

# Histories of Green



waterloo alexandria



zetland beaconsfield rosebery



essays by  
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UNSW  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



# Square

# **Histories of Green Square**

**Waterloo**

**Alexandria**

**Zetland**

**Beaconsfield**

**Rosebery**

#### **Histories of Green Square 2004**

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The chapters collected in this volume were researched and written by the students from the 2004 class of HIST3904: Going Public – Public History and the Historian, School of History, The University of New South Wales.

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Hinchcliff's Waterloo Mills, *Town & Country Journal*, 1877, ML

Outside Baby Clinic at Alexandria, 1914, ML

'Psalmist', Sam Hood, 1935, ML

'Two women collecting winnings', Sam Hood, 1935, ML

Deen Bong, from Exemption Certificate, 1907, AA

Subdivision Plan of Waterloo, Reuss and Halloran, 1885, ML

Goodlet and Smith's Annular Brick Kilns, Waterloo, *Town & Country Journal*, 1877, ML

Inside the Baby Clinic at Alexandria, ML

Bare-knuckle prize fight in 1847, *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 1847, ML

**Back cover image** 'Crowds watch over the back fence', Sam Hood, 1934, ML

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# Abbreviations

<b>AA</b>	<b>Australian Archives</b>	<b>NSWLAVP</b>	NSW Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings
<b>ADB</b>	Australian Dictionary of Biography	<b>NSWPD</b>	NSW Parliamentary Debates
<b>AHA</b>	Australian Hotels Association	<b>OTJA</b>	New South Wales Pony Owners, Trainers and Jockeys Association
<b>AJC</b>	Australian Jockey Club	<b>Pers. com.</b>	Personal communication
<b>APA</b>	Aborigines Progressive Association	<b>PHANSW</b>	Professional Historians Association of New South Wales
<b>APB</b>	Aborigines Protection Board	<b>SMH</b>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
<b>ARC</b>	Association of Racing Clubs	<b>S.P.</b>	Starting Price (bookmaking or betting)
<b>ABC</b>	Australian Born Chinese	<b>SRNSW</b>	State Records of New South Wales
<b>BMA</b>	British Medical Association	<b>STC</b>	Sydney Turf Club
<b>DUAP</b>	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning	<b>TAB</b>	Totalisator Agency Boards
<b>ESBS</b>	Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub	<b>ULVA</b>	United Licensed Victuallers Association
<b>f.p.</b>	first published	<b>UNSW</b>	University of New South Wales
<b>GSTC</b>	Green Square Town Centre	<b>WAP</b>	White Australia Policy
<b>ISRCS</b>	Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Co-op Ltd	<b>WCTU</b>	Women's Christian Temperance Union
<b>ML</b>	Mitchell Library	<b>ZCAG</b>	Zetland Community Action Group

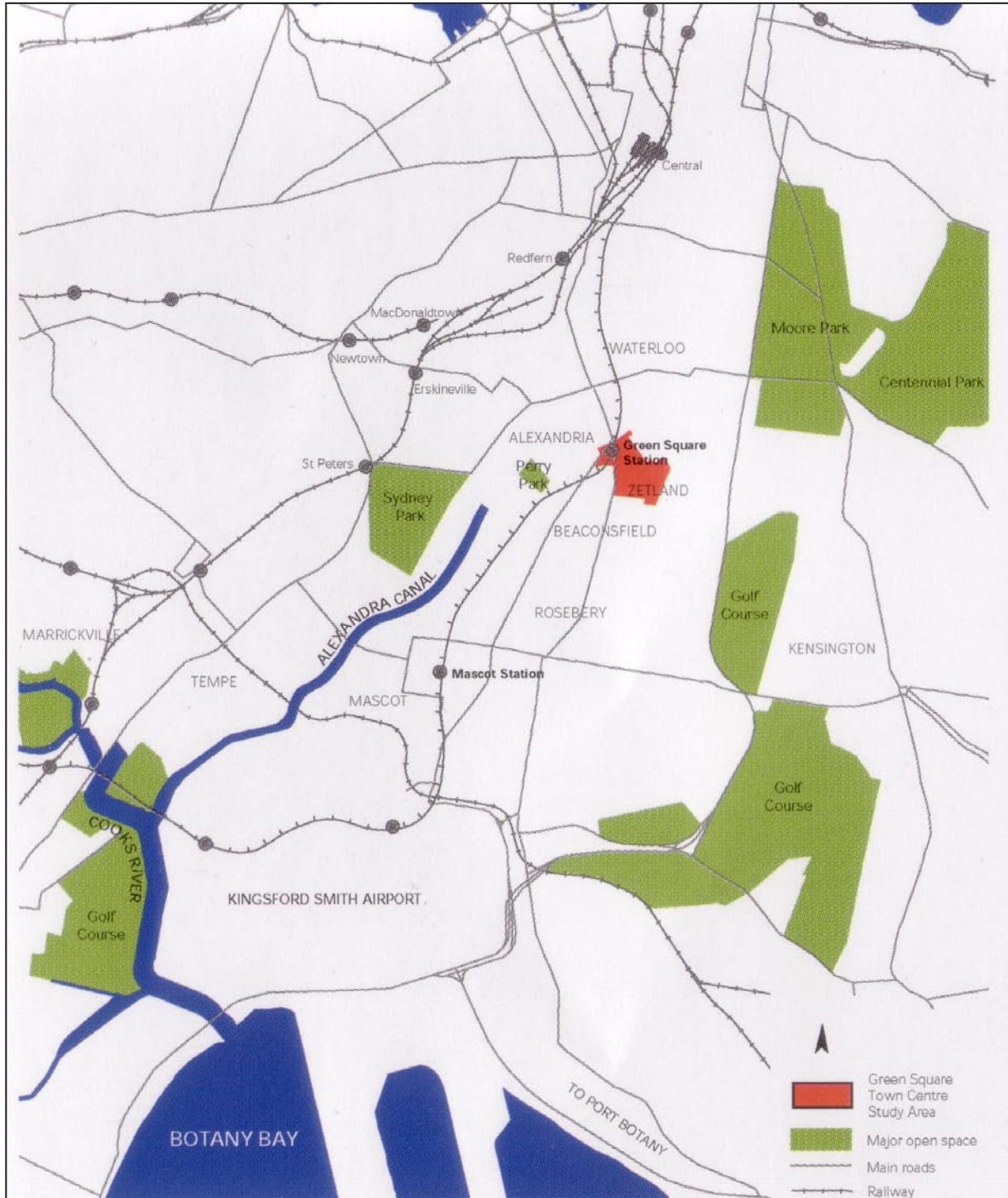


Fig 1.1 Location of Green Square Town Centre and the suburbs which make up the Green Square area: Waterloo, Alexandria, Zetland, Beaconsfield and Rosebery. (Source: Green Square Town Centre Master Plan, courtesy Landcom, South Sydney Development Corporation and Sydney City Council.)

# Chapter 1

# Introducing the Green Square History Project

Grace Karskens

## 1.1 The project

This project explores the history of Green Square, a new name for an old industrial and residential area to the south of central Sydney. Each author presents an aspect of this history, explaining its legacy in the urban landscape today, but also explores important events or developments which have been forgotten, lost or hidden. Together, the essays show that the forces which shaped Green Square's history are complex, intertwined and ongoing. They tell a dynamic story about environmental change and radical transformations of landscape. They track the movement and experience of successive waves of people, and the meanings this place held for them. So this is a project in urban history—it offers a microcosm of the development of Sydney as a whole.

The project was initiated as part of a course I teach in Public History (HIST3904) in the School of History at UNSW and it was undertaken with the support of the then South Sydney City Council (now Sydney City Council). The aim of this course is to introduce students to public history—history as it is practiced outside the academy—and give them experience in original research for public history projects. Meanwhile, my conversations with Stevan Untaru, Senior Planner at South Sydney Council, revealed our shared interest in the importance of history in planning, and ways that the two could be linked. This resulted in the idea of a group project on the Green Square area which could then be made available to planners and developers, public artists, future residents and urban historians.

The students in this course were asked to devise, select and research topics which would throw light on the history of the Green Square area, both environmental and human. They went on field trips, spoke with council staff, archivists, residents and many others, combed archives, haunted state and local libraries, searched the web and swapped contacts and sources. This volume is the result of their research, discussions, thinking and writing.

## 1.2 Green Square: what's in a name?

Green Square itself is a contested name for a place that is partly-real and partly-imagined. As Tessa Endelman relates, it was once the name of a tiny, obscure triangular-shaped park named in honour of Labor MP, local Mayor and tireless promoter of industry and jobs, Frederick Green. In the 1990s, 'Green Square' was adopted as a kind of rebranding strategy for an area of South Sydney comprising Zetland and parts of

Alexandria, Waterloo, Beaconsfield and Rosebery. But these are old working class suburbs and many of the residents there do not want their local identity submerged in an imposed new name. So, while you can catch a train to the ultramodern Green Square station, standing rather incongruously, as it does, among the car-sales yards and old factories on gritty Botany Road, other than this the name hovers largely as a planning idea and a marketing concept. There is no suburb, no postcode, no entry in street directories for Green Square.

So Green Square is a brand new name, triggering associations with clean, green, sustainable urban visions. It seems artificial, it has yet to take root, if that was the intention. Why, then, has this history project focused on the new name and area? Green Square is more about the future than the past. But that is why recovering history is so important at this time. Green Square names a place in transition, a place where the new literally jostles with the old, and where the past is in danger of obliteration as the city relentlessly expands, constantly remaking itself.

With the decline of secondary industry since the 1970s, the twentieth century industrial landscape of vast factories and belching chimneys is in retreat. Meanwhile, Sydney entered the global city stakes. The property market and finance and IT industries boomed and the city's population continued to swell. With the traditional house-and-garden increasingly unsustainable, this area was re-envisioned as Sydney's latest high-rise residential area, with sleek, towering apartment blocks housing new generations of well-heeled white collar workers. A shimmering town centre of futuristic glass and steel was imagined, with wide piazzas, elegant sculpture and fountains, and fast transport to jobs in the city. The most aesthetically pleasing of the older industrial buildings are being carefully restored and recycled as part of vast apartment complexes like Victoria Park and the Hudson, where even the smallest unit appears to cost over \$300,000. While the area still supports manufacturing, high-tech industries, offices, commercial businesses, showrooms and storage facilities are replacing the old heavy industries of car manufacturing, foundries, chemicals and brewing, establishments with labour forces that used to run into thousands. In short, at Green Square we can actually witness the spectacular, strange and often poignant process of social, physical and economic transformation. It is a case study of a process which has occurred in Sydney since its inception.



Fig. 1.2 Urban dreams and visions: the imagined vista of the future Green Square Town Centre – a sleek urban landscape of gleaming high-rise and efficient transport links. (Source: Green Square Town Centre Master Plan, courtesy Landcom, South Sydney Development Corp and Sydney City Council.)

### 1.3 Why does Green Square need a history?

Green Square's twentieth century social history revolved around close-packed inner-city working class suburbs of terrace houses, lanes, pubs and shops, a diverse mix of locals and immigrants, 'rusted-on Labor' people, never-say-die Rabbitohs football supporters, so loyal it is said they have 'one red eye and one green eye' for the club colours. But new residents will most likely be young urban professionals, eschewing (for now) the traditional dream of house and garden in far-flung suburbs. There is little likelihood of shared or inherited local memories, experience and culture. New and old will not easily engage. Surveys and anecdotal evidence reveal that new residents have little or no idea of the history of their new homes, but indications are that they are curious. In the documentation for Green Square, planners and artists repeat over and over again the importance of historical understandings to 'create roots' and a 'sense of belonging' and, rather grandly, that arrangements must be made 'for the acknowledgment and recognition of the physical, social and cultural history of the site...and its people'.

There is something surreal about these solemn statements on the importance of history, because, apart from Margo Beasley's excellent oral history *Everyone Knew Everyone*, no history appears to have been commissioned for Green Square. The massive Green Square Town Centre Masterplan contains a mere one and a half pages on European history and only four paragraphs about the thousands of years of Eora occupation, which stops at 1788, as though they somehow dropped out of history. This was a source of concern to planners at the then South Sydney Council. It is curious, given the intense level of research and assessment given so many other aspects of the area, most of which would have benefited from a properly researched history.

The absence of deep historical inquiry probably arises from a combination of factors. One is the chequered history of local government for the area. Once made up of the Municipalities of Waterloo and Alexandria, the area has been broken up and reincorporated several times, moving between Sydney City Council and South Sydney Council. Local identity via local government has thus been difficult in the Green Square area, itself a composite of older suburbs. Research is not straightforward, there are few easily available sources, so researchers must look further afield and think laterally. As Susan O'Reilly and Tessa Endelman observe, this is an area which as traditionally 'fallen through the cracks' of community history and urban planning.

Another factor is what we might call the tyranny of heritage: local history is often equated with 'heritage'—buildings and sites deemed to be important enough to preserve. To be 'historic' an area has to look 'historic', and preferably aesthetically pleasing as well. Hence, if there are few obvious heritage sites in this run-down landscape, many assume there is no history, or none of note. And a lack of historical knowledge means that significant heritage is not identified.

In addition, defunct industrial areas are generally considered eyesores rather than historic landscapes—change is embraced, its impact is positive and the industrial past is best left behind and forgotten. How could an area 'best described as deepest rustbelt' have a history? The challenge for planners, developers and designers is not how to link past and future, but about 'creating excellence in design within the constraints of commercial reality'. In a recent public lecture, Phillip Bartlett, dubbed a 'developer extraordinaire', described Green Square as 'the void, the vacuum, and where there's a vacuum something will actually happen'. In fact its most positive aspect was the absence of 'what other areas have, which means an opportu-



Fig. 1.3 The past in the present: Victorian terraces in Portman Street, adjoining the Green Square Town Centre site. (Photo: Grace Karskens, 2004.)

nity to create something quite special'. Here developers are free of the constraints that history and heritage might impose—Green Square is a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate.

Finally, a broader reason for the neglect of history may be a sense that it is 'all in the past'. Elizabeth Farrelly's critical commentary on Green Square planning and its 'hyper-talk' referred to history with some verbal eye-rolling: 'They've... produced the black-and-white oral histories, patronised sweet and not-so-sweet old ladies with their doiled memories'. Here, history is the source only of quaint, amusing stories and nostalgia; it is irrelevant to the serious issues and real problems in the brave new world of urban design and planning.

### 1.4 Tales from Green Square

The seeming 'ordinariness', the messiness and lack of definition of Green Square is highly deceptive. If we assume nothing happened here, that it is a 'void', we will surely see nothing.

We will fail to see the party of redcoated officers soldiers in 1790, sent on a mission of violent vengeance against Aboriginal people for the murder of a white man, but stuck fast somewhere here in the wild swamps, and sinking fast. Without research, how would we know that Alexandria was one of the largest centres of Chinese people in Sydney, a true retreat in Retreat Street? Or of the terrible ordeal of Mary Jane Hicks and the way that happened to her here split the colony into debates about gender, sex, race and nation?

There can be no glimpse, either, of mothers and babies, dressed in their best, coming to see the Sisters in Australia's first Baby Clinic in Alexandria, for they lived in a suburb notorious for its infant mortality rates. Where is Father Silwanus Mansour, ministering to his ecumenical flock of Greeks, Antichian Orthodox, Coptics and Syrians in the 1890s, and overseeing the building of Australia's first Melkite church in Waterloo?

Or the crowds of punters, hands clenching betting slips, eyes glued to the horses thundering down the cinder track to another tight finish at Victoria Park racecourse? Or the throng of workers streaming in and out of factories and workshops in their thousands? The roar of the crowds has faded and the sprawling factories are silent.

Without history, more recent lessons and experience will be lost too. Years from now, we will not know of the bitter and determined fight local people waged to close the Waterloo Incinerator, the 'Zetland Monster'; or the joy of Russian immigrants at having Russian language books in the Waterloo library; or, indeed, the strivings of the late twentieth century planners to steer and shape a whole new area of Sydney.

These are some of the stories told in this volume as part of broader histories. Jason Doran and Scott Cumming present the history of the natural environment here, before and after the arrival of the Europeans respectively. Alex Sharp tells the stories of the indigenous people, the Eora whose country this was, and the many other Aboriginal people who lived here in subsequent decades. Susannah Frith tracks the industrial development of the area, from the early industries of the 1810s through the massive developments of the twentieth century, when Alexandria boasted of itself as 'the Birmingham of the south', and up to the present day. Jeff Fairman looks at the parallel emergence of suburbs and residential communities and asks who was responsible for the 'slums'; and Scott Vance explores the changing nature of crime, law and order in these places. Cindy Li discovers that Australia's first Baby Clinic was opened in Henderson Street Alexandria (the building still stands, though unacknowledged) and explains its importance by setting it in the wider context of the baby health care movement and the role of the new professional health workers.



Popular culture is a significant and lively feature of any urban society and a rich source for understanding the values and lives of past peoples. Erik Nielsen goes to the races at the Victoria Park Racetrack and explains the significance of racing and betting culture and its class dimensions, while Anna Gauchat visits the area's many pubs and explores what drinking culture has meant to men and women, past and present. The area has also has a long and significant immigrant history. Melita Rogowsky focuses on the Chinese community of Retreat Street from the 1870s, one of the largest and most important in Sydney, while Susan O'Reilly gives a broad overview of immigrant lives, communities and contributions to the area. Finally, Tessa Endelman presents the 'roots' of Green Square—the history of planning in the area and the origins of the Green Square redevelopment; in short, the history of the present and future.

In telling these histories, the authors look both inwards at the area, and outwards to the wider context of environment, society, culture and ideas. They also consider the implications of these findings in the light of the current and future change in the area, how these histories live on and how they might be interpreted. These histories do not end at a safe, harmless distance in the past, they are not 'doiled memories'; each is dynamic and runs unbroken to the present. They do not present a consensual, seamless account, because such a past never existed. The stories interweave and jostle, overlaid in places, diverging in others.

At one level, this project has very practical aims: to provide local history in an accessible form for the future use of residents, community groups, professionals, educators and researchers. It is a sort of conduit linking research and writing with interested end-users. But there are wider outcomes as well. It is clear from these studies that 'local' does not mean 'unimportant' or 'peripheral'. Looking at the 'small things forgotten', the vast ebb and flow of peoples, and the lineaments and texture of everyday life at this level often challenges wider assumptions about our past. For example: the idea that the Eora conveniently vanished soon after 1788; or that Australia's multicultural history only began after the Second World War; or that poor inner-city areas were always riddled with crime; or that Chinese quarters only existed in the city.

### 1.5 The history continuum: research, past and future

In a sense history writing is always a communal effort, for it draws on earlier works and lights the way to new areas of inquiry for subsequent researchers. So, besides presenting primary research, the chapters in *Histories of Green Square* draw together and acknowledge a number of diverse existing histories relevant to the area, including studies in urban history, ecology, the history of the Chinese, local church histories, heritage site histories, oral histories and many more.

Some of the authors also identified important areas for future research. These include:

- an oral history centred on women and their experience at the early and subsequent Baby Clinics in the area (see Chapter 11).
- an oral history of the Victoria Park Racetrack, examining its role in popular culture and the local community, and focusing on the people's reaction to the end of proprietary racing in 1943 (see Chapter 9).
- an oral history focusing on immigrant history in the area (see Chapter 13).

- a more detailed study of the Chinese community in Waterloo and Alexandria using the abundant records available in the Royal Commission and the Chinese language press (see Chapter 12).
- the instigation of an archaeological assessment and research program based on a thorough historical understanding of the area. This is an almost totally neglected area of research, and yet archaeological records have the potential to provide unique evidence about the lives, aspirations and cultures of the people who have lived here. As Melita Rogowsky notes, the 'number of sites earmarked for redevelopment in the Green Square area presents a rare and unparalleled opportunity for archaeological investigation' (see Chapters 5 and 12).

Other locally-based histories could focus on

- residents' protests and action groups, including protests against the early sewer line from the 1890s, over the high-rise plans of the NSW Housing Commission in the 1970s, the fight to close down the Waterloo Incinerator and the campaigns for Aboriginal civil and land rights in the region.
- A history of health and sickness in the area—this is a recurring theme in the history of Green Square. The research could draw together the histories of traditional treatment and remedies, and the rise of modern medicine, public health, hospitals, planning and environment.

This volume is not a comprehensive account of the history of the Green Square area, and should be considered a beginning, rather than definitive 'end'. As part of the longer continuum of history-making, it will hopefully inspire future researchers to further explore the urban history of our highly urbanised nation.



Fig 1.4 Factory site on Botany Road near to Green Square Town Centre (Photo: Grace Karskens 2004)

# Chapter 2

# Snapshots: Green Square Histories in Brief

## 2.1 The Pre-European Environmental Landscape in Green Square

Jason Doran

The present-day appearance of the Green Square area hides an environmental history that is worth remembering and more importantly, worth restoring, in part at least. This area forms part of a unique environmental landscape known as the Botany Basin. Its story is one of adaptation to unusual environmental factors, and what emerged was a richly diverse, topographically distinct environmental landscape.

Green Square was once covered in wetlands, dunes and dense shrubland, grading into low open woodland and forests. Its environmental history began more than 200 million years ago when the massive sandstone that underlies much of Sydney was formed. Over the past 1.8 million years, windblown sand covered the Botany Basin, creating a vast dune system. But the element which came to characterise the area most was water: it ran southwards from the higher parts, pooling in lower places in the Basin, creating a network of swamps, pools and creeks which in turn flowed into Botany Bay.

Water, sands, rocks and climate shaped the flora and fauna which flourished here: sedges, reeds and paperbarks in the swamps, grass trees, banksias, crimson bottlebrush and the spectacular Gynea lily in the scrub. The Botany Basin was home to the now endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub vegetation community, remnants of which remain in isolated or protected locations. Nearer Centennial Park stood a dark and dense forest of ‘immense mahogany trees, blackbutt and other eucalypts’ as well as large cabbage-tree palms. Animals, reptiles, insects and birds in particular thrived in the wetland environment.

This natural landscape was not only important for its own sake, it had cultural significance as well. Aboriginal people, the Eora, lived in and around Green Square for thousands of years, hunting, fishing and foraging and creating social and cultural systems inseparable from country. After 1788 some Europeans were repelled by the area—considering it inaccessible, uninviting and ‘useless’—but others foraged and hunted here for food. It wasn’t until the late twentieth century that wetlands and their immense biodiversity began to be appreciated in the community generally, and acquire the cultural significance they now hold. By that time, a century and a half

of industrial exploitation, drainage and infilling of swamps, building development and roads had long destroyed most of the pre-1788 environmental landscape in Green Square and the wider region.

However, remnant vegetation has survived in places, which, together with written records, can help us determine the biosphere that once existed in this area. This environmental history is essential in planning strategies for the future preservation and restoration of the region’s unique environment.

## 2.2 Chimneys and Change: Post-European environmental impacts in Green Square

Scott Cumming

The Green Square area is part of the larger environment of the South Sydney wetland corridor. This factor has been very significant in influencing post-European use of the area. From as early as the 1810s, local capitalists searching for power sources for their mills turned to the Waterloo/Botany area. Its relatively reliable water flow provided steam power for grinding grain and milling cloth.

The area was also used as a source of water for the growing city. The pure water was diverted into tunnels and dams, and a pumping station was built on Lords Dam, which had been built for one of the early mills. The diversion and pumping, however, resulted in the drainage of the wetlands, as did further draining work to provide land for market gardens. By 1869, the environment had changed radically: streams had almost ceased to flow, the swamps and their diverse plants and teeming wildlife were gone, and the area had become a ‘tract of barren sandhills’.

The natural run-off system from Waterloo Swamp to Shea’s Creek, the Cooks River and Botany Bay was admirably suited the purposes of industry: it was simply treated as an industrial waste drain. These waterways were soon polluted by foul water, refuse and ‘thick slimy matter’ from woolwashes, tanneries, boiling down establishments and abattoirs, and later from sawmills, foundries, soap and candle works and many more. The area was also used as a waste drain for sewage. From 1882 to 1916 the southern outfall sewer system carried the southern suburbs’ human waste from Surry Hills to a sewerage farm on the northern bank of the mouth of the Cooks River. Part of this system was an uncovered channel.

The way the wetlands in this area were used, altered and polluted illustrates the broader attitudes of European Australians towards the natural environment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the main part it was there to be harnessed for immediate human use, with no thought to conservation for future use, let alone of wetlands possessing any intrinsic value worth preserving.

Large areas of land in the area became available after the break up of the Cooper Estate in 1914. In consequence, expansive and often purpose-built factories began to fill the landscape, booming in the 1920s and intensifying in the following decades. These establishments continued to pollute the waterways while numerous chimneystacks belched smoke into the atmosphere. A 1995 study by the Total Environment Centre detailed the enormously degraded marine environment of the Alexandra Canal/Cooks River waterway: there were excessive levels of heavy metals, oil and grease made up 20 per cent of the sediments on their beds, and fish contained concentrations of organochlorines well in excess of the Food Standard Codes.

By the 1960s, Green Square was evidently also being thought of as a convenient place for other Sydney suburbs to dump their waste. Waverley and Woollahra councils were permitted to build the huge Waterloo Incinerator over the infilled site of Waterloo Dam adjoining residential Zetland streets. Despite immediate local protest, the immense chimney of the ‘Zetland Monster’ poured out stench, pollution and particle fallout round the clock between 1972 and 1996, when campaigns by locals, Greenpeace and South Sydney Council finally succeeded in shutting it down. The concern and campaigns were also emblematic of the rising tide of environmental awareness.

The proposed Green Square Town Centre includes the Incinerator site with its landmark chimney and abandoned, brooding buildings. The selection of this site as the future centre seems particularly apt in light of the fact that it was also the centre of the beginning of industrial development, and the centre for European usage of the area. It was here that the first chimneys were constructed and it is here that one of the last chimneys stands.

### 2.3 The Aboriginal Diaspora

#### Alex Sharp

Like every other part of Sydney, Green Square has a long and ongoing Aboriginal history. It is a story of suffering, death and displacement from land; a history of loss. It is also a story of survival and return.

The name of the traditional land owners of the Green Square area is not clear. We know that the country to the north around Sydney Cove (from South Head to Long Cove on Parramatta River)—belonged to the Cadigal. To south, on the north shore of Botany Bay, the country belonged to the Gamaygal. We do know, however, that the word Aborigines gave for ‘people’ or ‘here, from this place’ in this region was Eora, and so this name will be used for the original people of Green Square.

The Eora would have been among the coastal peoples of the Sydney region, with an economy based on the sea, harbours and rivers, as opposed to the ‘woods’ people who lived inland to the west. The Eora moved about their country hunting and collecting, ‘cleaning up’, or maintaining it, and taking shelter in overhanging caves or bark huts. Their paths criss-crossed

the land. Campsites were located close to the shore during the summer months, when the fishing was good.

The freshwater wetlands and sandhills of the Green Square area would have been a veritable storehouse of food providing edible roots and tubers, fruits, nectar-bearing flowers, as well as fish and shellfish, platypus and water birds. Land was not only a source of food and shelter—it was also the source of identity and spiritual beliefs. The Eora would have invested every feature in the Green Square area—water, earth, rocks, trees and animals—with specific stories which explained origins and meanings.

The Green Square area was important in the years immediately after 1788 because it was the country linking the two pivotal places in the early settlement: Botany Bay and Sydney Cove. This was the area convicts crossed in the hope of boarding La Perouse’s ships at Botany Bay; some were lost here on their return journey, possibly killed by Eora. Convicts continued to wander into the area, exploring and looking for food. Some stole Aboriginal tools and weapons to sell as curios; and it is possible that worse crimes were committed. Two men were killed by Eora here in October 1788. Two years later, in December 1790, a party of fifty soldiers heavily laden with weapons set out across the Green Square area to capture or kill six Eora men in retaliation for the fatal spearing of John McEntire by the warrior Pemulwy. But the party got lost, failed to capture anyone, and, on a second expedition, some nearly drowned in the quicksand of one of the creeks in the area.

But the arrival of the Europeans resulted in hard times and then catastrophe for the Eora. Fish and game were already scarce in the first winter because of the sudden arrival of over a thousand people. A devastating smallpox epidemic swept down from northern Australia, killing large numbers, causing disruption to social systems and forcing some to move to new areas. Other diseases brought by the Europeans also took a heavy toll.

In the coastal areas, it appears that the remaining Eora continued to live around Botany Bay and Cooks River, and so probably continued to hunt and fish in the swamps and streams just to the north, which were largely shunned by the whites for some decades. Some of the men got work in the town, sold fish and firewood or became sailors. But their numbers dwindled over the decades. By 1845, only four of the Cooks River people were at Botany Bay, living with Cabrogal people who had migrated from Liverpool.

The region continued to have an Aboriginal population. People from other parts of the state who had been dispossessed and displaced by the spread of white farming began to move to Sydney. La Perouse was settled by people from the South Coast from 1880s, and a Reserve was eventually gazetted for them in 1895. La Perouse became well-known as Sydney’s Aboriginal place.

Aboriginal people continued to arrive in Sydney from the rural areas in the twentieth century because much of the land they had managed to get back was taken from them again after 1911. Some of these people came to live in the older, inner-city industrial areas, such as Redfern and Waterloo, looking for jobs and homes. The increasing powers of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board meant that the lives of many Aboriginal people were controlled by white officials. From 1915, the Board had power to remove their children and place them in homes; in the 1930s it rounded up hundreds in rural areas and placed them in distant camps. Sydney offered some respite

and escape from the Board’s escalating powers, though people in Green Square were also under surveillance and suffered the loss of their children.

Impoverishment, control and the vast displacements of Aboriginal people was fertile ground for the first broad Aboriginal civil rights movements in the 1920s and 1930s. The Aboriginal Progress Association, founded in 1937 had its coastal headquarters in Sydney. It was as a result of the Association’s campaigns that the APB was eventually abolished in 1940 and replaced with the Aboriginal Welfare Board.

The post-war period marked a great rise in the Aboriginal population of Sydney. Drawn by employment and educational opportunities, Aborigines headed for the Big Smoke. It was in this period that large numbers of Aboriginal people returned to the Green Square area, particularly Waterloo and neighbouring Redfern. These areas became Koori meeting places and Redfern in particular was a place for finding lost family members.

Redfern was also the epicentre of the next wave of civil rights movements, driven to solve urban problems as well as attack entrenched racism. A number of significant organisations and service were also established here in the 1970s. Redfern’s problems were not solved, however: urban decay, poverty, violent riots, and crime and drug problems were considerable and remain so. Yet Redfern is Sydney’s symbolic and literal Aboriginal space, the product of dispossession and a place won back from white urban Australia.

### 2.4 From Tanning to Planning: an industrial history of Green Square

#### Susannah Frith

The Green Square area has an industrial history dating back to 1815, one which has changed remarkably over almost two centuries. The first industries to appear, grain mills and wool-washing, were surrounded by scrub, dunes and swamps and were only accessible by horse and dray, or on foot, over a bumpy dirt road. From the 1850s more noxious trades came out of the city and set themselves up in amongst the numerous market gardeners. There were still very small numbers of residents in the area at this time, with larger residential areas in Redfern, Newtown and the city. Industries employed relatively small workforces of between ten and 50 men, boys and girls. At the end of the nineteenth century the industries multiplied and the noxious trades were joined by manufacturers such as joiners, founders and engineers. Market gardening was overtaken by secondary industries, and improved roads and transport meant goods could be delivered to the ports much faster.

During the two world wars and in their aftermaths the area expanded even further with large-scale industry and planned factories. By 1943, the Municipality of Alexandria proudly boasted that it contained 550 factories, and was ‘the largest industrial municipality in Australia’. The factories employed 22,238 workers, with ‘one half of the suburb occupied by large industrial concerns’. While the majority of working people who lived in the area laboured in its factories, much larger numbers were drawn to work each day from outside the area.

Mechanisation and expansion reached its zenith in the 1950s, but this decade marked more changes in the area’s industrial profile. This time it was the expansion of the city of Sydney and industrial decentralisation that propelled the movement of

the heavy industries away from South Sydney. The downturn in secondary industry since the 1970s furthered this process of decline. Technological change and the expansion of service industries brought different kinds of industry to the area. But the sorts of people who had ridden the wave of industrial success in the first half of the twentieth century no longer had the skills that are needed in the area. They are being forced to look elsewhere for work, so many are leaving altogether.

As a result, the suburbs of Green Square, which have for the past century been home to the workers of Sydney, have begun to change. The new residents of the area reflect its changing industrial environment. Although still dominated by manufacturing, the newer concerns include wholesaling, public administration and storage. Warehouses take up a large a large proportion of the space left by the industries that have moved out west.

Wherever and whenever they opened, industries provided much needed employment in Sydney, especially during the hard years of the depression of the 1890s, and again in the 1920s. Working people in Alexandria and Waterloo formed strong communities in what were often unpleasant environments. They established churches schools, the lively pursuits of popular culture and lifelong friendships, formed through work and social groups. Oral history brings to life the difficulties, especially during the 1930s Depression, the unpleasant and often dangerous working conditions, and the smells and sights of these suburbs. But many people describe their communities warmly, as a good life for them and one they were content to live. There is strong evidence for great human satisfactions: pleasure, contentment, love and friendship.

At this time of transition in Green Square, it is important to incorporate this past into future, for the sake of both the existing communities and the people who are moving in. A genuine understanding of this history can foster a deeper engagement with the place and hopefully plant that attachment which has given the locals before them so much contentment, and a sense of belonging.

### 2.5 Waterloo: Whose fault were the slums? the power of ideas that shaped the suburb

#### Jeff Fairman

Green Square was Sydney’s first true industrial area, and demand for housing, created both by the growth of industry and by Sydney’s phenomenal population growth overall, saw the landscape dramatically altered. Sandy hills on the high ground surrounding Mount Lachlan gave way to new streets, rows of terrace houses, small workers’ cottages, shops and churches. Beginning in earnest in the late 1870s, housing development was sudden, it seemed to occur all at once, as parcels of land owned by the Cooper estate were subdivided and sold off for housing.

In Waterloo, this process of development was unplanned, chaotic and at times inequitable. There was money to be made from the sale of land to skilled workers who had enough to spend; yet there were also profits in renting to those unskilled workers who would never buy their own house. Sydney has been called the ‘Accidental City’, and Waterloo’s growth as a suburb certainly fits this description—it took a long time for anything resembling real planning to occur there and the consequences were obvious. As a result of poor sanitary conditions—lack of sewerage, clean fresh water and drainage—

Waterloo had some of the highest rates of mortality and reputedly the highest infant mortality in Sydney.

Many people were poor, worked long hours in the factories producing glass, milling flour, tanning or making boots. On the other hand, those who possessed a trade, such as masons, leather workers, engineers and builders, lived a relatively comfortable life. The Rosebery model industrial suburb, begun in 1912, was a planned public housing initiative. Like Dacey Gardens (now Daceyville) it was one of the first planned suburbs in Sydney.

Urban planning, when it did come, had a major impact on Waterloo and surrounds—it was better known as ‘slum clearance’. Urban renewal, the policy adopted in Waterloo, probably came as a shock when the first buildings were demolished in the 1940s. This practice continued into the 1970s, when public protest forced a change of policy.

Perhaps the most important question that can be asked from this history of Waterloo is who created the slums? Many observers have looked unfavourably on the slum-dwellers as the makers of their own misery, but as other historians have also shown, attention should also focus on the factors that allowed them to be created, including poor planning and *laissez-faire* government.

The changes that Green Square now faces are amongst some of the greatest challenges in the history of the area. Local people witnessed ‘beautiful old houses’ knocked down to make way for industry in the area, but now these industrial buildings in turn are being demolished to make way for new housing, mainly expensive high density housing.

The legacy of the nineteenth century residents of Waterloo also remains in the built environment of terraces, cottages, streets and lanes. With the change in attitudes towards heritage, they are now more likely to be lovingly restored than demolished. But the peaceful, pretty streets may be misleading, suggesting that the past was simpler, more pleasant and picturesque, and full of ‘character’. We should not forget that this history was one of struggle: there was poverty, overcrowding and dingy back alleys, smells, pollution and at times disease. For many of the working class people who lived here, this was reality. Perhaps this is why what is remembered and valued among residents living in the Green Square area today are the good times, a sense of community, knowing your street, talking to your neighbour and not locking your doors.

## 2.6 Green Square and the Thin Blue Line: crime, law and order in the green square area

### Scott Vance

The history of crime, law and order is important, because by looking at what was being policed in different periods we can learn what behaviour society—or some sections of it—wanted controlled. We can see what crimes the community took seriously and what crimes they did not. At a general level, it may also be possible to gauge what respect or otherwise the community had for the police and for law and order.

Looking at history of crime in the Green Square area is a good way to observe these changes. This chapter takes typical ‘slices’ at different periods, and comparing these with more detailed accounts of the few sensational or extraordinary events.

Before the 1860s the police force in Sydney was still largely non-professional, and the policing system inefficient and

uncoordinated. Nevertheless, one activity the ‘bluebottles’ (as they were known) policed in the 1840s was bare-knuckle prize fighting. Patrons and participants made their way to the wild, isolated Cook’s river, near Green Square, to fight, watch and bet on the result. If tipped off, the police followed in hot pursuit and arrested them as vagrants.

In 1862 there was a re-organisation of the police into a more professional body and by 1870 there were police stationed at Waterloo in the Green Square area, with numbers steadily rising as the population grew. There is early evidence in this period of the attempt to control working class behaviour in pastimes such as consumption of alcohol and gambling, but otherwise, little major crime was reported. Occasionally, though, there were serious crimes. In 1886, the area was rocked by one of the most notorious crimes of the century, the Mt Rennie rape case, which caused a sensation and had the whole of Sydney hotly debating questions relating to colonial youth and the nature of colonial society.

In the twentieth century the number of police stations was reduced and Redfern became the station for the Green Square area. Gambling and other vices such as sly-grog selling were the focus of police arrests in this period. Yet oral history and some written evidence show that these activities had a wide level of acceptance in the community. They were not considered crimes, but part of working class popular culture.

The post-war period continued to be characterised by a relative lack of serious crime, punctuated by two sensational killings. Street fighter and standover man John Charles (“Jackie”) Hodder from Alexandria was stabbed to death in front of the three hundred guests at a dance at Waterloo Town Hall in 1965. A few months later Maurice ‘Barney’ Ryan was shot dead at a dance at Alexandria Town Hall. It was believed that the killing of Ryan was payback for Hodder.

From the years after World War II to the present, with the gradual erosion of manufacturing industry and job opportunities, the socio-economic status of many residents changed. There are highly dependent welfare recipients and more modern crimes include vandalism and drug abuse, linked to organised crime. In more recent times, race has also become a factor, with the much-publicised confrontations between police and Aboriginal residents in the Green Square area and its surroundings. The most recent of these was the riot which followed the death of an Aboriginal youth T J Hickey in February 2004. With current redevelopments now taking place, the type of community is gradually but radically changing. There will probably be an emphasis on the protection of material property—more surveillance, security measures and so on—and far less interest in controlling popular habits or pastimes such as gambling and drinking, as in the past.

The history of crime, law and order throws light on a number of aspects of life in the Green Square area. Laws and policing did not occur in a social or cultural vacuum, but were shaped by wider issues, such as gender, class and race; perhaps most striking is the recurring clash of the law and police with youth. Oral histories reveal that crime (or rather what was officially deemed crime) played a part in people’s lives—it was present and important, people commonly took part in such activities, some of which they did not believe were wrong. It is also rewarding to challenge assumptions—to find out that what authorities ruled illegal changed over time; and to discover that, despite the area’s reputation, and some terrible and sensational crimes, for much of its history there appears to have been very little crime at all.

## 2.7 A Course of Action: working class sporting culture at Victoria Park Racecourse, 1908-1943

### Erik Nielsen

Victoria Park Racecourse was a proprietary racetrack, one of many which dotted this region of Sydney in the early twentieth century. Its history tells us about how the people of the Green Square area enjoyed and defended their leisure time in the first half of the twentieth century. It was opened in 1908 and was built by Sir James Joynton Smith, a local businessman, and was the most modern of all these types of courses. Proprietary racing is a term used for racing provided by privately-owned clubs, as opposed to ‘principal’ clubs set up by government legislation, such as the Australian Jockey Club (AJC).

The Victoria Park course had the typical sparse appearance of a racecourse; the fence around the edges marked its boundary and a grandstand stood on the western side. It was the ‘first course in Australia to cater for ladies in the provision of retiring rooms’. The proprietors clearly recognised that women enjoyed racing and betting as well as men. The site also included the ‘Tote’ Building, which still stands. This building held the Totalisator, a machine that calculated odds based on the actual amount of money wagered on the race. Besides horseracing, the site was also used for various community events and entertainment, including Australia’s first plane flight.

Proprietary racing was different to non-proprietary racing in a number of ways. First, the calibre of horses competing was different to the thoroughbreds found at Australian Jockey Club meets—horses were either less capable thoroughbreds or workhorses, usually ponies or hacks. As a result, there were more opportunities for people to own racehorses. Proprietary racing developed in ways that provided interesting racing. The smaller tracks meant punters could see the whole race. Races were generally of a sprint distance, more numerous on the daily program and with larger fields of competitors. All these factors meant tighter finishes that were exciting to watch and offered good odds due to the number of legitimate chances in the race.

Betting itself was important in working class sporting culture in at least three ways. First, betting was pursued for its financial benefits—the chance of a major windfall. Second, betting was also an important recreational pursuit and intellectual exercise for working class people. And third, betting was a way of challenging the dominant cultural order.

The Victoria Park Racing Club also followed its own conventions, suitable to its purposes. For example the stewards at Victoria Park, who enforced the disciplinary codes, insisted on interviewing witnesses separately, rather than all together as decreed by the AJC. In this way jockeys, trainers and owners who broke the rules were more likely to be caught out and punished. Enforcing the rules was important in proprietary racing because it was so often attacked as being rife with corruption. Its opponents—typically middle class supporters of the principal club—also claimed that its sole aim was profit-making, that it encouraged gambling and lured workers away from their jobs, that it was run by crooks, and that it lacked any higher benefit to the nation. But proprietary racing had different goals and purposes to thoroughbred racing.

Victoria Park racecourse was also a site of class struggle, in this case between the middle class proprietors (the Association of Racing Clubs—ARC) and working class participants (the NSW Pony Owners, Trainers and Jockeys Association

OTJA). Naturally, the interests of these two groups came into conflict. A major dispute developed in 1923 over the registration of two trainers by the ARC who were not members of the OTJA. The OTJA displayed its discontent in two ways: a boycott on August 1923, and through testimony to the Select Committee of 1923. This conflict demonstrates the determination of working class participants to run their own affairs in the sport.

Proprietary racing was wound up in 1943 after the passing of the Sydney Turf Club Bill. Politicians on both sides agreed that non-proprietary control would develop the sport because the profits would go back into it. Higher prize-money would improve the quality of racehorses. Practices such as rigging that had long haunted the racing industry would be cleaned up. The demise of proprietary racing seems to have occurred without protest. Working class interest had already been drawn to principal clubs by the phenomenal rise of Phar Lap, ‘the people’s champion’. Other forms of racing, such as trotting and greyhound racing also came into vogue.

Like other racecourses around Sydney, Victoria Park Racecourse was used for military purposes during the Second World War. After the war, the site was sold off and converted into an industrial precinct. With the downturn in secondary industry and the closure of plants, the area came under the control of Landcom in the late 1990s. Today ultra-modern high-rise apartment buildings dominate the area. One of the two parks features the old Tote building, partly restored.

Like the Green Square area generally, this is a landscape still in transition. The place appears a little desolate; the trees need time to grow. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing, for it does leave room for the new residents to impose their own imprint on their own site, just as the earlier generations of people did. They used their leisure time on their own terms, in a sport tailored to suit their needs. The dynamism of this sporting culture is evident in the way it adapted to new circumstances after 1943. It is not necessary to mourn the end of proprietary racing, as the culture at its heart it is still alive, albeit in a different form.

## 2.8 A History of Pubs Around Green Square

### Anna Gauchat

Early Australian pubs were a fusion of the English style taverns, alehouses and inns that accommodated both locals and travellers. By at least 1853, nine publicans in the Waterloo and Alexandria areas had already been granted licences. The first of these was the Waterloo Retreat, located on Retreat Street, on the Alexandria side of Botany Road, owned by Thomas Roston.

Housing and industry boomed in the new suburbs of Waterloo and Alexandria from the 1880s, and with population and industry came pubs. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were 22 within a two kilometre radius in Waterloo alone. The high concentration of hotels in the area is linked with the demography of Alexandria and Waterloo, which were largely working class suburbs.

Pubs were important social gathering places and a distinctive ‘pub culture’ arose from them. They were centres of urban life where men engaged in entertainment such as skittles, quoits, billiards, sing-song nights, gambling on card-games, two-up and horseraces, and of course drinking. They were also places where men could find out where they could get work and other information.



Fig 2.1 Green Square Hotel (the former Zetland Hotel). (Photo: Grace Karskens 2004)

Women did not usually patronise bars, as women in hotels were widely assumed to be prostitutes. For many women it was as socially unacceptable to participate in the drinking and gambling. They were permitted to buy alcohol but they would drink it in private in the company of other women. But pubs were not entirely male domains, as many women were licensees and employees of hotels, actively engaged in their management and functions. Barmaids were a popular feature of most hotels, but they were constantly criticized by moral reform groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. From 1905, women had to be over 21 to work as barmaids, unless they were the wives or daughters of publicans.

Reform groups had another victory in 1918 when 6 o'clock closing was introduced. As a result pubs were forced to change to cater for the 'rush hour' of patrons who had sixty minutes to drink beer after their days' work. Ironically it encouraged a new culture high intensity drinking: 'sculling' as much alcohol as possible in a short time. This form of drinking became infamous as the '6 o'clock swill'. It also encouraged the proliferation of 'sly grog' places where people could drink after hours. The law was not repealed until 1955.

The 1930s Depression was especially difficult for retail trades, such as pubs and hotels, and family run businesses were forced to make ends meet by whatever means they could. Often the whole family worked in the pub, including children. Despite the difficulties, the Green Square pubs and their publicans continued to play an important role—some publicans, like Bernie Fallon from the Zetland Hotel were well-known in the community and are still remembered.

Another person who must have been well-known in the community was the Reverend George van Eerde of the Redfern Methodist Church. Rev. van Eerde saw the negative impacts that pubs had in the community. He believed that drinking worsened the suffering of women and children, and he often

accompanied women on pay day to encourage husbands to hand over their money to their wives and not to beer.

In the 1950s, pub culture was again challenged by new developments. Accommodation was now also supplied by motels, but, more importantly, licensed clubs were providing more comfortable surroundings for socialising for both men and women. Pubs, open until 10pm from 1955, began to refurbish once again, incorporating saloons, lounges, beer gardens and gaming areas for darts, quoits and billiards.

However, by the 1980s and 1990s, indications are that crime, alcoholism and poverty were serious problems in parts of the Green Square area. The Iron Duke Hotel developed a notorious reputation as being a 'bikey club' with strippers, bar fights and rough crowds. Meanwhile the Zetland Hotel had a colourful period of hiring lingerie waitresses as barmaids.

Drinking has always been a subject of debate in Australia, and while the moral dimension of these debates has faded, the impacts of what is now called alcohol abuse are still of great concern. The amendments to the liquor laws as a result of these concerns have meant significant changes to the way alcohol is served in licensed restaurants, clubs and hotels. Pubs responded once more with the addition of bistros, expanded seating areas to cater for tables and TV screens, and restrictions on smoking.

Today there are 49 pubs in Green Square. They range from the traditional dark and dingy to the brightly lit, and this in itself is indicative of the changing demographic profile of the area. Unfortunately, many who have not altered their pubs within the last few years have been forced to close down. The 'For Sale' sign has gone up above the Green Square Hotel. The hotel will pass to new managers who do not have the same depth of knowledge or affinity with the area.



Fig 2.2 Entrance to the Yiu Ming Temple, Alexandria (Photo: Grace Karskens 2004)

However change and adaptation to new social and economic factors have been integral to the history of hotels. The pubs preserve some of the physical fabric and social rituals of the past, but they can also play an essential role for the future. They are the places where new residents can interact with locals, learn something about local traditions and history, places of relaxation and sociability for an evolving community, places which might knit together past and future in Green Square.

## 2.9 Alexandria, Birthplace of Baby Health

### Cindy Li

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1914, Australia's first baby health centre was opened in the suburb of Alexandria. The Baby Clinic, as it was then called, was originally situated at 22½ Henderson Street, a small semi-detached house rented by the Department of Public Health. And so Alexandria may be considered the birthplace of what was to become a hugely popular health service, one which affected the way successive generations of mothers brought up their children. This house is a significant site for the history of health care, the rise of modern childcare and of course the history of women.

Alexandria had also been the focus of an earlier network of localised infant welfare services. The Alice Rawson School for Mothers had a training school in Bourke Street Alexandria as well as in Newtown. These services were aimed at reducing the high level of infant mortality in the City of Sydney and the surrounding working class metropolis. In 1909, the Department of Public Health employed a nurse for the urban industrial areas surrounding the city, including what is now Green Square. The nurse provided care and advice, but she was also responsible for reporting the conditions of babies and their home environments back to the Department. At this stage the infant welfare movement largely attributed infant ill health and mortality to the failings of the working class mothers. It

generally failed to acknowledge the role of unemployment, poverty, poor planning and overcrowding.

The decision to open the Alexandria Baby Clinic was made on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1914 at the first meeting of the Baby Clinics, Pre-Maternity and Home Nursing Board, convened by the then Labor Minister for Public Health, the Hon. Frederick Flowers. One month later, the Baby Clinic opened its doors and two nurses, Nurse Pike and Nurse Williams, began their duties. By September 12<sup>th</sup>, the honorary physician Dr Margaret Harper had begun her weekly attendance at the clinic. The clinic movement quickly mushroomed and in the following year, the Baby Clinics Board opened more clinics in other inner-city working class areas including Newtown, Balmain and Glebe.

The building at 22½ Henderson Street was originally constructed as a residential house and it still stands today. But it did not provide sufficient space. When Dr Harper was in for consultation, the rooms could not accommodate all the women and children who came to see her. They had to wait outside in the backyard in an improvised waiting room—a garden pavilion, which could not be used when it rained. And so even in its early days, the Clinic was very popular. In 1917, on the suggestion of the Nurse Inspector, Lucy Spencer, it moved to the more spacious shop and dwelling next door.

Most of the first baby health centres were started in existing buildings, and they tended to have a 'homelike' design and atmosphere, which was thought to be more suitable for such a service. The use of a house would have made the Clinic more familiar, welcoming and accessible to local women. It was not a hospital—the Clinic was for keeping 'well' babies well and it did not provide treatment for sick babies. The baby health centre remained at 20 Henderson Street until 1965, when it moved to a newly constructed purpose-built building in Renwick Street.

At first the state's Baby Health clinics program came under strong attack from doctors, especially in the new area of paediatrics. They became more supportive of the movement as they saw new career opportunities opening for them. Women's and feminist groups also attempted to influence policy outcomes, but did not have the political clout of the doctors. More research is needed on their involvement in this process, and also on women's other roles. Women were not just clients of the baby health centres. As feminists, doctors and philanthropists, they were themselves involved in framing infant health and welfare policy.

In 1926 the Department of Public Health took over the baby health centres, and this marked an end to the focus on working class women alone. The baby health centres became a service that was universally accessible to all mothers, regardless of class background. The infant welfare movement was now under the direction of a newly emerged class of experts: nurses, doctors and clinic sisters who believed that all women needed to be taught mothercraft, not just working class mothers. They urged women to avoid the traditional child-rearing practices passed on to them from their own mothers, and to follow instead only expert advice that was grounded in 'scientific' evidence. Thus the baby health movement can be seen as a part of the road to modernisation. The nurses, doctors and sisters were part of the much broader national efficiency movement which held an ambitious vision for a new society, where social harmony could be achieved by a state bureaucracy applying scientific principles to social problems or conflicts.

What is missing from this story is the voices of the mothers of Alexandria and other Green Square suburbs themselves. They were not just passive recipients, they had to make choices about what service they used, whether they would follow the advice, or whether they would even use the baby health centre in the first place. For these reasons, an oral history of the women who lived in the Green Square area would be a very valuable and rewarding project.

## 2.10 Exodus and Retreat:

### The Chinese of Alexandria and Waterloo

Melita Rogowsky

The Retreat Street precinct of Alexandria is associated with successive waves of Chinese immigration to Australia. The area surrounding Retreat Street in Alexandria and Waterloo has been the site of continuous Chinese occupation since at least the 1870s. Though the numbers of Chinese in the area fluctuated dramatically with the introduction and intensification of the White Australia Policy (WAP), the precinct accommodated the highest concentration of Chinese market gardeners in Sydney during the 1880s and early 1900s. The swamplands of Waterloo provided fertile ground for the gardens and the gardeners lived in wooden huts adjacent to the street (which have since been destroyed by fire and/or government 'cleansing'). They spent their recreational time, along with other working class Chinese (as well as Europeans), in Retreat Street, which was notorious for its gambling houses.

The surrounding area, particularly Botany Road and Bourke Street, hosted many other successful Chinese businesses, including more market gardeners, grocers, cabinetmakers and a butcher. The state heritage listed Yiu Ming Temple (circa 1909) and the locally listed terrace houses which adjoin it, were built by local tradesmen of the Go Yui clan. Situated at the far end of Retreat Street, they are associated with many of the his-

torical figures and businesses of the area and remain a key site of religious and cultural activity for the Go Yui clan. Australian Born Chinese (ABC) children who were born and raised in this region attended the local Waterloo Public School. The conflicts between European-Australians and Chinese-Australians and the resultant oppressive legislation and regulation were played out in community agitation and action, media propaganda, harassment and violence. One important lesson is that racism does not appear to have been a constant factor at this local level, but rather escalated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; but even then it was at times mitigated by instances of sympathy, friendship and esteem.

The combined districts of Alexandria and Waterloo are thus places of special cultural significance and meaning for people with links to the Chinese communities of this neighbourhood today. They also enrich our understanding of Sydney's multicultural past. It is an important reminder to future generations of Australians of the broad and complex history of urban Chinese settlement outside of the boundaries of the area now commonly known as 'Chinatown'. It is a story which tells us about the local implementation of the WAP, and Chinese community resistance to and negotiation with the xenophobic Australia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Making this history available to Chinese communities in this region and elsewhere, new and current residents of the area, schools, libraries and workplaces, will contribute to a richer understanding of an area that is often wrongly dismissed as an industrial wasteland.

As Ann Stephen noted in her report *Lions of Retreat Street*, Chinese settlement in Retreat Street has in part reshaped the meaning of Alexandria and Waterloo. These suburbs were named to celebrate the recent victory of the British in the Napoleonic Wars, as was Retreat Street, which takes its name from the Waterloo Retreat Hotel which once stood on its corner. But Retreat Street has become synonymous with the tranquillity of the temple, rather than with a working class pub, or European battles.

## 2.11 From German Streets to Russian libraries: Immigrant Histories of Green Square

Susan O'Reilly

The Green Square area is known for its industrial history, plants, factories and most recently for the development of expensive high-density housing. But these areas were not spaces only of economic development, devoid of human voices and the stories of the surrounding communities. What accents did these voices have? What cultures wove amongst one another, creating the diverse religious and ethnic communities that exist in the area today?

The Green Square area has attracted immigrants ever since industries were established here, and continues to do so. This history has not yet been written and records are scant, yet a wealth of immigration stories were found. The area has been home to an incredibly diverse range of ethnic groups, from the early Irish, to the Greek, Italian, and eastern European communities of the post-war period. There was also a strong Chinese presence, and later other Asian communities, including the Vietnamese. The pattern of immigrants settling in the area to take advantage of the high levels of unskilled employment has been a constant feature of the area, from Irish in the mid nineteenth century, to the Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Chinese people in the area today. Immigrants have therefore been

integral to the area's industrial and labour history. They were among the hundreds or thousands of workers in the major industries, and became shopkeepers, tradesmen and market gardeners.

Little social infrastructure was available for the first waves of immigrants. The support and security networks were fulfilled mainly by religious orders, church communities and their affiliated organisations. Family and local community networks were also established. Religious diversification and commitment was strong, with the establishment of the first Maronite and Melkite churches (1894 and 1895 respectively) in Waterloo, which reflected a strong Syrian and Lebanese population. Mt Carmel Catholic Church, built in 1859, was the pride of the Irish community but also ministered to Maltese and Lebanese Catholics in the twentieth century.

Local government programs and services to assist migrants have only developed strongly during the 1990s, and they have clearly increased immigrants' opportunities and desire to interact more closely with the wider community. Their success, compared with the lack of established services in the earlier periods, makes it poignantly obvious how hard interaction would have been for the area's immigrants from the late 1800's to the late nineties.

There are no extraordinary immigration stories amongst these histories, so far. Little scandal and very few controversial issues seem to have arisen. What is important is the remarkable ability of these immigrant groups to establish functioning and resourceful communities that did not forget their traditions and cultures but also eventually incorporated them into the wider community of the area.

## 2.12 The Roots of Green Square: A Planning History

Tessa Endelman

Green Square area has long been a site for planning visions. Over the twentieth century there were various schemes for the redevelopment of certain aspects, areas and services in South Sydney, so the current plans for Green Square are only the latest in a long history of proposed schemes for the area. Despite its long history of occupation, very little in the way of planned redevelopment was actually achieved. At times administered by individual local councils, for most of its recent history the majority of the district has been governed alternately by either South Sydney Council or the City of Sydney Council.

The Green Square project was primarily created through an alliance between South Sydney City Council and the NSW State Government. Since about 1991, discussions between community groups and planners have been held through a wide variety of forums. Community consultation was a fundamental part of the new development scheme, and was achieved through the circulation of a discussion paper, various discussion groups, letter drops and surveys as well as through regular updates in the community newsletter the *Inner-city News*.

An important factor in the projected urban renewal is the rezoning of activities within the area. Green Square has a long industrial history and much of it was previously known as a slum area. Industrial expansion in the post-WWII period further reduced the quantity of housing and the quality of the urban environment. One of the key objectives of the Green Square project is to encourage multi-land use in the area, increasing the balance of industrial with commercial and residential areas.

The community's response revealed the major concerns to be the environment, the future role of the city, transport, public safety and the needs of the community. Bearing this in mind, the council's development consultants created the South Sydney Plan, part of which, the Strategy for a Sustainable City of South Sydney, incorporates the Green Square project. Other major concerns were the maintenance of a socially and culturally diverse population (to be achieved by a percentage of low-cost housing and other strategies), and the promotion of high quality urban design in new development.

Further development in the area was prompted by the State Government's announcement of the new Southern Railway, a service that would run between the airport and Central Station for the millions of visitors expected during the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. The plan of the new train line included a new station situated in the heart of a newly defined Green Square area. Access to rail transport finally sparked the total redevelopment of the area. By 1997, a draft Masterplan had been developed by South Sydney Council's consultants, Stanislav Turner, in association with Hassell Pty Ltd. It aimed to convert the largely industrial profile of the area into residential and mixed land use areas., outlining the future planning of Green Square and its development into the year 2020.

To date, the Green Square project has faced several difficulties and has become further and further removed from the original plans and their underlying philosophies. It will be interesting to see whether it will achieve the high levels of success in environmental sustainability, social and cultural diversity, mixed-use zoning, good design and a vibrant urban culture to which it originally aspired, or whether it will become a 'white elephant'. It remains to be seen whether this latest and most ambitious plan for renewal will suffer a similar fate to that of its predecessors, or whether it will achieve an equitable and sound urban future.



# Chapter 3

# The Pre-European Environmental Landscape of Green Square

Jason Doran

## 3.1 Introduction

### 3.1.1 Overview and aims

The early environmental history of Green Square and surrounding suburbs included a diverse and unique ecosystem of species, within an area of varying degrees of ecological succession, from swamps to impenetrable shrubland, to low open woodlands and forests. It was once an area abundantly endowed with diverse native flora and fauna. The natural environment of Green Square was distinctive for many reasons. It was not only important to the Aboriginal and European residents of the area, it also included the now endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS). This report will endeavor to recreate an image of what that environment was like, and determine its significance, in order to suggest appropriate ideas for the development of the Green Square Town Centre Project and the wider redevelopment of the area.

Green Square's environmental history plays an important part in understanding the cultural changes that have occurred within the South Sydney region. Linked with the geological formation of the Botany Basin, this environment has adapted to local conditions in the last 1.8 million years. Species which occurred here need to be identified and considered, and their history interpreted, when making decisions regarding future development. The preservation of native fauna and flora is important, not only for biodiversity, but also for conservation within the Sydney region as a whole. Sydney is world famous for its unique natural heritage, which is also linked to the first European observations of Australia and Botany Bay in particular. While some Europeans failed to understand or appreciate Australia's seemingly alien landscape, others celebrated it as a garden paradise of beautiful wildflowers and botanical treasures. Whatever the opinion, serious environmental degradation has occurred since European settlement (see Chapter 4) and work needs to be done to restore and protect the natural beauty that once existed. The vision for a new town centre for Green Square as a place of work and recreation, with a mix of high quality building designs and types, including public plazas and public art, should include an awareness of the environmental past. But in order to achieve this, the environmental history of the area has to be understood. This chapter therefore presents an analysis of the pre-1788 landscape and environment of the Green Square area and early European observations, and examines surviving remnant flora and fauna in the region.

### 3.1.2 Location of the study site

Green Square Town Centre Site is situated four and a half kilometers south of Central Sydney and is bordered by the major roads of Botany Road, Bourke Street, and Joynton Avenue. It covers an area of 14 hectares, primarily located in the Sydney suburb of Zetland. The surrounding suburbs include Waterloo, Alexandria, Beaconsfield and Rosebery. The study site itself is situated at an elevation of 40 metres, on ground having a slight gradient south towards Botany Bay, which is intersected by small gullies (Latitude 34° 46'50"S, longitude 151° 34'50"E).

The Botany Basin, in which the study site is located, is a structural and topological depression west of the coast between Port Jackson and Port Hacking. The broad expanse of Botany Bay itself occupies a large and central area.<sup>1</sup> The environmental history of this region began millions of years ago as windswept sand blew into this depression forming a landscape unique to this part of the world. The ecological diversity of the area was an outcome of environmental adaptation to landscape and climate. This environment not only supported a diverse array of flora and fauna, it has also provided for the needs of the many generations of human inhabitants who have lived in the area.

### 3.2 Early European observations

Early European observers recorded differing perspectives of the landscape of the Sydney region. Impressions were influenced by the seasons and by the education, interest and disposition of the observer. Some understood and appreciated the uniqueness of the flora and fauna they encountered. During Lieutenant (later Captain) Cook's 1770 visit to Botany Bay (then named Sting Ray Bay) an inland exploration was made of some three or four miles. Cook headed north to an area close to the site now known as Green Square and made observations of the land, describing the area as 'mostly a barren heath diversified with marshes and Morasses'.<sup>2</sup> His observations of the area further south, around the Bay, along with those of Joseph Banks, later aided in the European colonisation of Australia. Impressions were rather different when the First Fleet arrived at the height of summer in 1788—Governor Arthur Phillip thought the area too swampy for a settlement. In contrast to Cook's view of the landscape, Lieutenant King described 'the country between that place [Botany Bay] and Port Jackson' more generally, as consisting 'chiefly of deep bays and sand hills interspersed with a vast number of rocks'.<sup>3</sup>



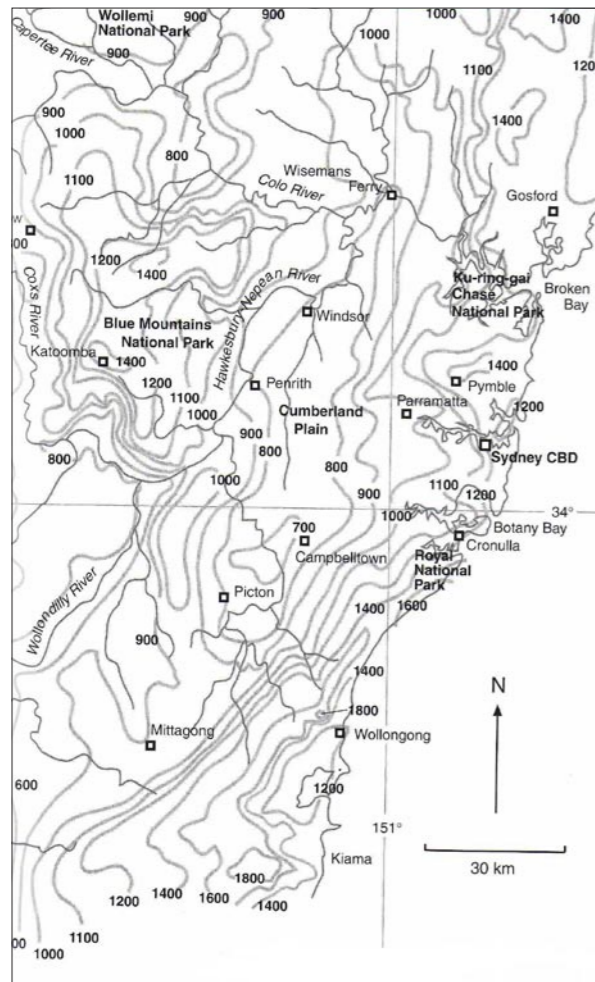


Fig. 3.1 Sydney and Environs: Average annual rainfall (Source: Howell & Benson, *Sydney's Bushland*, 2000, p.13, courtesy Doug Benson.)

Variations in the vegetation between Sydney Cove and Botany Bay were also noted early in 1788. Between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February, Captain Hunter, upon finding the seas too rough to return to Sydney by boat, made his way overland with another officer and two seamen 'through the woods and swamps, of which there were many in our route'.<sup>4</sup> Historian Joan Lawrence describes their trek:

...they used a pocket compass as an aid and said of the land some two miles south of Port Jackson that it 'abounds with high trees, and little or no underwood; but between that and Botany Bay, it is all thick, low woods or shrubberies, barren heaths, and swamps, the land near the sea, although covered in many places with wood, is rocky from the water-side to the very summit of the hills'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1790 a search party was sent out by Governor Philip to kill a number of the Aboriginal people living on the north side of Botany Bay, in retaliation for the alleged murder of John McEntire by an Aboriginal man, Pemulwuy (see Chapter 5). Tim Flannery recounts the tetchy and ironic observations of the terrain by Lieutenant Watkin Tench, who was ordered to take part in this expedition:

...Our march ended at sunset, without our seeing a single native. We had passed through the country which the discoverers of Botany Bay extol as 'some

of the finest meadows in the world'. These meadows instead of grass, are covered with high coarse rushes, growing in a rotten spongy bog, into which we were plunged knee-deep at every step.<sup>6</sup>

Tench also noted the flora and fauna of the area in his journal. They included the once common Cabbage Tree Palm (*Livistona australis*): 'That species of palm tree which produces the mountain cabbage is also found in most of the freshwater swamps, within six or seven miles from the coast'. The Swamp Wallaby Tench described as 'the red kangaroo, from the colour of its fur, which is like that of a hare, and sometimes is mingled with a large portion of black: the natives call it *bagary*'. He also pointed out that, besides being an important food source for Aboriginal people, *bagary*'s greatest destroyer was the dingo. Tench sighted emu, which he named *cassowary*: 'We came suddenly upon them, and they ran up a hill exactly like a flock of turkeys, but so fast that we could not get a shot at them'. The emus were feeding upon 'either grass or a yellow bell-flower growing in the swamps'. He also found numerous reptiles there.<sup>7</sup>

To the casual European observer, the Botany Basin, including Green Square, appeared inaccessible and useless because it did not offer land desirable for cultivation or grazing. Open park-like country was preferred, something they often identified with 'gentlemen's parks in England' and most suitable for grazing. The inhospitable nature of this un-European environmental landscape was later described by Thomas Woore, who also made observations in the vicinity of Green Square. He described the area that includes Waterloo Swamp while on an expedition with Baron Carl von Hugel between 1833 and 1834:

...Our principle object was the collection of aquatic plants, which at that time grew in considerable variety, as a great part of the surface was covered with water. This occupation led us over almost every part of the swamp that we could obtain footing on; but it was very difficult to travel, and in many places impossible to do so, from its semi-liquid state...Much stunted timber and some large trees were at that time growing on the sand slopes in sheltered hollows, and the whole was covered with a thick coat of brushwood, that effectually prevented the sun's rays and hot winds from penetrating to the surface... I have now many specimens of *Utricularia* and other plants of a similar nature we collected there, that can only exist in quagmires.<sup>8</sup>

These early observations present the area as a hazardous and uninviting environment, by highlighting its rugged swampiness. However, they do provide an important insight into the great abundance of native plant and animal life that existed there. Birds were particularly attracted to the large supply of fresh water. This environment was formed as a result of a unique combination of natural environmental factors.

### 3.3 Natural environmental factors

#### 3.3.1 Geomorphology

Sydney is renowned for its Hawkesbury Sandstone, which covers a wide geographical area that includes the Botany Basin. It is massive in nature, the result of a uniform depositional phase of Permian and Triassic age (270–180 million years ago), in which over the millennia sediments were laid down in a freshwater alluvial environment.<sup>9</sup> The Hawkesbury Sandstone of the Botany Basin is overlain with Quaternary sand deposits. Erosion by wind and water continuously reshaped this landform.

#### 3.3.2 Geology

The Quaternary Period (the last 1.8 million years) is the most recent stage in landscape development and during this time 'dune sands were blown inland from the coast where today's southern and eastern suburbs lie'.<sup>10</sup> It is this sand that constitutes much of the soil around Green Square today. These sands mainly overlie a bedrock of Hawkesbury Sandstone, except for along the southern margin of the Botany Basin, where they rest on Wianamatta Shale. The thickness of sediment in the Basin varies from about a metre or so, to a maximum of seventy-five metres in the channel of the Georges River.<sup>11</sup> Hawke defines these sediments more precisely as:

...dominantly of fine-grained, uniform quartzose porous and permeable sands interspersed with thin, discontinuous impermeable lenses of clay, peat and "Waterloo rock" (weakly cemented ferruginous sands). They overlie the relatively impervious Triassic Wianamatta Group and Hawkesbury Sandstone bedrock... The basin sand deposits are a product of rising sea levels in the Late Quaternary which have sorted and moved back formerly more easterly terrestrial deposits and redeposited them in coastal depressions. The depression in this case was provided by the basin and the former large estuarine system in it. The deposits are probably related to more than one change in sea level.<sup>12</sup>

The Eastern Suburbs as a whole is covered by these Quaternary and Pleistocene sands and clays. Aeolian sands occur at Green Square, while estuarine silts and clays occur along nearby Shea's Creek. Soil type, including moisture content, affects the distribution and diversity of the native flora and fauna that thrived in this environment. Disturbing this geology by improving soil quality can upset the fine adaptive balance that the ESBS achieved, and needs in order to survive.

#### 3.3.3 Soils

The soils on the Quaternary alluvium of the Botany Basin and Green Square can vary in nature. Loamy soils (containing sand, clay and organic matter) are found on younger sediments, though simple profiles of siliceous sands are more common, particularly around Green Square. Benson and Howell point out that 'slightly more phosphorus is found in the soils derived from shales than in those derived from sandstone but the biggest differences in quality between these relate to soil structure and the ability of the heavier textured soils to retain more soil moisture'.<sup>13</sup> The soil quality is also very 'poor' because it is lacking in the nutrients that European plants need to survive, and like most of Australia's soils, they are acidic.

#### 3.3.4 Hydrologic regime

The Green Square Town Centre is situated on reclaimed land that was once known as Waterloo Swamp. Waterloo Swamp and the swampland that still exists in Centennial Park and at Eastlakes Golf Course are the result of the hydrology of the Botany Basin Sand Beds (see also Chapter 4.0). These are defined by the quantity of water moving in and out of the area. Hawke points out that precipitation provides the basic inflow to the system following three main paths: '(i) direct runoff to surface storage or to Botany Bay, (ii) atmospheric return by evaporation, and (iii) infiltration to the zone of aeration which is either transpired or moves down to the zone of saturation to become groundwater'.<sup>14</sup> This groundwater has 'a uniform

flow to the northern shores of Botany Bay with a water table gradient of 1 in 120'.<sup>15</sup> Today, much of the rainwater that falls at Green Square is collected as storm water runoff in drains, which empty into Botany Bay.

#### 3.3.5 Climate

The southerly aspect of the Sydney Basin leaves Green Square open to west-southwesterly winds. These are the most frequent winds here and had a large impact on shaping the pre-European environment. However, main wind directions also vary with the season and time of day, for 'in the afternoons northeasterly or east-northeasterly winds are most common in all seasons except winter'.<sup>16</sup>

Hawke notes the importance of the climate for the distribution of water and the ecology of the area:

... [Climate] is of considerable importance when evaluating shallow, basically unconfined aquifers [rock mass or layer that readily transmits and holds ground water] which are continually recharging with water, because ultimately rainfall is the source of all fresh water in the Botany Basin...Climate has a marked influence on the groundwater storage and recharge in periods such as summer when rainfall is least and demand for water and evapotranspiration [combined water loss to the atmosphere by evaporation from the soil and transpiration from plants] are highest, or in lengthy dry periods (droughts) when no recharge is



Fig. 3.2 Centennial Park today with a Gymea lily in the centre-foreground. (Photo: Jason Doran 2003.)



Fig. 3.3 Paperbark trees in Centennial Park. (Photo: Jason Doran 2003.)

available at all.<sup>17</sup>

Lack of rainfall during summer months and dry spells proved to be of great consternation in colonial Sydney. This is because Sydney relied on the Botany Basin as its main supply of fresh water supply. Clark and Recher note the difference in rainfall across the Botany Basin as varying from a high of 1270 millimetres near the coast to a low of 720 millimetres in the north-western part of the watershed (See Fig. 3.1).<sup>18</sup>

Most rainfall is associated with thunderstorms and major



Figure 3.4 Remnant vegetation of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in Centennial Park (Photo: Jason Doran 2003.)



Figure 3.5 Remnant Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in Centennial Park (Photo: Jason Doran 2003.)



Figure 3.6 Native vegetation restoration in Centennial Park. (Photo: Jason Doran 2003.)

fronts. The average daily maximum temperature is 26.1° Celsius in January and 16.7° Celsius in July and average daily minimum temperature ranges from 17.4° Celsius in January and 6.5° Celsius in July.<sup>19</sup> Differences in average rainfall and temperature would have altered the distribution and frequency of species, especially those species adapted to aquatic environments such as swamps.

### 3.4 Observed natural diversity

#### 3.4.1 Pre-European Landscape

Despite the fact that there is relatively little documented evidence of the pre-existing environmental landscape of Green Square, remnant species of flora and fauna do survive and, together with the early observations, these allow us to appreciate ecological and aesthetic qualities of the original vista. Unfortunately, much of the native vegetation has been cleared and the environmental landscape dramatically altered. Benson and Howell describe the environment of the Sydney region generally as ‘an uninterrupted mosaic of forests, woodlands, heaths, scrub, sedgelands and swamps’, with variations that were ‘a response to the underlying geology and soils, modified by the effects of climate, particularly rainfall and temperature.’<sup>20</sup>

A mosaic of important habitats for different species of flora and fauna also occurred within the vicinity of Green Square. As we have seen, Green Square was once a part of an extensive system of sand dune wetlands, covered by heath and scrub. Some of these wetlands still exist in the area today in the local golf courses, such as The Lakes. Species that exist in these wetlands include *Eleocharis sphacelata* and *Baumea articulata*, which are common sedge species. Howell and Benson observe that ‘other species that occurred naturally in these wetlands have become popular landscaping plants—Sydney’s tallest Paperbark, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, Crimson Bottlebrush, *Callistemon citrinus*, and the yellow-flowered Native Broom, *Viminaria juncea*.’<sup>21</sup> Other notable plants included the conspicuous Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea resinifera*, and a shrub *Monotoca elliptica*, which has tiny white flowers in spring. The distinctiveness and beauty of Green Square and the region is evidenced by species that include ‘the brilliant red waratah and gynea lily, whose blooms have been the pride of the bush.’<sup>22</sup>

The extensive sand dune wetlands of the area also provided a haven for native bird species, some of which have been lost to us. The emu, brolga, magpie-goose and black swan disappeared from the area in the nineteenth century ‘when virtually every man carried a gun and felt free to blast at any feathered thing that came within range.’<sup>23</sup> The diversity in wildlife was noted by Obed West, an editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He lived on a property known as Barcom Glen in Paddington, on the northern side of Lachlan Swamp. His reminiscences were written between 1882 and 1884, and in them he described a much earlier time, probably the 1820s to 1830s. Barcom Glen, he wrote,

...had the appearance of a dark and dense forest, immense mahogany trees, blackbutt and other eucalyptus species growing in great profusion, while in the glen leading up to the house a number of large cabbage-trees used to grow, and for many years the stems of these palms, quite two feet in diameter at the base, were... standing. About 200 yards from the mill a large swamp [Lachlan] commenced and ran down to where Bentley’s Bridge stands, and then across by the present Glenmore Road to the head of the gully where

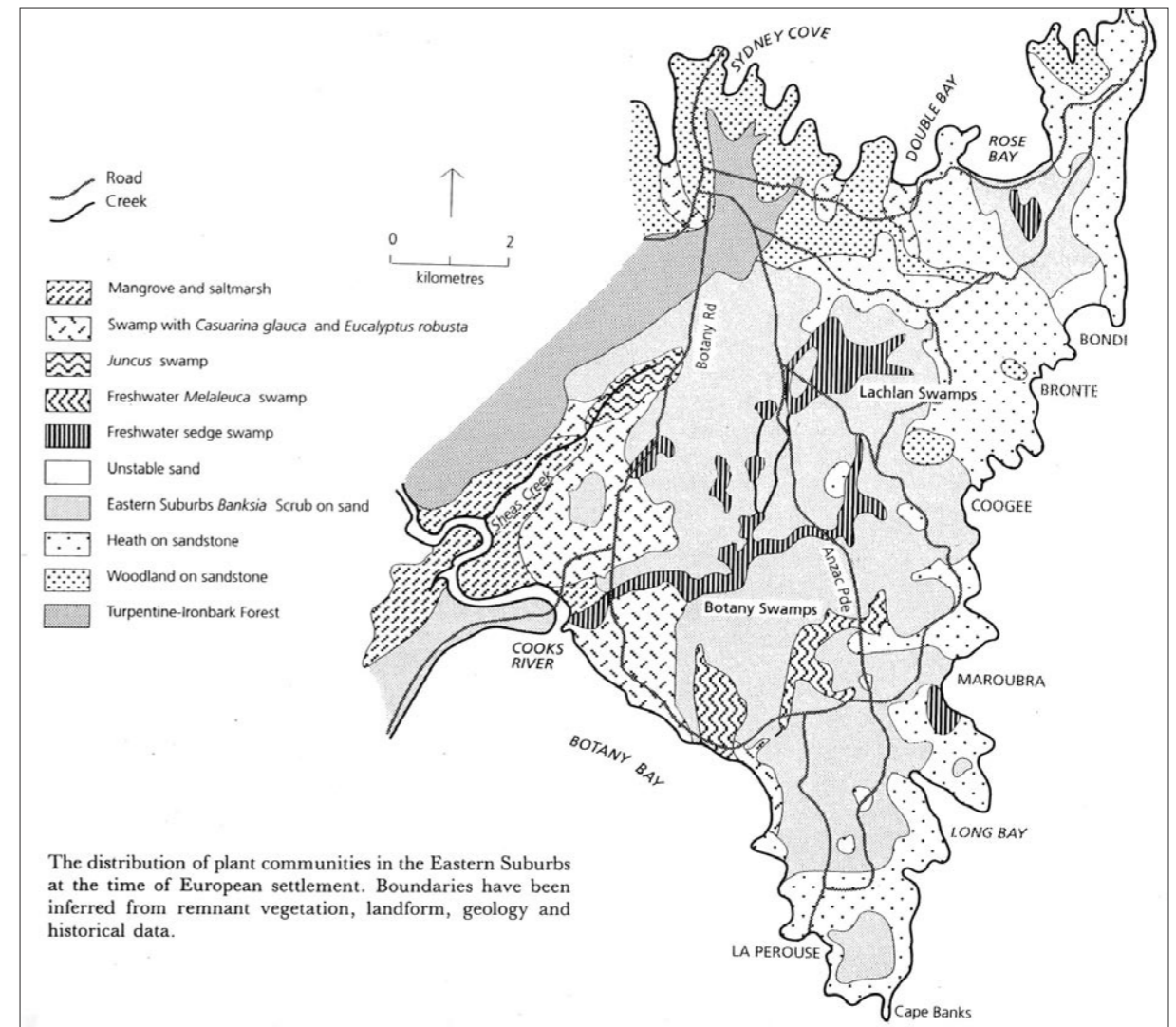


Fig. 3.7 Distribution of plant communities in the Eastern Suburbs. Green Square was once Banksia Scrub. (Source: Benson & Howell, *Taken for Granted* 1990, p. 90, courtesy Doug Benson.)

the Glenmore Distillery was afterwards built. The swamp was a regular Slough of Despond and could not be crossed. It swarmed with aquatic birds of every description—red bills, water hens, bitterns, quail, frequently all kinds of ducks, and when in season, snipe, landrails, and at all times bronze-winged pigeons could be had in abundance. Brush wallabies were all very numerous in the vicinity and many scores of them I have shot. It may seem strange to hear that, within the memory of any person living, the head of the swamp was a great resort for dingoes.<sup>24</sup>

The abundance of wildlife described by Obed West indicates a healthy and biodiverse environment, one that was popular and important to Europeans like him, but more importantly it must have been of great significance to the health and well-being of the Indigenous Eora people.

#### 3.4.2 Vegetation: Plant Communities – the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub

Besides the information we can glean from early observations, the survival of vegetation and plant communities in similar nearby localities enables us to establish the many different types of wetland species that once inhabited the area of Green

Square. The area was an important environmental ecosystem. It was once part of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS). The ESBS is listed as an endangered ecological community. It once ‘occupied approximately 5,300 hectares in the eastern suburbs. Today less than three percent of its original distribution remains as a number of small, isolated remnants, ranging in size from 0.06 to 8.5 hectares totalling 138 hectares.’<sup>25</sup> Only twenty hectares or 0.49 per cent of its original distribution exists, yet the overall species list for the entire community is very large. Also, major disturbances have affected biodiversity so that only a few species dominate isolated pockets of native vegetation. However, given time and the right conditions, these will then give way to a more complex floristic composition and vegetation structure.<sup>26</sup> The vegetation once found around Green Square included:

...varied heath, scrub and low forest vegetation with a rich variety of shrubs, including *Banksia aemula*, *Monotoca elliptica*, *Eriostemon australasius*, *Ricinocarpus pinifolius* and *Xanthorrhoea resinosa*... *Eleocharis sphacelata* would have been a characteristic species, as it is today, and in the shallower water, *Baumea articulata*, *Baumea rubiginosa* and *Juncus species* would have been abundant...Native Broom, *Viminaria juncea*, was

common.<sup>27</sup>

Other common shrub species included *Banksias errata* and *Eriostemon australasius* while ‘small soaks and concentrations of organic matter in the sand formed locally wet habitats for *Goodenia stelligera*, *Callistemon citrinus*, Button Grass, *Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*, and other swamp heath plants.’<sup>28</sup> On the floodplain of Waterloo Swamp, the paperbark *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, would also have thrived and can still be found in Centennial Park.

The Recovery Plan for the ESBS undertaken by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in Centennial Park (2003) has found that only ‘twenty-one species of native plant...and sixteen species characteristic of ESBS were noted’ in Centennial Park. This is a rather poor contrast to the dark dense forest, immense mahogany trees, blackbutt and other eucalyptus species, as well as cabbage tree palms that once grew here in great profusion.

### 3.4.3 Fauna

Many species of native fauna once existed at Green Square. Some of these can still be found in the Botany Bay National Park and Hawkesbury Sandstone environments. Unfortunately, most of these species would not be able to survive in the heavily built up Green Square of today. However, many species of native birds can survive here, and have been recorded in the area, including seventy species in the suburb of La Perouse

Table 3.1

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Southern Brown Bandicoot	<i>Isodon obesulus</i>	Endangered
Long-nosed Bandicoot	<i>Perameles nasuta</i>	Rare
Common Brushtail Possum	<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>	Common
Common Ringtail Possum	<i>Pseudocheirus peregrinus</i>	Common
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>	Common
Parma Wallaby	<i>Macropus parma</i>	Vulnerable
Red-necked Wallaby	<i>Macropus rufogriseus</i>	Rare
Swamp Wallaby	<i>Wallabia bicolor</i>	Rare
Red-necked Pademelon	<i>Thylogale thetis</i>	Rare
Short-beaked Echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>	Common
Diamond Python	<i>Morelia spilota spilota</i>	Common
Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard	<i>Tiliqua scincoides</i>	Common
Emu	<i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i>	Common
Grey-headed flying foxes	<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	Common
Eastern brown snake	<i>Pseudonaja textiles</i>	Common
Red-bellied black snake	<i>Pseudechis porphyriacus</i>	Common
Eastern long-necked tortoise	<i>Chelodina longicollis</i>	Common
Green and golden bell frog	<i>Litoria aurea</i>	Threatened
Squirrel Glider	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>	Vulnerable
Sugar Glider	<i>Petaurus breviceps</i>	Common
Eastern Quoll	<i>Dasyurus viverrinus</i>	Endangered
Spotted-tailed Quoll	<i>Dasyurus maculates</i>	Vulnerable
Tiger Quoll	<i>Dasyurus maculates</i>	Vulnerable
Brush-tailed Phascogale	<i>Phascogale tapoatafa</i>	Endangered
Coppertail Skink	<i>Ctenotus taeniolatus</i>	Common
Pale-flecked Garden Skink	<i>Lampropholis guichenoti</i>	Common
Brown Antechinus	<i>Antechinus stuartii</i>	Rare

alone.<sup>29</sup> The National Parks and Wildlife Service lists some of the more common species of native animals once found here, in Table 3.1. This list is a very incomplete account of Sydney’s unique species of wildlife. Moreover, it is a reminder that, although many of these animals no longer exist at Green Square (nor could they), we should do more to preserve the native species that can, and still do, exist in the area generally.

## 3.5 Green Square environment as a cultural landscape

### 3.5.1 Cultural significance

The pre-European environment is also ‘cultural environment’. Here I am using the ideas of geographers who point out that ‘culture is (re) produced—it is not ‘natural’. Humankind are not born into static cultural groups that we cannot transcend... culture [is] socially constructed—a dynamic product of individuals and groups, both past and present.’<sup>30</sup> The way people saw, experienced and used natural environments was bound up with their culture and so became part of it. Our heritage is made up of many layers of historical and cultural meaning, including environmental ones, and we need to both understand those meanings and preserve what we can of them.

Aboriginal culture was inseparable from country and also impacted on the land, but they knew and respected the land in very different ways to Europeans. The vegetation in the swamps, heath, and scrubland around Green Square would

have provided them with the natural resources for daily life (see Chapter 5). Europeans acquired large land grants here and from 1823, mills were established, and dams built on the swamps. Later water collected around the Green Square area supplied the growing and evermore thirsty town. Poor or non-existent regulation, coupled with a growing population that moved into the Botany Basin region over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, meant uncontrolled exploitation, and the land surrounding Green Square suffered greatly due to the overuse of natural resources and severe pollution (see Chapters 4 and 6).

Fortunately, the importance of the natural qualities and significance of the area were recognised in one sense: Centennial Park, dedicated as ‘the People’s Park’ in 1888, was preserved for future generations. Centennial Park is of vital cultural significance to the people of the eastern suburbs of Sydney, a place of recreation and tranquility, as well as a refuge for native flora and fauna.

### 3.5.2 Social values

All of the interrelated aspects of the environmental history of Green Square discussed in this volume are also of present-day social value.<sup>31</sup> This includes the natural landscape, where it still exists, as well as Aboriginal and European heritage. Many Aboriginal people place a high social value on natural heritage, especially the landscapes, plants and animals which provide sustenance and links with country. The Australian community in general also places a high social value on parks and reserves. While social values once revolved around the area as a source of food and water, today Green Square’s imagined future is dominated by a built environment of futuristic building designs, with broad plazas and public art. But this new environment needs to incorporate past natural/cultural heritage in order to maintain or recover continuity and foster public memory.

### 3.6 Ideas for interpretation

Aesthetically pleasing restoration work is currently being undertaken in Centennial Park, maintaining and restoring biodiversity; it is also attracting large numbers of visitors. The reintroduction of native species to the Park by the Centennial and Moore Park Trust has also had a great effect on improving the natural qualities of the area. Although these are long-term programs and involve a large area of parkland, their successful methods could perhaps be applied at Green Square, both the Town Centre, and in the area generally, as has been achieved at the Victoria Park development (see Chapter 9). For example, rows of strategically placed ESBS species that grow to varying heights could be used in the Green Square Town Centre design. Vegetation could be planted in busy and open areas to filter noise and wind in particular, which still blows regularly from the west and south-west. The cabbage tree palm and the grass tree were also once common to the area and could be used in conjunction with other species, such as banksias.

The area’s wetlands were a valuable asset to the inhabitants of Sydney and a significant part of Australia’s history. Displays of native plantings could have aesthetically pleasing signs explaining their natural history and human usage, as well as the meaning and significance of the ESBS. Engraved stone monuments (rather than metal signs) would provide a natural earthy feel. Easy access should also be a priority to allow visitors room to view the vegetation closely, without disturbing the ground or other plants growing nearby.

## 3.7 Conclusion

The landscape of Green Square was one of swamps and sandhills covered in shrubland. Sandy wind-swept soils had overlain a natural depression in the Hawkesbury sandstone, which collected and filtered large amounts of fresh water. Observations made by early European explorers and settlers portray a wild and rugged place, which once extended right across the Botany Basin, a place teeming with wildlife, a unique and diverse array of native flora and fauna, adapted to a distinct set of environmental factors. Water, wetland plant species, birds and animals in turn supplied Aboriginal people and European settlers with vital resources.

This environmental landscape has been radically altered since European settlement. The systematic draining and polluting of Lachlan and Waterloo Swamps and local streams have robbed Green Square of many of its natural features. Environmental degradation has been caused by industrial exploitation and the diversion of water to supply the expanding township of Sydney. Changes were also due to periods of drought, the introduction of domestic animals and the clearing of vegetation. Despite these changes, we have the ability and knowledge to restore some of what has been lost to us. By doing so, we will be helping to preserve and maintain Australia’s natural and cultural past and our place in it.

**Appendix**

Table 3.2 Species of native plants found in Centennial Park

Sub-Class <i>Magnoliidae</i>				
Family	Botanical Name	ESBS species	Dry ESBS	Transition Zones
<i>Epacridaceae</i>	<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	X	X	
	<i>Monotoca elliptica</i>	X	X	
<i>Fabaceae- Mimosoideae</i>	<i>Acacia sophorae</i>	X	X	
<i>Moraceae</i>	<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>		X	
<i>Myrtaceae</i>	<i>Kunzea ambigua</i>	X	X	
	<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>	X	X	
	<i>Melaleuca nodosa</i>	X		X
<i>Pittosporaceae</i>	<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>		X	
<i>Proteaceae</i>	<i>Banksia aemula</i>	X	X	
	<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	X	X	
	<i>Banksias errata</i>	X	X	
	<i>Lambertia Formosa</i>	X	X	
<i>Rubiaceae</i>	<i>Pomax umbellata</i>	X	X	
Sub-Class <i>Liliidae</i>				
<i>Cyperaceae</i>	<i>Lepidosperma laterale</i>		X	
<i>Liliaceae</i>	<i>Dianella revlouta</i>	X	X	
<i>Lomandraceae</i>	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	X		X
<i>Poaceae</i>	<i>Dichelachne crimita</i>	X	X	
	<i>Entolasia marginata</i>		X	
	<i>Eragrostis brownie</i>	X	X	
	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>		X	
<i>Xanthorrhoeaceae</i>	<i>Xanthorrhoea resinifera</i>	X	X	

# Chapter 4 Chimneys and Change: Post-European environmental impact in Green Square

Scott Cumming

## 4.1 Introduction: the larger wetland environment

The Green Square area is best understood as part of a larger environmental space. From the heights of Paddington and Bondi Junction in the northeast, water has traditionally run through a series of ponds, marshes, swamps and creeks down to Botany Bay, in the southwest. The areas of Waterloo, Alexandria, Zetland and Rosebery are bound up with this larger wetland environment and lie at an intermediate point in this chain of water catchment and run-off. The character of the area as a natural water reservoir and drainage corridor, has had far reaching consequences for human exploitation and activity in the area since 1788.

Dramatic environmental change has resulted from this human usage, and the specific environment of Green Square, is best explored within the context of this larger environmental story.

## 4.2 Early European observations of the area

Thomas Woore made detailed observations in a letter to the President of the Commission of Inquiry into the supply of

water to Sydney, in 1869. His comments provide an insight into the great environmental changes that took place in this area between 1829 and 1869. Woore visited ‘the Botany swamps’ in 1829, 1833, 1834 and again in 1869. His sketch of the Waterloo Mills in 1833 shows the structure standing on the edge of an extensive marsh.

By 1869, though, Woore reported that great changes had taken place. The once copious stream had almost ceased to flow, the aquatic plant life had gone and an equestrian could ride over any part of what was originally a fluid morass. The area had become ‘...a tract of barren sandhills that immediately the rain descends on them, rushes to the sea in torrents.’<sup>1</sup>

The activity of settlers had wrought these dramatic changes. The limited timbers were cleared for the purposes of construction or for use as firewood. The lower scrub was cleared to allow for the grazing of cattle and horses, whose tramping hooves further hardened the ground surface. Areas of marshland were deliberately drained to facilitate the establishment of market gardens or to channel the water itself, for use, for example, in the powering of steam mills.

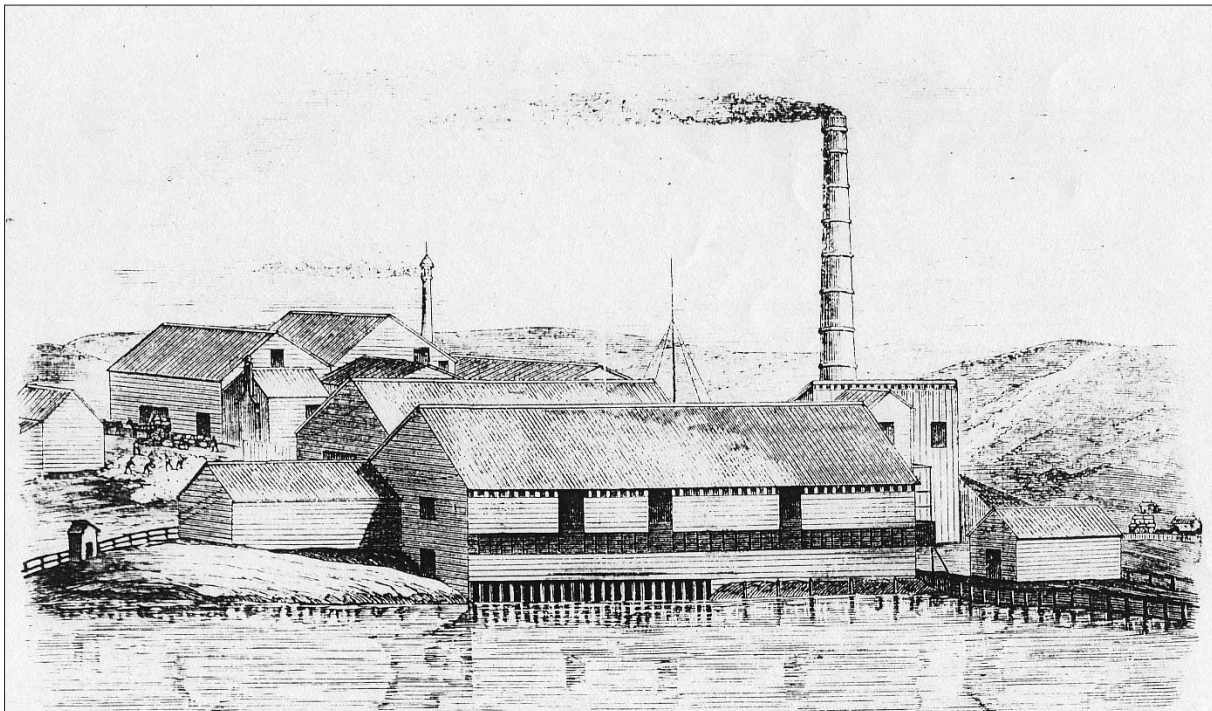


Fig. 4.1 Upper Dam, Hinchliff's Waterloo Mills wool washing establishment.  
(Source: *Town and Country Journal*, 16 June 1877, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

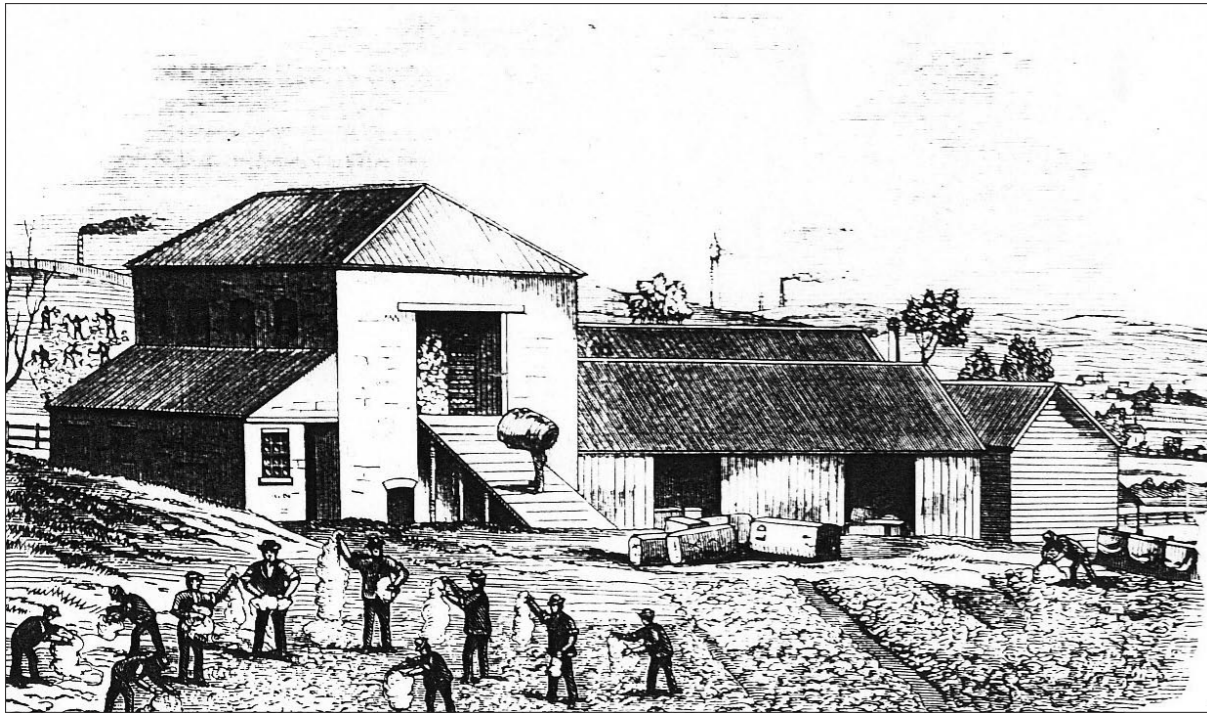


Fig. 4.2 Lower Dam, Hinchcliff's Waterloo Mills wool washing establishment. (Source: *Town and Country Journal*, 16 June 1877, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

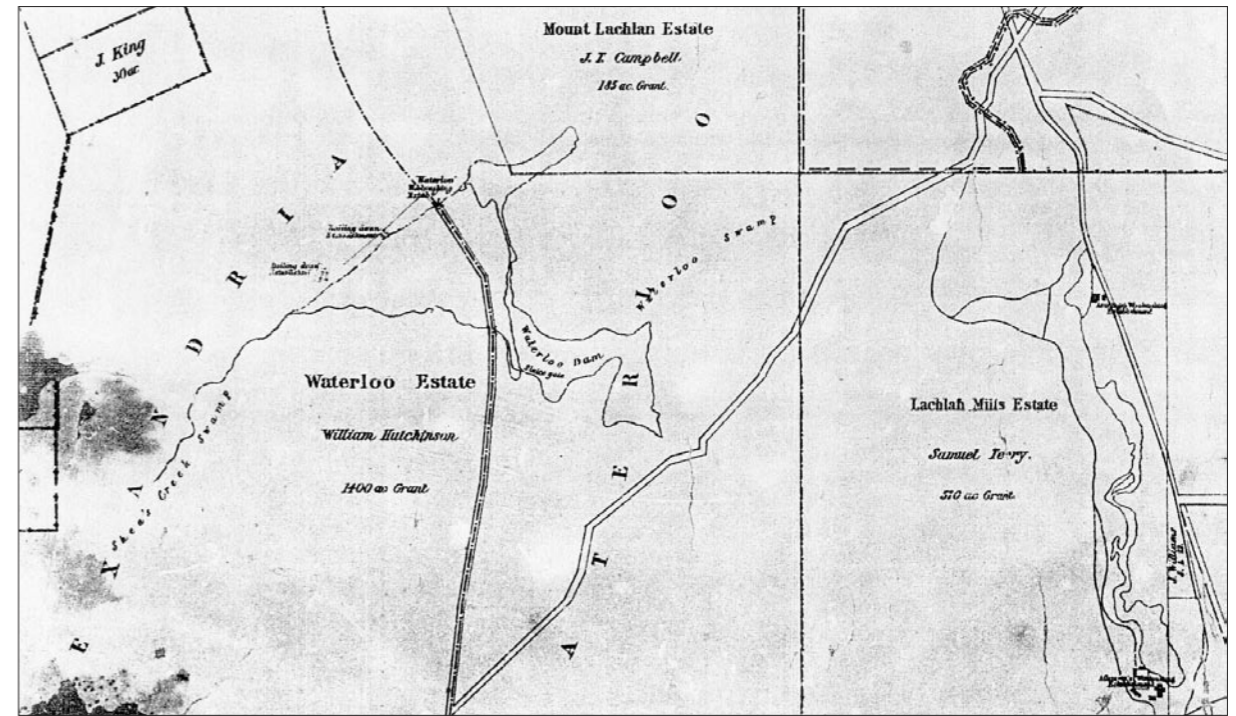


Fig. 4.3 Parish of Alexandria 1871. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

#### 4.3 Mills and damming

The small European settlement at Sydney Cove spread west, with the success of farming on the fertile alluvial soils of the Parramatta River. The more nutrient-poor soils of the coastal area discouraged early attempts to settle the region between Sydney Cove and Botany Bay. In 1815 Simeon Lord, a successful ex-convict, constructed a mill for the manufacture, cleansing and thickening of cloth at the Botany swamp.<sup>2</sup> He also had a dam constructed, and it was this millpond that later became the reservoir that augmented early Sydney's water supply.<sup>3</sup> A little later, in 1818, another mill was constructed on these same swamps, for the milling of paper from linen and cotton rags.<sup>4</sup>

In 1820 a joint venture involving Hutchinson, Cooper, Williams and Levertton resulted in the construction of the Lachlan and Waterloo Mills. Originally these mills ground wheat for the growing colony and, in one week in 1821, ground 1600 bushels.<sup>5</sup> By 1827 these mills had been converted to woollen mills due to the rise of the colonial wool industry and its increased demand for processing facilities.<sup>6</sup> The Waterloo Dam continued to be used for the purposes of powering mills and in 1848 the Hinchcliff's Waterloo Mills wool washing establishment was constructed at the Dam. This facility was still operational some thirty years later and in 1877 the establishment had two main divisions, the Upper and Lower Dam works (see Figs 4.1 and 4.2).

Wool washing was carried out at both dams, with fellmongering also undertaken at the lower dam in the winter season. These activities employed large numbers of workers, most of who lived on the land with their families. The major works also involved the further clearing of the environment in the vicinity of the mills. The practice of wool washing in particular, required open space as drying grounds for the washed fleeces. These mills had a drying lawn of about ten acres in extent.<sup>7</sup> Fellmongering and wool washing were considered

noxious trades and the waste run-off from these activities caused significant pollution into Shea's Creek and further into Botany Bay. The *Town and Country Journal* in 1877 described this noisome run-off:

The foul water and refuse from the wash-house is carried away by a chute about half a mile long, to the mouth of the floodgate of the dam, which is now and then risen, to allow the water to escape with sufficient force to scour the weir.<sup>8</sup>

The parish maps of Alexandria for 1871 and 1880 note the location of these establishments (see Fig. 4.3).<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.4 Sydney's water supply

Water supply for Sydney was an ongoing problem throughout the nineteenth century. The Tank Stream running into Sydney Cove soon became inadequate for the purposes of the growing colony, and by 1826 the population of Sydney had reached 10,000 and the Tank Stream had become, '...a filthy sewer'.<sup>10</sup> The Government turned to the swampy area to the south of the settlement. In 1825 John Busby, Mineral Surveyor and Civil Engineer, completed a survey of the swamp, and reported that the 'water is perfectly transparent and colourless, free from every taste and smell, and so soft as to be fit for washing and every other domestic purpose'.<sup>11</sup> Construction of a tunnel from Hyde Park to Lachlan Swamp, in the hollow between Paddington and Randwick, began in 1827. Busby's Bore, as it was known, was completed in 1837.<sup>12</sup> By 1849 the population of Sydney had grown to 40,000 and water supply had again become a pressing issue. A pumping station was erected at Lords Dam, which pumped water to a reservoir in Paddington and another in Crown Street. This impacted on many square miles of the surrounding area, including the Green Square area, because the pumping of water out of Lords Dam caused further drainage of the adjoining wetland.

#### 4.5 Draining the wetland

In 1830 surveyor Robert Hoddle was directed to the area now known as Banksmeadow, southeast of the Green Square area on the shores of Botany Bay. His instructions were to:

...procure as many spades as you have men in your party, as soon as you have determined the extremity next the Sea of the middle drain of the swamp you will set them to work to cut the ditch four feet deep in the direction of the middle line.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose was to reclaim the swampland and make it available for division into allotments for members of the New South Wales Veteran's Corps, which had been disbanded. The drain was dug and played an integral role in draining water run off in the region over the next hundred years. It also provides an insight into nineteenth century attitudes towards wetland environments: they were called swamps and regarded as waste lands which ought to be made 'useful'.

The area of Green Square abutting South Dowling Street, where much construction has recently taken place, was the site of the Victoria Park Race Course in the early twentieth century. Sir Joynton Smith had purchased this tract of land with the intention of establishing a racecourse and at the time of purchase he described it as a marsh covering many acres. In his *My Life Story*, he described himself, in 1906:

...standing on a bank on the side of my purchase to the south east of Botany close to Shea's Creek...I decided to have a trench dug through to the creek. Then the miracle occurred, the waters of the swamp were released in a solid body, a twenty foot torrent sped into Shea's Creek, and raced with a gurgle of joy, to which I contributed, away to Botany Bay.<sup>14</sup>

The sheer glee with which Joynton Smith relates this story is a great insight into attitudes towards wetlands and land usage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The land (along with its plant and animal life) was seen as intrinsically

worthless, until it could be drained, cleared and put under construction for human purposes.

Market gardens were a very prominent early industry in the area. The reserves of water under the ground's surface provided excellent conditions for growing most vegetables (with the notable exception of potatoes!). Again, though, it was necessary to first drain away the surface water to create an environment appropriate for market gardening.

#### 4.6 Sewerage

The nature of the South Sydney wetland corridor as a natural drainage system also lent itself to use as a sewerage system. Until 1875 the sewage run-off from the city of Sydney had simply emptied into Sydney Harbour somewhere in the vicinity of Circular Quay. In 1875 a Board of Health and Sewerage was established to look into improvements to the city sewerage system. The Bondi ocean outfall was constructed but did not capture waste from these more southerly lying areas. Instead, between 1882 and 1889 the Sydney City Sewerage Farm was built on a narrow neck of ground at the entrance to the Cooks River.<sup>15</sup> Sewage from a point near Phels Street in Surry Hills flowed through Waterloo and Alexandria from northeast to southwest, traversing the relatively unoccupied area of the southwest side of the Waterloo Estate (see Fig. 4.5). This was not a fully closed or covered system. From Botany Road to Botany Bay it flowed uncovered in an embankment with concrete culverts constructed where the sewer crossed natural watercourses.<sup>16</sup> The sewerage farm met with resistance and complaints from residents in areas adjacent to it, and was eventually closed down in 1916, when an additional ocean outfall was constructed.

#### 4.7 Nineteenth century industrial uses

In 1848 an Act of the New South Wales Parliament banned the operation of noxious industries from the area immediately in and around Sydney. The attraction of the area to the

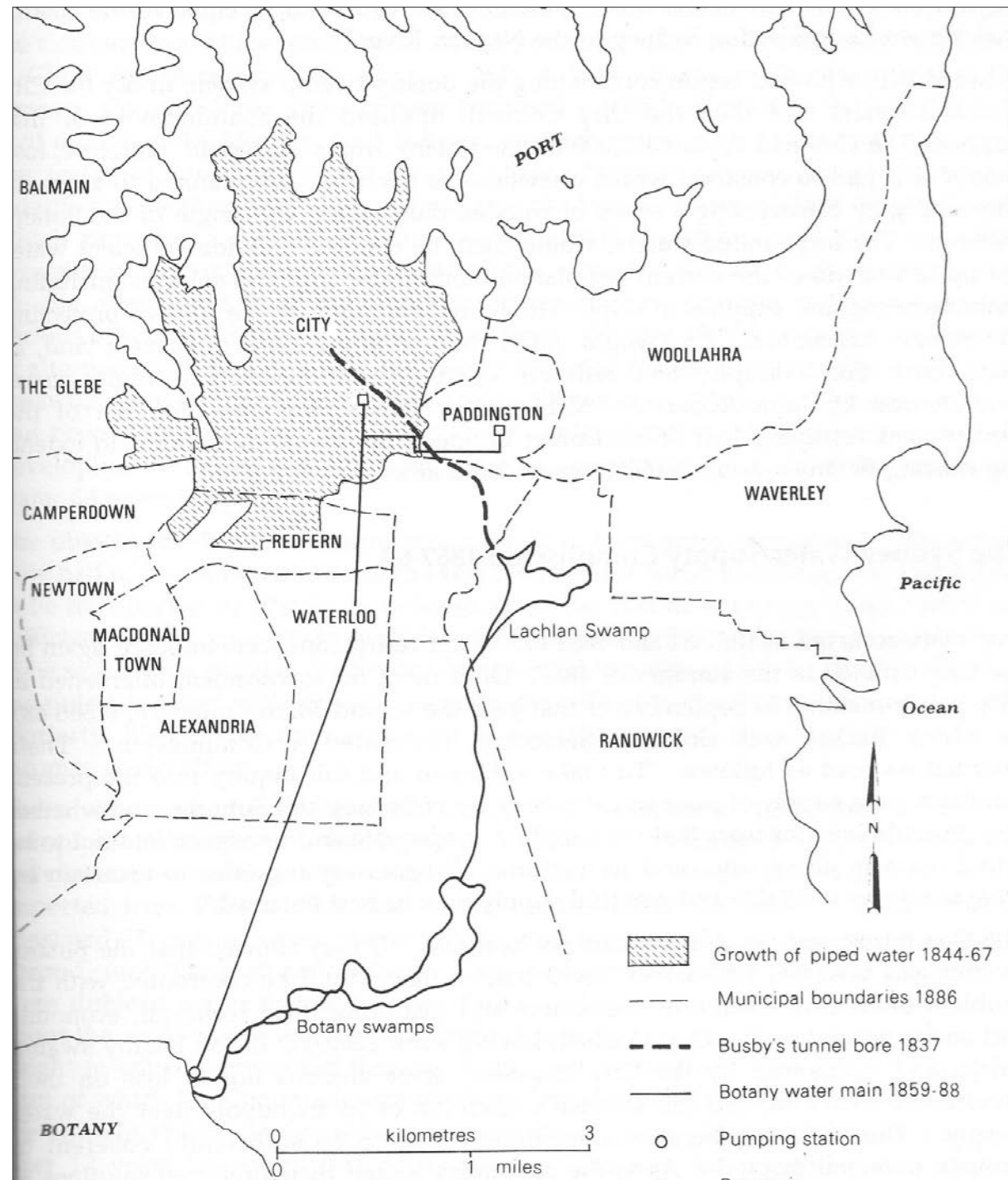


Figure 4.4 Sydney – Water Supply Sources 1837–1888 (Source: Dan Coward, *Out of Sight*, 1988).

south of Sydney became immediately apparent, its natural drainage characteristics again influencing decisions about human usage. The highest concentration of these noxious industries moved further south to Botany Bay itself, but many also established themselves in the Waterloo and Alexandria area.<sup>17</sup> The Waterloo Swamps, situated to the north of the Lords Dam system, were separate from the Water Reserve and had outlets into Shea's Creek. As already noted, wool washing and fellmongering industries had already been established in the area of the Waterloo Swamps, from the mid-nineteenth century. Other noxious industries followed, including hide tanning, boiling down establishments and abattoirs.

The 1883 Royal Commission Inquiry into Noxious and Offensive Trades noted a number of such industries in the Waterloo/Alexandria area and detailed their impact on the environment. In an examination of Mr. Benjamin Ere's Boiling-down and Woolwashing establishment, Cooks River Road, Alexandria, the Commissioners noted that five hundred gallons of waste water ran off into Shea's Creek every day. The creek was described as having:

...a quantity of thick slimy matter...continually on the surface; making it necessary to form a surface lock, by floating a plank secured by a chain on each side until the matter collects in a mass, the lock being opened occasionally to let that go above stream.<sup>18</sup>

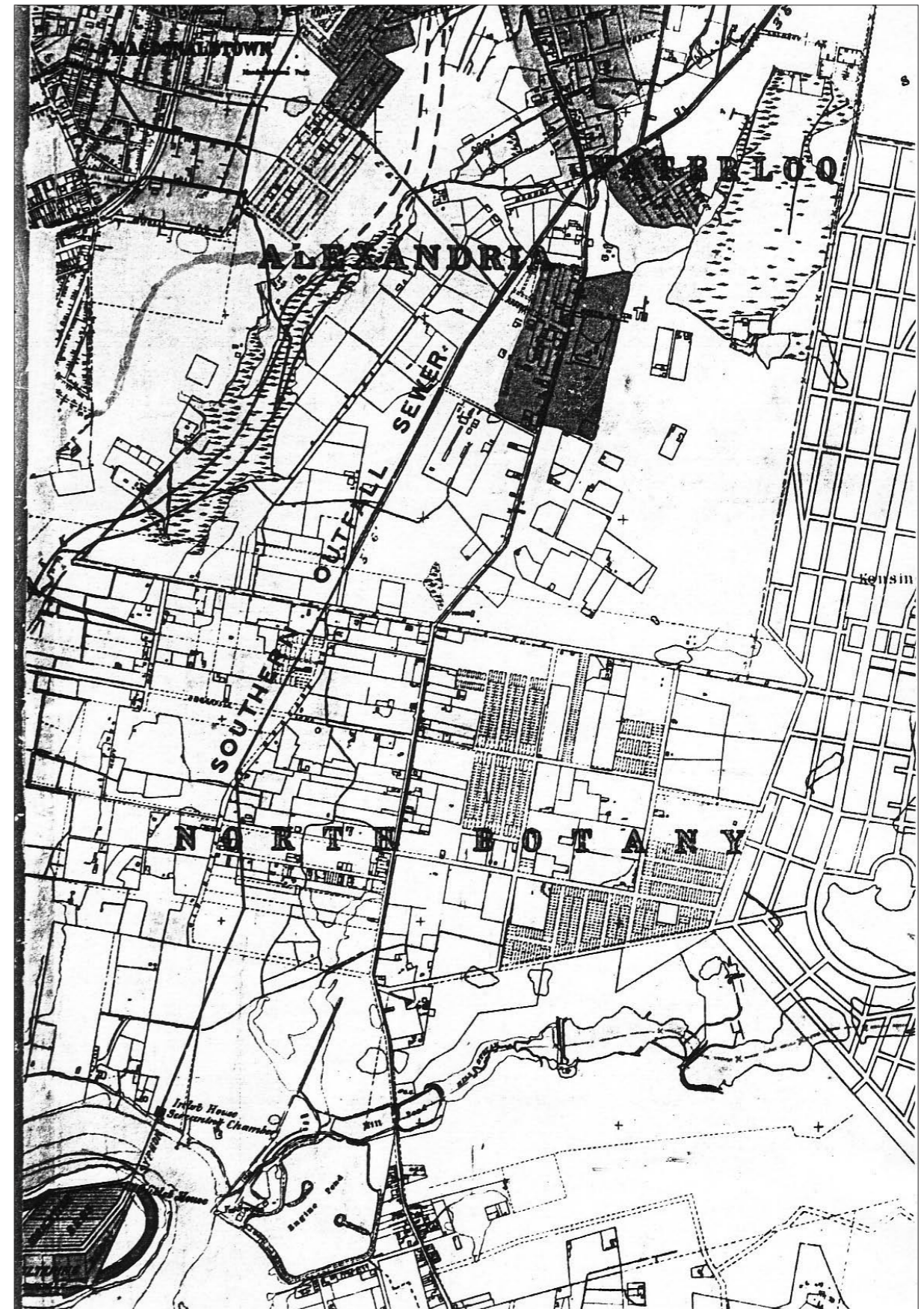


Fig. 4.5 The path of the southern outfall sewer through the Waterloo and Alexandria. (Source: Mitchell Library map M4 811.18 ghhd /1892/1 Sh 2(2), courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

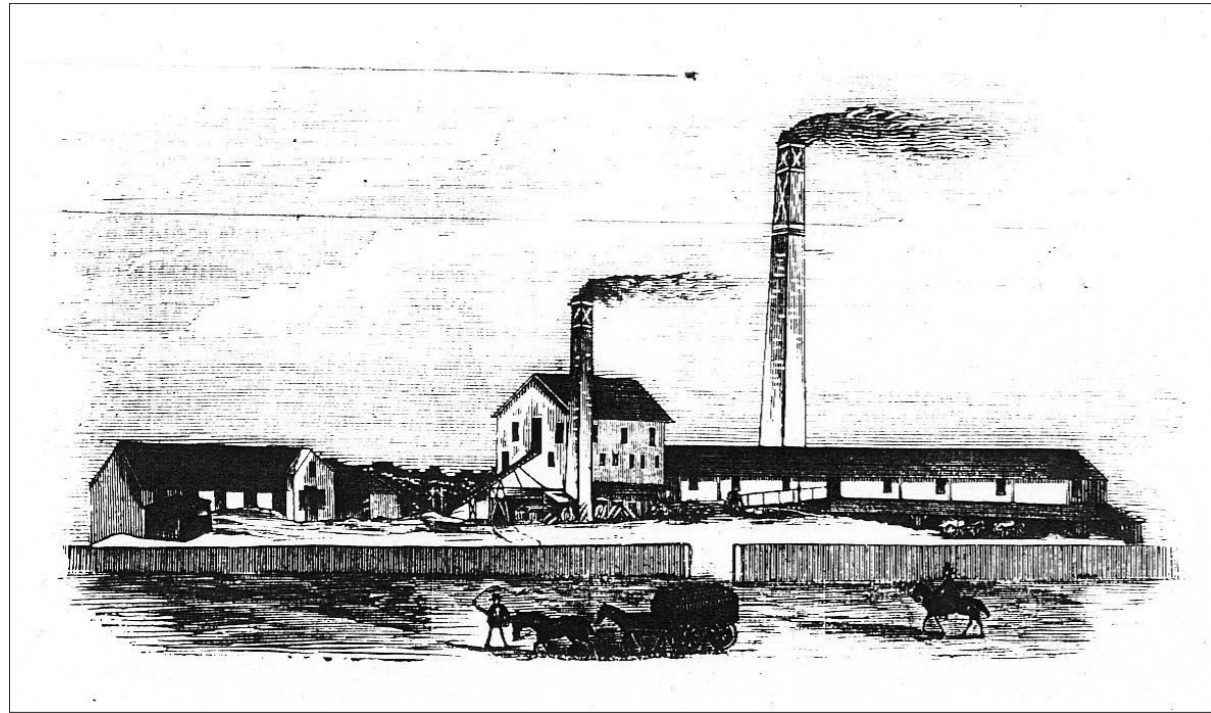


Fig. 4.6 Goodlet and Smith's Annular Brick Kilns, Waterloo.  
(Source: *Town and Country Journal* 3 February 1877, courtesy of State Reference Library, State Library of NSW.)

All of the other noxious industries in the area examined by the Commission likewise drained their fouled waters into Shea's Creek. The Report identifies the location of many of these nineteenth century industries as being on or adjacent to the Cooks River Road, as well as a number along the Botany Road.

Coal-burning steam power provided the basis for the operation of mills and other industries in this area, from the earliest establishment of the Waterloo Mill in 1820. Unfortunately, the Royal Commission Inquiry of 1883 did not provide any insights into the quality of the air in the area. Early images of the Waterloo Mills Woolwashing establishment, however, show a number of chimneys on the surrounding skyline, belching forth smoke. Taken in conjunction with nearby abattoirs, fellmongers and tanneries we can safely conclude that a malodorous pall must have hung over the area.

Brickworks were another significant industry in the area and had a major environmental impact other than water and air pollution: the excavation of huge pits. In 1877 a report in the *Town and Country Journal* provided an insight into the size of the quarries and clay pits these sorts of establishments required. Goodlet and Smith's Annular Brick Kiln in Waterloo was cited as utilising the most modern brick making technology (see Fig. 4.6). It quarried and pulverised slate from 'an area of about one acre...and looking down into this huge excavation, which is about thirty feet deep all over, some idea is gained of (its) immense proportions'.<sup>19</sup> Steam power had been harnessed to a geared winching system, which lifted laden rail trucks from rail lines in the bottom of the pit to the uppermost floor of the machine house.

More general and diverse industries entered the area after the 1880s, but they often still had a noxious base. Some of the industries operating in the Borough of Alexandria at the time of the proposed extension of the Shea's Creek Canal in 1892 included Alexandria Saw Mills, Sydney Smelting and Phosphor

Bronze Foundry, Quatre Bras Tannery and Fellmongery, St Peters Brick Factory, Warren Brick Factory, Baedford Brickworks, Sydney Soap and Candle Company (which had previously been a Kerosene Works), Co-operative Acid & Chemical Manufacturing Company.<sup>20</sup> The liquid waste products from all of these industries flowed into Shea's Creek Canal and thence to the Cooks River and into Botany Bay. High levels of pollution, then, were experienced in these waterways from the late nineteenth century, and they increased in the twentieth century. The atmospheric pollution created by the operation of these major industries can only be guessed at.

#### 4.8 Twentieth century industrial uses.

Twentieth century industrial development in the area was strongly influenced by the unique nature of the ownership of the land. Virtually all of the land that today incorporates the areas of Alexandria, Waterloo, Zetland and Rosebery were one large estate, which remained primarily in the hands of one owner, until after the First World War. The land was originally granted in 1823 to William Hutchinson who sold it to Daniel Cooper and Solomon Levy in 1825, including buildings and the water mill.<sup>21</sup> Solomon Levy died in 1833 and eventually Daniel Cooper became the sole owner of some 1,585 acres, including the Waterloo estate, the Mount Lachlan Estate and their mills. The somewhat complicated terms of Daniel Cooper's will left the estate in trust to the second son of his nephew, Daniel Cooper the younger. William Charles Cooper was only one year old when his great uncle died in 1853 and the estate was held in trust for him until 1872 when he came of age. Usage of land on the estate prior to this for industrial, rural and residential purposes was usually by ninety-nine-year lease. Some small acreages were sold after 1872 and some small residential subdivisions were released after 1884.<sup>22</sup> The final break up and sale of the Estate did not really occur until 1914, after William Charles Cooper had quit Australia for England.<sup>23</sup>

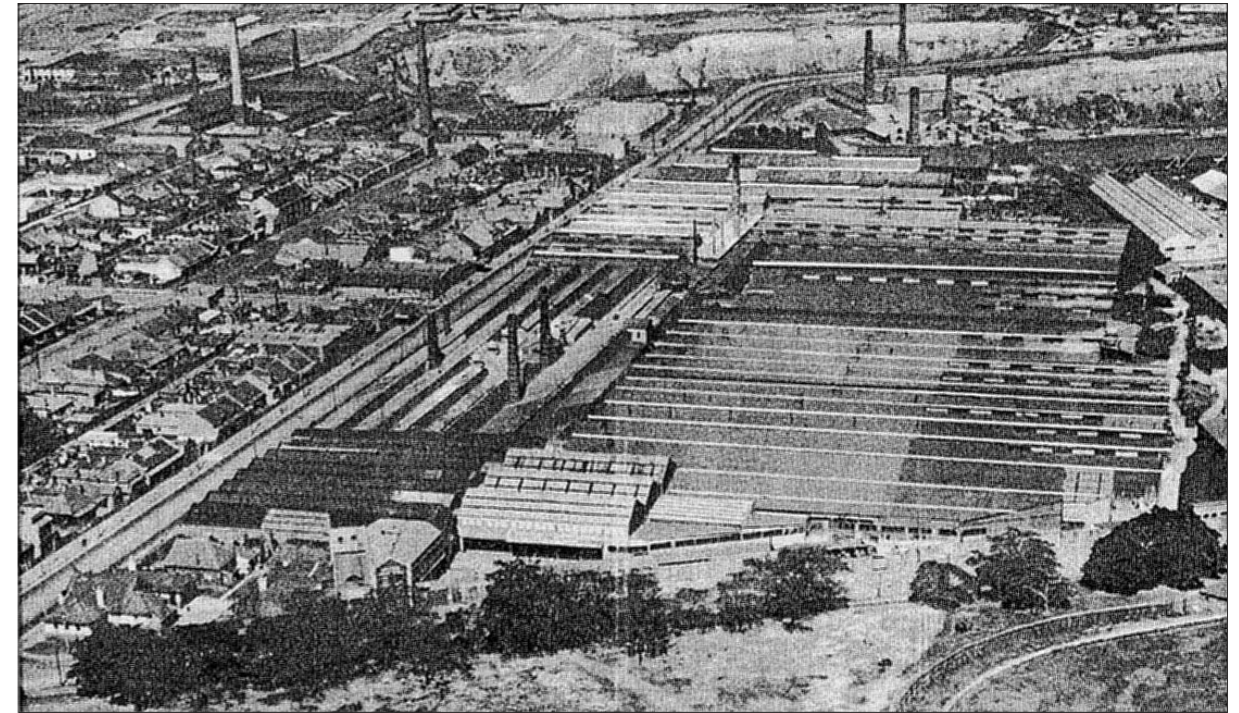


Fig. 4.7 Metters Ltd., an aerial view over the industrial landscape in 1924.  
(Source: *Building*, 12 September 1924, courtesy State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

The major implication of all this for industrial development was that the release of the Cooper Estate made available larger tracts of land at a time when surrounding areas had already become more densely populated. Many industrial establishments in Redfern and Surry Hills found it worthwhile to relocate to more expansive and often purpose-built premises in the Waterloo/Alexandria area. An intensive period of industrial development followed, which increased land value in the area and forced out all but a few of the remaining market gardeners. By 1943 an Alexandria Council celebratory publication claimed that Alexandria was the largest industrial municipality in Australia, proudly proclaiming that 'in an area of 1,024 acres has been crowded not less than 550 factories'.<sup>24</sup> The tone of this publication clearly shows that attitudes towards the environment had not undergone any great change since the early nineteenth century. Indeed, the very object of local councils in the South Sydney area seemed to be to attract as much industrial development as possible.<sup>25</sup>

The goods and materials produced by these '...not less than 550 factories' was long and varied: 'Asbestos, Aircraft, Storage Batteries, Carbon Brushes, Soap and Tallow, Fertilisers, Springs, Engineers Requirements, Furniture, Glass, Sporting Goods, Matches, Industrial Gases, Paper Containers, Paints and Varnishes'.<sup>26</sup> Many of these establishments straddled vast acreages and changed the face of the physical environment dramatically (see Fig. 4.7).<sup>27</sup>

An aerial photograph from 1924 shows and notes the 'extensive buildings of James Stedman-Henderson's Ltd, occupying twelve and a half acres, and the factory buildings of Parke Davis & Co., and Wrigley's Spearmint Co'.<sup>28</sup> James Stedman-Henderson's Sweets Limited was built between 1917–1919 and the factory laid out on modern town planning lines, while the Wrigley's warehouse was completed in 1919.<sup>29</sup>

Controls on the release of waste into the local environment, both liquid and atmospheric, remained very lax until after

1970. A 1995 report into the environmental condition of the Cooks River noted that at that time eleven premises were still licensed to drain daily discharge into the Cooks River system. The report concluded that 'there is no doubt that in recent years, legislation has made industries more responsible about the discharge of pollution. The number of premises licensed to pollute is much less than the 100 or so that occurred in 1970'.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from this enlightening comparison, the report provided a thorough analysis of the environmental damage done to the Cooks River system by a century and a half of industrial usage (as well as more recent high-density urban usage) of the South Sydney area. A study by the Department of Health cited in the report revealed that many fish in the Cooks River contained concentrations of organochlorines in excess of Food Standard Codes. This meant that fish caught in the Cooks River should not be eaten. The report also noted that the Alexandra Canal (previously Shea's Creek Canal) was a major source of contamination for the Lower Cooks River. Levels of the heavy metals, lead, zinc, iron and mercury were found to be excessive and mercury had spread generally throughout the Canal and the Lower Cooks River.<sup>31</sup> The concentration of oil and grease in some areas of the Canal was found to be greater than 20 per cent of the mass of the sediment. The report concluded that 'The significant concentrations of inorganic and organic pollutants in both the water and the sediments of Alexandra Canal mean that much of the waterway is hostile to life'.<sup>32</sup>

While reports such as these cited focus on water, the visual record suggests that air pollution was also a problem. The photograph in *Alexandria: The Birmingham of Australia* depicting the massive Metters concern, also showed a good slice of the Alexandria/Waterloo area. At least twelve large chimneystacks were in evidence from which a high level of atmospheric emissions can be inferred.



#### 4.9 Residential subdivisions

Urbanisation also changed the face of the physical environment in the area, and occurred hand in hand with industrial development after the break up of the Cooper Estate. As noted, residential subdivisions were released within the Cooper Estate prior to 1914 but usually on a leasehold basis. A good population overview was provided in the 1892 Government examination of the proposal to extend Shea's Creek Canal. In April 1891 the Alexandria municipality was recorded as having a population of 7,499, with a 1,705 dwellings. Waterloo had 8,615 residents and 1,875 dwellings.<sup>33</sup> These suburban areas were usually promoted as 'working man's townships', being in close proximity to the industrial areas that needed to employ workers (see Chapters 6 and 7). Physically they criss-crossed the landscape in grid fashion and each new lawn, garden and yard transformed the previous environment.<sup>34</sup> The associated increase in human usage of the environment bought with it other environmental problems. A 1995 study of the Cooks River noted the significant contribution of urban pest control to the build up of organochlorines in the surrounding water system.<sup>35</sup> Other activities by residents of areas surrounding the Alexandra Canal and Cooks River system have had major environmental impacts. Washing cars released grease and heavy metals into roadside gutters. Oils, detergents, chemicals and paints were also released into roadside gutters. Cars, car parts, storage drums, trolleys and rubbish were often directly dumped into waterways. The 1991 annual 'Clean up Australia' campaign resulted in a total of twenty-four cars being hauled out of the Cooks River.<sup>36</sup> Although industrial activity has surely been the biggest contributor to environmental degradation, human activity in residential urban areas has also played a part.

#### 4.10 Roads and transportation

The development of roadways and transport infrastructure was essential for the opening up of the area for industrial and urban expansion. The first main road through the area was the Botany Road, completed in 1821 by Major Druitt, an engineer. The road went from Sydney to the Waterloo Mills, a distance of two miles, and required the construction of six bridges. Road construction was mainly focused around the more occupied northern section of the Cooper Estate until after the Estate was broken up.<sup>37</sup> By 1891 a tramline ran through Waterloo, Alexandria and out to Botany.<sup>38</sup> In the twentieth century the development of transportation infrastructure carried on apace. The needs of industrial expansion and the growing urban communities resulted in the industrial railway links and a dramatic increase in the construction of roads. As the car became more affordable, traffic on the roads increased and added to the already significant atmospheric pollution in the area. Increasingly trucks serviced the needs of industrial transportation and so roadways became noisier and more polluted.

#### 4.11 The Waterloo Incinerator site (GSTC site)

The Waverley & Woollahra Process Plant (Waterloo Incinerator) site lies at the heart of the Green Square development area and will, at some stage in the future, become the site of the Green Square Town Centre. This seems particularly apt in light of the fact that it is also the site of the beginning of industrial development and the centre for European usage of the area. It was here that the first chimneys were constructed and it is here that one of the last chimneys stands. The Waterloo Incinerator chimney dominates the surrounding area by its immense size and is visible from many kilometres away. The

### It was here that the first chimneys were constructed and it is here that one of the last chimneys stands.

name given to the incinerator by local residents, 'the Zetland Monster', reflects the imposing physical presence of the facility and its perceived baleful influence. So this site encapsulates the two constant factors in the post European alteration of the environment: change and chimneystacks.

The original Waterloo Mill, named by Governor Macquarie after he visited the newly completed mill in 1821, was located close to the site of the now defunct Waterloo Incinerator. There does not seem to be a surviving image of the mill, but it was most probably steam powered with the associated operation of heavy machinery, so it would have had a chimney.<sup>39</sup> Hinchcliff's Waterloo Mills Woolwashing Establishment was established in 1848 near the site of the earlier mill, the upper dam works with two large chimneystacks and the lower dam works with two or three more (see Figs. 4.1 and 4.2). In 1855 Goodlet and Smith's Annular Brick Kilns were established on the site of the earlier Waterloo Mill and two very imposing chimneys were integral to its operation (see Fig. 4.6). The brickworks continued to operate until some time in the 1930s and in 1933 a garbage destructor was constructed on the site.<sup>40</sup> This facility only operated for about ten years and newer brickworks made simultaneous usage of the site.<sup>41</sup> All of these usages of the site required associated chimneystacks.

By 1949 the Waterloo Firebrick Company Ltd and the Industrial Brick Co. Ltd. were operating at opposite ends of the Incinerator/Town Centre site and the old garbage destructor was abandoned and unused. In 1966 the Waverley and Woollahra Councils purchased the site to establish a new waste incinerator and the old brickworks were demolished to clear the way for construction. A Development Application was approved in 1968 for the new incinerator and office building.<sup>42</sup> The old flourmill and brickworks chimneystacks were demolished to make way for the much larger chimney for the venting of fumes from the high temperature Incinerator.

The Incinerator building was deliberately designed to look like a 1960s office block. However, only a bare minimum of space was actually for offices; most of the space inside was taken up by waste pits and furnaces.<sup>43</sup> This design, along with the highly euphemistic name given to the Incinerator, 'The Waverley & Woollahra Process Plant', betrayed a desire to disguise the Incinerator's purpose, as well as an awareness of community resistance to the project from the outset. The Incinerator began operating around the clock in 1972, employing only thirty-two people (five in administration and twenty-seven in the actual operation of the plant).<sup>44</sup> For such a huge and intrusive infrastructure project it offered only a very small amount of employment to the local community.

From the beginning of the Incinerator's operation in 1972, the local community began protesting. As early as 1975 the plant was shut down due to corrosion of the electrostatic precipitators and scrubbers, and upgrading was required. Local residents had to endure stench, pollution and particle fallout almost fifteen times that allowed under the *Clean Air Act 1961*. Their response was to rally in the streets and at the council chambers.<sup>45</sup> The Incinerator opened again within a year, with assurances that it had complied with appropriate emission control requirements. It operated continuously for close to the next twenty years despite local residents' objec-



Fig. 4.8 The 'Zetland Monster' – the Waterloo Incinerator (Photo: Grace Karskens 2004)

tions. Ann Brown, a local resident of Zetland from the early 1980s, recalled that 'through the eighties and nineties putrid smells associated with the incinerator worsened'.<sup>46</sup>

A report in 1991 by the State Pollution Control Commission warning of toxic emissions of between 12–38 times the most stringent international standards reinvigorated local resistance and attracted Greenpeace to the cause.<sup>47</sup> There was a strong sense of outrage within the local community and the South Sydney Council became active in its opposition to the incinerator. This second campaign took on a higher profile as residents, Greenpeace and the South Sydney Council united in their struggle to close the incinerator. In the early 1990s Greenpeace occupied the incinerator site for thirty-six hours, and in March 1991 a major rally involving more than two-hundred people took place at the Incinerator.<sup>48</sup> Ann Brown remembers the 'David and Goliath' nature of the struggle and the way the community saw it a social justice issue. 'It began to dawn on us' she said 'that we were going to be the dumping ground for all the eastern suburbs trash, with no say...'<sup>49</sup> The plant resisted calls for its closure until 1996, when it was finally shut down.

The campaign to close the Incinerator provides an insight into changing attitudes towards the environment that were taking place in the latter part of the twentieth century. No longer did local communities simply accept the conventional wisdom of unhampered industrial development, that jobs always outweighed environmental conditions, and that the environment was simply a resource to be exploited. Changes in Government environment policy after 1960 also reflected the shift in societal attitudes to environmental issues. The Clean Air and Clean Waters Acts (No.69, 1961 and No.78, 1970) marked

the beginning of these changes. In 1970 the State Pollution Control Commission (SPCC) was established, and in 1974 the responsibility for the administration of the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act were transferred from the Health department to the SPCC. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the SPCC took on increasing responsibility for environmental matters.<sup>50</sup> By 1991, when it reported on the excessive toxic emissions of the Waterloo incinerator, the SPCC had become a significant and active government body in the area of environmental protection and management.<sup>51</sup>

Changes in broader societal attitudes towards the environmental impact of land usage and industrial development are reflected in the legislative changes outlined above. The campaign to close the 'Zetland Monster' by the local community, the support from South Sydney Council, the involvement of the international organisation Greenpeace and the damning report from the SPCC provides a telling case study. This struggle offers insights into the way local environments and people were no longer invisible or regarded as insignificant, and a window into a new phase in our attitudes to the environment and its use.

#### 4.12 Statement of cultural significance

The cultural significance of understanding the way in which this environment has been exploited and altered since European arrival lies in learning from those experiences. Similar environments still exist in a relatively unspoiled state, so knowing what we do about the impact of European land usage on the Waterloo/Botany wetland area, one would hope that similar development of these areas would not occur. As much as the environment of this area has been radically altered by human activity, it still broadly follows its original geographic contours. In times of heavy rains water still flows from the heights of Paddington, Bondi Junction and Randwick through Centennial Park, Waterloo and Alexandria, Shea's Creek and out to Botany Bay. Developers of the Green Square area are aware of this and must factor such considerations into future development planning.

The Waterloo Incinerator chimneystack is an artefact of cultural significance that connects the site with the history of its human usage, and the struggle of people in the local community for a say in the control of their environment.

#### 4.13 Ideas for interpretation

The Incinerator and its chimneystack should be preserved and used to interpret the history of Green Square Town Centre. It could stand as a powerful reminder of the environmental impact of human land usage practices on the area throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It would also recall the long struggle of the local people to claim a measure of control over their environment and the changing attitudes toward the environment that were taking place more generally in society from the 1970s.

Steam power was a very significant nineteenth century technology, which dominated the industrial usage of the Green Square area, and could be thematically incorporated into public space, especially public art. The water theme has already been used in the development of public space and art, which is most appropriate. Perhaps, as Jason Doran also suggests (Chapter 3) some representation of the lost wetland environment could be recreated and remembered in Green Square public space.



# Chapter 5

# The Aboriginal Diaspora

Alex Sharp & Grace Karskens

## 5.1 Introduction

The written history of Aborigines in the Green Square area is minimal. Aboriginal presence in Sydney after the European invasion is often difficult to trace. Such histories are scant because of the events that Aboriginal people had to endure after the arrival of the first wave of Europeans. But like every other part of Sydney, Green Square has a long and ongoing Aboriginal history. It is a story of suffering, death and displacement from land; a history of loss. It is also a story of survival and return.

## 5.2 The Eora before and after 1788

### 5.2.1 Whose country was this?

The Aboriginal people of the Sydney region lived in groups of between thirty to fifty people (sometimes called ‘clans’), related by birth and/or marriage. Each group was associated with specific areas of land (country), often taking their name from it, and each was distinguished by body decorations, hair-styles, songs and dances, tools and weapons.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the research and records available on the Sydney groups, the name of the traditional land owners of the Green Square area is not clear. We know that the country to the north—the area from South Head to Long Cove on Parramatta River—belonged to the Cadigal, who took their name from Cadi (the south side of Port Jackson). To the south, on the north shore of Botany Bay, the country belonged to the Gamaygal—Kamay was the name for Botany Bay; the south side of Botany Bay was Gweagal country. Another group, the Muru-ora-dial may have lived in the coastal Maroubra area to the east, though this seems to be a guess based on the similarity of names rather than on solid evidence.<sup>2</sup>

One important piece of evidence about whose country this was comes from the evidence given by Mahroot, an Aboriginal man who was born at Cooks River, just south of Green Square, in about 1796. He was interviewed in 1845 by a Select Committee of the NSW Legislative Council which was set up to investigate the state of Aboriginal people in the Sydney region. Mahroot told the committee that he was one of only four of his group who were still alive; originally four hundred people had lived around Botany. He said that his people’s country had stretched ‘...as far as here [Sydney] to Botany Bay and around the sea coast, away from the Heads of Port Jackson, to the Heads at Botany Bay’. Green Square was the country of Mahroot’s people. But when the Committee asked for the name of his ‘tribe’ he answered evasively: ‘They do give it a name, I do not know what it is’. Perhaps there were reasons

he was unwilling or unable to say the name. However he said that his people were now—that is, in the 1840s—called the Botany Bay Mooro—an intriguing echo of the name Muru-ora-dial.<sup>3</sup>

We do know, however, that the word Aborigines gave for ‘people’ or ‘here, from this place’ in this region was Eora, and so this name will be used for the original people of Green Square.<sup>4</sup> They would have been among the coastal peoples of the Sydney region, as opposed to the ‘woods’ people who lived inland to the west. The coastal people lived more on fish and shellfish, while the inland groups were known as climbers of trees, as they hunted small marsupials like possums.

### 5.2.2 Languages

The languages and dialects spoken by the various coastal and inland groups a source of some contention between scholars and modern Aboriginal groups. Some argue that the Darug language reached from the Hawkesbury/Nepean all the way to the coast, and that the coastal language was simply a dialect of Darug. Others point to evidence showing that in the 1790s coastal people were total strangers to the inland people, had different rituals and could not understand them very well. They argue that there was a distinct coastal language and identity. Most scholars agree that south of Botany Bay, the language was Dharawal. Problems arose when these language names were equated with ‘tribes’ and their boundaries, leading to conflicting claims about which groups belonged to which tribe and which country.<sup>5</sup>

### 5.2.3 A coastal people

The Eora, then, were coastal people, who had been able to ‘develop a strong marine orientation for their subsistence activities’.<sup>6</sup> Campsites were located close to the shore during the summer months, when the fishing was good. Early European observers wrote about and painted pictures of their fishing and cooking techniques. Archaeological evidence—the enormous middens of shells especially—show that shellfish, such as oysters, mussels and cockles were another important food source. Canoes for fishing were made out of long strips of bark, tied at each end, with middle kept open by sticks. Flimsy as they looked, they traversed the waters around Sydney with ease and agility, men fishing with four-metre long spears, the women with lines and hooks made of bone or shell. Fishing lines were made from the inner bark of the Kurrajong and hibiscus trees, and multi pronged spears were tipped with bone. They often cooked and ate the fish they caught in these canoes, grilling them over fires on small clay pads. Any that

was left over would be brought back for the group.<sup>7</sup>

The Europeans were at first scathing about these simple and unlikely water craft, but the Aborigines were so adept at handling them, they were soon impressed by their skill. Women who went fishing would take their children out with them in the canoes. Captain Hunter of the *Sirius* wrote with some wonder—

A miserable boat, the highest part of which was not more than six inches above the surface of the water, washing in the edge of a surf, which would frighten even an old seaman to come near in a good craft.<sup>8</sup>

The freshwater wetlands and sandhills of the Green Square area would also have been a veritable storehouse of food. Benson and Howell have identified a number of wetland and dune species which could have provided food:

In the swamps, *Eleocharis sphacelata*, *Phragmites australis* and *Triglochin procera* provided edible roots and tubers. In the heath and shrubland on the sandy dunes were sharp-leaved plants with small edible succulent fruits, members of the heath family, *Epacridaceae*. Shrubby geebung... Currant Bush... Native Cherry, and the semi-parasitic Devils Twine... all produced small edible fruits. Ground orchids... and small lilies... provided edible tubers. Flower spikes of Banksia and the *Xanthorrhoea* or Grass Tree were rich in nectar.<sup>9</sup>

Freshwater swamps, creeks and lagoons were also rich in resources of fish (mullet, Australian Bass, Macquarie perch, eels) shellfish (several species of freshwater mussels), crayfish and yabbies, tortoises, platypus and water rats. The area teemed with water birds—swans, ducks, ibis, egrets, water hens, quail and many more. In the Hawkesbury/Nepean area to the west, eel traps made of hollow logs and woven bird traps were set to catch food—perhaps these devices were also made and used in the swamps of Green Square.<sup>10</sup> The area was also a great haven for insects—including mosquitoes, flies and sandflies which plagued the Europeans in their hot clothing. Most coastal Aboriginal people did not wear clothing, but they covered themselves in fish oil to ward off mosquitoes and the cold. Some observers reported that Aborigines would put fish entrails in their hair, so that the oils would slowly seep out and cover their bodies.<sup>11</sup>

The Eora moved about their country hunting and collecting, ‘cleaning up’ or maintaining it and taking shelter in overhanging caves or bark huts. A group of these huts stood on the Cooks River near Botany Bay. Eora paths criss-crossed the land. People don’t seem to have moved outside their own areas often, apart from for travelling to major ritual or gatherings, or a whale feast. However trade goods moved readily from group to group across large distances and along well-known routes. One major item of trade from the western parts of Sydney was stone—such as smooth basalt pebbles, chert, mudstone, quartz and red and yellow silcrete. These were worked into sharp tools and weapons.<sup>12</sup> Some tools were used to engrave pictures on sandstone platforms and in caves, and many still survive in the national parks which encircle the city. They depict fish and animals, people, tools and ‘sky heroes’ or spiritual beings.<sup>13</sup>

Land was not only a source of food and shelter—it was also the source of identity and spiritual beliefs. The Eora would have invested every feature in the Green Square area—water, earth, rocks, trees and animals—with specific stories which

explained origins and meanings, and which had different versions and levels of meaning according to who was telling and listening. These were also law legends, inextricably linked with rules for the proper conduct of human society, with totems and people’s relationship with other living creatures, and with supernatural and spiritual beings.<sup>14</sup>

Aboriginal people are often portrayed as ‘living in harmony’ with the natural environment, making no impact on it, almost as if they were part of an unchanging ‘nature’ themselves. While country was and is central to sustenance, culture and spiritual life, there is also a great deal of evidence to show that Aboriginal culture was dynamic and responsive to new ideas and techniques. Archaeology shows that the types of tools they used changed radically. People here had already adapted to massive changes in their environments, including climate changes and rising sea levels which drowned the valley of Sydney Harbour with a consequent loss of land. Many new ideas, objects, words and rituals were readily absorbed into Aboriginal culture; others were rejected as having no use or relevance.<sup>15</sup>

The Eora, like Aboriginal peoples across the continent, had also learned how to manage the environment and therefore had shaped it. Besides imposing harvesting and hunting regimes, they appear to have used fire as tool in creating and maintaining some areas as open, grassed landscapes with widely spaced trees, to encourage certain grazing animals and to make the country easy to move through. This pattern of burning seems to have been a complex mosaic of different cycles and types of fires for different places. Our understanding of these patterns is still incomplete, although research continues because knowledge of such seasonal burning is needed for modern fire management strategies.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.3 The Eora and the Europeans 1788–1816

#### 5.3.1 Botany Bay, Sydney and Green Square: the space between

The Green Square area was important in the years immediately after 1788 because it was the country linking the two pivotal places in the early settlement: Botany Bay and Sydney Cove. Botany Bay had been Cook’s landing place in 1770, the first landfall of the First Fleet in 1788 and the place where the French explorer La Perouse dropped anchor and stayed for six weeks. Sydney Cove in Port Jackson was the place Arthur Phillip chose as the site for the penal settlement. To get from one to the other overland, people had to move through the swamps and sandhills of the area now known as Green Square.

And they did. When convicts heard about La Perouse’s ships moored at Botany Bay, parties of them immediately left Sydney and ‘found the road to Botany Bay’, where they begged to be taken on board the French ships. Of course, there was no ‘road’ in the sense of a made carriageway. Perhaps they found and followed an Aboriginal path running southwards. In any case, they were not allowed to board the ships and some of them became lost when they tried to return to Sydney. Some thought they did escape on the ships; others that they became lost and starved; or that they had been killed by Eora.<sup>17</sup>

#### 5.3.2 Encounters and impacts

The first encounters and relations between Europeans and Eora were varied: they could be friendly and humorous, or violent and threatening. Or there could be no contact at all, as the Eora soon avoided and ignored the invaders at Sydney Cove

altogether. Governor Philip and officers like Collins, Tench and Surgeon White were keen to learn about this new culture and people, and also to build good and peaceful relations (although with the Europeans in the position of power of course). When the Eora avoided them, they kidnapped a number of young men, including Colbee and Bennelong, so that they could become envoys between the two peoples. Bennelong became a favourite and eventually he and a large number of his kin stayed at Government house, and later in a hut built for them on Bennelong Point.<sup>18</sup>

Some of these educated and highly literate Europeans thought of the Eora as ‘noble savages’—people uncorrupted by civilization, living a simple and idyllic life. Captain Cook had also seen them in this way, writing:

They live in a Tranquility, which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The Earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life. They covet not Magnificent Houses, Household stuff etc; they live in a warm and fine climate; and enjoy every Wholesome Air.<sup>19</sup>

But the majority of the First Fleeters were convicts and not likely to have been familiar with such ideas. Some of them made friends with the Eora, bringing them presents, eating, singing and dancing with them. But others stole their tools and weapons to sell as curios. Convicts also went off into Eora country constantly, exploring or looking for food, and they often headed towards Botany Bay. By October 1788 two convicts who were with a party travelling to Botany Bay foraging for vegetables and sweet tea were murdered by Aborigines. At this stage, Governor Phillip suspected that ‘one of the natives had been murdered and several wounded’ by convicts or soldiers roaming in the bush, and that the attacks and killings were payback.<sup>20</sup> The abduction and rape of Aboriginal women may also have occurred.

Meanwhile, the sudden arrival of over a thousand people meant that fish stocks, the staple of the Eora, were quickly depleted. The Europeans noted this and wondered why they looked so hungry that first winter, the season when fish were scarce anyway. It did not occur to them that their arrival caused the shortage of food.<sup>21</sup>

#### 5.3.3 Smallpox and aftermath

Then from April 1789, a terrible disease which was most likely smallpox swept through the Eora population, killing vast numbers of people. The death toll was so high and the suffering of the dying so fearful that people were often unable to care for the sick or bury their dead. There were reports of dead bodies of Aborigines strewn among the rocks of the coastline and floating in the harbour.<sup>22</sup> All but three of the Cadigal died, and there were reports of entire groups further west who were wiped out. Until recently the source of the disease has not been known—it has been assumed that it was brought by the First Fleet, but no-one on those ships had been infected by it. Recent research by Judy Campbell shows that this wave of smallpox had in fact come from the north. Macassan fisherman brought the disease from Indonesia and it travelled southwards across the continent. However, other more commonplace diseases brought by the Europeans would also take a heavy toll of the Aboriginal population.<sup>23</sup>

One outcome of the smallpox epidemic was that members of the surviving groups had to join together to form new groups, some moving away from their own country in the process. So major disruptions to traditional life already occurred by

1790—the diasporas had begun. One group which did this were the Bediagal, or Bidjigal, a ‘woods’ group from the inland area to the north-west of Parramatta. The place they moved to by 1790 was the north part of Botany Bay, the country of the Gamaygal, which probably included the streams and swamps of Green Square. Among the Bediagal was a warrior named Pemulwy.<sup>24</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Pemulwy, John MacEntire and the reprisal expedition

One white man whom the Eora loathed was John MacEntire, the Governor’s gamekeeper. As gamekeeper, MacEntire was allowed to carry a gun. In December 1790 while out hunting kangaroos near Botany Bay, MacEntire was fatally speared. He had to be dragged back to Sydney with the spear in his chest, its point so jagged it could not be removed. On his deathbed he confessed to shooting at Aborigines but swore he had never done anything else to harm them; he died a lingering and painful death. The spear, when it was finally extracted, was identified by other Eora as belonging to Pemulwy.

Phillip had carefully negotiated an agreement with the Eora that no more spears would be thrown. In his view the attack on MacEntire clearly contravened this, and he decided to send a clear message that it would not be tolerated. A reprisal party of over fifty men laden with weapons led by an unwilling Lieutenant Watkin Tench was sent out. They were ordered to teach the Botany Bay people a lesson by either killing or capturing six of their men.<sup>25</sup>

So the party, ‘a terrific procession’, set off for Botany Bay and the Cooks River through the swamps and dunes of Green Square. But party soon got lost and ended up on the shores of the Bay, where they saw five Eora, who promptly ran away. Laden with their heavy woollen coats and weapons in the hot weather, they gave chase but the ‘unencumbered’ Aborigines vanished. Another group surprised near the huts also made off in canoes. They did find one man fishing, but it turned out to be their friend, Colbee, who shared a meal with them, cheerfully informing them that Pemulwy had fled long ago to the south—it is possible that Colbee himself tipped Pemulwy and others off about the raid. The reprisal party had to camp by a ‘sandfly and mosquito infested swamp’ that night before returning to Sydney empty-handed.

Undeterred, Phillip sent Tench out again with a smaller party on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, this time leaving at night and travelling by moonlight. Hoping to ambush the same huts and take prisoners, they were crossing the bed of one of the creeks when a number of them, including Tench, began sinking in quicksand. Struggling only made them sink faster, and finally one terrified soldier shouted to those on the banks to cut and throw in tree branches so they could save themselves. They managed to clamber out, but half their weapons were beyond use. When they finally arrived at the huts, they found they had been deserted for some time. Defeated by the bush, and with no sign of Pemulwy or the Botany Bay tribe, Tench returned to Sydney muddy and empty handed. Of the Green Square area he wrote ruefully that they had passed through country which was ‘a rotten spongy bog, into which we were plunged knee-deep at every step.’<sup>26</sup>

The Eora and this country had turned this famous reprisal expedition into a farce. The whites were hopeless. Yet by this time, just under three years after the invasion, Aboriginal life in the Sydney region had already changed forever—disease had carried off hundreds, groups had moved to new areas. Phillip’s attempts at diplomacy and law and order had favoured one

group over others and had only limited and temporary effects. After he left the colony in 1792, the settlement was allowed to expand into the lands of the inland groups around the Hawkesbury/Nepean. There a violent and bloody frontier war broke out as the Aborigines defended their country against the settlers. The resistance was crushed by the Appin massacre in 1816.

#### 5.4 Aboriginal life in the Sydney region c1820-1880

In the coastal areas, it appears that the remaining Eora and Bediagal continued to live around Botany Bay and Cooks River, and so probably continued to hunt and fish in the swamps and streams just to the north, which were still largely shunned by the whites. The first official land grants in the Green Square area were not made until the early 1820s, and even then, the major clearing and drainage which would destroy the wetlands were still some decades off.

Some Aborigines, like Bungaree and Mahroot, went to sea on ships and became excellent sailors. Other groups moved onto the properties of large landowners and worked for them, often in exchange for rations. One account tells of a white farmer who employed two Aboriginal children, and found them more hard working than the convicts.<sup>27</sup> Settling on farms and estates had a number of advantages. It offered relative security and stability in a hostile white environment, and an alternative source of food in the shape of rations. It also helped maintain the family and clan ties because the Aborigines usually worked with their families. Sometimes it allowed Aborigines to stay near their own country. However, Aboriginal people were usually exploited as a source of cheap labour.<sup>28</sup>

Other Aboriginal people decided to live in Sydney among the whites, getting work or selling fish or firewood. Some, like Warrah Warrah, a young man from the Broken Bay Tribe in the north, were well-known and widely liked. However the jobs that Aborigines could get in the town were usually very low-paid. The accounts written by whites often stressed their pathetic and degraded conditions, wearing cast-off clothing, begging for money and always drunk. Aboriginal men working in Sydney would hire themselves out to taverns to clean the casks. Their payment was the first wash of the cask, called the ‘Bull wash’. Some sources claim that Aboriginal men resorted to selling their wives into prostitution.<sup>29</sup>

By 1845, as we have seen, the Aboriginal population of Sydney was declining. It was estimated that fewer than 300 Aborigines lived in and around the Sydney area by this time.<sup>30</sup> But Aboriginal people from other parts of the state arrived in the Sydney region at various times as a result of dispossession of their own country because of expanding settlement. Mahroot said that the remaining members of his people now lived with the ‘Cobrakalls’ (Cabrogals) who, like the earlier Bediagal, had moved to Botany Bay from their country in the Liverpool area in the west. Mahroot said they still lived off the land—‘They can pick up fish about the rocks, and opossums inland... we can forage about the rocks and inland in the wood just the same way’. He said both fish and possums were now harder to get than when he was a boy.<sup>31</sup>

As the city grew, however, more and more land was cleared and drained for timber, farming and the water supply. As Scott Cumming points out, by 1869 the environment of Green Square area had been radically altered. The trees were gone, the wetlands drained, and industries were starting to pollute the creeks and rivers. The area was now a ‘tract of barren sandhills’. The people of Botany Bay could no longer fish, hunt

and forage here. We don’t know what happened to Mahroot and his people, or the Cabrogal of Botany Bay, but by 1883, parliamentarian George Thornton confidently claimed that there was ‘...not one person left of the Sydney or Botany tribes, nor has there been one for some years.’<sup>32</sup>

But Sydney continued to have an Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people from the South Coast who had been displaced by farmers began to move to Sydney. Around 1878, a number of them had moved into boatsheds on the west side of Circular Quay, where they offended the city leaders with their fighting and drinking. But they entertained sailors and local people hugely—sometimes their antics attracted ‘two or three hundred spectators, frequently blocking the public thoroughfares.’<sup>33</sup> By 1883 this group included about 20 people, who had their rations cut off and were evicted from the boatshed in July that year. Some went to the north shore and others to Manly.

Meanwhile another group from the South Coast also settled in Sydney—at La Perouse, on Botany Bay, to the southeast of Green Square. There were 26 people in this group in 1880, but often that number swelled with visitors from Wollongong, Georges River and the Burrigorang valley. La Perouse was on the distant fringes of the city, out of sight, so although it was precarious, this settlement stayed, and it put down roots. A missionary was stationed there by 1885, and the population was also controlled by a manager and local police. A mission church was built and the Reserve was finally officially gazetted in 1895. La Perouse became Sydney’s Aboriginal place. Visiting dignitaries came to meet genuine Australian ‘natives’, and hundreds of weekend daytrippers came out to visit and picnic on weekends, especially after the tramline was opened. Local men made and sold artifacts like boomerangs, women worked shells into ornaments with traditional Aboriginal designs; kids dived for pennies off the wharf.<sup>34</sup>

#### 5.5 The Aborigines Protection Board 1883–1915 and the rise of bureaucracy

The increasing management at La Perouse, and its isolation from Sydney, were signs of how the treatment of Aboriginal people was changing. Earlier they had been able to move around and settle in different places to survive, stay together and find work—politicians had been entirely indifferent to their plight. By in the 1880s, though, white society was becoming increasingly concerned to control their movements, and keep them separate from whites ‘for their own good’, especially in the towns and cities. The Aborigines Protection Board was established in 1883 to distribute rations and manage the Aboriginal people of NSW. The Board members believed that Aborigines were a ‘dying race’ and that contact with whites was the cause of their demise—therefore they focused on keeping Aboriginal people segregated on missions and stations. They were increasingly treated as if they were children who could not manage their own affairs.<sup>35</sup>

At first the Board’s powers were limited, but from 1909 with the passing of the Aborigines Protection Act, it gained some of the interventionist power it had sought for years. Then in 1915 an amending Act gave it power over all dependent Aboriginal people in NSW and power to remove Aboriginal children from their parents—these children have since been called the stolen generations. Child-removal continued for decades and occurred in the city as well as the rural areas.<sup>36</sup>

These policies would have a direct impact on people living in the Green Square area. For example, Kathy Ingram’s mother

and her siblings were taken from her grandmother, who lived in Elizabeth Street, Zetland around the 1930s. They were placed in foster homes in Kensington and their mother worked nearby to stay in contact with them. Her daughter (Kathy’s mother) was sent out as a domestic worker, but managed to escape and return to her mothers’ house, where she remained. ‘My grandmother hated the welfare’ says Kathy Ingram ‘...it was a terrible thing.’<sup>37</sup>

Children were often placed in homes where boys were trained for labouring work and girls for domestic service. Many girls would have arrived in some of Sydney’s larger and better off households to work as maids. It is estimated that there were 570 girls indentured in Sydney between 1920 and 1930. They worked long hours for low wages, and most of their money went to the APB to be kept ‘in trust’. They were entitled to these earnings at the age of 21, but only a fraction were actually paid the money they had earned.<sup>38</sup>

By the turn of the century, it became apparent to whites that Aboriginal people were not a ‘dying race’ after all. Surveys conducted from the 1880s to 1900 recorded that the ‘half-castes’ in the Aboriginal population were a growing proportion. In 1882, of the 7,000 Aborigines in NSW, 27 per cent were estimated to be of mixed descent. By 1900 that figure had risen to 55 per cent.<sup>39</sup> Ideas of Social Darwinism had also shaped convictions about Aborigines—that they were intended by nature and evolution to disappear. The Board decided to manage the rising numbers of mixed-descent people by pursuing a policy of biological and cultural annihilation. The separation of mixed-descent children from parents and culture would extinguish the Aboriginal way of life. The children would be brought up with whites and indoctrinated with white culture—although they would always remain on the lowest rungs of society. This strategy would also discourage marriage to other Aboriginal people—hence limiting Aboriginal populations. Removal of girls at puberty was seen as an effective measure to reduce Aboriginal birth rates. In 1921, 81 per cent of the children removed were female. From 1912 to 1928, 68 per cent of those taken were 12 and over. Girls made up 70 per cent of the children taken over the period.<sup>40</sup> Separation and assimilation was seen as way to hasten the end of Aboriginality and its perceived threats to the white population and nation.

By the 1920s, suburban Sydney had sprawled southwards and the Aboriginal settlement at La Perouse was not longer so isolated. Randwick Council, with the agreement of the Aborigines Protection Board, tried to have the La Perouse people removed ‘for their own good’ further south and out of sight of the new suburbanites. However, they refused to go, and with the help of white supporters, they remained there. New fibro houses were built for them, but they were still without electricity and running water in the 1950s.<sup>41</sup>

#### 5.6 Aboriginal Sydney 1920–1945

##### 5.6.1 Twentieth Century dispossession and diaspora

From the 1920s, new waves of Aboriginal people arrived in Sydney as a result of the expansion of farming and dairying on the north and south coasts. In this case, land that had been granted to Aborigines as reserves, or purchased and farmed by Aboriginal people as selections, was taken from them and given to white farmers. After the First World War, these white farmers were often soldier settlers. In 1911 there were 27,000 acres of reserve land. By 1927, 13,000 acres had been taken away by the Board, three-quarters of which was fertile land

on the coast.<sup>42</sup> Some of these doubly-dispossessed people came to Sydney, and by the 1930s were living in inner-city working class areas like Balmain, Glebe, Rozelle, Surry Hills and Redfern, which would become such an important centre later.

##### 5.6.2 Aboriginal people in Green Square c1920-45:

Aboriginal families also settled in Waterloo and Alexandria. As we have seen, Kathy Ingram’s grandmother lived in Zetland in Elizabeth Street, her parents met there before 1945, and Kathy was born in Waterloo. A number of non-Aboriginal people interviewed by Sue Rosen for the 1995 South Sydney Social History project were asked about Aboriginal families in the area in the 1920s and 1930s. Interestingly they mostly denied any Aboriginal presence, but then remembered Aboriginal people they had known. Ann Ramsay, born in Redfern in 1914, could not really remember many Aboriginal people; but she had a best friend, Mary, who was Aboriginal. She also remembered a well-known Aboriginal black-tracker who, although widely respected and liked by some, was persecuted by others: ‘they gave him a hell of a life.’<sup>43</sup> Robert Hammond, born in Alexandria in 1927, said there were no Aboriginal residents until the postwar period, but then remembered that his family visited the aunt of Aboriginal fighter, Tony Mundine, who lived in Phillip Street: ‘They were quite nice people’. Terry Murphy (born 1931) was adamant: ‘They claimed the Aborigines were there [in Redfern/Eveleigh], that’s a bloody lie! The Aborigines were never there in force like they are now’. Yet he too remembered Aboriginal people well: the Hill family with their numerous children—‘but you wouldn’t’a known’—and other families who were ‘great people’, who joined the clubs and worked for the council.<sup>44</sup>

The city at this time would have been something of a refuge and escape from the APB and its power and policies during the Depression years. From 1936 the Board was given up power over all Aborigines in the state, and it sought to round and confine all of them in isolated reserves like those at Menindee and Brewarrina. An ‘Aboriginal or any person apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood’ was liable to be banished to a reserve.<sup>45</sup> The Aborigines were inmates, with every part of their lives controlled. The camps became overcrowded and insanitary, and disease was rife.

##### 5.6.3 Aboriginal civil and land rights movements in Sydney, 1920s–1940s

Impoverishment, control and the vast displacements of Aboriginal people was fertile ground for the first broad Aboriginal civil rights movements. The 1930s period was marked by an intensive effort to create political networks throughout NSW to further the Aboriginal cause and focus on maltreatment at the hands of the APB.<sup>46</sup> The first, the Australian Aboriginal Progressives Association was founded in 1924 and soon gathered support up and down the NSW coast. The Aboriginal Progress Association (APA), the leading party, was set up by William Ferguson, in Dubbo in 1937. The APA opened branches in many country towns and also at La Perouse and gained support from some unions, the Communist party, and, strangely, the far right Australia First party. The coastal APA was led by Jack Patten, and primarily based in Sydney.

In the 1930s Sydney became a focal point for Aboriginal civil rights and land rights movements. The sesquicentenary of the British landing on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1938 was an important day for a show of solidarity amongst the Aboriginal people. While white Australians enjoyed the celebration and re-telling of

the British conquest of Sydney, the Aboriginal people called it the 'Day of Mourning'. Ferguson and Jack Patten drafted a manifesto demanding citizens' rights for Aboriginal people. It was the first time that the history of Australia had been publicly written from an Aboriginal perspective. A week later an Aboriginal deputation presented resolutions and a ten point program for Aboriginal equality to Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, but nothing came of this and the civil rights movement lost the momentum it had gathered in the cities.<sup>47</sup>

Although the manifesto failed to result in any real changes in the state's laws, the APA was an outspoken organisation and became prominent in issues concerning Aboriginal treatment by the state. In 1938, the Public Service Board began an inquiry into the Aboriginal Protection Board, with the APA as a main source of information. In 1940 the APB was abolished on the strength of the report. The Public Service Board also recommended that Aboriginal children be educated in public schools and that the government should no longer give in to local white hostility towards Aboriginals.

## 5.7 Aboriginal Sydney in the post-war period

### 5.7.1 The Aboriginal Welfare Board

The Aboriginal Protection Board was replaced by the Aboriginal Welfare Board. The policy emphasis now shifted to guiding and 'advancing' Aboriginals towards white 'levels of civilisation'. The camps were abandoned; instead an intricate system of surveillance was established to maintain the process of control and assimilation. An Exemption Certificate system was set up which allowed Aboriginals full citizenship, freedom from further interference and surveillance, and access to public education, housing and services, the same as white people. But the cost was high and the conditions draconian. Aboriginal people had to cut off contact with other Aboriginal people, even their families. They had to hold approved jobs, live in 'white' houses and have them inspected regularly to see if they were neat and clean enough. Even their purchases of furnishings were monitored. In spite of the severe punishments for not taking part in the scheme, only a small minority of people even applied—1500 people out of around 14,000 over twenty years to 1964.<sup>48</sup>

### 5.7.2 'The big lights of the big city': coming into Sydney

The post-war period marked a great rise in the Aboriginal population of Sydney. Eager to escape the restrictions of the Aboriginal Welfare Board, and encouraged by employment opportunities, Aboriginals headed for the opportunities and promises of the Big Smoke. It was in this period that Aboriginal people returned to the Green Square area, particularly Waterloo and neighbouring Redfern. Aboriginal activist Chicka Dixon describes the lure of the city for young men:

I first came to Sydney in 1946. In those days my family lived on the riverbanks, in fringe dwellings and camped in paddocks and government mission stations... Well in those days it was sort of the big thing for young blacks...to come to Sydney. Go to Redfern. That was the big thing in life...the big lights of the big city.<sup>49</sup>

The labour shortage of the boom period after the Second World War provided economic opportunities, while education was another city drawcard. Industries and the housing and construction industry provided jobs and some were employed in the public service. Young Aboriginal women came to train as nurses in Sydney, which included Camperdown Children's Hospital and St Margaret's Hospital Darlinghurst.<sup>50</sup>

With little money, the new arrivals once more went to the older working class areas, perhaps joining relatives already settled there.<sup>51</sup> Cathie Craigie talked about the way Aboriginal culture and habits were transferred to the city:

Wherever our people came [from], there was a strong sense of sharing. Houses were often open to others to get a grounding in Sydney and that element has still remained today...without Redfern there is no real meeting place for Koories in Sydney.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand it is important to remember that there were distinctions and variety within Aboriginal society itself; these were people who came from many different regions and had very different experiences. Some of the older Aboriginal residents found the new arrivals different and a little alien. Kathy Ingram seems to have been a little taken aback by the new influx: 'I knew that I was Aboriginal... but they didn't seem my type of people...they hung around places I wasn't allowed to go.'<sup>53</sup>

Although economic prosperity gave Aboriginals the hope of finding employment, it had not removed racist attitudes, policies and practices, nor the poor housing some were forced to live in. Aboriginals did not have the vote, were not counted in the census and were not entitled to welfare benefits. They were still subject to a 10pm curfew even into the 1960s. Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, there would be at least three police paddy wagons lined up outside the Empress hotel in Redfern, waiting to round up the Aboriginals coming out.<sup>54</sup>

Urban problems and racism were the vectors for the next wave of the Aboriginal rights movement in the 1970s, and this time the epicentre in Sydney was Redfern. The Aboriginal Housing Company was formed there in 1973, run by Aboriginal people to purchase and manage housing for Aboriginal tenants. In response to issues like police harassment and lack of available health services, Aboriginal activists lobbied for services, and the Aboriginal Legal Service and an Aboriginal Medical Service were also established in the early 1970s. The Black Theatre, founded in 1973–74, opened in a warehouse in Redfern, became a 'creative hub' of the community and helped create a whole range of creative and artistic organisations.<sup>55</sup>

Redfern's problems were not solved, however; urban decay, poverty, violent riots, crime and drug problems were considerable and remain so. But these aspects tend to be the prime, often sensationalised, focus in media portrayals, and so they dominate images of Redfern in the wider non-Aboriginal community. Redfern's essential role as the birthplace of these significant organisations and changed mindsets, its ongoing role as Aboriginal meeting place and site of family reunion, are usually overshadowed and forgotten. Yet Redfern is Sydney's symbolic and literal Aboriginal space, the product of dispossession and a place won back from white urban Australia.<sup>56</sup>

### 5.8 Conclusion

The Aboriginal history of Green Square counters the dominant image of the area as primarily an industrial landscape. New residents of Green Square should have access to the knowledge, that before the industrialisation, before the white colonists, the Green Square area was the country of the Eora. And they did not simply disappear after 1788. Traditional owners lived in this region for another five decades—and were joined by groups from other regions. In 1845 they were still hunting on land and fishing the waters. After 1788, the Green Square area was also important as the zone of movement and encounters between Eora and Europeans, because it lay between Sydney

Cove and Botany Bay. It was the place the first official white reprisal party trudged through and camped on their unsuccessful mission to capture or kill Aboriginals in 1790, and some of them nearly drowned in the quicksand of one of its streams.

The movement of people in search of refuge, sustenance, family and freedom is also a major theme in this history. Green Square includes some of the suburbs Aboriginal people came to after the dispossessions and forced removals of the twentieth century. It is close to La Perouse and Redfern, the successive centres of Sydney Aboriginals. So the area has significance as destination and refuge during one of the greatest internal migrations in Australian history, which in turn gave rise to civil and land rights movements.

This chapter is hardly the last word on the Aboriginal diaspora in Sydney; nor is it the full story of Green Square's Aboriginal history. Further research is needed on the lives and fate of the nineteenth century Aboriginal people in the region, and on Aboriginal migration into the city in the twentieth century, especially after the Second World War. What were the nature of daily life for them once they came into the city? What were their workplace and living conditions, how did their neighbourhoods develop? How did Aboriginals populations mesh into working class areas, and how did remaining traditional landscapes relate to the later and present ones? Archaeological excavations have not been carried out in the Green Square. Such investigations may provide valuable information on the Eora of this area before, and for some time after, 1788.

### 5.9 Ideas for interpretation

Green Square's Aboriginal history could be expressed in a multi-media complex. The Eora had different weapons, songs, body decorations, dances and dialect to distinguish them, and this multi-faceted complex could express that cultural diversity and dynamism, and allow for its modern continuation. It could be a place of encounters, a learning place and a meeting place. It could be equipped with digital projectors, computers with animation software, music rooms and dance halls which would allow creative space for people in the neighbourhood. Children could come into the complex to work on assignments on the computers, and learn about new technologies. People generally could upgrade their computer skills. The complex could also be used for small business, information nights and community meetings.



# Chapter 6

# From Tanning to Planning: An Industrial History of Green Square

Susannah Frith

## 6.1 Introduction

As we drive through the areas of Waterloo and Alexandria today and see the studios, the showrooms, the warehouses and the old abandoned factory buildings, the landscape brings to mind an image of the kind of people who work in the area: car-salespersons, retail assistants and couriers. It is not the sort of area that most people find aesthetically pleasing; neither does it bring to mind a suburban community environment where children play and neighbours chat over the fence. We forget those people. There is a sense of loss for the residents in the area as it becomes more gentrified. There are residents whose families have lived in the area for generations, whose parents and grandparents have worked in the surrounding factories—tanning hides, washing or spinning wool, working in foundries and glass blowing. With the continual development of new apartment buildings and the rising housing market, it is difficult to see how the new Green Square can be conducive to a traditional working class community. As the older secondary industries move further away from inner Sydney, commercial businesses and storage facilities replace them. In addition, Green Square is one centre of this gentrification process in Sydney and, with the plans of the Green Square development project well underway, it has become progressively easier to forget the character of the industrial community that dominated the area for so long.

The Green Square Development Project is aimed at creating a commercial centre in balance with the new living spaces built on the vacant industrial blocks that used to make up this industrial heartland of Sydney. The suburbs of Alexandria, Zetland, Waterloo and Rosebery, which join at the place now named Green Square, have been home to many people from all over the world who came to make a living in the industries that grew up around the Alexandra Canal and the Waterloo Swamp. These industries included wool washing, tanning, brick making and bone crushing as well as smaller scale market gardens and printing works. Some of these grew up in the area from before the 1850s while others continued to appear well into the latter part of the nineteenth century.

This chapter focuses on the long history of industrial sites around the area, how they have changed and why these changes have taken place. Industrial activity has evolved radically from small market gardens and mills to heavy, noxious waste industry and large manufacturing companies. Many of these larger industrial concerns lasted over eighty years and were later joined by newer industries such as bronze-casting and biscuit making.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1960s however, and with the

downturn in secondary industry in Sydney, there has been another shift away from the large-scale industries and towards commercial businesses and warehouses.

This chapter will also explore the lives of the area's working people, who were affected by the changes. In the South Sydney Council 2002 *Annual Community Report*, the Green Square project is described as committed to 'taking advantage of redundant industrial land being transformed into sustainable new communities.'<sup>2</sup> But it is important to understand the older community, and the industrial history of Green Square which shaped it. Industry has been the backbone of the area and gives us an understanding of the kinds of people who lived and worked in the area. Industry provided jobs for the people and nurtured very particular types of urban communities. The area was also Sydney's industrial powerhouse and thus played a major role in the city's development. Many of the early industrialists came from overseas, pioneering their companies at a local level, but also developing Sydney as a whole. Thus the main objectives of this chapter are:

- To document the physical changes of industrial development in the Waterloo/Alexandria area and explore why these changes came about
- To explore the lifestyles of workers and their families in the area and to understand the kind of environment in which they worked
- To understand why the industrial history of this area is important as a place of cultural significance
- To explore themes of this industrial and social history as a subject for interpretation.

## 6.2 History

### 6.2.1 Phase 1: Before 1850

From the early nineteenth century the areas of Alexandria and Waterloo were taken up as large estates. As Scott Cumming discusses in Chapter 4, the Waterloo Swamp and Shea's Creek provided excellent water sources for mills that were built on the estates and needed steam power. According to historian Shirley Fitzgerald, it was the access to these water sources that attracted industry to the area right up to the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The development of roads also made the area more accessible. By the 1880s industrial development was still relatively low, but the area was divided up into estates, including the Lachlan and Waterloo Farms, which had mills on them.<sup>4</sup> At this stage, Sydney's industry was concentrated in the city, near the busy wharves and the commercial heart.





Fig. 6.1 Photographer Sam Hood captured this portrait of local Alexandria people who had gathered to watch a fire of the Metters factory in 1934. (Source: Sam Hood, 'Crowds watch over the back fence', Hood Collection, courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

The earlier industries were rural-based and demonstrate the relationship between the growing town and its rural hinterland. The Lachlan and Waterloo Mills represent some of Australia's first industries.<sup>5</sup> They were originally built for grinding wheat but in 1827 they were converted into woollen mills. Wool was a continually expanding industry at this time, strongly supported by Commissioner Bigge who had been sent from Britain to inspect the colony in 1819.<sup>6</sup> As historian Lucy Turnbull observes 'The wool industry was the fuel that ignited the economic boom of the 1830s'. Wool led pastoralists to rapidly invade Aboriginal lands in the interior. But transporting, processing, storing and exporting wool ironically also fostered Sydney's development.<sup>7</sup> Wool shaped the fortunes of the city: when the first economic bust occurred in the 1840s the collapse of the wool industry played a major part in the financial crash. When drought hit wool prices, Sydney's industries took it hard. Many new companies, which had been established in the previous decade, fell apart. The new mills at Waterloo were lucky to survive.

Another industry established before 1850 was Hinchcliff's Waterloo Mills wool washing establishment set up in 1848 on the Waterloo Dam, which had originally been constructed by Simeon Lord for his mill (see also Chapter 4). The Hinchcliff mill was located at what is today the corner of Allen and George streets in Waterloo.<sup>8</sup> Woolwashing was important for the industry because the wool had to be cleaned of the oily lanolin and dirt before it was exported to Britain or sold locally.<sup>9</sup> The area continued to be an important centre for the wool industry into the second half of the century, with continual developments of new technologies. One establishment, Ebsworth's woolscouring works, was well known for its technique of drying the wool with hot air.<sup>10</sup>

#### 6.2.2. Phase 2: 1850–1900

The area around Redfern was developed as a working class residential area in the 1860s, and Alexandria and Waterloo's suburbs grew in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> But the area was not a completely 'industrial landscape' early in this phase. Factories were sparsely spread out around the area. By 1871 the Hinchcliff works were still surrounded by open ground, and the prime industries at this time were still rurally based trades. A Health Board Inspector's 1876 report gave 'the impression of large parts of the area as "semi-rural", that is, without large accumulations of population and with much market gardening'.<sup>12</sup>

More industries were established in the area in the 1880s. They were attracted to Alexandria and Waterloo by the flat landscape, the availability of water, the close proximity to the city and Port Jackson and the railway at Eveleigh.<sup>13</sup> They were also mainly noxious trades which had either been banned from the city or were increasingly unacceptable as Sydney was transforming into a business district rather than an industrial centre.

The *South Sydney Heritage Study* provides a list of industries in the wider South Sydney area (Alexandria, Waterloo, Redfern) in the nineteenth century. It lists forty-three types of industry, including breweries, wool washing, soap works, brickworks, dairy, market gardens, tanneries, boiling down works, glass works and the Sydney Jam Factory (later known to workers as 'The Jammy').<sup>14</sup> At Hinchcliff's wool washing establishment, there were approximately one-hundred hands employed, most of whom lived on the estate, and 'wool was conveyed to Sydney three times a day'.<sup>15</sup> The Goodlet and Smith Brickwork's on Botany Road, Waterloo was established in 1855 and covered four to five acres of land (now the block between Epsom and Cressy Streets), producing bricks for Sydney's rapid expansion.<sup>16</sup> Overall, though, many of these industries

were small-scale companies, employing between ten and fifty men, boys and girls.

The *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Noxious Trades* outlined the type, condition and practices of industries that existed in 1883. Mr James Johnson's Wool-washing and Fellmongering in Waterloo carried out 'the businesses of wool-washing, sorting, pressing, and fellmongering' in buildings of iron and wood 'in fair repair'. The place boasted a steam engine with two boilers, sweating-room and soak-pit, and 'all other requisites for a large business'. It employed on average 'forty men and six boys'. Two dams supplied water, while the excess water drained from the surface into a creek and thence into Shea's Creek, along with all the 'refuse'. The works processed 5,000 bales a year, including the wool taken from skins.<sup>17</sup> The Commissioners were refused entry into the Alderson Tannery so they were unable to inspect it. A map of Waterloo dating from around 1885 showed approximately fourteen identifiable industrial sites, including two breweries, three soap works, a rope works, three wool washes, a dairy, a brickworks, a pottery, a tallow works and a flour mill on the corner of Pitt and Wellington streets.

The *Royal Commission into Noxious Trades* also gave some insight into what it would have been like to live close to such industries. Witnesses complained of the smells from the dyes in the tanning and leather industries and meat in the slaughterhouses prominent in the area. Together with smoke from the chimneys, these stinks created an atmosphere rather different to the Waterloo we know today.<sup>18</sup> As Scott Cumming discusses in Chapter 4, many of these noxious industries were based around the Alexandria Canal and washed their waste straight into it, so the quality of the water would have been appalling.

But these industries also provided much needed employment in Sydney, especially during the hard years of the depression of the 1890s, and again in the 1920s. Fitzgerald observes that, already in the 1860s, 74 per cent of Alexandria's population were blue collar workers—'far exceeding the metropolitan average', with 'not a single doctor, clergyman or lawyer'.<sup>19</sup> Cable and Annable trace the location of working class residents in the areas of Alexandria and Waterloo:

In Alexandria in the 1870s those occupants who are identified as 'gardeners' appear to be resident in the areas of Wyndham Road, Buckland Street, Ricketty Road, Mitchell Road and Garden Street, with dairymen on Mitchell Road, Wyndham Street and Botany Road. In the late 1880s...by contrast the area along Barwon Park Road was devoted to brickworks.<sup>20</sup>

According to some, the living conditions for workers were not very desirable, with many workers living in what were regarded as crowded slums and as squatters (see also Chapter 7).<sup>21</sup>

#### 6.2.3 Phase 3: 1900–1950

In the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the types of industries in the area did not vary to great extent. It was not until the 1920s that new types of industries began to appear in the area. Meanwhile, the market gardens, which had been a huge establishment in the area up to this period, petered out.<sup>22</sup> These new industries were on a different scale. They were heavier, they employed more people, for now workers numbering in the hundreds, and companies began to expand their factories to accommodate higher product demand. The turn of the century brought

Witnesses complained of the smells from the dyes in the tanning and leather industries, and meat in the slaughterhouses prominent in the area. Together with smoke from the chimneys, these stinks created an atmosphere rather different to the Waterloo we know today.

great changes and development for industry, as the manufacturing sector experienced rapid growth and the further extension of heavy industry.<sup>23</sup>

Australian industry benefited greatly during the First World War from the guaranteed sale of wool and beef to the British government for the duration of the war.<sup>24</sup> During the postwar boom of the 1920s, large-scale industries were established and many more factories built. This development brought many new people to Alexandria and Waterloo in search of work, so this period is also marked by the rapid growth of the industrial suburbs. The Depression which hit Australia between 1929–1933 slowed the development of industry down only slightly, and it had recovered a roaring pace at the outbreak of the Second World War. By 1943, the Municipality of Alexandria proudly boasted that it contained 550 factories, and was 'the largest industrial municipality in Australia'.<sup>25</sup> Peter Spearritt, however, estimates the number of factories to be 342 in 1944, employing 22,238 workers; with 'one half of the suburb ... occupied by large industrial concerns'.<sup>26</sup>

The Second World War also had a significant effect on Waterloo and Alexandria. Most industries devoted all their resources to the war effort, suspending their own production to take up the manufacture of rifle butts and stocks or other wartime products, depending on their plant and equipment. Some companies managed to continue to make their own products alongside their war effort work. In order to do their bit, Felt & Textiles of Australia Pty. Ltd. had to abandon a section of their activities and were forced to compromise on the quality of their products for the duration of the war.<sup>27</sup> Slazengers (Australia) Pty. Limited, a sporting goods company is a good example of the kind of sacrifice and effort that was made by industries in the war (though the contracts could also be lucrative). They 'sought and obtained one of the earliest contracts for pre-fabricated huts', while also making rifle furniture as well as sporting equipment to encourage health and fitness in the armed forces.<sup>28</sup>

While the majority of working people who lived in the area laboured in its factories, 'only one-tenth of the factory labour force lived in the area'.<sup>29</sup> This means that industry was drawing huge numbers to work each day from outside the area. One factory that prided itself in employment of local people was Hadfields Steel Works Limited, where many of the five hundred employees in 1943 were locals.<sup>30</sup> The size of industries grew at a considerable rate at this time and average employee numbers grew to between two and four hundred. Metters Limited employed a massive 2,500 staff.

#### 6.2.4 Phase 4: 1950–2000

After 1950 the level of industry in the areas of Waterloo and Alexandria reached its zenith, but that decade also marked a great turning point. Post-war expansion was substantial and rapid, as the earlier boom period had been, but new industries and expanding old ones increasingly looked to the relatively cheap and open sites on the city's new fringes in the west and southwest, where suburban growth was booming. 'Between 1950 and 1955...factories in New South Wales increased by 30 per cent' observes Turnbull. However, 'in the second half of the 1950s, the inner-city suburbs lost nearly 400 factories, and this trend has persisted to the present day'.<sup>31</sup> Since the 1960s the sites that were once used for heavy industry have been converted into offices, storage spaces and showrooms.

The general decline of secondary industry from the 1970s was a result of a combination of factors, including shrinking markets, the removal of tariff protection by governments, industry restructuring and increased mechanisation.<sup>32</sup> Turnbull traces the impacts:

Many suburbs that had been the heartland of early postwar growth and industrialisation were hard hit from the 1970s. Motor vehicle plants in inner-city Waterloo and Pagewood closed, as did many smaller factories and workshops. The manufacturing industry accounted for only 17 per cent of the workforce in 1986, down from 31 per cent in 1971.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of the drop in secondary industry, blue-collar employment also declined, for 'between 1972 and 1991, the number of people in Sydney employed in manufacturing shrank from 385,000 to 219,000, or by 43 per cent, while the population of Sydney has grown by over a third'.<sup>35</sup>

Why was there such a dramatic decline in the manufacturing industry in the Green Square area from the 1970s? Within the broader patterns of change, there are a number of reasons. Land values in the area increased, inducing many companies to move further west in search of cheaper rent. The development of heavy industry and the movement of the major container industries from Port Jackson to Port Botany, together with the expansion of the airport, meant that the industries in Botany overtook the existing industry in Alexandria.<sup>36</sup> Further mechanisation and the use of production lines meant that many industries required far fewer and less skilled workers, and so many blue-collar jobs were lost. A large proportion of the working class community moved away as a result.

Despite all this, and the rise in commercial businesses and warehouses in the area, the large proportion of the industry that was left in Alexandria and Waterloo was still manufacturing and this area remained the Central Industrial Area.<sup>37</sup> According to the South Sydney Council 1984 *Local Environmental Study*, the Alexandria area continued to be attractive to new industries. Manufacturing, wholesaling, transport and storage command the industrial structure of the area in that order when viewed by the amount of floor space used. In terms of employment figures, public administration and defence rank higher than transport and storage.<sup>38</sup>

What are the prime industries that dominate the area today? As mentioned above, manufacturing still makes up a high percentage of the land use. Other uses include 'research and development, warehousing, freight handling and office related activities'.<sup>39</sup> Technological advance, which has changed the environment of the Central Business District to a service based

centre, has also influenced the change in industry in South Sydney. Now computer services, stationary suppliers and couriers are the prominent businesses serving the city; gone are the odorous days of wool-washing and fell-mongering, tied to rural industries. The large amount of warehouse space seen in the Green Square area today, is a result of the need for space in the distribution of locally manufactured products.<sup>40</sup>

#### 6.2.5 Summary

So industry in Alexandria and Waterloo has come a long way since the early nineteenth century. The first industries to appear, grain mills and wool-washing, were surrounded by pastures, sandhills and swamps and only accessible by horse and dray, or on foot, over a bumpy dirt road. Then the noxious trades came out of the city and set up in amongst the market gardeners. There were still very small numbers of residents in the area at this time, with larger residential areas in Redfern, Newtown and the city. At the end of the nineteenth century the industries grew and the noxious trades were joined by manufacturers such as joiners, founders and engineers. Market gardening was overtaken by the secondary industries, and improved roads and transport meant goods could be delivered to the ports much faster. The suburbs began to grow in tandem: Rosebery was designed as a model suburb and small patches of housing sprang up in Alexandria and Waterloo as well. During the two world wars and in their aftermaths the area expanded even further into large-scale industry and planned factories. After mechanisation and expansion had reached its zenith the area's industrial profile changed again. This time it was the expansion of the city of Sydney and the push for industrial decentralisation that propelled the movement of the heavy industries away from South Sydney. Technological change and the expansion of service industries brought a different kind of manufacturing industry to the area. But the sorts of people who had ridden the wave of industrial success in the first half of the twentieth century no longer have the skills that are needed in the area. They are being forced to look elsewhere for work, so many are leaving altogether.

#### 6.3 Life for Green Square's working people

What is history without people to write it and what is industry without people to run it? Working people in Alexandria and Waterloo formed strong communities in what were often unpleasant environments. As other chapters in this collection also show, they established schools for their children, the lively pursuits of popular culture and lifelong friendships formed through work and social groups. Migrants from all over the world have also introduced their cultures and religions to the area.

In the earlier industries the employment figures were quite small and the owners of the industries often employed children in their factories, alongside the men. Mr George Watson's Tanning and Japanning Works in Alexandria employed 'on an average fifteen men, two boys, and three girls'.<sup>41</sup> Shirley Fitzgerald's pioneering *Rising Damp* details the unpleasant, dangerous and difficult conditions for workers in such nineteenth century industries, when there were no regulations protecting them, and 'the majority of workers were either not organised at all, or met with overwhelming resistance'. Unskilled workers, including women and children, were the most vulnerable, sometimes working fourteen hours a day at dirty, arduous jobs for meagre wages.<sup>42</sup>

Many of the accounts concerning workers' conditions in the early twentieth century were written by the owners them-

**“He, we, well they lined up for the dole and that sort of thing and went to the Red Cross. Our clothes, and our shoes, and our Christmas things at Christmas time...we had good food because you could buy food cheap...”**

elves, and they often prided themselves in being paternalistic and kind to their employees. The official history of Akubra Hats tells us:

Staff numbers at the hat company Akubra Hats had grown enormously and by the 1920s the company employed hundreds of people. They were good and competent workers and to Stephen [the owner] they were as his own family...Certainly, he and Ada had four children but the company of employees was their wider family and they were at one with it.<sup>43</sup>

This of course shows the image that the factory owners wanted to portray. Did these factory owners really consider their workers like family? What were working conditions like in factories like this? Writer Dorothy Hewitt worked in the Alexandria Spinning Mills in the 1950s 'a woollen mill...that no sensible working class girl would have been seen dead in, if she could help it'. Hewitt used her experience there to write *Bobbin Up*, a novel tracing the lives, predicaments and hopes of women workers at the mill. When one of the characters, Jeannie, arrives for work she moves:

... from sunlight and air into a mill which was dark and hot as hell. The steam hissed out of the pipes, giving the atmosphere that wet, muggy heat they said was essential for working the wool. Clanking machinery, the smell of wool and grease, the overalled women wiping sweaty hands over their hair, hit her hard, as it always did when she came in out of the morning sunlight.

*Bobbin Up* also portrays the long, hard hours of work, the power relations of workers and supervisors in all their pettiness, the meanness of managerial policies, yet also the humour, stoicism and mutual care of the women who worked there.<sup>44</sup>

Interviews by historian Sue Rosen with residents in the area of Alexandria in 1993, help to shine light on the real experiences of the working class in the industries surrounding Green Square. Betty Moulds was born in 1925, she remembers her father collecting coal for the factories and driving it around in his horse and cart, and the hard times her family experienced during the Depression, when her father lost his job:

He, we, well they lined up for the dole and that sort of thing and went to the Red Cross. Our clothes, and our shoes, and our Christmas things at Christmas time...we had good food because you could buy food cheap...My father drank, but he made sure he had his money for his noggin of beer...Mum always found our thruppence to go to the picture show.<sup>45</sup>

Like other interviewees, Betty Moulds also spoke of the kinds of smells that she could remember – the smell of boiling meat and hops fumes from the brewery, and, more surprisingly, the smell of cut grass at the park that used to make her sick.<sup>46</sup>

Sydney Fennell remembered the boot factory that his father worked in and the poverty of the Depression years, 'we didn't have anything, you know, and nobody had anything, all you had was friends, and they had nothing'.<sup>47</sup> He describes the high levels of industry in the area and the number of accidents that occurred among workers, speaking about them as if they were a common occurrence.

Kathy Ingram (born 1945) and Esosa Equaibor (born 1970) were interviewed about their experiences of living in this industrial community in different periods. Kathy's parents had separated in 1956 and her mother had brought her to Zetland to live with her grandmother. She remembers her parents as having worked their whole lives, her mother was a machinist and her father worked in the coalmines in Helensburgh. Here we may note the importance of women's labour to industrial development. Women made up a large proportion of the twentieth century factory workers partly because of their cheap labour—they were paid only around half of men's wages. Larger numbers of women entered the workforce as a result of the need for their labour and skills during the Second World War, while the men were fighting. When the men came back, many of women stayed at work. Kathy herself describes why she went to work in a factory instead of continuing her education:

I realised that if I would have stayed there, I would have got my intermediate certificate, and I would have went on to get a better job, even though I could have went to work in an office, but I didn't want to, because all me friends worked in the factory.<sup>48</sup>

People like Kathy chose work in the factories over higher status office work because of loyalty and close ties with friends of the same background and class. In contrast to the dire environmental descriptions, poverty and hard and difficult jobs, many people describe their communities warmly, as a good life for them and one they were content to live.

Rosen's interview with Esosa Equaibor shows that the environment of Alexandria, Waterloo and Zetland changed markedly. Her parent's jobs reflect the changing nature of industry, for her father started out in the tobacco industry and then moved to surveying and finally went to university. University is not a place that people like Betty Mould's parents would have even considered. Esosa's mother does secretarial work. She says the kinds of jobs available around the area include positions as shops assistants, clerks and hairdressers. She describes how most of the factories have closed down to make room for residential development.

It is, however, hard to determine from the questions asked by Rosen what kind of feelings people experienced as they watched the industries and the old landscapes change. Are the older residents sad as they watch the old industrial character of the area become gentrified? The residents interviewed in Margo Beasley's *Everyone Knew Everyone* express their love and attachment for the area. They speak of change, but recognise that the people who have stayed have kept the spirit of the industrial past, despite the commercial change. Beasley writes of publican Delene Hagan:

Although many of Delene's customers are 'still fiercely proud of living in Zetland', she says an increasing proportion of her clientele reflects the growing commercial orientation of the area rather than its industrial past. 'The tanneries and the glassworks...the tram depot, the Navy Stores, all those things, they've all gone', Delene says, but she still has a solid core of about 60 locals.<sup>49</sup>

“My father drank, but he made sure he had his money for his noggin of beer...Mum always found out thruppence to go to the picture show.”

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of the redevelopment of Green Square is what the future holds for these working class locals in a continually and rapidly developing area.

This issue of reconciling the older communities with the new developments and population loomed large among the many questions facing planning authorities dealing with the future of the Green Square area. Some measures taken to deal with this include focusing on redevelopment of residential areas as well as industrial; encouraging industries to provide jobs for the locals; and ensuring that any hazardous industries do not encroach into residential areas.<sup>50</sup>

The Green Square Development Project must provide a minimum amount of affordable housing for lower-income households. However, it seems unlikely that this will be sufficient to provide continuity with the older community, or the desired economically and socially diverse population. Many long term residents continue to be concerned about the effects that new developments on the old sites will have on the residential areas around them. The newer industries, together with residential developments, are pushing up the value of land in the area and, despite government help, it is impossible for many to afford to stay. Other problems included the poor level of mobility for residents in the area, due to pressures of industry and related traffic problems.<sup>51</sup> The efforts made by companies to employ local people, who have not had the opportunity to learn new skills, have also been minimal.

#### 6.4 Statement of cultural significance

The Green Square area has a long and powerful industrial history which radically reshaped the local environment, as well as attracting and nurturing strong local communities. The area played an important role in the expansion of Sydney and was significant in Australia's industrial development. It also demonstrates how industry changed over time and in response to the rise and fall of rural industries, urban development and technology. But perhaps most important in the present day, and for the future, are the still-extant communities of the area. Margo Beasley expresses this succinctly:

In earlier years working class people were compelled to live within the harsh environment of these suburbs because their livelihoods depended on it. But this compulsion resulted in an extraordinarily close network of people who were related to each other, or became close friends, and cared for one another over generations.<sup>52</sup>

At this time of transition, it is essential that this entwined industrial and community history be recognised rather than dismissed. It is important to incorporate the past into this future, for the sake of both the existing communities and the people who are moving in. A genuine understanding of the past can foster a deeper engagement with the place and hopefully plant that attachment, which has given the locals before them so much contentment and a sense of belonging.

#### 6.5 Ideas for interpretation

These days industry commonly brings to mind smog, bad smells, ugliness, dirt and poverty. While these negative factors should not be forgotten, interpretation of this aspect of Green Square's history could also remember a time when the area was an industrial powerhouse, and when industry was a matter of pride, rather than condemnation. As industry was the livelihood of people here (and from other parts of Sydney) and the major factor which brought the communities to the area, it is a suitable and important theme for representation. Interpretation could also break with stereotypical images and present more positive stories. The rich collections of oral histories available, reveal the kinds of communities that were formed in this area. There is strong evidence for great human satisfactions of the kind everyone desires: pleasure, contentment, love and friendship. Public interpretation or art work might convey these themes in such a way as to both educate new arrivals about the past, and welcome them into the community.

# Chapter 7

# Waterloo: Whose fault were the slums? The power of ideas that shaped the suburb

Jeff Fairman

## 7.1. Introduction

Over the past 150 years the area that now encompasses the suburbs of Waterloo, Zetland, Alexandria and Rosebery has changed radically. At first the natural environment was a barrier to development, but the growing suburbs eventually subsumed the natural swamplands and rivers, and industries were established atop the Waterloo swamp and Shea's creek. This was Sydney's first true industrial area, and demand for housing, created both by the growth of industry and by Sydney's phenomenal population growth overall, saw the landscape dramatically altered. Sandy hills on the high ground surrounding Mount Lachlan gave way to new streets, rows of terrace houses, small workers' cottages, shops and churches. Beginning in earnest in the late 1870s, housing development was sudden, it seemed to occur all at once, as parcels of land owned by the Cooper estate were subdivided and sold off for housing.

In Waterloo, this process of development was unplanned, chaotic and at times inequitable. There was money to be made from the sale of land to skilled workers who had enough to spend; yet there were also profits in renting to those unskilled workers' who would never buy their own house. Sydney has been called the 'Accidental City', and Waterloo's growth as a suburb certainly fits this description—it took a long time for anything resembling real planning to occur there and the consequences were obvious. As a result of poor sanitary conditions—lack of sewerage, clean water and drainage—Waterloo had some of the highest rates of mortality and reputedly the highest infant mortality in Sydney. Many people were poor, worked long hours in the factories producing glass, milling flour, tanning or making boots, while those who possessed a trade, such as masons, leather workers, engineers and builders, lived a relatively comfortable life. The Rosebery model industrial suburb, begun in 1912 was, by contrast, a planned public housing initiative. Like Dacey Gardens (now Daceyville) it was one of the first planned suburbs in Sydney.

Urban planning, when it did come, had a major impact on Waterloo and surrounds, and was better known as 'slum clearance'. Urban renewal, the policy adopted in Waterloo, probably came as a shock when the first buildings were demolished in the 1940s. This practice continued into the 1970s, when public protest forced a change of policy in regard to the 'slums'.

Perhaps the most important question that can be asked from this history of Waterloo is who created the slums? Who is responsible for them? I will argue that the slums need to be considered in the light of both the ideas and circumstances that helped create them and the people who lived in them. Many observers have looked unfavourably on the slum-dwellers as the makers of their own misery, but as other his-

torians have shown, attention should also focus on the factors that allowed slums to develop, including poor planning and *laissez-faire* government.

The changes that Green Square now faces are amongst some of the greatest challenges in the history of the area. Local people witnessed 'beautiful old houses' knocked down to make way for industry in the area, but now these industrial buildings in turn are being demolished to make way for new housing.<sup>2</sup> As Susannah Frith discusses in Chapter 6, there is still a connection to place, a sense of belonging closely tied with housing and neighbourhood, and a sense of community in the Green Square area. But the place is changing, as older industry moves out, and more and more of these places are replaced by higher density housing.

## 7.2. Before the suburbs and the first subdivisions

### 7.2.1 Early European use of the land

The land that today comprises Waterloo was first granted to John Thomas Campbell, who received a grant of 185 acres in 1825, and called Mount Lachlan Estate. This grant roughly correlates with the area bounded by the current suburb of Waterloo. William Hutchinson had received a much larger grant of 1400 acres in 1823, the 'Waterloo Estate' which accords generally with the suburbs of Zetland, Alexandria and Rosebery. At the time of the first grants, however, this area of land was remote from the growing City of Sydney, the land was relatively untouched by European settlement, and was considered a wilderness and a wasteland. The Botany Road, linking Botany Bay with Sydney, passed through and would have been the only major sign of European habitation, besides a sprinkling of small industries that dotted the edge of the swamps.

### 7.2.2 The natural environment

The natural environment played an important role in shaping the development of housing, industry and infrastructure in the area. As Jason Doran and Scott Cummings show (Chapters 3 and 4), the land itself was a diverse wetland, comprising lowland, swamps and streams, along with 'undulating land, sandy soil covered with low scrub'.<sup>3</sup> The area was important as an urban water supply, and also irrigated numerous market gardens producing vegetables for the city. Housing development was at first limited to the high ground surrounding the Waterloo swamp, the Waterloo Dam and Shea's Creek. The environment naturally impeded growth of industry and housing as development spread south, until the swamp lands were drained and eventually built over. The location of Mt Carmel Catholic church, one of the oldest buildings in Waterloo, reflects this use of the high ground as a preferred site for establishing a town.

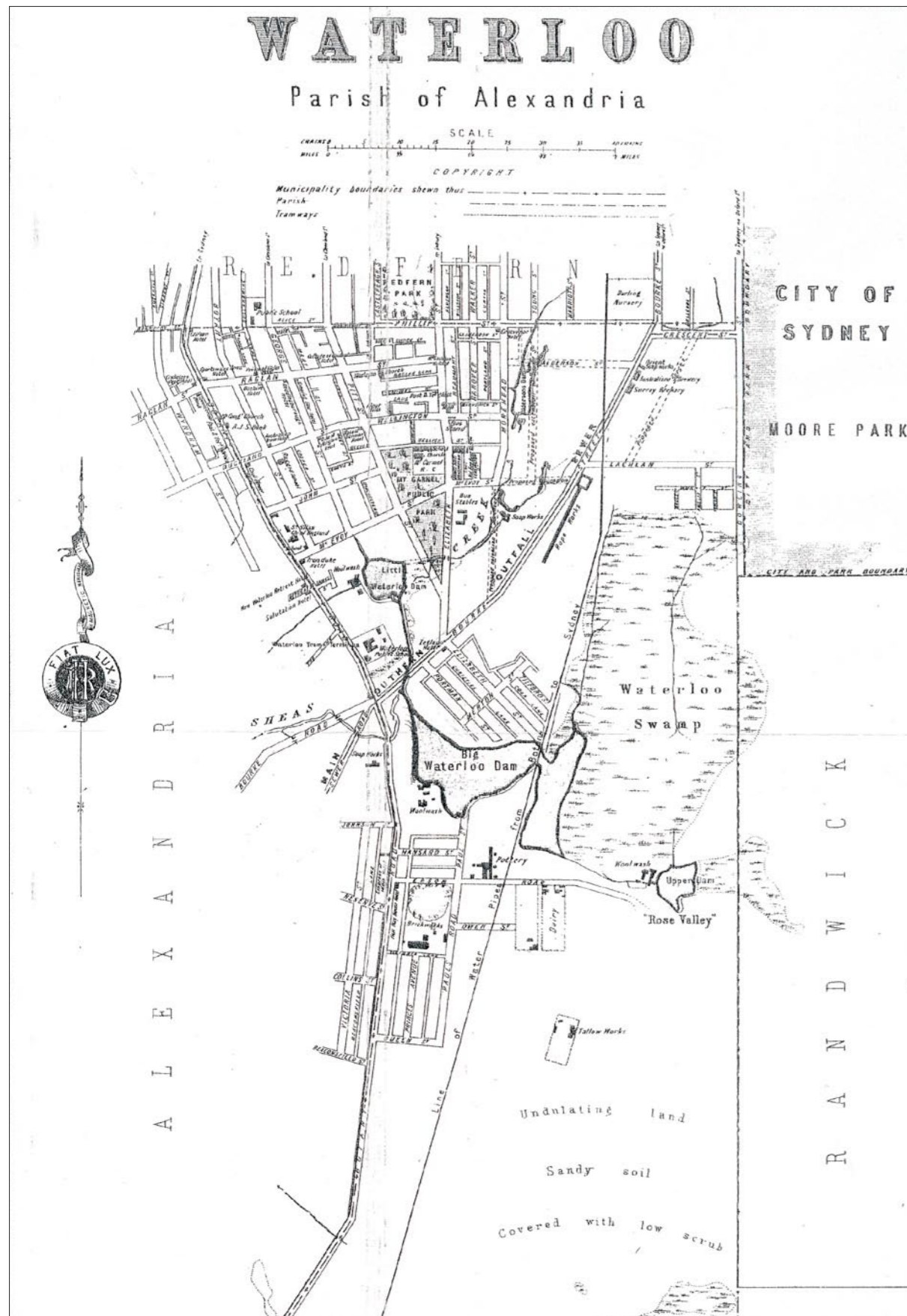


Fig. 7.1 Lithographed map of Waterloo, Parish of Alexandria, County of Cumberland, c1885, from a collection of Sydney suburban maps published by Higinbotham and Robinson. (Source: ML ref. F981.1/H, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

The natural watercourses were essential for use in many industries, including the numerous tanneries, wool washes, soap factories, glassmakers and brewers.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, at a time of little regulation regarding either public health or industrial pollution, these uses often resulted in public health issues, and the degradation of the water supply. The Alexandra Canal was one such waterway: until recently it was considered one of Sydney's most polluted waterways.<sup>5</sup>

Daniel Cooper, a prominent businessman, acquired both the Mount Lachlan and Waterloo Estates in 1829 and 1825 respectively. The Cooper family held this vast area right up until the beginning of World War One.<sup>6</sup> Subdivision in the area was largely a result of the release and sale of small parcels of these Cooper Estates, from the 1850s up until 1914. Thus the appearance of subdivision was contingent upon the Coopers' own financial situation, the price of land, and the economy.<sup>7</sup>

### 7.2.3 The first subdivision

The first recorded subdivision occurred in 1853, when allotments 'ranging from 20 feet to 60 feet frontage' were offered.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, to date there is no detail of exactly where in Waterloo this was located. However, likely places for the earliest subdivision were along Wellington and Raglan Streets, where some of the oldest residential buildings in Waterloo, dating from the late 1870s, can be found. Interestingly, Mt Carmel (Catholic) and Mt Lachlan (now Uniting) churches are the oldest surviving buildings still standing in Waterloo. The land for both of these was granted by Daniel Cooper—first Mt Carmel in 1859, and then Mt Lachlan in 1860.<sup>9</sup> The lure of employment in industries such as those established by Daniel Cooper attracted people to the area as early as 1815, but the major boom in population occurred fifty years later, firstly in Redfern in the 1860s, and in the following decades in Waterloo and Alexandria.

Waterloo was incorporated as a borough in May 1860, after successfully petitioning for independence from the borough of Redfern, established just one year earlier.<sup>10</sup> Until the Town Hall was completed in 1882, the Council met in a room attached to Quin's Bakery.<sup>11</sup> Subdivision prior to 1880 was localised around the area bounded by Wellington, Raglan and Elizabeth Streets, which marked the heart of the town. It seems that even at this early stage of development, much of the growth was based on venture capital. It is likely that the first housing in the area was built by speculative investors, who thus played a key role in providing housing in these outer suburbs of Sydney.<sup>12</sup> In Wellington Street, for example, as Susan O'Reilly also discusses in Chapter 13, 'virtually every dwelling in the Street was constructed by James Schimmel in the late 1870s', and this was not an unusual achievement.<sup>13</sup> The extraordinary growth in Sydney's population in the boom years provided excellent opportunity for profits for those with capital to invest, as there was an enormous demand for housing. Often, though, this housing was of substandard quality to maximise profit margins.

The Australian colonies were marketed as a 'worker's paradise' to prospective immigrants in Britain, and those who migrated expected a land of prosperity, decent housing and work for all.<sup>14</sup> But this was far from reality in Waterloo, and indeed in many parts of Sydney. As we shall see, regulation of housing development was rare, while exploitation was common. The severe problems really came to a head during the 'boom era' of the 1880s and the bust of the 1890s.

### 7.3 Thirty years of change, 1880–1910

Throughout the 1870s, Sydney's suburban population experienced a remarkable period of growth culminating in the 1880s, when, for the first time, the suburban population exceeded that of the city wards. With a population that had grown from 135,000 in 1871 to 383,283 by 1891, Sydney had experienced astounding growth in a short time, but this increase was greatest in suburbs such as Redfern, Paddington, and Balmain.<sup>15</sup> While the City had previously been the most crowded place in Sydney, this was no longer the case by 1891. By then many of the fringe working-class suburbs, including Waterloo, were just as crowded. House construction and subdivision peaked there in the 1880s.

#### 7.3.1 Growth of the suburb

Subdivision in the 1880s occurred south of the established town of Waterloo, following the lines of the major streets—Bourke and Botany Streets and down Elizabeth Street. Subdivided lands were aimed at 'Working men, Artisans, Mechanics' alike.<sup>16</sup> Land closer to the Waterloo swamp and Dam was the first to be offered in the 1880s, such as the Zetland Estate in Portman and Merton Streets, which was located just off Bourke Street and near the site of the proposed Green Square Town Centre.<sup>17</sup> The Zetland Estate allotments were offered for sale on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1885, and comprised 289 allotments, all roughly 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, the long, narrow shape of terraced housing.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the houses built on these site were primarily terraces, built in Victorian Italianate style, though some variations can be found. The other style of housing still extant in this area is the small free-standing workers' cottage, which tends to be single storey, and constructed from timber.

Subdivision was rarely successful on the first sale, and allotments were often offered for sale over a number of years. In Waterloo, land sales tended to occur in clusters (such as between 1880 and 1890, in 1900 and then between 1910 and 1916). The Zetland Estate is an example of this pattern, as the sale of land surrounding Bourke, Botany and Elizabeth Streets continued with another sale in 1903 and again in 1911. Still further south, the Victoria Estate subdivision, near Epsom and Hansard Streets, was offered for sale in 1912.<sup>19</sup>

The presence of both terrace and cottage style housing suggests that there were two different classes of workers in the area. Those who lived in the more substantial and elaborate terraces tended to be artisans or skilled workers, while the workers' cottages were occupied, primarily, by unskilled labourers and factory workers. The *Sands Sydney Directory* for 1890 reveals that ninety per cent of those people living in Portman Street had trades, and included painters, stonemasons, an engineer, boot makers, builders, and grocers. In Raglan Street *Sands* lists a jeweller at 22 Raglan Street, an ironmonger, bricklayers, dairy keepers, florists and butchers. While these occupations by today's standards might seem laborious and not of particularly high status, it should be noted that these were skilled trades, and that therefore these people were likely to have enjoyed leisure time (those who worked the eight hour day at least) and regular and partly disposable incomes.<sup>20</sup>

What was life like for these skilled labourers? Certainly there was a degree of material wealth as artisans earned more money than unskilled workers, but it was also the regularity of work that a skilled worker could expect which allowed the improvement of material life and comfort. However, there was also a degree of pressure to aspire to more middle class

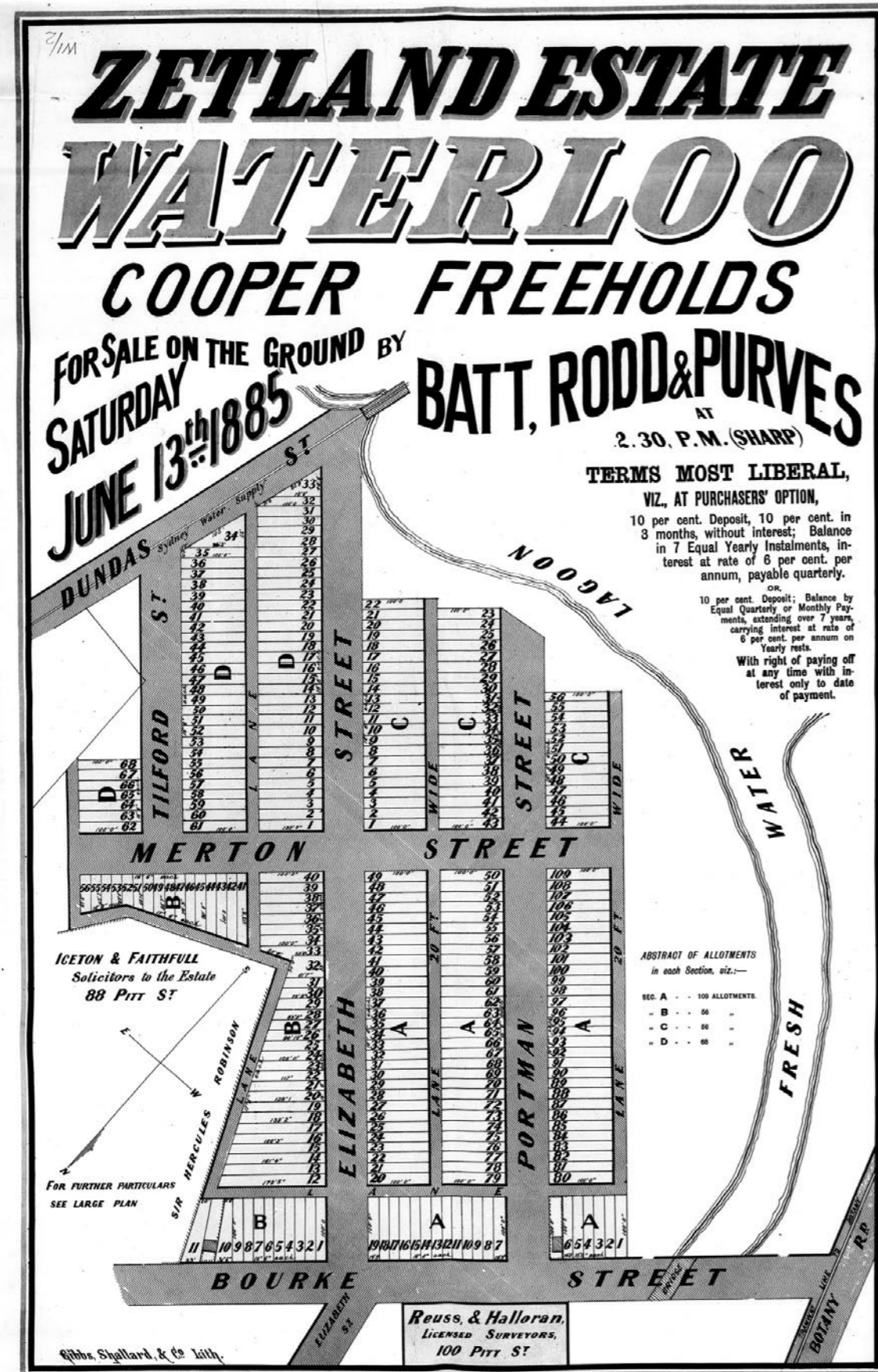


Fig. 7.2 Reuss and Halloran, Subdivision Plan of Waterloo, 1885, showing pattern and extent of subdivision in the suburb. (Source: ML ref. SP W4/2, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

lifestyle, in order to demonstrate the attainment of civility and respectability. This included accumulating material possessions, most of which we are familiar with today: owning the right house, furniture, having sets of fine china, and wearing the right clothing.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, the industrialisation of Waterloo and Alexandria provided some people with a means of living a better life. If you were a skilled worker, the prospects of getting a skilled job in a factory and buying cheap land or a cheap house in Waterloo or Alexandria in the 1880s or 90s were good. However, as Shirley Fitzgerald argues, these prospects and securities were also beginning to be eroded in this period through mechanisation and the introduction of assembly lines in factories.<sup>22</sup>

There is another side to this story, that of the unskilled labourers, for Waterloo, Redfern and Alexandria were also synonymous with poverty and low socio-economic status.<sup>23</sup> *Sands Sydney Directory* only lists occupations for about half of the residents in Waterloo. For the whole of Waterloo, the proportion of skilled artisans was about fifty per cent, those in professional or commercial callings made up ten per cent, the unskilled twenty per cent and petty bourgeois or clerical occupations twenty per cent.<sup>24</sup> As discussed above, in Merton and Portman Streets, this figure was higher, with about ninety per cent of those living in these Streets having skilled occupations. However, *Sands Sydney Directory* lists no occupation at all for many of the streets that surround Mt Carmel church, and in some of the older precincts of Waterloo. Hansard, Moorehead, McEvoy, Kellick and Kensington Streets are most likely streets where unskilled workers lived.

Life for these people was most definitely harder than for skilled workers; working conditions were very poor, pay was low and hours were often extremely long. In slow times workers were laid off and lost their incomes altogether. Work could often be life-threatening, especially in factories and manufacturing like those of Waterloo and Alexandria. The story of the famous Redfern 'rabbit-ohs', who caught and sold rabbit as a cheap source of meat, is a good example of how people of this class got by in times of unemployment.<sup>25</sup>

**7.3.2 Health in the suburbs**

In 1876 a committee of the Sydney Health Board was established to report on 'crowded dwellings and areas', primarily in the western area of the City, but also in the other problem areas of Waterloo, Redfern, Alexandria and The Glebe. This report found the condition of housing in these areas to be substandard. The typical slum area consisted of poorly constructed housing, narrow lanes which separated rows of terraces facing each other across a courtyard as narrow as four feet (approx. 1.2 metres). Ventilation was achieved from the front of such houses only, and the front courtyard also contained privies and refuse from the buildings.<sup>26</sup> Although most of Waterloo did not have the same population density as parts of the City, its poor quality housing, lack of facilities and services were very similar to conditions in the western region of the City.

As a result of this enquiry into housing, the *City of Sydney Improvement Act* was passed in 1879, which was an attempt, however dubious, to improve the quality of housing in the City. The suburban municipalities which included Redfern,



Fig. 7.3 'A terrace in Bourke Street', date unknown, c1885. This is the sort of substantial housing which artisans and skilled workers could have occupied in Waterloo. (Source: ML ref GPO I frame 31148, courtesy Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of New South Wales.)

Alexandria and Waterloo, however, were under no such obligation to conform with the City of Sydney Act. Even by 1890 it was noted that no building regulations existed in the suburbs. Sewerage construction had not begun, even though the 1867 *Municipalities Act* had empowered councils to do so; cesspits were still common and even the pan system of sewage collection had not been established.<sup>27</sup> This contributed to making life in the suburbs more difficult than in the City. It is fascinating that, at a time of supposedly increased regulation by the state and local governments, in places like Waterloo, authorities failed to properly regulate housing, and neglected basic public health issues, such as sewerage and clean water. It is clear that the *laissez-faire* approach to City and suburban development at the time of major subdivision and housing development helped create these exceedingly poor conditions. In this light, we can see the irony of attempts to clean up 'slum' areas in Waterloo in later decades, as a means of fixing what had been allowed to occur through poor regulation in the first place.

The impact of this neglect can be read in mortality figures. While the death rate in London during epidemics of typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea in 1864 was 27 per 1,000 people, the death rate in Sydney in 1874 was far worse. During an epidemic of measles and scarlet fever Sydney reached a death rate of 32 per 1000, and in Waterloo and Alexandria, this figure was made worse still by an infant mortality rate which contemporary sources reported as 46 per cent of all births.<sup>28</sup> Life in the industrial outskirts of Sydney was very hard, and high mortality rates point to exceptionally unsanitary conditions in the Waterloo area. (These conditions were not localised to Waterloo, however. The City also suffered from the same unsanitary conditions, while the outer suburbs, the domicile of the middle class, had similar figures in regard to infant mortality).

The high rate of infant mortality might be attributed to a lack of adequate hospital facilities; perhaps malnutrition and poverty played a part. As Fitzgerald points out, Alexandria had no doctors at all.<sup>29</sup> But these were secondary to poor sanitary conditions, which contaminated water and heightened the risks of epidemics such as cholera and typhoid. By contrast, the benefits of sewerage, drainage and fresh water supplies, when and where they came, were dramatic. In Sydney, after extensive sewer extensions in the late 1880s and the completion of the new Nepean water supply scheme, the death rate dropped from 19 per 1000 to 15.2—most of this figure in infant mortality.<sup>30</sup> But lack of basic urban services in Waterloo continued to be the great scourge of the suburb.

So, while Waterloo was quickly painted with the 'slum' brush, it is also clear that the people themselves were disregarded, they were unimportant, out of sight. Or they were blamed for the apparent squalor in which they lived—as if it were somehow their fault, because of the type of people that they were. In one sense these people were also victims of the wider problems of the delayed development of infrastructure in the city as a whole. The most basic and fundamental needs were ignored, unfunded or considered not feasible for decades; such problems were of course magnified at the City's fringes.

### 7.3.3 Suburban planning in the 1880s

While City planning and infrastructure left a lot to be desired, planning of the suburban areas was by comparison dismal. Legislation forced industries out of the City, and so they moved to places like Waterloo and Alexandria. Tougher

building regulations in the City meant that it was no longer as affordable to build there, either. However, the new building codes, requirements for sewerage, water closets or fresh water still did not apply in Waterloo when suburban and industrial development was underway in the 1870s and into the 1880s.

Construction in Waterloo was therefore cheaper and less stringent than in the City Municipality and the mix of housing was being established, in many cases, alongside industry. Evidence of this can be seen in some of the twisted streets of Waterloo where the original street was extended to meet another main road. Lachlan Street, for example, does not quite meet up with McEvoy, and Phillip Street joins Bourke and Crescent at an acute angle. Unsuccessful subdivisions led to the establishment of industries on surrounding areas, which in turn forced alterations to the original plans for roads and houses. This is really indicative of the lack of overall planning in this period of land sales and suburbanisation. It was a totally unregulated market in which almost any building could be constructed without providing water, sewerage, gas, proper drainage or roads. If the land could be acquired, then it could be subdivided and sold.

By 1890, Waterloo and Alexandria had received many of the more undesirable, polluting, smelly and noxious industries, which had been legislated out of both the City and more established suburbs, such as Redfern. While Redfern had been built out and its low-lying areas drained, the Waterloo area was still in a state of transition.<sup>31</sup> A walk through the area in 1890 would reveal new housing from recent subdivision, terraces and 'many small, ill-constructed cottages, most of them wooden.'<sup>32</sup> New factories had grown up alongside existing industries such as dairies, market gardens and brickworks. And there were still spaces in which nothing had been built at all: sand hills, swamps and vegetation.

The growth that took place in Waterloo over 30 years after 1870 was staggering. Waterloo was transformed from a small fringe suburb of Sydney, with some small industry mixed with market gardens, dairies and mills, to a suburb where larger scale industry, rows of terrace housing and areas of workers' cottages now filled the landscape. Large scale industry would continue to grow—the area had a dozen industries in 1910; by 1914 there were over 100.<sup>33</sup> The vast increase in Sydney's population generally, coupled with the prospect of employment, drew people to Waterloo and fuelled the housing boom. But not everyone gained from the growth of the suburb. An elite class of property investors gained from sale of the land, while factories-owners made small fortunes from manufacturing. Some artisans would no doubt have been able to purchase their own handsome brick and stucco houses in Waterloo, but there were also many unskilled labourers who rented mean wooden cottages, and existed at subsistence level.<sup>34</sup>

### 7.4 'Housing for everyone': public housing, slum clearance and development 'along modern lines'

From the middle of the nineteenth century, middle class attitudes towards the City started to change, and their exodus to the new outer suburbs, especially with the extension of tram and train services, is often seen as a catalyst for the creation of the slums. The older parts of the City they abandoned fell into disrepair and disrepute.<sup>35</sup> However, the evidence gained from Waterloo, a suburb that was developed after the early estate holders had 'left', suggests that lack of planning and building regulation and failure to provide amenities, were the real culprits behind creation of slums, rather than the socio-

economic background or moral status of residents. Places like Waterloo need to be interpreted in the light of such factors: the extent to which they were created by the people who lived in them must be weighed against the circumstances which were imposed and allowed by those with power, authority and wealth.

By the late nineteenth century, though, poor housing was of increasing concern for authorities and governments. The two responses—slum clearance and public housing—would both shape Waterloo in the twentieth century.

#### 7.4.1 The evolution of public housing

While urban services in the city were improving in the 1880s and 1890s, much of the housing in the older urban locales, such as the Rocks, Woolloomooloo and Redfern was in disrepair and overcrowded.<sup>36</sup> Along with the Rocks, Redfern was the most densely populated in the 1880s and 1890s, and also experienced the greatest growth rate in Sydney during this time.<sup>37</sup> The outbreak of Plague in 1900 is often seen as evidence for the squalid conditions of urban Sydney. It was certainly used by the State government as justification for slum clearance in and around Miller's Point and the Rocks and, as Melita Rogowsky discusses in Chapter 12, was used as a justification for the demolition of Chinese homes in Alexandria, after an outbreak of plague in 1902.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas 'slums' were once simply ignored, by 1900, and with the election of a Labor government, ideas of 'development along modern lines' were increasingly adopted.<sup>39</sup> This meant that slum areas were to be identified, knocked down and ideally, if not often actually, replaced by modern forms of public housing. In response to the need for more housing at a cheaper price, and the constant threat of disease and unsani-



Fig. 7.6 Aerial view of the Rosebery Model Estate in 1924, showing the progress of building and the gaps still evident, as well as the remaining natural environment in this period, particularly the sandy nature of the soils. (Source: *Building: The Magazine for the Architect*, 12 September 1924, courtesy State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

tary conditions, the government set about cleaning up and regulating the less desirable of Sydney's suburbs. These ideas, now known as 'urban renewal', finally arrived in Waterloo in the 1940s and 1950s and reached a peak in the 1960s. This resulted in a dramatic reshaping of the built environment. Successive redevelopments have left Waterloo a patchwork of different public housing styles, some experimental, ranging from two-storey houses to towering high-rise blocks.

After the Second World War it was estimated that Sydney required up to 300,000 new homes, thus creating the great boom in housing development in the suburbs.<sup>40</sup> For Waterloo, this meant intensification of slum clearance in some of the most run-down areas and replacement with two and three-storey walk-up flats. Further experimentation during the 1960s in public housing ultimately resulted in the Endeavour Estate, planned to include six thirty-storey buildings, each housing 2,000 residents. High-rise housing and increased density were seen as the answer to the problem of housing shortage, and considered most suitable for the elderly for whom two of the blocks were intended.<sup>41</sup> But obvious drawbacks, such as a lack of elevators, made access for the elderly difficult, and the imposing height and dense occupation of the buildings was out of character with the rest of Waterloo.

Objections raised by the local residents in 1972 to high-rise redevelopment in Elizabeth Street led to the imposition of a Green Ban by the Builders Labourers Federation, and forced the government to reconsider its plans for Waterloo. It also forced the consideration of public interest and opinion in planning schemes. As a result, plans for Waterloo now include a rehabilitation program for buildings in the area, rather than bulldozing them.<sup>42</sup> It was a long road to recognition of the importance of the neighbourhood, especially in the face of some stringent opposition to preservation of the old buildings by a government that saw little value in them. Assumptions about what constituted 'heritage' are clear in the Housing Commission's 1974 statement:

Preservation of fine old buildings is often worthwhile and can add to the charm and historic interest of a city. This area has been selected for redevelopment precisely because it contains few, if any, buildings worthy of preservation.<sup>43</sup>

This report also included two draft plans for thirty-storey high-rise buildings and walk-up flats, and clearly shows just what urban renewal actually meant. Largely because of resident action in the 1970s, urban renewal now represents something more than mere modernist slum clearance projects. In Waterloo, there has been a shift away from demolition as the unquestioned way to reshape the neighbourhood, for the program seeks to preserve and highlight those buildings that have cultural significance to the local area.

#### 7.4.2 Rosebery, the 'Model Industrial Suburb'

Another response to the need for public housing, and one more popular than high-density high-rise, was the 'model suburb'. For the first time, an attempt was made to fully plan and lay out the entire suburb, including roads, parks, schools and infrastructure, before it was built. The model suburb represented all that modernity could offer in terms of the best possible environment to live in. The first such planned suburb was the Daceyville model suburb, originally Dacey Garden Suburb, which commenced in 1912. By 1913 over 100 houses had been constructed on the site, all of which were for lower middle class and working class people, who were selected by

lottery. Although the project was never completed as planned, and was eventually abandoned, over 300 houses, a baby health clinic, public hall and parkland were completed and still exist on the site today.<sup>44</sup>

A similar project was started by a private development company on the Rosebery Estate in 1912, aimed at creating a model suburb in which the industrial worker could attain a better lifestyle than the cramped terrace living of Waterloo could provide. The location of the Rosebery suburb was also important. This was no garden suburb, for here the idea was to provide an ideal place for factory workers to live in the local area, reasonably close to their places of work. It was to combine some advantages elements of 'country' living, with the social advantages of working in the towns. The 1920 publication Waterloo Jubilee outlined the project:

In 1911 the Town Planning Company of Australia was formed, and purchased from the Cooper Estate about 300 acres of land, used mainly for grazing stock and vegetable growing. The company ... subdivided the Estate along modern lines. The result: A large area covered in one portion by the modern cottage dwelling, and in the other by factories, planned and laid out on modern scientific lines, securing to the employees all that the best modern ideas can evolve in making working conditions as pleasant as possible.<sup>45</sup>

So there were some subtle differences in planning the two model suburbs, though both are based on late nineteenth century Garden City ideals. The Town Planning Company of Australia subdivided the Rosebery Estate in 1914, but as late as 1924 much of the Estate was still undeveloped, suggesting the impact of the war, and perhaps lack of public acceptance.<sup>46</sup> The architectural style of the area includes Federation style c1912–1920, the California bungalow style of 1920–1930, and other inter-war period styles of houses 1920–40. The 1950s saw many Italian and Greek migrants moving into the model suburb of Rosebery, who in turn placed their own mark on the area by slightly altering the façades of some of the buildings, often by the addition of columns and arches. In the 1970s this process was repeated as migrants from the Middle East moved into the area.<sup>47</sup>

### 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter had provided a brief overview of the history of how Waterloo and other suburbs in the Green Square area came to be, where and why the first areas of subdivision occurred, why Waterloo's population boomed in the 1880s and what the character and style of construction was in the area. We have also glimpsed the occupants of the numerous terraces, many of whom were artisans, skilled labourers who possessed a trade of some sort. There were also small wooden workers' cottages, most often occupied by unskilled labourers who had been drawn to Waterloo for the prospects of employment in industry. Clearly, Sydney was no classless society, suburbs and regions varied considerably and produced their own social divisions, for 'anyone who took the time to stroll through West Sydney or Alexandria knew that for many life was mean and cramped'.<sup>48</sup>

What is also clear is that class-based attitudes towards the slums, the working class and industrial areas, have been a key element in shaping the history of Waterloo, and will continue to do so into the future. Ideas of urban vice and blight were used time and again to justify massive resumption works undertaken in Waterloo and Redfern right up until the 1970s.

Modernity has also left its mark on the built fabric of Waterloo, as different ideas of how to approach slums and overcrowding have produced different building styles in the area. This has had diverse outcomes, including the Rosebery model suburb, slum clearance in Waterloo, and various types of public housing, including walk-up flats and high-rise buildings.

The legacy of the nineteenth century residents of Waterloo remains in the built environment of terraces, cottages, streets and lanes; these tell us about the physical and social history of the area. Where they have been lovingly restored, they may be misleading, however, suggesting that the past was simpler, more pleasant and picturesque, and full of 'character'.<sup>49</sup> We should not forget that this history was one of struggle: there was poverty, overcrowding and dingy back alleys, smells, pollution and at times disease. Social experiences in nineteenth century Sydney were vastly different: for the middle class, Waterloo represented something to be escaped, avoided at all costs, but for many of the working class people who lived here, this was reality. This was life for these people—a place where their lives were made or broken. Perhaps this is why what is remembered and valued among residents living in the Green Square area today are the good times, a sense of community, knowing your street, talking to your neighbour and leaving your door unlocked. What they fear most is another attempt by somebody else to clean up their neighbourhood.



# Chapter 8

# Green Square and the Thin Blue Line: Crime, Law & Order in the Green Square Area

Scott Vance

## 8.1 Introduction

The histories of crime, law and order are important to recover. By looking at what was being policed in different periods we can learn what behaviour society—or some sections of it—wanted controlled. These included, for example, practices associated with working class pastimes, such as gambling, the consumption of alcohol or bare knuckle prize fighting. We can see which crimes the community took seriously and which crimes they did not. At a general level, it may also be possible to gauge what respect, or otherwise, the community had for the police and for law and order.

Of course the crimes are sometimes stories in themselves. Some were sensational, like the Mt Rennie rape case, which caused deep anxiety and enormous debate in Sydney in the 1880s. Others were not sensational but give an idea of what sort of ‘ordinary’ crimes were taking place at the time. Crime, and the policing of it in a particular area, also reflects the kind of people who live in this area, and how the population changed over time.

## 8.2 Crime, law and order at the local level

The history of crime, law and order in the Green Square area is varied and interesting, but not always straightforward to research and reconstruct. While there are few problems in tracing key events or charting information such as the establishment or closure of police stations, crime is, by its very nature, complex. The question of what a crime actually is, is in itself a contentious question, as the definitions have changed.

In the nineteenth century, for example, vagrancy was a crime, as was a husband deserting his wife, but today these practices are not considered criminal. Perceptions of crime are another factor to take into account. How seriously should a crime like illegal S.P. (Starting Price) betting be taken when the majority of the community did not consider it a crime? And what about crime statistics? Did they or do they reflect the everyday personal lives and experiences of people who have lived in the Green Square area?

There are also problems with the sources for the history of crime. Up to 1946 there are gluts of information for some periods, which are difficult to represent unless readers are interested in a complete litany of names, dates and events. More recent times offer the opposite problem. Official records on specific crimes are increasingly restricted as one draws closer to the present, to protect the lives and reputa-

tions of persons still living, or their relatives. Information might be gleaned from sources such as newspapers, but this is a highly selective record, as only stories considered by editors as newsworthy are printed.

Another problem is placing crime in geographical boundaries. The term Green Square has only recently been coined and has not been an official area in relation to gathering of information such as crime statistics. So we cannot focus on Green Square specifically—but in a sense this is appropriate, as people’s experiences of crime would not be limited to theoretical geographical boundaries anyway. The sly grog shops and brothels centred in nearby Surry Hills in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, and recent riots and racial tensions centred in Redfern, have impacted beyond strictly narrowly defined boundaries into the Green Square area.

Perhaps the best way to approach the history of crime, law and order is to take typical ‘slices’ at different periods in the Green Square area, and compare these with more detailed accounts of the few sensational or extraordinary events. It also possible to look at this history in tandem with what was happening in the broader area of Sydney. To start with, this means looking at the establishment of an organised police force and how it came to the Green Square area.

## 8.3 The beginnings of the police

At the start of settlement in New South Wales, policing was a military responsibility, but gradually provisions were made for non-military watchmen and constables.<sup>1</sup> In 1833 an Act was passed for the appointment of two or more magistrates for the town and port of Sydney, ‘they being empowered to select men for a police force.’<sup>2</sup> Another Act was passed in 1838 to expand the police force in principal country districts. It was, however, generally considered that the non-professional policing system that emerged from these Acts was inefficient, and lacked co-ordination and structure.

### 8.3.1 ‘Bluebottles’ and bare-knuckle prize fighting

Nevertheless these police had a wide variety of duties to perform and problems to try and control. One activity they policed in Sydney occurred at the outskirts of the Green Square area around this time—bare-knuckle prize fighting. Patrons and participants made their way to the Cooks River, especially around the 1840s, to fight, watch and bet on the result. Bare-knuckle prize fighting was a very popular sport at this time and, although it was not actually illegal, the

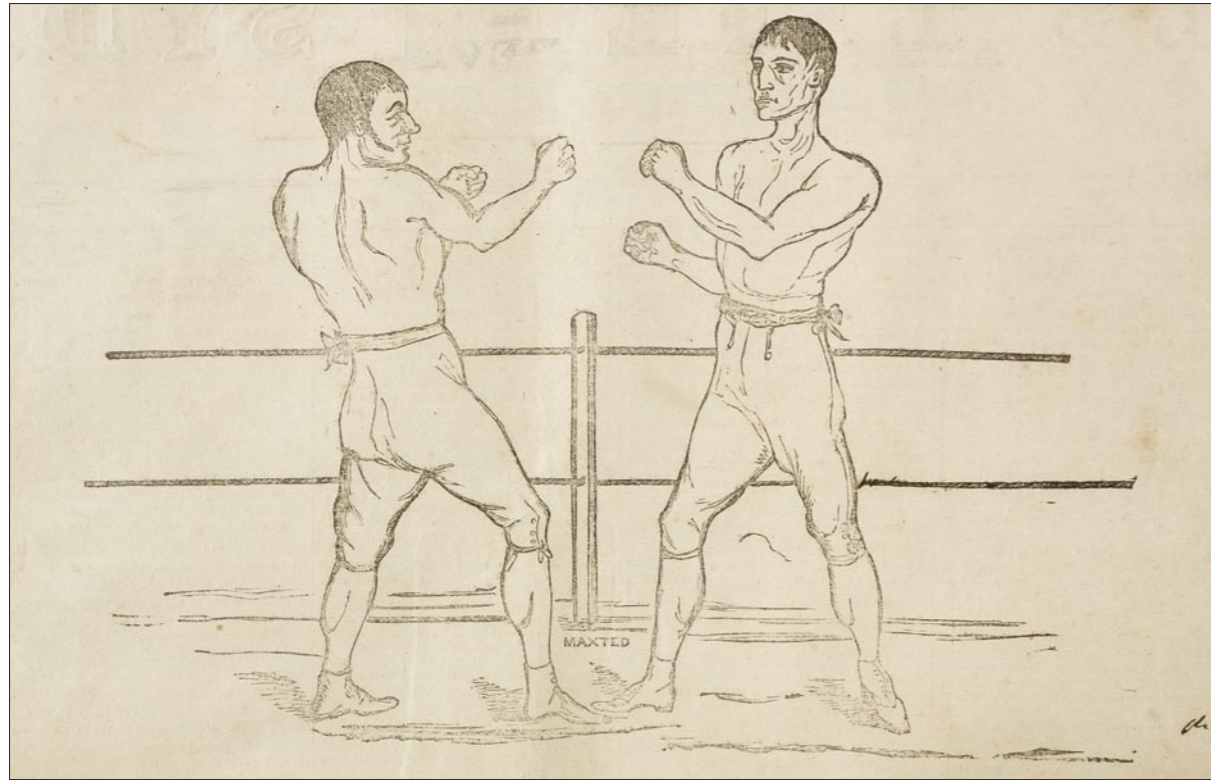


Fig. 8.1 Bare-knuckle prize fight in 1847 (Source: *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer* 10 April 1847. Courtesy State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales. No reproduction without permission.)

authorities in Sydney cracked down on it, prosecuting fighters under the Vagrants Act. This is why the fights were held in outlying areas such as the Cooks River—a wild, isolated place at this time.<sup>3</sup>

However, it was not a sport that lasted. By 1849 the prizefights were in decline. One of the reasons seems to be the withdrawal of support from the gentry. Previously they had participated as audience and sponsors of fights which, in theory, were supposed to promote British manly virtues, such as courage. From 1847 newspapers were critical of their support, and after 1850, rising and powerful notions of what was respectable were at odds with prize fighting.<sup>4</sup> As with other pre-industrial pursuits, like cock-fighting, prize fighting was associated with gambling, drinking and, of course, violence.<sup>5</sup>

The gentry's attention gradually turned to horseracing. Meanwhile, in the period between 1847 and 1857 the 'bluebot-tles' (police) were successful in preventing many fights taking place, suggesting a will on the part of the force to impose these new notions of respectability on what was now a predominantly working class pastime.<sup>6</sup>

### 8.3.2 Reorganisation of the police force

An Inspector General of Police was appointed to the metropolitan district of Sydney in 1852. It was not until 1862, though, that the NSW Police became a professional, coordinated body and the Inspector General of Police was given control of the police in the whole colony. The colony was divided up into districts and a hierarchy of police officers was created.<sup>7</sup>

One of the later divisions, in 1864, placed the Municipality of Waterloo in the Metropolitan District which encompassed what were then the outer suburbs of Sydney (as distinct from the central parts of the City).<sup>8</sup> However the Bench of Magistrates at the Central Police Office in Sydney still had juris-

diction over this Metropolitan District. No police station is shown in the Green Square area in the records relating to the distribution of the police force in 1863 and 1864, although there was one constable stationed at Cooks River nearby and two policemen at Redfern.<sup>9</sup>

### 8.4 Police in Waterloo, Alexandria, Mitchell Road and Beaconsfield, 1870–1902

The first police station in the Green Square area was opened in Waterloo by 1870, with one constable on duty. By 1881, several years after the separation of the Alexandria Borough from Waterloo, the station was known as Waterloo and Alexandria Station.<sup>10</sup>

The growth of industry and population in the area saw police numbers increase over the years. Between 1883 and 1902, the Waterloo and Alexandria station increased its police force, with a high point in 1887 when there were fourteen police officers (one senior sergeant, one senior constable and twelve constables).<sup>11</sup> Police stations at Beaconsfield Estate and Mitchell Road also appeared in 1886 and 1888 respectively, although generally with only one constable each.<sup>12</sup> The close proximity of these stations by today's standards can be explained by the slower mode of transportation—horses and horse-drawn vehicles. People also commonly moved around on foot.

The records about police stations did not give information of what sort of crimes were taking place in the Green Square area. However the Inspector General did comment on trends in the Metropolitan District. Of great concern in this period was the consumption of alcohol and drunkenness. Out of 26,621 apprehensions in 1886, 15,741 were for drunkenness and related crimes (that is, drunkenness formed part of the charge).<sup>13</sup> In 1888, there were 855 licensed houses in the Metropolitan District; as Anna Gauchat observes, there were at

least thirty-nine pubs in Waterloo, Alexandria and Zetland alone by 1886 and a number of people were fined or gaoled for misdemeanours related to drinking (see Chapter 10). In the metropolitan area as a whole, police arrested 20,906 people in 1888, of whom over half (11,353) were charged with drunkenness. In the same year, out of 1,366 inquests, there were 158 cases where people lost their lives from causes attributed directly or indirectly to drunkenness.<sup>14</sup>

Another concern, touched on earlier with bare-knuckle prize fighting, was gambling, a pastime that would be of increasing concern to authorities in the twentieth century. From the 1870s, though, there was a preoccupation with Chinese gaming houses. The 1891 Royal Commission into 'alleged Chinese gambling and immorality' reported the existence of 105 Chinese gambling houses in Sydney and its suburbs.<sup>15</sup> Chinese people occupied 60 per cent of these houses and Alexandria was one of the three main regions in Sydney for the gaming 'dens', as they were called (see also Chapter 12).<sup>16</sup>

Other problems which would have occupied police in the Green Square area in this period are recorded in the *New South Wales Police Gazette* and *Weekly Record of Crime*. For this chapter I have sampled these sources at twenty year intervals, looking at the month of November. The November 1886 reports for the metropolitan district generally reveal crimes, but also common behaviour and glimpses of traumatic situations. Besides crimes against persons or property, there were reports of people involved in riotous behaviour, using indecent language or threatening words. A woman was charged for concealment of a birth, while two people were charged for attempted suicide. Horse and cattle stealing was apparently common, and there were instances of desertion from the armed forces. There were several lists every week of men wanted for deserting their wives, but only a few instances of mothers deserting their children. One man was charged for not having a light on his cart at night.<sup>17</sup>

In an age without widespread photographic identification, the weekly *Gazettes* published descriptions of wanted people instead. Sometimes a description was racially-based—a person was said to be 'Jewish in appearance'; a woman might be described as 'good looking'. These suggest there were commonly-held ideas about people's appearance.

The reports of the crimes also included geographic information—where they took place. The Green Square area was apparently quiet that month in 1886, with only one crime reported: Mr McLean, a bootmaker on Botany Road in Waterloo, was robbed on 24<sup>th</sup> November. Four pairs of men's elastic side boots to the value of £1.10s were taken by three youths dressed in dark clothes and black soft felt hats.<sup>18</sup> The robbers would have been known as larrikins.

#### 8.4.1 The Mt Rennie Case and the Waterloo Push

Only two months before, though, the area was rocked by one of the most notorious crimes of that century—it was known as the Mt Rennie Case. A 16 year-old orphan, Mary Jane Hicks, was repeatedly raped at Mt Rennie, a sandy knoll in the 'scrub-covered wasteland of Moore Park'.<sup>19</sup> It was believed that upwards of twenty men (mostly youths) either participated in or observed the rapes.<sup>20</sup> The case divided society, and also historians who wrote about the case subsequently. Frank Clune's *Scandals of Sydney Town* (1957), for example, took the side of the attackers and portrayed Mary Jane Hicks almost as a guilty party rather than the victim.<sup>21</sup>

Mary Jane Hicks was walking in the city looking for a job when a cabman offered her a ride to anywhere where she wanted, suggesting they spend an hour or two somewhere and that he would pay for her board and lodgings. Mary went with the cabman willingly, according to Clune, knowing that the cabby's suggestion 'was not proper'.<sup>22</sup> A half-hour drive took them to Bourke Street near Mt Rennie where, Hicks later testified, the cabman 'took liberties' with her.

They were interrupted by the Waterloo Push, a gang or mob of larrikins, whereupon the cabman panicked and climbed up to his driving seat to get away. Hicks got out of the cab, allegedly persuaded by one of the youths. The cabman drove away, leaving her behind. Later he said he had intended going to the police but after further thought decided the girl had left the cab of her own accord.<sup>23</sup>

The youth who had convinced her out of the cab offered to escort Mary to the tramline and she went with him through the bush till they got to Mt Rennie. He left her sitting there, but then returned with two other gang members. When they grabbed her, she screamed, alerting two men sitting under a tree fifty yards (110 metres) away smoking their pipes, who came to the rescue. The three attackers fled and one of the smokers began escorting her back to the road while the other grabbed their coats. But the rest of the Waterloo Push were hanging around the scrub and had seen what was happening. They attacked, carrying sticks, stones, glass bottles, and sheath knives. One of the smokers ran away, while the other scuffled with the gangs before getting away to get help. He made his way to Redfern Police station but there were no constables, so Darlinghurst Police were summoned.

Two hours later the police found Mary Jane Hicks almost unconscious and in 'an extreme state of terror and exhaustion. She was partly undressed, and her clothing was torn in shreds'. She estimated that she had been raped by at least eight, probably twelve of the gang.<sup>24</sup>

The news of the crime and the ensuing trial of the perpetrators caused sensational and deeply polarised debate in the community, especially the newspapers. Much of the debate centred on the perceived depravity of the youth in the colony—the working class youth. This anxiety was not only manifested in the Mt Rennie case. Newspapers generally talked of a larrikin class and were fearful that a crime wave had hit Sydney.<sup>25</sup> Larrikins were considered a menace to society, had little or no respect for authority and were offensive and rude; they used 'bestial terms' to embarrass respectable women as they walked through the Botanical Gardens, for example.<sup>26</sup> Larrikins were seen as layabouts, and much was made of the fact that Mary Jane was 'raped on the afternoon of a working day when Australia's youth should have been employed in some honest occupation'.<sup>27</sup>

To add to the matter, two other gang rapes, each involving large numbers of youths and older men, had occurred in 1883 at Woolloomooloo and Mt Carmel in Waterloo. Both women died after their ordeal.<sup>28</sup> Coming up to the centenary of the colony, the Mt Rennie case aroused anxious 'speculation about the nature of colonial society'.<sup>29</sup>

Another aspect of the debate was the Waterloo area itself. Waterloo had a population of around 8,000 people at this time and was fast becoming a manufacturing centre. There was an abundance of sand and dust in the neighbourhood as well as problems with flies and mosquitos. A school medical service believed children of Waterloo were of 'poorer



Fig. 8.2 The Mt Rennie Area in 2004 — now Moore Park Golf Course (Photo: Scott Vance, 2004).

physique than others examined in the metropolitan area'. A teacher described his residence 'filled with a foul atmosphere, traceable to...neighbouring boiling down establishments and Chinese hovels'.<sup>30</sup> The depraved youths were said to have come from a kind of miserable wasteland.

Clearly, gender was the other underlying theme of debate. This was not only true of the Mt Rennie case, but also in policing and crime generally and over time. There are few records, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on domestic abuse for example, yet it was well-known that the crime did take place and was very common. This suggests the assumptions of the exclusively male law and order community: either domestic abuse was excusable or it was a private matter that should not be trespassed upon.

*The Bulletin* championed the rapists in the Mt Rennie case, arguing 'she was asking for it' and calling Mary Jane Hicks a 'lying little street tramp'.<sup>31</sup> However, the horrific nature of the crime, and the sense that there needed to be a message sent to the youth of the colony, saw nine out of the eleven youths who were tried sentenced to hang. The cab driver received fourteen years hard labour with two floggings.

Five of the death sentences were commuted, so that the large official crowd which gathered on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1887 saw four youths hanged at Darlinghurst Jail. Because the youths were so slight in physique there was a miscalculation of their drop, and three of the four slowly strangled to death.

### 8.5 Early twentieth century

For the main part, however, the occurrence of crime in the Green Square area was far less serious. The records for November 1906 reveal a warrant was issued by the Redfern Police Bench for the arrest of Isaac Henry, charged with wife desertion, the complainant being from the Beaconsfield Estate in Waterloo. A youth dressed in a blue serge suit had exposed

himself to a nineteen-year-old girl in McEvoy Street.<sup>32</sup>

By 1926, police presence in the area had shrunk, as No. 7 Head Station at Turner Street, Redfern, was the only police station that served the Green Square area, most probably because of the impact of the motorcar. The weekly reports of crime for the month of November that year saw little more action in the area than in 1886 and 1906. Young people could still be a concern. A guardian in Alexandria had issued a complaint and a warrant was issued for the arrest of sixteen-year-old Chrissie Cox, charged with being an uncontrollable child. Dolores Ferraris of Rosebery reported necklets and bangles stolen. At Cambridge Delicacies, on the corner of Bourke and Phillip Streets, the safe had been burgled by means of explosives and £5 was stolen.<sup>33</sup> This small incident illustrates the changing landscape of the area with the growth of businesses and shops.

More notorious instances of organised crime were occurring just north of the Green Square area in this period, however. Sly grog, drugs, dealing in stolen goods, gambling and prostitution were vices and crimes controlled by four main players—Kate Leigh, Tilly Devine, Phil Jeffs and Norman Bruhn. Each had territories in Darlinghurst, Kings Cross, Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills.<sup>34</sup> After 1927, gang wars erupted between these crime bosses. These 'wars' were most noted for the gangs' weapon of choice—the razor. Between 1927 and 1930 there would be more than 500 recorded razor attacks.<sup>35</sup>

### 8.6 Gambling in the 1930s.

During the 1930s, gambling again came to the fore as the most noted crime. There seems little doubt that it was a widespread practice in the community in this period—especially on horse and pony racing. Betting was legal at the many tracks in the area, such as Rosebery, Victoria Park, Ascot, Randwick and Kensington, but illegal on the streets (see also Chapter 9).



Fig. 8.3 Brickworks off Mitchell Rd (1929) — a major two-up venue. (Source: ML ref. GPO I frame 14610, courtesy Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of New South Wales. No reproduction without permission).

The police who were responsible for enforcing this regulation were at times ambivalent about it; at other times they were corrupt in handling the suppression of S.P. betting. In 1936 a Royal Commission was set up to weed out corrupt police and reinforce and clarify the policy on policing illegal S.P. betting. What is interesting is that Inspector Russel believed that more than seventy-five per cent of the populace saw nothing wrong with S.P. betting. Comments were also made of how little the public helped the police in this matter and that most of the population saw no disgrace in being punished for it.<sup>36</sup>

The reasons for gambling could be varied. The most obvious is the dream of a windfall (see also Chapter 9). The Green Square area was a working class/industrial area, and the chance of a big win for small outlays would have been tempting as well as exciting. Evidence from the oral histories of the area seem to indicate that the pastime of S.P. betting or gambling, being an S.P. bookmaker, or working for one, was something which defined a person as a part of the community.

### 8.7 The police, crime and the community: oral histories

The oral histories collected from residents are another rich source on gambling and policing in this period. In his youth, Howard Hastings, a resident in Zetland, assisted a S.P. bookmaker, gathering and tracking various prices on dogs and horses by telephone. Although they were raided frequently, they were 'pretty sweet with the police'. This often meant they were forewarned of the raids.<sup>37</sup>

There was obviously money in being the assistant to a S.P. bookmaker or being an S.P. bookmaker yourself. Dr. Hugh McConville recalled that the only people in Beaconsfield who could afford cars were the S.P. bookmakers.<sup>38</sup> Robert Hammond, of Alexandria, similarly, remembered Snowy Holmes, a S.P. bookmaker who always had a motorcar. Snowy also had a rapport with the children. When he had a winning

day, he would drive past in his car, 'see us kids and he'd throw a handful of pennies out'. Other games of chance included two-up and cards. Robert Hammond recalls a big two-up school at the brick pit on Mitchell Road where there could be between sixty to eighty people betting (see Fig. 8.3). The police often raided. 'They'd come down in old 1927 Chevrolet cars and all jump out'.<sup>39</sup>

Shirley Moir's game was cards. After leaving school early, one of her first jobs was to provide tea and sandwiches for men who played cards in Alexandria's Belmont Lane. She also became an assistant to an S.P. bookmaker and recalls that many local women played rummy—including her mother. She would often play on her mother's behalf and 'would also sit in for other women if they were feeding their babies or were called away'. The pastime, she says, is 'not a game of chance. It's a skill'.<sup>40</sup>

There are recollections of other crimes in the oral histories of this period as well. One recollection is of 'things' going missing down at the rail yards at Alexandria—the pilfering of goods from some of the big rail carriages.<sup>41</sup> Sly grog was remembered too. With six o'clock closing, Robert Hammond's father would go around to the Balaclava Hotel on the corner of Buckland Street and Mitchell Road. There would be 'a favourite knock on the publican's door' to get a quart after closing time.<sup>42</sup> Betty Moulds from Alexandria remembered 'Nigger Fox' a sly grog seller who lived four or five doors down from her family.<sup>43</sup> Often people used to knock on Betty's door by mistake.

As for views of the police, the recollections are not only of police raids, or police corruption; the personalities of policemen are also remembered—some positive, some negative. Robert Hammond remembers a couple of policemen from Redfern, the station that policed the Green Square area in his youth:



Fig. 8.4 Waterloo Town Hall (now Waterloo Library) where John Charles Hodder was killed in 1965 (Photo: Scott Vance, 2004)

Raymond Blissett was one of our most famous policemen, up around Redfern. He finished up a detective inspector, they used to call him the 'Blizzard' because of his cold bloody nature I suppose. I remember Long Tack Sam; he was a very good runner, so it was no good giving cheek to Long Tack Sam because he'd run you down. He always managed to get the boot in the you-know-where.<sup>44</sup>

Syd Fennell, who was born in 1929 and grew up in Alexandria, also remembers the occasional kick in the tail for being where he shouldn't.<sup>45</sup>

But the police also played another role in communities, setting up and running Police Citizens Boys Youth Clubs (from 1937) with activities that included sport, gymnastics, music, singing and sailing. Significantly they were only aimed at boys. Today a Police and Community Youth Club (PCYC) still exists on Elizabeth Street Redfern, close to the Green Square area.

### 8.8 The 1940s to the 1960s

During the immediate post war period still other crimes preoccupied police. Most of the reports in November 1946 concerned tracking down illegal aliens, and quite a number of escaped Italian prisoners of war, as well as motor vehicle theft. Locally, Roberts and Parson Pty Ltd in Bourke Street Alexandria were robbed of various jewellery, precious stones as well as a pistol, whisky, cigarettes and a pair of gent's overalls.<sup>46</sup> This was the only crime reported that month in the Green Square area.

After this period, tracking crime becomes more difficult. Although sources such as the *Police Gazette* continued right up into the late 1970s, access to it from this period has been restricted. Here we must draw on further oral testimonies and newspaper reports.

There were sensational newspaper reports of murders, for example, the killing of Alexandria resident John Charles ("Jackie") Hodder in 1965. Hodder was stabbed to death in front of the 300 guests at a dance at Waterloo Town Hall. The dance had been organised to raise money for an Alexandria hotel barmaid who was ill.<sup>47</sup> According to criminal identity George Freeman, Hodder was a deadly street fighter and feared standover man and was one of eight underworld murder victims between July 1963 and May 1968.<sup>48</sup> Hodder's reputation was such that his funeral at Darlinghurst was described as the biggest Darlinghurst had seen for years.<sup>49</sup>

Another of these killings occurred a few months after Hodder's death. This time it was Maurice 'Barney' Ryan, shot dead at a dance at Alexandria Town Hall.<sup>50</sup> Barney Ryan had been one of the men charged with Hodder's death but charges had subsequently been dropped. It was believed that the killing of Ryan was payback for Hodder.

### 8.9 The 1970s to the present

Sue Lewis, a resident of Zetland who grew up in the 70s and 80s, relates the more recent forms of crime in the area. Vandalism was one such crime, seemingly perpetrated mostly by bored youths, as was drug abuse, some connected with organised crime.<sup>51</sup> The Zetland Hotel was notorious for criminal links. Valero Jiminez grew up in the same period and recalled a 'lot of crime' like assaults and break-ins, often associated with drug use and gangs.<sup>52</sup>

In more recent times, much-publicised confrontations have occurred between police and Aboriginal residents in the Green Square area and its surroundings. Waterloo and Redfern in particular have relatively high Aboriginal populations. Many Aboriginal people had moved to these suburbs after World War II, drawn to the city for better access to employment, health, education and welfare services.<sup>53</sup>

One such confrontation was the so-called 'Battle of Waterloo' in 2001. It was reported that police had noticed youths trying to rob a man near the corner of Elizabeth and Wellington streets at approximately 7.15pm. Police in their vehicle allegedly rammed a fence over which the youths tried to escape, causing one boy to fall, breaking a collarbone. When an ambulance arrived it was pelted with stones by youths, who also set fire to trees and attacked fire officers. When police arrived bricks were thrown, residents were evacuated from their homes and more police were called. The *Herald* reported that 'up to twenty youths continued to taunt police, lighting fireworks and scrawling messages on the street'.<sup>54</sup>

Although the incident died down and was resolved before midnight, more trouble occurred the following night. At the George Hotel, where patrons had been locked in for their own safety the previous night, a fight broke out at a twenty-first birthday celebration. Again, youths 'moved into the street and placed rocks on the road and set trees alight'.<sup>55</sup> Aboriginal leader and spokesman Lyall Munro managed to defuse the situation and convinced the youths to return home. But when he left the youths returned, rocking cars and throwing stones. Police tactics were later called into question, as they did not move in quickly, waiting till after 4am to 'reclaim' the area.

These riots were echoed recently, this time sparked by a tragic death. A young Aboriginal resident of Waterloo, Thomas Hickey, was killed when thrown from his bicycle and impaled on a metal fence as he dashed across Phillip Street Waterloo, through a pedestrian access gate. Some members of the community and a number of witnesses say that the boy was being chased or followed by the police, and that this was the reason for his death.<sup>56</sup>

Anger at police culminated in a riot in Redfern on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004 with reports of up to 40 or 50 police injured. Parts of Redfern railway station were torched and bricks and Molotov cocktails were thrown.<sup>57</sup> This time Lyall Munro was reported as saying 'the streets were taken by our young people and we are all proud'. Many clearly shared the sentiments of another speaker who said 'there is no justice in this community for us'.<sup>58</sup> At the time of writing, a Coroner's Inquest investigating the death of Thomas Hickey was underway.

In recent times, crime statistics have been collected at the local government level (the former City of South Sydney). However, this area includes a wide variety of communities, so it is difficult to determine the situation in the suburbs making up Green Square. The statistics often show South Sydney in the top ten in various categories of crime, though recent trends show no increases in some categories and declines in others.<sup>59</sup>

Much of the crime in the area since the 70s has been linked to poverty and unemployment in the area. A substantial number of residents in Waterloo are public housing tenants, now a highly welfare-dependant population. This population suffered 'significant social problems such as poor educational attainment, chronic unemployment amongst young people, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependence, and crime and fear of crime'.<sup>60</sup>

### 8.10 Into the future

The present and proposed redevelopments in the Green Square will continue to have an impact on many facets of life in the area, and crime, law and order are no exceptions. The expensive high-rise apartment complexes are designed for people who can afford them, and so new types of com-

munities will form—very different from the mostly working class communities that dominated the area before. There will probably be an emphasis on the protection of material property—more surveillance, security measures and so on—and far less interest in controlling popular habits or pastimes, such as gambling and intemperance, as in the past.

### 8.11 Conclusion

The history of crime, law and order will probably always be contentious and the nature of the records means that some events and patterns may not be historically visible. Crime is a topic few local historians tend to highlight in their town or area's history, as these are often written to celebrate progress and achievement. Despite these factors, these are important and rewarding histories to try to recover—for the events themselves, for what they tell us about the wider society in which they occurred, and in order to balance the other aspects of our knowledge of the past. We have seen that crime, law and order did not occur in a social or cultural vacuum, but were entangled with and shaped by wider issues, such as gender, class and race; perhaps most striking is the recurring clash of the law and police with youth.

Further, as seen in many of the oral histories from the Green Square area, crime (or rather what was officially deemed crime) played a part in people's lives—it was present and important—people commonly took part in such activities, some of which they did not believe were wrong. It is also rewarding to challenge assumptions—to find out that what authorities ruled illegal and in need of control changed over time; and to find that, despite the area's reputation and some terrible and sensational crimes, for all the sample periods examined, there appears to have been very little crime at all.



# Chapter 9

## A Course of Action: Working Class Sporting Culture at Victoria Park Racecourse, between 1908 and 1943

Erik Nielsen

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the sporting and popular culture of the residents of Green Square (the suburbs Waterloo, Zetland, Alexandria, Rosebery and Beaconsfield) by looking at the history of the Victoria Park Racecourse between 1908 and 1943. Victoria Park Racecourse was a proprietary, or privately owned, track, one of many which dotted this region of Sydney in the early twentieth century. Its history tells us about how the people of the Green Square area enjoyed and defended their leisure time in the first half of the twentieth century.

The history of the racecourse and the various activities that occurred on the site are important in themselves, of course, but to understand its real significance, we need to see it in a wider social and cultural context. So this chapter will also examine the general gambling culture of the working class

and the particular type and style of racing that took place at Victoria Park. It emerges that this racecourse was in fact a site for tense class relations, a battleground for control not only of working conditions, but of popular culture, and particularly working class people's leisure time and activities. When faced with a challenge from outside their own social group, working people here adapted their culture on their own terms and for their own purposes.

The days of racing at Victoria Park ended many years ago. But the legacy of this site lives on, because the racing culture that emerged from this period is not a 'dead' culture. If anything, it is dynamic, constantly adapting to new developments and requirements.

What happened to the site after the closure in 1943? The final part of this chapter takes the story of the Victoria Park Race-



Fig. 9.1 'Psalmist' wins a race at Victoria Park in 1935.  
(Source: Sam Hood, 'Psalmist', Hood Collection, courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)



Fig 9.2 Sam Hood, 'Demonstration of schoolchildren in aid of South Sydney Hospital', 1909, showing schoolchildren participating in the fundraiser for the Royal South Sydney Hospital. (Source: Hood Collection, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

course up to the present, including an account of how the site's history is represented at the Landcom residential development at Victoria Park today, and what lessons the history of the racecourse might hold for the future.

### 9.2 Victoria Park Racecourse

Victoria Park Racecourse was one of several proprietary racecourses in Sydney in the early twentieth century. Others were located at Rosebery, Mascot and Kensington (where the University of New South Wales stands today). It was opened in 1908 and was built by Sir James Joynton Smith, a local businessman. Proprietary racing is a term used for racing provided by privately-owned clubs as opposed to 'principal' clubs set up by government legislation. Proprietary racing does not exist in Sydney anymore, as the clubs that control horseracing in Sydney, the Australian Jockey Club (AJC) and the Sydney Turf Club (STC), are legally incorporated entities. Victoria Park Racecourse was important to the local community for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was obviously the site of proprietary 'pony' racing. However, the racecourse had a number of other uses and boasted a number of unique features.

The site for the racecourse was chosen by Smith despite still being part of Waterloo Swamp as late as 1906 (see also Chapter 4). It was drained by digging a trench from the site to Shea's Creek, causing the water to drain away into Botany Bay.<sup>1</sup> The reclaimed land was made of two to three metres of natural peat and resilient soil, perfect for growing long-lasting turf. Perversely, the mile (1600 metre) long track was laid as cinder rather than turf.<sup>2</sup>

The racecourse was the most modern of all proprietary racecourses. It had the typical sparse appearance of a racecourse; the fence around the edges marked its boundary. It had a

grandstand on the western side only, just as Royal Randwick still has today, although the grandstand at Victoria Park was smaller. It was the 'first course in Australia to cater for ladies in the provision of retiring rooms'.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that the racecourse was interested in attracting a wide audience. The proprietors clearly recognised that women enjoyed racing and betting as well as men. The site also included the 'Tote' Building, which still stands. This building held the Totalisator, a machine that calculated odds based on the actual amount of money wagered on the race, the system used today by the Totalisator Agency Boards (TAB) in each state. This arrangement was preferred by bettors at the time, as bookmakers were not necessarily trusted. The types and tastes of the patrons clearly had an influence on how this racecourse was set up.

The track was used for purposes other than horseracing, especially in the early period. In 1909, a fundraiser was held for another of Smith's interests, the Royal South Sydney Hospital. The track was used for motor racing up to the 1920s at least. The racecourse was also the site for one of Australia's first plane flights, that of Colin Defries in 1909. Defries kept his plane in the air for eight seconds before crashing while trying to retrieve his favourite hat, which had blown off his head in the course of the flight. The racecourse therefore acted as an entertainment venue for the whole community rather than just the racing community.

### 9.3 Working class betting culture

According to historians, betting served at least three major functions in working class sporting culture. First, betting was pursued for its financial benefits. Second, betting was also an important recreational pursuit and intellectual exercise for the working class. And third, betting was a way of challenging the dominant cultural order.



Fig 9.3 Victoria Park Racecourse, 1935. A view of the Racecourse from the eastern side of South Dowling Street, showing the context, as local factories are visible in the background. (Source: Sam Hood, 'Victoria Park Racecourse, Zetland', Hood Collection, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

Betting was seen as a chance for working class people to achieve a degree of prosperity. Working class aspirationists had precious few opportunities to further their financial situation. Betting on racing was one of the most appropriate courses of action. This was especially the case in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when factors such as the depressions of the 1890s and 1920s and low wages meant that middle class strategies for financial security, such as 'savings and investments', were beyond the reach of most of the working class.<sup>4</sup> However, working class people were also known for betting with discipline and moderation throughout this period.<sup>5</sup> Betting was therefore a delicate balancing act, the aim being to claim a windfall for minimal outlay.

The small amounts that working people bet underlines how important betting was as a recreational activity. Besides being exciting and fun, betting also gave working people an opportunity to exercise their intellects. Betting in Australia was intellectualised by the religious use of form guides.<sup>6</sup> The early twentieth century saw many small publications that helped bettors hoping to score major victories. For example, *Davies' Racing Systems That Pay*, was a prescriptive piece that offered advice on modes of betting and how to stick to determined systems.<sup>7</sup> Others offered statistical analysis—the *Guide to Pony Racing*, listed every horse that ran in 1917.<sup>8</sup> The ability to interpret form to find value wins required exceptional analytical capabilities.

Betting also took on importance as a challenge to the accepted order. Betting away from racecourses was illegal at this time, but was accepted by wide sections of the community (see also Chapter 8). Here we see the way working people had their own ideas about appropriate behaviour and that they were willing to defy conditions imposed by authorities. Illegal 'starting price'

(S.P.) bookmakers sprang up all over Sydney. They functioned through wireless radio calls via illegal broadcasts from near the racecourses which relayed information on official bookmakers' prices and barrier positions.<sup>9</sup> This highly organised process shows that popular culture harnessed available new technology to subvert laws, thereby challenging ideals promulgated by the middle classes and enforced by authorities.

### 9.4 Nature of proprietary racing at Victoria Park

How was proprietary racing different to non-proprietary racing run by the principal clubs? Firstly, the calibre of horses competing was different to the thoroughbreds found at Australian Jockey Club meets. The horses competing on the 'pony tracks' were either less capable thoroughbreds or workhorses, usually ponies or hacks.<sup>10</sup> As a result, there were more opportunities for people to own racehorses, since the high costs of competing in thoroughbred racing were avoided. The standard of racing was probably not comparable to thoroughbred racing, although Joynton Smith commented in his autobiography that 'it is not unusual now to see a speedy pony winning important events at Randwick'.<sup>11</sup>

Proprietary racing therefore developed in ways that provided interesting racing, despite the limitations of its participants. The smaller tracks that characterised pony racing meant that the racing generally took place 'within the eyesight range of most people,' giving the opportunity for punters to see the development of the race. Races were generally of sprint distance, more numerous on the daily program and with larger fields of competitors. All these factors meant tighter finishes that were exciting to watch and offered good odds due to the number of legitimate chances in the race.<sup>12</sup>

At a broader level, proprietary racing emphasised different values and purposes from thoroughbred racing. Thorough-

bred racing in part legitimised itself to middle-class critics by pointing out that it provided better quality horses for the agricultural sector and to the military.<sup>13</sup> This form of racing was therefore based around horses which showed proficiency in speed as well as endurance. Pony racing neglected these concerns in favour of the excitement and the ‘good betting races’ that sprint racing provided. We can see that pony racing was more concerned with presenting a spectacle than the Australian Jockey Club and other principal clubs.<sup>14</sup>

It is tempting to assume that proprietary racing was an inferior form of racing. However, proprietary racing had different goals from thoroughbred racing. It appealed to those who enjoyed tight finishes and a high number of chances, as opposed to the two-to-four-mile slogs occasionally raced at Randwick in which the winner was decided early in the race.<sup>15</sup> The idea that it was ‘inferior’ is more likely a result of the hierarchy of sports according to ‘worth’, constructed by middle class observers rather than working class participants.

The Victoria Park Racing Club also followed its own conventions, suitable to its purposes. The best example of this is the disciplinary process that the club adopted. Stewards were employed by proprietary and non-proprietary racing clubs alike, to find and punish owners, jockeys and trainers who broke the rules. The stewards at Victoria Park had different practices, however. While the Australian Jockey Club procedure stated that the AJC stewards ‘must have before them all persons who are charged before hearing any evidence’, the stewards at Victoria Park heard testimony from all witnesses separately.<sup>16</sup> As James Donohoe, stipendiary steward at Victoria Park, stated before a 1923 Parliamentary Select Committee on the conduct and administration of pony racing: ‘If you call the [jockey] in and examine him first, he is likely to make statements contrary to the statements that the owner or trainer make.’<sup>17</sup> He claimed that interviewing separately was necessary in order to get the truth from those appearing before the stewards.

This provides an important indication of the mentality of the racecourse administrators. The Victoria Park stewards were very keen to impose harsh penalties in order to protect the reputation of the sport. In fact, when asked whether the AJC system afforded the accused ‘a better chance’ by the committee, Donohoe’s sardonic reply was ‘Yes, of getting clear.’<sup>18</sup> There was clearly a recognition amongst officials that improper practices had to be stamped out in this code of racing, and they tried to divert attention away from themselves and onto cheating competitors.

This was in part a response to the widely held perception among observers and competitors alike that the administration of proprietary racing was rife with corruption. Proprietary racing was often seen as an inferior sporting contest run by people of dubious character for purely financial reasons. It was alleged that the standard of the breeding of the horses was deliberately kept low for ‘no other purpose than to stimulate gambling.’<sup>19</sup> Pony racing therefore did not have the (so-called) nationalistic and economic justifications of thoroughbred racing. The courses were considered the ‘haunt of thieves’ where dubious practices such as doping and rigging races took place, practices considered to be the result of low prize-money.<sup>20</sup> The races, it was argued, were run purely for profit-making, and the small amount of prize-money put on offer demonstrated this fact.

Proprietary racing was usually run on weekdays as well as weekends. This meant that proprietary course attendance

rates were not affected by AJC meetings on Saturdays and public holidays. Here was more ammunition for the enemies of proprietary racing—their racetrack kept workers from their jobs and so profit was being placed above the prosperity of the nation. Workers were expected to work rather than enjoy recreation. This was the opinion of Joseph A. Wright, who appeared before the Select Committee of 1923 in his capacity as a representative of a league for the abolition of proprietary racing. In his testimony, he also claimed that there was not an honest racing man alive, and that it was necessary to ‘stand in with the crooks’ to make a profit in the sport. Sir Joynnton Smith himself, Wright asserted, was disqualified for life in New Zealand. This last claim was refuted on the basis of Smith’s membership of the AJC.<sup>21</sup>

Accusations of unfair suspension of trainers and owners were also leveled against the officials of the Associated Racing Clubs. The stewards were alleged to have abused their power in order to pursue personal vendettas. Milton Richards, appearing before the committee, claimed to have been ‘forced out’ of pony racing by officials. He also complained that officials required the owner or trainer of any good horse to inform them of the fact, in order to ‘cash in’ on the horse’s success.<sup>22</sup> The Select Committee heard other complaints of this nature, including the case of Charles Edward Stephenson, the trainer of a horse named Queen Costella. The horse was expected to win a second division race at Victoria Park. However, as a result of scratchings, it was put in first division in a bad barrier and was outclassed. According to witness Frederick James Hodges, the officials (who apparently bet on the horse) were ‘very vexed and they threatened to have their revenge on the trainer on some future occasion’. Stephenson was later suspended for twelve months for ‘pulling’ his horse, which he claimed ‘ruined’ him.<sup>23</sup>

The treatment of the animals involved in the sport was considered by opponents of proprietary racing to be substandard. Doping (administering drugs to a horse) was said to be rife. The Select Committee heard the testimony of John Albert Bonser regarding the doping death of his horse Rosie Colour. The horse was found to have a large enough quantity of arsenic in its organs to kill it, but as it had died off the racecourse, the stewards washed their hands off the issue. However, the role of doping may have been overstated. James Douglas Stewart, prominent veterinarian, commented that doping had ‘practically played itself out. [Dopers] probably realise that it does not pay.’<sup>24</sup>

Horses in this period were put under greater stress than current racehorses. This can be seen in the case of Uncle Jim, a horse that ran on Sydney’s pony tracks just before the First World War. In the six and a half months between 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1913 and 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1914, Uncle Jim ran in twenty-four races. He was run in races only four (or less) days apart on eight occasions between 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1914 and 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1914.<sup>25</sup> By comparison, the 2004 Golden Slipper winner Private Steer recently drew admiration for winning three races on three successive Saturdays. This enormous workload was tempered by the fact Uncle Jim usually competed in ‘Flying Handicap’ sprint races. Other sporting contests, such as heavyweight boxing championships, were also held with greater regularity than they are today.

There was obviously some degree of malpractice on the part of the officials and owners of proprietary racing. However, it would be naïve to suggest that other forms of racing were free of corruption or the influence of gambling on its officials. Even



Fig 9.4 Sam Hood ‘Two women collecting winnings’, 1935. Both men and women enjoyed betting on horseraces. (Source: Hood Collection, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

the most prosperous owner in the colonial period needed to bet and win to keep their interest in the sport profitable.<sup>26</sup> Doping was also apparent in thoroughbred racing shortly after the end of proprietary racing in New South Wales. Tarien, winner of the 1953 AJC Doncaster handicap and trained by T.J. Smith, was found to be doped.<sup>27</sup> Clearly malpractice could occur in even the most distinguished of races. Perhaps proprietary racing was unfairly condemned as its opponents were blinded by thoroughbred racing’s perceived status and respectability.

Proprietary racing at Victoria Park was run to rules that generally, but not always, suited its patrons better than other forms of racing. Bettors were certainly favoured, while participants (human and equine) fared less well, although they were given opportunities to compete not afforded them elsewhere.

### 9.5 Proprietary racing circuit: a site of class struggle

The proprietary racing circuit developed around a relationship between mainly middle class proprietors and working class participants. Naturally, the interests of these two groups came into conflict, and it is interesting to observe how the participants reacted to these situations, as it illustrates the dynamics of popular culture. The relationship between the Association of Racing Clubs (ARC) (the proprietors) and the New South Wales Pony Owners, Trainers and Jockeys Association (OTJA) mirrors that of a relationship between employers and employees in a labour dispute. A major dispute developed in 1923 over the registration of two trainers by the ARC who were not members of the OTJA.<sup>28</sup> The OTJA displayed its discontent in two ways: a boycott on August 1923, and through testimony to the Select Committee of 1923.

The August boycott was instigated when the OTJA announced that its members would not compete at the meeting at

Rosebery on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August, holding their own meeting at Kembla Grange instead. As a result, only sixty entries were received for the Rosebery meeting, with a further twenty-two entries pulling out on the day. The boycotting trainers maintained a vigil that outnumbered the sparsely attended meeting at the sand hill overlooking the track, hooting and jeering riders and horses who competed. These horses were considered ‘black’ in the same way that non-union labour is in an industrial dispute.<sup>29</sup>

The ARC had fired a pre-emptive strike against the jockeys at the Kensington meeting on the Wednesday. The jockeys were notified that failure to turn up to the Rosebery meeting would result in the cancellation of their registration, a sanction that was later carried out.<sup>30</sup> The ARC met on Monday, August 20<sup>th</sup> 1923 and further resolved to ‘decline to recognise or have any communication with the New South Wales Pony and Galloway Owners and Trainers Association.’<sup>31</sup> The ARC also allegedly mounted an intimidation campaign against bookmakers who worked at the Kembla Grange meeting.<sup>32</sup> We can see just how jealously the proprietors guarded their authority, and how jealously working people guarded their working conditions, right to organise and recreational activities.

The Select Committee hearings of 1923–1924 were used as a sounding board by the OTJA to air their grievances against the ARC. The first witness, Thomas Dominic Kingsley, Secretary of the Association, used his testimony to express dissatisfaction with the proprietary arrangement of pony racing. One grievance was the lack of prize-money available to trainers and owners compared to their costs. The ARC was only contributing £875 per usual day of racing, to be divided amongst several races, an average stake being £60. The cost of running a horse



**This period of instability and conflict gives us an insight into how the working class participants viewed the sport. Their determination to run their own affairs displays that they felt no inferiority to the middle class proprietors. They were prepared to stand up and fight for their perceived rights as stakeholders in the sport.**

was given as £3 17s 6d. This cost was high, especially considering the low chance of winning every race. The OTJA was also concerned at the capitalist nature of proprietary racing. The original shareholders were accused of ‘watering’ their capital and making quick profits at the expense of ‘starving owners and trainers’. The Racing and Gaming legislation gave the ARC a monopoly over the conduct of pony racing, much to the chagrin of Kingsley. The OTJA wanted a pony course run by themselves under the same sort of arrangement as the Australian Jockey Club, so that they too would become a principal club in charge of their own affairs.<sup>33</sup>

This period of instability and conflict gives us an insight into how the working class participants viewed the sport. Their determination to run their own affairs displays that they felt no inferiority to the middle class proprietors. They were prepared to stand up and fight for their perceived rights as stakeholders in the sport.

Were working class participants exploited by pony racing? This is not a straightforward question, as the life of Sir James Joynton Smith himself shows. Smith was born in England to working class parents in 1858. Although his first jobs were menial in nature, he later became a successful hotel licensee in New Zealand. He went back to England in 1886, gambled away his first fortune, but recovered prosperity upon returning to the Antipodes. He was successful both in hotels and sporting investments, such as promotion of sporting events (such as the Kangaroos versus Wallabies rugby tests of 1909), Victoria Park and newspapers such as *The Referee* (from 1930). He accepted a knighthood in 1920.<sup>34</sup>

This life could be interpreted a number of ways. A Marxist reading might see Smith as exploiting the working classes in the relentless pursuit of profit. A liberal view might see his story as a triumph, celebrating the ability of the working man to shape his own destiny. There was undoubtedly some measure of exploitation in the relationship between Smith and his patrons. Smith himself avoided gambling altogether after his first disastrous loss. However, this did not stop him from prospering ‘through his concentration on the pastimes of the people’, a nice euphemism for providing gambling opportunities.<sup>35</sup> The meagre prize-money Smith provided might also be described as exploitative. In his defence, Smith pointed to the example of James Joseph Donohoe, who, as inaugural manager of Victoria Park, accumulated a major punting fortune, for his wife had invested his windfalls into property.<sup>36</sup> Property ownership no doubt gave gambling tycoons an increased legitimacy.

However, it is important to remember that proprietary racing gave people opportunities to participate in racing that other bodies such as the Australian Jockey Club were reluctant to provide. Smith in turn benefited from working class patronage in other ways. He was elected Lord Mayor of Sydney Municipal Council in 1917, a position he was able to achieve only through the support of Labor councilors. Smith’s patronage of sport also boosted his own vision of himself as a sportsman.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, proprietary racing probably provided mutual benefits. The prevalence of gambling is not seen as a widespread or endemic social problem by historians such as O’Hara and Waterhouse, since generally only small amounts of money were wagered. Further, describing racing and betting as purely exploitative denies working class participants their cultural agency—the way they expressed their values on their own terms.

### 9.6 The end of proprietary racing

Proprietary racing was wound up in 1943 after the passing of the Sydney Turf Club Bill in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. This bill endeavoured to

incorporate a Sydney Turf Club and to...provide for the acquisition by that club of certain racecourses and the equipment thereof; to provide for the discontinuation of the licenses of certain racecourses [including Victoria Park]; to provide for the establishment of a Racing Compensation Fund in the treasury...<sup>38</sup>

The move to end proprietary racing was fuelled by a number of concerns. Labor premier Sir W. J. McKell expressed a ‘Labor man’s distaste for racing profits going into the pockets of company shareholders.’<sup>39</sup> Racing under non-proprietary control was also thought to provide more opportunities to develop the sport, as the profits were put back into the sport.<sup>40</sup> Non-proprietary racing would provide higher prize-money, which, it was believed, would improve the quality of race-horses. Non-proprietary racing was also seen as a way to clean up practices such as rigging that had long haunted the racing industry. The commitment of parliamentarians was so strong that the matter was addressed in a ‘non-party spirit’, in the words of opposition Member for Lismore, Mr. Frith.<sup>41</sup> In fact, while the second reading of the bill resulted in a great deal of debate over the issue of compensation for previous owners of the racecourses, there was no debate at all over the measure to end proprietary racing.<sup>42</sup>

Here we can see that ideas about the ‘acceptability’ of sport were constructed by social concerns. Sport was given a higher value than mere recreation, for example, and it tended to be seen as incompatible with business and profit. Frith was moved to comment that ‘nothing has tended to damage the value of sport in this country more than commercialisation’. The late nineteenth century notion of Muscular Christianity, or amateur sport as a way to create a strong Christian (and by default male) ‘race’ capable of defending itself against threats, was still clearly quite strong.

Sport was also invested with nationalistic aims. The Australian Jockey Club was lauded as a model, due to its contribution to wartime patriotic funds. Sport was a way that Australians reinforced their identification with British ideals and the Empire, which were still important for the Australian self-image. Non-proprietary horse racing was lauded by Mr. Greig of Drummoyne as having a ‘tremendous attraction for British communities.’<sup>43</sup> Racing was even tied to the pioneer legend. Mr Finnan, Member for Hawkesbury, attributed clean, moral and

democratic ideals to the pioneers of the Hawkesbury Racing Club, which had been:

formed in the days of our grandfathers and pioneers, with the one objective of providing good, clean racing and appropriate prize-money for those participating in the sport.<sup>44</sup>

So non-proprietary sport was considered to be the ideal method for the provision of sporting recreation. This had clear implications for working class participants in sport. Their ability to build a sporting culture that suited their own needs was hindered by these and other forces. Proprietary racing, despite its shortcomings, had been an opportunity to challenge these boundaries and to set their own recreational agenda, one which was based around enjoyment of their leisure time and the chance of a big win, rather than notions of nation, race and morality.

Yet the immediate effect of the prohibition of proprietary racing on its working class constituency is hard to judge. Most histories of popular culture describe the end of proprietary racing in a single sentence, which suggests that it passed with little fanfare or protest.<sup>45</sup> There may be a number of reasons for this. Working class interest had probably been drawn to principal clubs by factors such as the phenomenal rise of Phar Lap, ‘the people’s champion’. The working class presence at the Randwick track had already been felt more keenly. Other forms of racing, such as trotting and greyhound racing also came into vogue in working class circles. Trotting came to prominence in 1949, when night trotting was instituted. Greyhound racing was prominent in New South Wales from 1938–1939, when 1693 meetings were held across forty-seven clubs.<sup>46</sup> The traditionally working class nature of these forms of racing displays a changing emphasis towards other sports amongst racegoers. Another factor may simply be that Sydney was rapidly becoming a motor transport city, and there were fewer horses in city areas at this time, compared to earlier periods.

### 9.7 Postscript—Victoria Park after the racecourse

Like other racecourses around Sydney, Victoria Park Racecourse was used for military purposes as the Second World War began to seriously threaten Australia. After the war, the site was sold off and converted into an industrial precinct. One of the companies established here, British Leyland, produced the much-maligned Leyland P–76, infamous for consistently breaking down. With the downturn in secondary industry and the closure of plants (see Chapter 6), the area came under the control of Landcom in the late 1990s. Ultra-modern high-rise apartment buildings now dominate the area.

This development includes two public parks. The first park is known as the ‘Tote Park’, a small complex accessed from the Joynton Avenue entrance. This park is based around the Totalisator Building, which dates from the days of the racecourse and at present houses the marketing department for the Victoria Park development. The retention of this building is an example of the impact of current heritage sensibilities and policies. In the past the building would have been removed and this important artefact of popular culture would have been lost. The Tote building has been partly restored, with impressions, rather than total restorations, of the ‘In’ and ‘Out’ signs on the side of the betting windows incorporated into the paint work. These are tokens meant to symbolise the site’s racing history, but suggest that it is all in the past and finished. Their full restoration would enhance and celebrate this history, and

perhaps remind people that racing culture is not just ‘in the past’—it is still with us.

History has been remembered in other ways in Tote Park. The plantings feature species typical of the wetlands which once covered this area, while native trees, though still immature and sparse, will grow to provide good tree cover. The benches have a series of plaques detailing historical information about the site’s past as a wetland, the racecourse, subsequent industrial development and the future of the site as a residential precinct. Another collection of plaques set at ground level provide a corresponding pictorial record which complements the text on the benches. One problem with the presentation is that it is a bit hard to find the matching plaques and negotiate the area. The plaque about the racecourse is tucked away at the back, almost out of public view. Overall, too, the plaques offer an extremely consensual, laudatory history, some of which verges on propaganda for Landcom. They do allow a measure of basic familiarisation with the site, but they leave out what was really important: the issues which were contested in the past, the things that mattered to people and over which they fought. We have seen the way the users of Victoria Park Racecourse imposed their own culture on the site, shaped it to suit their tastes and hopes. This history cannot really be told without mentioning the various conflicts that took place at the site. Readers might also connect these past struggles with present-day issues over space, work and popular culture.

Joynton Park, which is further towards South Dowling Street, is much larger, containing a massive expanse of grassed area about the size of a rugby league field, ringed by young trees. There are twin water features in the form of stepped waterfalls and a common area with barbeques at the southern end. Another reconstructed wetland to the west demonstrates again how radically Sydney’s sensibilities have changed with regard to these types of environments. While in the past swamps were considered wasteland, they are now recognised and celebrated as natural heritage by the parks’ designers.

Like the Green Square area generally, this is a landscape still in transition. The residential development is incomplete, so the area is not well populated and lacks a certain energy. The place appears a little desolate; the trees need time to grow. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however, for it does leave room for the new residents to impose their own imprint on their own site. The large open spaces may seem daunting, but they can be used in many different ways, and, as the history of Victoria Park Racecourse tells us, this is essential for the development of a vibrant popular culture. Earlier generations of people created a particular place for their popular culture here. They used their leisure time on their own terms, participating in what was considered an unfashionable sport, but one that was tailored to suit their own needs. They struggled with middle class proprietors for control of the sport. And the dynamism of this sporting culture is evident in the way it adapted to new circumstances after 1943. It is not necessary to mourn the end of proprietary racing, as the culture at its heart it is still alive, albeit in a different form.



# Chapter 10

# A History of the Pubs around Green Square

Anna Gauchat



Fig. 10.1 Helen Gauchat, 'Barmaid and Patron'. Pubs were not just places where men drank, but where they gathered.<sup>1</sup>

## 10.1 Introduction

Some friends of mine have been living in one of the new apartment blocks around Green Square for the last six months. They find it a convenient place to live, as it is close to transport, the university and the city. I often ask them what they know about the area's past. They respond with blank faces, shrugging their shoulders. 'What history?' they say 'There is no history around there'. As a student studying history, and a resident of Sydney for the last twelve years, I find this saddening. It seems that Green Square is perhaps one of the least historically documented areas in Sydney, so it is not surprising that the thousands of new residents have no idea of what and who was here before, or how the place developed.

Writing about pubs in the area is one important way of exploring this urban past. We can also examine the wider roles pubs played making Australian society, popular culture and identity, and how these changed over time. Public drinking places are distinctive according to the culture and society in which they emerge, and they provide an environment where 'social interaction and social bonding' can occur.<sup>2</sup> Australian pubs are supposed to be egalitarian places, where drinkers can meet, drink and talk regardless of class, race and age. The numerous bars, beer gardens, lounges and gaming areas in Australian pubs have evolved to cater for the various kinds of socialising that happens in them.

We can also examine the culture of drinking itself, the effects that alcohol has on individuals and groups and the role it plays in social interaction. For centuries, humans have used alcohol in symbolic and ritual ways to celebrate, to break out of the normal or everyday routines, to congratulate, or 'share in brotherhood'.<sup>3</sup> Alcohol is an intoxicating substance—the action of ethanol on the body causes 'altered states of consciousness' and tends to dissolve inhibitions, allowing people to 'relax'.<sup>4</sup> Hence, pubs can be places where people feel freer from the usual social norms—for example, conversing with a total stranger does not seem unusual. Pubs can have a feeling of commonality. Traditional Australian drinking rituals and habits include 'shouting' rounds of drinks for others and toasting; alcohol is a major part of almost any celebration, relaxation and leisure activities, especially where people come together.

## 10.2 Early colonial hotels

The early Australian pubs were a fusion of the English style taverns, alehouses and inns that accommodated both locals and travellers.<sup>5</sup> By the 1830s, the production of beer, wine and spirits became an important element of the colonial economy and after the 1850s there were at least a dozen separate breweries in Sydney, one of which, the Tooths' Brewery, operated in Alexandria.<sup>6</sup> Hotels were commonly located in the centre of populated areas, often on the corner of each street. The vast number of hotels which appeared between the 1850s and 1900s is indicative both of the demand for public houses in residential and industrial areas and of the profits to be made in the hotel trade (see also Chapter 8). The pubs were

used as public meeting places, and provided accommodation, refreshments, and a place for social interaction for weary travellers and industrial workers.<sup>7</sup> Drinking was a popular form of leisure activity for Australian people, and by 1958 historian Russell Ward wrote rather boastfully that ‘no people on the face of the Earth ever absorbed more alcohol per head of people’.<sup>8</sup>

This may have been more wishful thinking than fact however. Tony Dingle’s careful research on the amount of alcohol imported and consumed showed that the amount Australians drank was high during times of economic prosperity, but fell in hard times.<sup>9</sup> Alcohol was related to leisure, not necessity, and working class people were unlikely to spend a large portion of their wages on it. Nevertheless, Richard Waterhouse maintains that the ‘working class spent a larger proportion of their income on alcohol than the middle classes’.<sup>10</sup>

So while Australians seem to revel in a reputation for heavy drinking, in fact they drink no more than people of other nations. Australians were third in the world in terms of alcohol consumed per capita in 1975, but this fell to 19<sup>th</sup> in 1999.<sup>11</sup> Today they rank only 93/94<sup>th</sup> in the world.<sup>12</sup>

**10.3 The emergence of hotels**

By at least 1853, nine publicans in the Waterloo and Alexandria areas had already been granted licences to serve travellers and local workers employed in the woolwashes, tanneries and other local industries (see table 10.1).<sup>13</sup> The first of these was the Waterloo Retreat, located on Retreat Street, on the Alexandria side of Botany Road, owned by Thomas Roston.<sup>14</sup>

As Susannah Frith and Jeff Fairman have shown (Chapters 6 and 7), housing and industry boomed in the new suburbs of Waterloo and Alexandria from the 1880s, and with population and industry, came pubs. By 1886, there were 22 within a two kilometre radius in Waterloo alone (see table 10.2). The high concentration of hotels in the area is attributed to the demography of Alexandria and Waterloo, which were largely working class suburbs. Carolyn Allport observes that in order to sustain a community ‘there was usually a grocer and a hotel on most intersections’.<sup>15</sup>

In 1872 the area was endowed with the much prized first-ever bust of Captain James Cook, set above the handsome and appropriately named Captain Cook Hotel (run by the equally appropriately named Edward Punch). The bust faced towards the exact point on Botany Bay upon which the ‘intrepid explorer first set foot on dry land’. The *Town and Country Journal* reported that the new hotel was a blend of classic and modern English styles, creating a building of ‘elegant and imposing appearance’.<sup>17</sup>

Others soon followed. George Whiting built the Grosvenor Hotel in 1881, which was licensed to a Mrs Jane Stocks.<sup>18</sup> The Cauliflower Inn was built on an earlier market garden where cauliflowers had been cultivated, and was valued at £180 by the municipal valuer. The Camelia Grove Hotel also recalled earlier features—it was named after the Camelia Grove Gardens which were owned by the Henderson family, who were one of the first European families in the area.<sup>19</sup> By 1890, however, this number had decreased somewhat, to nineteen hotels in Waterloo and thirteen in Alexandria—perhaps as a result of the onset of economic depression.<sup>20</sup>

The ownership of licensed hotels was a sound investment for landlords, who received an income from their tenants. Many entrepreneurial investors bought land for private use, and leased the hotel and licences to publicans. Those made wealthy by real estate and hotels included landlords such as Patrick Hogan, owner of the Mount Lachlan Hotel, and publicans like one Mrs Hill, who also owned four single-storied cottages.<sup>21</sup> Mrs McElhinney, the licensee for the Waterloo Retreat Hotel in the 1890s, was also the leaseholder for a number of properties adjacent to pub which were rented to market gardeners, and were criticised for their poor condition, as Melita Rogowsky makes clear in Chapter 12.

**10.4 The Liquor Act 1882 (amended 1883)**

The liquor licensing laws stipulated the responsibilities of license holders in regards to the sale of alcohol. Besides giving us an idea of how a law-abiding pub might be run, they convey the concerns that the law-makers and society generally had with pubs, and the way pubs were dominated by white males.<sup>22</sup> The policing of the alcohol trade was nominally very strict. Hoteliers were threatened with penalties, imprisonment and fines for any breaches to the Liquor Act.

The annual payment for a publican’s license was £30. The law insisted that when a female licensee married, she had to hand over all her rights and liabilities to her husband. If this transfer was not performed within two weeks of the marriage, the license became void. If the licensee become a lunatic, the licence was placed in the hands of an agent.

Publicans were expected to control who had access to alcohol, the behaviour of their clients and uphold standards of morality. The penalty for supplying Aboriginal people and children under the age of 16 with alcohol of any type was anywhere from £2 to £10. Hotels were not to be used for prostitution (as was common in earlier years) and publicans could be evicted for allowing it. Music and dancing were not permitted unless they had been approved by the local Licensing Magistrate. People thought to be common prostitutes, thieves, drunken or

Table 10.1 Hotels and licensees in the Green Square area (from *Sands Sydney Directory*, 1853)

Hotel	Location	Licensee
Redfern Inn		J. Chambers
The Waterloo Retreat	Retreat Street	Thomas Roston
Londonderry Inn	Botany Road	Edward Hickson
Redfern Hotel	Botany Street	Harris Thomas
Salutation Inn	Botany Road	Thomas B. Goldfinch
Halfway House Hotel	Botany Road	Maurice O’Rourke
Sportsmans’ Arms	Botany Road and Redfern Street	Peter Walsh
Cottage of Content Hotel	Pitt and Bathurst Streets	John Vierra
Commercial Hotel	Sussex and King Streets	Robert Yeend

Table 10.2

Hotels and licensees in the Green Square area (from *Licensed Victualler’s Directory*, 1886)<sup>16</sup>

Hotel	Location	Licensee
Alexandria Hotel	Wishart and Raglan Street Alexandria	Mary Cath
Australian Inn	106 Botany Street Waterloo	
Balaclava Hotel	Buckland Street Alexandria	John Gamble
Bee-Hive Hotel	Cooper and Raglan Streets Waterloo	Henry Vincent
Boundary Hotel	Paramatta Road Alexandria	W.M Neilan
Camelia Grove Hotel	146 Henderson Road Alexandria	Augusta Nolan
Captain Cook Hotel	Botany Street Moore Park	Edward Punch
Cauliflower Hotel	123 Botany Road Waterloo	Geo. Rolfe
Cheerful Home Hotel	Botany Road Waterloo	Thos. Curry
Clifton Hotel	Botany Road Waterloo	Thos. D. Hutton
Commercial Hotel	Botany Road Alexandria	Jos. Parry
Cottage of Content Hotel	Pitt and Raglan Streets Waterloo	F.P Tass
Cricketers’ Arms Hotel	Raglan Street and Botany Road Alexandria	James Binham
Duke of Wellington Hotel	100 George Street Waterloo	Wm Roff
Empress of India Hotel	Botany Road Alexandria	Jas. Park
Evening Star Hotel	Raglan and George Streets, Waterloo	Isaac Banks
Fitzroy Hotel	3 Cooper Street Waterloo	Eugene Downey
George Hotel	102 Elizabeth Streets Waterloo	Mustchlin Geo
Grosvenor Hotel	Moorehead and Philip Streets Waterloo	Michael Lyons
Halfway House Hotel	391 Botany Road Waterloo	E.J. Currie
Iron Duke	175 Botany Road Waterloo	Mchl H. Tierney
Lord Raglan Hotel	Raglan Street Alexandria	Jno. Rice
Middlesborough Hotel	George and Raglan Streets Waterloo	Jno. Rutherford
Mount Lachlan Hotel	33 Elizabeth Street Waterloo	Geo Humphries
New Waterloo Retreat	Botany Road Waterloo	Patrick J. Boyle
Prince of Wales Hotel	Cooper and Raglan Streets Waterloo	Martin Gibbons
Princess of Wales Hotel	34 Cooper Street Waterloo	Jno. Connell
Rose of Australia Hotel	Buckland Street Waterloo	Jane Parker
Rose of Denmark Hotel	2 Buckland Street Waterloo	Philomena Hansman
Salutation Inn	Botany Road Alexandria	John E Gibbons
Sportsmans’ Arms Hotel	Botany Road and Raglan Street Waterloo	Ellen Wallace
Star Hotel	Botany Road Alexandria	Thos. J. Murphy
Stephney Hotel	Raglan and Phillip Streets Alexandria	A.L. Brierly
Sportsmans’ Arms Hotel		Peter Welsh
Clifton Hotel		Charley Keen
Compass Hotel	Pitt Street Waterloo	(publican n/a)
Bugle Horn		Mr James Marland
The Salutation Inn	(previously a hostelry)	
Zetland Hotel	936/8 Bourke Street Waterloo	

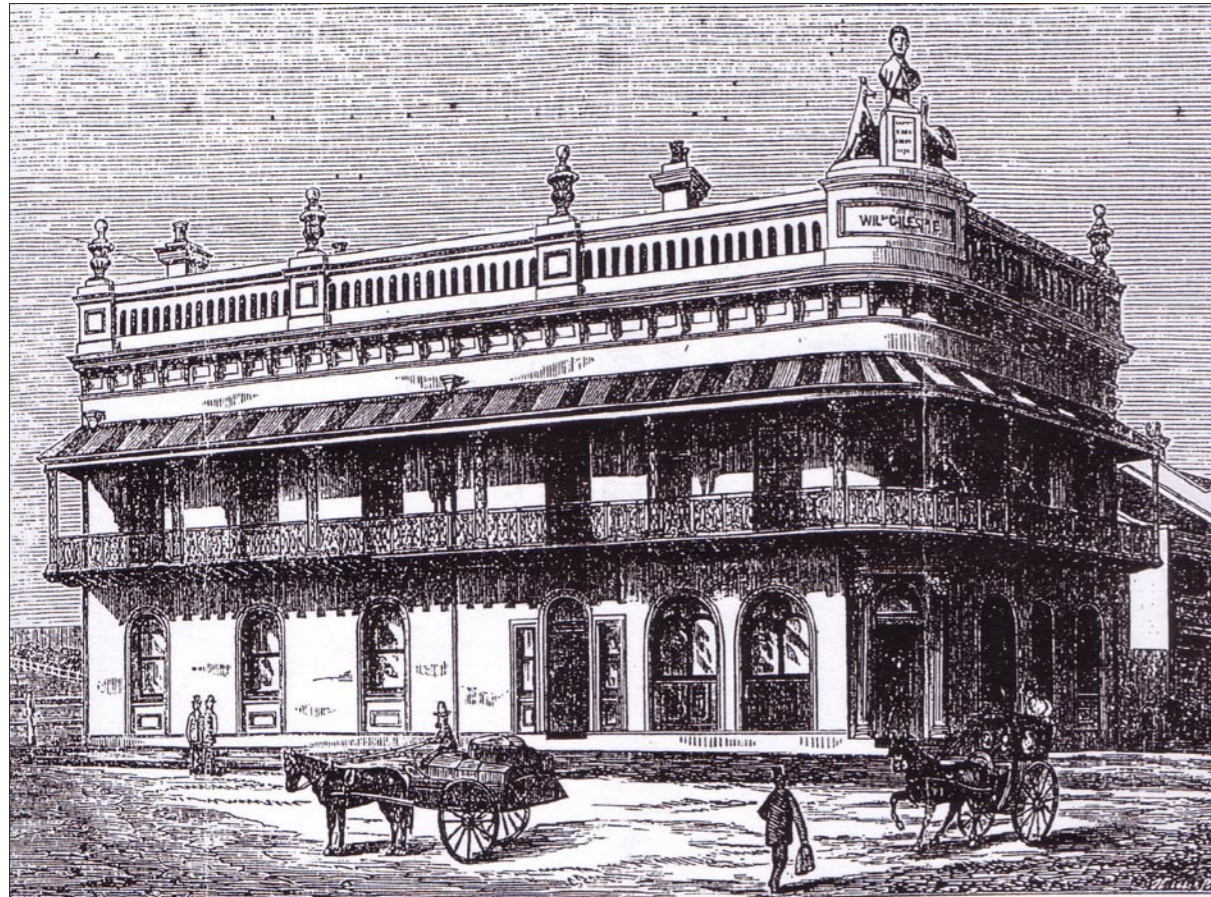


Fig. 10.2 Pride of Moore Park: The Captain Cook Hotel 1872. (Source: *Town and Country Journal*, 9 November 1872, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

disorderly, or of notoriously bad character that were found on the premises could cost the licensee £10.

The sale of alcohol itself was also minutely regulated. Drinks were to be sold according to imperial measure. The hours trading were restricted to between 6am and 11pm, and not allowed at all on Sundays. Any breaches of these trading hours could see the licensee imprisoned or fined £20. The version of the Licensing Act provided in the Licensee Manual, 1883, included helpful advice from publican C.O. Smithers: ‘Have nothing voluntarily to do with the police’.<sup>23</sup>

Publicans were represented by the United Licensed Victuallers Association (ULVA), formed in 1873 and responsible for informing licensees of the NSW liquor licensing laws. According to the Australian Hotels Association, the ULVA had been established specifically in response to the temperance movement gathering support in this period.<sup>24</sup> Despite these laws and penalties and the existence of ULVA, breaches were commonplace and often reported in the local press (see below) along with reports of failed licence applications and the occasional absent-minded drinker.<sup>25</sup>

**10.5 Pubs as recreational space: a gendered environment**

Pubs were important social gathering places and a distinctive ‘pub culture’ arose from urban hotels, such as those listed above. The pubs were centres of urban life in which patrons engaged in entertainment such as skittles, quoits, billiards, sing-song nights and of course drinking. They were also places men could find out where they could get work and other information. The layout of the bar was designed for a

‘drop-in’ trade of workers, who could sit on stools at the bar or nearby to drink and talk.<sup>26</sup> As Vance and Neilsen point out, pubs were frequented by S.P. bookmakers, who took bets on horses for the nearby racecourses in Randwick and Victoria Park. Gambling in pubs also included two-up and card games (see also Chapters 8 and 9).

Working-class pubs were, however, largely restricted to men and off-limits to women. Women were seen behind the bar as barmaids or as hotel licensees, but not generally as patrons. Working class women did not usually patronise bars, as women in hotels were widely assumed to be prostitutes. For many women it was socially unacceptable to participate in the drinking and gambling, and impossible to join in the male world of the pub in any case. There were designated ‘Ladies Lounges’ in which women were served food and some alcohol, but they were in a separate room from the main bar. Women were permitted to buy alcohol from the side rooms of public houses and local stores but they would drink it in private in the company of other women.<sup>27</sup> Even barmaids who had served behind the main public bars were forbidden to drink in them, and were relegated to the ‘Ladies Lounge’.

But pubs were not entirely male domains, as many women were in fact license holders and employees of hotels, actively engaged in their management and functions. In her study of barmaids, Diane Kirkby divides women’s roles into four categories: they were the owners of freehold titles, lessees, licensees or employees.<sup>28</sup> Since the earliest years of the colony, hotels offered women opportunities for employment which were socially acceptable, as they involved domestic skills such

**Reports from *The Suburban Times*, *Redfern*, *Waterloo*, *Alexandria*, *Darlington* and *Botany Gazetteer*, 1899**

**14 January 1899**

‘Wanted a Free Drink’—A William Leahy was charged by the Redfern Police for ‘refusing to pay for a glass of beer supplied by an employee, John Rose Locke licensee of Morning Star Hotel, Redfern. Leahy claimed that he had ordered a beer for himself and an acquaintance. The acquaintance then left the hotel, and Leahy did not realise he was expected to pay for both. He was sentenced to three days imprisonment.

**21 January 1899**

‘Licensing Application’—An application for a licence for a proposed La Perouse Hotel denied, because there was insignificant traffic flow in the street. In the same area there were three hotels within a 500 yard radius. A vote in Redfern was made against the increase of licensed hotels in the district, in the last nine years, seven applications had been denied.

**18 February 1899**

‘Licence Banned’—Thomas Peacocke licensee of Cottage of Content Hotel, was fined two pounds and costs or fourteen days imprisonment for selling liquor on a Sunday. He was

charged by Inspector Garland of Redfern Police, and the second charge of 7s 4d costs was withdrawn.

**25 February 1899**

‘Drunk and Disorderly’—On Thursday of that week, William Belshaw aged 43 was charged 10s for being drunk and disorderly on Cleveland Street, and an extra 20s for using bad language on Castlereagh Street.

**8 May 1899**

‘Illegal Liquor Traffic’—Matthew Ryan licensee of George Hotel and Mary Carroll licensee of Lord Raglan Hotel were charged three pounds and 5s 6d costs for selling liquor on a Sunday. James Roche was fined three pounds for keeping his hotel open after the designated closing times.

**23 April 1899**

Charles Kirk was fined three pounds for delaying the admittance of Inspector Thomas Van from entering the Boundary Hotel. The inspector was prevented from entering for fourteen minutes.

Table 10.3 Hotels in the Green Square area, 1949–1969<sup>44</sup>

Hotel	Location
Abbots Hotel	47 Botany Road Waterloo
Alexandria Hotel	35 Henderson Road Alexandria
Australia Inn	219 Botany Street Waterloo
Balaclava Hotel	50 Mitchell Street Alexandria
Bow Bells Hotel	20 Botany Road Alexandria (new)
Boundary Hotel	Wyndham Street Alexandria
Camelia Grove Hotel	146 Henderson Road Alexandria
Cauliflower Hotel	123 Botany Road Waterloo
Clifton Hotel	Botany Road Waterloo
Cricketers’ Arms Hotel	58 Botany Road Alexandria
Duke of Wellington	291 George Street Waterloo
George Hotel	760 Elizabeth Street Waterloo
Glenroy Hotel	246 Botany Road Waterloo
Grosvenor	153/155 Phillip Street (Cnr Morehead St) Waterloo
Iron Duke Hotel	220 Botany Road Alexandria
Lord Raglan Hotel	12 Henderson Road Alexandria
Moore Park View Hotel	853 Dowling Street Waterloo
Mount Lachlan Hotel	663 Elizabeth Street Waterloo
Park View Hotel	180 Mitchell Road Alexandria
Rose of Denmark	98 Wellington Street Waterloo
Star Hotel	170 Botany Road Alexandria
Zetland Hotel	936/8 Bourke Street Waterloo

as serving food and drink, cleaning and cooking, outside the confines of the household.<sup>29</sup>

Barmaids were a popular feature of most hotels, but they were constantly criticised by moral reform groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which lobbied for a law to prevent their employment.<sup>30</sup> The WCTU wanted to raise the status of women in the community, and they saw the male culture of drinking and gambling as damaging to women, especially dependent wives and their children. They believed that barmaids were hired primarily as sexual objects to entice male drinkers and argued that such practices 'degrade, debase and lower the standard of womanhood'. Yet few gave much thought to the economic independence such work provided to women.<sup>31</sup> Eventually the reformers triumphed in some states and barmaids were banned in the first decade of the twentieth century. While this did not occur in NSW, an age restriction was introduced in 1905. Women had to be over twenty-one to work as barmaids, unless they were the wives or daughters of publicans.<sup>32</sup>

#### 10.6 Six o'clock closing, drinking culture and pub layout

In 1918, the Temperance campaigners were also successful in restricting another major element of the pub trade. Six o'clock closing was introduced during the First World War, and would remain in force for the next forty years.<sup>33</sup> It was an attempt to prevent the nation's young men from getting drunk and disorderly, rather than going off to fight. Another concern was the impact of alcohol on returned soldiers afflicted with shell shock or nerve trouble.<sup>34</sup> Women's lobby groups argued that six o'clock closing would benefit married women enormously

and promote family life, since men would no longer be able to spend entire evenings and family incomes in hotels.

However, the new closing time had some unintended outcomes. It changed the nature of pub culture dramatically, and further restricted patronage to men. Pubs and hotels were forced to change the physical layout of their bars to cater for the 'rush hour' of patrons who had sixty minutes to drink beer after their days' work. Ironically it encouraged a new culture of high intensity drinking: 'sculling' as much alcohol as possible in a short time. This form of drinking became infamous as the 'six o'clock swill'.

Pubs became 'high pressure drinking houses', which emphasized speed of service, little conversation and considerable amounts of cleaning up. Hotels adapted by allowing as much space for the bar as possible, so there were few chairs, as the customers were more concerned about getting their drinks than sitting down. Games and billiards tables and other furniture were removed to allow a greater number of people to access the bar. Interiors were redesigned for easier cleaning, with tiled walls and linoleum or sawdust floors to ensure the relatively fast removal of the inevitable mess. Beer pulls were made to pour a constant flow of the liquid, and few bottled beers were available.<sup>35</sup> Patrons would line their beers up on the bar and drink as many as they could before the doors closed and they were forced to return home or move on to a sly grog place.<sup>36</sup> Husbands no doubt came home to their wives in states of mild to severe intoxication. As for the impact on consumption overall, Dingle argues that the amount of alcohol consumed did not decline with the new closing times, and that

the alcohol imports and the production of locally brewed beer did not alter significantly either.<sup>37</sup>

#### 10.7 The 1930s Depression

The Depression of the 1930s had a particularly devastating effect on areas like Alexandria and Waterloo because so many people relied on industry for their livelihood. The area was renowned for its long job queues, handouts, soup kitchens, poor housing and daily evictions.<sup>38</sup> Since people's disposable income shrank dramatically, the Depression was especially difficult for retail trades, such as hotels. Family run businesses were forced to make ends meet by whatever means they could. Delene Hagan, present owner of the Green Square Hotel (formerly the Zetland Hotel), recounts that her mother and aunts were made to work behind the bar in the then Zetland Hotel when they were still young.<sup>39</sup> The girls would sit up on a bench and give the men their change. This story is important because it allows us a glimpse of what was really happening in hotels—that the girls were underage and yet worked in a licensed area. It was nevertheless consistent with legislation allowing a publican to employ his wife and daughters in the hotel.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the economic difficulties, there was still a strong sense of community in the area and the pubs and their publicans continued to play an important role. Of particular note is Bernie Fallon, grandfather of Delene Hagan and licensee of the Zetland Hotel between 1936 and 1954. Bernie Fallon was known as a notoriously bad driver, an S.P. bookmaker and a strong personality in the local community.<sup>41</sup> Nobody knows how he came to possess enough money to buy the hotel; however, Hagan supposes that his links with the Victoria Park racecourse may have had something to do with it. On Sundays, Fallon would allow his regulars to gather in the back section of the hotel, where they could not be seen from the road. Here the men were slipped drinks from the bar and placed their bets. Despite breaking the licensing laws, Bernie Fallon donated a lot of money to the St Carmel Catholic Church. The Fallons also hosted an annual function for the local Labor Party members and supporters and patrons of the Zetland Hotel. Fallon was famous for another important reason as well. Each Christmas time he would don the red suit as Santa Claus and the children would eagerly follow him down the road, receiving gifts and sweets.<sup>42</sup> Bernie's legacy is just one of the histories captured in the walls of this old pub.

#### 10.8 The post war period: a moral challenge

After the Second World War, Waterloo and Redfern were regarded as run-down unsavoury 'slums' by outsiders and authorities, and targeted for slum-clearance programs (see also Chapter 7).<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, some more hotels were built, adding to the older stock.

We also have a rare account of the area, the people and the impact of pubs from someone who actually lived there. The Reverend George van Eerde was posted to the Redfern Methodist Church as Superintendent of the Mission, and in his memoirs he recorded his views on the working class suburbs in which he found himself. In his view, men were encouraged to drink at an early age because of the depressing character of the environment. Their houses were small and crowded, so men frequented public spaces such as streets and pubs to get away from these living conditions. Van Eerde claimed that there were some 72 pubs for men to visit, all of which encouraged S.P. gambling, drinking and crime, which would often result in the imprisonment of young men. Men would 'drown their sorrows in alcohol and seek the solace of male company in the hotel'.<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, van Eerde was sympathetic to the plight of women in these areas, whom he viewed as the victims of their social circumstances, including child-care responsibilities, low wages, prostitution and the physical control of their husbands. He believed that drinking worsened the suffering of women and children and caused unnecessary damage to family life. Men, van Eerde suggested, needed to 'drink less, spend more money on household food, and care more for their families'. And he practiced what he preached, often accompanying women on pay day to encourage men to hand over their money to their wives and not to beer. He was also known to actually take beer out of men's hands, pour it into the gutter and put the bottles in a nearby bin. The men would respond with verbal and physical abuse, yet they allowed the Superintendent to persist because they relied on the Church for hand-outs. In the face of such challenges, men justified their need for alcohol because they saw their drinking habits 'as a harmless pastime enabling them to face their wives and failures with laughter'.<sup>46</sup>

Van Eerde worked in other ways to benefit the area. He drew the Council's attention to the exploitation of tenants by landlords who did not maintain their properties. He insisted on a Council review of public facilities that excluded women from social activities, and he suggested they create places for social interaction which were not related to alcohol and which would be better venues than 'morally loose' environments of dance halls and hotels.

#### 10.9 Urban redevelopment 1950–1970s and the emergence of licensed clubs

In the 1950s, pub culture was again challenged by new developments in the hospitality trade. Accommodation was now also supplied by motels, but more importantly, licensed clubs were providing more comfortable surroundings for socialising. Clubs offered a new type of leisure venue, incorporating spacious, comfortable and sometimes glamorous drinking areas, seating, games-rooms, restaurants, entertainment and they were often affiliated with local sporting teams. From 1956 poker machines were also legal in licensed clubs. Unlike pubs, clubs were respectable places where men and women could enjoy a night out together, although women were not full-members but guests of their husbands, or boyfriends.<sup>47</sup> Clubs were allowed to sell liquor outside hotel hours, although in 1955 the 'six o'clock swill' came to an end with the introduction of 10 o'clock closing for hotels. From 1963, too, hotels were no longer required to have a meal break in the middle of the day.<sup>48</sup>

The new closing time meant that pubs, once more, had to cater for customers staying for a longer period of time. They began to refurbish, incorporating saloons, lounges, beer gardens and gaming areas for darts, quoits and billiards.<sup>49</sup> Hotels also had links with local sporting teams like the South Sydney District Rugby League team which in turn were closely linked with the community network. John Ferris, a resident of Waterloo for forty years says that 'it was all about football'.<sup>50</sup> Pictures of the Alexandria Rovers, a first grade team, still adorn the walls of the Glenroy Hotel.

The immediate post war period thus saw perhaps the greatest shift in attitudes to and laws concerning drinking and hotels, and the pubs changed in response. What took longer to change were laws concerning Indigenous Australians, who were not permitted to consume, buy or possess alcohol, even in private, until the 1960s.<sup>51</sup>



Fig. 10.3 Strom Gould, 'Drawing the Meat Tray', 1979, showing a scene common in pubs across the nation. (Source: Cedric Flower, *Clothing in Australia*. All reasonable attempts have been made to locate the owners of this painting. Any information would be appreciated by the editors.)

### 10.10 The 80s and 90s: Alexandria, Zetland and Waterloo

As we have seen so far, pubs have had both positive and negative impacts on the community. Many sources point out that the incidence of crime, alcoholism and poverty were a serious problem for the area in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>52</sup> Helen Hayes observes that in the South Sydney region alone, the combination of crime, drug racketing, poverty and alcoholism caused crime rates to increase by 121.6 per cent from 1980–83.<sup>53</sup> Senior Constable John Watkins supports this claim, stating that Alexandria and Waterloo were particularly affected by drug dealers who based themselves in the area.<sup>54</sup>

The Iron Duke Hotel developed a notorious reputation as being a ‘bikey club’ with strippers, bar fights and rough crowds. Diana Logan, a resident in the area in the early 90s, can remember loud punk bands that played there each week.<sup>55</sup> The hotel hosted twelve death metal bands in a night, where the band members drank and performed on a makeshift stage in the gaming room.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile the Zetland Hotel had a colourful period of hiring lingerie waitresses as barmaids. In 1991, the licensee Carl Daley commissioned Alexandria’s top graffiti artists to spray paint a wall of the pub, to ‘brighten the place up’. He thought their talents ought to be used to paint a commissioned mural rather than as vandalism on State Rail trains.<sup>57</sup>

Today pubs feature poker machines, TABs and televisions, which report all the matches, races and games from around the nation. Visual technology has certainly reshaped the nature of pub culture. Journalist Philip Conford laments that televisions and poker machines have stifled conversation, and mourned the long-gone pubs with their cool bar rooms, cold beer and barmaids.<sup>58</sup> These, he says, were the places which created the ‘fair dinkum pub legends’, though perhaps nostalgia has sweetened the real pubs of the past, and phenomena like the six o’clock swill.<sup>59</sup>

### 10.11 Alcohol abuse and responsible drinking

Drinking has always been a subject of debate in Australia, and while the moral dimension of these debates has faded, the impacts of what is now called alcohol abuse are still of great concern. In NSW alone alcohol abuse costs taxpayers some \$7 million per day. Its effects are widespread and can be serious, including loss of labour and productivity, increased crime, health costs and road accidents. Statistics indicate a link between poverty and alcoholism and resultant welfare dependence, though alcohol-related issues are not restricted to certain groups of society.<sup>60</sup> In 2003 they were the subject of a major state government Alcohol Summit.

The amendments to the liquor licenses as a result of these concerns have meant significant changes to the way alcohol is served in licensed restaurants, clubs and hotels. Partly as a result, pubs such as the Glenroy, the Iron Duke, the Cauliflower and the Green Square have undergone huge refurbishments. They serve meals in their newly designed bistros, the seating areas have expanded to cater for tables and TV screens and smoking in pubs is now restricted, as patrons are not allowed to smoke around the serving area. More attention has been paid to the well-being of hotel employees via occupational health and safety regulations. Uniformed and plain-clothed police are often seen walking into pubs in Sydney to check for infringements of these codes.

### 10.12 Pubs and the gentrification of Green Square

At present there are forty-nine pubs in Green Square. They range from the traditional dark and dingy to the brightly lit, and this in itself is indicative of the changing demographic profile of the area. Publicans are faced with a choice: ‘keep up with the times’ or ‘hang on to the past.’ Unfortunately, many who have not altered their pubs within the last few years have been forced to close down, and the buildings sold off to developers.

There is something of the past left in the surviving pubs, though. Photographs from South Sydney’s football glory days hang in the Glenroy and you cannot drive along McEvoy Road without noticing the huge cauliflower and shovel on the roof of the Cauliflower Hotel. The Green Square Hotel still has ‘Zetland Hotel’ printed on the frosted window and inside the Art Deco style bar, fittings and décor from its 1930s makeover are remarkably intact.

There is more to this sense of the past than simply the physical buildings, however. Stuart Neal and Sharon Guest’s guide to Sydney pubs notes the strong friendships that some pubs generate. The Redfern Hotel, they say, is ‘slice of old Australia’ where visitors can ‘come and see what it used to be like’:

The Redfern reminded Stu of a small country town watering hole with just about everyone sitting at the bar: workers, Aboriginals, pensioners. It’s an extended family where the owners know everyone by name and are ardent supporters of the local community. The Redfern hasn’t changed in forty years, except now there’s chairs and carpet and women can mix it with the men in the public bar.<sup>62</sup>

But, inevitably the pubs’ patrons are changing with the gentrification of Green Square. New ‘yuppie’ residents of the apartments and businessmen in suits on lunch breaks join the older community of locals, bringing different tastes and expectations. The ‘For Sale’ sign has gone up above the Green Square Hotel. Delene Hagan, a resident in the area for some forty years, will no longer be the publican, and the hotel will pass to new managers who do not have her depth of knowledge or affinity with the area.

It is easy, however, to fall into the trap of nostalgia. As we have seen, change and adaptation to new social and economic factors have been integral to the history of hotels. Joe Rich, a regular at the Cauliflower, points out that Green Square is one of those areas where people have had to adapt to change all their lives. His local pub has been transformed, but he still comes in most days along with his bevy of mates to eat and drink. The pubs preserve some of the physical fabric and social rituals of the past, but they can also play an essential role for the future. They are the places where new residents can interact with locals, learn something about local traditions and history, places of relaxation and sociability for an evolving community, places which might knit together past and future in Green Square.

Table 10.3

Some pubs and clubs in the Green Square area 2004<sup>61</sup>

Hotel/Club	Location
South Sydney Leagues Club	265 Chalmers Street Redfern
Alexandria Hotel	35 Henderson Road Alexandria
Glenroy Hotel	246 Botany Road Alexandria
Lord Raglan Hotel	Raglan Street Alexandria
Boarder Hotel	12 Henderson Road Alexandria
Iron Duke Hotel	220 Botany Road Waterloo
Sports Inn	146 Henderson Road Alexandria
Green Square Hotel	946/8 Bourke Street Zetland
George Hotel	760 Elizabeth Street Waterloo
Cauliflower Hotel	123 Botany Road Waterloo

### Appendix

#### Hotels listed in Green Square Draft Local Environment Plan, Heritage Inventory (extracts/notes)

##### 1. Green Square Hotel GS4 936-38 Bourke Street, Zetland

History: c1890—Hotel erected (architect unknown)

1932—Awning erected

1939—extensive modifications to remove top storey and upgrade building (to conform with current regulations and standards), executed by architectural firm: J.E + E.R Justelius + Frederick

Style: Inter-war art deco, overlaid on a Victorian building, rendered brick, metal roof, suspended awning. Upper Level: 1890 double hung sash windows, single horizontal band below the windows, single horizontal band below the windows. External ground floor tiling, doors, windows, remarkably intact—date 1930. Single storey addition for bistro and beer garden added to Southern End

Statement of Significance: The Green Square Hotel is a representative example of commercial development that took place with the original residential subdivision c.1884 and redeveloped with expansion of large scale industry within the c1920/30s. Remarkably intact 1930s interior and exterior and of significant local social significance.

Policy: In any proposed works to the building, intervention in the physical fabric is to be kept to an absolute minimum so that the intactness of both the interior and exterior is respected and not in any way compromised.

##### 2. GS29 Moore Park View 853 South Dowling Street Waterloo

Statement of Significance:

The Moore Park View Hotel is representative of hotels being developed and refurbished by the large breweries in late 1920s and early 30s. It is strategically located opposite the ACI glass factory, one of the largest employers of industrial workers of the time.





# Chapter 11

## Alexandria: Birthplace of Baby Health

Cindy Li

### 11.1 Introduction

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1914, Australia's first baby health centre was opened in the suburb of Alexandria. The Baby Clinic, as it was then called, was originally situated at 22½ Henderson Street, a small semi-detached house, rented by the Department of Public Health. Thus Alexandria may be considered the birthplace of what was to become a hugely popular health service, one which affected the way successive generations of mothers brought up their children.

The Baby Clinic is not only significant to the history of the Green Square area, on a broader scale, it is an important site in the histories of public policy, gender and class relations. Looking at the local history of Green Square allows us to trace the infant welfare movement and its extensive array of baby health centres back to its humble beginnings. We can see the trajectory of Australia's infant health-care from its beginnings as a highly localised movement, directed at working class mothers in metropolitan Sydney, to a broad state campaign aimed at reforming the child-rearing practices of all mothers, regardless of class background.

The expansion of the baby health centres is an important part of our political and social history. Infant health and welfare have become increasingly centralised and bureaucratised since World War I. Studying this history gives us an insight into Laborist political philosophy of the time, which promoted state intervention and expanding bureaucracy as a solution to social conflicts and inequalities.<sup>1</sup> The infant welfare movement was also a part of our evolving health-care system; baby health was actually one of the first areas of health care where access was universalised.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis on preventative health of the baby health centres also reflects the ideologies underpinning our health-care system, which regards health as a private, individual responsibility, or in the case of infant health, the responsibility of the mother.<sup>3</sup>

The baby health movement is also about women's history. Not only does it relate to women's work and their everyday experiences, it also represents modern 'rational' approaches to child-rearing. As the feminist historian Kerreen Reiger has argued, the infant welfare movement extended ideas about modern efficiency and its 'scientific' principles to the private and traditionally female role of child rearing.<sup>4</sup> For women, the infant welfare movement was a double-edged sword. On one hand, women's work as mothers was increasingly subject to the scrutiny of the newly-emerged, and powerful class of health 'experts'; but on the other, the emergence of this professional class also provided a limited number of women with career opportunities as nurses, sisters and doctors.



Fig. 11.1 Mothers, children and nurses outside the Baby Clinic at 22 ½ Henderson Street, Alexandria, December 1914. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.)

Because the emergence of the baby health centres has such far-reaching implications, the historical significance of the Alexandria Baby Clinic is not confined to the local area. For this reason, I have chosen to contextualise this part of Green Square's history within a broader perspective of the trends in social policy, class relations and gender roles and relations.

### 11.2 22½ Henderson Street – humble beginnings

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1914, the Baby Clinics, Pre-Maternity and Home Nursing Board met for the first time. The Board had been convened by the Labor Minister for Public Health, the Hon. Frederick Flowers, to oversee the creation of new baby clinics, and at this meeting it was decided that the first clinic



Fig.11.2 The Baby Clinic opened in 22½ Henderson Street, Alexandria in August 1914, and this photo was taken in December that year. The adjoining house was sublet. Note the 'Baby Clinic' sign on the verandah upstairs. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).



Fig 11.3 The houses at 22 and 22a Henderson Street today (Photo: Cindy Li, 2004).



Fig. 11.4 Inside the Baby Clinic. Notice the homely features such as the hearth and flowers. Although the nurse is wearing a uniform, she is not hidden behind a tall, official looking counter or desk. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).

would be set up in Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> Exactly one month later, the Baby Clinic opened its doors for the first time and two nurses, Nurse Pike and Nurse Williams, began their duties. By September 12<sup>th</sup>, the honorary physician Dr Margaret Harper had begun her weekly attendance at the clinic. She was there every Wednesday afternoon, from 2 to 4pm so mothers could bring their babies for consultation.<sup>6</sup> The clinic movement quickly mushroomed and in the following year, the Baby Clinics Board opened more clinics in other inner-city working class areas including Newtown, Balmain and Glebe. This pattern of expansion reflected the early direction of the infant health movement, when it mainly targeted working class mothers and areas with reputedly high infant mortality rates (see also Chapter 7).

Originally both numbers 22½ and 22 (now 22 and 22a) Henderson Street were rented by the Department of Public Health, which intended to use no. 22 either as a childcare facility or as nurses' quarters. However, these plans were abandoned and no. 22 was sublet.<sup>7</sup> The building was originally constructed as a residential house and it still stands today. But it did not provide sufficient space. When Dr Harper was in for consultation, the rooms could not accommodate all the women and children who attended. They had to wait outside in the backyard in an improvised waiting room—a garden pavilion (see Fig.11.6), which could not be used when it rained.<sup>8</sup>

Even in its early days, the Clinic was very popular. In 1917, on the suggestion of the Nurse Inspector, Lucy Spencer, the Clinic moved to the more spacious shop and dwelling next door.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the first baby health centres were started in existing buildings, and they tended to have a 'homelike' design and atmosphere. Photographs of the exterior and interior of 22½ Henderson Street show that the Baby Clinic did not have the appearance of an institution or a clinic in the modern sense. The controversial Dr Truby King, who became highly influential in the infant welfare movement in both Australia and New Zealand after World War I, was an advocate of the use of domestic rather than institutionalised designs.<sup>10</sup> The use of a house would have made the Clinic more familiar, welcoming and accessible to local women. The 'homelike' atmosphere would also have underscored its role as a provider of preventative rather than a therapeutic health service. The Clinic was for keeping 'well' babies well and it did not provide treatment for sick babies.

The baby health centre remained at 20 Henderson Street until 1965, when it moved to a newly constructed purpose-built building in Renwick Street. With its spacious surrounds, this new brick building stood out from the rest of the streetscape. Its modernist, square and symmetrical lines and foundation plaques announced its purpose and official importance. The design suggests the baby health centre continued to be regarded as an important community service for the local area.<sup>11</sup>

### 11.3 1900s to 1910s: the early infant welfare movement

A network of localised infant welfare services had preceded the establishment of the Clinic in Alexandria in 1914. These services were aimed at reducing the high level of infant mortality in the City of Sydney and the surrounding working class metropolis, including the suburbs of Alexandria and Waterloo. At the turn of the century, the infant welfare movement was a joint effort of state and private voluntary organisations.<sup>12</sup> Philanthropic organisations were involved in sending nurses to visit new mothers and to provide them with child-care advice, but in fact most of these organisations were highly dependent on state funding.

The 1914 conference called by Minister Frederick Flowers gives an indication of the extensive philanthropic and local Council infant welfare services which preceded the baby clinics. At this conference, the Minister announced plans to provide ample funding for a more consolidated and extensive baby health service, and the result was the establishment of the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies. However the discussion at this conference indicates that there was already a rudimentary level of coordination between the different services.<sup>13</sup>

The development of the baby clinics built on these existing services. For instance, the Minister reviewed the work of the Alice Rawson Schools in educating mothers in mothercraft and he announced that mothercraft training would be a centrepiece of his policy on infant health. The Alice Rawson School for Mothers operated a domiciliary service and it also

opened a training school for mothers in Bourke Street Alexandria as well as in Newtown. The Department of Public Health subsequently produced a number of educational pamphlets for mothers, similar to those already being distributed by the Alice Rawson Schools.<sup>14</sup>

Educating mothers in the feeding and nursing of their infants was one of the recommendations made by the earlier Royal Commission into the Decline of the Birth Rate for reducing infant mortality.<sup>15</sup> Most of the infant welfare work at this time did revolve around visiting and educating mothers about the importance of hygiene and breastfeeding. This can be seen in the first organised attempt at infant welfare, the 'Town Hall campaign' which was launched in 1904 by the Medical Officer of the Metropolitan Combined districts, Dr W. G. Armstrong. In Armstrong's campaign, a 'lady visitor' would visit all new mothers in poor neighbourhoods, instructing them on mothercraft and inspecting their homes for cleanliness.<sup>16</sup> At this time, the Metropolitan Combined district did not include Alexandria, but in 1909, the Department of Public Health adopted Armstrong's domiciliary service and employed a nurse to undertake similar work in the urban industrial areas surrounding the city, including what is now Green Square. The nurse provided care and advice, and she was also responsible for reporting the conditions of babies and their home environments back to the Department.<sup>17</sup>

Here we can clearly see the continuing strong influence of nineteenth century philanthropy on the early infant welfare

movement. The visiting nurse was comparable to the 'lady bountiful', the middle class philanthropist who would visit the poor to scrutinise their home life and morality. Like the earlier philanthropists, those involved in the early infant welfare movement tended to operate from a conservative basis—both groups sought to address social problems by reforming the behaviour of the poor, while at the same time preserving existing class hierarchies. The infant welfare movement largely attributed the causes of infant ill health and mortality to the failings of the working class mothers, and it generally failed to acknowledge the role of structural causes such as unemployment, poverty, poor planning and overcrowding (see also Chapter 7).<sup>18</sup>

#### 11.4 The infant mortality crisis

The high level of infant mortality in Sydney was the driving force behind the state government's efforts to institutionalise the baby health movement. The infant mortality rate in Sydney matched those of other industrialising countries, where babies in cities died from diarrhoea and enteritis.<sup>19</sup> From 1892 to 1901, the average number of deaths of babies under one year of age was 110.6 in every 1000 children born.<sup>20</sup>

Although this problem had existed since colonial times, it was not until after Federation that public concern demanded a broad and systematic policy response. The 1903 *Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth Rate and the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales* helped bring this issue to public attention. The declining birth rate, combined with the high level of infant mortality, prompted fears of an impending population crisis, a 'race suicide' of white Australia in the newly federated nation. The poor physique of the recruits for the Boer War had also raised concern about the quality of the national stock and the nation's capability in war.<sup>21</sup>

Infant mortality and morbidity were markedly higher in the cities, where babies were more exposed to the risk of gut infection.<sup>22</sup> Much of the contemporary concern about the dangers of urban overcrowding and insanitary conditions also had a strong class dimension. The middle class were concerned about 'urban decay' and regarded the impoverished parts of the city as a breeding ground for degeneration and debility.<sup>23</sup> The Green Square area, being in the heart of a working class industrial area, would have been implicated in these emotive images. Arguably, the welfare reforms of the state and the philanthropic movements can be seen as measures for social control. The reforms were about changing habits, building up the nation and the race, and also a means of defusing working class unrest. However, as discussed further below (11.7), the history of class relations is not simply about the impositions of the dominant ruling class upon passive and victimised working class people—there is more to the story than that.<sup>24</sup>

By the late 1920s, the problem of infant mortality had been dramatically reduced as a result of significant improvements in the standard of living brought about by social and economic developments and a reduction in family size.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the baby health centres did not become redundant—they were actually at the height of their operations in this period. The motivating factor behind the infant welfare movement had changed: the reduction of infant mortality was no longer paramount, it had been replaced by an increasingly influential progressivist ideology (see 11.6). The movement expanded its initial aim of targeting working class mothers to a broader vision of reforming all mothers, right across the social strata.<sup>26</sup>

#### 11.5 Politics and stakeholders (1914–1926)

The Minister's 1914 conference and the opening of the baby clinics was the beginning of the state's slow but steadily increasing control over the infant welfare movement. But this was not without critics. The state met with strong resistance from the powerful professional lobby of the doctors. Over time, doctors became more supportive of the movement as they saw new career opportunities opening for them, but initially, many of them shunned state intervention as a breach of the division between public and private practice.<sup>27</sup>

We can see this in the colourful political struggles between politicians and doctors over control of the baby clinics. For political expediency, the government allowed doctors to dominate the Baby Clinics advisory committee. The politics of the various advisory committees were stormy and in June 1915, the first of these advisory committees resigned in protest over the level of government control over the clinics' funding.<sup>28</sup> The second committee was disbanded in 1926 when the Department of Public Health effectively took over the control of the clinics.<sup>29</sup> E. S. Morris was appointed Director of Maternal and Baby Welfare and he became the chief coordinator of the baby health centres.

But before 1926, the British Medical Association [BMA] was a formidable stakeholder and to comply with its demands, the Minister Frederick Flowers had to revamp his bold new plan to provide the service to all children under school age. In 1916, the BMA successfully insisted that the service be restricted to infants under twelve months and only available to mothers unable to afford private medical fees.<sup>30</sup> There were high professional stakes involved for doctors, especially those in the emerging speciality of paediatrics, who needed to secure their professional legitimacy. Amongst the doctors themselves, though, the infant welfare movement was highly factionalised, with dogmatic disputes over infant feeding formulas and the structuring of feeding timetables.<sup>31</sup>

Although the management of the baby clinics prior to 1926 was dominated by the tug-of-war between doctors and the state, women's and feminist groups also attempted to influence policy outcomes. Of course, they did not have the same political clout as the doctors. This can be seen in the letter which E. S. Morris sent to the Minister regarding the appointment of a another advisory committee. While he stacked the committee with doctors' groups, he expressed doubts over the need for representation from women's groups, warning that the committee would become 'unwieldy'.<sup>32</sup>

There needs to be further historical inquiry into the women involved in the executive management of the infant welfare movement. Women were not just clients of the baby health centres, but as feminists, doctors and philanthropists, they were themselves involved in framing infant health and welfare policy (see 11.9).

#### 11.6 Charitable ladies to child health professionals

The Department of Public Health takeover of the baby health centres in 1926 marked an end to any remaining philanthropic or charitable overtones in the provision of the baby health service. The baby health centres became a service that was universally accessible to all mothers, regardless of class background. The infant welfare movement was now under the direction of a newly emerged class of experts, nurses, doctors and clinic sisters who believed that all women needed to be taught mothercraft, not just working class mothers. They urged women to avoid the traditional child-rearing practices



Fig. 11.5 New Alexandria Baby Health Clinic, opened in 1965. Not the modern, square lines and the two plaques. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).

passed on to them from their own mothers, and to follow instead only expert advice that was grounded in 'scientific' evidence.<sup>33</sup>

By emphasising the importance of efficiency, order and discipline, these child health professionals were effectively bringing what was traditionally the female and private sphere of the home in line with the rationalist principles of modern industrial capitalism.<sup>34</sup> Thus the baby health movement can be seen as a part of the road to modernisation. The nurses, doctors and sisters were part of the much broader national efficiency movement which held an ambitious vision for a new society, where social harmony could be achieved by a state bureaucracy applying scientific principles to social problems or conflicts.<sup>35</sup>

The infant health service was effectively transformed from a piecemeal, localised service to a highly bureaucratized and centralised arm of state welfare. This transformation to a universalised service seemed more egalitarian. However, free health care for infants was strongly confined within certain boundaries. The service provided by the baby health centres was limited to preventative health care only.<sup>36</sup> Unless a mother took her ill baby to a public hospital, the treatment of ill babies was still private health care that had to be paid for. And although the infant welfare movement no longer intended to reform and scrutinise only working class mothers, it nevertheless continued to reinforce bourgeois values as the norm. Much of the advice given to mothers tended to be practical only for those from the affluent middle class.<sup>37</sup> However, state-sponsored infant welfare cannot be dismissed simply as an attempt to impose bourgeois values onto a passive working class, because working class women themselves actively attended and supported the baby centres.

#### 11.7 Helpful advice or rigid dogmatism?

The central aim of the infant welfare movement was to educate mothers in child rearing and the baby health centres became an effective means for the government to reach a wide audience. Mothercraft education consisted of women being constantly and repetitively bombarded with simple messages. The messages were highly uniform and consistent and this was ensured by standardised training for all the nurses working in the baby health centres.<sup>38</sup> But what exactly was the advice given and to what extent did it contribute to better health outcomes for babies?

Sources such as *The Parents Book*, a popular annual series written by Dr. Margaret Harper, give us an insight into the sort of advice that would have been given to the mothers attending the baby health centres. By contemporary standards, these instructions may seem unnecessarily rigid and indeed some historians have dismissed them as being mere dogmatism or propaganda.<sup>39</sup> Most of the advice given was about the feeding of infants. The child health professionals advocated 'scientific' breastfeeding, which is feeding by the clock. In the first volume of *The Parents Book*, Dr Harper insisted that once a timetable for feeding had been arranged, a mother had to 'keep to it absolutely'.<sup>40</sup> She also insisted that when the baby was put to sleep at 10pm, it was not to be fed until its waking hour at 6am the next day. Clearly, such advice was often highly impractical and unrealistic. It demanded that women devote themselves entirely to infant care during the day and ignore the baby's cries through the night.

Another substantial portion of the advice dealt with the weighing of babies. This was a ritual which took place at

the baby health centres under the supervision of the nurse. At the health centres, a test-feed would be done: the mother would weigh her baby before and directly after feeding, so as to measure the precise volume of breast milk the baby consumed.<sup>41</sup> There was a preoccupation with graphs, charts and standardised measurements, whether for plotting the intake of milk or tracking the baby's rate of growth. Although the child health professionals professed to treat each baby as unique, they would chart the growth of each baby against a constructed norm.<sup>42</sup>

One of the common threads that ran through all the advice given to the mothers was a preoccupation with regularity. Regularity was regarded as sacrosanct. It was not just something based on 'science', it was imbued with broader significance. Reiger argues that regularity was also part of the modernist efficiency ideology. By training and disciplining the child in clockwork regularity right from birth, child health professionals were preparing the child for her or his future role as a worker in the home or the workplace.<sup>43</sup>

No doubt, the advice given at the baby health centres put greater pressure on mothers. The baby health professionals regarded birth and growth as processes that required constant medical supervision, even if the baby and the mother were both healthy. In order to make their own expertise seem essential to a baby's health, the doctors and nurses often denigrated the skills and capabilities of the mothers whom they were purporting to help.<sup>44</sup> The patronising and sometimes even accusatory tone of the advice books and pamphlets also insulted women's capabilities.

However, the health centres may also have provided reassurance, particularly for new, inexperienced mothers who did not have an extensive network of support. Three of the women interviewed in the NSW Bicentennial Oral History Project discuss their experiences of the baby health centres and even though they all had childcare support from their family, they also found the centres useful.<sup>45</sup> Catherine Schulties, one of the women interviewed, went at least once a fortnight to the Truby King clinic and she found the advice helpful. She was unable to breastfeed and she said she learned how to adjust the baby formula as her baby grew.<sup>46</sup>

Recently, some historians have questioned the overall effectiveness of the infant welfare movement. While the expansion of infant welfare coincided with a significant drop in the rate of infant mortality, Phillipa Mein Smith has demonstrated the existence of some temporal and geographical mismatches which suggests that improvement in infants' survival rates was not necessarily caused by the opening of the baby health centres. The long-held belief that the baby health centres were directly responsible for improving infant health is based on the assumption that the mothers actually followed the advice they were given. While this may have been true for some women, it is unrealistic to assume that all women did exactly what they were told.<sup>47</sup>

### 11.8 Gender roles and the infant welfare movement

We do know that the baby health centres were well-patronised. In 1915, attendances of all baby health centres totalled 18,000 and by 1924, this figure had increased to approximately 165,000.<sup>48</sup> However, these statistics do not tell the full story, because once again, they give no indication of women's attitudes or responses to the advice they sought at the baby health centres. They may also be misleading. Wendy Selby, who has conducted an oral history of Queensland women's

experiences of the baby health centres, also interviewed some of the former clinic sisters. These women mention that there was significant pressure on them to keep up the number of attendances for the monthly reports, and they said that they would often record an attendance for anyone who came into the clinic, counting children as well as mothers.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, oral history could offer new and valuable insights for the history of infant welfare. As Selby argues, it serves as a vital complement to the official record, because it gives a voice to the women who were the consumers of the service.<sup>50</sup> An oral history can help to remind us that even though the women were recipients of this health advice service, they were in no way passive recipients. Women had to make choices about what services they used, whether they would follow the advice, or whether they would even use the baby health centre in the first place. For these reasons, an oral history of the women who lived in the Green Square area would be a highly informative and rewarding project.<sup>51</sup>

Of course, women were not only consumers of the infant welfare services, they also participated as doctors, nurses and clinic sisters. The infant welfare service provided a limited number of women with career opportunities, albeit confined within the traditional feminine role of childcare. The career of Dr. Margaret Harper, the Baby Clinic's first doctor, is a very important and poignant example. By the 1920s, Dr. Harper had achieved international renown for her contribution to infant health and welfare. She must have been well-known to the women of the Green Square area.

Similarly, the position of Nurse Inspector also offered women an opportunity to work in a supervisory or management role. In a letter to the Undersecretary of the Department of Public Health, the Nurse Inspector Lucy Spencer reported that, as well as inspecting the work of sisters and nurses, she had to keep the accounts, maintain the attendance records and attend to the drugs and stores. Hers was clearly a position of high level responsibility. She also requested and was later granted a car for two and a half days per week, so that she could drive around to the various clinics to inspect them.<sup>52</sup>

However, the staff working at the baby health centres were part of a very strict chain of command. The clinic sisters and nurses at the bottom of this chain were under the constant supervision and scrutiny of the doctors, the Nurse Inspector and, of course, the Department. There is evidence of this very early in the baby health centres' history. In the same letter to the Undersecretary, Lucy Spencer explains that 'unless the nurses feel that they are being regularly and effectively supervised, even the best are apt to become lax'. Supervision, discipline and regularity were not only for mothers and babies.<sup>53</sup>

Oral history also suggests that nurses in the centres were under close supervision with regard to the advice they gave. Celia Duncan, Erica Galwey, Heather Rice and Marjorie Simpson worked as clinic sisters in the 1950s in rural areas and they described inspectors descending without warning and scolding the sisters for not following the rules by the book. There were very strict rules about what advice could be given over the desk. When clients asked for information on abuse and domestic violence, the nurses would ask them to come back during lunch hour.<sup>54</sup>

The infant welfare movement was highly ambivalent in relation to constructs of gender. The doctors' notion that mothercraft was not natural but something that had to be learned had the potential to debunk the 'natural' basis of gender roles which



Fig. 11.6 This posed photograph was taken by the Department of Public Health to demonstrate the popularity of the Baby Clinic. The mothers are in the garden pavilion which served as an outdoor waiting room for those wanting to see Dr Harper. Note the baby scales in the centre of the photo. The mothers and children appear to be dressed in their Sunday best. (Source: Mitchell Library, courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).

decreed that women must care for children.<sup>55</sup> The introduction of rationalist and scientific principles into the private sphere of child-care and home life may have elevated women's work and challenged the Victorian notion of the separate private and public spheres. However, overall the infant welfare movement tended to reinforce women's domestic role as mothers and homemakers.

### 11.9 Conclusion and suggestions for further research

This chapter has explored the general history of the infant welfare movement as the context for understanding the importance of the Alexandria Baby Clinic. Further research on the local area would tell us more about the impact of the Clinic and why this area was targeted in the earliest organised efforts to reduce infant mortality. This research could involve investigating the attitudes of the early policy-makers, doctors and philanthropists to the suburbs in the Green Square area. It would give us interesting insights into the emergence of the working class identity of the area, as seen from both the eyes of residents and the eyes of outsiders.

The baby health centre is also an important part of women's history in the area. As suggested above, an oral history of women would be extremely valuable and could be conducted from a local history perspective. One possible area of inquiry could be the importance of the baby health centre as a site for women forming social and support networks. This may provide new insights into the role of community sites in building up social networks and a sense of community and belonging.

Another aspect of the infant welfare movement which needs further research is the accessibility of the service to clients of diverse cultural backgrounds and to clients of Indigenous backgrounds. One of the very early motivations for the infant welfare was the concern about 'race suicide' of white Australia, and future researchers could investigate whether this racialist attitude actually trickled down to the day to day running of the first baby health centres. Alexandria's Baby Clinic may be a prime site to begin this research not only because it was the very first baby health centre, but also because of the extensive immigrant population in the area.

Whether future researchers and residents are interested in local history, in the broader infant welfare movement, or in women's history, Alexandria's Baby Clinic, the birthplace of baby health, opens a rich and important vista on the past, a history whose legacy still shapes society today.



# Chapter 12

# Exodus and Retreat: Chinese of Alexandria and Waterloo

Melita Rogowsky

## 12.1 Introduction

Nestled at the end of a nothing little lane of Alexandria, stands a Chinese temple. Enclosed within its walls lie traces of the memories, the secrets, and the legacy of early Chinese settlement in this area. This temple, and the terraces which adjoin it, are the only remaining structural evidence of the history of the Chinese in a district that was arguably home to one of the largest concentrations of urban Chinese in Sydney (and Australia) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Though Chinese-Australian history has been well documented in recent times, the history of the Chinese in this area has only been partially researched, appearing in broader histories of Chinese in Sydney, family histories or heritage reports on the temple. To better represent and understand the history and impact of the Chinese in this area, we need to take a closer look.

This chapter builds upon the historical research already undertaken into Chinese history in Alexandria and Waterloo. By examining archival evidence which specifically relates to this neighbourhood, it draws out the subtleties of local historical experience, and provides a fresh starting point for re-examining some of the existing historical narratives about urban Chinese in Australia. Some of this local evidence subverts the notion that European/Chinese relations were necessarily always antagonistic; but it also provides insight into the local implementation of the White Australia Policy (WAP) and its impacts.<sup>2</sup> Thus micro-history sheds light on the broader historical narratives, which tell the macro-history of urban Chinese settlement.

This chapter provides fresh insights into local Chinese history, but it also points to the need for further research in this area, both locally and for Chinese settlements outside of the central areas of Sydney and Melbourne. The archival records touched on in this chapter are a rich source for further research. Many other sources, such as the Chinese language press, are largely inaccessible to non-Chinese speaking researchers.<sup>3</sup> Hence this chapter draws on European archival records which contain both representations of Chinese and the voices of Chinese themselves. Examples include the *Royal Commission into alleged Chinese gambling and immorality* of 1891, the English language press and various records in state and local archives.<sup>4</sup>

## 12.2 Chinese immigration to Australia

### 12.2.1 Overview

The first Chinese arrived in Australia in 1848 as indentured labourers and many others arrived in the 1850s and 60s in

search of gold. But according to Jane Lydon, Chinese immigration did not reach its peak until 1891 at 13,048; and thereafter the WAP saw departures actually exceed arrivals.<sup>5</sup> C. Y. Choi does not attribute these departures wholly to the effects of the WAP but suggests the pressure from family lineage to return to China also played a significant role.<sup>6</sup> Indeed most Chinese of this period referred to themselves as ‘sojourners’ because their intention was to return to China.<sup>7</sup> The struggle to make a decent living coupled with the restrictive measures of the WAP ensured that many sojourners did not leave however, but settled in country towns and urban centres.

### 12.2.2 Urban Chinese

The end of the gold rush saw a considerable number of Chinese, mostly market gardeners and some cabinet makers, move into urban areas of Sydney and Melbourne. In 1871 less than five per cent of NSW Chinese lived in Sydney, but by 1891 26 per cent did.<sup>8</sup> Market gardening gradually became the most important occupation, accounting for over 30 per cent of working Chinese males in NSW and Victoria in 1901.<sup>9</sup> This shift caused friction with Europeans already plying these trades and resulted in increasing regulation through restrictive legislation.<sup>10</sup>

The largest concentrations of Chinese in Sydney were initially in the Rocks, shifted to the Haymarket area now known as Chinatown, and also eventually in Alexandria and Waterloo.<sup>11</sup> But Chinese also settled in outer urban areas of Sydney including Rushcutters Bay and Rose Bay, Botany, Kogarah, Newtown, Erskineville and North Sydney. According to Andrew Markus, many urban Chinese became prosperous importers and exporters, grocers and shopkeepers in twentieth century. Overall, though, Australia’s Chinese population actually declined from 32,997 to 20,752 in the 20 years following federation, with the introduction of the WAP at a federal level.<sup>12</sup>

### 12.2.3 Alexandria: settlement and exodus

As both Scott Cumming and Susannah Frith make clear in Chapters 4 and 5, the wetlands of Alexandria and Waterloo provided fertile ground for market gardens and records suggest that European market gardeners were present in the area from at least the 1850s. *Sands Sydney Directories* for the 1870s indicate that the majority of market gardeners and carpenters in Alexandria at that time were still of European origin, though temple records suggest there were a number of Chinese present in Alexandria from as early as 1876.<sup>13</sup> According to *Sands*, however, by the 1880s the majority of

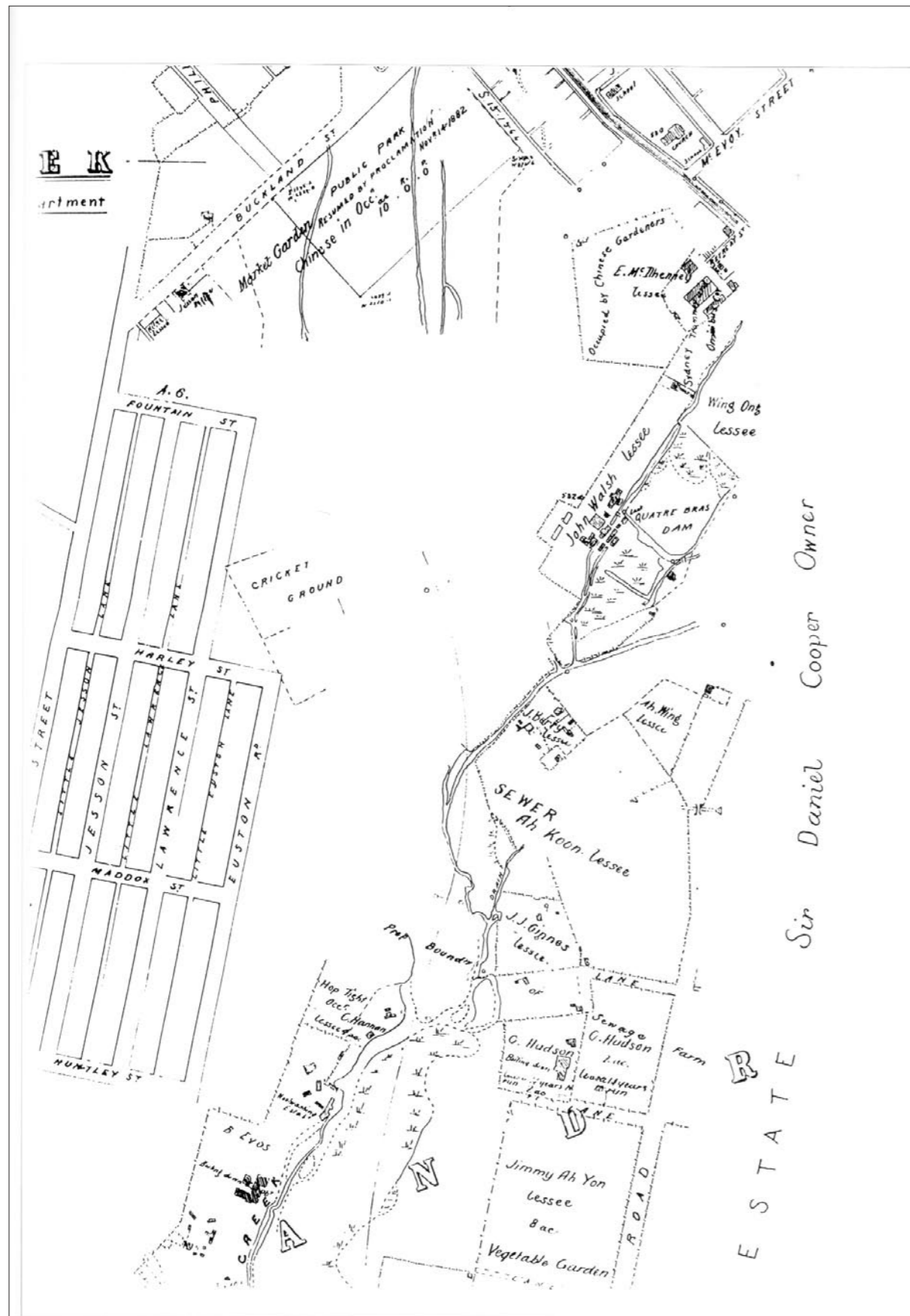


Fig. 12.1 Extract from an 1888 map of Alexandria showing the extent of Chinese gardens in the district. (Source: ML Alexandria SP A2/88; courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.)

market gardeners in Alexandria were Chinese. Chinese market gardeners made up 17 of the 33 entries for Bourke Road in 1889, while eight of the nine entries for Retreat Street during this year appear to be Chinese names.

A witness at the Royal Commission explained that Europeans had worked these gardens before Chinese gardeners who, being able to make larger profits from the gardens, moved into the area and bought them out.<sup>14</sup> The map shown in Fig 12.1 shows extensive Chinese gardens located throughout the Daniel Cooper Estate in Alexandria/Waterloo in 1889. The map shows that in some cases the gardeners were occupiers on leased land, but in others they were themselves the leaseholders.<sup>15</sup> Retreat Street, notorious for its gambling, boarding houses and the shops that serviced the market gardeners—is at the top right. The lessee for the Retreat Street area was a Mrs McElhinney, who was also the licensee of the corner pub, the Waterloo Retreat Hotel.<sup>16</sup> Mrs McElhinney owned 20 tenements in the street and a Chinese man name Sun Moon owned 44 Chinese occupied tenements. Both the absentee landowner Daniel Cooper, who owned 1400 acres of land in South Sydney, and Mrs McElhinney came under criticism in the Royal Commission for the state of their properties.<sup>17</sup>

Good soil and proximity to the city’s markets were only two of a number of reasons Chinese people chose to settle in the area however, as the presence of a variety of other Chinese, many of them carpenters and grocers, indicates. In fact a lively community evolved in the area, suggesting that this largely industrial and working class area, considered a wasteland by many Europeans, was a space which enabled Chinese residents to keep to themselves and to go about their business largely without interference.

The 1901 census recorded 289 Chinese-born men as residents of Alexandria and ninety-three Chinese-born men living in

Waterloo.<sup>18</sup> The *Sands Sydney Directory* suggests the Chinese maintained a significant presence in the area until at least 1933, when it ceased publication. Though increasing industrialisation began to replace traditional trades in the area (such as market gardening), oral histories from the 1940s and 1950s reveal that a significant Chinese presence remained during these decades. Gladys Lim, former resident and community historian, fondly remembers living at her father’s grocery store on Botany Road as a child in the 1940s and 50s.<sup>19</sup> George Wing Kee recalls moving to the Green Square area and taking up temporary residence near the Chinese temple in the 1940s, and then moving to a shop in Bourke Street, Zetland, where his parents ran a fish and chip shop.<sup>20</sup> Locals of the area report celebratory lion dances in Botany Road at least until the end of the Second World War and, according to the Migration Heritage Centre of NSW, locals also remember draught horses travelling along Botany Road with loads of vegetables bound for the markets in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>21</sup>

By 1970, though, most of the market gardens in Sydney had disappeared.<sup>22</sup> Although increasing industrialisation is usually cited for their disappearance, Markus also identifies the increasing competition from new southern European immigrant gardeners and suburban subdivision as two causes for the disappearance of Chinese market gardeners after 1950.<sup>23</sup>

Today, only two Chinese market gardens remain in Sydney: one in Rockdale and one in Botany. The tradition of early market gardening in Waterloo by new immigrant communities is maintained, however, by a number of community gardens that exist as part of the Waterloo Public Housing Estate, which involve individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> And the Chinese temple that lies tranquilly at the end of Retreat Street is the legacy of the market gardeners who built it.



Fig. 12.2 The gate to the Yiu Ming Temple at Alexandria today. (Photo: Melita Rogowsky, 2004.)

### 12.3 The Yiu Ming Temple

The market gardeners who built the Yiu Ming Temple were from the Gaoyao/Gouyiu and Gaoming/Gouming districts in China, and their temple was completed in 1909.<sup>25</sup> Scholars agree that the present temple probably replaced an earlier simple wooden structure likely to have been located farther south towards Botany, in the heart of the gardens.<sup>26</sup> A panel inside the present temple was translated by the Powerhouse Museum:

At the beginning, there was a shrine built with timbers, serving as a temporary place of worship. After decades of weathering and changes to human affairs, though the shrine still stood there, it was too humble and too crude to shelter deities. In 1904 members met again, and thanks to their support, the temple was rebuilt. Fortunately among those who came in the early years were builders, carpenters, interior decorators and other craftsmen and the temple was finished as a result of their cooperative efforts.<sup>27</sup>

The temple was and still is administered by The Yiu Ming Hung Fook Tong (now called the Yiu Ming Society), a clan association which has existed for over 140 years. This clan looked after the interests of gardeners in the nineteenth century, and today caters to both new arrivals and the aged.<sup>28</sup> The earliest temple records date to 1870 and list members from rural outposts in NSW such as Newcastle, Bega, Bombala and Pambula. Temple records from 1910 show that members came from locations throughout the Sydney region and beyond, including Rose Bay, Botany, Waterloo, Kogarah, Northern Sydney and Canberra.<sup>29</sup>

The temple is architecturally and historically significant because its design, location and orientation demonstrate common nineteenth and early twentieth century characteristics of Chinese temple design, which are becoming rare in both Australia and China. Further, Australian detailing such as Federation tiling common to Sydney homes built in this period, reveals a cross-fertilisation of architectural and cultural influences. The result is a unique Chinese-Australian architectural style.<sup>30</sup> The temple is associated with local Chinese businesses, organisations and important Chinese historical figures.<sup>31</sup> It is a place of worship, celebration and community activity and continues to play a significant role in the Chinese community of Sydney.

#### 12.4 Religious practice

In the preceding two centuries, the Chinese practiced a diversity of religions including varieties of both Christianity and Eastern beliefs. As it was common practice in China to weave together aspects of differing religious beliefs, it is likely that many Chinese in the Alexandria and Waterloo area found the exclusivity required by Christianity unnecessary, if not a little odd.<sup>32</sup> This section traces the development and practice of the religious beliefs of the early Chinese in this area.

##### 12.4.1 Temple worship: buddhism, daoism and 'folk' traditions

Whilst the Yiu Ming Temple appears typical of a Daoist temple, it also embraces many other traditions. The three main deities worshipped at the temple are Cai Shen, Hong Sheng and Guan Di. Hong Sheng is the local and main deity and is likely to have been worshipped at the earlier temple, whilst the other better-known deities would have been added when the present temple was built. Hong Sheng, often referred to, as the 'god of the southern seas' is not commonly worshipped by Chinese

Australians or by people living in southern China. Hong Sheng is possibly an incarnation of the Dragon King who rules the sea and protects fisherman, or of a governor from the Tang dynasty who is said to have built an observatory that gave accurate predictions of the weather.<sup>33</sup> Both hypotheses reflect the heavy dependence of the earliest temple members upon the weather to ensure both their livelihood and their safe seaward passage to the south.

The tales associated with the adventures of Guan Yu (later known as Guan Di the God of War) and Guan Yin (the Goddess of Mercy), and the virtues that they represent (integrity, loyalty, bravery, mercy, charity) are also represented throughout the temple. Chee and Tzee suggest that interpretations of these tales in Buddhist and Daoist writings reveal that the Chinese of the area integrated Buddhist, Daoist and traditional or 'folk' religious beliefs.<sup>34</sup> The temple remains an important part of the religious and cultural life of many Chinese who visit it today.

##### 12.4.2 Christian churches

A number of Christian churches and missions had Chinese congregations or conducted services in the Waterloo/Alexandria area in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As early as 1879 the Church of England engaged Soo Hoo Ten as a catechist. There were Chinese Presbyterian Church congregations in both Redfern and Waterloo by 1897, which were led by John Young Wai. The Salvation Army established a Brigade in Waterloo with a Chinese sergeant in charge.<sup>35</sup> The *Sands Sydney Directory* reveals the presence of a 'Chinese Church' in Retreat Street in 1901, although it is unclear whether this referred to an early incarnation of the existing temple or a Christian church.<sup>36</sup>

Soo Hoo Ten of the Church of England was involved in conducting services at St Silas' Church in Waterloo. A leading and enthusiastic missionary who was interested in genuinely converting Chinese-Australians to Christianity rather than merely recruiting new members, Soo Hoo Ten visited the market gardens in Alexandria/Waterloo, encouraging the men to attend one of his services. Of the 400–800 men who worked the gardens he apparently persuaded only eight to 16 to attend. According to Ten's mission notes, the reasons the men gave for non-attendance varied from the need to water the gardens in dry weather, to complaints about the behaviour of European Christians. As noted earlier, however, Chinese resistance to attending services or converting to Christianity is more complex than the church reports suggest. It is likely that in the early years, even those Chinese recorded in the Census as official adherents of particular religion, are likely to have practiced different aspects of different religions simultaneously.<sup>37</sup> St Silas' Anglican Church continues to conduct services today, as do a number of other Chinese churches in Waterloo.<sup>38</sup>

#### 12.5 Women and children

##### 12.5.1 Chinese women

Almost all (98 per cent) of Chinese migrants in the nineteenth century were men.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless there were some Chinese-born women living in Sydney at the time of Federation—according to the 1901 census there were fifty-six Chinese-born women living in Sydney during that year. Of course this figure pales in comparison with the 3,276 Chinese men counted, and none of the Chinese born women were residents of Alexandria or Waterloo.<sup>40</sup>

The Royal Commission of 1891 failed to interview any Chinese women. Most of the testimony that relates to Alexandria/Waterloo explicitly suggests that Chinese men in the area did not have Chinese wives, save the testimony of Sub-Inspector Lawless, who claimed that there were three European women and one Chinese woman living in Retreat Street at the time of the Inquiry.<sup>41</sup> That Chinese women were largely absent at the turn of the century can be attributed, firstly, to the provisions of the WAP, and the £100 poll tax (which ensured that only middle class men could afford to bring out their wives), and secondly, to restrictions upon the travel of women by Chinese custom and authorities.<sup>42</sup>

##### 12.5.2 European women

Many European women married or had relationships with Chinese men in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, according to historian Kate Bagnall, there were large numbers of children born to Chinese men and European or Aboriginal women.<sup>43</sup>

While no Chinese women came before the Royal Commission, seven working class European women were interviewed. These women's testimony, together with that of local officials and the conclusions of the Commission, described their mutually beneficial relations with Chinese men. These relations compared favourably with what they could expect from European men, who treated them badly. A number of these women claimed they were kept in a house in town and visited weekly by their lovers, who lived in all male market-gardening communities during the week.<sup>44</sup> Though none mentions Alexandria in their evidence specifically, it is likely that gardeners in Alexandria also kept women in town.

Sub-Inspector Lawless claimed there were three European women living with the Chinese of Alexandria at the time of the Inquiry. Though Lawless made it clear that these women were not prostitutes, but living with Chinese men as if married, he also claimed that one year earlier, a number of European women were arrested in the area and imprisoned for between one and six months for vagrancy.<sup>45</sup>

##### 12.5.3 ABCs (Australian Born Chinese)

Though oral histories provide insight into the lives of Australian-born Chinese living in the area in the 1940s and 50s, little evidence of the early Chinese children of the area survives. An anti-Chinese statement published in the press by the Waterloo Mayor in 1908, however (see section 12.7.4 for more detail), provides a glimpse of children of mixed Chinese/Australian descent attending the Waterloo Public School during that period:

'You would not take that girl to be more than 18 years of age', remarked Mr Ross, pointing to a European occupant of one verandah, 'and you would be surprised to hear that those two half-cast Chinese children are hers. There are ten half-caste Chinese children, attending Waterloo School, and these have all come along during the last couple of years.'<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately most of the Waterloo School records no longer exist, so it is not possible to determine the numbers of ABC children who attended the school at any given time. Among the surviving administrative bundles for the Waterloo School, though, is a 1908 Schools Inspector's report revealing that, in his opinion, the children of Waterloo School were in poorer health than any other children within the metropolitan area.<sup>47</sup> As a result of this report, a public meeting attended

by the Mayor, the Minister for Botany, Mr Dacey, and local parents was held at Waterloo Town Hall to discuss the health of the children. While the Department of Public Instruction acknowledged that the area was generally poor and working class, it avoided any analysis of the problems of entrenched poverty, and placed the onus upon individual parents. Nevertheless, this report, together with evidence regarding living conditions in the Royal Commission report and high infant mortality rates (see Chapters 7 and 11), suggest that for ABC and European children alike, life in Alexandria/Waterloo was difficult and blighted by poverty and disease.<sup>48</sup>

Yet for all this hardship, Alexandria was also a site of safety and retreat for many Chinese (as the name Retreat Street seems to imply). Gladys Lim recalls living in Alexandria and attending the Waterloo School with one other ABC child in the 1940s. Lim also recalls that during World War Two her family, after many years of living in Alexandria, relocated to outer suburban Merrylands, where they were mistaken for Japanese. The Lim family was forced to return to the safety of Alexandria, seeking refuge amongst the Chinese in a district where at least the European community was used to a Chinese presence.<sup>49</sup>

#### 12.6 Retreat Street and the Royal Commission

##### 12.6.1 Witnesses and questions

This section explores the evidence given to the Royal Commission that relates specifically to the Chinese who lived and worked in Alexandria/Waterloo, alongside the questions and conclusions of the Commission.<sup>50</sup> Among the numerous individuals examined by the Commission were a Chinese carpenter who lived and worked in Retreat Street (Sun Sing Loong);<sup>51</sup> two police inspectors responsible for the Borough (Sub-Inspector Alfred Potter and Sub-Inspector Edmund Lawless); the Mayor of Alexandria (James Ralph) and the Inspector of Nuisances for the Borough (William Setchell). Finally, evidence on Alexandria and the sanitary habits of the Chinese was given by Dr Ashburton Thompson, the Chief Medical Inspector of the Board of Health.<sup>52</sup>

The Report of this Commission is a rich source of information regarding the life of Sydney Chinese and European-Australian attitudes towards them in the late nineteenth century. The questions asked centre around certain themes, which were of deep concern to the wider community during this period, including: living and working conditions, sleeping quarters, types of meals, rates of pay, working hours, quality of workmanship, sanitary conditions, morality, gambling, opium use, sexuality and interracial sexual contact. Given the density of the testimony, it is only possible to make a brief examination of the material here. A detailed study of all of the testimony that relates to the region would enable a fuller picture of Chinese life in Alexandria/Waterloo in the 1890s, as well as working class Chinese life at the turn of the century generally.

##### 12.6.2 Mei Quong Tart and the merchant class

Significantly, one of the five Commissioners was Mei Quong Tart, an esteemed Chinese businessman, who was also an interpreter and adviser to the colonial government. The owner of the famous Elite Teas Rooms at the Queen Victoria Building and the husband of a respectable white woman, Quong Tart was perhaps the best-known Chinese-born entrepreneur in nineteenth-century NSW. He was a leader of the elite merchant class of Chinese in Sydney, a group which generally sought upward mobility in their negotiations with European society,



and he was involved in organising many charitable activities and fundraising events, which brought him both fame and notoriety.<sup>53</sup>

Tart was an ardent campaigner against opium smoking—a practice that the upper class Chinese believed lessened the standing of the entire Chinese population. He was also active in representing the interests of the Chinese merchant classes generally. Hence his involvement in the Commission must be understood in relation to his class position, and the privileges afforded to the merchant class of Chinese that he sought to protect. Many of the questions asked by Tart in the inquiry underscored class distinctions between the insanitary conditions of the lower classes of Chinese (typified by those that lived, worked or frequented Retreat Street) and the purportedly sanitary conditions of the merchant class. Tart continually attempted to distance his own class from the low-class Chinese, who had come to the attention of the Commission.<sup>54</sup> In this he was successful, for the Commission ultimately found the Chinese to be ‘a singularly peaceable and law abiding section of the community’, excepting those of the lower orders, who were, in its estimation, addicted to gambling and opium.<sup>55</sup>

### 12.6.3 The imagined slum

An excerpt from the Commissioner’s *Report* of their inspection of some dwellings in Retreat Street reveals the impact and nature of their class bias, which was tied up with middle class notions of respectability:

The accommodation provided by these shanties beggars description. All of them constructed from wood; many consist of one compartment only; some are devoid of any kind of flooring; in others, small bedrooms have been partitioned off from the rest of the ill-covered space, and the bedrooms thus constructed are in most cases quite innocent of ventilation. Fruit and vegetables were, in several instances, found on the floor of the rooms in which the occupants eat, smoke, and sleep, and here and there, heaps of produce stored in that fashion were not even protected by any sort of covering. The upper portion of the interior of these shanties was festooned by cobwebs. Viewed as a whole, the nest of huts bear more resemblance to an Arab town on the outskirts of an Egyptian city than to anything in Australia to which it would be possible to compare it.

A large Chinese store and butchers shop, in Botany Road, inspected by the Commission, bore striking contrast to the habitations referred to above.<sup>56</sup>

The excerpt follows a summary list of eleven premises, which, like the store and butcher’s shop, were ‘clean’ or ‘fairly clean’. This apparent contradiction points to a middle-class preoccupation with the living conditions of the poor. Likening the premises to an Arab town in Egypt served to present poverty as alien and exotic, dirty and un-Australian, when in reality the living conditions for most of the European working class in urban Sydney were also poor and insanitary, a point which was taken up in the evidence of the Chief Medical Inspector. Further, by contrasting the premises of the business and shop-keeping class of Chinese on Botany Road against the premises of the lower classes of Retreat Street, the Commissioners reveal the intertwined nature of class and racial bias.

### 12.6.4 Sun Sing Loong and Working Class Chinese

The evidence given by Sun Sing Loong, a cabinet-maker who lived in Retreat Street, suggests that the experience of working class Chinese was not as dire as many thought. He said that over 1,000 of his clan were in Sydney and about 100 Chinese men were living in Retreat Street, of whom twelve were cabinet-makers and 20 gamblers. Loong described the minutiae of his daily life: what he ate, where he slept, his earnings, living costs, and so on. A carpenter who employed one other man, he was mostly contracted to build tables and kitchen safes. He claimed it cost him eight shillings per week to live and that he paid two shillings per week for his place in a little shed in Retreat Street, where he had been living for over five years.

Following the movement of the Chinese working class into trades such as cabinetmaking in the previous decade, European cabinet-makers associations had organised, forming the backbone of the anti-Chinese movement. It was the agitation of this movement which had eventually forced the government to hold the Royal Commission. Hence, Sun Sing Loong was asked a great many questions about the nature of his business as a cabinetmaker.<sup>57</sup>

### 12.6.5 The local police

The testimony of the two police inspectors from the Alexandria district throws light on a number of aspects of life in ‘slumland’ Alexandria, as well as on law enforcement attitudes at that time. The evidence of the police, as the European outsiders who visited Retreat Street most often, suggests that they had the clearest picture of Chinese life in Alexandria; except, of course, for the working class European men and women who lived happily alongside the Chinese.

Hence Sub-Inspector Lawless’ estimates of the number of Chinese living in Alexandria, and his breakdown of their trades, is most useful:

150 gardeners, 14 rag-pickers, 113 hawkers that is, those who go about hawking vegetables and other things, though mostly vegetables. There are 2 cooks, and 1 man who makes fly-catchers, and also a wood turner. Then there are 14 who sell pak-ah-pu tickets, and are always to be found about the gambling places. They are a kind of touts. I think when you count those you will find that they make 375.<sup>58</sup>

Neither police inspector was willing to testify whole-heartedly against the Chinese. Rather, both officers explicitly declared that they had no issue with the respectable class of Chinese, but those they have ‘to complain about are the low class of people’. Both said that they could not say that the habits of the Chinese were dirty, and agreed that, compared with Europeans of the same class, they found them to be law abiding people.<sup>59</sup> Sub-Inspector Potter, however, revealed that the police had ‘annexed’ the Chinese quarters (which had previously been of mixed population) a few years earlier, so that the quarters were restricted to Chinese residents only.

### 12.6.6 Lacklustre Local Government

The Inspector for Public Nuisances and the Mayor of Alexandria both demonstrated a rather lacklustre approach to the Chinese, only inspecting the Chinese quarters in preparation for the visit of the Commission.<sup>60</sup> Their approach was no doubt related to the general lack of concern with regard to the Chinese from within their electorate. Indeed the Mayor claimed that in five years the question of the Chinese had never been before Council.<sup>61</sup>



Fig. 12.3 Photograph from the Exemption Certificate granted to market gardener Fa Xing (Fatty Hing), who was a friend of neighbouring Irish-European market gardener Timothy Mulcahy. (Source: National Archives of Australia SP42/1, 1908/1473.)



Fig. 12.4 Photograph from the Exemption Certificate granted to Alexandria businessman Deen Bong, who was thought of favourably by the Alexandria Mayor Alderman Ralph. (Source: National Archives of Australia SP42/1, B1907/2054.)

Further, the Inspector admitted that the Chinese of the area were generally quiet and amenable to law, and that he had never summonsed a Chinese man for infringement of sanitary laws.<sup>62</sup> Yet both officials were quick to agree with the Commission when it suggested to them that the Chinese at Retreat Street were generally an undesirable class of people. Tensions between European and Chinese-Australians heightened over the next twenty years and, as we shall see, this was reflected in the changing attitudes and increasing intervention of local authorities.

### 12.6.7 The Chief Medical Inspector

The evidence given by the Chief Medical Inspector of the Board of Health, Dr Ashburton Thompson, contains remarkably detailed descriptions of the Retreat Street area. From Dr Thompson we learn that an open sewer ran the length of Retreat Street and that the gardeners used a urinal of earthenware pots in a makeshift wooden shed; that the gardeners homes were made of Hobart palings. This information is invaluable for any researcher attempting to reconstruct the living conditions of Sydney’s nineteenth century Chinese, but perhaps the most striking of the evidence given by the Inspector, was his insistence that the living conditions of the Chinese were no worse than those of Europeans of the same class. Indeed, the Chinese tenements of Alexandria:

show within signs of domestic comfort, such as is possible, and of ornament; they vary in this respect and in cleanliness with the character of the occupants just as other peoples tenements do; and against the occupants regarded as poor people, who must live under such accommodation as their means afford and as the laws allow...

As bad, or perhaps, a worse case examined by the Board of Health in a ordinary boarding-house in the city last May; no Chinese lived there, but poor white people, and they lived under entirely improper conditions.

These observations, made by Dr Thompson in 1891, coupled with the findings of the Royal Commission, (which ultimately found the Chinese to be law abiding and hardworking), demonstrate that the attitudes of the authorities towards the Chinese were not fixed. They changed significantly over time—as the extreme words of the local Inspector, spoken some ten years later, demonstrate in section 12.7.3

## 12.7 Friend or foe?

### 12.7.1 Rising regulation, community negotiation

The Chinese of Alexandria felt the effects of the WAP as much as their countrymen in other neighbourhoods. Restrictive legislation, regulation, surveillance, media propaganda, community agitation and harassment were all part of the Chinese experience of Alexandria/Waterloo in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is important to note, however, that these occurred alongside Chinese resistance to and negotiation with European Australians.

The Chinese language newspaper *Tung Wah Times* reported increasing regulation in the Alexandria community after 1901. This took the form of raids on gambling houses, sanitary inspections and Board of Health strictures, the arrest of European women consorting with Chinese men and regulation and surveillance of working practices. In contrast, a number of articles reported gardeners and local businesses making donations to local organisations, including fresh vegetables to the Unemployed Workers Association, and funds to South Sydney Hospital. These strategic interventions reveal that Chinese of both the working and business classes were skilled at negotiating and interacting with Europeans; they may reveal why at least some Europeans thought favourably of some Chinese, some of the time.<sup>63</sup>

### 12.7.2 Empathy and friendship

Local European attitudes toward the Chinese were ambiguous and contradictory. Occasionally there are striking glimpses and vignettes which show authorities and residents as sympathetic, compassionate, respectful and even friendly with the local Chinese.

One of these instances occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1888, when fire destroyed most of the wooden huts in Retreat Street. These had housed up to sixty gardeners, who were now homeless. In a year when racial prejudice peaked, there was a rare instance of sympathy for the Chinese. The Premier Sir Henry Parkes allocated the gardeners £100 directly from the State revenue in order to rebuild their homes.<sup>64</sup> We catch a glimpse of friendship when Timothy Mulcahy, long-time resident of Retreat Street, wrote a character reference for fellow market gardener Fa Xing (known as Fatty Hing), a Retreat Street resident of thirty years. Mulcahy wrote with some feeling: ‘I can honestly say that I will miss him until he returns from China’.<sup>65</sup>

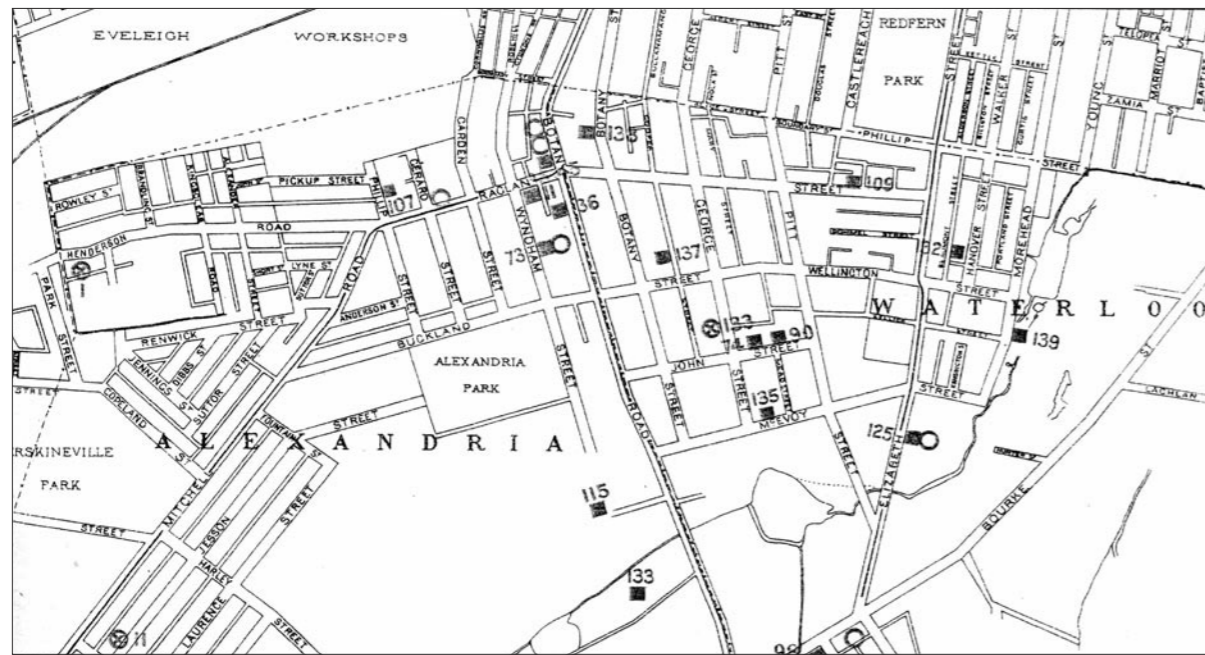


Fig. 12.5 Extract from a 1903 map detailing the location of plague cases in Alexandria and Waterloo in 1902. The only Chinese case of plague in Retreat Street (no. 115) resulted in the demolition of a row of terrace houses. (Source: J. Ashburton Thompson, *Report of the Board of Health on Plague in NSW 1902*, Legislative Assembly New South Wales, Sydney, Government Printer, 1903, pp 26–29.)

12.7.3 Alexandria Council: friend of foe?

Records relating to Alexandria Council reveal conflicting attitudes. A character reference for merchant Deen Bong from Retreat Street (Fig. 12.4) reveals a Mayoral perspective that is remarkable for its respectfulness and generosity, at the height of the WAP. In 1907 Mr Bong applied for a passport for travel (and a certificate exempting him from taking the notorious dictation test) and was supported by the reference from Mayor Ralph, who described him as ‘... one of those chinamen whom any one came into contact with him could recommend as a desirable citizen.’<sup>66</sup>

The mood of the Council with regards to the Chinese was not always so sympathetic and supportive however. Alexandria and Waterloo Council minutes from the early twentieth century reveal an increasing preoccupation with the Chinese, which manifested in a variety of ways.

Sydney suffered a series of outbreaks of Bubonic Plague from 1900 to 1907.<sup>67</sup> In 1902 Alexandria was singled out by a Board of Health sanitary investigation and subsequently mentioned in the press as one of several areas affected by the latest outbreak. In April, Alderman Banner, incensed by the publication of the Sanitary Inspector’s report in the daily press, moved that the death rates for the Borough be examined in comparison with the death rates of other boroughs. A reply to the press was to be drafted—and lodged as an advertisement if the press declined to publish it.<sup>68</sup>

By the end of April, community concern over the representation of Alexandria as insanitary had escalated, resulting in a community meeting at the Alexandria Town Hall. At the meeting, outraged claims were made that the Board of Health had singled out Alexandria for public condemnation, when many of the adjoining neighbourhoods were more filthy and suffered worse sanitary conditions. (In fact, the Board and the press had also focused on a number of other suburbs of Sydney). Alderman Banner challenged the Board of Health

to prove its claim that Alexandria was the most insanitary borough in Sydney.<sup>69</sup> The names of the plague victims from Alexandria published in the press all appear to be European, with only one Chinese out of eight. Nevertheless, the Council expressed their outrage by scapegoating the Chinese as the source and carriers of plague. A contemporary map (Fig 12.5) reveals the location of each case of plague in Borough. Note that there was only one case of plague suffered by a person of Chinese descent in Retreat Street (no. 115) while all of the other victims were Europeans.<sup>70</sup>

Earlier in 1902, the local Inspector had been quite vociferous in his call for the Chinese quarters to be demolished:

Suffice for me to say that I had no idea that such insanitary dwellings and surroundings existed in the Borough of Alexandria, but I am confident that their near demolition is at hand, and that this Council will be asked to exercise the ample powers that are provided for under the *Public Health Act*, in getting rid of these shambles, which are an eyesore and a disgrace to the Borough.<sup>71</sup>

The local Inspector’s ignorance of the housing conditions in the Chinese quarter is revealing of the generally lacklustre and careless approach of local authorities to matters within their jurisdiction, including insanitary conditions, until outbreak of disease and state intervention forced their hand (Jeff Fairman discusses this in Chapter 7). Similar comments about the Chinese quarters were made throughout the first half of 1902. Finally, the *Tung Wah Times* reported that, even though plague only occurred in one terrace, an entire row of terraces in Retreat Street was demolished.<sup>72</sup>

A Whoop for Waterloo

The Cackle of Comical Councillors

*The Waterloo Council, in response to an appeal from the British Empire League urging them to buck up and flaunt flags on Empire Day, replied that Waterloo will do its duty.*

They are loyal men and true, Alderman of Waterloo,  
 They are councillors, long-bearded and sedate,  
 Where the giddy Chinkee dwells in the suburb of bad smells,  
 They of paving stones and sewer traps do prate  
 Where the verdant cabbage grows,  
 With the flowery “Early Rose”  
 And the carrot and parsnip are on view;  
 There they sit, those loyal men,  
 And with ready tongue and pen,  
 They uphold the dignity of Waterloo—  
 Where the dead horse is dissected,  
 Where the Chow’s ne’er disinfected,  
 There they battle for the rights of Waterloo.

Then those Alderman arose, and they stood upon their toes,  
 ‘Twas a glorious and soul-inspiring sight;  
 And they told the council clerk just to put his pen to work,  
 And in dignified italics then to write:  
 “We are loyal to core,  
 We have whooped and will whoop more,  
 And our duty to the Hempire we will do;  
 For the dear old British flag,  
 We’ll go out upon a jag,  
 On the twenty-fourth of May at Waterloo—  
 And we will not walk dejected,  
 For the flag will be protected,  
 By the sturdy Alderman of Waterloo.

Till along a letter came, and it fanned in to a flame,  
 All the loyalty that smouldered in their breasts;  
 ‘Twas the British Hempire League, and the note said  
 “Don’t renege,  
 You’ll go whooping for the Hempire like the rest.  
 They are watching you from ‘Ome,  
 Looking to you cross the foam,  
 Though the odours from the ‘boiling downs are blue;  
 Yet they know you’ll fly the flag,  
 Know you’ll speechify and brag,  
 And say very loyal things at Waterloo—  
 Though the drainage is neglected,  
 Though the Chinkee looks dejected,  
 You are loyal to the flag at Waterloo.

To the south and the north, then the loyal words went forth,  
 To the east and to the west the message flew;  
 And the loyal hearts that burned when they heard about it,  
 turned  
 Their faces as they drank to Waterloo  
 Where the Chinkee digs the soil,  
 Where the dead horses gently boil,  
 Where the billy goats the boarding posters chew;  
 There’s a loyal, sturdy hand,  
 Who are known throughout the land,  
 By the message that they sent from Waterloo—  
 Where the ‘bus horse is dissected,  
 Where the Chow’s a ne’er disinfected,  
 Where the William goat abounds at Waterloo.

This poem, called ‘A Whoop for Waterloo’ was published in the salacious nationalist newspaper *The Truth* (May 13th 1906) and was discovered pasted in the inside cover of the Waterloo Council Minute Book, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1905 –22<sup>nd</sup> October 1909, City of Sydney Archives, CRS 637/11.

12.7.4 A Whoop for Waterloo

The preoccupation with the representation of the district to the wider community of Sydney and scapegoating of the Chinese was not restricted to the Alderman of Alexandria, however; it was also the cause of great concern for the Aldermen of Waterloo. They wrote letters to the Board of Health and the *Daily Telegraph* complaining about misrepresentation of sanitary conditions in their Borough.<sup>73</sup> This concern with image and reputation is a recurring theme in the local newspaper *The Suburban Times*, which covered the outbreaks of Bubonic Plague in 1902. This paper published a series of smug articles congratulating the Borough of Waterloo for avoiding a plague outbreak, which contrasted with an intense focus on the problems Alexandria was facing.<sup>74</sup>

A satirical poem, ‘A Whoop for Waterloo’ (see above), published in the salacious radical nationalist Sydney newspaper *Truth* provides an insight into the way both the Council and Waterloo were perceived by at least some outsiders. We know the Waterloo Aldermen read the poem, because it was pasted

on the inside cover of a Waterloo Council Minute Book.<sup>75</sup> The poem lampoons the pompous Waterloo Aldermen as caring only for their own dignity while surrounded by the shocking sanitary conditions reported by the Board of Health and the Department of Public Instruction. Like other such newspapers, *Truth* was rabidly anti-Chinese and the constant racist references to ‘Chinkee’ and ‘Chow’ in the poem strongly suggest that the Chinese were part of the sanitary problem, if not the cause of it.

A deputation to the Premier of NSW by representatives from the municipalities of Alexandria, Waterloo, Redfern, Botany, Erskineville and Newtown regarding the ‘Chinese Question’ was reported in the *Herald* in a series of articles in 1908. The Premier was told that recent alterations in the city resulting in large numbers of Haymarket Chinese moving into the suburbs ‘had intensified an evil which had existed in those localities for some time’. It was hoped that the Chinese would be made to conform to European ideas regarding sanitation, health and working conditions, and that the movement of Chinese into the area be restricted. They alleged that property values were at stake.



Fig 12.6 Applicants for exemption from the dictation test were also handprinted. The hand pictured is that of Fa Xing (Fatty Hing) whose photograph appeared earlier in this chapter. (Source: National Archives of Australia SP42/1 1908/1473.)

Alderman Banner of Alexandria alleged ‘...wherever the Chinese made their appearance the value of adjoining business places dropped, and no people, except those of the lowest class, would live near them.’<sup>76</sup> Alderman Ross, the Mayor of Waterloo, and Mr A. Dacey MLA for Botany, described walled Chinese gambling dens in Alexandria as ‘regular fortifications’. The Premier assured the delegation that his government had recently introduced legislation to control Chinese workmen and if there was anything else that could be done which was within its jurisdiction, it would be done.

But these allegations did not pass uncontested. Many leading Chinese firms and manufacturers were indignant at the statements which had been made. In a letter to the *Herald* published the next day, John Hoe of Retreat Street, an employer of 70 cabinetmakers and carpenters, refuted the claims, which he took as a personal attack:

‘I can prove by my wages book that I pay the best wages in the state’, Mr John Hoe added. ‘My best workmen get up to 4 15s per week, and not one of my 70 hands receives less than 2. In addition, I keep the men in food, which costs me 10s per head per week, for I get them pork, fish, veal, with poultry on Sundays, and spirits twice a week. They only work overtime when an urgent order is to be completed, and it would be more profitable to me to dispense with overtime altogether.’

‘...I am building only 10, and not 20 houses, but they will be of the latest design, and all modern improvements will be introduced. Rather than allow the work to go outside the district, they rejected the lowest tender, and gave the work to a local European contractor, who will employ Europeans tradesmen. As a matter of fact, when I want any house-repairing or ordinary building work done I always employ Europeans, because they ask for lower wages than Chinese cabinetmakers will accept. You cannot get Chinese tradesmen to accept 10s added,’ he added in conclusion, ‘and they live better than the Australian workmen.’<sup>77</sup>

Notice the acute awareness of the concerns of the European community expressed here. Hoe’s prompt and audacious response infuriated the Mayor of Waterloo, who, as an employer in the area, appears to have taken Hoe’s claims personally. His lengthy response, published on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, described Hoe’s defence as ‘callous impudence’ and conveyed in no uncertain terms the deep prejudices against the Chinese among Europeans.

The Mayor’s response also demonised the Chinese way of life. For Sydneysiders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the home was constructed as emblem of social status, worth and respectability. ‘The economic need to keep up appearance of respectability meant that domestic life became a mode of presenting the self to the wider world’ and respectable people were expected to live in good family homes.<sup>78</sup> The Mayor attempted to capitalise upon these notions of respectability when he compared the living conditions of the Chinese cabinetmakers who worked for John Hoe with those of his own 70 employees:

My men work five days a week and 90 per cent of them are married men. That means that they occupy 60 or 70 houses, and we therefore provide for between 200

and 300 people. Mr John Hoe says he keeps his men in food. The wives of our men keep them in food.

... If time would permit I could take you to each and every one of the houses occupied by our men ... and am proud to say that a large number of them live in their own homes. I will now take up and show you Mr John Hoe’s premises and where his men reside. Can Mr John Hoe kindly tell us how many wives his 70 hands have and where they reside.<sup>79</sup>

The references to the absence of wives in the Chinese households of Alexandria/Waterloo reflects the recurring suspicion of Chinese lifestyles as somehow unnatural, as well as the general sense among the European community that, because Chinese men did not have Chinese wives, they were a threat to European women. The Mayor was clearly entirely ignorant of reasons for the absence of Chinese women.

### 12.8 Summary and statement of cultural significance

The area surrounding Retreat Street in Alexandria and Waterloo has been the site of continuous Chinese occupation since at least the 1870s.<sup>80</sup> Though the numbers of Chinese in the area fluctuated dramatically with the introduction and intensification of the WAP, the precinct accommodated the highest concentration of Chinese market gardeners in Sydney during the 1880s and early 1900s. The gardeners lived in wooden huts adjacent to the Street (which have since been destroyed by fire and/or government ‘cleansing’), but spent their recreational time, along with other working class Chinese (as well as Europeans), in Retreat Street, which was notorious for its gambling houses.<sup>81</sup>

The surrounding area, particularly Botany Road and Bourke Street, hosted many other successful Chinese businesses, including more market gardens, grocers, cabinetmakers and a butcher.<sup>82</sup> The state heritage listed Yiu Ming Temple and the locally listed terrace houses which adjoin it, were built by local tradesmen of the Go Yui clan. Situated at the far end of Retreat Street, they are associated with many of the historical figures and businesses of the area and remain a key site of religious and cultural activity for the Go Yui clan.<sup>83</sup> Australian Born Chinese (ABC) children were born and raised in this region, attending the local Waterloo Public School. The combined districts of Alexandria and Waterloo are thus places of special cultural significance and meaning for people with links to the Chinese communities of this neighbourhood. They also enrich our understanding of Sydney’s multicultural past. One important lesson is that racism does not appear to have been a constant factor at this local level, but rather escalated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The area also has social significance because it is rich in meaning for Chinese-Australians who live in the area, as well as in other parts of Sydney and Australia today. It is an important reminder to future generations of Australians of the broad and complex history of urban Chinese settlement outside of the boundaries of the area now commonly known as ‘Chinatown’. It is a story which tells us about the local implementation of the WAP, and Chinese community resistance to and negotiation with the xenophobic Australia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Making this history available to Chinese communities in this region and elsewhere, new and current residents of the area, schools, libraries and workplaces, will contribute to a richer understanding of an area that is often wrongly dismissed as an industrial wasteland.



Fig. 12.7 The development site to the north of the temple and the rear of the terrace houses within the temple grounds. The Hudson development towers over the temple to the left and to the south. (Photo: Melita Rogowsky 2004.)

As Ann Stephen noted in her report on the temple, Chinese settlement in Retreat Street has in part reshaped the meaning of Alexandria and Waterloo. These suburbs were named to celebrate the recent victory of the British in the Napoleonic Wars, as was Retreat Street, which takes its name from the Waterloo Retreat Hotel which once stood on its corner. But Retreat Street has become synonymous with the tranquility of the temple, rather than with a working class pub, or European battles.<sup>84</sup>

### 12.9 Recommendations

In 1998 the site on the southern side of the temple was redeveloped as a residential apartment complex, The Hudson, which now towers above it. At the time of writing, the site on the northern side of temple was being bulldozed to make way for yet another new residential complex (see Fig. 12.7). Though the temple and the terraces are explicitly protected by state and local heritage legislation, the lands surrounding the temple are not. However, this surrounding area is likely to contain archaeological evidence of considerable significance, which should be subject to the *NSW Heritage Act 1977*.

As we have seen throughout this chapter and as Fig. 12.1 suggests, the area around the temple was likely to have been the site for nineteenth century market gardens or the homes of Chinese gardeners. An examination of the material lives of the Chinese in Alexandria through archaeological investigation would very likely provide unique insights into suburban working class Chinese of the late nineteenth century, just as similar investigations in Sydney's Rocks area have provided for the city neighbourhoods.

Archaeological sites in NSW are protected by the *NSW Heritage Act 1977* which provides for archaeological investigation where important archaeological remains are known to exist or are discovered. However, this does not appear to have been applied on the many development sites in Alexandria. This may be the result of a lack of awareness of archaeo-

logical potential, or the unfounded assumption that the area is without history, or that its history is not as important as those of areas such as The Rocks. Clearly, the sheer number of sites earmarked for redevelopment in the Green Square area presents a rare and unparalleled opportunity for archaeological investigation of a nineteenth century suburb that was home to working class Australians of various backgrounds. To date, very few investigations of suburban archaeology have been carried out anywhere in Australia, let alone on sites of Chinese occupation.<sup>85</sup>

It is therefore recommended that the City of Sydney instigate a program of research and archaeological assessment of all development sites in the Green Square area in the early stages of planning, to ensure both compliance with the *Heritage Act* and the preservation and study of the archaeological record.

## Chapter 13

From German Streets to  
Russian libraries:  
Immigrant Histories of  
Green Square

Susan O'Reilly

**13.1 Introduction and overview**

The areas of Waterloo, Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Rosebery and Zetland are known for their industrial history, plants, factories and most recently for the development of expensive high-density housing. But these areas were not spaces only of economic and building development, devoid of human voices and stories of the surrounding communities. What accents did these voices have? What cultures wove amongst one another, creating the diverse religious and ethnic communities that exist in the area today?

At present, the Green Square area is on the cusp of enormous changes, with extensive development drawing in new communities and groups of people. To understand the future of a place and its community, we must take the time to look back and recognise the people who lived here before and the types of activities they participated in, the ways they changed their surroundings and their continuing presence. A history of immigration opens up this perspective and brings national issues to local faces and buildings.

Since 1788, immigration has had an undeniably strong impact on Australia and its communities. Sydney has absorbed many of these waves of people, and they in turn brought their religions, sports, food, world-views, and architectural styles to the streets and the suburbs. However, compared to communities such as Leichhardt and Marrickville, the histories and impacts of immigrant peoples of the Green Square area have not been widely recorded. Here, immigrant histories seem to be hidden amongst the records of various community groups, such as churches. These suggest that the majority of immigrants to the area simply worked and lived, creating quiet histories of their own. A most effective way to further record and celebrate Green Square's immigrant history would be through an oral history project. Oral histories could reveal the diverse, vibrant and layered community in Green Square, both now and in the past.

Immigration to Australia has been shaped by a number of factors, including government policies designed to increase Australia's population, and humanitarian measures to aid displaced people and refugee groups. International conflicts such as the two World Wars and civil conflicts of a number of countries have seen many people flee to Australia's shores to find employment, housing and freedom. The cry 'Populate or Perish' encapsulated Australian government policies after the Second World War. These aimed to increase Australia's population rapidly through increased birth rates and immigration. As a result, the percentage of Sydney's foreign-born

population rose from thirteen percent in 1947, to 22 per cent in 1966.<sup>1</sup> Displaced persons affected by the devastation of war flooded into Australia from Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup> High levels of immigration would continue through the 1950s and 1960s with the arrival of Greeks, Italians, Hungarians and Vietnamese.<sup>3</sup>

Sydney absorbed much of the inflow and while some flocked to already established immigrant communities in areas like Leichhardt and Surry Hills, or went out to join small communities in Western Sydney, many others settled in the Green Square area. Waterloo, Alexandria and the surrounding suburbs provided high levels of factory based employment, which suited migrants who were unskilled, semi-skilled and/or not proficient in English. Between 1944 and 1945 Alexandria had 342 factories with 22,238 employees and was the second biggest centre for industry in the metropolis; neighbouring Waterloo was the third largest.<sup>4</sup>

Industrialisation combined with low cost housing (some provided by the state) would continue to attract immigrants to the area throughout the remainder of the twentieth-century, although the downturn in secondary industry also hit immigrant working people hard.<sup>5</sup> In the 1970s, when the Leylands factory closed its doors, over seventy per cent of the Zetland plant workforce were immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter tracks the presence and impact of immigrant communities within the Green Square area in order to uncover the community behind the industry and the history of the ethnic character that is so celebrated in South Sydney today. Since the mid-nineteenth century, these groups have shaped the religious character of the area, its physical appearance through architectural styles, the makeup of local festivals and the services offered by local councils. And while these communities may be celebrated for their differences, in many ways they have also been drawn into the fabric of the wider community and local battles. This mutual embrace is evident in many aspects, not least of which was the fight to save the South Sydney Rugby League team, the Rabbitohs. George Piggins in his book *Never Say Die, The Fight to Save the Rabbitohs* acknowledged the immigrant communities in these words: 'I thank the ethnic communities who came out in force, the wonderful Lebanese and Greek Australian's who rallied and raised desperately needed funds.'<sup>7</sup>

**13.2 Unwilling immigrants: the French Canadian exiles**

While Irish and English settlers made up most of the area's European population in the first half of the nineteenth century, the industries established there did attract at least

one other ethnic group—the French Canadian exiles. They were among the fifty men exiled from Canada for their role in the 1837 protests and armed clashes, when French Canadians demanded separation from the British-controlled Canadian government. After their arrival in Australia a number of this group earned their living in the Waterloo area, working in the building industry and sharing residential arrangements, apparently living communally. These men were better educated than most prisoners and engaged with the local community. Some of them were employed building a cottage for academic Dr Sly in Ethel Street.<sup>8</sup> Mary Salmon wrote of the impact of this group in the Waterloo area in a report for the *Australian* in 1904:

[They were a] fine body of men commonly spoken as ‘the Canadian exiles’ who, being banished to this country for political offences, benefited it greatly by their skilled and conscientious work. Some of them were builders and a party lived in the cottage next to a house where for years Barrister Holroyd lived, opposite Macdonald Park. They formed a small community, having a common purse, and it was from an exile that Mr Bob Henderson and his brother learnt their first lessons. When granted a pardon, they returned home and Australia lost a valuable settler.<sup>9</sup>

### 13.3 Religion

Religion is often integral to distinctive cultures, but it can also be something shared between different cultures. Similar practices, faiths and a shared desire to maintain a system of worship can forge commonalities between ethnic groups in society. The early Irish presence saw the establishment of Mt Carmel Catholic Church, which later provided the place of worship and spiritual guidance for the increasing Maltese and Lebanese communities. Australia’s first Maronite and Melkite churches were founded in Waterloo, reflecting the high level of Lebanese and Greek immigration to the area. While these churches have now been re-established elsewhere, the Mt Carmel community has remained and flourished in a highly Catholic area. With the creation of a primary and high school, a convent and a Mercy Foundation Centre, it remains a cornerstone of the local area and still has a diverse congregation.

#### 13.3.1 Mt Carmel Church and the early Catholic community

The southern portion of Zetland was known until the 1870s as ‘Irishtown’ with clusters of Irish families living around Raglan and Kellick Streets.<sup>10</sup> They created a closeknit community through religious affiliation and social groups—the latter focused on such establishments as the Zetland Hotel, which opened in 1886.<sup>11</sup> Irish concentrations such as these developed in the city, particularly in Redfern, Waterloo and Paddington, and this was a sign of their overrepresentation in unskilled occupations and the sorts of jobs available in these areas. In the 1880’s industries such as tanneries, glass works, woolwashing establishments and soap and candle factories constituted the majority of industry in Waterloo and the surrounding areas, drawing people to work in them.<sup>12</sup> The clustered communities also reflected the workers’ need to live close to their places of work.<sup>13</sup>

Mt Carmel Church, built in 1859 on land donated by local landowner Daniel Cooper, is a good example of the impact this group had on the physical and social environment of the area. The church’s main purpose was to minister to the religious needs of the mainly Irish population that settled around the area. At the Centenary Ball in 1959, Father Roche noted the

‘debt of gratitude owed by Mt Carmel to the seminaries of Ireland and the priests they sent out to Australia in the days when there were so few Australian priests’. But the importance of this central immigrant group within the parish community was also acknowledged, for Roche thanked the ‘lay people of the early days, too, [who] were predominantly Irish with the same uncompromising devotion to the Faith’.<sup>14</sup>

While the dominant cultural group in the early days of the Mt Carmel parish were the Irish, the presence of other immigrant groups can also be glimpsed. In 1879, Mt Carmel Church celebrated its twentieth birthday with a Mass. At this important event, the vocal segments were provided by the Italian Opera Troupe with a special musical service composed by Signor Pado Gioza. The principal parts of the Mass were sung by Signor Tavella, Mr.G.A Johnson, Mr. Tagmire and Signor Bartolometti.<sup>15</sup> Some of these men, whether they were from Italy or of Italian descent, were participating in the activities of the parish and probably had an ongoing relationship with the church and its parishioners. Perhaps their wives and families also attended mass or participated in community events.

Since then, numerous immigrant groups have moved in and out of the Mt Carmel School and parish community, with varying impacts. Increasing numbers of Maltese families arriving during the 1950s were easily accommodated because they spoke English. They also had similar religious practices to the Irish Catholic community, such as assembling on Sundays to say the Rosary before Mass. Kathy Ingram, a local resident at the time remembers their presence: ‘Yeah, a lot of Maltese, and they were people that were more or less accepted, the Maltese were just, they weren’t like called wogs, and everything like that, yeah they were just part of Waterloo’.<sup>16</sup>

Mt Carmel also maintained links with other religious groups, mainly the Melkite Church of St Michael in Wellington Street (see Section 13.3.3). Cardinal Gilroy made a historic visit to the church where he was welcomed by Monsignor Shahoud, indicating the high level at which dialogue occurred between the churches.

From the mid 1950s onwards, immigration to the area took on an increasingly European profile as Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavs moved in. This wave of post-war immigration also included Turkish and Lebanese families, and these groups became the main buyers of inner-city housing. The influx of Lebanese immigrants during the 1970s and 80s seems to have marked some community changes. Lebanese migration to Sydney increased by 200 per cent between 1967 and 1975, and Waterloo and its surrounding suburbs became home to many of this community.<sup>17</sup> The Lebanese were strongly bound together by concern over the conflict in Lebanon and the fate of their families. Catherine Duncan, historian of the Mercy Sisters in Waterloo, maintains that language was a difficulty for those Lebanese of the Roman Catholic faith. She argues that their different patterns of family structure were at odds with traditional Irish Catholic ideas of the roles of men and women.<sup>18</sup>

By 1971, nearly 40 per cent of the inhabitants of Waterloo were immigrants and the mix was still more diverse.<sup>19</sup> Esoa Equaibor, an immigrant from Nigeria, remembers the ethnic makeup of the areas in the 1970s:

we lived in a block of units, and it would have been probably about two hundred of us, everyone was from a different background ... the Aboriginals, Greek, Lebanese and Hungarian, Asian, Chinese, and ...our primary school is right across the road from our flats.<sup>20</sup>

## The first Melkite Church became a place of worship for all Eastern Christians including Greeks, Antichian Orthodox, Coptics and Syrians, and Father Mansour found himself in a unique ecumenical position.

Ethnic identification remains a distinctive feature of the area’s cultural makeup. In the 1996 Census, the most spoken languages for the area included Chinese languages, Greek, Russian and Arabic. Overall over seventy different languages are spoken.<sup>21</sup> Today the Mt Carmel Church and school reflect the ethnically diverse area of South Sydney. In 1994, 60 per cent of those attending Mt Carmel School were children of non-English speaking immigrants.<sup>22</sup>

### 13.3.2 The early Maronite Community

The Maronite Church is the largest Christian group in Lebanon and Maronite immigration to Australia began in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1889, the Maronite Patriarch considered the Australian congregation large enough for the establishment of an official religious community. Father Abdullah Yasbeck and Father Joseph Dahdah arrived on the May 8<sup>th</sup> 1893 for that purpose. They established their ministry at St Vincent’s Church, Redfern, and at Our Lady of Mt Carmel, an indication of a local demand for such religious services.<sup>23</sup> This led to the establishment of a Maronite Chapel in a private house in Raglan Street, Waterloo in 1894. It was a small chapel but served the religious needs of the surrounding community until 1897.<sup>24</sup> This chapel was no longer needed when a larger church was built in Elizabeth Street, Redfern. Dedicated to St. Maroun, and blessed by Cardinal Moran on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1897, this was the first Maronite Church in Australia. It played a fundamental role as the religious centre in the Lebanese community over the next seventy years.<sup>25</sup>

### 13.3.3 The early Melkite community

A similar demand arose from the local Melkite population and the first clergyman of Eastern rite, Father Silwanus Mansour, arrived in 1891. The Melkite religion is a branch of Catholicism but follows the Eastern tradition in its ceremonies.<sup>26</sup> The Patriarch Gregory Joseph appointed Mansour the first Melkite parish priest in Australia in 1891. Father Mansour initially set up a temporary church in Redfern, ministering to members of the Syrian Melkite, Maronite or Orthodox communities who needed pastoral care.<sup>27</sup> Recognising the need for an established religious community, he sought permission from the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney to collect funds to build a Byzantine Church. Mansour travelled to Victoria and Queensland to gain support from the scattered Lebanese and Arabic communities. The money he received allowed him to purchase a piece of land in Wellington Street, Waterloo. Construction of a church began in 1893 and the building was completed and consecrated in 1895 by Cardinal Moran. The church appeared in the 1897 *Sands Sydney Directory* as an ‘Assyrian Church—Rev. Father Masoud [Mansour]’. Rev. Father Khoury joined Father Mansour in 1915.<sup>28</sup>

The small building became a place of worship for all Eastern Christians including Greeks, Antichian Orthodox, Coptics and Syrians, and Father Mansour found himself in a unique

ecumenical position. The ethnic diversity of the surrounding area was reflected in the fact that he had to provide pastoral care to people of a great many different ethnic backgrounds and traditions. Father Mansour died in 1929 while on a visit to Brisbane to witness the consecration of the second Melkite Church in Australia.<sup>29</sup>

Increases in Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian and Greek immigration in the 1960s and 1970s due to military conflict and economic hardship placed considerable pressure on the church building. It was considered too small and outdated, and the church decided to sell the property to the Housing Commission of NSW for redevelopment. The marble Iconostasis (Icon’s Screen) which dates from 1891 was moved from Waterloo and reassembled in St Michael’s, Darlington. The new St Michael’s was consecrated as a cathedral in January 1981.<sup>30</sup>

### 13.4 Economic activities

Early industries in the area were established primarily by British entrepreneurs or people of British descent, and their workers probably also included a mix of British immigrants and native born. Australia’s reputation as a ‘worker’s paradise’ continued to attract mostly English, Irish and Scottish immigrants in the nineteenth century, though as Jeff Fairman points out in Chapter 7, Waterloo was far from a ‘paradise’ for working people in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>31</sup> Two immigrant men who had a significant impact on the early business and residential community in this period were Michael O’Riordan and James Schimel.

#### 13.4.1 Michael O’Riordan

Michael O’Riordan was an Irishman who came to the area in the 1870s and in 1887 started a soap and tallow factory in Rosebery. In the early 1890s he moved to Sewer Road, which was later renamed O’Riordan Street in his honour. O’Riordan was responsible for the development of many industries in Alexandria and is famed for coining the phrase ‘The Birmingham of Australia’ to describe the industrial dominance of the area. O’Riordan also provided assistance to immigrants from Ireland by employing them in his factories where his wife would cook them a hot lunch as part of their wages.<sup>32</sup> O’Riordan was dedicated to his community, serving 21½ years as an Alderman for Alexandria and as Mayor for five terms. He remained undefeated in council elections from 1896–1917.<sup>33</sup>

#### 13.4.2 James Schimel

James Schimel was a German coachbuilder who moved into the area in the mid-nineteenth century and became a noted builder. He constructed most of the dwellings on Wellington Street in the late 1870s and, between 1870 and 1873, built two more residential properties as well as the Council Chambers. The houses ‘were representative of the early 1870s building in the area—single-storey with attic’.<sup>34</sup> Schimel built extensively on Elizabeth Street, completing four houses known as Eltville Terrace in 1879, a set of two-storied terraces next to the Council Chambers in 1880, two more residential terraces in 1883, and five two-storied dwellings between 1884 and 1888.<sup>35</sup> James Schimel and his brothers operated from his workshop and residence which consisted of eight rooms and a stable.

James Schimel also played a significant role in the Catholic community. His economic success allowed him to donate large sums of money to the Mt Carmel church. His wood-working skills came to the fore in 1874 when he designed and carved a new altar for the church (dedicated to Our Lady) and

also the wood panelling on the organ gallery. His children, James, Joseph, Frank, Therese and Christine were all talented musicians, and were the backbone of the Mt Carmel Choir for many years.<sup>36</sup> A statue of St. Francis Xavier is dedicated to the memory of his wife while a statue of St. Michael marks James Schimel's contribution to the parish. Both these statues remain in the parish community. He is also commemorated in two stained glass windows in the Mt Carmel Convent Chapel.

Schimel's contribution to the wider community was also recognised with the naming of a local street after him. But during the First World War, streets and places in Australia with German connections were often changed. Unfortunately, Schimel Street suffered this fate and is today known as Lenton Parade, after an Alderman, Charles Lenton, who was a bootmaker in Elizabeth Street.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Hanover Street was renamed Walker Street.<sup>38</sup>

### 13.4.3 Shops, trades and businesses

While the industrial development drew immigrants to the area for work, population growth in turn also encouraged them to open shops and small-scale businesses in the twenties and thirties. In the 1920s, the first eight houses in Morehead Street, Waterloo were owned by the Syrian family, the Kayrooz, who ran a drapery business.<sup>39</sup> The Greek community, noted for their café society, quickly expanded and a number of Greek-run food catering establishments were established in Waterloo and Newtown.<sup>40</sup> A quick glance at the 1927 *Sands Sydney Directory* for Alexandria reveals the following businesses:

- Micheal Vujcich, ham and beef shop
- Coad Bros, marble and terrazzo works
- K.X. Hundsorfer, sausage casings
- Mrs E. Soderland, grocer
- Economos Felias, fruiterer
- J.R Haslam, drapers
- J.R Haslam, mercer
- Ada Durger, grocer

In the 1930s, the ethnic diversity of the numerous shopkeepers was still evident. Among the common Anglo-Saxon names such as Jones, Hines and Smith, the 1931 *Sands Sydney Directory* for Waterloo (including Zetland and Rosebery) listed the names of the following businesses:

- Joe and Frank Femia, fruiterers
- Rosenthal and Mendelson, tailors
- Lazarus and Steenbhom, boot shop
- V. Taranto, fruiterer
- P.J Shalvey, butcher
- Mrs. M. Petrich, confectioner
- H.J. Hassan, grocer

### 13.4.4 Working in the factories

From the late 1940s to about 1973, the period of industrial boom, the immigrant workforce increased remarkably. During this time about sixty per cent of new workers were born outside of Australia. Factories such as Metters Ltd and Slazengers (Australia) Pty Ltd and other inner-city factories were often 'staffed by non-English speaking migrants, who formed a key component in Sydney's industrial workforce'.<sup>41</sup> Employ-

ment was sought in production such as textiles, footwear and food processing. BMC/Leyland Motor Vehicle Manufacturing Facility can stand as a case study for this expansive industrial phase. Between 1950 to 1975 most of its employees—typically 5000 at any time—were immigrants with limited English language skills and most instructions in the early days were by sign language. Thirty-five languages could be heard at the plant and employees were grouped to aid communication. English classes were organised to help immigrants gain English language skills rapidly. An interesting effect of this influx of immigration was the immigrants' adventurous food, as 'locals were introduced to exotic smells [and] imaginative ways were found to heat lunches'.<sup>42</sup>

However, as discussed in Chapter 6, from the 1950s onwards, factories also began move to the fringes of the city, and so inner-city suburbs were often the first to be affected.<sup>43</sup> From the 1970s, the 'de-industrialisation of the Australian economy, creat[ed] high levels of suffering and hardship'.<sup>44</sup> The Green Square suburbs were dogged by unemployment. South Sydney's population profile had disproportionate numbers of elderly people, single-parent families, migrants and indigenous Australians.<sup>45</sup> The decline of secondary industries has had a detrimental effect for immigrants in particular, as it eroded the main source of their employment.

### 13.5 Community

#### 13.5.1 Events and structures

As immigrant groups moved into the area, various organisations emerged to help create community networks which supported their transition into a new and foreign country. Religion has been one cornerstone of this security structure but the presence of immigrants can be seen in many other organizations. The 1930 *Sands Sydney Directory*, listed the Italian Artists Association at 77 Raglan Street, evidence of an Italian community that was creating structures apart from the Mt Carmel Church.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, in the first half of the twentieth century, immigrants mainly relied on family units, ties from the old countries, churches and local business relationships for support. Churches and kinship groups were the main providers of welfare and important nodes in community networks. There is little or no evidence to suggest that a strong, formalised support structure for migrants was provided by local government before the late twentieth century.

#### 13.5.2 Modern developments

Festivals often function as meeting points between cultures and there have been numerous festivals within the area, usually celebrating the culinary diversity associated with multiculturalism. The first South Sydney Festival was organised in 1972 by the South Sydney Council, and displayed the diversity of the area with food stalls, lantern parades and arts and crafts. This event developed into the MASCON Festivals, which are now an annual event and a cultural highpoint of the area's calendar. These festivals have embraced themes such as 'Ocean of Colours' and 'Festival of All Nations'. Rosebery has celebrated its diverse community since the early nineties with an event named 'Cuisine on the Green', often held at Turuwal Park. In 1997, the theme was 'Taverna/Café' celebrating the local Greek and South American/Spanish communities. Wood fired paella was served, accompanied by dolmades, moussaka, a Greek barbeque and the music of the Olympians—a five piece band playing traditional Greek music. Cuisine on the Green continues today.

## Russian music brought emotions to the fore, the library gained twenty-three new members and nearly two-thirds of the new books were borrowed the same day.

By 1994, a number of organisations had been established by South Sydney City Council to assist immigrants in the area. The Community Directory for that year listed the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, Hungarian Social Club, The Shop Family and Children's Centre Inc, migrant casework and English services, Ethnic Minorities Action Group. Special community language classes were set up at Waterloo Public School. Churches and religious organisations are also still important, including the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, St. Lazarus Orthodox Church (Serbian speaking) and the Mercy Family Life Centre.<sup>47</sup>

Even given these organisations and services, the high levels of immigration in the area suggests that a wider range of services ought to have been available. A possible reason for the relative lack of a local established immigrant support system, is the earlier development of organisations in other Sydney areas such as Cabramatta and Ashfield. Needs may have been met by groups outside of the Green Square area, while improved transport and communication meant that services no longer needed to be as localised as in earlier periods.

In 1996, a Community Gardens project was begun at the Waterloo Public Housing Estate to create a more enjoyable physical environment, a heightened sense of community and to improve the standard of living for public housing tenants. The area is ethnically diverse 'with high concentrations of people from Russia/Ukraine, Vietnam, China and other Asian countries'.<sup>48</sup> Fifteen nationalities are represented in the Garden membership—the majority of Garden members are Russian-speakers from the Ukraine (forty-five per cent), the second largest group are English speakers from Australia (eleven per cent) and the third Vietnamese speakers from Vietnam (eleven per cent).<sup>49</sup>

A study of the gardens carried out in 2003 found that they had become 'a common ground for the interaction of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and experiences'.<sup>50</sup> The gardens were especially important because the high-rise public housing flats where the immigrant tenants lived had further increased their sense of isolation. They feel separated and compartmentalised in what is generally an unfriendly and stark environment. The gardens offer a place for the communal acts of gardening and eating, which have decreased barriers between different ethnic groups as they share knowledge and food and work together to maintain the area. Gardener Loh Lai King, originally from Malaysia, said:

For ten years my neighbour didn't speak with me. She was Russian and didn't speak good English. But now we have the garden we communicate, and once a year we all have a party.<sup>51</sup>

The community gardens have been effective in helping immigrants to make friends outside of their own ethnic circle, as they provide 'a multicultural setting where people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work side-by-side, sharing garden practices, produce, and recipes'. They also allow people to continue gardening traditions they have brought from their homelands.<sup>52</sup>

### 13.5.3 Local government services

The services provided by local government for immigrant residents have undergone dramatic changes, though these are relatively recent. Under policies of assimilation, immigrants were expected to 'fit in' as best they could, and were virtually invisible where official policies and services were concerned. Earlier immigrants were forced to rely on small social networks to help them orientate themselves and settle in on first arrival. By contrast, there are now numerous services available to help newcomers in the area. Orientation Days, which began in 1998, were designed to give residents from different language and ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to see what type of services local government could offer. These events included a guided tour of Council buildings, a bus tour of community facilities and a visit to the local parks. Over eight different immigrant groups used the service, including Greek, Cantonese, Russian, Turkish and Mandarin.

Other ways in which local government eventually responded to immigrant communities was through the appointment of a multicultural community officer, a multicultural advisory committee and language aid services. The establishment of Ethnic Meals on Wheels indicates the way local immigrant groups have brought changes to well established services. Cross-cultural programs at local family day care centres reflect the recognition of immigrant groups at an institutional/policy level.

The presence of a multilingual community can be seen in the high demand placed on local libraries for non-English language literature. Waterloo Library now holds one of the largest Russian collections in Sydney, which is a reflection of the 94.2 per cent increase in that language group between 1991 and 1996. In 1997, the library responded to the voracious reading of the local Russian-speaking population with a Russian Books Launch. Over 250 books and magazines were purchased, and over 110 residents were invited to the library where library procedures were explained through an interpreter. Russian music brought emotions to the fore, the library gained twenty-three new members and nearly two-thirds of the new books were borrowed the same day. The effects have been positive for both the library and the Russian community. The project created work for fourteen people for approximately three months and Russian-speaking borrowers now have more confidence in talking to library staff in English. They recommend new authors and titles and suggest that a two book limit be imposed to ensure that the books are equitably shared.<sup>53</sup>

Overall, the immigration history of Green Square tells us that effective assistance and support has been implemented by local organisations at a local level with high levels of community involvement. New programs, infrastructure and events, like the gardens and the library books, clearly increase immigrants' opportunities and desire to interact more closely with the wider community. These programs and ideas have only developed strongly during the 1990s. Their success, compared with the lack of established services on the areas earlier days, makes it poignantly obvious how hard interaction would have been for the area's immigrants from the late 1800s to the late nineties.

### 13.6 Ideas for interpretation

There are several creative and intriguing ways Green Square's immigration history could be remembered and celebrated in the future design of the area. The Migration Wall at the National Maritime Museum, simply listing names, occupations and places of origin, is a physical representation of thousands of immigrants who have journeyed to these shores. A similar work of art could be created in the Green Square area using footprints dedicated to the various migrant groups who have lived in the area. These footprints could create a path through the new development and the shopping centres to ensure that the histories of past communities are tied with the creation of the new communities. This could be a way for the future residents of Green Square to become aware of the experiences and lives of those who created the earlier community structure and character of the area.

Another possibility would be the construction of a child's play area where the floor is a map of the world. Marks could be made indicating the home countries of local immigrants, so that people can clearly see the origins and incredible diversity of their immigrant community. It would allow the individual ethnic groups to be visible rather than homogenised into the one 'immigrant' group. Various social groups who deal with immigrant issues and structures could be consulted. By making the map the focus of a children's play area, the links between the creators of future communities and their ancestors are strongly maintained in a way which is also fun.



# Chapter 14

# The Roots of Green Square: A Planning History

Tessa Endelman

## 14.1 Introduction

Green Square area has long been a site for planning visions. Over the twentieth century there were various schemes for the redevelopment of certain aspects, areas and services in South Sydney, so the current plans for Green Square are only the latest in a long history of proposed schemes for the area. However, the current urban renewal project is at present the largest in the southern hemisphere and is supported by the NSW State Government.

For most of Sydney's relatively short history, the Green Square area has been largely an industrial zone, part of Sydney's oldest industrial area, home to brickworks, soap and candleworks, tanneries, breweries, glassworks and the like. At present the area incorporates a wide range of architectural styles, cultural groups and people of different ethnicities, socio-economic strata and age groups—a testament to Sydney's very mixed and largely unplanned growth.

Originating as the Municipalities of Waterloo and Alexandria from 1860, the area alternated several times over the twentieth century between the administrations of Sydney City Council and South Sydney Council. Thus the new Green Square district lies within a particular section of the Sydney metropolis that has continuously fallen through the cracks with regard to redevelopment, as responsible authorities and council borders kept changing.

Several of the authors in this volume have noted and discussed the potential impacts of current urban renewal plans for Green Square. But what are the origins of these plans, why have they been devised, and by whom? To grasp its present nature and significance, we need to look at the roots of Green Square: its antecedents, the wider context, the processes by which it was developed and implemented, and the outcomes it hopes to achieve.

## 14.2 Green Square and South Sydney: historical context

### 14.2.1 Local Government, redevelopment and 'slums'

The area became part of the Borough of Redfern under the Municipalities Act of 1858, and Waterloo and Alexandria were incorporated in one ward in 1859.<sup>1</sup> The Waterloo Municipal Council was then proclaimed in 1860, followed by Alexandria Municipality in 1868.<sup>2</sup> Over the next sixty years there were few alterations to municipal boundaries. What brought change was the steady increase in the number of factories located within the region and consequently the growing numbers of working class families living in the area. As Jeff Fairman has shown

(Chapter 7), there was little or no planning in this period of growth, with some disastrous consequences for public health.

Housing conditions in these inner-city and industrial suburbs had been a focus of reformers and improvers since the turn of the century and by the 1930s public concern over the levels of slum housing in Sydney was widespread. Unions called for campaigns to demolish slums and build better homes for workers. Moreover, in the interwar period the district had become still more oriented towards manufacturing, with residential areas facing a general decline both in quality and quantity. By 1943 more than half the land area of Alexandria was taken up by industry, which had replaced many residential areas.<sup>3</sup> The balance changed somewhat after the Second World War, when the demand for housing rose again as demobilised soldiers returned from overseas service.<sup>4</sup> However, in 1943 state housing authorities estimated that 14.5 per cent of Sydney's dwellings were sub-standard, with parts of Alexandria and Waterloo 'in need of substantial clearance'.<sup>5</sup> Waterloo and Alexandria were described as belonging to a ring of old slums which were not only an eyesore but testified to a distinction between the working and middle classes—an offence against both egalitarianism and aspirations to modernity.<sup>6</sup>

In 1949 Alexandria and Waterloo, along with other 'slum municipalities', were incorporated into the City of Sydney Council.<sup>7</sup> The council lines were redrawn again in 1968 with the founding of the South Sydney Municipal Council, which included much of the area that would become Green Square. In 1981 South Sydney Council was amalgamated back into the Sydney City Council for eight years until South Sydney City Council was founded in 1989. This Council lasted until it was merged once more with Sydney City Council early in 2004.<sup>8</sup>

Neither of these Sydney councils was renowned for their housing capabilities and, with the constant administrative shuffling, the issue of redevelopment was never properly addressed. The South Sydney region was the subject of some redevelopment planning in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1952, the City Council adopted a new Planning Scheme which included the South Sydney district, although at this stage, most planning still revolved around zoning. With its long industrial history, the area was predominantly made up of industrial sites and working class housing and it was once more designated as a district in need of 'slum clearance' and new public housing.<sup>9</sup> Very little came of this plan as the council soon found it was too expensive to buy the land and rebuild on it, especially public housing. Constant shifts in local government also

resulted in uncertainty over who would have authority and responsibility for such redevelopment.<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1970s, the New South Wales Housing Commission put forward a proposed redevelopment to provide housing for low-income workers close to the city in Waterloo.<sup>11</sup> Historian Carolyn Allport describes this as the Commission's 'final assault on what many had termed "the slums of Sydney"<sup>12</sup>. The problem with this attempt was that it came three decades too late, as a result of 'failure of the Commonwealth Government to grant specific slum clearance funds... [and] inter-governmental bickering over costs and legal responsibility'.<sup>13</sup> And the local community not only objected to the planned high-rise towers, it had moved on from the idea that 'slums' needed to be cleared at all. Residents' action groups fought for the preservation of the community and neighbourhood, while at the same time the older inner-city areas were now becoming increasingly popular places to live. Terraces and old warehouses soon became the site of renewal and gentrification as young professionals moved back into the area because of its highly desirable proximity to the city. Two of the planned six tower-blocks were built, together with some walk-up flats.

#### 14.2.2 Urban processes

Since the end of the Second World War, the nature of Sydney's urban environment has been constantly evolving. Decentralisation has had a significant impact on the character of the city and the relocation of industry, led to a decline in blue-collar employment within the city. People left too. Whereas the inner-city suburbs had been home to industrial and low-income workers, in the post-war period, many working families with children moved to the outer suburbs where the land was cheaper and suburbs more spacious. By 1971, Sydney City Council could see that 'the old Sydney metropolitan area is evolving into a continuously urbanising region' as different types of people were moving into the old streets and terraces, and the factories were closed down.<sup>14</sup>

South Sydney's industry also declined as a result of the massive new development near Port Botany, as it could not compete with the sheer size and efficiency of the new facilities. This, together with westward expansion, new planning controls and inadequate transport, led to even greater congestion in the area and added to a rising philosophy of industrial decentralisation.<sup>15</sup> The rise in tertiary employment has seen the demolition of housing to make way for the establishment of new commercial and government premises, resulting in the exodus of more families.<sup>16</sup>

In the last few decades, much of the South Sydney region has been the site of a steady process of gentrification due to the rising levels of tertiary employment such as banking and consultancy in and around the area. Increasing land values in the South Sydney area also force industry out of the area.<sup>17</sup> This has led to an increase in the number of white-collar workers and young professionals living in the region, causing the price of real estate in the area to rise.<sup>18</sup> As the post-war baby boomers came of age, the number of white-collar workers throughout Sydney grew. Combined with increasing numbers of households with two income earners and women postponing child-bearing, 'career-and consumer-oriented life-styles well suited for inner-suburban living' have multiplied.<sup>19</sup> Living in the inner-city became popular for young professional couples who wanted to be close to work and did not need large houses or gardens.

## Residents' action groups fought for the preservation of the community and neighbourhood, while at the same time the older inner-city areas were now becoming increasingly popular places to live.

However, the importance of maintaining the district as an area for low income housing became an issue for planning the future of the area. It has been acknowledged that the only way to stem the exodus of older residents, particularly industrial workers, from the city to the suburbs is through increasing the availability of low-income housing.<sup>20</sup> The Green Square project area is home to a large migrant population and still attracts many new immigrants who, along with the traditional working class residents, cannot afford to pay rising rents.

Population figures for South Sydney from 1976 to 1991 show an era of population decline followed by a moderate increase of nearly 3000 people after 1986. Statistics also reveal a general decrease in the average age of the populace, suggesting an increasingly younger population.<sup>21</sup> One of the stated goals of the Green Square project is 'to create new and liveable communities which are integrated with those that already exist'.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, for this to happen, provision for low-income earners in the area must continue to be an important consideration. However the type of private developments appearing at Green Square do not appear to be highly compatible with this goal.

#### 14.2.3 Sydney as a global city

As the biggest city in Australia, Sydney has always had an important national role and is increasingly seen as an important hub on the global network of trade and finance. As Sydney's global role has risen and the proportion of multi-national corporations and Australian head offices has increased, the importance of a functional South Sydney region has become more apparent.<sup>23</sup>

The Olympic Games held by Sydney in 2000 had an impact on the idea of Green Square through the construction of the New Southern Railway from the airport to Central Station, with a station in what is to become the Green Square Town Centre. 'With the proximity of Sydney Airport and the rise of tourism, particularly related to the Olympic Games', a design competition brief predicted, 'South Sydney will increasingly become a gateway to Sydney, and Australia'.<sup>24</sup> The City South Project also expressed this concept, and in an Interim Report discussed three possible development scenarios. One, entitled 'The Global City', sought to maximise 'economic development and employment growth in City South, particularly [with] associated opportunities and the attraction of new investment to Sydney'.<sup>25</sup> The growth in public transport services to the area would provide increased opportunities for residents, employment in the area and, it was hoped, be the catalyst for the creation of a Green Square community.<sup>26</sup>

#### 14.3 Visions for Green Square

The South Sydney Plan (1997) saw the introduction of an important new phase in South Sydney's development. Set up by South Sydney City Council in collaboration with the NSW State Government, the new plan was an amalgamation of past schemes into one cohesive plan of action in order to renew the Waterloo/Alexandria/Beaconsfield/Zetland/Rosebery

## Given Frederick Green's tireless promotion of industry and jobs, the name 'Green Square' is deeply ironic, as it now triggers images of 'clean, green' and 'environmentally friendly'.

area. Planning for what would become known as the Green Square project began in 1991. The scheme has been through many changes and developments and is the culmination of a number of different features and underlying philosophies.

#### 14.3.1 The name

The naming of 'Green Square' itself is not straightforward. Green Square was originally a small nondescript piece of public land named after past local MP Frederick Green. Green was Mayor of Alexandria in the 1930s and State Member for Redfern from 1950 to 1965.<sup>27</sup> During the Depression he campaigned for the government to provide work for the unemployed by sealing O'Riordan Street and Botany Road, thereby also encouraging the growth of industry, and employment, in Beaconsfield. The work was eventually carried out and 'a small triangle at... [the] intersection was formed and named after Green'.<sup>28</sup> The name of that small triangle has now been adopted for the massive new urban renewal project.

The suburbs that now make up 'Green Square' are supposed to retain their individual names as there are currently no plans to rename or dissolve them. However, the South Sydney Development Corporation's 'Green Square Town Centre Masterplan' and the naming of the new 'Green Square' train station, as well as regular usage by planners, developers and journalists has led to increasingly common use of the name.<sup>29</sup> 'Nobody ever knew where Green Square was' says one local resident, 'until the railway station was built there and named for it'.<sup>30</sup>

There is some concern by local citizens that the common usage of the name, 'Green Square' will ultimately replace the pre-existing suburb names of Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Rosebery, Waterloo and Zetland, to which they are clearly very attached. However, for many of the developers and other people involved in the redevelopment project the 'Green Square' name is very popular and marketable, because it removes the connotations of industries, pollution and 'slums' associated with the old suburb names. Given Frederick Green's tireless promotion of industry and jobs, the name 'Green Square' is deeply ironic, as it now triggers images of 'clean, green' and 'environmentally friendly'.<sup>31</sup>

#### 14.3.2 'Planning for the Future' – community consultation

In 1990 the newly formed South Sydney City Council embarked upon a process of redevelopment and renewal through the preparation of a new planning strategy. Beginning with a discussion paper entitled 'Planning for the Future', published in 1991, the council aimed to encourage community participation throughout the development process.<sup>32</sup> Hans Westerman outlined the rationale:

Planning visions if they are to have any value, must be rooted in the community. People will not own the 'product' unless they are involved in the process, understand the problems and take part in the search for solutions. A collective exploration of options

and solutions by professionals, bureaucrats and community leaders increases the probability of community acceptance and can lessen the demand for expensive inquiries or litigation.<sup>33</sup>

The response to the discussion paper via letters and phone calls by individuals and companies was encouraging and in 1992 public participation was increased through the creation of a Peak Planning Team and several Local Planning Teams. The different roles of the two groups allowed a range of people to become involved with the planning process of their new community. Interested local citizens and community groups were welcome to become part of the Local Planning Teams, whose job it was to discuss draft plans and background papers regarding ideas for the redevelopment. The Peak Planning Team was made up of representatives from local councils, Sydney City Council, the State Government Departments of Planning, State Development and Transport, the Local Planning Groups and other active community groups. Their job was to coordinate the planning activities between all the parties involved.

By December 1993 a 'Discussion Draft' had been produced and was officially adopted by council on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1994. It took into account the five hundred issues identified by the Local Area and Peak Planning Teams as well via questionnaires that participants had been asked to fill out.<sup>34</sup> A wider Liaison Group was also created to include further representatives from state government departments as well as authorities from other councils, the Water Board and the Environmental Protection Authority. The aim of this group was to further communication about the outcomes of meetings held by the Peak Planning Team and the Local Planning Groups. In order to contribute to the public participation program. Issues Based Forums were also held with the purpose of informing the wider community as plans progressed as well as providing another opportunity for discussion of particularly contentious issues.<sup>35</sup>

Through the public participation program, various issues that the public wanted addressed in the new development were identified and published as part of the council's document *Planning for the Future*. Foremost were concerns about environmental impacts, the future role of the city, diversity of land usage, public safety, transport and the needs of the community.<sup>36</sup> Hopes were pinned on the new Green Square railway station. The *South Sydney Annual Report 1995/6* predicted that the station would assist the transformation an old industrial district into a fresh new multi-usage zone; it seemed to be a portent of dramatic changes in the area over the next decade or two.<sup>37</sup>

#### 14.3.3 Green Square Urban Design Competition 1995

South Sydney Council also announced a 'Visions for Green Square' Urban Design Competition on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1995. With the planned construction of the New Southern Railway, the State Government had selected the area to undergo a process of urban renewal in the hopes of creating housing in the area for more than 20,000 people. The competition was open to the community, schools, universities, architects and town planners. Participants were asked to come up with ideas for an 'imaginative, affordable and sustainable urban living space for the area surrounding the proposed railway station at Green Square'.<sup>38</sup> Various proposals were put forward, but there is currently very little evidence of any of these plans being actually applied to the area.

#### 14.3.4 South Sydney plan

By 1996, South Sydney Council had once again decided to review its development plans, with a view to creating the new ‘South Sydney Plan’. The ‘South Sydney Plan’ was made up of three separate documents: ‘The Strategy for A Sustainable City of South Sydney 1995’, ‘The City of South Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1996’ and ‘The City of South Sydney Urban Design Development Control Plan 1996’. This new plan was to replace the aged plans that the council had been using since the 1970s.

##### *The Strategy for A Sustainable City of South Sydney*

The role of ‘The Strategy for A Sustainable City of South Sydney’ was to provide a framework that would encourage sustainable development in South Sydney with a view towards the future. It included an emphasis on the need for development in an ecologically sound way, coordination between land use and transport, improvement of urban areas and recognition of community needs and issues. It was structured around ideals, including ‘An Environmental Ethic’, ‘A Quality of Life Ethic’ and ‘A Management Ethic’.<sup>39</sup>

##### *The South Sydney Local Environment Plan*

The second section of the plan, ‘The South Sydney Local Environment Plan’ was designed to replace the collection of old planning controls which were outdated or failed to meet current needs. The Plan was intended to contain a basic framework guiding future development, with all the relevant legal requirements as well as leaving space for special cases which could be dealt with through the Urban Design Development Plan. It was also envisioned as being written in plain English, making it widely accessible to the community as well as reducing the need to consult other legislation.

##### *The South Sydney Urban Design Development Control Plan*

Finally, ‘The South Sydney Urban Design Development Control Plan’ was established to supersede the 1989 Development Control Plan No.1. The new plan aimed to create a balance between the need for high quality modern development alongside environmental and conservation considerations.<sup>40</sup>

#### 14.3.5 Green Square draft masterplan

By 1997, a draft masterplan for the redevelopment of Green Square had been developed by South Sydney Council’s consultants, Stanistic Turner, in association with Hassell Pty Ltd. It aimed to convert the largely industrial profile of the area into residential and mixed land use areas., outlining the future planning of Green Square and its development into the year 2020.<sup>41</sup> Besides dealing with zoning, density, urban design, height limits, parks, roads, open space and community facilities, the plan incorporated five mixed land use zones which featured residential, industrial and commercial development. It put forward three different design options and conducted various surveys in order to develop the best possible design for the final masterplan.<sup>42</sup>

Further community consultation was carried out at this stage with a variety of groups, including a Return Public Forum at the Alexandria Town Hall in July 1997 and a meeting with the Zetland Community Action Group (ZCAG) in April that year. Letter drops around the community were also carried out.<sup>43</sup> The planners consulted the various organisations involved in the development—Meriton, the developers for the ACI site and Landcom, the navy stores site developers. A Green Square

Transport Workshop was conducted which brought together representatives from the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP), Green Square consultants, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA), Sydney Buses and the City South Consultancy Team.<sup>44</sup>

People at the community meetings were asked to consider the three design options put forward by Stanistic Turner/Hassell and identify any positive or negative aspects. The first design was modelled on what was believed to be the ‘Current Development Path’, the second was ‘Residential Consolidation’ and the third option was entitled ‘The Global City’.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately a new design was created out of the most favoured aspects of each of these options.

At this stage it was considered particularly important to educate the community about the reasons for the Green Square project, especially since the name ‘Green Square’ had not previously existed. Confusingly, it was not intended to be seen as the establishment of a new suburb, given that the old suburbs that make up Green Square still existed and retained their own individual identities. Council emphasised the need for ‘vigilance and dialogue with the community, land owners and developers to make sure the mix is right’ in planning the ‘open space and community facilities along with quality, innovative urban design’.<sup>46</sup> However, the question still remained, under what name or identity was the development to be carried out?

The draft plan was put on exhibition at the Council premises from August to October 1997, after which, it was to be revised according to any submissions and resubmitted for Council approval in February 1998.<sup>47</sup> The progress of the Green Square project was discussed in the South Sydney City Council Annual Report in that year.<sup>48</sup> The South Sydney Development Corporation had been established, with a brief to coordinate, promote and manage the economic development of the South Sydney Growth Area, including the Green Square area. The Corporation was described as ‘an information broker and facilitator working with the community and other stakeholders in the area’.<sup>49</sup> A two stage planning control which broke the area into two sections, with Epsom Road forming the dividing line, was also established. These controls were regulated by the Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan.<sup>50</sup>

#### 14.3.6 Competition for the Green Square Town Centre

In 2001, South Sydney City Council ran a design competition for the initial design of the Green Square Town Centre. The competition was conducted entirely online and was sponsored by the South Sydney Development Corporation and Landcom, with the support of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.<sup>51</sup> It attracted 21 entries from around the world including the Netherlands, Japan, Malaysia and the United Kingdom. The five short-listed teams, almost all from overseas, included:

- TR Hamzah & Young Sdn. Bhd (Kuala Lumpur) & Jackson Teece Chesterman Willis
- Alsop Architects (London), SJB Architects, Urbis
- Dem Gillespies Pty Ltd, Maki & Associates (Tokyo), Space Syntax, Leyshon Consulting Pty Ltd, Jennifer Turpin & Michaelie Crawford
- Turner + Associates Architects, Prof. IR Wiels Arets Architect + Associates BV (Maastricht), McGregor + Partners & Holos Consulting Pty Ltd
- dKO + Sb Architecture, S333 (Amsterdam), dpa architecture, EDAW, Environa Studio

**Certainly, the scheme is startlingly different from the established townscape. Many would suggest that the high level of international involvement in design undermines the local or home-grown foundation which was the original aim of the plan.**

The winner, announced at the end of 2001, was the Turner/Arets team.<sup>52</sup> The aim of their new Town Centre is to create a focal point for the overall Green Square urban renewal project. The design was gleaming and futuristic, described as a ‘clever’ combination of plaza space, water features and up to eighteen-storey buildings forming an ‘exciting modern centre’ for the ‘giga size development with an eight billion dollar investment, 20,000 more residents and 20,000 new jobs in fifteen years’.<sup>53</sup> Architect Phillip Cox said ‘some of [the] complex’s features would be borrowed from cities around the world’.<sup>54</sup> Certainly, the scheme is startlingly different from the established townscape. Many would suggest that the high level of international involvement in design undermines the local or home-grown foundation which was the original aim of the plan. Further, as Elizabeth Farrelly commented, these designs remain just that: designs, images and concepts: ‘Who’s going to fund the ‘cultural’ buildings? Who will own, manage and maintain them?’<sup>55</sup>

#### 14.4 Problems in Green Square

Complications related to existing issues in the area and problems with the development process have arisen throughout the development project. Debates over who is really responsible for the development and what powers they have has frequently slowed down the development process.

##### 14.4.1 The Waterloo Incinerator

The Waterloo Incinerator, long a source of debate and agitation, was soon brought into discussions about the development of Green Square. As Scott Cumming discusses in Chapter 4, the incinerator had been a sore point with local residents for decades and the subject of many protests. The new local development gave residents further ammunition, since it was argued that the Waterloo incinerator stood in the way of the Green Square redevelopment. It was located less than 200 metres away from the site of Green Square station, then under construction, and would greatly detract from the future appeal of the area. Clearly the incinerator was not compatible with the primary aim of creating ‘sustainable, attractive large scale urban renewal’ in Green Square, for it would severely reduce ‘the attraction and commercial success of the development’.<sup>56</sup> ‘Green Square or urban nightmare?’ was the catchcry of protesters when the Waverley and Woollahra councils proposed replacing the incinerator.<sup>57</sup> Lobby groups maintained that if the state government allowed the incinerator to continue operating it’s building and chimney would become the ‘landmark building’ for the development. The incinerator was closed in 1996.<sup>58</sup>

#### 14.4.2 Affordable housing?

In 2000, Council’s control over the development and the enforcement of ‘affordable housing provisions’ was the subject of a court challenge. Under the ‘Green Square Local Environment Plan’ (LEP), Council had imposed certain conditions on the Green Square development regarding zoning and the provision of affordable housing.<sup>59</sup> However, Meriton, one of the major developers of the Green Square project, took the council to court to try and avoid having to provide affordable housing. The court found that the LEP that governed the Green Square zoning was in fact invalid. Consequently, rather than Meriton sidestepping affordable housing, the zoning that had granted them the development was negated, thus causing a reversion to the original zoning of the area, which was industrial.<sup>60</sup> This delayed the development process as a new LEP had to be written and the affordable housing provision reconsidered. At present the scheme requires that three per cent of residential floor and one per cent of non-residential floor space be affordable housing. However, developers have the option of paying a monetary contribution rather than provide the affordable housing on site. This formula is expected to provide 479 affordable housing units out of a total of 13,000 in Green Square.<sup>61</sup>

#### 14.4.3 White elephant?

Controversy, much of it in the print media, still surrounds the development of the area. So far it has failed to attract as much business, and thus employment, as was originally hoped.<sup>62</sup> Some commentators consider the Green Square development something of a ‘white elephant’ as it has not yet achieved the success in its original aims. Michael Latham, South Sydney Development Corporation chairman, naturally stresses the longer-term view: ‘Green Square was so well located within “global Sydney” that the development would ultimately lure jobs to the area’.<sup>63</sup> The original plan designed by Stanistic Turner/Hassell in 1996 has undergone several revisions or slight alterations, despite the Council’s earlier commitment to adhere to it. These include plans by at least two of the key developers, which have been allowed ‘with the apparent blessing of the South Sydney Council and the South Sydney Development Corporation’.<sup>64</sup>

#### 14.5 Conclusion

The area now known as Green Square is still in the process of redevelopment, and despite the enormous efforts which have been invested in planning and consultation, the final townscape and community outcomes remain uncertain. The construction of the new Southern Railway and Green Square station for the 2000 Olympics appears to have been the catalyst for South Sydney City Council, in cooperation with the State Government, to finally settle on a plan for redevelopment. However, the plans have been subject to a variety of reviews and will no doubt continue to change in response to contingent factors until its estimated completion date of 2020. There have already been difficulties in maintaining the originally planned level of mixed land use, with applications to change commercial areas into residential zones. The abandonment of the original LEP has also seen a drop in the provision of affordable housing. South Sydney and Green Square have a long history of planning attempts. It remains to be seen whether this latest and most ambitious plan for renewal will suffer a similar fate to that of its predecessors, or will achieve the planners’ visions of a socially, economically and environmentally sound urban future.



# Endnotes

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

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## Chapter 3

### Pre-European environmental landscape of Green Square

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12 Hawke, 'Extractive Resources of the Botany Bay Region', p. 19.

13 Benson and Howell, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 9–11.

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24 *Ibid.* p. 313.

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*Jubilee History of the Municipality of Botany 1888–1938*, Sydney, W.C. Penfolds & Co Pty Ltd, 1938, pp. 55–6.

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## Chapter 5

### Aboriginal Diaspora

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## Chapter 6

### From Tanning to Planning: an industrial history of Green Square

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46 NSW Bicentennial Oral History Collection, Catherine Schulties, no.6, transcript 2, p. 26.

47 Mein Smith, 'Infant Welfare Services and Infant Mortality', pp. 27, 30. Mein Smith argues that there is temporal mismatch because the trend in falling infant mortality actually began before the infant welfare movement became a mass movement. She argues that there is spatial mismatch because the decline in infant mortality was evenly spread across the different states, even though some states opened baby health centres much earlier than other states.

48 Department of Public Health, File Note, 26 October 1925, in Papers relating to the development of baby health centre services and the Division of Maternal and Baby Welfare, 1914–29, CGS 4866, 2/8566.2, SRNSW.

49 So if a mother with three children came to the clinic to ask a

question about one of the children, then the attendance record would show four attendances. Wendy Selby, 'Listening to Women: Oral Evidence and Feminist History-Writing', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 12, 1990, p. 100.

50 *Ibid.* p. 93.

51 Currently, no such oral history exists. As mentioned above, there are only a small number of oral histories in the Bicentennial Oral History which mention the baby health centres. Karen O'Connor also included some oral histories in her work, but these mostly refer to rural baby health centres, see O'Connor, *Our Babies, the State's Best Asset*, pp. 121–9.

52 Nurse Inspector to the Undersecretary, 5 April 1918, in Papers relating to the development of baby health centre services and the Division of Maternal and Baby Welfare, CGS 4866, 2/8566.2 1914–26, SRNSW.

53 *Ibid.*

54 O'Connor, *Our Babies, the State's Best Asset*, p. 124.

55 Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, p. 5.

## Chapter 12

### Exodus and Retreat: Chinese in Alexandria and Waterloo

1 The Borough of Alexandria was not incorporated until 1868 and both Alexandria and Waterloo are within the boundaries of the Parish of Alexandria; hence the residents of Waterloo and Alexandria used the names Waterloo and Alexandria interchangeably in the nineteenth century. Many Chinese also lived in the Borough of Waterloo after the incorporation of Alexandria, but it is not always easy to determine in which Borough they actually lived as the boundaries can be confusing.

2 The White Australia Policy describes the legislative and regulative apparatus that was introduced by various government authorities in Australia from 1860 to 1970 to restrict and control non-European populations. The apparatus comprised a range of immigration legislation introduced at the state level, as well as state labour and health policies which were directed at Chinese populations; the initiatives of local government and their various committees; and the manner in which the authorities—police, customs officers and local inspectors of all kinds—enforced government legislation and policy. The Policy was given national effect in the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* and was not formally ended until the 1970s. This regulative apparatus impacted on the Chinese of Sydney in a variety of ways. It provided for a £10 (1880s) to £100 (1901) poll tax to be paid by new Chinese immigrants on entry to the country, which resulted in the restriction of movement of Chinese already here, and access to relatives who had remained in China. From 1901 new immigrants were required to take a notorious dictation test, which could be in any language other than English determined by the customs officials. The new regulations required that residents remain in the country for 15 years before they were allowed to send for relatives and specifically excluded all non-Europeans from social welfare benefits. According to Fitzgerald this proved a problem for many of the aging gardeners in the 1940s and 50s, who resorted to selling peanuts at the Randwick Races in order to get by. For more information on the WAP see C. Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney University Press, 1975, pp. 17–35; Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788–1993*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1994, pp. 75–141, 119; Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape: Gold Scissors*, Sydney, State Library of NSW Press, 1997, pp. 3, 162.

3 For information relating to the Chinese press I have firstly relied heavily on the English language index to the Sydney newspaper, the *Tung Wah Times*, produced as part of the Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation project; and Yu Lan Poon, 'The two-way mirror: contemporary issues as seen through the eyes of the Chinese language press, 1901–1911', in S. Fitzgerald and G. Wotherspoon (eds.), *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney*, Sydney, State Library of NSW Press, 1995, pp. 174–91.

4 *Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force*, (appointed August 20, 1891), NSWLAVP, Vol. 8, Sydney, Government

Printer, 1892.

5 Jane Lydon, *Many Inventions: the Chinese in the Rocks, Sydney 1890–1930*, Melbourne, Department of History, Monash University, 1999, p. 69.

6 C. Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1975, p. 27.

7 Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 68.

8 Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, p. 80.

9 Choi, *Chinese Migration*, p. 28.

10 The Gardeners Union and the United Association of Furniture Manufactures (UAFM) led the charge against the Chinese.

11 The term Chinatown was not widely used until the twentieth century, see Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 68.

12 Many historians argue that the xenophobic Australia behind the WAP led the push to Federation. Markus, *Race Relations*, p. 141.

13 See note 1.

14 Mr W Setchell, Inspector of Nuisances (7 December 1891), *Royal Commission*, p. 366.

15 Of course, as is often pointed out, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish anglicised Chinese names from European names. Also the *Sands Sydney Directory* only lists the heads of households. See Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 5 for a discussion of the problems that anglicised Chinese names pose for researchers.

16 The first hotel to be opened in the area in 1844 and the namesake of the Street, see Alexandria Municipal Council, *Alexandria 1868–1943: The Birmingham of Australia, 75 years of Progress*, Sydney, the Council, 1943, p. 56.

17 Ann Stephen (ed.), *Lions of Retreat Street: a Chinese temple in inner-Sydney*, Sydney, Powerhouse Publishing/Hale & Iremonger, 1997 (2001), pp. 17–18; Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, pp. 70–72; *Royal Commission*, pp. 306–307, 366.

18 Census of New South Wales, 1901, Table VII, Birthplaces, cited in Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 93.

19 Gladys Lim, 'The Chinese in Alexandria New South Wales and the Yiu Ming Temple', in *Locality*, Centre for Community History, University of New South Wales, Vol. 11, No. 2, 39–40.

20 Margo Beasley, *Everyone Knew Everyone: Histories and Memories of Green Square*, Sydney, South Sydney Development Corporation and NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Sydney, 2001, p. 6.

21 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 163; Migration Heritage Centre of New South Wales, Powerhouse Museum, <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/projects/57.html>, 4/06/2004.

22 Migration Heritage Centre, *ibid.*

23 Markus, *Race Relations*, p. 141.

24 Including Burmese, Chinese, Indian and Russian. See Linda Bartolomei, Linda Corkery, Bruce Judd and Susan Thompson, *A Bountiful Harvest: Community Gardens and neighbourhood renewal in Waterloo*, Sydney, NSW Department of Housing and University of New South Wales, 2003, pp. 40–41.

25 These districts are in the province of Guandong, just west of Canton City. It is estimated that some 1,000 immigrants from this part of China lived in Sydney in 1890. Today descendants of the Go Yui community continue to run the Yiu Ming temple at Alexandria and a number of businesses in Haymarket; see Stephen, *Lions of Retreat Street*, p. 10. According to an article in the *Chinese Australian Times*, published on completion of the temple in 1909, the construction of the temple was funded by donations from over 3,000 members of the society, but disagreement over the benefit of constructing such a temple for the Chinese community 'while China [was] trying to draw up a Constitution and abolish all idol worship' split the organisation and the executive resigned in protest; see *Chinese Australian Times*, English translation, Mitchell Library. The second half of this article is now missing. See also Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 109.

26 Fitzgerald, *ibid.*

27 Stephen, *Lions of Retreat Street*, p. 17.

28 Henry Chan explained that as a new arrival in Australia in the

1950s, he was housed and protected at the terrace houses near the temple and that the association essentially acts as a welfare organisation for the Go Yui people of Sydney. Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 109, 162–163.

29 Stephen, *Lions of Retreat Street*, p. 10; Professional Historians Association of NSW [PHANSW], Heritage Register of Historic Places and Objects, SHI Number 4671015, 'Report on Yui Ming Temple at Alexandria', Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc., 2001, pp. 3, 4.

30 PHANSW Heritage Register, *ibid.*, p. 3.

31 John Hoe, a local Chinese business man who ran a cabinet making business, was a founding member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and a vocal member of community (see section 12.7.4); PHANSW Heritage Register, p. 4.

32 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 105.

33 Chee and Tzee cited in Stephen, *Lions of Retreat Street*, pp. 47, 52.

34 *Ibid.* p. 53.

35 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, pp. 101, 102, 105.

36 *Sands Sydney Directory*, 1901.

37 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 105.

38 Including a Congregational Church on Botany Road and the Sydney Christian Life Centre in Young Street.

39 Markus, *Race Relations*, p. 118.

40 Choi, *Chinese Migration*, p. 24; Census of New South Wales, 1901, Table VII Birthplaces, cited in Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, pp. 92–93. Of course this figure excludes possible Australian Born Chinese (ABC) women living in this area, which would likely have increased in time, as more ABCs were born. Given a Chinese presence in Australia for at least the past 50 years, this seems likely. These figures also exclude mixed race children born to European mothers who would have automatically received their European mother's maiden name at birth. It has been noted that some of the more successful market gardeners and hawkers tended to live in two places, which means it is also possible, that gardeners in Alexandria/Waterloo had wives and children living in other districts of Sydney (as well as in China).

41 Sub-Inspector Lawless (17 November 1891), *Royal Commission*, p. 304.

42 Wah Kee of George Street told the Royal Commission that the reason why so few wives were brought out to Australia was the £100 poll tax, *Royal Commission*, p. 52, cited in Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 136; Choi, *Chinese Migration*, p. 24.

43 Lydon, *Many Inventions*, pp. 130–9; Kate Bagnall is currently researching a Ph.D at the University of Sydney on European women and Chinese men and their children; see Kate Bagnall, "I am nearly Broken Hearted about Him": Stories of Australian Mothers' Separation from their 'Chinese' Children', *History Australia: Journal of the Australian Historical Association*, Vol. 1, No.1, December 2003.

44 Sub Inspector Potter, *Royal Commission*, p. 299; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 139.

45 Sub-Inspector Lawless, *Royal Commission*, pp. 304–5.

46 'Chinese in Waterloo: The Retreat from Wexford Street', *SMH*, 2 July 1908, p. 6.

47 Department of Public Instruction, Report: Waterloo, Medical Inspection of Schools, 19 May 1908, Administrative Files, Bundle B, Waterloo 1896–1909 5/18044, State Records of NSW.

48 Waterloo Council Minutes Books reveal that an application for the adoption of an orphan girl in Waterloo was refused by the State Children's Department because the locality was deemed unsuitable 1 August 1907, see 'State Children Department and the respectability of Waterloo', Waterloo Minute Book, 7 February 1905–22 October 1909, CRS 637/11, pp. 331, 339, 368, 380, 382, 387, Sydney City Archives.

49 Pers. com. Gladys Lim, 31 May 2004; Lim, 'The Chinese in Alexandria'.

50 The Royal Commission was appointed on August 20, 1891 in response to complaints against the Chinese from the labour movement and charges of police corruption.

51 Notably Sun Sing Loong is not accorded a title in the report, unlike European men who gave evidence, who were referred to as Mr or by an official title. Sun Sing Loong (11 December 1891), *Royal Commission*, p. 388–392

52 Sub-Inspector Potter (16 November 1891), and Sub-Inspector Lawless (17 November 1891), pp. 296–300, 303–10; Mr James Ralph, Mayor of Alexandria (7 December 1891), and Mr William Setchell, Inspector of Nuisances for Alexandria (7 December 1891), pp. 366–68; Dr Ashburton Thompson, Chief Medical Inspector, Board of Health (8 December 1891), pp. 369–75.

53 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 109; Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 145.

54 This is particularly evident when Tart questions the Sub-Inspectors.

55 *Royal Commission*, p. 26.

56 *Royal Commission*, p. 476.

57 He agreed that the conditions of the street were insanitary, but claimed there was little sickness evident in the area, *Royal Commission*, p. 390.

58 Sub-Inspector Lawless, *Royal Commission*, p. 305.

59 *Royal Commission*, pp. 297, 304

60 *Ibid.* p. 367

61 Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, p. 95.

62 Inspector of Nuisances, *Royal Commission*, p. 368.

63 This material was accessed via an English language database index for the *Tung Wah Times*, and the summaries of the articles provided. There were 54 entries for Alexandria.

64 In 1888 thousands of European Sydneysiders marched on Parliament, demanding that a shipload of Chinese be turned away. This ‘monster’ demonstration, as the *Town and Country Journal* referred to it, occurred less than a month before the fire at Retreat Street, and resulted in the *1888 Restriction Act*. See Fitzgerald, *Red Tape*, pp. 71, 94 and *Town and Country Journal*, 16 June 1888.

65 Fa Xing (Fatty Hing), Exemption Certificate, 1908/499, Australian Archives (NSW), series SP42/1 Item C 1908/1473 cited in Stephen, *Lions of Retreat Street*, p. 23.

66 Deen Bong, Exemption Certificate, 1907/273 Australian Archives (NSW), series SP42/1 Item B 1907/2054 cited in *ibid.* p. 17.

67 Peter Curson and Kevin McCracken, *Plague in Sydney: The anatomy of an epidemic*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1992, pp. 58–64.

68 ‘Reply to the Board of Health to be prepared’ 9 April 1902, Alexandria Minute Book 28 Aug 1901–06 Feb 1907, CRS 648, p. 66, Sydney City Archives.

69 ‘Indignation Meeting at Alexandria: Action of the Board of Health Criticised’, *SMH*, 1 May 1902.

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72 *Tung Wah Times*, New South Wales Chinese Merchants’ Society and the Chinese Empire Reform Association, Lean Fore for the *Tung Wah Times* Newspaper Company, Sydney, 17 May 1902, p. 3, cited in *Tung Wah Times* newspaper index, <http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/tungwah.shtml>.

73 Waterloo Council Minute Book, 29 May 1902, CRS 637/10, p. 191, Sydney City Archives.

74 *Suburban Times*, 22 March 1902; 8 March 1902.

75 ‘A Whoop for Waterloo: the cackle of comical councillors’, *Truth* 13 May 1906, or see Waterloo Minute Book, 7 February 1905–22 October 1909, CRS 637/11, Sydney City Archives.

76 ‘The Chinese Question: Southern Suburbs Protest’, *SMH*, 30 June 1908.

77 Re John Hoe, see note 31; ‘The Chinese Question: Statement in Defence’, *SMH*, 1 July 1908.

78 Lydon, *Many Inventions*, p. 45.

79 ‘Chinese in Waterloo’, *SMH*, 2 July 1908.

80 PHANSW, Heritage Register of Historic Places, ‘Report on Yiu Ming Temple’.

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## Chapter 13

### From German Streets to Russian Libraries: immigrant histories of Green Square

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6 Georg Lindstrom and David Martin, *I’ll Take Australia*, Sydney, Jacaranda Press, 1978.

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9 Mary Salmon, in *Australian*, 1904, newscutting volume, ML

10 Catherine Duncan, *Waterloo and the Sisters of Mercy, A Century of Change*, Sydney, Mercy Family Centre, 1994, p. 4.

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15 Rev W. Malone, 1859, *Centenary of Mt. Carmel*, Waterloo, Sydney, M.S Simpson and Sons Pty Ltd, 1959, p. 28.

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## Chapter 14

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Fig 15.1 Last dunny in Green Square? A surviving outhouse in Green Square. Discovered by the HIST3904 class in Nevins Lane, at the rear of a terrace house in Portland Street, Zetland. (Photo: Grace Karskens 2004.)

