilderness, naturally tended to find that the accident of having been born in different colonies was not as important as it had seemed before they left Boston, New York or Baltimore; Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide. It is true too that American and Australian frontier settlers both liked to believe that they were the most democratic people on the earth; but the two groups of pioneers, quite unconsciously for the most part, tended to emphasise different, in some ways even mutually incompatible, aspects of the democratic ideal. This basic difference in the two frontier legacies was first clearly indicated by an American visitor to Australia, who wrote in 1928:

Certainly the United States owes its individualism largely to its small man's frontier; I think it is not fanciful to suggest that Australia owes much of its collectivism to the fact that its frontier was hospitable to the large man instead.³⁶

The sparseness of Australia's inland population sprang partly from the land's remoteness from the old world and partly from its aridity. On the one hand the sheer loneliness of Australian bush people placed a high premium on mutual aid; on the other it diminished individualistic tendencies by diminishing competition for the land. This trend toward collectivism was accentuated by the fact that in Australia geography, economics and land legislation, in the first half of the nineteenth century, combined to discourage small-scale agriculture and to encourage large-scale grazing. And from the very beginning, the convict system required heavy emphasis on central government control and even on a sort of state-controlled economic collectivism. In the United States, at least up until about 1870 when settlement reached the eastern edge of the great trans-Mississippi plains, the typical frontier settler was a farmer, working his own land with the help of his family and perhaps of a hired hand or two at harvest time. Moreover, ample rainfall, fertile soil and relatively ready access to markets for produce supported the settler's belief that it was possible to become "independent", if not always rich, by enterprise, thrift and hard work. In Australia, on the other hand, aridity, distance from markets, poor communications and backward farming methods combined to frustrate the petty agriculturalist. Sheep, however, could thrive on the native grasses – given a

large enough area to graze over – and walk to the coastal markets. Their wool was so much more valuable by weight than grain that it could be carted profitably, if tediously, over many hundreds of miles of rough bush tracks. Thus large-scale pastoralism became the staple industry of the Australian inland. A sheep or cattle station, covering perhaps more than 200 square kilometres, requires only one resident owner or manager, but many working hands. Since most station work – like shearing, droving or dam-sinking – is seasonal or casual in character, bush-workers received little encouragement to identify their interests with those of their employers. In the 1870s the, English novelist, Anthony Trollope, one of whose sons was an Australian station owner, could still write of bush-workers:

The bulk of the labour is performed by a nomad tribe, who wander in quest of work, and are hired only for a time ... the squatter seldom knows whether the man he employs be married or single. They come and go, and are known by queer nicknames or are known by no names at all.³⁷

Thus the typical Australian frontier settler was not a self-employed farmer, but a landless, itinerant labourer who had little real chance of becoming “independent” – in the financial sense – and who sometimes believed himself to have “Buckley’s”. For him, freedom to climb to the top of the ladder by his own efforts meant less than freedom to combine with his mates against government restrictions (as the convicts had done), against “those wealthy squatters”, and indeed against the overwhelming loneliness which quite often rendered insane habitually solitary bushmen who were known as “hatters”. Broadly, we may say that frontier life evoked similar responses in the two continents, if we remember the very large qualification that it tended to foster collectivist attitudes in Australia almost as strongly as it fostered individualistic ones in North America. With this background in mind, let us return to the squatting rush.

When transportation to the mainland ceased in 1840, the movement inland was already in full swing, but the deep-seated emancipist-exclusionist dichotomy of the population broke down only gradually. In the last chapter we noticed that the great majority of native-born Australians in the early years sprang mainly from the convict and emancipist classes. Here we must stress that this group – convict, emancipist and Currency people – were the first white Australians, in the sense that they first came to think of themselves as such, and to feel strongly that they belonged to the country as it did to them. By and large they had less reason to love Britain than did well-to-do exclusionists. Most of them had not sufficient education to read English magazines, to write letters to relatives, or to keep up other connections with “Home”. Nor could they afford to send their children there to be educated, or to return there temporarily or peffilantly themselves, even if they had wished to do so. The wealthier and more cultivated colonists, on the other hand, for long tended to regard themselves as temporarily exiled Britons. The pattern of these contrasting attitudes was indicated by Watkin Tench, captain of Marines in the First Fleet. In 1791 he wrote of the time when:

the hour of departure to England, for the marine battalion, drew nigh. If I be allowed to speak from my own feelings on the occasion, I will not say that we contemplated its approach with mingled sensations: – we hailed it with rapture and exaltation ... [Yet] three corporals, one drummer, and 59 privates, accepted of grants of land, to settle at Norfolk Island and Rose Hill ... [the] majority of them ... from infatuated affection to female convicts, whose character and habits of life, I am sorry to say, promise from a connection neither honour nor tranquility.³⁸

These “other ranks” could, of course, like Tench and his fellow officers, have returned to Britain with free passages and on full pay. Convicts, emancipists and Currency people could not. Naturally they felt, as a rule, even more firmly attached to the new land. In 1837 James Macarthur complained that these people believed “that the colony was *theirs by right*, and that the emigrant settlers were interlopers upon the soil”,³⁹ and in 1843 John Hood wrote:

The fact of being a drunkard, or a convict, is not looked upon in this country, amongst the class as any disgrace; on the contrary ... no shame whatever is evinced by the very best amongst them; and they look upon all "self-imported devils" as beneath them, and not worth consideration.⁴⁰

Because the convict-emancipist-currency group constituted the great majority of all colonists in the early days, and because they were also the oldest and most thoroughly acclimatised settlers, many free immigrants of working-class background tended rapidly to assimilate their attitudes. Many of these ordinary colonists, feeling themselves thoroughly at home in Australia, naturally joined enthusiastically in the squatting rush to the interior. Because of the loneliness, dangers and hardships associated with it, bush work was easier to get and better paid than work in the cities and towns. As in the United States and other colonies of settlement, newly arrived immigrants tended to prefer life in the relatively "Home-like" cities where they disembarked from Europe, but the bush held few terrors for the old hands and the native-born. Census figures show that, in the decade 1841-51, the proportion of emancipist and Currency people in the population increased directly with distance from Sydney. If we consider convicts, emancipists, and native-born persons as one group and *all* free immigrants as the other, then the ratio of the first to the second in the County of Cumberland during this decade was about one to one.

Cumberland was the first settled area, extending for a radius of about 40 or more kilometres north, west and south of Sydney. Within the nineteen counties (excluding Cumberland) the proportion was about two to one; and beyond them, that is to say in what were sometimes known as "the squatting districts" beyond the erstwhile "limits of location", more than about 300 kilometres from the capital, the proportion was about two-and-a-half to one. Thus the "old Australians", if we may for convenience so call this majority group of mainly lower-class people, tended to concentrate disproportionately on the frontier where conditions were such as to accentuate the distinctive, levelling, nationalist attitudes they had already begun to develop. Table 2 provides a detailed picture of white Australian population distribution between 1821 and 1851.⁴¹

The situation was neatly reflected in literature and the arts. Until the 1880s, writers and painters naturally described the life around them in terms of traditional English literary and artistic conventions, and with a *cultivated* English audience in mind. The result was that formal *literature*, even when produced by a really talented native-born son of emancipist parents like Charles Harpur, tended to be little more, than a slightly anaemic, provincial reflection of its English exemplar. In Harpur's poetry the setting and the intention are usually Australian, but little else. Quite often native authors felt impelled to write about English life, of which they knew nothing at first-hand, just as the American Fenimore Cooper did in his first novel before turning, in *The Pioneers* (1823), to the frontier theme. Meanwhile, the "old Australians", many of whom were illiterate, produced little or no formal literature; but they did create directly from the raw life around them a considerable body of folk ballads, songs and tales which circulated orally. Enough of these survive to show that the people who composed them had already become spiritually Australianised long before 1851, in a way and to a degree that most of the cultured minority had not. Here, for instance, is the oldest extant chorus of one of the most popular bush songs of the first half of the nineteenth century, "The Old Bullock Dray". Stores were taken up-country to the stations, and wool back to Sydney for export, on ponderous two-wheeled bullock-drays, the drivers of which were almost always old hands or native-born Australians. The chorus emphasises the pride of these men in their familiarity with, and mastery of, the frontier environment. At the same time it underlines one of the most important functions of these folk songs, that of assisting acclimatisation by clothing an initially strange environment and way of life with the familiar garment of homespun myth.⁴²

So it's roll up your blankets, and let's make a push,
I'll take you up the country and show you the bush;

I'll take you round the stations and learn you how to ride,
And I'll show you how to muster when we cross th' Great Divide!

It is instructive to set against this a stanza from another bullockies' song, reported by a contemporary immigrant *littérateur*, Frank Fowler. Addressing his English audience, Fowler wrote condescendingly of Australian reality:

The bullock-songs are uncouth snatches generally improvised by the drivers themselves, but not destitute of a wild runic poetry, as the following verses from one of them will show:

Olle! Heigh ho!
Blow your horns, blow,
Blow the Southern Cross down if you will;
But on you must go,
Where the fresh gullies flow,
And the thirsty crane wets his red bill.⁴³

Comparison with all other extant "uncouth snatches" makes it appallingly probable that Fowler himself provided what he considered to be the touch of "wild runic poetry" in this stanza.

The same dichotomy between educated persons – with one eye cocked over their shoulders towards Europe – and the masses existed in the United States and other "new countries". Thus in 1839 an acute Austrian traveller, Francis J. Grund, wrote of the Great Republic:

"And I can assure you," said I, "that in my own heart I have a much higher respect for the common American, who, in his conduct towards strangers is solely guided by his own rude notion of dignity, than for the *educated gentleman*, who measures everything, and himself into the bargain, by the standard of another country."

"Agreed! Agreed!" cried my two companions; "for the one however barbarous, has within him the elements of a national character; while the other, however civilised, is but a mutilated European."⁴⁴

We have seen that in 1839 Grund's remarks would have been at least equally applicable to Australia.

The chorus of "The Old Bullock Dray", cited above, shows how the bush life fostered local, native nationalism. A study of the rest of the song can teach us a great deal more about the nature of early Australian ideas and ideals, in particular about the abysmally low status of women and of Aborigines. With the chorus omitted, the ballad goes like this:

Oh! the shearing is all over
And the wool is coming down,
And I mean to get a wife my
Boys,
When I get down to town.
Everything that has two legs
Presents itself to view,
From the little paddymelon
To the bucking kangaroo.

Now I've saved up a good cheque
And I mean to buy a team,
And when I get a wife, boys,
I'll be all serene:
For calling at the depot,
They say there's no delay,
To get an offsider
For the old bullock dray.

I'll teach you the whip,
And the bullocks how to flog.
You'll be my offsider
When we're stuck in a bog,

Lashing out both left and right
And every other way,
Making skin, blood and hair
Fly round the old bullock dray.

Oh, we'll live like fighting cocks,
For good living I'm your man.
There'll be leather-jacks,
johnny-cakes
And fritters in the pan;
And if you want some fish,
I'll get you some soon.
We'll bob for barramundis,
Round the banks of a lagoon.

Oh yes, of beef and damper
I'll make sure we have
enough,
And we'll boil in the billy,
Such a whopper of a duff,
And our friends will dance
To the honour of the day,
And the music of the bells
Around the old bullock dray.

We'll have plenty girls,
We must mind that.
There'll be Buck-jumping
Maggie,
And Leather-belly Pat,
There'll be Stringy-bark Peggy,
And Green-hide Mike;
Yes, my old colonial,
Just as many as you like.

We'll stop all immigration,
We won't need it any more.
We'll be making young natives,
Twins by the score;
And I wonder what the devil
Jack Robertson would say,
If he saw us promenading
Round the old bullock dray.

Oh, to tell a lot of lies,
You know it is a sin;
But I'll go up the country
And I'll marry a black gin.
"Baalgammon, white feller,"
This is what she'll say,
"Budgery you,
And your old bullock dray."

First we notice that the whole song is couched in Australian English. In England, one travels up to London or down to the country. In Australia, in the 1840s when this ballad first became popular, one always went "down to" the city, as in the first verse and "up the country" as in the last. We learn immediately, too, that the wool industry formed the basis of the Australian economy and that country life revolved round the shearing season, just as did the sessions of the Legislative Council in Sydney. The singer then introduces the theme of the whole ballad, which was in fact the basic social problem in nineteenth-century Australia – the effect on society of the great numerical imbalance between the sexes. Obviously the singer could hope to find a

wife only in town, and even there he had to be prepared to consider matrimony with any – presumably female – creature “that had two legs”. A paddymelon is a very small marsupial of the kangaroo genus.

The “depot” in the second verse was the female immigrant depot in Sydney where, not quite as in the old female convict factory, some newly arrived immigrant girls found shelter, and perhaps a husband, while waiting for a job. A bullock-driver’s “offsider” was of course his assistant, usually a younger person who walked along on the off-side of the team. The third verse emphasises the crude brutality of colonial life. The singer’s prospective mate must not only put up with the “skin blood and hair” flogged from the tortured beasts, but she must, as a matter of course, learn to flog them herself.

The next two verses stress what was, for most people at the time, the main attraction of Australian life in general and up-country life in particular. Manners might be crude and rude but food, however coarse, was plentiful. In the bush, endless daily quantities of mutton, damper and tea were the unquestioned right of all who remembered, or whose parents remembered, that in the old country working people rarely ate meat once a week – to say nothing of “beef, leather-jacks, johnny-cakes, fritters and barramundi”.

At the fantasy wedding in the next verse, the fantasy bride has disappeared altogether, as the singer celebrates the consolations of mateship. He promises his “old colonial” friends that there will be lots of bush whores – or perhaps just friendly Currency lasses – at the nuptial feast. He cannot even imagine white women as anything more than freely available objects of male lust, ingredients of a spree only a little less important than the food and drink. With its reference to Jack Robertson, the penultimate verse is obviously a later addition to the song. Robertson achieved fame in the 1860s as the author of the *Free Selection Acts* in New South Wales. His opposition to subsidised immigration made him very popular with native-born voters, many of whom shared his freely expressed view that it was the duty of all patriotic Australians to increase the population by their own exertions. The singer strongly endorses the idea, suggesting that the wedding-party should become a general debauch to produce “twins by the score”.

The last verse returns to earth with a bump. The idea that any bullock-driver could possibly get a help-meet from the immigrant depot is an impossible dream, and so is the fantasy of a plentiful supply of willing white women to embellish the occasional spree. In fact, the only “wife” a bullock-driver, or any bush worker, was likely to find in the 1840s was an Aboriginal woman, a person infinitely lower in the status hierarchy than “Leatherbelly Pat” and her friends. An Aboriginal female could always be cajoled, bought or kidnapped from the males of her tribe and exploited, then discarded or even murdered by whites. In Aboriginal pidgin English, “baalgammon” meant, in colloquial Australian, “no kidding” and “budgery you”, “good on you”.

Yet the ballad barely hints at the barbarous brutality of bush life, shown most clearly in the way our ancestors dispossessed and destroyed the Aborigines. Vicious racism was an integral part of the new national identity that was forming most rapidly on the advancing frontier of pastoral settlement. The levelling mateship, which was at the very heart of the new outlook, necessarily connoted hatred of all non-mates, particularly of those who were seen as inferior; and the more nationalist, the more egalitarian, the more “democratic” a white man was in the last century, the more racist he was likely to be in word and deed. The expansion of squatting over most of eastern Australia meant the rapid expropriation and extermination of the Aboriginal tribes. Few living Australians, black or white, have any idea of the scale and duration of the slaughter. It is true that dispossession, disease and despair killed more Aborigines than did white murderers, but premeditated butchery of men, women, children and infants accounted in the aggregate for tens of thousands of black lives. The latest estimate is that when the First Fleet dropped anchor in Sydney Cove in 1788 there were about 750 000

Aborigines in this continent – give or take 50 000 or so. By the time of the white centenary celebrations in 1888, the number had been reduced to about 60 000 fullbloods. From the beginning it is clear that blacks were murdered with impunity by settlers and convicts, in spite of some earnest official efforts to protect them; but it seems that the first officially sanctioned massacre occurred in Van Diemen's Land when a hunting party of about forty was shot down by soldiers in 1804.⁴⁵

In 1838 the most notorious of all such clashes happened on Henry Dangar's Myall Creek Station in northwestern New South Wales. This massacre is remembered not because it was more brutal and bloody than a hundred other similar events – it was not – but because it was better documented and because of what it showed about the values and assumptions of white society at the time.

In the winter of 1838, well before the shearing season, Henry Dangar was in Sydney. His Myall Creek run was being managed by William Hobbs with the help of two assigned convict stockmen, George Anderson and Charles Kilmeister. Early in May a "mob" of forty or fifty Aborigines camped near the stockmen's hut. Friendly relations – including sexual ones between Anderson and Kilmeister and some of the female Aborigines – were established.

Three or four weeks later on Sunday 11 June, eleven armed white men rode up to the hut. All were convicts or ex-convicts save one native-born white, John Fleming, who seems to have led the party. Rumours, but no firm evidence, said they had been busy for some time slaughtering Aborigines further west near Terri Hie Hie, where a white shepherd had been killed.

Fortunately many of the Myall Creek blacks were absent that afternoon with another station manager. Of those in camp, three young boys escaped with the help of Anderson and two beautiful girls were allowed to live so that they could be raped. The remaining twenty-eight men, women and children were tied together and dragged about half a mile away from the hut. There the eleven men, who had been joined by Kilmeister, shot some but hacked up most of the Aborigines with knives and swords. They spent most of Monday hunting vainly for the black people who had escaped and on Tuesday morning returned to burn the bodies of their victims.

So far there was nothing to distinguish this shambles from so many other earlier and later ones. Then three quite extraordinary things happened. A white man reported the murders. The police arrested the murderers. Some of them were brought to trial and hanged. On his return to the station Hobbs resolved to report the murders despite Kilmeister's begging him "for Jesus Christ's sake" not to do so. Word was sent to Edward "Denny" Day, the nearest police magistrate at "Mussel Brook" about 350 kilometres away across country. This remarkable officer possessed such zeal and humanity that his name was later honoured in folk tales and ballads as well as in official records. He reported the incident to the governor in Sydney, the newly arrived Sir George Gipps, who ordered him to arrest the culprits. Day rounded up all of them except for the currency lad, John Fleming, whose mates helped him escape justice. Frequently changing his horse along the track, he rode over 500 kilometres in about three days and took a ship to Van Diemen's Land. When the hue and cry ended he returned to the Hawkesbury to become a pillar of respectability – church warden and magistrate in Wilberforce until he died in the odour of sanctity in 1894. On 15 November 1838, Charles Kilmeister, John Johnston, Charles Toulouse, William Hawkins, James Parry, James Gates, John Russell, Edward Foley, George Pallister, John Blake and Charles Lamb were charged with murder before the Chief Justice, Sir James Dowling.

By then the whole colony was in an uproar – not with horror at the massacre but with sympathy for the murderers. Most white people found intolerable the idea that killing of Aborigines could be regarded as a crime, let alone a capital one. In 1821 a convict "bolter" had been hanged for murdering an Aborigine who had helped to apprehend him. Apart from this,

and the punishment of seven of the Myall Creek murderers, it seems that no white man in the colony was ever hanged for killing blacks.

Many landholders and other respectable people signed petitions and, soon after the arrests, a group of rich graziers meeting at Patrick's Plains (now Singleton) pledged £300 to fee the colony's best lawyers for the defence. Their leader was also a magistrate, Robert Scott. He visited the eleven prisoners in gaol and urged them: "not to split among themselves, saying that there was no direct evidence against them, and that, if they were only true to each other, they could not be convicted". For this highly improper action the upright Gipps later removed Scott from the Bench.

However, the prisoners apparently laid his injunction to heart. The jury found them not guilty at the first trial. Four men were then freed in the hope that they would turn Queen's evidence at the second trial of seven. They did not do so. Throughout both hearings the defence rested purely on legal technicalities. The accused never denied their guilt or affirmed it, but simply claimed "they thought it extremely hard that white men should be put to death for killing blacks". At the second trial the "seven unfortunate men" were found guilty and hanged seven days before Christmas.⁴⁶ From today's viewpoint what followed was the most horrifying part of the whole story. There were of course some humane and Christian colonists who were sickened by the crime but, to judge from contemporary reports, the majority were incensed by the punishment. A great wave of anti-Aboriginal feeling swept the colony. Massacres – and retaliatory murders by the blacks – became more frequent rather than less. In addition many squatters and their men began handing out to whole bands of Aborigines gifts of poisoned flour or cakes – thus, they believed, making their crime the harder to detect.⁴⁷

Many newspapers deplored the hanging while glossing over the original crime. Some, like the *Sydney Herald* of 5 October 1838, roundly declared that Aborigines were less than human beings and called, in effect, for their extermination:

We want neither the classic nor the romantic savages here. We have too many of the murderous wretches about us already ... The whole gang of black animals are not worth the money which the Colonists will have to pay for printing the silly documents upon which we have already wasted too much time.

Even Alexander Harris, perhaps the most humane and percipient of contemporary chroniclers, felt that the seven murderers were punished only for doing what they had always been taught was right by their masters. "From time immemorial," he wrote, "it had been the custom for influential settlers to head parties like this, against the blacks. All former governors had sanctioned this method of proceeding ..." And Harris recorded too, that after the excitement and alarm occasioned by the hangings had died down, "the matter fell into its true and old form, from which it should never have been disturbed: a simple question of *intimidation* ...between the musket and the spear".⁴⁸

In other words, white Australian males were tacitly allowed to resume with impunity their destruction of Aboriginal people and culture. Their spoliation of the other despised group, white Australian women, suffered a check at this time – at the hands of the greatest champion of womanhood ever to live here. The daughter of a prosperous Northamptonshire farmer, Caroline Jones was brought up in the tradition of Anglican evangelical philanthropy. She showed her mettle first at the age of 22, in 1830, when she married Captain Archibald Chisholm of the British East India Company, on condition that her social work should continue. Continue it, manifestly did, possibly on Chisholm's condition that she convert to his Catholic religion – as she did at about this time. In 1838 the Chisholms took their home leave in New South Wales and settled near Windsor. Caroline was immediately struck by the plight of Australian women, particularly of the immigrant girls, who were often forced into prostitution to survive in the colony while they were looking for work. Many were debauched on the voyage out by ships' officers, as so many convict girls had been. On the *Subraon*, which reached Sydney in April 1848, for instance,

Captain Cawardine had arranged for a constant procession of young girls from a Dublin foundling home to spend the voyage in his cabin ... Chief Officer Mills seduced a nineteen-year-old orphan girl, who became pregnant, tried to abort herself, and died on board. Third Officer Hill slept constantly with another girl who upon landing was sent to become the inmate of a notorious brothel in Sydney.⁴⁹

Caroline Chisholm sheltered some of these girls in her own home while finding jobs for them, but soon found she could not cope with the numbers who needed help. Undaunted, she persuaded the proprietors of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the governor himself, Sir George Gipps, to aid her. "I was amazed," Gipps told a friend, "when my aide introduced a handsome, stately young woman who proceeded to reason the question as if she thought her reason and experience, too, worth as much as mine."⁵⁰ He gave her use of an old government building, in which she quickly established a temporary shelter for up to ninety-six immigrants at a time, and the only free employment registry office in Sydney. She and her husband raised the necessary money entirely from public subscriptions and she personally conducted many dray-loads of girls "up the country" to jobs she had found them. In 1846 the Chisholms returned to England, where she obtained the support of Earl Grey, James Stephen of the colonial office and Charles Dickens, among others, for her highly successful Family Colonization Loan Society. Captain Chisholm returned to Australia in 1851 as an unpaid agent looking after the arriving migrants. Caroline came back in 1854 and gained even more recognition as a champion of female immigration and women's rights in Victoria than she had won in South Wales.

In her lifetime, hostile critics denigrated her with false accusations that she was biased in favour of Irish and Catholic women. Recently she has been damned with faint praise as a conservative and patronising "do-gooder" with thoroughly conformist aims. It is true that she sought to make one generation of working-class girls into the mothers of a later generation of respectable middle-class people, and she was astonishingly successful too. She was brought up as a gentle, conservative middle-class lady, but when she encountered so much indifference and hostility from the rich and officialdom, she plainly proclaimed her commitment to the most radical demands of the day, universal suffrage, vote by ballot and payment of members of parliament. By precept and example she did more than any other single human being to ameliorate, however slightly, the status of Australian women, so crudely figured forth in hundreds of sketches, yarns and folksongs like "The Old Bullock Dray".

The blacks, as we have seen, found no such doughty champion. Missionary efforts to save them from "dispersal" and degradation all failed dismally.⁵¹ Squatters and their employees usually agreed together to "disperse" the blacks as they increasingly came to agree about much else. During the 1840s the old emancipist-exclusionist dichotomy was fast diminishing and for employers and employees alike the acclimatisation process tended to proceed most rapidly on the frontier. In some districts, many of the flock masters were emancipists or Currency lads who, by superior luck, hard work, sobriety or skill in "cattle-duffing", had amassed sufficient capital to stock a "run".⁵² In nearly all areas there were a few such squatters, but overall, the majority were free immigrants possessing at least a modicum of education and taste, as well as capital. Some were retired army and navy officers from the old country, and not a few were men of real birth and breeding. Most of these immigrant squatters frankly intended to stay in the barbarous wilderness only long enough to make their fortunes before returning to England to live in comfort and refinement, but as the long years of "roughing it" on the pioneering frontier passed, many of them found to their surprise that they too were becoming Australians. Once such was Patrick Leslie, pioneer squatter of the Darling Downs.

Scottish-born like so many of the early pastoralists, Leslie was 20 years of age when he landed in Sydney in 1835. He went to stay with John Macarthur's nephew, Hannibal, whose daughter he married a few years later. In 1840 he left the last New England out-stations behind him to the south and found rich new country on the western slopes of the Great Divide a hundred kilometres or two inland from the Moreton Bay penal settlement. He became a

successful squatter and, as an elected member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, did much to secure the separation of Queensland in 1859 – despite differences on other issues with Dr Lang, whom he castigated as “the Reverend Republican”. Having made a reasonable fortune, he returned to Scotland but then went to New Zealand for some years. In 1878, however, he returned to Australia and died in Sydney.

Living the frontier life, many such men came to know and love not only the land of their adoption, but also those who had already claimed it for their own. Especially in up-country districts, free immigrants and old hands came increasingly to know and respect each other, and to share many implicit attitudes to life, even if they seldom at this time came to share each other’s manners and modes of pronouncing the English language. Of his pioneering journey to the Darling Downs, Leslie wrote afterwards: “We had twenty-two men, all ticket-of-leave or convicts, as good and game a lot of men as ever existed, and who never occasioned us a moment’s trouble: worth any forty men I have ever seen since.” Of his twenty-two old hands it is recorded that their feelings toward Leslie were such that they swore they would “follow him into hell itself”.⁵³

We are now in a better position to see why people in the 1880s and since have tended to think of Queensland as the most characteristically Australian of all the colonies. South and Western Australia were settled long after the mother colony of New South Wales, and by free immigrants fresh from Great Britain. Victoria, it is true, was, like Queensland, first unofficially occupied by squatters and old hands from New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, but, by Australian standards, Victoria occupies only a very small area of well-watered land. This colony was too rich and too cramped for space to remain for long a predominantly pastoral frontier area. Queensland, on the other hand, was the biggest of all the colonies except Western Australia. Most of its land was and remains suitable, but not *too* suitable, for pastoral occupation. As we have seen, it was first settled by convicts and then by graziers and old hands from the mother colony who had already undergone an intensive course of assimilation to Australian conditions. It was, and to a considerable extent has remained, the frontier colony – or state. Climate, as well as area and the accident of late settlement, may have something to do with it. If, compared with Britain, all Australia is hot and dry, Queensland is the hottest and driest part of the continent to be occupied – except on the coast, where it is the hottest and wettest. If characteristically Australian habits and attitudes are apprehended as those which differ most from traditional British ones, we have seen that such reactions were evoked most completely by frontier conditions, and for geographic reasons the traditional Australian tribulations of frontier life – bushfires, droughts, dust storms, floods, poisonous snakes, sharks and insect plagues – prevail in Queensland more than in any other colony.

So does admiration for practical “male” virtues and corresponding contempt for education and the arts, for women, for blacks and indeed all “Southerners”. Besides, on the coastal plain, Queenslanders grow sugar cane from which they distil rum for the Commonwealth. Perhaps it is the heat which causes them to drink rather more than their share of it. Certainly the heat has made it much more difficult for them to preserve formal English styles of dress and behaviour. In North Queensland only the most determinedly respectable burghers wear coats in the street. As a visiting Englishman wrote in 1886, “The Englishman in Queensland is, like the sheep, developing into a different species.”⁵⁴

Reconciliation between the old exclusionist and emancipist groups and the growth of a sense of Australian national identity were most clearly demonstrated, at a quasi-political level, in the movement against the resumption of transportation at mid-century. In 1847, Earl Grey, the current Secretary of State, proposed to resume transportation to the eastern mainland colonies, something which colonists thought had ended forever in 1840. To Grey it went without saying that Van Diemen’s Land should continue as a receptacle of British criminals, but opposition there was even stronger than in the other colonies. Grey persisted, in spite of

colonial rumblings, at least in part because the Legislative Councils in New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and, after 1850, Victoria, gave him conflicting advice. At that time it still took at least eight months to receive an answer in London to even the most important and official inquiry made of Hobart or Sydney. Grey should not have been expected to understand, from half a world away, that when the squatter-dominated Legislative Councils spoke with divided voices, this meant that virtually all colonists outside the council chambers were united against the proposal.⁵⁵

All employees feared that cheap convict labour would drastically reduce the rate of wages for free men. Since, in the 1830s, convicts had been assigned almost exclusively to up-country squatters, town employers feared that resumption would offer them no benefits, but merely augment what they saw as the privileges of the pastoral class. Almost everyone, including ageing emancipists and even many squatters, opposed transportation also for less selfish reasons. They held passionately that convictism lowered the whole tone of society in the eyes of the mother country and indeed of all the other lands on earth. It also formed the major stumbling block on the path to self-governing institutions. It was felt as an affront to the sense of Australian national identity which was emerging in all the colonies except Western Australia – in the pure province of South Australia as much as in the still “tainted” Van Diemen's Land. Religious people, reformers of all kinds and early Australian nationalists like Charles Harpur,⁵⁶ the most considerable poet of the time, joined in 1851 to form the Australasian League for the Prevention of Transportation, whose banner, consisting of the union jack in one quarter and the southern cross, flew in all the eastern colonies and anticipated almost completely the first official national flag of 1901.⁵⁷ The League's leading spirit was John West, Congregational parson, historian of Van Diemen's Land and editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁵⁸ Another keen member was the young Henry Parkes, who launched his political career on work for the League, commending it to readers of the *People's Advocate* as “Australia's First National Movement”.

When the convict ship *Hashemy* reached Melbourne in April 1849, the superintendent of the Port Phillip District, Charles Joseph La Trobe, prudently ordered her on to Sydney. There she was confronted at Circular Quay by what the superintendent of the Sydney Police sourly described as a mob numbering no more than 700 “composed solely of the working classes”. The still-maneless Parkes, who had done more than anyone else to gather the “mob” together in the drenching rain that June morning, estimated 7000 and the *Sydney Morning Herald's* reporter 5000. The “mob”, whatever its size, unanimously passed a resolution, seconded by Parkes, that the *Hashemy's* “exiles” should be sent back to Britain. To no one's surprise, Governor Sir Charles Fitzroy, a descendant of King Charles II, contemptuously refused. Many up-country squatters, including Wentworth and Henry Dangar, still wanted convict employees.⁵⁹ The *Hashemy* landed most of her cargo at Sydney but went on to discharge the rest in the Moreton Bay district where one of the youngest prisoners, 16-year-old William Henry Groom, later lived to become first the colonial and then the Commonwealth member of parliament for Darling Downs. A few more shiploads were sent to Moreton Bay district of New South Wales, but the League's propaganda had won the day.⁶⁰

By mid-century, transportation had been (or in Van Diemen's Land was on the verge of being) abolished, except in the isolated western colony where it was just beginning. Legislative Councils in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Van Diemen's Land had been invited to devise more fully representative constitutions for approval by the Imperial parliament. Except in the frontier area, which was to become the separate colony of Queensland in 1859, most of the best pastoral land had been occupied, if thinly, by the “shepherd kings” and the “nomad tribe” of bush-workers who were, in an important sense, the first white Australians. The pastoral boom had also drawn from Britain an increasing stream of free immigrants, some of whom were men of substance and culture. The old antagonism between the emancipist and

exclusionist factions was diminishing as people in both groups, but especially the former, began to feel at home in the land; yet the colonial middle class had barely come into existence. Retail trade and secondary industry had achieved only a rudimentary stage of development. Even Sydney was still not very much more than an entrepôt centre, siphoning rum and other station stores into, and wool out of, the interior. About 150 000 convicts had been transported, but the total white population of Australia was still only 405 356 in 1851. The discovery of gold in that year led not so much to changes in, as to a rapid acceleration of, existing trends.