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Introduction

To many, the history of White Australia is about little more than convicts, bushrangers and Anzacs at Gallipoli; others see it solely in the context of the British Empire and interpret its history largely in terms of metropolis and periphery. Yet there is much more to Australia’s past than the narrative of specific groups or being footnoted in imperial discourses; revision and re-revision of interpretations has shaped and challenged our understanding and assumptions of the nation’s history and generated lively debates with which scholars can engage.

The narrative of Australia’s advance from a starving penal colony to a prosperous free nation is one that sheds light on a range of tensions within colonial and post-colonial society. It is also the story of human resilience and resistance and of creative adaptability and innovation to changing circumstances. The study of White Australia offers a rich vein for historical inquiry from the motives for establishing a British colony at Botany Bay, through the problems of establishing the Australian colonies, European-Indigenous relations, convict society and the legacy of the ‘convict stain’, migration, gender relations, the significance of religion, the gold rushes, nation-building, Federation, the experience of war and myths of nationhood, to post-World War II Australia. The complexities and contradictions within these topics offer students the opportunity for stimulating and challenging discussion in seminars and encourage independent thinking in written work.

Historical inquiry has developed around key analytical frameworks of race, gender, war and remembrance, power and punishment, migration, identity and nationhood. The range of thought-provoking themes together with the improved availability and accessibility of secondary and primary sources make Australian history an attractive topic for undergraduate and postgraduate study. As it intersects with British social, economic, political and imperial history, most students will be able to bring previously-acquired knowledge and understanding to the discipline. Moreover, the subject offers potential for innovative teaching and interdisciplinary approaches, e.g. literature, politics, film studies, anthropology, the history of art, sports history, human geography, sociology, and archaeology. There is scope for teaching across all levels, e.g. a survey module at level 1; a more indepth approach at level 2, a specific perspective for level 3, undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, and taught elements of MA programmes.

The writing of Australian history has changed substantially in recent decades. Until the mid-20th century, Australian historiography was dominated by imperial influences and the search for national identity. The Bush, pioneer values, and democratic egalitarianism were emphasised and indigenous and women’s history were marginalised. But Australian historiography has moved on – new methodologies, new sources, new intellectual fashions and models of good practice have helped to reshape historians’ agendas, assumptions, and techniques of interpretation. These new approaches and influences have enriched the historiography and highlighted sensitive issues such as European-Aboriginal relations including dispossession and frontier violence, and the ways in which Australia has embraced multi-culturalism in recent decades.

This pamphlet highlights some of the issues and key themes in the study of Australian history. It is by no means exhaustive and is not intended to be prescriptive. The main aim is to provide some direction by offering suggestions for reading, discussion, essays and lecture topics. There are strong contentious debates with which to engage, but, even taking account of the growing body of revisionist literature, there remains many more questions than answers in Australian historiography, thus providing exciting and challenging issues for students to tackle. In my experience, enthused by this lively and fertile scholarship, undergraduates are not afraid of taking an independent approach or challenging existing scholarship in their analyses and assessments of problems in Australian history and this is frequently reflected in high standards of written work and seminar discussions.

Two suggested outlines for modules

The following are merely suggestions and can be adapted to suit individual interests and course requirements. I have tended to build modules around the first model and have focused largely on socio-economic and cultural themes, placing topics in their political context where appropriate. In the first term, I give particular
attention to the ‘players’ of European settlement: convicts; governors; indigenous Australians; and immigrants and in the following term move on to examine the interaction of these players and how they influenced Australia’s development. I extended my initial time period of 1788-1901 to 1918 to include the First World War and the Anzac Legend and take advantage of the growing scholarship in this area and in response to students’ interest.

Australia 1788-1918

- Introduction to Australia history and historiography
- The Botany Bay decision
- Establishing a colony
- The convict system
- Convict society
- European – Aboriginal relations
- Frontier conflict
- The ‘peopling’ of Australia
- ‘Shrewd operators’? The quality of immigrants debate.
- Women in Australia: victims or agents?
- The gold rushes.
- The cities rise…and rise.
- Sport and leisure.
- The bush and its heroes.
- Gallipoli and the Anzac legend.
- A workingman’s paradise?
- Australia 1788-1918: a historical assessment.

Australian history from 1788

- Introduction to Australian History
- The Botany Bay decision
- Invasion or settlement?
- Convicts and convict society
- Aboriginal-European relations
- Frontier conflict
- Women in Australia
- Tensions on the goldfields
- The cities rise…and rise
- Religion and education
- The bush and its heroes
- Federation
- Gallipoli and the Anzac Legend
- Sport and leisure
- The inter-war years and the Great Depression
- Australia at war 1939-45
- Post-war migration
- The Menzies years
- The Howard years
- Britain and Australia: a changing relationship
The key themes of initial settlement; convicts and convict society; European-Aboriginal relations; and migration underpin the history of White Australia since 1788, therefore historiographical context for these topics is summarised briefly below. Additional themes broadly relating to the first suggested module outline above are included with some standard questions and reading. The final section offers examples of printed primary sources and links to gateways and websites for other primary material and archives – this is not exhaustive, but includes key links and gateways.
M. Crotty and D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Turning Points in Australian History* (Sydney, 2009).
*Oxford History of Australia*, General Editor Geoffrey Bolton.
   Vol. 2 1770-1860 by Jan Kociumbas (Melbourne, 1995).
   Vol. 3 1860-1900 by Beverley Kingston (Melbourne, 1993).
   Vol. 4 1901-42 by Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne, 1993).
White, Richard & penny Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth Century Australia: Pastiche II* (St. Leonards, 1997).
Celtic perspectives can be useful when studying several themes, including convicts, migration, religion, mining, and war, therefore the following is a useful introductory list for relevant reading.

Hewitson, Jim, *Far off in sunlit places* (OTC Editions, 2010).
McDonagh, O. & W.F. Mandle (eds.) *Ireland and Irish-Australia. Studies in Cultural and Political History* (Croom Helm, 1986).

### The Botany Bay decision

The British government’s plan to establish a penal colony at Botany Bay was adopted in 1786 and the motives for this decision have been keenly debated by historians. Was the new colony intended simply as a dumping ground for convicts to ease one of Britain’s urgent social problems, or was the decision taken in the light of perceived strategic and/or economic advantages? The paucity and ambiguity of surviving contemporary evidence relating to the policy-makers’ decision have ensured that this topic has remained controversial and it offers a stimulating introduction to the history of the Australian colonies, while overlapping with British social, political and imperial history.

- Why did the British government establish a penal colony in New South Wales in 1788?
- Does the choice of Arthur Phillip reveal anything about the British government’s motives for settling Australia?
- How convincing is the argument that the Pitt administration had no real intention of exploiting natural resources from Australia and nearby islands for British naval supplies?

Frost, Alan, Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia’s Convict Beginnings (Carlton, 1994).
Frost, Alan, Convicts and Empire: a Naval Question 1776-1811 (Melbourne, 1980).
Smith, Bernard, Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages (Carlton, 1992).
Steven, M., Trade, Tactics & Territory: Britain in the Pacific 1783-1823 (Melbourne, 1983).
The Secret History of the Convict Colony: Alexandro Malaspina’s Report on the British Settlement of New South Wales translated by Robert J. King (Sydney, 1990)
Tench, Watkin, Complete Account of the Settlement of Port Jackson in New South Wales (London, 1793).
Tench, Watkin, Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay (London, 1789).
Ward, R., Finding Australia: the history of Australia to 1821 (Richmond, 1987).

Convicts and convict society

Between 1788 and 1768, approximately 160,000 convicts were transported from Britain to the Australian colonies. This section of the population was well documented, from their trials in Britain to the remarkably detailed transportation records, including convict indents (which give the age, religion, nature of the offence, place of trial, occupation, gender, and previous criminal record of each transported convict), convict musters, and pardons. The 1988 bicentennial of the European settlement of Australia saw a strong revival of interest in Australia’s origins as a penal colony and the nation’s convict legacy received particular attention from both the Australian public and historians. The character, origins and experiences of these transported convicts have been keenly debated. Nineteenth-century historians generally evaded tackling the question of convicts and convict society; for Australians, both scholars and the public, the convict stain was an embarrassment. The early decades of the 20th century saw tension within analyses over whether transported convicts were victims of Britain’s socio-economic conditions and unjust legal system or whether they had been habitual, hardened criminals. Manning Clark for example concluded that most of the convicts were professional criminals, members of a criminal class and the ‘offscourings of mankind’. Later, revisionist studies have shed light on convicts’ occupational skills with some economic historians concluding that the majority of convicts were not hardened criminals but a skilled and effective workforce.

Research focused on the convict experience has also produced a rich historiography. Some scholars have stressed the social and economic opportunities from which some were able to benefit. There is considerable evidence to support the conclusion that some convicts – both male and female – accumulated considerable wealth and achieved relatively high social status. But, as other historians highlight, these positive experiences need to be weighed against the more negative aspects and brutality of the convict system. There were few socio-economic opportunities for those convicts serving their time in the harsh environment of the penal settlements such as Norfolk Island or Port Arthur.
Convict labour was as the heart of the convict system and offers another interesting perspective from which to view the convict experience and a rich historiography has developed around the topic prompting a number of penetrating questions. Who ‘owned’ convict labour? Were convicts paid workers or slaves? Did convicts have agency?

The experiences of female convicts provide another fascinating area of study. How did gender and sexuality influence the convict experience? Approximately 15% of transportees to Australia were women in the prime of their life (in terms of child bearing and economic activity) – with ages ranging from late teens to early 30s. Contemporaries and orthodox interpretations portrayed them largely as depraved prostitutes with few skills who were drawn largely from Britain’s criminal class. But in the 1970s feminist researchers, most notably Anne Summers, shed new light on the background and experiences of female convicts and emphasised that the image and fate of many women were the result of a male power structure. Later studies have illuminated the role and contribution of women convicts to Australia’s socio-economic development during the colonial period. Deborah Oxley in Convict Maids: the forced migration of women to Australia (1996) assessed the women as workers, not simply convicts, and argued that female convicts possessed a wide range of skills and qualities, which were crucial in helping to build a new society and economy. Joy Damousi’s Depraved and Disorderly (1997) brought an additional dimension to the subject and produced a cultural history of convict women illuminating contemporary perceptions of their morality; punishment and resistance; and their role as mothers to new generations of Australians.

- How efficient was Australia’s convict labour system?
- ‘Transported convicts were not habitual criminals but were ordinary men and women possessing useful and diverse skills’ (Nicholas, 1988). Discuss.
- Has the brutality of the convict system been overstated?
- To what extent and with what success could convicts resist authority?
- To what extent did the treatment and experiences of women convicts differ from their male counterparts?
- Who were the most influential in the transition of Australia’s gaol economy to a free economy: convicts or the military?
- ‘Prostitutes’ or ‘ordinary working-class women’? Which of these is the more accurate description of female convicts?
- How appropriate is the description of female convicts as ‘depraved and disorderly’?
- Did the freedoms and privileges outweigh the hardships of the convict system?

Baker, A.W., Death is a Good Solution: the Convict Experience in Early Australia (St Lucia, 1984).
Damousi, Joy, Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia (Cambridge, 1997).
Daniels, Kay, Convict Women (St Leonards, 1998).
Frost, Alan, Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia’s Convict Beginnings (Carlton, 1994).
Reid, K., Gender, Crime and Empire (Manchester, 2007).
Robson, L.L., The Convict Settlers of Australia (Carlton, 1994).
Tardif, P., Notorious Strumpets and Dangerous Girls (1990, available as CD-Rom)

European-Aboriginal relations

The academic study of Aboriginal-European relations since the 1970s has been particularly dynamic and controversial. Historiography has moved on from narratives and assumptions of benign settlement and unhindered colonial progress to embrace debates including the nature and extent of European-Aboriginal violence, dispossession, frontier history, the ‘stolen generations’, the ‘White Australia policy’ and – particularly controversial – historians’ methodology. The heated and continuing exchanges between scholars and other commentators, known as Australia’s ‘history wars’, highlight the contested histories of European settlement and have been significant in recent and current political debates concerning native title, sovereignty, the plight of Aboriginal children, and Aboriginal socio-economic and political rights.

Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner, during his delivery of the 1969 Boyer Lectures, is usually credited with dispelling the myth of benign settlement and calling for the end of the ‘great Australian silence’ about the ‘unacknowledged relations between two racial groups’ within Australia. From the 1970s academic interest in Aboriginal history was dynamic and revealed new insights and many challenged existing assumptions and narratives. New sources, including Aboriginal voices, have informed and influenced historiography and the way Indigenous history is approached and understood. Yet, as the Australian ‘history wars’ reveal, tensions in interpretations remain. Arguably, the most heated academic and public debates followed accusations that historians were less concerned with robust academic methodology and more interested in promoting and supporting political agenda. In the mid-1990s, journalists Ron Moran and Keith Windschuttle denied the occurrence of some massacres, with Windschuttle claiming that the historical evidence presented by some historians was dubious and that some accounts were ‘outright fabrication’. These Australian history wars reveal that many of the historical questions remain unresolved and contested, thus providing a sensitive and fascinating range of problems and historiography with which students can engage.

- How legitimate is it to describe the British settlement of Australia as an act of invasion?
- How significant and problematic are methodological issues underlying debates about the extent of violence between Europeans and Aborigines in colonial Australia?
- To what extent were the indigenous peoples of Australia passive victims of European settlement?
- How do you explain the dramatic decrease in Aboriginal population after the European settlement of Australia?
- To what extent was the violence on the frontier ‘warfare’?
- To what extent were attitudes towards Aborigines dictated by European economic imperatives?
- Were there genuine attempts to protect Aborigines?
- Did the British government and colonial authorities respect the rights of Aborigines?

Broome, Richard, Aboriginal Australians: a history since 1788 (Crows Nest, 2010).

Clendinnen, Inga, *Dancing with strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact* (Cambridge, 2005).

Connor, John, *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838* (Sydney, 2002).


Reynolds, Henry, *Fate of a Free People* (Camberwell, 2004).


Australian literature and film are useful resources when taking an interdisciplinary approach to understanding Aboriginal historical issues, Indigenous knowledge (the Dreaming or the Dreamtime), and the complexities of the kinship system and social organisation structure; for example:

- Wright, A., *Carpentaria* (Sydney, 2006).

- Phillip Noyce (Dir.), *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002).
- Rolf de Heer (Dir.), *Ten Canoes* (2006).

**Migration and migrants**

The peopling of White Australia is a key theme in the nation’s history. The multi-faceted nature of migration history provides the opportunity to explore issues and problems from a variety of perspectives including economic, social, cultural and political. Questions can also be addressed within the contextual frameworks of gender, race, class and nationhood. The forced migration of convicts, voluntary or ‘free’ migration and government-assisted schemes have provided historians with a number of problems. Why did some people emigrate from the UK to the Australian colonies? Did a better class of emigrant go to North America? How did the cultural baggage of these migrants affect Australia’s development? Spontaneous migration in the wake of the 1850s gold rushes, the 20th-century White Australia policy, assisted schemes during the 20th century, the multi-cultural policies of the 1970s and 1980s, national anxieties concerning under-population and notions.
of nationhood present students with a wide and fascinating range of debates and enable them to analyse the historical processes which shaped migration from a number of perspectives.

- How significant were the Ripon Regulations of 1831 for the peopling of Australia?
- Why did emigrants leave Britain for Australia during the 19th or 20th centuries?
- Was contemporary criticism of the quality of British assisted migrants arriving in colonial Australia justified?
- To what extent were assisted emigrants coerced into migrating to Australia after 1831?
- To what extent did the British government and local agencies use assisted emigration schemes to rid the UK of its ‘scum’?
- How far and with what success could emigrants manipulate the system?
- How significant were private shipping interests for increasing migration from the UK to Australia during the 1830s and 1840s?
- Were economic considerations the main reason for emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia?
- How successful were 20th-century post-war immigration schemes?
- How accurate is it to describe the migration programme of the late 1940s as a triumph of labour needs over the idea of White Australia?

Appleyard, R.T., *British Emigration to Australia* (Canberra, 1964).
Sherington, G., Australia’s Immigrants, 1788-1988 (Sydney, 1980).

Women in Australia

Scholarship relating to contemporary perceptions of women in Australia, their experiences and contribution to the nation’s development has produced a lively and contentious historiography. Pat Grimshaw et al, Creating a Nation (2006) challenged orthodox interpretations of women as victims of colonisation, and stressed their agency, productivity and creativity in Australia’s development. This topic overlaps with several themes including convicts, migration, the gold rushes, national identity and the notion of Australia as a ‘workingman’s paradise’, encouraging students to contextualise their knowledge and understanding of women’s history. The fact that white Australian women achieved the vote before their British counterparts adds a further dimension when analysing their place in the nation’s history.

- Victims of a male-dominated society or agents of change and empowerment? Which is the more valid assessment of women in colonial Australia?
- To what extent have political experiences and influences of Australian women during the late 19th century and early 20th centuries been understated?
- How far did the nature and range of economic opportunities for women change during the 19th century?
- To what extent have revisionist historians overstated the socio-economic opportunities for women in colonial Australia?
- ‘Traditional historical analyses of women’s contribution to Australian society have persistently undervalued their social and economic value.’ Discuss.
- How independent were women in colonial Australia?
- To what extent were Australian women ‘gifted’ the vote?

Alford, K., Production or Reproduction? An Economic History of Women in Australia 1788-1850 (Melbourne , 1984).
Beddoe, Deidre, Welsh Convict Women (Barry, 1979).
Damousi, Joy, Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia (Cambridge, 1997).
Daniels, Kay, Convict Women (St Leonards, 1998).
Daniels, Kay (ed.), So Much Hard Work: women and prostitution in Australian history (Sydney, 1984).
Gothard, Jan, Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia (Carlton, 2001).
Lees, Kirsten, Votes for Women, the Australia Story (St Leonards, 1995).
Margarey, S., Passion of the First Wave Feminists (Sydney, 2001).
McLaughlin, Trevor (ed.), Irish Women in Colonial Australia (St Leonards, 1998).
O’Brien, Anne P., God’s willing workers: women and religion in Australia (Sydney, 2005).
Oxley, Deborah, Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia (Cambridge, 1996).
Reekie, Gail, On the Edge, Women’s Experiences of Queensland (St Lucia, 1994).
Summers, Anne, Damned Whores and God’s Police (Ringwood, 1975: 2002).
Tensions on the goldfields

The gold rushes during the 1850s were a watershed in Australian history – economically, politically, socially and culturally. Unsurprisingly, the gold finds generated significant tensions in the wake of a spontaneous population explosion, as immigrants of many nationalities scrambled to the find gold, their aspirations high. In 1852, 370,000 newcomers landed on Australia’s shores. These were heady times, and Australia would never be quite the same again. This is an interesting topic for teaching and students can explore a number of historical problems: the fight for democracy and political representation, egalitarianism, racism, national identity and ‘mateship’ in the context of Russell Ward’s ground-breaking but controversial work *The Australian Legend*.

- How egalitarian was life on the goldfields?
- Was the Eureka rebellion of 1854 a fight for democracy or a revolt against taxes?
- To what extent was an inexperienced administration responsible for the discord, violence and working-class rebellion on the Victorian goldfields during the 1850s?
- Have the hostilities and tensions between Chinese immigrants and Europeans on the goldfields been overstated?
- Explain the causes of Australian racism against Chinese immigrants during the 19th century.
- How significant were the gold rushes for the notion of Australian national identity?

Bate, W.A., *Victorian gold rushes* (Fitzroy, 1988).
Carboni, Raffaello, *The Eureka Stockade* (Ballarat, c.1904)

Keesing, Nancy (ed.), *History of the Australian Gold Rushes by those who were there* (London, 1976).

The cities rise
Australia was, and remains, one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world. Each colonial/state capital dominated its hinterland and presented a striking contrast to the vast empty spaces of the outback. Several historical problems arise when examining the development, growth, and influence of the cities, offering students the opportunity ask probing questions about the dynamics between economic, social, political, cultural, and psychological influences and imperatives. Academic scrutiny of public health and the quality of life experienced by city dwellers has generated keen debate and affords students another attractive area of study.

- ‘The public environment of Australian cities could be as degraded and disease-promoting as any in Europe’ (Lewis and MacLeod, 1987). Discuss.
- How significant was the development of railways for the growth of Australia’s major cities?
- How marvellous was ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ during the 19th century?
- Why did such a high proportion of Australia’s population live in a handful of large cities?
- ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ or ‘Smelbourne’? Which is the more accurate assessment of 19th-century Melbourne?
- To what extent has the significance of economic factors been exaggerated when explaining the expansion and dominance of the colonial capital cities?
- Why did so many immigrants remain in or return to the cities?
- How significant were civic pride and state rivalries for the development and expansion of the colonial capital cities?
- How did the gold rushes affect Australia’s pattern of settlement?

Blainey, G., A Land Half Won [chapt. 8] (Melbourne, 1983).
Cannon M., Life in the Cities (Ringwood, 1988).
Curson, P. H., Times of Crises: Epidemics in Sydney 1788-1900 (Sydney, 1985).
Docherty, J.C., Newcastle: the making of an Australian city (Sydney, 1983).
Dunston, D., Governing the Metropolis. Melbourne 1830-1891 (Carlton, 1984).
Fitzgerald, S., Rising Damp: Sydney 1870-90 (Melbourne, 1987).
McCarty, J.W. & C.B. Schedvin, Urbanisation in Australia (Sydney, 1974).

Religion, education and moral improvement

The history of religion in colonial Australia is dominated by the activities of and tensions between traditional Christian churches and evangelical missionaries, as they sought to gain power for themselves and moral improvement across the colonies. Religion and moral improvers had a difficult task and played an unpopular role. In striving for influence they received criticism from some contemporaries, and later from historians, that they had fuelled sectarianism and had been a socially divisive force in Australian society. Sectarianism was reflected in several areas of society, most notably education, politics and the work of charitable organisations. The multi-faceted nature of this topic gives students the opportunity to view the issues from a variety of perspectives and contexts, for example class and gender.
Why was education such a contentious issue in colonial Australia?
Is the divisive nature of education in colonial Australia explained more convincingly in the context of religion or class?
Did religion do more to unite or divide Australian society?
How did the convict system influence people’s attitude to religion?
To what extent was Australia a secular society?
How successful were either charitable and voluntary agencies or churches in their quest for moral improvement in colonial Australia?

Bruce, Kaye (ed.), *Anglicanism in Australia: A History* (Carlton, 2002).

**Sport and leisure**

Always a popular topic with my undergraduates, the themes of sport and leisure are an interesting way to examine some of the larger issues in Australian history. Although a relatively recent area of historical research, there is a strong historiography that, in my experience, students find particularly stimulating and engaging. By contextualising the development of sport and leisure in Australia, students gain understanding of the significance of economic, political, social and cultural factors that were at play, and more particularly they can use the topic as a lens through which to view issues relating to national identity and national anxieties, e.g. the need for fit young men to defend the nation.

- ‘Australia’s increased enthusiasm for sport from the 1850s was fuelled largely by national anxieties.’ Discuss.
- How significant was the ‘imaginary grandstand’ for the development of Australia’s sporting culture?
- ‘Australia’s preoccupation with sport was simply a consequence of a male-dominated society.’ Discuss.
- How significant were economic factors for the development of Australia’s leisure and sporting culture?
- Class or gender? Which had the greater influence on the development of Australia’s leisure culture?
- To what extent were Australians influenced by Anglo-Celtic sporting culture?

Adair, D & Wray Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History* (Melbourne, 1997).
Cashman, R. & M. McKernan (eds.), *Sport in History* (St. Lucia, 1979).
Crotty, Martin, Making the Australian Male: Middle Class Masculinity 1870-1920 (Carlton, 2001).
Cumes, J.W.C., Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid: Leisure Times in Early Australia (Melbourne, 1979).
Jordan, Robert, The Convict Theatres of Early Australia, 1788-1840 (Sydney, 2002).
Stoddart, B., The Imperial Game (Manchester, 1998).

The bush and bushrangers

The bush looms large in Australian history; be it in the context of national identity, the gold rushes, explorers, or bushrangers. Russel Ward’s Australian Legend is a key text in which he identifies a typical Australian whose traits such as mateship, anti-authoritarianism, swearing and hard drinking came from the frontier experiences of bush workers and from their environment. There are several bush ‘heroes’ identified by Ward and others from the early pioneers, convicts, explorers and gold miners, through to the Anzacs. Bushrangers and other rural bandits have romantic appeal, in that they are usually placed within the context of the grievances of poorer rural Australians, and they have remained an important part of Australia’s social and cultural history. Who hasn’t heard of Ned Kelly? Moreover, it is an excellent topic for teaching as it reinforces understanding of class issues, power and punishment in colonial Australia, land issues, and national anxieties. Rather surprisingly, in Eric Hobsbawm’s work on social banditry, Australian bushranging barely receives a mention, but his thesis is a particularly useful tool for analysing bushrangers’ place in Australian society.

- Why did bushrangers enjoy popular support?
- Was there a class dimension to bushranging?
- How adequately does Hobsbawm’s theses on social banditry explain the bushranging phenomenon?
- Were bushrangers in the pre-goldrush period simply criminals, or victims of draconian legislation and an unjust society?
- To what extent did the tensions between the Kelly gang and colonial authorities embody broader issues in rural Australia?
- Why did the bush hold such significance for Australians?

Carey, P., The True History of the Kelly Gang (Brisbane, 2000).
Castles, Alex, Ned Kelly’s Last Day’s: setting the record straight (Crows Nest, 2005).
Gammage, W., ‘Who gained, and who was meant to gain, from land selection in New South Wales?’, Australian Historical Studies, 24 (1990), pp. 104-22.
Hirst, J.B., Convict Society and its Enemies (Sydney, 1983).
Anzacs and Gallipoli

War has played an important role in Australian history and was influential in shaping understandings of masculinity and femininity in 20th-century Australia. The centrality of war and the role of gender in ideas about Australian nationhood, memory and myth making are particularly stimulating topics for study. The Anzac legend was born at Gallipoli; it is about manhood, courage, egalitarianism, distain for authority – echoes of Ward’s typical Australia in the Australian Legend. Charles Bean, Australia’s official war historian, among others played a significant role in creating and reinforcing the legend and few dared or were reluctant to challenge it. But recent research has shed new light on the ‘myth’ of Anzacs at Gallipoli, and this has prompted renewed interest in the topic. The resulting literature enable students to explore not only the legend but the relationships between gender, memory, race, war, nationalism and Australia’s changing relationship with Britain. The increasing accessibility of primary sources including film, literature, memoirs, letters and diaries provide new insights and enable students to approach the topic from a range of perspectives including cultural and social history.

- To what extent was the Anzac legend constructed by Charles E. W. Bean?
- How flawed is the Anzac legend?
- To what extent did Gallipoli reinforce an emergent Australian identity?
- Why did Anzac day become classed as sacred?
- To what extent has the meaning of Anzac changed?
- How significant was Murdoch’s letter for the Anzac legend?
- Who created the Anzac legend?
- Who is excluded from the Anzac legend? Why?

Bean, Charles E.W., The Story of Anzac (Sydney, 1929).
Damousi, J. & M. Lake (eds.), Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century (Melbourne, 1995).


Lake, Marilyn & Henry Reynolds (eds.), *What’s Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney, 2010).


McKernan, M. & M. Browne (eds.), *Australia: two centuries of war and peace* (Canberra, 1988).


Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac memories, living with the legend* (Melbourne, 1994).


Wilcox, Craig, *Australia’s Boer War* (South Melbourne, 2002).


Film: Peter Weir (Dir.), *Gallipoli* (1981).

‘A workingman’s paradise’

Emigration propaganda promoted the Australian colonies as a ‘workingman’s paradise’ or a ‘land of milk and honey’. What was the reality? Evidence suggests that, for some, Australia was far from being a paradise. Colonists’ experiences were influenced by a number of factors including gender, social and economic status, race, employment skills, and whether they lived in an urban or rural area. This topic is an excellent opportunity to draw together themes and issues from across the module and encourages students to conceptualise their subject.

- ‘It was only in periods of economic depression that the inequalities in Australian society were revealed.’
  Discuss.
- How legitimate is the description of Australia as ‘a workingman’s paradise’ after the 1830s?
- Were there any ‘winners’ in the 1840s and 1890s depressions?
- To what extent can colonial Australia be assessed as a working women’s paradise?
- Was colonial Australia a ‘paradise’ for women?


Dissertations

Dissertations relating to Australian history have been particularly popular with my undergraduates over the years. The increasing availability of online primary and secondary sources has enabled students to choose from a significantly wider range of topics. While this is excellent news for students and supervisors, there is always a risk when using web-based material that students do not develop their archival and historical research skills, as they can so easily become ‘desktop researchers’. Wherever possible, I have encouraged dissertation students to try to include both online and local or national archival sources. Those students living in or near London are fortunate that they are more conveniently placed to use the National Archives and British Library, which both hold an extensive range of Australian material. But there is a diverse range of sources relating to Australian history in archives and libraries across the UK and I am continually impressed by undergraduates’ and postgraduates’ archival finds. There are a number of useful aids to track down sources, the following being particularly useful:


- Although rather dated, Manuscripts in the British Isles Relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific (Canberra, 1972) edited by Phyllis Mander-Jones is a wonderfully detailed catalogue and index of archival collections and is always worth consulting.


Primary sources

Official documents and correspondence

*Historical Records of Australia*, edited by Frederick Watson

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*House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*

Particularly useful across all levels of teaching – especially levels 2 and 3. Examples of particularly interesting papers (given with short titles) are:
‘Report of the commission of inquiry into the state of the colony of New South Wales (on convicts)’ (1822).
‘Commission of Enquiry on Judicial Establishments of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land: report’ (1823) [Bigge Report].
‘Reports from Commissioners or Emigration to the Colonial Department’ (1831-2).
‘Papers Relating to Conduct of Magistrates in New South Wales in directing and inflicting Punishments on Prisoners’ (1826).
‘Correspondence concerning Military Operations against Aboriginal Inhabitants of Van Diemen’s Land’ (1831).
‘Select Committee on Aborigines in British Settlements: Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index’ (1837).
‘Papers relative to Emigration to the Australian Colonies’, (1847-8).

Printed sources including letters, diaries, select documents and editions

Allchurch, Edward, *Voyage of the Atalanta: Plymouth to South Australia Colony 1866* (Lindfield, 1978).
Chapman, Peter (ed.), *Public Finance of Port Phillip 1836-40, Historical Records of Victoria Foundation Series*.
Clarke, Patricia (ed.), *Life Lines: Australian Women’s Letters and Diaries 1788-1840* (St Leonards, 1992).
Coleman, Deidre (ed.), *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies, two women’s travel narratives of the 1790s* (London, 1999).
Duyker, Edward (ed.), *A woman on the goldfields: Emily Skinner’s Diary* (Carlton, 1995).
Frost, Lucy (ed.), *No place for nervous lady: voices from the Australian Bush* (Melbourne, 1984).
MacKellar, Maggie, *Strangers in a Foreign Land: the journal of Neil Black and other voices from the Western Desert*.
Mulvaney, J. et al. (eds.), “My dear Spencer: the letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer” (Melbourne, 1997).
Selected lead Articles from ‘the Dawn’, selected by D. Falconer (Whitefish, n.d.).
Vellacott, Helen (ed.), *Diary of a Lady’s Maid, Emma Southgate* (Carlton, 1995).
Webby, Elizabeth, *Colonial Voices: Letters, Diaries, Journalism and Other Accounts of Nineteenth-Century Australia* (St Lucia, 1989).

**Online primary sources**


Documenting a Democracy: key documents from the National Archives of Australia, described as ‘the foundation of our nation’. [www.foundingdocs.gov.au](http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au)


This is a searchable database of criminal court cases. There are some very interesting cases and highlighted examples covering European-Aboriginal relations (e.g. the Myall Creek cases), convict disputes; bushranging; etc.

Eighteenth Century Collection Online [ECCO]

This site includes a wide range of material on the early settlement of Australia and encounters with its indigenous peoples. Examples include:

Anon., *The History of Botany Bay, in New Holland. Containing a full account of the inhabitants…* (Bristol, 1787?).

Anon., *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay: with an account of the establishment of the colonies of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island…* (London, 1789).

Hunter, John, *An historical journal of the transactions of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, with the discoveries which have been made in New South Wales…* (London, 1794?).

Johnson, Richard, *An address to the inhabitants of the colonies, established in New South Wales and Norfolk Island* (London, 1794).

Roe, Charles, *A Treatise on the natural smallpox, with some remarks and observations on inoculation* (London, 1780?).


Irish convicts to Australia. [http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html](http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html)


Female convict websites

[https://sites.google.com/site/convictfemalefactories/](https://sites.google.com/site/convictfemalefactories/)


The Wellington Valley Project hosts online primary sources relating to the Church Missionary Society Mission to Wellington Valley New South Wales 1830-42 and sheds light not only on its work but also on the relationship between Aborigines and missionaries. This can be found at: [www.newcastle.edu.au/group/amrhd/wvp/index.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/group/amrhd/wvp/index.html)

Keith Windschuttle’s website, ‘The Sydney Line’. Windschuttle is at the centre of Australia’s ‘History Wars. [www.sydneyline.com](http://www.sydneyline.com)


Australian War Memorial. An important website for Australian military history and Australian society during periods of war. [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)
The following is a direct link to online records including war diaries, records of C.E.W Bean and official histories www.awm.gov.au/collection/records/
The Sydney Electronic Text and Image Service [SETIS] provides digital editions of Australian literary and historical texts and hosts several other Australian Studies Resources.
http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/oztexts/
Project Gutenberg Australia. Free e-books including literary and historical texts. http://gutenberg.net.au
JSTOR. In addition to secondary content, JSTOR is an excellent resource for primary material and images.
La Trobe University iTunes audio podcasts includes discussions on a wide range of themes in Australian history http://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/australian-history/id391323919
The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is a national body for learning and teaching in higher education. We work with universities and other higher education providers to bring about change in learning and teaching. We do this to improve the experience that students have while they are studying, and to support and develop those who teach them. Our activities focus on rewarding and recognising excellence in teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice, and by helping to influence, shape and implement policy - locally, nationally, and internationally.

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