

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

HISTORY CLUB

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS

IN

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

No. 2

1977

Authorised by Geoff Robinson, Secretary, History Club.

Typeset and Printed by the S.R.C. office.

CONTENTS

PREFACE.

EDWARD CAPPER : HARDWARE AND SOCIETY.

by Ian Bowrey 1

DANGAR'S DISMISSAL.

by Russell Seton 9

THE 'WANTED COLUMNS' OF THE MAITLAND MERCURY, 1850-55: EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS DURING THE GOLD RUSHES.

by Jan Horne 15

WORKING CLASS WOMEN AND THE SUFFRAGETTES : A STUDY OF URBAN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA, 1890-1900.

by Noeline Williamson 21

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE : A REFLECTION OF THE NATIONAL SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS.

by Judi Harris 29

THE 1929 COLLIERIES LOCKOUT AND THE ROTHBURY INCIDENT.

by William Hill 35

P R E F A C E

In 1976 five research papers in Australian history, written by second year students in the ordinary History IIB course, were presented in this format. The favourable response that they received suggests that the project is a worthwhile one and it will therefore be continued annually. This year, however, publication of the papers has been undertaken by students under the auspices of the History Club and the S.R.C.

Each year students in this course are asked to investigate some aspect of Australian history, preferably through research in primary sources. They are encouraged to look wherever possible at questions through which light can be thrown on significant problems by the study of local history. Over a hundred such projects were undertaken this year, and the variety of topics as well as the quality of the papers presented was very encouraging.

The papers published here were chosen not only because they are good papers, but also to show the variety of issues that interest students. Many other papers could have been chosen.

Peter Stephens :	Morpeth in the era of the Steamship.
Mary Livingstone :	The First General Strike in the Coal Industry
Adelle Harding :	The Copeland Gold Rush
Mark Holmes :	The First Battle Honour – Australians in the Boer War
Baronya Croft :	Rothbury Dilemmas
John Charleston :	Maitland-Morpeth – The Forgotten Artery
Peter Crotty :	Henry Dangar, Pioneer Explorer, Surveyor and Pastoralist
Gregory Gamage :	Attitudes of the People of Newcastle towards the Chinese 1978 - 1888
Lynda Allomes :	A Study of Bushranging in the Hunter Valley
Susan Murray :	The Robertson Land Acts
Lynn Rutherford :	The Bellbird Mine Disaster 1923
Peter Jeffrey :	The Paul Bunyans of Cedar Arm

C. Bacchi
P. Hempenstall
N. Rutherford

The works presented in this collection are not only a tribute to their authors, but also to Carol Bacchi, Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford who provided the opportunity, the support, and the encouragement that made it all possible. The History Club is pleased to be associated with such a worthwhile project.

History Club Executive

THE 'WANTED COLUMNS' OF THE MAITLAND MERCURY, 1850-55:
EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS DURING THE GOLD RUSHES

BY

JAN E. HORNE

SYNOPSIS:

The aim of this paper is to examine the "Wanted" columns of the "Maitland Mercury" in 1850 and 1855, in order, firstly, to determine the nature of employment available for men and men in the Hunter Valley in those years, as an indication of urban development. Secondly, it aims to analyse any immediate changes in the employment pattern after the first peak of gold discoveries.

The active discouragement of the "Maitland Mercury" towards gold prospecting, is seen as an important factor in reducing the labour shortage. The jobs available in 1855 point to an expanding urbanization and industrial development, and Census figures support this view. It is concluded, therefore, that, in the period 1850 to 1855, expansion outstripped the availability of labour, and this, rather than the discovery of gold, exacerbated the labour shortage.

During 1849 and 1850, 4,769 men and 6,285 women emigrated to New South Wales, by far the majority coming at public expense. ¹ What livelihoods could these people expect to find in their new home? The 'bounty' system had been discontinued, but agents were contracted by employers to meet the immigrant ships and arrange employment. Other sources of employment information for the new arrivals, as well as the native born, were the columns of newspapers and labour exchanges, such as the Servants Registry Office and Female Immigration Depot which operated in Sydney, Newcastle and Maitland. By 1850 the colony had experienced one depression but the economy was now recovering and employees could anticipate a market in which their labour, and especially their skills, were in demand.

A carpenter or blacksmith could expect to receive in the country 36 p.a., a farm labourer or shepherd 17, a female cook 15-19, a domestic servant 10-14. ² The majority of men were still employed in rural industry, but from 1850, there was also a period of town development, especially in the Hunter Valley. The extension of steam power to brickyards, saw-mills and flour mills in this period, also created an industrial labour market.

The years 1850 and 1855 have been particularly selected to determine the extent to which urban, rural and industrial developments in the Hunter Valley are reflected in the demand for labour as advertised in the 'Maitland Mercury.' Such a survey may also indicate any immediate effects on this demand as a result of the gold discoveries.

In the 1850s Maitland was the second largest town in the colony, the centre of an extensive wheat growing area and the economic link with Morpeth, the port to which bullock drays brought wool and produce from all the north for shipment to Sydney. By 1850, the Maitland Police District had a population of 10,240, ³ there were Courts, churches, banks, warehouses and 842 houses of stone or brick. The columns of the 'Maitland Mercury' indicate a wide variety of artisans and merchants to provide goods and services for the hinterland settlements.

The demand for skilled tradesmen was high, particularly those needed for basic building. Carpenters were most in demand each position being advertised 2 or 3 times. Five years later, a change occurred in the development and prosperity of the region, as well as an increased demand for basic building skills, the more refined and sophisticated trades make an appearance. Brickmakers were heavily in demand, but as well, Stonemasons, a Plasterer, Morticers and Painter. Carpenters' wages had increased from 4/6 per day to 15/- per day, "liberal" wages being a feature of advertisements. One blacksmith was offered as well "a full set of tools and stock of iron." ⁴

Another feature which appears by 1855 is the demand for Drapers, Grocers, Shoemakers, Tailors and a Coachsmith (advertised eleven times), thus indicating the advance of civilization and a thriving economy. This is also indicated in the demand for educators. In 1850, positions for 4 governesses were advertised; this increased to seven in 1858 and all of these were advertised twice at least, some three or four times, and one, "to teach 9 or 10 children and be treated as one of the family" appeared seven times. The Board of National Education advertised in 1850 for teachers in state schools, but in 1855 wealthy families were demanding private master and tutors.

Service industries had also appeared by 1855 and were seeking labour. Monthly advertisements were inserted for men for the Police Force; a position for a "Practical man to Superintend Road Making and Repairs" was offered at the attractive salary of 200 p.a. Labourers for the Northern Road were offered 7 per month, with "tents provided." The new Maitland Hospital had been opened in 1849 and advertised for Wardsmen in 1855, one for "An Active Middle Aged Man" appearing thirteen times.

The demand for Married Couples as House Servants was high in 1850 but increased by 190% in 1855. The wife was generally required for domestic service as housemaid, cook or laundress, and the husband as groom, gardener or "general useful". Salaries were quoted in 1855 as 100 p.a. without rations. Couples required for farm work showed a greater increase (800%), all positions being advertised three times.

One area particularly reflects urban growth and the acute shortage of young labour. In 1850, five positions were offered for boys, three of these being for apprenticeships. In 1855, twenty-eight were required, of which fifteen were for apprenticeships. These were now for the more refined trades of an expanding economy and prosperous community, such as the Upholstery and Paperhanging Trade, wholesale and retail businesses, coachsmith and cabinetmaking trades. The 'Maitland Mercury' advertised for an "Apprentice to the Press" in almost every edition in 1855; an other was advertised 27 times and several over 10 times. The 1851 and 1856 Census figures show decreases in the numbers of youths aged 14 to 21 years in relation to the rest of the population. If we assume that each juvenile group in the 1851 Census corresponds to the next age group in the 1856 Census, it can be seen that a net increase took place for every group except 7 to 14 age group in 1851 - i.e. the 14 - 21 age group in 1856. This would strongly suggest youths in the 14 - 21 age group had been attracted to other areas by 1 March, 1856.

Maitland 1851 - 1856					
Male Population					
2 yr	2 - 7 yr	7 - 14 yr	14 - 21 yr	21 - 45 yr	
509	1151	1428	928	2787	1856
420	913	928	485	1981	1851

Single unskilled women were restricted to positions in Domestic Service. The demand for female house servants, excluding the more skilled cooks, laundresses and needlewomen, increased from 1850 to 1855 by 240%. Census figures for the 14 to 21 age group conform to the pattern of general population increase for females. The increase in demand for labour in this age group is therefore likely to be due to the expanding prosperity of townships.

Maitland 1851 - 1856					
Female Population					
2 yr	2 - 7 yr	7 - 14 yr	14 - 21 yr	21 - 45 yr	
475	1084	1585	1238	2343	1856
409	942	913	581	1534	1851

The Australian Agricultural Company was of great importance in the pastoral development of the Hunter Valley, conducting stock sales at Maitland two days each week until 1853.⁵ Tobacco was extensively grown and an estimated 32 vineyards established.⁶ The effects of a labour shortage in the wine-growing industry had already been felt, as indicated by requests for the application of the Bounty system to European labourers. The first shipload of German immigrants for local winemakers had arrived in 1849, under the agency of Kirchner and Co. This apparently satisfied the demand, for in 1850 the 'Maitland Mercury' carried only one advertisement (for 6 Spademen) for a Valley vineyard. However, by 1855, Kirchner & Co. were again engaged in the search for European labour. The following advertisement was inserted in the "Maitland Mercury" three times in January, 1855:

GERMAN IMMIGRATION - Kirchner & Co. beg to intimate to those colonists who are desirous of importing labour from Germany, that he continues to take orders for the introduction of vinedressers, shepherds, farm servants, mechanics, domestic servants etc. to be selected, engaged and forwarded under the direction of Mr. Kirchner, now in Europe.

Permanent jobs for farm labourers were 2½ times more plentiful in 1855 than in 1850; for stockmen 5 times more and for station overseers 8 times more. Drovers were offered 3 per week and a bullock driver 80 p.a. plus 12 lb beef, 12 lbs flour, 2 lbs sugar and ¼ lb tea. Temporary positions for rural workers, such as drivers, splitters, well-sinkers, fencers and horsebreakers were four times more plentiful in 1855 than in 1850. The shortage of labour is indicated by the great frequency of advertisements - those for farm labourers were repeated up to 6 times; for stockmen up to 10 times; and all others 2 or 3 times. This is pinpointed in the 1856 Census. On March 1, 1851, 1,312 people were employed in the rural industry, on March 1, 1856, 1,629 people were employed, an increase of only 24%, whereas those employed as "artificers and Skilled Tradesmen" increased by 500% and unskilled labour by 285%.

The period 1850 - 1855 was one in which a diversified and industrialising economy became firmly established. In 1852 the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company was established; by 1855 Maitland had a brewery, 2 soap and candle factories producing 183 tons of soap and 168 tons of candles, 4 tobacco factories, an ironfoundry, 4 canneries, brickworks, flour mills and 4 coal mines producing 20,344 tons of coal. The shipbuilding industry was thriving and the starting of the railway line from Newcastle occasioned much approving comment in the editorials and correspondence of the 'Maitland Mercury'.

Advertised positions in industry increased from 1850 to 1855 by 90% and all jobs were advertised in 1855 several times. The coal industry shows a particular boom, demand for miners increasing by 180% and the A. A. Co. offering 30/- per day. The need for more skilled workers such as Engineers and Managers reflects also an increase in industrialised techniques.

Census figures for this period show a significant increase in the 21 - 45 year age group, yet a labour shortage still occurred, as the Wanted Columns of the 'Maitland Mercury' show. The reason for this must be seen in the expansion of urban, rural and industrial developments rather than the desertion of labour to other areas, such as the gold diggings.

A comparison of Occupation figures show a decrease in those employed in Trade or Commerce, sheep grazing and (male) domestic service, but a very great increase in skilled workmen, unskilled labourers, female domestic servants and clerical workers. These increases were still not sufficient to meet the demand - advertisements for skilled workmen increased by 220%, for unskilled labourers by 333%, female domestic servants by 400% and clerical workers by 750%.

The increased advertising for employees in Trade and Commerce from 1850 to 1855 suggests an increase in urban development, whereas the demand for male domestic servants may have had to compete in 1855 with jobs such as retail assistants, waiters and industry workers.

Effects of a labour shortage were thus certainly being felt in the Hunter Valley by 1855, particularly in commerce, skilled trades and industry. But the 'Maitland Mercury' generally reflects an atmosphere of thriving prosperity and expansion. Within 5 years, the rawness had given way to established civilization. In 1850 merchants were only concerned with advertising basic commodities such as oil, seed, hides and coffins, but by 1855, they were announcing the arrival of "splendid" pianos, "smart" phaetons, "elegant ribbons – just imported." The quality of entertainment had advanced in sophistication and 1855 saw the proliferation of "academics".

In its reporting of the gold discoveries, the 'Maitland Mercury' maintained throughout the period the conservative stand it had taken over the Californian discoveries. Readers would have derived little incentive from the regularly published reports from San Francisco to set off for the diggings. The prevailing tone was pessimistic about success and emphasised the lack of shelter, disease, high cost of food and lawlessness. – "the awful pictures of a tent town are horrifying in the extreme." 7

The reluctant acknowledgement of the discovery of a 9 oz "piece of gold" at Summer Hill first appeared in the 'Maitland Mercury' on 21st May, 1851, but reports of other findings were discounted. – "In the absence of confirmation, we are inclined to regard these statements as exaggerations." The gloomy results of this discovery preoccupied the first editorial:–

"All the ordinary industrial pursuits are likely to be neglected . . . Some engaged in productive industry- in pastoral, agricultural and manufacturing pursuits – will be induced to desert their present occupations . . . Our power of producing our staple articles of export and consumption may . . . be seriously crippled. The withdrawal of a considerable amount of labour from farm(s) . . . will tend to raise the price of the necessaries of life . . . and still further cripple those engaged in the production of wool and tallow" . . .

The Editor called for the cessation of all expansion, immediate searches for a temporary labour source and government protection from "rough and lawless characters."

Subsequent editorials emphasised the defiance that would result from the high licence fees and a week after the first announcement predicted (with less accuracy) the economic destruction of the colony:–

"The discovery (of gold) is sweeping over the country like a terrific storm which bends or breaks down all before it, and in its track will be found the ruin of many who have spent years of toil . . . Men . . . must submit as they would to a shipwreck or an earthquake: they must strive manfully to save as much as they can from the wreck, and gird up their loins to replace the properties which have been thus suddenly shattered or destroyed."

The gloom then gave way to a consideration of ways in which Maitland could capitalise on the strike. The transportation of goods directly to the diggings was advocated and the hope offered of gold discoveries being made in the nearby area. The "selected" extracts reprinted from the Sydney papers emphasised factors to deter prospective diggers – "cold and hunger", "not being provided with any shelter", "miserable provisions". By June, editorials were more preoccupied with the Transportation debate, the floods and the mails. Subsequent strikes began to be viewed more favourably – immigration would be encouraged and so "will do much towards solving the hitherto puzzling problem of how this country is to be peopled." The panic had subsided now that it was clear that "propensity for migrating to the diggings has sensibly abated". The seven-point advice to Intending Gold Diggers" sums up the propaganda campaign mounted by the 'Maitland Mercury' as spokesman for the commercial and pastoral industries which dominated the area.

By 1855, with the experience of Eureka behind, and complacent about the continued prosperity of the area, news of the gold diggings was relegated to occasional reports of the Hanging Rock and Rocky River findings. These emphasised the shortage of water, extreme heat and depressed state of the gold market.

The evidence studied points to the success of the 'Maitland Mercury's' campaign – the Hunter Valley did not suffer a crisis as an immediate result of the discovery of gold. The labour shortage was a continuing problem, but increased advertising in 1855 must be seen in relation to a thriving economy in which urban, rural and industrial expansion created a demand for labour which immigration and normal population growth, at this stage, could not satisfy. The gold discoveries, rather than depleting labour reserves, must be seen as eventually contributing to its prosperity.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Statistical Register of N.S.W. 1849–1856. Govt. Printer Sydney 1859.
2. Ibid.
3. Census, 1st March, 1851.
4. "Maitland Mercury", May, 1856.
5. Goold, W. J. "Old Maitland" N.D.H.S. Vol. x Part x
6. Driscoll, W. P. "Beginnings of the Wine Industry in the Hunter Valley"
7. Reported in 'Maitland Mercury' from "People's Advocate" 2/3/ 1850.

BIBLIOGRAPHY**Books:**

Driscoll, W. P., Beginnings of the Wine Industry in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle. City Council Publication. 1969.

Glynn, S. Urbanization in Australian History, 1788-1900, Melbourne. Nelson, 1970.

Mitchell, C. J., Hunters River, Maitland, Maitland Mercury. 1973.

O'Donnell, D., The History of Early Newcastle 1800-1870.

Articles:

Goold, W. J., "The California Fleet," Newcastle Hunter District Historical Society Vol. III Part XIV.
 "Old Maitland", N.H.D.H.S. Vol X Part X,
 "Maitland Hospital," N.H.D.H.S. Vol. V Part XII.

Jervis, J. The Hunter Valley, Royal Australian Historical Society. 1953.

McFarlane, R., Squatting and Development of the Hunter River District, N.H.D.H.S. Vol. I No. 1

Pogonoski, R., The Maitland Mercury, N.H.D.H.S. Vol IV Part V.

Official Publications:

N.S.W. Colonial Secretary - Statistical Returns of the Colony 1850, 1851, 1855, 1856 (Mitchell Library).

Statistical Register of N.S.W. from 1849 to 1858. Government Printer. Sydney 1859.

Hunter Valley Research Foundation : The Hunter Valley Region, Newcastle. Ells, 1968.

The Hunter Valley Research Foundation' King. H., Urban Pattern of the Hunter Valley,
 Newcastle. City Council, 1963.

Newspapers:

The Maitland Mercury 1850
 1851
 1855