THE HISTORY OF KINGSTON S.E.

AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT.

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This thesis was presented in accordance with the regulations laid down for the

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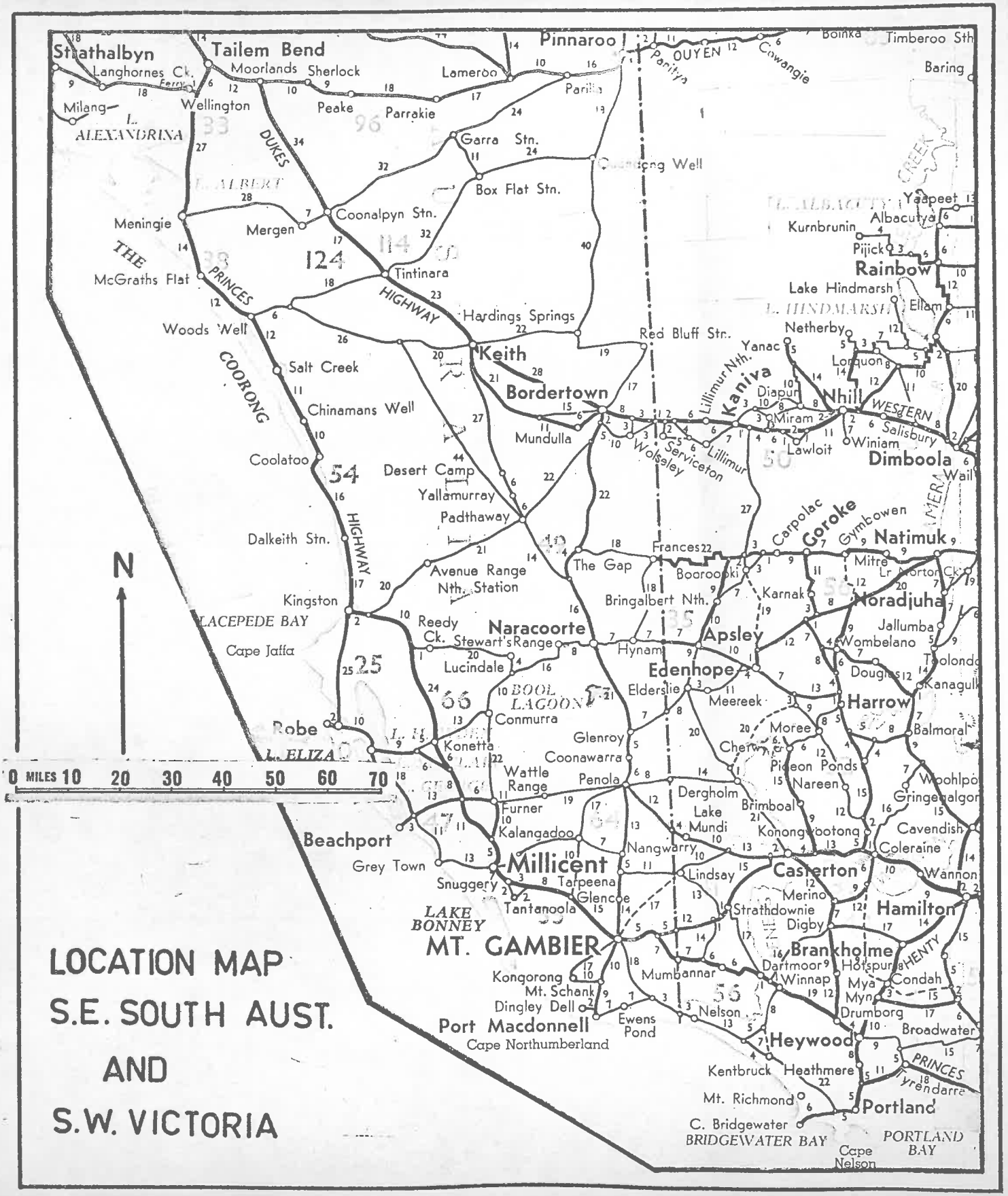
This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except when due reference has been made in the text.



LOCATION MAP S.E. SOUTH AUST. AND S.W. VICTORIA

INTRODUCTION

This study is primarily concerned with the history of Kingston S.E.[1] and the Lacepede District. The focus is on the economic and social history of the town and the district. The study begins with the pioneer pastoralists and the circumstances in which they took up their runs. It deals with the opening of the South East District, the pattern of settlement and the pioneer community in Lacepede Bay. It then moves to the foundation of the private town of Kingston and the scheme to build a port there.

The founders of Kingston, J. and A. Cooke, believed that Lacepede Bay could become the chief port of the South East and the border district of south-western Victoria. The question of whether or not the government would proclaim a port at Kingston and build the necessary feeder railway to the Victorian border depended upon their policies with regard to the settlement of the South East and the promotion of the interests of the merchants of Adelaide, and also upon their attitude towards intercolonial trade. The battle to achieve the proclamation of the port and the construction of the railway became part of a larger issue being fought out in parliament between the advocates of selection and closer settlement in the South East and the pastoralists who held leases there. The government supported the Cooke brothers' scheme between 1868 and 1872 because they were making a determined effort to open the South East to selectors. Kingston was to function as the

1 There are two towns in South Australia with the name of Kingston. One is therefore designated for convenience Kingston-on-the-Murray and the other, Kingston S.E., Kingston S.E. was the name given to the government town in 1861.

port of the agricultural districts around Bordertown, Naracoorte and Penola. A special theme in the thesis is the role of the central government in the growth and development of the town.

The scheme to build the port at Kingston aroused the opposition of most of the other settlers of the South East and the study has been extended into the developments in the more closely settled areas in the Lower South East to explain this opposition. A study of the natural drainage of the region was necessary to explain the vicissitudes of fortune of the pastoralists and selectors in the area around Kingston and also to show why the port needed an access railway.

When Kingston started on its career as a wool-port, its development was retarded by the lack of subsidiary industries in a pastoral economy. The population of the town suffered from a chronic seasonal shortage of jobs during the winter months. The town became essentially a centre of transport and travel, its chief industries being shipping, carting, driving the mail coaches and providing hotels and boarding houses for the migratory public.

The development of the community in the township during the eighteen seventies and eighties involved not only the rise of the social institutions that were common to the other towns in South Australia during this period of rapid expansion, but also the special problems of living with a fairly large group of aborigines and part-aborigines.

The latter part of the thesis deals with the economic developments within the port and the district and some of the social aspects. It covers the career of Kingston as a port; the causes of its failure; the changing nature of selection in the district; the fate of the local pastoral industry and the development of a new government attitude to the whole question of closer settlement in the South East.

The period which I had to cover in order to follow the history of Kingston and the district, that is, 1846 to about

1890, was one of exciting developments in South Australia and it was interesting to see how far-reaching was the arm of the central government. Although the history of Kingston as a port finished in the eighteen nineties I included the last chapter in order to complete the story of the pastoral development in the district. The port failed, but the town persisted and the district eventually became a prosperous one.

THE TOWN AND THE DISTRICT

Kingston S.E. is situated on Lacepede Bay on the south-eastern coast of South Australia. It is 189 miles by road and 292 by rail from Adelaide. For many years it was the chief outport for the wool of the South-eastern District, but its shipping business is now a thing of the past. To-day it is the market town of the pastoral district of Lacepede and the commercial, administrative and social centre. The only other community centre in the district is a small one at Reedy Creek, about twelve miles from Kingston. There are 1,000 people living in the town and most of them are involved in some way with the pastoral industry. However, there are two other quite active industries in Kingston, one being cray-fishing which has been established for a long period of time, and the other a small but growing tourist trade.

The district of Lacepede covers about 1,167 square miles of the County of MacDonnell in the north-western section of the South-eastern District. It has a population of 2,050 the majority of whom are pastoralists.[1] Until recent times, it has been the poor and backward neighbour of the richer, better-drained areas of the South East. Although there are patches of good land, the soils in the district are only moderately fertile in their natural condition. Most of them are deficient in phosphorus, nitrogen, copper, cobalt and zinc and many are highly saline. Without the application of artificial fertilizers, they have been only second-rate pasture land and

even less useful for agriculture.

Unlike many of the pastoral areas of South Australia which have a history of a long struggle against drought, the Lacepede district has suffered from an over abundance of water. It was the natural drainage basin of the South East and the Victorian highlands across the border.

LACEPEDE BAY

Lacepede Bay is a long inward bend in the south-eastern coastline extending for nineteen miles from the south-south-western headland of Cape Jaffa in a north-easterly direction to Granite Rocks about twelve miles north of Kingston. It is a very large harbour with an opening of about twenty one miles and the shoreline is formed by a sandy beach. Despite its apparent exposure to the swell of the Southern Ocean and frequent south-westerly gales, the waters in the bay remain calm in all weathers. There are strong underwater currents and the holding ground is not good in some of the anchorages around the jetty, but there is no surf in the bay. According to The Australia Pilot, the waters never become more disturbed than to produce a choppy surface sea and "a vessel may anchor with safety according to her draught, anywhere between Kingston and Cape Jaffa". The dangers to shipping are the submerged reefs and rocks which extend out to the north-west, west and south-west of Cape Jaffa. They form a rocky ledge covered with water to a depth of from 3 to 7 fathoms. A lighthouse has been built on Margaret Brock Reef which extends the furthest out to sea, its extremity being 4½ miles west of Cape Jaffa. The rock upon which the lighthouse stands is the only dry one in the reef. The reef is always a danger to small, heavily laden vessels because the seas break over it in an

1 (page III) From information supplied by the Clerk of the Lacepede District Council. Kingston 1966.

irregular manner and sometimes they break as far as five miles away from it.

Although Lacepede Bay is always safe, the anchorages inshore are not deep enough for any but small vessels. The shore slopes gradually downward towards the open sea to form a wide, shallow shelf which extends outwards for 2½ miles. The depth of water over this shelf is less than 5 fathoms. Vessels of a moderate draught can be anchoraged only at distances of 1½ to 2½ miles out from the head of the jetty where the depth is from 27 feet to 4 fathoms, or, alternatively, in the southern part of the bay about 2 miles from Cape Jaffa, where it is about 27 feet.[2]

The serenity of the waters within Lacepede Bay and their comparative shallow depths are thought to result from the protection of the headland at Cape Jaffa and the system of submerged reefs extending out from it. They probably act as a natural breakwater and help to build up the sandy shelf which extends out from the shore at Lacepede Bay for a greater distance than anywhere else in the South East. It is thought that the carriage of sand suspended in water in a north-north-westerly direction along the southern coast of the continent is obstructed at Lacepede Bay by the headland and the submerged reefs and deposits accumulate on the harbour bottom. The shelf thus constructed may also contribute towards the quiet of the harbour.[3]

2 For the description of the Bay I have drawn heavily upon The Australia Pilot, Vol. 1, (Hydrographic Department Admiralty. London, 1960; Supplement No. 1, 1963 to Vol.1) 'The Southern Coast of Australia from Cape Leeuwin to Cape Northumberland.'

3 For the explanation of the safety of the Bay see South Australia Parliamentary Paper (House of Assembly) No. 30, 1946; 'Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee upon Public Works on the Site of a Deep Sea Port in the South East'.

Chapter one

THE OPENING OF THE SOUTH EAST

AND THE PIONEER SETTLERS OF LACEPEDE BAY

The South East district of South Australia consists of the country to the south-east of the River Murray and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert. It is bounded on the north by the Adelaide-Melbourne railway line, on the east by the Victorian border and on the west and south by the Southern Ocean. It was first opened by squatters and overlanders from the Port Phillip District who crossed the border into the south-eastern portion of it in 1839. Their expansion into the South East was part of the westward extension of pastoral settlement which began in New South Wales about 1830 and reached the South Australian border when Mitchell discovered the south-western plains and the Henty settlement around Portland Bay in 1836. By 1839, Stephen Henty had found Portland overcrowded with pastoralists and he explored the country around Mount Gambier in search of new runs.[1] In the same year, the overlander, Charles Bonney, opened a new stock route from the Port Phillip District to Adelaide along the south-eastern coast. Henty was very satisfied with the beautiful pastoral country around Mount Gambier and Bonney found that well-watered grass lands continued all along the coast from Rivoli Bay to the southern end of the Coorong.[2]

1 See H.C.Talbot, 'The Early History of the South East District of South Australia' (Transactions of the Royal Geographical Society S.A. Vol. XXI, Adelaide, 1913), p.111.

2 See J.H.Shepherd, 'The History of Mount Gambier and the South Eastern District' (typescript and cuttings, Adelaide

The Henty brothers started the pastoral settlement of Mount Gambier when they established an out station there in 1841.[3] By 1843, squatters from the Port Phillip District and Van Dieman's Land had staked out runs in the Mosquito Plains along the border and in the coastal country from Mount Gambier to Rivoli Bay (the present site of Beachport). The newcomers soon saw the advantages of exporting their wool from Rivoli Bay rather than Portland and they asked the South Australian government to found a town there.[4] Between 1840 and 1843 Bonney's route, the Portland Road, became a regular overlanding track and the parties from Port Phillip aroused considerable interest at Adelaide in their reports of the flourishing settlement in the South East. They also drew attention to the existance of another fine stretch of country which, according to the aborigines, was in the land of the Tatiara people who lived along the border to the south-east of the Ninety Mile Desert. They made several attempts to find it[5] and although they failed, they stimulated the interest of the Adelaide press. The Southern Australian gave full publicity to the South East and suggested that it should be opened to South Australians and not left for pastoralists of other colonies to enjoy.

During 1842 and 1843[6] the paper continually brought the matter before the public eye, but the government made no move

2 (continued) Archives), p.294; quoting from Bonney's journal:- "The country was a chain of swamps occasionally as much as ten miles wide and divided into hills of Casuarina and Eucalyptus with fine grass all around".

3 H.C.Talbot, op.cit., p.120.

4 Southern Australian 19 December, 1843.

5 See Daisy Fry, 'The Story of the Tatiara, 1845-1947' (Tatiara Centenary Committee, Bordertown 1947), pp. 4-10.

6 Southern Australian, 2 August, 1842; 21 April, 1843; 15 August, 1843; 19 September, 1843; 19 December, 1843.

until 1844. The authorities believed that there was sufficient land in the surveyed counties to satisfy the needs of the settlers for several years to come and the expense of opening a new district did not seem justified. Neither the agricultural nor the pastoral industry had made any significant progress and a depression had devastated the commerce of Adelaide in 1841 and 1842. Besides, the parties travelling from Port Phillip had seen only part of the South East. The land further away from the coast, particularly the north-western section of it, had a very bad reputation. Beyond the eastern banks of the Murray lay the mallee scrub of the Ninety Mile Desert. It had been partly explored between 1836 and 1840 and the explorers had been driven back by the lack of water.[7] The country from the mouth of the Murray along the south-eastern coast appeared to be just as poor. Some good land had been surveyed for pastoralists around the margins of Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert,[8] but the exploration of fifty miles of the Coorong coastline had revealed only mallee scrub and sandhills.[9] The pastoralists staked out runs around the lakes and along the banks of the Murray, but they were confined to the eastern banks of the river and lakes by the ephemeral nature of the scrub grasses and the costs of sinking wells to water the stock.[10]

7 See A.Grenfell-Price, Foundation and Settlement of South Australia 1829-1845 (Adelaide, 1924), p.147.

8 E.C.Frome, the Surveyor-General, explored the land around the south-eastern banks of Lake Albert for a special survey in 1840. He thought it was good land for agriculture as well as for pastoral runs. South Australian Government Gazette, 15 October, 1840.

9 W.J.S.Pullen, Lieut. R.N., had explored the Murray mouth and the inside channels of it as well as the Coorong coast by 1840. See A.Grenfell-Price, loc.cit.

10 From evidence given by Archibald Cooke during an appeal

In 1844 the situation in South Australia was radically changed. The discovery of copper at Kapunda in 1843 resulted in a large influx of population and stimulated land sales. Agriculture and the pastoral industry began to make rapid progress and the colony was running short of available land in the surveyed counties. When the inhabitants of Rivoli Bay asked for a port to be established there, Grey was willing to explore the South East. He led an expedition from Adelaide along the overlanding track to see what the country looked like from a western approach.[11] The explorers found that it surpassed their expectations. There were well-watered lands all along the coast from Cape Jaffa to Rivoli Bay which they thought were suitable for farms as well as pastoral lands. Grey reported that it was "one of the most extensive and continuous tracts of good country which is known to exist within the limits of South Australia".[12] The pastoral plains were all within easy reach of the sea and there were several harbours that might be useful anchorages. He thought that a port should be founded in the South East and started the marine surveyors on the checking and sounding of the inlets from Cape Northumberland to Rivoli Bay.

The full report of the expedition was published in the Southern Australian[13] and stimulated a land rush to the South East long before the district was officially opened. The search for the Tatiara was resumed by the pastoralists of the

10 (continued) against the resumption of part of their runs by A.Cooke and D.Wark in 1860. South Australia Parliamentary Papers (House of Assembly) No.90, 1860.

11 See G.Williams, South Australian Exploration to 1856 (Board of Governors of Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of S.A. Adelaide, 1919), p.71.

12 Ibid., p.74.

13 Southern Australian, 18 June, 1844. Report of an expedition to the South East District of South Australia.

Murray and the Western District of Victoria[14] and by 1845, they had not only discovered it, but had also established runs from Bordertown and Keith to the Naracoorte and Mosquito Plains. Governor Robe completed the work of opening the South East. Soon after his arrival in the colony he led an expedition by sea to Rivoli Bay and the Glenelg River country in order to find the best sites for "the establishment of a port, a township, a police station and an overland mail communication".[15] Immediately upon his return to Adelaide, occupation licences were offered for pastoral runs in the South East. Two new counties, Grey and Robe, were proclaimed. The county of Grey stretched from the Victorian border and the sea in the south, to the 37° 20 parallel of latitude in the north. Robe stretched the northern boundary of Grey to the 36° 54 parallel of latitude.[16] In view of the occupation of the Tatiara and the recommendations of the marine surveyors, Robe town was made the port of the whole district in 1847.[17] A resident magistrate had been appointed there in 1846.[18] In 1847, a practicable route for the horse-mail and police service to Mount Gambier was founded and the work of opening the South East was completed.

When occupation licences were offered for the new counties, there was a flood of applications for them. Most of them came from squatters who were already established in the South East. Anybody who left it until 1846 to look for runs

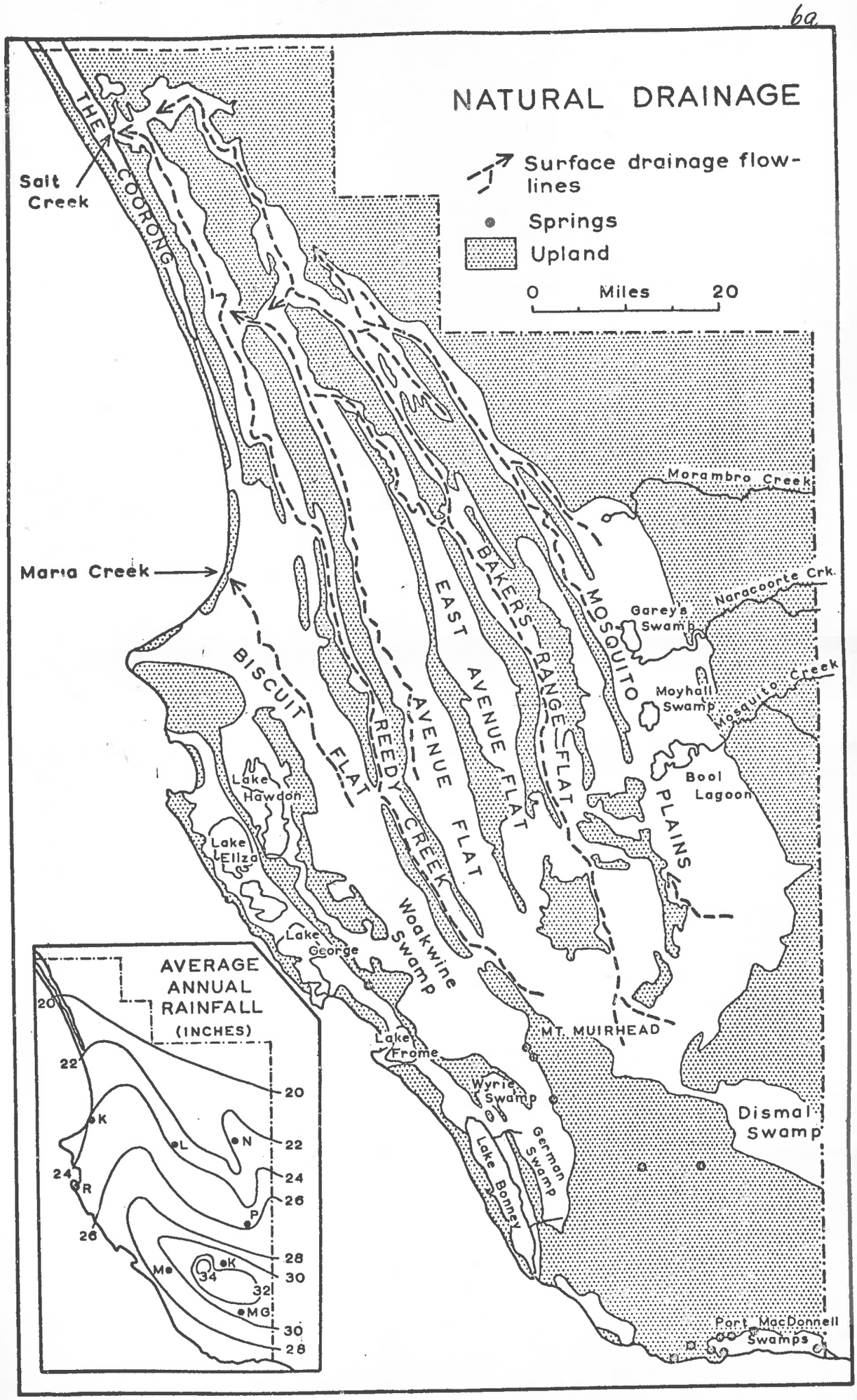
14 Daisy Fry, op.cit., pp.10, 13, 22; also South Australian Government Gazette, February and November 1845; April, June and September 1846 and January and April 1847.

15 South Australian, 9 January, 1846. (The name of the paper was changed from Southern Australian in October, 1844.)

16 S.A.Government Gazette, 23 July, 1846, p.237.

17 Ibid., 19 March, 1846, p.108. Robe was proclaimed a port in 1847. See S.A.Government Gazette, 16 December, 1847.

18 S.A.Government Gazette, 10 September, 1846, p.303.



By courtesy of
Dr. M. Williams, Geog. Dept.
Adelaide University.

had difficulty in finding enough good land. Grey had been right when he had suspected that the district might not be as good as the overlanders suggested. The lands that he explored and the Tatiara were valuable, but they were the better drained portions of the South East. In the centre and along the north-western coast there were many patches of infertile swamp-land that were almost useless even for pastures.

The newly opened district was part of a great plain which sloped downwards to the coast from the highlands of the south-east and the Victorian border. It was dissected by a number of low ranges which ran south-south-east and north-north-west. They were the relics of ancient coastlines which had been stranded inland and they formed a succession of ridges alternating with flat plains in the depressions between them. They extended from the Mosquito Plains along the Victorian border, to the Woakwine Hills and the sand-dunes along the existing coastline. The highest plains were the Mosquito Flats around Penola, which were about two hundred feet above sea-level and the lowest were the coastal flats between the Coorong and Lacepede Bay, which were only barely above sea-level.

The whole terrain sloped gently downwards from east to west and, very gently, from south-east to north-west. Consequently, water drained only slowly towards the coastal regions around the Coorong and Lacepede Bay. The natural drainage of the creeks from the Victorian highlands flowing over the border and the Mosquito Plains westward to the sea, was obstructed by the succession of hills and flats running across the direction of their drainage. Their channels were diverted to the north-west and their waters flooded the Mosquito Plains before they moved through gaps in the hills to the lower flats which they also flooded. They eventually joined the Reedy and Avenue Creeks which drained through shallow channels down the gradual incline from the higher land around Mount Muirhead to Lacepede Bay or the Coorong.

The outlets to the sea were Maria Creek into Lacepede Bay and Salt Creek which drained into the Coorong. Neither were sufficiently above sea-level for the water to drain effectively. The coastal flats and those between the ranges were flooded in winter and left with chains of swamps which were sometimes ten miles wide and twelve feet deep on their western margins. There were swamps in all of the flats in the South East, but they were at their worst in Lacepede Bay because it was a natural drainage basin.[19]

The pastoralists who had taken up land before 1846, had kept to the higher flats around the Victorian border and the Woakwine Ranges along the coast which ran about five miles inland from about Lake Bonney nearly to Lake Eliza. The lists of applications for occupation licences during 1846 show that the settlers spread from south-east to north-west, by-passing the swamps. The pastoralists from the counties around Adelaide who came through the Ninety Mile Desert or along the Coorong overlanding route, or the late-comers from the western district hoped to find runs in the Tatiara or in the Guichen Bay district where they would be close to the outport likely to be established in Guichen Bay. They were too late. Margaret Hutchison and Andrew Dunn who arrived in 1845, could find runs no closer to Robe than Biscuit Flat. Thomas

19 For information of the topography and drainage of the South East I have used the following:- S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 181 and 184, 1864, Reports on the Drainage of the South East; S.A.Parl.Paper 17, 1948, 'First report of the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement, on the South Eastern Drainage and Development; Border Watch, 16 September 1868, 'The Drainage Report'; E.Ward, The South Eastern District of South Australia;its Resources and Requirements (Adelaide,1869); M.Williams, 'The Drainage of the Swamp Lands in the South East of South Australia,' Journal of the Australian Institute of Geographers, Vol.11,(October,1964).

Seymour's party explored the Tatiara for land in 1846, but they could find only three runs, one of which was at Mount Benson. Archibald Cooke who left it until after 1847 to search for runs in the Tatiara, could find none at all and had to turn to Lacepede Bay as a last resort. The coastal flats of Lacepede Bay and the surrounding ones, the Reedy Creek, Avenue, Biscuit and Blackford flats contained some fertile grazing lands, but a large area was covered with swamps or it was so water-logged that it could not be cultivated. It is not surprising that several of the first men to take out occupation licences for land around Lacepede Bay abandoned their claims within a year or so. At least three applications had been made for the Maria Creek run before Cooke and Wark leased it in 1851 and the station founded by Edward and Charles Stirling at Mount Benson in about 1846, was a disastrous failure.[20]

The small group who were successful in founding permanent stations in Lacepede Bay were those who had chosen the better-drained land. They were Archibald Cooke of the "Maria Creek" station; George Kendle of "Murrabinna"; James Brown of "Keilira; Margaret Hutchison and Andrew Dunn of "Woolmit" and Thomas Morris of "Bowaka". There were many other pastoralists on runs stretching from Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte, Keith and Robe, but they did not belong to the community which grew up around the township of Kingston which was founded near Maria Creek in 1858. Thomas Seymour for example made Robe his township even though he owned runs on Mount Benson and Biscuit Flat.

The pioneers of the little settlement around Lacepede Bay all held land upon occupation licences, which were certificates issued by the Lands Office upon their registration (and payment of £5) as lessees of the Crown.

20 From lists of applications for occupation licences and of licences granted. S.A. Government Gazette 1846 and 1847.

Some of them seem to have squatted on runs before 1846, but they sensibly applied for licences as soon as the district was officially opened. In cases of disputes the government would recognize no claims other than the licences. Upon application for the licences, they had to give a full description of the runs, pay 10/- per square mile in rent and in addition, pay assessments upon their stock.[21] Since the leases were only upon an annual basis and the government could resume the runs at short notice, the tenure was fairly insecure. However the lessees could build and reside on their runs and use the timber thereon. There were no other conditions upon which they could occupy the land. They could not buy it because it had not yet been surveyed and few of them would have been able to afford to buy land in large enough amounts. They had all been obliged to work for, or with, other pastoralists after their arrival in the colonies before they could get together enough stock to establish stations of their own.

Archibald Cooke had arrived in South Australia as an assisted immigrant who was given a free passage in return for two years' work as a labourer.[22] In 1846 all the land that he was able to buy was eighty three acres at Macclesfield.[23] He gained his stock by working for neighbouring pastoralists and was given his first opportunity to expand when he joined David Wark, an established pastoralist

21 Acts 5 and 6 Vic. May 1843 and Act 11 1846. Regulations in S.A.Government Gazette, 29 January, 1846, p.10 and 22 October, 1846, p.348.

22 From The Register of Emigrant Labourers Applying for Free Passage to South Australia 1836-1845 (Adelaide Archives); also R.Cockburn, Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol.1 (Adelaide 1927), pp. 148-149.

23 S.A.Government Gazette 28 October, 1847. 'Declaration of Acreage under Act 11, 1846'.

at Wellington.[24] Henry Morris, the first owner of "Bowaka", had to work with his cousin John Hindmarsh, on a cattle station in Encounter Bay before he could buy stock of his own.[25] Like Cooke, he would not have been able to found a station in Lacepede Bay without the financial backing of a partner and he could not have afforded to buy enough land for a sheep run. In a similar situation was James Brown who worked with his brother, Archibald on a small farm in Encounter Bay before the brothers took out a licence for the Avenue Range run.[26] In these cases, the foundations of the new stations were moves to get the junior partners established on their own.

It is not difficult to discover why they went to the South East to found new stations. They were land-hungry pastoralists just as the Hentys and the other pioneers of the Mount Gambier district had been in 1839. Margaret Hutchison and Andrew Dunn went there in 1845 because the expansion in the pastoral industry in the Western District had driven them to look for runs in the Wimmera. When they heard that Grey had opened up well-watered land along the coast, they left their runs around Edenhope and established themselves in Biscuit Flat.[27] The South Australians, Cooke and Wark, Morris

24 Colonial Secretary's Office Docket No.508 1847 (Adelaide Archives) and R.Cockburn, op.cit., Vol.1, pp. 148-149 Vol.11, p.208.

25 Information supplied by Mr.T.Morris, Millicent and Mrs.J.Banks (nee Morris) Adelaide. Also J.T.Morris, 'Henry Thomas Morris; A Centenary Historical Outline'. (Adelaide 1936, in family possession).

26 R.Cockburn, op.cit., Vol.11, p.140 and Papers Relating to the Affairs of South Australia (Adelaide Archives).

27 R.Cockburn, op.cit., Vol.11, pp.86-87. Biscuit Flat was so called from the round, flat pieces of limestone which were scattered over the grass.

and Hindmarsh and the Brown brothers, were among the numerous pastoralists in the surveyed counties around Adelaide who were cramped for room after 1843. They were growing successful. Wool prices were rising and they were building up their stock. But their runs were in Encounter Bay and around Wellington and these districts were becoming overcrowded. In order to preserve their industry, they had to find more land and they went in search of it.

The soils around Lacepede Bay varied considerably in fertility. The coastal sand-dunes were very saline and generally lacking in most of the mineral nutrients necessary for healthy plant and animal life. The deficiencies led to poor pastures and diseases in the stock. The sandy rises along the coast were more fertile and better drained than the swampy flats and the first settlers converged upon them. There was a narrow band of higher land extending around the coast from about fifteen miles to the north-west of the bay to the spurs of the Mount Benson Range which sloped down to the shore at its south-eastern end. Around Mount Benson the rise was seven to eight miles wide, but towards its north-western end, it was barely a mile across. Along its eastern flank were the swampy coastal flats and the Maria Creek Swamp and on the south-east, the fairly fertile land of Biscuit Flat. Cooke and Wark founded the "Maria Creek" station on thirty square miles of the coastal ridge. The soil was composed of fine sandy loam and the land was fairly well grassed and lightly timbered. George Kendle's "Murrabinna" station, consisting of forty four square miles on the south-eastern side of Maria Creek, ran from the coastal ridge into Biscuit Flat.

The Flats between the ranges were generally composed of more fertile and silty soils than either the coastal flats or the ranges themselves and the rest of the pioneers selected their runs to include as much of the flat country as possible. The hills were either sandy rises or exposed

ridges of limestone and of little use. Consequently the shape of the early runs closely followed the contours of the flats. Margaret Hutchison's "Woolmit" (about twenty five square miles) and "Bowaka" which belonged to Henry Morris and John Hindmarsh, (twenty six square miles), were on Biscuit Flat. James and Archibald Brown took out two leases in the Avenue Range country to build their station of "Keilira" (thirty seven and sixty nine square miles). It contained some very good pastoral land, but there were also large areas covered with swamps.

Most of the leases in the Lacepede Bay district were for as large tracts of land as the lessees could afford because much of the country was either covered with hard-leaved scrub or inundated with water. Those who had the smaller runs extended them as soon as possible so that they could have enough room to move their sheep away from the sodden and unhealthy areas. The depression of 1848 was enough to show them how poor the runs were and to persuade some of them to give up altogether, or seek runs in better places. Henry Morris went to California, leaving "Bowaka" to his younger brother; Thomas Seymour concentrated on his land nearer Lake Hawdon and Edward and Charles Stirling abandoned their Mount Benson station and took their stock back to their run at Lake Alexandrina.

Except for the Morris brothers the pioneers in Lacepede Bay were all Scottish immigrants who had come from farming district in their homeland and had emigrated to the colonies in order to make quick profits out of the pastoral industry. However, they did not belong to the group who went to the colonies only to make profits and then return to Britain. They came from overcrowded farming areas around East Fife, Glasgow and Edinburgh and they intended to live permanently in the colonies because they could obtain better conditions there than they could ever hope for in their homeland. For Henry and Thomas Morris the conditions were similar. They

came from a farming and fruit-growing district in Kent where the farms were too small for the owners to do more than cover their costs.

Two other Scottish immigrants to South Australia who took over stations in Lacepede Bay from the pioneers during the eighteen sixties, were John Gall and Donald Gollan. Gall emigrated from Aberdeenshire in 1846. He had to work for many years on farms and pastoral stations before he was able to buy the "Cantara" and "Tilley's Swamp" stations near Kingston.[28] When Gollan arrived in South Australia in 1839, he went to Strathalbyn where he built up his capital in running the first hotel there and driving the first mail coach to Adelaide.[29] He took over "Murrabinna" from George Kendle in the early sixties.

Margaret Hutchison deserves special mention because she was the only woman who became a station owner in the district around Kingston. She was also a woman of exceptional courage and determination. Left widowed with a large family shortly after her arrival in the Port Phillip District, she sold up her husband's station near the present site of Moonee Ponds and founded a new one in the Wimmera District. She went from there to Biscuit Flat, walking her stock and relying only upon the help of her eldest son who was still only a youth. She had founded "Woolmit" and built a home for her children before Andrew Dunn arrived. He had emigrated from the same farming estate near Edinburgh and had also been depasturing stock in the Western District before he crossed the border and went to Biscuit Flat. He seems to have acted as Mrs. Hutchison's working partner when he married her and took over the running of "Woolmit". He later formed a partnership with her son which grew into a flourishing pastoral business

28 Naracoorte Herald, 1892,'The Life Story of Mr. John Gall'. (Autobiography in serial form for several weeks).

29 R.Cockburn, op.cit., Vol. 11, p.170.

PIONEER PASTORAL

LEASES.1847-1861

COMPOSITE MAP FROM DEPARTMENT

OF LANDS. S.A.

PIONEER PASTORAL LEASES

AROUND

LACEPEDE BAY

Miles 0 1 2 3 4 Miles

N

STEWART
No 203 79m

J. WHITE
No 218 119m

E. COLE
No 217 80m

BROWN
No 200 69m

J COLE
No 202 36m

SIMSON
12m

TAYLOR
and
BLAGG
No 219 33m

J TAYLOR
No 220 24m

Res

Res

Res

No 221 26m

BROWN
37m

BAKER No 222
31m

T MORRIS
No 292 26m

DUNN
34m

BROWN
15m

TILLEY No 199
59m

Tilley's Aeban. House

NOLTENIUS 59m

WOOD and
KENDALL
No 198 44m

Res

COOKE and WARK No 65 34m

DUNN
No 197 57m

J SMITH
5m

L A C E P E D E B A Y

Res Water or stone ~~Aboriginal~~ Reserves

-------- Road to Robe

Chapter two

THE PASTORAL SETTLEMENT AT LACEPEDE BAY

FROM 1845 TO 1865

When the pioneers took their stock to Lacepede Bay between 1845 and 1851 they went by three routes. Margaret Hutchison and Andrew Dunn travelled overland from the Victorian border; Archibald Cooke took some of his supplies by sea from Port Elliot and the rest by land while the others seem to have crossed the Murray and taken the old overlanding route along the Coorong. The first difficulty to be negotiated when they were taking stock from the counties around Adelaide was the crossing of the River Murray. Cattle and horses could be induced to swim across the fording places if necessary but the sheep had to be penned on rafts or ferried across. The ferry-man at Wellington in 1846-47 took advantage of the rush of business to raise his fees. Wellington became such a busy fording place that the government had to build a cause-way there. The Coorong track was fairly well supplied with feed and easy for droving in that the stock could be fanned out over a wide front while on the move. The only real difficulty was the shortage of water holes between the Murray and Salt Creek. Whichever way they went, the droving parties had to dig in sand for water. Droving was a slow business at any time, but it was particularly slow with sheep because they had to be walked.

Parties like Brown's, Morris's, Seymour's and Cooke's[1] going from one station to another, must have looked

1 Archibald Cooke first went to Kingston on his yacht taking with him some of his gear, but in 1858 he set out from Wellington with a number of labourers and mechanics and all

formidable cavalcade to the aborigines along the route. The owner of the outfit had to take with him all of the shepherds, mechanics, carpenters and labourers that he would need to get his new station established, for, once in an outback place like Lacepede Bay, he would have difficulty in attracting labour thither. The nearest port was Robe, which was about thirty four miles away from the Maria Creek. He also had to carry with him the food and the provisions that he would need for several months and all of the gear necessary for building and to start farming. He usually bought the best team of working bullocks that he could afford and engaged the most skilful bullocky whom he could find. Everything was piled into the waggon, food, cooking utensils, tools, seed-wheat, timber, gear and tackle for the stock and perhaps a crate of fowls. The waggons and drays bristled with firearms, axes, picks and water casks hanging on their sides. If the station owner were taking his family with him, he might travel in a dray, canopied with a blanket to shield the occupants from the sun and lined with more blankets for sleeping.[2]

There was plenty to do during the slow journey across country, looking after the stock, folding the sheep at night and protecting them from wild dogs and the occasional forays of aborigines. The sheep were often penned for the night by means of gates propped together in squares, with dogs tethered at the corners. The aborigines along the Coorong presented no real danger. They had been too thoroughly subdued by the government action after the "Maria" murders, but they were not too timid to steal stock when they felt

1 (continued) of the requisite material to build the stores. See South Australian Register, 11 March, 1858. (Port Elliot correspondent)

2 Margaret Hutchison also took dairy cows with her in order to have milk for her children.

that they could get away with it.[3]

The site of the homestead block was usually chosen on the best land, well supplied with water, but high and dry. Although the occupation licences carried the right to build on Crown lands, only Margaret Hutchison built a permanent house in the beginning. She had a large family to shelter. Most of the single men preferred to erect temporary shelters until they had the more urgent jobs completed. James Brown put up a couple of log huts for himself and his shepherds and workmen, while many of the others built one or two roomed limestone huts. Limestone was prevalent throughout the area and the country-side became dotted with huts built from it. "Limestone Hut" and "Stone Hut" became common place names in the district.

Clearing the land was difficult. Most of the eastern slopes of the ranges were heavily timbered with stringy bark trees and covered with a dense undergrowth of scrub. The western slopes and the flats between, were more lightly timbered with various species of eucalypts, banksias and wattles which formed a more open park-like vegetation, but the flats and the edges of the swamps were overgrown with thick wiry grasses, ferns and tough heathy plants. Some of the soils of the flats were of such heavy clay that the harrows and single disc ploughs of the time were too light to carry out effective cultivation. Many of the pioneers left the scrub as it was, except for an occasional burning off and ran their sheep in it.

3 In 1840 the brigantine, the "Maria," which was trading between Adelaide and Van Diemen's Land, was wrecked off Cape Jaffa and the survivors were murdered by aborigines living along the Coorong. The government hanged those pointed out as the murderers and the native people living around the Coorong were intimidated by the terrible punishment.

Although they owned large numbers of stock, they rarely sowed pasture grasses. They were content to rely on nature for the feed for their sheep and cattle. They thought that once they had burnt off the worst of the scrub and put stock on the land, the natural grasses would regenerate themselves. Although he was talking mainly about the Murray mallee at the time, Archibald Cooke explained what they believed to a select Committee in 1860 when he said, "If a footing can be obtained and sufficient existence for the sheep for a year or so, the grass comes and the scrub dies off".[4]

The settlers also fought a long battle against kangaroos and wild dogs which they usually killed by shooting. On Mount Benson, Seymour gave the aborigines 6d. a head for the kangaroos that they shot. Against the wild dogs they had a more persistent battle which lasted into the twentieth century.

When the government parcelled out the waste lands on licences or pastoral leases, there were always clauses in the agreements protecting the rights of the natives to go on living on the runs as freely as they had done beforehand. The settlers around Lacepede Bay gave the aborigines these rights. In the beginning there was plenty of room for everyone and order was kept by a Police Officer and a Native Affairs Officer who were at Robe in 1847. Large camps of aborigines lived on the runs around Maria Creek and Mount Benson.[5] Some of them were attracted to work on the stations as stockmen,

4 S.A.Parl.Paper (House of Assembly) 90, 1860. Cooke and Wark Appeal. Answer to question 131.

5 Some of those who worked on the stations were part-aborigines not full-bloods. Hybridization had been taking place since the coastal overlanding route was opened in 1838. Nevertheless full-blood aborigines continued to work on the stations and farms around Kingston until the race died out at the beginning of the twentieth century.

horse-breakers, shepherds and trackers. At first they took on the jobs for short periods at a time when they went to the station to visit relatives, but even in 1846, many of the young men and women were living on the stations and working for the settlers. Most of the settlers treated them kindly, taught them their religion, how to read and write and trained them in the work of the stations. James Brown had a number working for him at "Keilira" and Lawson of "Padthaway" and Foote of "Tilley's Swamp" made their stations centres where food and blankets could be distributed. Lawson took a kindly interest in the dark people on his land and learned from them their customs of hunting and preparing food. Other settlers were afraid to employ aboriginal labour because in so doing, they might become involved in quarrels and trouble. Thomas Morris, for example, was considerate of the people living on his run, but he kept aloof from them and would not allow any of them to approach the homestead.

The only real trouble with the aborigines arose out of their habits of spearing and stealing sheep and of setting fire to the scrub during hunting. Fires broke out around Kingston every summer and the settlers had poor means of dealing with them. Thefts of sheep went on incessantly, but the settlers usually did no more than frighten the natives away from their flocks by firing guns into the air. As early as 1838, the government had warned that the aborigines were to be protected and that any punishment of them was to be left to government officers.[6] The early settlers near Robe found the police officer there very zealous in his duty of watching over the welfare of the aborigines and they kept well within the law. However James Brown was the exception. In 1849 he was reported for having shot five aborigines who had been stealing sheep on his run. Brown was an irritable

6 Gazette and Register, 17 March, 1838; Proclamation of Governor Hindmarsh.

man who quarrelled violently with both white and dark men and women, his wife and his overseer included. He had a large number of aborigines camped in the swamp country on his run, many of whom found spearing sheep an easier way of getting a living than hunting the wild dogs and kangaroos whose numbers were diminishing with the advent of settlement. It was reported in 1849, that Brown had caught aborigines stealing his sheep and had shot the old men and women who were too slow to get away. The Protector of Aborigines, sent to investigate the case, exhumed several charred bodies and tell-tale cockle baskets at the place where Brown's overseer and stockman reported that the shooting had occurred. The Crown took up the case, but the overseer and stockman left South Australia and the only native witness disappeared and so after a year of unsuccessful effort to find evidence establishing the cause of the deaths, the Crown had to drop the case.[7]

During the first few years of settlement, the pastoralists had been holding their runs on occupation licences which had to be renewed each year. The Imperial Act of 1850 changed all this.[8] It gave them more security of tenure by permitting fourteen-year leases. It also abolished assessments, replacing them with fixed annual rentals. The waste lands of South Australia were classified into three grades, based generally upon their situation and grazing capacity. The rent of first class land was £1 a square mile, that of second class land 15/- and third class 10/-. Most of the land around Lacepede Bay was regarded as third class and rated at 10/- a square mile per annum. Since they had been either the discoverers or the first occupiers of the land, lessees like Brown, Morris and Kendle were given the privilege of transferring from licence to lease by written

7 Colonial Secretary's Office, 1849. Dockets A 216; 457; 538; 643; 916; 1310; 1388; and Q69. (ADELAIDE ARCHIVES)

8 The Imperial Act of 1850 No.9 (10 Vic).

application thereby being spared the necessity of bidding for the runs at public auctions. Any improvements effected on the leaseholds had to be given up to the government at the expiry of the lease in return for adequate reimbursement. The majority of the lessees effected this change. The new lessees were Archibald Cooke and David Wark who took up the run on the north-west side of Maria Creek and Thomas Morris who took over "Bowaka" from his brother, Henry. Most of the other leases were held by the original owners who were to remain on their stations for twenty years or more. During this time, they sank some of their capital into the improvement of the runs and more into the building of permanent homes. Goyder has left a full description of the stations in his reports of 1865 to 1866 when he went to the South East to value the runs.

There was a four-roomed stone house on "Murrabinna" with a separate kitchen and huts for the workmen on the homestead block. The homestead block, with its draw-well and set of troughs, was separated from the adjacent horse paddocks and stock yards by stone walls: some of the paddocks had been fenced for pasture and thirteen water holes had been dug on the run. James Brown had built a homestead, with a verandah all round it, on the head station at "Keilira" and another one for the overseer on the Blackford run. He made his improvements secure by purchasing the homestead block from the government. It had been part of a travelling stock reserve and thereafter he was harassed by drovers taking thousands of sheep through his land every year on their way to the port at Guichen Bay.

It became the fashion in the fifties to build the homestead on a rough [___] plan. The front of the house consisted of the bedrooms, dining room and office and the wings stretching back at right angles to the main block, consisted of the servants' rooms on one side and the kitchen and store-rooms on the other. The kitchen at "Bowaka", which

was built on this plan in 1851, was at the extreme end of one wing and Morris had to build verandahs between the kitchen and the dining room to protect the food being carried to the master and his family. The three blocks of the house protected the back garden which, together with the dairy, was enclosed by a stone wall which continued out and around the more ornate garden in the front. Outside the walls were the piggery, the drafting yards and the horse and pasture paddocks which were all fenced. Fairly close to the house was a large stone wool-shed housing the wool press. The houses at "Taratap" and "Woolmit" were built on similar lines and were sheltered with vine-covered verandahs and limestone walls.[9] By no means all of the stations had wool-sheds. Brown's sheep were shorn on the neighbouring station of "Kercunda" until the wool-shed was built at "Avenue Range".

Until the second half of the eighteen sixties when post and rail fences were introduced and the town of Kingston was able to supply the contractors for the work, the station owners had not bothered to put up many fences. They erected stone walls around the homesteads, but for the fencing of the yards they were often content with rough brush structures, frequently just logs and brush pushed together. These were great fire hazards and they really presented no obstacle to the horses, but fencing was expensive and took years to complete. Good brush fences cost about £15 a mile and they had to be repaired every two years at a further cost of about £10.[10] Post and rail fences cost more. For the enclosing of

9 The walls were built as protection from the wind and the intrusion of stock but they were also useful barriers against angry aborigines. The women were afraid of them and when the men were away at work some of them dressed in men's clothing before they went outside of the house. (Information from Mr. Clem Smith).

10 J.Murdoch and H. Parker, The History of Naracoorte

about 95 square miles with post and rail fences, Brown had to pay £6,000. They were probably well worth the money since they are still standing on "Taratap", a hundred years later. The fencing of runs which covered from forty to eighty square miles, was too expensive to be undertaken lightly. Imported wire fencing which was about £10 a mile cheaper than the posts and rails was not used until the eighteen seventies and eighties.

Poor fencing resulted in the building up of a large population of wild horses especially on Mount Benson where Thomas Seymour kept a stud. Everybody kept horses as a matter of course. They used them for most of the lighter work on the stations and they rode them, not only to work with the stock, but also just for pleasure. The bigger stations kept studs of draught horses and race horses. Racing was one of their greatest pleasures and, as early as 1864, annual race meetings began at Kingston. The rounding up of the wild horses at Mount Benson became a regular and exciting occupation for the station populations both white and dark-skinned. They were then taken to Cooke's stockyards at Kingston, there to be broken in and sold. The Cooke brothers sold horses in the Tatiara and the Wimmera and they also sent them to India. In the sixties the British in Bombay were desperately short of race-horses.[11]

The pastoralists soon found that they were working on marginal lands. The plains were not just sodden in winter: they were covered with water for miles. In some years the floods came before the feed had time to grow after a dry summer. This happened for example in 1865 when the sheep and lambs died and the horses and cattle looked like skeletons.[12] In the swampy areas the stock were prone to "foot rot" and

10 (continued) (Naracoorte 1962), p.44.

11 Portland Guardian, 4 January, 1866.

12 Ibid., 22 August, 1865. Penola correspondent.

Phalaris staggers, a cobalt deficiency disease which afflicted animals depastured on the rank grasses that grew around the swamps. The stock that were kept on the runs along the coast also suffered from coast disease which was caused by the copper and cobalt deficiencies of the soil. The animals became emaciated and crippled and lambing was almost impossible. Coast disease also reduced the market value of the wool which lost its crimp and elasticity. "Steely wool" or "wiry wool" brought very low prices on London markets and sometimes it could not be sold at all. The stock recovered if they were moved to non "coasty" areas and the station owners soon learned that they could keep them in "coasty" areas for only four months at a time.

The Cooke brothers were better off than most of the others because they used the Maria Creek lease only for summer pastures. They owned runs which stretched along the eastern bank of the Murray for twenty two miles, from about six miles south of Wellington to the present site of Tailem Bend. On the Maria Creek and Murray runs they were able to depasture about 1,500 head of cattle, 16,000 to 18,000 sheep and 120 to 130 horses. In the good years they made handsome profits and they must have made rapid progress during the eighteen fifties since Archibald had started in 1847 with 3,400 sheep and a few working bullocks.[13]

The Cooke brothers and the other station owners in Lacepede Bay fought the setbacks caused by the cold and wet conditions and disease by taking out leases in the mallee scrub between the Coorong and the Tatiara. The Cookes had leases there extending from Wellington to Tintinara and Brown, Gall and Gollan also took out extensive runs in this area on five and thirteen-year leases during the eighteen fifties and sixties.[14] They used to transfer their stock

13 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 90, 1860, 'Cooke and Wark Appeal'.

before the winter set in and they were thus able to depasture large numbers of sheep and horses and some cattle. Goyder's report on the stations in 1865-1866 shows that James Brown kept at "Keilira" 24,000 sheep, 60 head of cattle and some horses; Thomas Morris depastured on "Bowaka" 13,000 sheep, 50 cattle and 100 horses and Donald Gollan had on "Murrabinna" 11,200 sheep, 900 cattle and 200 horses.[15]

Most of them had suffered heavy losses of stock during the first years of settlement, but they learned to keep their animals more healthy by letting them run free in the scrub bringing them in and yarding them only for special purposes like shearing and selling. The poor nature of the feed made it necessary to let the stock roam over a wide area and the shepherds had the unenviable task of trying to prevent straying in the heathy scrub.

James Brown seems to have taken the lead in fencing his land and dispensing with shepherds. Goyder noted that he had fenced about half of his runs in 1866 and commented upon the increase in his profits. "By this means a greater quantity of

14 (page 24) This information comes from the records taken from time to time from the Lands Department on the position of the pastoral runs in the South East. The following were the most useful:- S.A.Parl.Paper (House of Assembly) 121, 1857, 'Annual and Fourteen-year Pastoral Leases'; S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 38, 1865-66, 'Return of All Pastoral Leases from 1851 to 1864'; S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 155, 1868-69, 'Return of All Pastoral Claims between the Coorong and the Eastern Boundary'; S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 119, 1882, 'Position of Pastoral Lessees'.

15 S.A.Parl. Paper (Legislative Council) 126, 1865-66, 'Valuations of the Pastoral Runs in the South East', and S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 77, 1865; 'Final Report on the Position of the Pastoral Leases'.

stock is depastured, the condition and the quality is increased, better lambings are possible and the losses in strayed sheep are trifling".[16]

It was generally agreed in the South East in the eighteen sixties that unshepherded sheep were more healthy, but few of the local owners would undertake the necessary fencing because it raised the value of the land and the rents to be paid. Goyder did not deduct fencing costs from rents nor refund the money when the leases expired. He allowed for only the depreciation on fencing. He calculated that the original outlay would be covered by the savings in shepherds' wages. There was general indignation that fencing costs were not deducted from the rents and Archibald Cooke had the approval of a meeting of pastoralists in Lacepede Bay in 1868 when he condemned the government as a money-grabbing lot who were intent upon extracting every penny out of the pastoralists and submitting them to ruinous injustices.[17] Their rents had been progressively raised since 1857 and they complained repeatedly against the valuations of the runs made by Goyder, but they had only themselves to blame because they had been overstocking the land in order to take advantage of the rising prices of wool and stock after 1854.[18]

The cost of marketing the wool was a considerable part of their annual expenses. Robe was separated from most of the stations by a series of ranges and swampy flats. They had to cart the clip in bullock waggons, for horse drays were almost

16 S.A.Parl. Paper (Legislative Council) 137, 1865-66. Goyder's Letter to the Legislative Council on the Detailed Valuations of the Pastoral Runs in the South East.

17 See Border Watch, 11 March, 1868.

18 See A. Barnard, The Australian Wool Market: 1840 to 1900; Table XXVII, pp. 229-230. The average annual price for Adelaide greasy merino wool in pence per pound from 1848 to 1860 was:- 5½; 7; 7½; 7½; 9; 9½; 8¾; 9¼; 11; 11½; 11; 11½ and 12⅝.

useless over this kind of country. Carting was limited to the summer months because of the sodden nature of the bullock tracks from March until September. Even in the summer, the waggons often sank to their axles in the swamps. Transport to the port often took several days and the wool had to be left stacked in the agent's shed at Guichen Bay until another ship came in, sometimes a month later.[19] Not only were ships infrequent at Guichen Bay but, during the fifties only the poorer type of vessel called there. They were so slow that freights were likely to miss the sales for which they were intended and so old that insurance costs were exorbitant. George Ormerod[20] began an agency for the shipping of wool directly to London at Robe in the early fifties. The advantage of shipping wool directly to London rather than selling it to firms in Adelaide and Melbourne, lay in the differences in the prices obtained. London prices were usually higher because the local firms were cautious in their offers which had to be in anticipation of the following year's markets. It was therefore considered cheaper to export the wool through a consigning agent like Ormerod who would procure a ship to carry the load of the district. Although coastal ships were plying between Adelaide and Melbourne, they did not call regularly at South-Eastern ports until 1862, when the government voted £1,000 to induce them to do so.[21] The steamer "Ant" began calling at Guichen Bay in

19 In a letter to John Riddoch M.P. for the district of Victoria, in 1868, Henry Jones of "Binnum", complained that he had to pay on an average, 5/- per hundred pounds to get his wool to Guichen Bay and it was often left stacked there for a month. S.A.Parl. Debates (House of Assembly) 28 August, 1868; col.257.

20 George Ormerod, a pastoralist at Naracoorte, worked his shipping agency from Naracoorte and Robe.

21 Border Watch, 3 January, 1862.

1863,[22] but there were no regular visits to Lacepede Bay until after the proclamation of Port Caroline, in 1865.

The sheep that were kept on the stations around Kingston were usually small-framed merinos of relatively poor quality that came overland from Victoria. Frequently they were affected with scab.[23] The Scab Acts of South Australia were fairly severe. In 1853, the government insisted upon the total destruction of scab-infected flocks. The regulation was effective within a few months and could be repealed, but in the meantime the pastoralists suffered severe losses. Heavy fines were imposed for not cleaning scabby sheep[24] and periodically the trade in sheep with Victoria was held up while the inspector of stock examined the flocks at the border and gave written permission to move them.

In order to get a good price for the wool, the general practice was to wash or scour it to remove the dust, seeds and burrs. There were several natural washing pools in Lacepede Bay, at Tilleys Swamp, Reedy Creek and Mount Benson. However there were also specially constructed ones on some of the stations. The one at "Taratap" was a narrow paved trough, fed by natural springs and so constructed that it would take little labour to steer the sheep through it. Such troughs

22 Ibid., 20 November, 1863.

23 Scab was particularly difficult to eradicate in places where the sheep were allowed to run free. The Victorian stock coming to Lacepede Bay also suffered from time to time, with pleuro-pneumonia.

24 The common cure for scab was arsenic, tobacco and sulphur. Some of the cures were worse than the complaint and burnt the skin. H.T. Morris, the Chief Inspector of stock in the South East during the fifties and sixties, was persistent and co-operative in the work of cleaning sheep and has been given much of the credit of clearing the area of the disease.

were also valuable for dipping when chemical dips for cleaning sheep of infection became common. During the sixties, the Border Watch carried advertisements for chemical dips and the use of jets worked by pumps for the washing of sheep, because they did not flatten the wool. It also advocated washing or scouring as an essential for pastoralists to get good prices for their wool. Hot water, soap and soda were recommended, but there were also advocates of cold water washing as a superior method.

Scouring was done after the wool had been shorn. As time went on, firms were set up in the towns to do this work. Until then scouring, sorting and pressing was done on the stations and the shipping firms did the dumping. It seems that the pastoralists did their sorting very roughly, for the reports of the selling agents frequently contained references to the poor classing of the wool. The wool was sold in the London sales from February to about March and the first ships usually got away from the district during October.[25] The clip was rarely delivered to the ports any earlier, because shearing was generally later in the South East than elsewhere. The end of winter was later and shearers refused to work on wet sheep.

Shearers were a fairly independent group, since they were itinerant workers and skilled artisans who could hold out for good wages and conditions. The shearers who lived in Robe and Kingston used to leave home for the duration of the season and they "did the big run", shearing on the stations around the Darling and then working through the other stations on the return journey. During the fifties shearers had a reputation for "bolting", that is leaving the

25 This was the custom until the depression of the nineties when the settlers decided not to put so much wool on the market at one time but to work for better prices by withholding some of it for the later sales.

pastoralists in the lurch. This may have been the case, for the squatters made their own contracts with them and struck hard bargains. The "bolting" may have been caused by unsatisfactory wages or poor conditions. Nevertheless, in the records of the cases before the justices of the peace in Kingston during the late sixties and the seventies, shearers were conspicuous by their absence.[26] The more frequent bolters were the shepherds. The shearers made their own stipulations regarding hours and conditions, but they still suffered themselves to be housed in log huts, lean-to shelters and limestone huts with earthern floors and they worked in poorly ventilated and ill-lit sheds. They were more choosey about their food. Cooking at shearing time was a full time job, for the men worked from daylight to dark. The wages for shearers were usually higher than those of other skilled craftsmen like carpenters and wheelwrights. The shearing season was a short one and the men worked at top speed for long hours for their day's pay. The usual payment was 14/- a hundred which represented an average day's work. Many shearers could do more than a hundred per day, but the squatters preferred to employ a man that shore about a hundred to a hundred and twenty.[27] Faster workers might be careless with the fleece or injure the sheep. There is a record of an agreement between Frederick Tapfield and the shearers at "Avenue Range", in 1886. It began as follows:- "We the undersigned do hereby personally agree to shear all the sheep brought to the "Avenue Range" shed in a clean and workmanlike manner to the satisfaction of the manager and we also agree to accept payment at the rate of 13/- per

26 The local court cases were always published in the Naracoorte Herald.

27 Charles Cooper of Robe shore one hundred and seventy in a day at "The Snuggery" with the blade. C.J.D.Smith,'Memoirs of Lacepede Octogenarians' (Naracoorte, 1932).

hundred".[28] For the 13/-, the shearer had to carry the sheep from the pen to the shearing floor, and if he spoilt the fleece or injured the sheep, left, or was dismissed before the work was finished, he was to be paid less. The phrase, "to the satisfaction of the manager" put the weight of the bargaining power on the employer's side.

During the fifties the South East suffered from a continual shortage of labour. The Border Watch, for example, always carried advertisements for shepherds, grubbers, drivers of horse teams, workers for road making, station hands, cooks and housemaids. After the gold rushes, the South Australian government was urged by the colonists to pass measures encouraging closer settlement and it stepped up its immigration policy. In 1854-55, 5,500 Irish female immigrants were brought out and some of them were sent to country centres, one of which was Robe, for distribution to the applicants among the neighbouring station owners. A few went to the stations around Robe and some may have been employed at places like "Woolmit" and "Bowaka". In 1858, the government offered a free passage to British migrants who were willing to bind themselves to working in the country for two years as agricultural labourers, shepherds, herdsmen, miners, bricklayers and domestic servants.[29] Some of these went to the country, completed their service and then set up in their own enterprises in the nearest towns as James MacDonald did at Kingston after he had worked for Brown. Others absconded from the service of their employers as soon as they could. Generally Thomas Morris, the Cooke brothers and James Brown preferred to nominate their own immigrant employees,

28 From the records of "Taratap", supplied by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Tapfield. Thomas Guthrie owned the station. Tapfield was his manager.

29 S.A.Government Gazette, 7 January, 1858. For nomination and towards their passage, they had to pay from £3 to £5.

especially for shepherding, because they were more reliable. The Cookes also augmented their labour supply by persuading people passing through Kingston to stay and work there. The wages that they paid could not therefore have been lower than elsewhere in South Australia.[30] In 1858, the farmers and pastoralists around Lacepede Bay were paying about the same wages as those that were regarded as average. The average wages for shepherds was £35 to £45 a year with rations. Cooke, Cave and Brown were paying £1 a week with rations. The farm workers might have been paid less. George Smith scythed hay for the Cookes for £4 a ton and did other work for them for 14/- a week, when the average wages for farm servants was £65 to £70 a year.[31] For domestic work and work with stock, the stations around Kingston also employed the aborigines and part-aborigines who were willing to take on steady jobs. The custom had a beneficial effect on the white people, who came to value the dark men and women as a labour force and also upon the dark people who thereby gained in status and self respect. The aboriginal men were particularly good with horses and one of them was given the responsibility of going with Cooke's horses when they were shipped to India.

The ordinary dull routine of work on the stations was lightened by the pleasures of horse-riding, talking with the aborigines, duck shooting and picnics. At night, the families

30 It is difficult to find records of the wages paid. Old timers tended to quote the lowest that they were given during the depressions. The information that I used came from C.J.D.Smith, op.cit.

31 Figures for average wages paid in South Australia taken from South Australian Almanac, 1858; SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1852 'Statistical Register' No.22, 'Average wages paid in South Australia over past year'; SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ~~Vol. 1~~, Statistical Register, 1876, p.89, 'Average Wages Paid in South Australia, 1866-1875'.

entertained themselves with reading, painting, sewing, games, music and the occasional entertainment of friends. There were the annual race meetings of Kingston after 1864, the races and coursing at Naracoorte and the regattas at Kingston and Robe to brighten up the Christmas and New Year Holidays. These were generally well attended and the townships became crowded with vehicles of all kinds from the smart four-in-hand to the farm dray. At the balls which rounded off the festivities in Kingston, the visitors danced all night because there was not enough sleeping accommodation. Visitors were very welcome at the homesteads. Occasionally the families were surprised by the arrival of travelling salesmen, particularly from Victorian centres, who would flash over the border in their splendidly appointed wagonettes while the South Australian commercial travellers were hampered by having to travel by coach. The most frequent callers were the clergy who were welcomed with open-handed hospitality. The lives of these men must have been very hard, for their circuits consisted of most of the South East. The reverend David Milne who joined the bush mission in 1861 was sent to Kingston and his circuit was Kingston to the River Murray.[32]

One of the greatest worries of the people on the stations was the prevalence of lawless wayfarers who preyed upon the homesteads, stealing stock and presenting themselves as unwelcome visitors to the families. Numerous tramps also camped on the stations and demanded free meals from the homesteads. The stations around Kingston and Robe were on the routes to Robe from Tintinara, Keith, Padthaway and Naracoorte and the sheep and bullock waggons were driven through the properties.[33] Some drovers and bullockies were not always careful to shut gates or even to open them, nor did

32 David Milne was ordained at Kingston in 1869.

33 Thomas Morris claimed that 65,000 sheep passed through "Bowaka" each year. R. Cockburn, op.cit., Vol. 1, p.241

the drovers always see that they did not get some of the station owners' stock mixed with their own. Cases of such stealing appeared frequently in the local court news and notices from station owners threatening legal action against persons unlawfully handling their stock were even more frequent. The trouble was so widespread through the South East that the Pastoralists Association asked for government protection, but the government was unable to help them.[34] They had to form patrols and protect their stock themselves.

Lawless characters infested the roads and out-back tracks. They had plenty of opportunity where settlement was sparse and travel was by bullock waggons or horse-drawn vehicles. Drovers were murdered for their stock, waggon and dray passengers disappeared and a few bodies were found buried in the sandhills of the Coorong or the Ninety Mile Desert. Hill and Company started coaches around Adelaide in 1844 and Rounsevell began mail coaches from Adelaide through the Mount Lofty Ranges to Mount Barker, Strathalbyn, Kingston and Mount Gambier during the late fifties. Cobb and Company took over from Rounsevell in 1867.[35] A passenger needed a tough nerve and an iron constitution to go on the whole trip to Mount Gambier which was one of the most difficult on Rounsevell's lines. In winter, the coaches ran through water up to the floor boards and several times, the mail driver lost his way at night and ended the journey in a swamp. There were five inns from Meningie to Salt Creek, but the accommocation left much to be desired and the sanitary arrangements were usually very defective. Horse thieves and murderers like Malachi Martin, who was executed in 1862[36] were in the habit of visiting them, and some of the landlords like "Doodlum Duck"

34 Border Watch, 15 January, 1864.
35 Adelaide Observer, 12 February, 1898.
36 Malachi Martin, innkeeper at Salt Creek, murdered a waitress.

of Coolatoo kept illicit stills or sold liquor of "very doubtful quality".[37] It was not until closer settlement in the late eighteen eighties that law and order were established throughout this area.

During the fifties and early sixties, the people living around Kingston were so isolated from the capital city and from the townships at Naracoorte and Robe, that they were forced to rely on themselves and and develop a way of life of their own. Isolation was made the more complete in this area than elsewhere, because of the greater difficulties of travel. The people on the stations tended to centre their lives around their own homesteads and families. There was plenty of co-operation between neighbours. They rode horses for miles to visit one another. They shared wool sheds and drafting yards and clubbed together to pay for a minister of religion to come to their area, but there was no feeling of community over the whole district until the establishment of a centre in the town of Kingston, where they could hold their public meetings, build their churches and come together for entertainment.

In the meantime they were hard-working, self-reliant, law-abiding and practical. They solved the problems of keeping stock in an unhealthy district, and of inadequate protection from lawlessness. They learned to live in peace with the aboriginal population, which was larger around Kingston than around any other town in the South East. In their home life, they clung to the social and religious institutions that had been the framework of their lives before they left Britain when they were young men and women. Although the greater part of their time was taken up in work, they did their best to preserve the niceties of life. They planted the trees, shrubs and herbs in their well-planned gardens that they had known in England. Some of the plants, like Cape tulip flourished as weeds in their new surroundings. They gave their children the same education that they had

been given, or better where they could afford it, and they insisted upon the same religious training. They themselves had generally come from families with some means and they preserved their social status, treating the station hands and domestic servants as servants and not employees. They did not feel any sense of equality with the people who worked for them. When the town of Kingston was established, they either became the leading families in it or they remained aloof from it. They made compromises with the situations that they could not change, but they made no other concessions.

37 (page 35) Kingston Weekly, 4 July, 1947.

Chapter three

THE FOUNDATION OF KINGSTON FROM 1855 to 1865

THE PORT FOR THE NORTHERN SOUTH EAST

Kingston was founded by James and Archibald Cooke and George Kingston in 1858. The Cooke brothers were faced with the possibility of losing their pastoral runs along the River Murray and they turned to speculation in a merchant and shipping business and the foundation of a port in Lacepede Bay. In the years before the advent of railways the cheapest overland transport was by bullock waggon and it was still far more expensive than water transport. The Cooke brothers speculated in Lacepede Bay because they thought overseas ships could be engaged to call there since it was the nearest and safest port for the Tatiara and the north-west Wimmera Districts. The natural advantages of its geographical position combined with the fact that it was the only completely sheltered harbour on the south-eastern coast attracted them so much that they were willing to speculate in it even though the government had chosen Robe as the port of the South East.

In 1856 the Cooke brothers purchased about ten square miles of land along the shores of the bay and George Kingston bought two near Maria Creek. Kingston sub-divided part of his land into blocks for a private township which was named after him. His town was to be the commercial centre of the port. The land which the Cooke brothers had bought was to be used for the offices, stores and warehouses of the merchant and shipping business and also for sale as suburban and farming blocks. Kingston was thus planned as a large settlement with a big population. The port was also to be provided with access roads to the stations on the eastern side of the

Coorong and a railway to the fertile districts along the Victorian border. The Cookes planned to lay on large ships for wool and wheat and to make Kingston the leading port on the south-eastern coast from Port Elliot to MacDonnell Bay.

Of the three founders, George Kingston played the smallest part. He contributed a great deal at the beginning in buying the two sections of land in 1856 and in founding his town and also giving his name to the enterprise. He had been one of the founders of South Australia and was then an eminent member of the Legislative Council. He was also well known as a purchaser of land for English investors speculating on the future of South Australia and his patronage would have been valuable to the Cookes. However he did little more for the development of his town than persuade people to buy his blocks. James and Archibald Cooke were responsible for the pioneering work in the foundation of the port and the development of the inhabitants into an integrated town community with its own schools, churches, institute and local self-government. Kingston was a speculator who waited to receive his profits from the industry of the people in his town. James and Archibald Cooke speculated heavily in the town, but they were also willing to work for its success. Archibald Cooke spent seven years in founding Kingston and fighting to achieve its recognition as a port and James spent the greater part of his life in working for the social development of the community and for the success of the town.

At first the local pastoralists were opposed to the scheme and refused to invest in it. The foundation of such a large settlement in the middle of a pastoral district was likely to put an end to their leases. Indeed it must have looked to them a foolish move to speculate on a port at Kingston when they sent their wool to Robe and the settlers of the Tatiara and the Naracoorte and Mosquito Plains used Robe or the Victorian ports of Portland, Geelong and

Melbourne. George Ormerod, the pioneer pastoralist at Naracoorte, who established a shipping agency in Robe during the early fifties had been attracting the local business and also some of the trade of the stations along the south-eastern part of the border. The Cooke brothers did not at first intend to compete with Ormerod. Their interests ranged much further to the north. They thought that they could gain the shipping business of the stations along the eastern flank of the Coorong and all of the country to the south-east of the Murray which was cut off from Adelaide by the river, the lakes and the Ninety Mile Desert. More important than this was the trade of the Tatiara and the Wimmera districts which they hoped to win from the Victorian ports.

The Tatiara roughly comprised the fertile country between the Ninety Mile Desert, the sandhills and flats along the Coorong and the Victorian border. The limits of the district were outlined by the stations around Keith in the north, Mount Monster in the west and Mundalla and Bordertown in the south and east. The pattern of settlement in the Tatiara had been similar to that in the area around Lacepede Bay. Pioneer pastoralists from South Australia and Victoria opened it in the mid forties. The original occupation licences were superseded by fourteen-year leases in 1850 and towards the end of the fifties, the stations and runs extended into the Naracoorte and Mosquito Plains.[1] It was a rich and compact pastoral area which was only about sixty miles from Kingston and the Cooke brothers hoped to attract the trade of the station owners by bringing overseas ships almost to their back doors.

The South Australian Tatiara was only part of the fertile country which stretched across the border towards the

1 See Daisy Fry, 'The Story of the Tatiara 1845-1947' (The Tatiara Centenary Committee, Bordertown, 1947, Adelaide Archives).

River Wimmera in Victoria. It was a narrow belt of land between the sandhills of the Ninety Mile Desert on the north and the Little Desert in the south. It was watered by the River Wimmera which flowed from the Grampians through Horsham and Dimboola and expanded into a great sheet of water, called Lake Hindmarsh between the present sites of Jeparit and Rainbow. North of Lake Hindmarsh the river again expanded into a similar sheet of water known as Lake Albacutya before it disappeared in the northern mallee plains. From time to time during wet winters, the River Wimmera filled Lake Hindmarsh and Lake Albacutya and flooded the surrounding plains.

The Western District had been opened to the pastoralists by Governor Bourke, but the drier sections along the north-western border were not settled until the mid forties. The area around Kaniva, Lillimur and Dimboola filled up about 1845 and the pastoralists spread into the mallee plains around Lake Albacutya.[2] The distances by road to Melbourne then were probably much further. Jeparit is now, (1967), 232 miles from Melbourne, Kaniva 258, Lillimur and Albacutya 264, Lockhart (on the border) 278, Apsley 257, Dimboola 210 and Horsham 186. Horsham was then roughly equi-distant from Kingston and Melbourne and James Cooke thought that he should gain the trade of all of the stations further from Melbourne than Horsham.[3] Carriage by water was so much cheaper than by land that not even railways could compete with it and the recognized principle of marketing was to shorten the overland

2 See T.M.Landt (editor), 'The Story of the Kaniva District 1845-1961' (Kaniva, 1961, Latrobe library Melbourne).

3 Portland was closer than Geelong or Melbourne, but in 1855 it was cut off from the trade of the Wimmera by the ports of Geelong and Melbourne which had better access roads and port facilities. Portland Guardian 18, 21, 28 January, 1864; 1 February, 1864.

part of the route as much as possible. Pastoralists would therefore naturally go to the nearest port.

James Cooke could well feel confident that the station owners around Kaniva, Lillimur and Dimboola would use his port. Many of them already knew Lacepede Bay since they had landed there to go to their stations in 1845.[4] However, they were sending their wool and getting their supplies by bullock waggon or horse dray through the merchants of Geelong and Melbourne. The gold rushes were partly responsible for this. The gold escort route, constructed in 1852, cut across the desert from Wellington through Mount Monster to Bordertown, Lockhart, Kaniva, Lawloit, Dimboola and Horsham.[5] The South Australian surveyor-general had cleared the road with the help of miners and sappers, dug wells and erected sign posts. It was the existence of this road that gave the merchants of Geelong and Melbourne a chance to dominate the trade of the Tatiara and the north-western Wimmera. Cooke thought that once he had established a good port at Kingston, the waggons would go to Lacepede Bay via Padthaway and Naracoorte.

The townspeople of Portland were also determined to break the monopoly of the merchants of the central ports. Portland had been suffering a serious decline in trade since the early fifties when the bulk of the money available for port facilities had been spent on Geelong and Melbourne. They attracted the majority of the overseas ships and Portland hardly saw any except in the wool season. The merchants and land owners agitated for a break-water which they thought would be all that was necessary to convert the Bay into a deep-sea port. However, they achieved no more than a favourable report of the select committee which inquired into the possibility of constructing the break-water in 1857.[6] A

4 See T.M.Landt, op.cit., p.9.
5 Loc.cit.

local account of the history of Kingston claims that James Cooke came to an agreement with certain merchants and land owners of Portland that they should make a determined bid for the trade by building adequate port facilities at Kingston and Portland. Each port would be entitled to the trade of the area nearest to it; Kingston to that of the north-western Wimmera and the Tatiara, and Portland to the south-eastern portion of the border and the more settled part of the Western District.[7]

Although Robe had been proclaimed in 1847, it had made little progress before Ormerod went there. ~~in the early fifties~~. It suffered the disadvantage of its situation. The south-east coast was a lee shore almost perpetually buffeted by heavy swells from the south-west. From Cape Jaffa to Cape Northumberland it was beset with rocky outcrop ledges and partly submerged rocks which added to the difficulties of the masters of the sailing ships. When Robe was chosen as the port of the South East in 1846, the governor confessed that he thought it to be the best of a bad lot. The marine surveys showed that there was little to choose between Lacepede Bay and Guichen Bay. Whereas Lacepede Bay was the only completely sheltered harbour, Guichen Bay had deep water closer to the shore and he therefore decided on Guichen Bay.[8] However Guichen Bay was only completely sheltered from the south-east. It was exposed to the gales of the north-west and the reefs outside the entrance made the approach to the harbour difficult when a south-westerly swell was running.[9] The Cooke brothers gambled on the complete safety of Lacepede Bay. They

6 (Page 41) See note 3.

7 Elma J. Smith, 'The History of Kingston S.E.' (Country Womens' Association, Kingston 1951).

8 S.A.Government Gazette, 19 March 1846, p.108.

9 S.A.Parl.Paper (House of Assembly) 30, 1946, p.8. See Introduction note 3.

advertised it as a port of refuge just as the merchants of Portland did for their bay.

Although the South Australian government had a mild tariff system since 1846, mainly for the purposes of revenue from excise duties and the protection of agriculture, there was virtual free trade across the Victorian border. The cost of policeing it would have been too great. Consequently the goods imported by the merchants of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne for the settlers of the South East produced revenue for the Victorian government. The promoters of Kingston hoped to persuade the government to build adequate port facilities for them in order to obtain the revenue going to Victoria. They also hoped to gain the support of the merchants and shipping companies of Adelaide with the attractive prospect of regaining the trade of the South East from the Victorians who were dominating the commerce of the areas around the towns of Mount Gambier, Penola, Naracoorte and Bordertown.

There is no actual record of the original scheme to speculate in Lacepede Bay. James Cooke was its chief exponent and he made the motives and the plans abundantly clear in the great volume of letters, petitions and newspaper articles which he wrote during the eighteen sixties, seventies and eighties and his railway map of 1873 shows what he thought was to be Kingston's sphere of trade. However it is not clear whether the original idea was his or not. In 1856 Archibald Cooke shared equally in the financial plunge and George Kingston also speculated in it.

The original idea to use the Bay seems to have been Archibald's. He is said to have taken James to explore the possibility of exporting their wool from the Maria Creek anchorages in 1853 or 1854. He had grown prosperous in the pastoral industry during the fifties, but since his leases were on the eastern banks of the Murray and at Maria Creek, his marketing costs were very high. He exported his wool from Port Adelaide[10] and he had the choice of sending it by

bullock waggon through the difficult roads of the Mount Lofty Ranges or loading it on to coastal vessels at Port Elliot for transfer to overseas ships at Port Adelaide. If he chartered his own ship at Lacepede Bay, he would cut out the costs of the long haul overland or the trans-shipment.

It seems that Archibald saw no further than the shipping business for his own wool and that of the other pastoralists around Lacepede Bay whereas James was excited by the vision of a port for the northern South East. He was well versed in business affairs. He had been employed in a Liverpool shipping firm before he left Glasgow for South Australia and after his arrival in Adelaide, in 1843, worked as a secretary to John Baker, a member of the Legislative Council and one of the leading pastoralists and financiers in the colony. He left Baker to take a partnership in an Adelaide merchant firm which dealt with places as far away as the Bendigo gold fields.[11] He must have known that the hey-day of the pioneer pastoralists was nearing its end and that the colonial governments were being forced into the policy of making the land available for small farms. The position of the leases along the Murray must have been the deciding factor. It is significant that the first hundreds of the Murray were declared in 1853[12] and the Cooke brothers requested the survey of Lacepede Bay in 1855. It is obvious that, by then, both brothers intended to provide against the day when the pioneer pastoralists would lose their leases by transferring their capital into the speculative enterprise at Lacepede Bay. The South East seemed a good investment. The Tatiara and

10 (page 43) He sent it on ships chartered by Alexander Elder and Company. Elder was a close friend to James Cooke.

11 Rodney Cockburn, op.cit., Vol. V, pp.148-149.

12 S.A.Government Gazette, 13 December, 1853. Some of their land was resumed for the Hundred of Seymour in 1860. Cooke and Wark appealed against the resumption and won.

the Wimmera were recognized as the richest single tract of potential wheat land in southern Australia. Other pastoralists might invest in banks, mines, shipping or land companies. The Cookes put their money into a port for a potentially rich agricultural area and they took the precaution to secure its success by founding a shipping agency there and putting all of their initiative and skill into the enterprise.

The opportunity came in 1855 when the government surveyors, who had been working in the South East preparing land for sale since 1843, at last reached the Guichen Bay area. Applications for surveys were invited from settlers who wanted to buy land in the locality.[13] The Cooke brothers requested the survey of the shores of Lacepede Bay. They wanted it prepared in large sections each of about a square mile. The Lands Department put no difficulty in their way. The Department surveyed thirteen sections resuming over six thousand acres from the Maria Creek lease. The Cooke brothers bought ten sections and George Kingston, two.[14] He surveyed his town directly in line with the anchorages off the beach near Maria Creek in 1858. In 1857 James Cooke had left for Scotland where he canvassed his relatives and friends for investments in the land and sought recruits for the new settlement.[15] He did not return to South Australia until 1864 and so Archibald had to take the responsibility of building the shipping business, founding the settlement of the town and struggling to have it proclaimed as a port.

In 1858 he bought a cutter, the "Swallow", which he intended to use for trade between Kingston and Port Adelaide

13 S.A. Government Gazette, 23 February 1855.

14 Information kindly supplied by the South Australian Crown Lands Department, Adelaide, 1966.

15 Information kindly supplied by Mr. G.E. Cooke, Adelaide, 1966. James Cooke persuaded a relative to invest £3,000.

and he left Wellington with a party of mechanics, craftsmen and labourers and the provisions, materials and gear necessary to build the offices and stores of the shipping business, to erect huts for the employees and to build a small jetty.[16]

When Archibald Cooke started the work of founding the port, it was logical to assume that the government would help by providing the necessary facilities once the private founders had proved that the new port was worth-while. Small ports were being established in the fifties for the convenience of pastoral as well as agricultural areas. Jetties and lighthouses were built in places like Port Wakefield, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Port Elliot, Yankalilla, Robe, Onkaparinga, Milang and Encounter Bay.[17] The only stipulations seem to have been that there was sufficient government revenue at the time to cover the cost and that the customs duties and port fees would be large enough to cover the government expenditure. Cooke's early difficulty was to persuade the government that Kingston was a worth-while investment. It seems that there were not many people in Adelaide who thought that it was. The amount of land purchased in 1856 by people other than the Cookes and Kingston was very small and it was taken mainly by English investors who bought allotments in Kingston's town. In 1858, Cooke sent a petition into parliament for a survey of Lacepede Bay for the establishment of a port for imports and exports. It was supported by a number of bankers and merchants of Adelaide, but the government declined to establish the port. Although they were aware of the potential value of Lacepede Bay, they were inclined to think that the promise of the border trade

16 South Australian Register, 11 March 1858 (Port Elliot Correspondent).

17 South Australia, Papers to the Legislative Council 154, 1855-56, 'Report of Jetty and Breakwater Commission'.

belonged to the more remote future and they refused to open the port upon the grounds that the present trade was insufficient to justify the expense of sending a customs officer to Kingston.[18] Nevertheless, they were willing to survey the bay. The inhabitants of Rivoli Bay were also asking for the survey of their harbour for the establishment of a port at Grey town and instructions were given for the survey of both harbours in 1858.[19]

Until Kingston was proclaimed as a port Cooke could not export to or import from places outside South Australia without first going through Port Adelaide for clearance.[20] It was of little use for him to canvass the Tatiara for export business when everything had to go to Port Adelaide instead of directly to London. However between 1858 and 1864 he was fully occupied in the erection of the buildings for the settlement, the opening of the agency and the attraction of settlers and men with capital to invest in the town. He had one big success at the outset when he was able to get an hotel built there, in 1859. It was the "Kingston Arms" and its erection gave the passer-by to understand that this town was larger than it really was. The shipping Offices were completed at the end of 1863. In the same year, the "Swallow" carried its first load of wool to Port Adelaide. It had been employed for some time in bringing provisions from Port Adelaide and, in 1862, some of the inhabitants of Naracoorte

18 S.A.Parl.Debates (House of Assembly) 21 September 1858; col 795, 803 Petition for Survey of Lacepede Bay:- S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 158, 1858.

19 Ibid., 9 December 1858; col 854.

20 Border Watch, 24 October 1864. In 1864 when Cunningham and Macredie sent their gear to their new agency in Kingston on the government steamer "Coorong" the freight had to be cleared first at Port Adelaide. The regulations were enforced by Act 17, 1860; The Marine Board Act.

began to use it for the import of stocks. Cooke employed his own teamsters to carry goods to Naracoorte and the stations further inland and bring back the wool to be exported. In this way, he hoped to attract some of the trade that was going to Victoria. A few of the local pastoralists gave him their custom, but the majority kept to Geelong, Melbourne or Robe.

While the little community at Kingston had to go on loading and unloading from the beach, the port at Robe was making distinct progress. George Ormerod was attracting a good deal of the wool trade from the stations along the border as well as the local ones in the Naracoorte and Mosquito Plains. Robe was given a jetty in 1853 and in 1857 when Ormerod began annual exports to Britain, pilots were sent to guide the overseas ships into Guichen Bay. The wool exported overseas in 1857 was 2,747 bales and as well as these, 238 bales were sent to Port Adelaide.[21] Ormerod had also become connected with a Victorian shipping firm of Sumner, Grice and Company and the steamship, "Ant" was beginning a regular coastal trade between Guichen Bay, Melbourne and Port Adelaide. The inhabitants of Robe were looking forward to a prosperous future and some of them were already agitating for a tramway between Guichen Bay and Mount Gambier in a bid to gain more of the south-eastern trade.[22]

21 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 84, 1857, 'Exports from Colonial Outports'.

Exports of Wool from Robe 1854-57

Year	To England	To Port Adelaide
1854	-	551 bales
1855	2,000 bales	1,204 bales
1856	2,017 bales	272 bales
1857	2,747 bales	238 bales

22 South Australian Register, 5 January 1858 and 28 July 1858.

In view of the extensive development at Robe, it was to be expected that the government would refuse to send a customs officer to Kingston.

The inhabitants of Lacepede Bay were asking for government help at a bad time. From 1857 to 1862 South Australia was suffering from a depression caused by severe droughts in the north and recessions in trade. Government revenue was insufficient to cope with all of the demands upon it and priority was given to agriculture. The requests of the pastoral communities of the South East were generally shelved until money could be borrowed from England. The discontent of the district over the neglect to do anything about roads, drainage and ports caused threats of secession in 1858 and annexation to Victoria[23] in the early sixties. The government then voted money for some of the improvements that the district needed.[24] Roads were planned; MacDonnell Bay was surveyed for a port in 1860 and the government-owned

23 An account of the secession movement in 1858 and the agitation to join Victoria was given by the editor of the Border Watch 4 February 1865. There was a meeting in Mount Gambier in 1862 proposing the union of the South East of South Australia and the Western District of Victoria. Border Watch, 21 March 1862. Annexation to Victoria was proposed at intervals between 1862 and 1865.

24 Border Watch, 13 September 1863; 'The Money Voted for the South East District'.

1860 - For a jetty at Port MacDonnell and a road to Penola £3,000.
*For a road to Robe £1,000.

1861 - For Port MacDonnell - Penola Road £5,000.
For Robetown Road £1,000.
For Robetown Road to Mosquito Plains £2,000.

1862 - For Roads £6,000.
*The £1,000 voted in 1860 was not spent.

steamship, the "Coorong" which was built for the Adelaide Melbourne run, began calling at south-eastern ports. It is obvious from the plans to build roads from Penola and Port MacDonnell to Robe, that the government was thinking of building a good port in the South East, but it was to be at Robe. They might construct jetties at the others for the convenience of the pastoralists, but they would not consider that any further expense ~~on them~~ was justified. Consequently, when the report of the surveys of Rivoli Bay and Lacepede Bay was tabled in parliament in 1859,[25] nothing was done even though Lacepede Bay had been recommended as "without exception, one of the best anchorages on the coast".[26]

In 1860, Kingston had grown into a small village of about 140 people,[27] excluding the aboriginal population of the town. The little community was suffering from the influx of wayfarers and ruffians usual to new settlements far away from the centre of administration. Drunken quarrels, assaults and the destruction of property occurred at intervals. The aborigines also caused trouble when they came into Kingston from the surrounding scrub for corroborees and some of them became noisy and pugnacious after refreshments from the "Kingston Arms". In 1860, Cooke requested police protection and an officer was sent provided that Cooke housed him for three years.[28] It was usual government policy, when new communities asked for police protection and administrative

25 S.A.Parl. Debates (House of Assembly) 29 April, 1859; Col.4.

26 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 29, 1859, 'Letter from the Trinity Board enclosing the report of the surveys of Rivoli Bay and Lacepede Bay. Surveyor: P.A. Nation'.

27 Police Commissioner's Docket 58, 1860 (Adelaide Archives). Cooke gave this number when he asked for police protection for Kingston.

28 He was housed rent-free for three years in an iron hut which had been Cooke's head station. It might have been

officials, to provide them and plan for the growing settlement by surveying a hundred and a town for it and opening land for sale. The Hundred of Lacepede was proclaimed in 1861[29] and, despite the fact that the private town already existed, a government town was surveyed in November of the same year. Sir George Kingston had had plenty of experience in surveys and was probably well aware of the government practice to set up a town of its own alongside a private one in order to force the community to centre its main business on Crown land around the post office, police station and local courthouse. He seems to have had his town surveyed as close to the sand-dunes as he could and still use them for protection from the winds from the sea. However the government surveyors were not defeated. They were able to layout a long, narrow township on the dunes and the foreshore in front of Kingston's town. It was in an excellent position as far as probable land sales were concerned for it commanded the approach to the anchorages that were being used. Although the Cookes had already bought about 5,000 acres, Archibald was forced to buy land in the government town for their shipping offices and warehouses. He also bought allotments along the foreshore for re-sale when the port grew bigger. The large suburbs of Rosetown, Queenstown, Lacepede and Kingston South were not laid out until later. Here the government had been forestalled by the Cookes who had bought most of the available land in 1856 and were thus able to survey suburbs for private sale.

In response to further petitions to open the port and grant a loan of £1,000[30] to build a jetty, the Public Works

28 (continued) satisfactory for Cooke, but the trooper found it so cold and damp that his health was injured; "his arms became covered with rust and his clothes were mildewed."

29 Department of Lands, South Australia, Adelaide 1962.

30 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 158, 1860. S.A.Parl.

Department constructed a small jetty at the northern end of the government town. It was separated from the wool stores by the swamps of Maria Creek and it was too small to be of service to overseas ships or even coastal steamships. In 1862, Archibald Cooke sent in another petition, this time for £1,500 to be used in the lengthening of the jetty and the construction of a road across the swamps. The government refused. It had already voted more than £15,000 for improvements in the South East and it was not going to spend more money on Kingston, where it had hardly sold any land.[31] However Kingston was on the main road to the lower South East and it gained from the improvements that were intended for the benefit of the settled areas around Mount Gambier. The road works, carried out for the purpose of giving Mount Gambier better communication with Adelaide, gave the same to the people of Kingston. A bridge for vehicles was constructed across Maria Creek.[32] The opening of the Maria Creek was enlarged to facilitate the drainage of the further South East, Tilleys Swamp was drained and a bridge was built over Salt Creek.[33] Kingston also gained the benefit of the coach service which was begun to Port MacDonnell in 1863.[34] Better communication was established with the stations along the Coorong road as well as Robe, Rivoli Bay and Mount Gambier. The hundreds of Duffield, Neville and Santo were opened along

30 (continued) Debates (House of Assembly) 4 September 1860 col.742. 14 June 1861 240-1 Parliament refused to grant more than £1,000.

31 S.A.Parl Debates (House of Assembly) 25 June 1862; col.331.

32 In 1863. The first surveys of the Hundred of Lacepede also began in 1863. Crown Lands Department.

33 This was begun in 1865.

34 Border Watch, 11 September 1863. "Thomas Cawker has made arrangements for carrying the Adelaide mails between Port MacDonnell and Kingston and intends running fast coaches each way for the convenience of passengers and parcels."

the Coorong in 1864 and the government also intended to declare an agricultural area around Naracoorte.

Since 1857-1858 South Australia had been embarrassed by a shortage of suitable land for agriculture. The well-watered plains of the South East had a great appeal to the farmers particularly after bad droughts. The government had been following a policy of making the pastoralists give up the land held on fourteen-year leases by raising the rents and reducing the tenures of any leases taken out after 1858, from fourteen to five years. In 1865 many of the old leases were expiring and the government was determined to resume the land and convert it into farming blocks. Drainage of the swamps in the lower South East was begun in 1864 and the possibilities of clearing the water off the swampy flats in the north were also being considered. The farmers in the agricultural area of Naracoorte would need cheap transport to the nearest port and the government were considering the construction of a light tramway to either Lacepede Bay or Guichen Bay.

In the same year James Cooke had returned from Scotland with promises of capital investment in Lacepede Bay. He was so sure that Kingston would gain the railway that he toured the Tatiara in search of shipping business for the port. He was successful in securing the promises of the wool trade of a large number of the stations if the railway were built. He also canvassed Adelaide and Melbourne for the support of wool-brokers and shipping firms. None of the Adelaide wool-brokers and exporters felt confident enough in Kingston to establish agencies there, but the Port Adelaide coastal shipping firms did and a Melbourne wool-broker and exporter sent an agent to Kingston in 1864.[35]

The promise of the border trade became more appealing in 1864 when Victoria was considering increasing her system of tariffs. It was possible that South Australian importers

35 Cooke may have been Elder's agent at this time.

might gain a footing in the border trade because the duties on some of their goods would be lower. Adelaide might also gain some of the customs revenue then going to Melbourne. Nevertheless the government had no wish to irritate the neighbouring colony by obvious piracy along the border. Consequently it was not the promise of the Victorian commerce that made the government decide to declare the port at Kingston. It was the intention to open the northern South East to agriculture and in particular, the declaration of an agricultural area in Naracoorte. The reports of the marine surveys of 1859 had established Lacepede Bay as the safest harbour on the south-eastern coast. A safe port with plenty of sea-room was needed for wheat ships. Lacepede Bay was given the chance to become the wheat port of the northern South East by the proclamation of Port Caroline (the official name for the port at Kingston) on 21st January 1865.

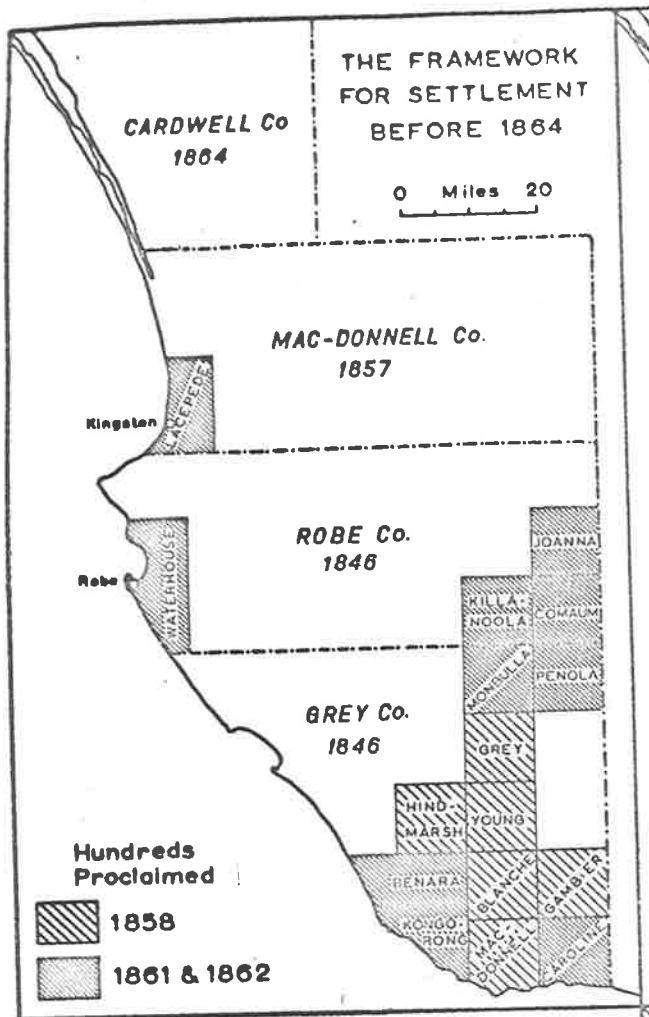
Chapter four

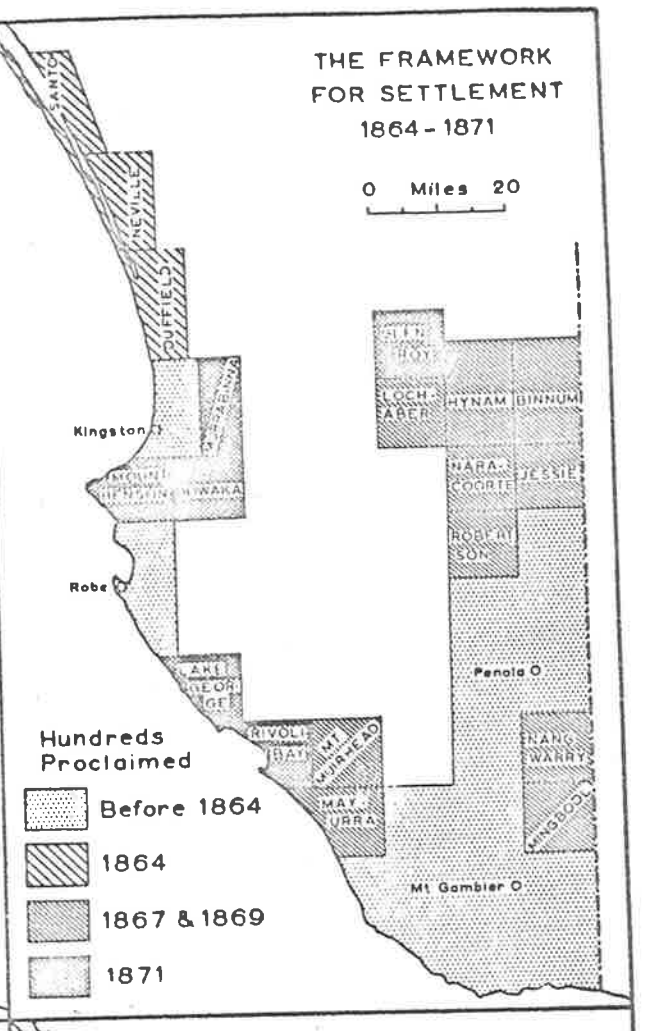
THE BATTLE FOR THE RAILWAY AND CLOSER SETTLEMENT FROM 1864 TO 1872

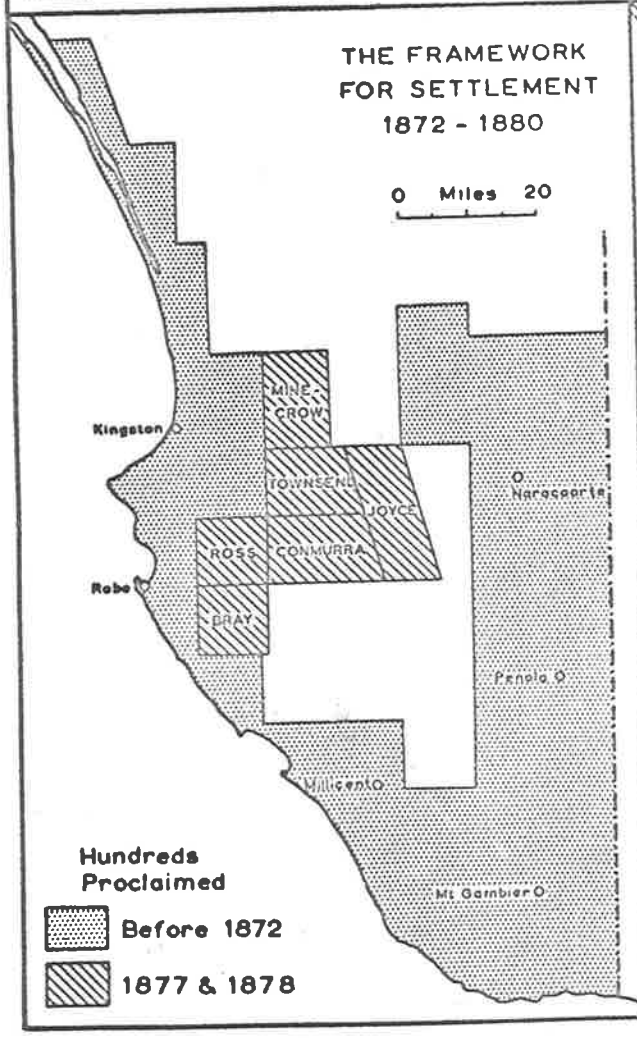
In 1864 the South East District was naturally divided into two separate parts, the southern which roughly comprised the county of Grey and the northern which consisted of the counties of Robe and MacDonnell which had been proclaimed in 1857.[1] In the southern portion the land was better drained and more fertile and consequently contained the oldest and the most densely populated areas with towns at Mount Gambier and Penola and ports at MacDonnell Bay and Rivoli Bay. Its rich grassland attracted farmers as well as pastoralists and most of the land, except in the flooded areas along the coast and around Dismal Swamp, had been surveyed into hundreds by 1864.

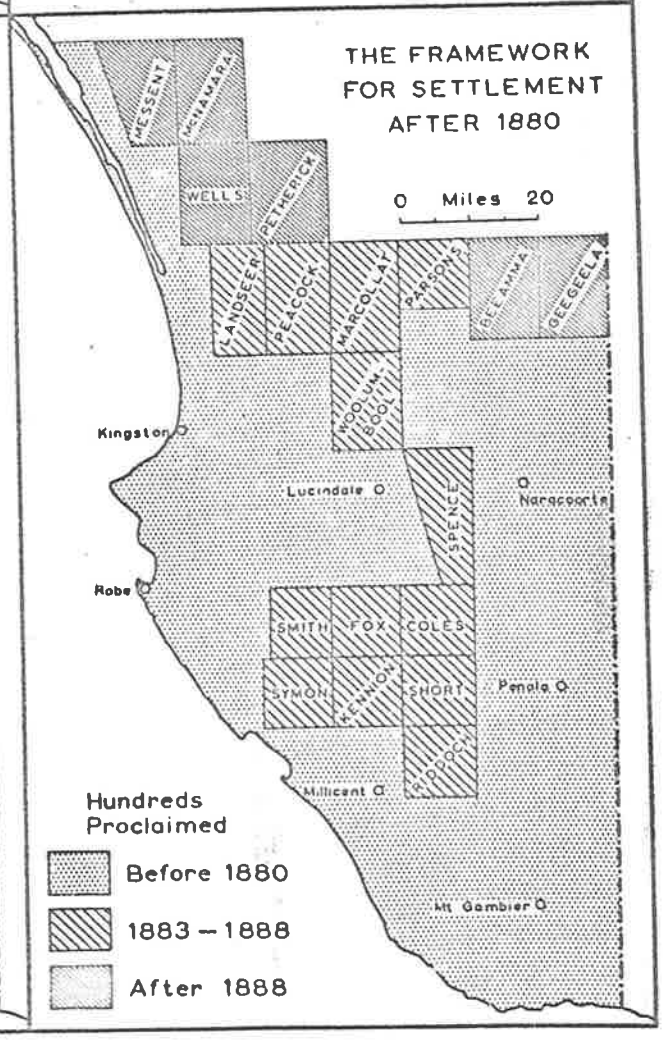
The northern counties of Robe and MacDonnell were the drainage areas of the higher land to the south-east and were less fertile. They remained chiefly pastoral and thinly populated. The hundreds surveyed by 1864 were Comaum, Killanoola and Joanna in the Mosquito Plain and Waterhouse and Lacepede around the ports of Robe and Kingston. The only other townships were Naracoorte and Bordertown, the commercial centres of the districts along the border. These districts contained some of the richest pastoral runs in the

1 See map, 'Framework of Settlement Before 1864', from Michael Williams, 'The Drainage of the Swamp Lands of the South East'. By courtesy of Dr. Williams.
The County of Cardwell which included the Tatiara, was proclaimed in 1864.









By courtesy of
Dr. M. Williams, Geog. Dept.
Adelaide University.

South East. Around Naracoorte and Bordertown there were many large and well run stations some of which were Struan, Naracoorte, Moy Hall, Morambro, Padthaway, Cannawigara, Bangham, Tatiara, Lockhart, (all three on the border), Killanoola, Hynam and Binnum. Founded in the eighteen forties, they were well established in the sixties and their owners led the district in the breeding of stud horses and sheep and in experimental work on the draining of their land and the cultivation of cereals and pasture grasses. They built themselves imposing homesteads and lived in comfort and sometimes luxury. There was not much difference between their way of life and that of their fellows in the Western District. Besides their head stations, they owned or leased ancillary ones on both sides of the border.[2] The fertile lands of the Tatiara were better drained than those of the plains around Naracoorte and Penola and they were also the last stronghold of the pastoralists in the South East.

Although some of the squatters owned their stations freehold, many of them did not own any of the land at all, but held it on lease. Consequently they were in a precarious position in 1864 when their leases were due to expire within the next few years and the government signified its intention of finalizing them and selling the land for agriculture.

From 1857 various governments of South Australia had been working to ease the pastoralists out of land which could be sold for farming and although they were unsuccessful in their bid to reduce the tenure of the fourteen-year leases, they had been able to shorten that of future leases to two five-yearly periods and establish the right to terminate any lease where the land was wanted for sale. The pioneer pastoral lessees fought a bitter battle for the right to renew their leases for another period of fourteen years.

2 See Daisy Fry, 'Story of the Tatiara'; Judith Murdoch and Heather Parker, 'History of Naracoorte'.

Although they won it,[3] those with runs in the Tatiara were by no means secure from the resumption of their land for the purposes of sub-division into "agricultural areas". In 1864, Goyder, the Surveyor General, was in the South East selecting the areas that were most suitable for agriculture and surveying them. The extent of each area depended upon the nature of the land. The agricultural area at Naracoorte was one of them which had already been singled out for proclamation. The popularity of credit selection was growing in South Australia, particularly after the Nicholson and Duffy Acts had been passed in Victoria in 1860 and 1862 respectively.[4] The closer settlement of the Wimmera was begun successfully under the regulations of the Grant Land Act of 1865[5] and many South Australian farmers crossed the border into the Western District to take advantage of the liberal land legislation. It was only a matter of time before the South East was opened on the basis of similar laws in South Australia.

When James Cooke returned to Kingston in 1864, he was naturally anxious that the government should succeed in settling farmers in the Tatiara and the border plains. He had founded his scheme for Kingston on the assumption that it would become the wheat port of these areas and the Wimmera.

3 SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT, Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Council 1864, Vol.1 pp. 54, 82 92. Also Act 22, 1864; An Act to Extend the Terms of Certain Leases of the Waste Lands.

4 The Nicholson Act of 1860 and the Duffy Act of 1862 established credit selection in Victoria. See I.D.McNaughton, 'Colonial Liberalism' in Gordon Greenwood (ed.), Australia - A Social and Political History (Sydney, 1955), p.119.

5 Ibid., also Portland Guardian, 27 March 1865; editorial on the new land act.

While it remained the port of a pastoral district, the town was likely to stay small and the shipping business would be practically limited to the wool season, but if the district were dotted with farms, the port would have the chance to expand on the larger shipping turnover and the subsidiary industries that should arise.

He was also anxious that Kingston be given access to the border districts. There were no roads connecting the border and the coast, only bullock tracks that wound around the hills and dug deep into the swampy flats. The Cookes sent their bullock teams out to the Tatiara, but they could not compete with the merchants of Geelong and Melbourne who could use horse drays through the Wimmera. Before it could progress Kingston would have to be provided with cheap transport to the Tatiara and the district would need to be closely settled. Cooke thought that he had the answer to both problems. He proposed that a railway should be built from Kingston into the heart of the Tatiara and that it should be completed before the district was opened or any land was sold.

The route that he advocated would run to Avenue Range and across the scrub land towards the Tatiara station. It would avoid the swamps around the Morambro Creek and reach the border near Lake Cadnite (about the present site of Frances). He had made a close study of railways in Britain and America and he was impressed with the way in which they had stimulated the growth of hitherto backward towns in Britain and opened up for settlement vast areas of the westlands in America. He believed that his railway plan might do the same for the Tatiara and Kingston. The usual government procedure in the opening of new districts was to put up the land for sale and leave the provision of transport facilities until later when the settlers asked for them. Cooke was anxious that the government would reverse the procedure and build the railway on Crown land before it was

opened for auction. If this were done, there would be a better chance of attracting farmers and the land should not fall into the hands of the pastoralists or the speculators. Only a railway would serve the purpose. Kingston was surrounded by swamps. Roads in such difficult terrain would be too costly to construct and maintain. The drainage of the route would be too difficult and the repairs necessitated by the annual winter floods would be too costly.[6]

Whether the government could be persuaded to build the railway or not would depend upon two factors. The first was the promise of the border trade. It was questionable whether the government would think it good policy to tap Victorian trade. The second factor was the success or failure of the closer settlement of the Tatiara. There was little likelihood of a railway if the district remained pastoral. The government would only consider building railways for wheat farmers. Pastoralists could afford to send their wool overland by bullock waggon, but the margin between the world prices of wheat and the costs of production for South Australian farmers was too small for them to do the same. The wheat was not worth the cost of a long haul. The government believed that South Australia's economic and political stability rested upon farming and it was willing to build railways from agricultural areas to the nearest ports to enable the producers to compete in world markets with others in more fertile countries.

Cooke began his campaign for the railway in 1864. The suggestion that the government might build a light railway or a horse tramway from Naracoorte or Penola to the coast interested him, but it did not satisfy him because the line

6 Border Watch, 12 September 1868; letter from James Cooke. Government reports also indicated that the local stone was too soft. The drainage too difficult and the maintenance costs too high.

would not open the Tatiara or reach the Wimmera. While the idea of the Naracoorte line was tossed about in parliament, Cooke went on agitating for his railway to the border. He toured the Tatiara and the Wimmera for support and put his persuasive arguments to the business men of Adelaide and the members of parliament who he thought would take up the scheme with the government. He also published articles in the local newspapers like the Border Watch at Mount Gambier and the Register at Adelaide, advertising the perfect safety of Lacepede Bay.[7] He succeeded in arousing the interest of some of the shipping merchants and bankers who saw in the scheme the chance of entering the border trade. He also gained the support of several members of parliament, either because they thought that a railway might secure the settlement of the Tatiara, or because they were attracted by the opportunity that it would give to gain some of the customs duties then going to the Victorian government. Penola and Mount Gambier in particular were importing from the Victorian ports because they were nearer than Adelaide and although the goods were transhipped to Port MacDonnell, the duties were not paid there but at the ports where they were unloaded from the overseas ships, that is, Portland, Geelong and Melbourne.

Cooke's Border Railway scheme met with the determined opposition of most of the South East. The lessee pastoralists opposed it because it would cause the loss of their runs. Henry Jones of "Binnum" was one of its sturdiest opponents. The proposed line was expected to run through his leases of "Binnum," "Cadnite" and "Geegeela."[8] It was unpopular with the people of Penola, Mount Gambier and Robe because it looked

7 South Australian Register, 13 June 1866; South Australian Gazatteer, 1867.

8 See map of proposed railway also South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 28 August 1868. Riddoch reading letter from H.Jones of "Binnum"; col.257.

like a deliberate attempt to divert most of their trade to Kingston. Cooke had planned his line so far to the north in order to tap the Tatiara and the Wimmera without competition from the other ports, particularly Portland, and to avoid the swamps between Kingston and Naracoorte. As a result, his railway would neglect the traffic routes already being used between Penola, Mount Gambier and Naracoorte and the ports at Robe and Port MacDonnell. While the rest of the towns were asking for money to be spent on roads connecting them with each other, Cooke was making counter petitions for it to be used for a railway which would leave them stranded. Robe could not keep its shipping business with a railway port next door to it and Port MacDonnell could not prevent the merchants of Portland from monopolizing the trade of Penola and Mount Gambier without a break-water and access roads.

The leader of the organized opposition to the Border Railway, or any railway in the north, and the development of a large port in Kingston was John Riddoch, locally known as the squire of Penola. He owned the "Yallum Park" station, a few miles from Penola and a large number of properties around it.[9] His stud cattle, horses and sheep were well known in the colonies and he conducted his shipping at Port MacDonnell. He was the squatters' man in parliament vigorously fighting against the resumption of their leases although he himself had profited from closer settlement. He had bought thousands of acres of land in the auction sales in the new hundreds and he was anxious that Port MacDonnell should be the chief port of the South East.[10] It was largely due to his efforts that the Select Committee of 1866 was appointed to inquire into the best ways of improving the means of communication for the

9 H.C.Talbot, 'Early History of the South East District', p.127.

10 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1866, col.1198, 1199, 1202; 1867, col.1381, 1382.

settlers of the South East. The Committee, with Riddoch as its chairman, recommended a break-water for Port MacDonnell and an access road or tramway to it from Mount Gambier. They also recommended the drainage and improvement of the coastal road from Mount Gambier to Adelaide and the construction of branch roads between Penola, Mount Gambier and Robe.[11] The break-water was estimated to cost £150,000 and Riddoch was willing to guarantee the interest on a loan of £50,000 for its construction.[12]

The main arguments put forward by Penola and Mount Gambier against the Border railway, or any line to Lacepede Bay, were that it would not pay and that since the main part of the funds voted for the improvements in the district had come from the land sales in the southern portion, the money should be spent on roads in that area. Settled areas should be served first. Actually the government had served the settled areas first. They had recognized the district's need for roads and had voted money for them. Kingston and Naracoorte were the most neglected because there was no serviceable road between them.

Robe threw in its lot with Penola and Mount Gambier in order to prevent any railway in the north. The Hundred of Waterhouse was too poor for agriculture, but it was developing into a promising fat stock area and it looked as if Robe would have a better chance of remaining a pastoral port if Port MacDonnell and not Kingston, took the lead in the South East. Naracoorte would profit by a railway, but the townsmen preferred the chance of Naracoorte becoming the railway head of a line from Mount Gambier rather than being a

11 South Australia Parliamentary Paper, (House of Assembly) 65, 1865 Vol.11, 'Report of the Select Committee on South Eastern Improvements'.

12 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-69, Col.1128; Reynolds speaking in favour of Lacepede Bay railway.

mere branch of the Border railway.

Portland was also making a bid for the position of the chief port on the south-eastern coast. In 1864 the leading men of the town claimed that Portland Bay was the recognized harbour of refuge for shipping in Bass Strait and they asked again for a break-water and an improved road to the South East so that they should have access to the Wimmera and be certain of their trade with Penola and Mount Gambier which the ports of Robe and Port MacDonnell might threaten.[13] They claimed that Portland Bay was superior to Guichen Bay and MacDonnell Bay and that it could dominate the border trade as far as the Tatiara.[14] In 1867 they grew impatient of the government neglect of their bay and founded their own private company to build a tramway to Heywood and Hamilton.[15] In 1868 they gave up the private tramway and asked the government to build a railway. They pointed out that the colony should do so because it gained about £100,000 a year in customs duties from the Wimmera and the trade with Penola, Mount Gambier and Port MacDonnell.[16]

Cooke's railway scheme was given an airing in parliament in 1866. The government had begun the survey of the railway for Naracoorte, promised in 1864. They were taking it to Guichen Bay, but the surveyors reported that the line would involve engineering difficulties caused by the swamps. The government proposed that it be taken to Lacepede Bay instead. The Border Railway scheme was then introduced as an alternative. The route had been planned over fairly flat country in order to avoid engineering difficulties and a branch could be built from it to Naracoorte. Riddoch attacked the proposal as soon as it was made and blocked any further

13 Portland Guardian, 18, 21, 28 January 1864.
14 Ibid., 1 February 1864.
15 Ibid., 7 January 1867; 'The Portland and Northern Tramway'.
16 Ibid., 3 August 1868.

discussion of the idea with proposals for improvements to the Mount Gambier - Adelaide road and the survey of a light tramway from Naracoorte to Mount Gambier via Penola.[17] His proposals were supported by the report of the Select Committee Upon Improvements in the South East. The Committee were ready to acknowledge that Lacepede Bay was the best harbour in the South East, but the hinterland was poor and contained only a few scattered pastoral stations. Port MacDonnell was not as safe as Kingston, but it was the leading port in the South East and the hinterland was richer and more closely settled. Lacepede Bay had a promising future as the outlet of the Tatiara, but since that area was still sparsely settled, no money should be spent yet on Port Caroline.[18]

The parliament of 1866 agreed that the settled areas should be served first and Naracoorte should be connected with Mount Gambier and MacDonnell Bay by means of a road or light tramway. The surveys were ordered for a mail road from Naracoorte to the Coorong at Salt Creek and a light tramway from Naracoorte to Mount Gambier via Penola.

In 1867 the idea of making Lacepede Bay the railway port of the northern South East gained more popularity in parliament. It would serve Naracoorte and the other agricultural areas that were planned there. It was a safer and a bigger harbour for wheat ships than Port MacDonnell and, being further away from Portland, it was not so likely to be dominated by Victorian merchants. Consequently when the bill for the Naracoorte to Mount Gambier railway was introduced, a move was made to substitute for it one for a line from Lacepede Bay to Mount Gambier via Naracoorte and Penola.[19]

17 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1866, col.1198, 1199, 1202.

18 See note 10.

19 S. AUSTRALIA, Votes and Proc. H. of A., 1867, p.173; also S.A.Parl. Debates, 1866, col.1203.

The populations of Penola and Naracoorte were violently opposed to it and the bill for the original Mount Gambier to Naracoorte line was passed.[20] It looked as if Cooke and Kingston would be defeated since there was no obvious need for a Lacepede Bay railway when Naracoorte was to be supplied with one to Mount Gambier and Port MacDonnell. The promise of this line probably led the merchants of Portland to found their Portland and Northern Tramway Company in 1867.

The year 1868 was the turning point in the government attitude to the railway in the northern South East. Henceforth the government fought for a line from Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte and the border. The elections of that year were fought on the issue of selection. The depression of 1867 had caused widespread unemployment and the urban electorates were in favour of credit selection and public works as cure-alls for the economic ills of the colony. The farmers voted for selection and the chance to be let into the South East and the pastoralists voted to keep them out. Their campaign was embittered by their losses in the drought, the recession in wool and stock prices and Goyder's assessments of their rents. They had a political axe to grind as well as an economic one. The South East, comprising the electoral district of Victoria, had only one member in the House of Assembly and the pastoralists felt aggrieved that they were always out-voted by the urban electorates on matters affecting the district. In 1868 they thought that they were being pushed into credit selection, not because it would benefit the district, but because the population around Adelaide wanted it. Not all of the South East were against selection. The working population and the farmers of Mount Gambier were in favour of it. The

20 S. Aust., Votes and Proc. of H. of A. 1867, p.195; also Act 18, 1867; 'An Act to authorize and provide for the construction of a line of rail from Mount Gambier to Naracoorte'.

townsmen of Kingston were too. Of the candidates who stood for election, the most popular were Riddoch, the squatters' man and Kent Hughes who courted the votes of the farmers and townsmen by promising credit selection and public works.

The people of Kingston were not really satisfied with either candidate. Neither of them thought that the northern population was large enough to be entitled to any but a very small portion of the funds devoted to public works. At their meeting in 1868, the electors of Kingston complained that they were being neglected for the interests of Penola and Mount Gambier[21] and they began to wonder whether they had not been given fairer treatment when they used to choose Adelaide men to represent them. The smaller population in the north despaired of ever getting their interests considered in parliament when they were outvoted by the south at every election. However, the government which was voted in during 1868, was the group committed to selection and public works and the Border Railway Bill was tabled in the early sessions.[22] The new government meant to resume the pastoral leases, introduce selection into the Tatiara and the other fertile plains along the border and secure their settlement by using Cooke's idea of building a railway into the heart of the area. The surveys were begun for the Border Railway at Lacepede Bay[23] and the Naracoorte to Mount Gambier line was shelved until the Border Railway Bill was passed. This line would be preferable to the Mount Gambier one because there would be a branch to Naracoorte and Lacepede Bay was a better

21 Border Watch, 15 April 1868.

22 S. Aust., Votes and Proc. H. of A., 1868, p.52; Bill for a railway from Port Caroline to the border with a branch to Naracoorte received by the Governor. Also S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-1869 col. 46, 47, 52, 53.

23 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 40 1867; 'Port Caroline - Border Railway. Plans. Sections'.

harbour than MacDonnell Bay.[24]

The towns of the South East then took up the battle for the Naracoorte-Mount Gambier line and petitions were sent into both houses of parliament against the building of the Border railway. Members were badgered with deputations and letters and the colonial newspapers, particularly the Border Watch, became the centres of a controversy in which the Penola faction fought Kingston and the government.[25] They branded the Border Railway Bill as a mad scheme of an infatuated government to get revenue by building a railway in an area where there was no trade and where the population did not want one. There was no word actually written that they did not want the Tatiara opened for credit selection. This would be unwise in Mount Gambier where the working population and the farmers believed in the radical ideas of making cheap land available for the little man. Nevertheless the underlying meaning was there in the denial that the land would ever be good for anything but pasture. Pastoralist members of parliament, like G.C.Hawker were taken over the railway route and persuaded with very little trouble that there was no good land between Kingston and Bordertown. The Penola faction declared that the Tatiara was pastoral country and if the squatters were given a railway that was cheaper than bullock waggons they would use it, but not to send their wool to Adelaide. They would send it to Melbourne as they always had done because the shipping was better and they gained better prices for it.

At this stage, Thomas Hinckley, an engineer and farmer at Naracoorte offered a compromise on the railway problem which might result in better opportunities to sell land. He suggested that if the line went from Lacepede Bay to

24 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-1869 Col. 46, 47, 53, 255.
25 Border Watch, 18 July; 26 August; 12, 19, 23 September; 7, 9 October 1868; 13 January; 7, 17 March; 19 May 1869.

Naracoorte along a more southerly route than the one being surveyed, with a branch from Naracoorte to the Tatiara and another in the opposite direction to Penola, most of the opposition would be removed. The line would go through Crown land all the way and would open large areas of good country for agriculture. It would boost land sales and also serve the border trade.[26] This plan appealed to parliament. The majority of the members did not believe that Port MacDonnell was a good enough harbour to be worth the expense of the break-water and the railway from Naracoorte. The Lacepede Bay line was shorter. The new line with its branches to the Tatiara and the Mosquito Plains would also achieve the government's purpose at less cost than two lines. The southern portion of the South East already had a system of roads and it seemed more sensible to build the railway in the north where there were no roads. They thought that it was also good policy to bridge the small section of poor land behind Kingston to reach a large stretch of good land which would otherwise be left to a few pastoralists. The business men of Portland who had founded the Portland and Northern Tramway Company, also thought it good policy for South Australia but a poor one as far as their interests were concerned. They were afraid that if it succeeded, it would intercept the Penola and Mount Gambier trade and also the border trade of Victoria and divert the whole commercial stream to Adelaide. "This district would be virtually absorbed into South Australia, the £100,000 duties and all".[27]

However the depression had taken too great a toll of the public revenues for the government to proceed with any railway scheme in 1868. The public funds were £17,000 less than the level of 1867[28] and the drop in the land sales fund

26 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-1869, col.1128; Reynolds reading Hinckley's letter.

27 Portland Guardian, 3 August 1868.

was so great that the government tried to amend Sutherland's Act in order to free more money for general expenditure.[29] They had to shelve the railway schemes for the South East until they were in a better financial position. Since the southern part of the district wanted roads and not railways, the government sought to remove the Mount Gambier Railway Act of 1867 from the Statute Book.[30] In the meantime bonds were sent to England for the Lacepede Bay line. The government felt that they had been pushed around by the populations of Penola and Mount Gambier and their parliamentary representatives and they were "putting a stop to it".[31] Consequently they refused to vote any extra money for their roads.

Penola retaliated by the formation of a league to protect the interests of the district. All of the towns except Kingston promised to send delegates to Penola to discuss what improvements they would demand from a humiliated government.[32] However, all of the South East was not in sympathy with Penola. The meeting was poorly attended. The organizers of the resistance had to acknowledge defeat. Their campaign died down with gibes at the lethargy of the rest of the South East and the petty tyranny of the "Adelaide jam-makers and shop-keepers".[33] In the meanwhile the government went on with their preparations for the opening of the South East to credit selection. The squatters had lost the first

28 (page 68) S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-1869, col. 44, 45.
29 Act 17, 1862. (Sutherland's Act.) Two thirds of the money from land sales was to be used for public works and one third for immigration purposes.
30 The request for the repeal of the Mount Gambier Railway Act was withdrawn.
31 S.A.Parl. Debates, 1868-1869, col.1128.
32 Border Watch, 10 October 1868 and 5 December 1868.
33 Ibid., 16 January 1869; editorial.

round of the political battle for the Tatiara and the plains along the northern part of the Victorian border. The settled districts had to accept less money for improvements so that the landless farmers should be given the chance to enrich themselves and the colony on farms in the pastoral areas.

The population in the rest of South Australia tended to look upon the South East as a paradise of well-watered plains and they did not take seriously enough the fact that many of the plains were too well-watered. The chief factors obstructing the plans to open the South East to selectors were the lack of drainage of the northern flats and the lack of adequate transport across the swamps. The selectors were anxious to take up blocks, but the amount of land which Goyder regarded as useful for agriculture was limited. Some of the southern coastal areas had been drained as a result of the operations organized by Goyder when he was put in control of the Drainage Works in 1864. A large area had been reclaimed when cuttings had been made through the Woakwine Range to drain the swamps of the Mount Muirhead Flats into Lake Bonney.

Although he did not think that the flats in the counties of Robe and MacDonnell were suitable for agriculture, Goyder recommended that the surface waters be drained from them for pastoral purposes.[34] In 1867 the government did not have enough money for the drainage of the north, but the demand for farming land was so great that they opened what Goyder thought to be the best of the areas around the swamps and from 1867 to 1869 the agricultural areas of Robertson, Hynam,

34 Goyder's recommendations in 1869 were that the drain leading from Narrow Neck should be extended across country in three directions:- to Avenue Flat, to Dismal Swamp and to the Mosquito Plains near Penola. See Michael Williams, 'Drainage of the South East'. p.5.

Binnum, Lochaber, Glenroy, and Naracoorte were proclaimed. The local pastoralists protested that the land was too wet for agriculture, but they were ignored and they had to buy their land if they wanted to preserve their industry. This they hastened to do.

The farmers went to the new hundreds upon the understanding that they would be drained and they sometimes paid high prices for their blocks. Some of the land at Naracoorte cost them fifty shillings an acre. By 1870 they were in a deplorable situation. In most cases they had cultivated all of the available land only to find their crops ruined by the winter floods. The settlers in Naracoorte sent numerous petitions into parliament complaining that they had been promised the drainage of their land and the provision of a railway and the government had left them without either. They respectfully requested a line to the coast before they were bankrupted and forced off their blocks. The road to Lacepede Bay which was their nearest port, was notoriously bad and they could not afford the high costs involved in transport.[35] The government realized that they would have to build the railway to Lacepede Bay to keep the farmers from selling out to the pastoralists and thus destroying the chances of converting the area to agriculture. Since the necessary money had not yet been raised in England, they would have to raise it locally.

In order to come to a compromise with the settled district in the south and also to serve the new agricultural areas in the Mosquito Plains, two lines from Naracoorte were suggested in 1870. One was to go to MacDonnell Bay and the other to Lacepede Bay; both to be commenced at the same time. However the rivalry between the northern and southern portions of the South East arose again. This time the

35 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 142, 1869-1870 and Nos. 50, 58, 66, 75, 116 and 141 of 1870-1871.

southern population wanted a line to Rivoli Bay instead of Lacepede Bay in order to serve Millicent which was becoming a rich and important settlement. In the meantime the government could not persuade private firms to take over the financing of the lines and parliament haggled over other possible means of raising the money.[36]

The credit selection legislation got under way in 1868-69 and in the third schedule to Strangways Act,[37] selection areas were recommended in certain portions of the South East. As the pastoral leases expired, they were resumed, surveyed into hundreds and opened to selection. The agricultural areas already declared were also proclaimed as selection areas. The conditions were against the selectors from the beginning. The best of the lands had been bought by the squatters before they were put up for selection.[38] Strangways Act limited the amount that could be purchased for selection, but the pastoralists from the areas around Penola, Naracoorte and Bordertown were able to buy back thousands of acres of their old runs at the auction sales of 1868 or by the employment of dummies, who were usually men who worked on their stations whom they paid to pose as selectors and satisfy the conditions of the Act. The swampy nature of the country, the damage to their crops caused by the winter floods and the lack of transport facilities were proving too much for selectors with only slender capital resources. The government decided to act. The selectors of Penola and Naracoorte must be given a railway before it was too late. The surveyor general was asked to make a thorough investigation of all possible routes

36 So Aust., Votes and Proc. H.of A. 1868-1869, pp.187, 219.

37 Act 14, 1868-1869, Amendment 14 to the Waste Lands Act.

38 They bought land in the auction sales of 1868-1869 before Strangways Act came into operation, in order to preserve the right to depasture in the common lands of the hundreds.

and extensions of railways in the South East so that Naracoorte and Penola could be given access to the coast. Goyder reported that the line from Naracoorte to Kingston went over sixty miles of inferior grazing land which was not likely to become productive until it was drained. From Naracoorte to Rivoli Bay, the line went over fifty six miles of better country, but it too, was not drained. He decided that the best line would be one from Naracoorte, via Penola, to Millicent and Rivoli Bay, which was seventy five miles from Naracoorte and forty five from Penola.[39]

However, detailed marine surveys of Rivoli Bay were requested by the supporters of Lacepede Bay and neither the President of the Marine Board[40] nor the officer in charge of Admiralty and Colonial Surveys,[41] could recommend Rivoli Bay as a port for large wheat ships. Lacepede Bay remained the only logical choice and, at the end of 1871, the bill for a line of rail from Naracoorte to Lacepede Bay was finally passed.[42] As it was to be used primarily for the carriage of wheat and wool to the coast, it was to be a narrow gauge line. By the end of 1872, the government was successful in finding investors in England who were willing to support the railway and in November, the bill providing for the raising of funds for the Port Caroline - Naracoorte railway by means of a loan from England, was read for the third time and passed despite the solid opposition of John Riddoch for the district of

39 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 151, 1870; 'Report of the Surveyor General on the best route connecting Naracoorte and Penola to the sea-board'.

40 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 160, 1870; Survey of Rivoli Bay by the President of the Marine Board.

41 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 23, 1871; Survey of Rivoli Bay by F.Howard R.N.

42 Act 7, 1871; 'An Act to provide for the formation of a railway from Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte'.

ALTERNATIVE RAILWAY

ROUTES: S.A.P.P. 45 1872

PLAN
showing
RAILWAY SURVEYS
MADE IN THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT
of
Victoria

GLYDE.
CARDWELL
BUCKINGHAM
SANTO
NEVILLE
DUFFIELD
MACDONNELL
LAWSON
HENRY
TATIARA
ACt AREA
LACEPEDE
MURRAY
LOCHABER
HYNAM
BINNUM
MOUNT BENSON
BOWAKA
ROBE
ROBERTSON
JOANNA
KILLANOOLA
COMAUM
WATERHOUSE
LAKE GEORGE
MONBULLA
PENOLA
RIVOLI BAY
MT MUIRHEAD
GREY
NANGWARR
HINDMARSH
YOUNG
BENARA
BLANCHE
CAMBIER
KONGORONG
NARACOORTE
Port Caroline
LACEPEDE BAY
Cape Thomas
GUICHEN BAY
Cape Lannes
Cape Rabelais
Pt William
Cape Martin
Pt Connor
Sherbert Rock
Rivoli Bay
Cape Buffon
Light House
Cape Jaffa
Pt MacDonnell
Carpenter Rocks
Cape Banks
Mosquito Plains
Lake Bonney
Lake Hawdon
Lake George
Taunta
Mt Charles
Two Wells
Sugarloaf Hill
Naen-naen
Cochrane's Well
Mt Rough
Scrubby Woolshed
Cooldaroo
Chittaman's Wells
Reynton's Bluff
Salt Creek
Black Hummock
Nat Cattle Pt
Policeman's Pt
Flour Pt
Tiller's Swamp
Tiller's Old Accn House
Drum's Cattle Stn
Rate's Accn House
Marcellat H.S.
Harly's Homestead
Paltawar H.S.
Joffroy's Swamp
Avenue Range H.S.
Blackford H.Station
Lacepede Bay to Border 67M.
Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte 60M.
L. Robe
Port Caroline
Kingston
Marcollina H.S.
Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte 44M.
Survey now in progress
Line for which Bill was passed
Preliminary Examination only, Total length 51 miles
Mesmurray H.S.
Naracoorte
Government Well
Avenue Rabbit H.S.
Rabbit Proof Fence
Bowaka Morris H.S.
Seymour's H.S.
Biscuit Flat
Dunn's H.S.
Winshy Well
Mt Benson Woolmit
Baker's Range H.S.
Meyhall H.
Robertson's H.S.
Taylor's H.S.
Pearsby's H.S.
Konetta H.S.
Mt Bruce H.S.
Collendale H.S.
Glenroy
Macoop H.
Kadnook
Flat Wells
Kangaroo Inn
Bonney's Wells
Avenue Flat
Penola
Monbulla H.S.
Waitle Range Rabbit Stn
Rivoli Bay to Penola and Naracoorte 65M.
Mt Gambier to Robe 78M.
Mt Gambier to Port MacDonnell 19M.
Johnson's H.S.
Proposed
Mt Graham
Campbell's Hill
Mt Muirhead
Mt McIntyre
Millicent
Mt Burr
Mt Edmund
Mt Lookout
Glencoe H.S.
Tarpeena Kaladuse
Kongorong
German Creek H.S.
Cambierton
Glenburnie
Blue Lake
Wireless
Lagoon
Lake
Mt Gambier and Naracoorte
Lacepede Bay and Border, with Branch to Naracoorte
Rivoli Bay, Penola and Naracoorte
Mt Gambier and Robe
Mt Gambier and Port MacDonnell
Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte, Survey now in progress
" " " line for which Bill was passed
Preliminary Examination only, Total length 51 miles

Victoria. The construction was not completed until the end of 1875, some of the delay being caused by temporary shortages of funds, but most of the trouble was caused by the necessity of bridging the swamps between Kingston and Naracoorte; those swamps which the original Border railway plan had been devised to avoid.

Cooke had not gained the railway that he needed to the border to ensure that the land did not go back to the pastoralists. At the time, the Naracoorte line looked to be a fair enough substitute. As the editor of the Portland Guardian wrote in 1873, the settlers in the Wimmera would only have to send their goods seventy to eighty miles to Naracoorte and they would willingly put up with bad roads for that distance. He rounded off his remarks with the following quotation from the Age which summed up the position. "Our Adelaide friends are doing a little justifiable piratical work on our western border by sending out a line from Lacepede Bay to Naracoorte, running a needle into the side of Victoria without provoking any manifestation of annoyance."[43] Cooke did not feel the same confidence in Kingston's chances of the Tatiara and Wimmera wheat trade. The railway did not extend far enough. He was afraid that the high costs of production in the farming of the Wimmera and mallee soils might be too great for selectors on small farms of 320 to 640 acres without much capital to back them. The chances that the land would revert to the pastoralists were too high. He had worked for a line into the heart of the Tatiara because the reduced costs of marketing would have been great enough to encourage farming. Railway transport was far cheaper than any by road. In 1868 he wrote in the Border Watch:- "From the evidence of our railway managers to the Wallaroo and Clare Railway Committee, the average cost of cartage on a metalled road is 6 pence per ton per mile.....The highest haulage

43 Portland Guardian, 20 February 1873.

cost of steam traction is 1½ pence per ton per mile."[44] He thought that the railway would have a "creative power" because it would encourage settlement. For these reasons he pressed on with his campaign for the Border railway line. While the government was weighing the advantages of gaining the customs duties from Victoria and removing the pastoralists from the north against the claims of the settled districts in the south, Cooke was getting assurances from the pastoralists in the Wimmera that they would use Lacepede Bay if the railway were built to the border. After the government had passed the Naracoorte to Port Caroline Railway Act, Cooke immediately presented another petition for the line that he had originally proposed.

The battle for the railway in the north had been fought on several issues, but the resumption of the pastoral leases and the opening of the Tatiara to agriculture, whether on credit selection legislation or not, were the main causes of the dispute between the governments of 1868 to 1872 and the majority of the population of the South East. The promise of the border trade was attractive to the government, but it was only a secondary aim. The cost of the railway did not affect the contest since it was recognized on both sides that only a railway would be adequate to serve the agricultural area at Naracoorte. Once the southern portion of the district saw that a railway was inevitable, they wanted it to be built in their neighbourhood, both for the profits that it should bring to Penola, Mount Gambier and Port MacDonnell and also to keep the Tatiara free of the threat of closer settlement.

What the South Australian government was to achieve from credit selection and closer settlement in the northern South East was still an enigma. Their intentions to build the district into an agricultural one were fairly obvious. In 1874 the government threw aside Goyder's policy of selecting

44 Border Watch, 19 September 1868.

special areas for agriculture and leaving the rest for pasture, and the whole South East was opened to the selectors. The Waste Lands Alienation Act of that year provided for selection on ten per cent deposit with six years to pay and the provision that one fifth of each block was to be cultivated. The Act provided for the cultivation terms to include the growing of hemp, flax and root crops as well as wheat in order to accommodate the selectors in the South East who found the winters too wet for wheat growing.[45] Even the swampy country around Lacepede Bay was surveyed into hundreds and offered for sale. Mount Benson, Bowaka and Murrabinna were all proclaimed selection areas in the eighteen seventies.

While Cooke went on agitating for access to the Wimmera, Portland continued to dominate the trade of the South East in the area between Penola and Mount Gambier and it gained an entry into the Wimmera when the Victorian government decided to connect it with the line to Ballarat and Ararat in 1875.[46]

45 See S.A.Parl. Paper, 60, Vol. 111, 1890. 'The Report of the Surveyor General on the Disposal of Crown Lands in South Australia' and G.L.Buxton, 'South Australian Land Acts 1869-1885' (Hons. Hist. Thesis, Uni. of Adelaide, 1961) p.46.

46 H.G.Turner, History of the Colony of Victoria (London, 1904), p.177.

Chapter five

KINGSTON IN THE SEVENTIES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PORT AND THE TOWN COMMUNITY

Although Kingston remained a small wool port until the Naracoorte railway was completed, the years between 1865 and 1876 were the most important period in its growth and development. They were the formative years in which, the basis of the commercial activities was put down and the foundation was built for the emergence of a town society which provided itself with its own schools, churches and facilities for cultural development and governed itself through its own district council. It was very much James Cooke's town from 1865 to 1875 when he led the agitation for the Border railway, campaigned in Adelaide and Melbourne for merchant and shipping companies to establish agencies in the port and persuaded the local townsmen that they needed a district council, a better school and other facilities for cultural pursuits.

When James returned to Kingston in 1864, Archibald had already laid the foundation of the shipping business and drawn the inhabitants together into a conscious social unit. The early reports of the correspondent of the Border Watch reveal that they co-operated to build the school house and the small jetty and clear the streets of the town and that the feeling of mateship common in such isolated little groups was enhanced in this one by the fine qualities of leadership exhibited by Archibald Cooke himself. He worked as hard as anyone else, and although he and his brother owned the vast estate surrounding the town, he lived for many years in a small thatched hut as the others did. The other men admired

him for his business acumen, his daredevil feats of horse racing and sailing and his unfailing camaraderie and cheerfulness. In 1865 Archibald went back to manage the pastoral business from the head station at Wellington and James took over the shipping and merchant business at Kingston.

James was more serious and bookish than his brother and a confirmed talker, but he made himself the patriarch of the town and some of his humanitarian ideas were incorporated into the social framework of the community growing up there. Mrs. Cooke also played a part in the social growth of the town. She was mainly responsible for the holding of the first services of the Free Presbyterian Church in Kingston and she worked untiringly for the establishment of her church. She was also a firm believer in the moral influence of schools and Sunday schools in the community and she helped in the education of the aboriginal children. James and his wife were humanitarians in the tradition of the British nineteenth century middle class. They were good people, conscious that the life of the just is a shining path and they held the respect of the community throughout their long lives.

Kingston was never an isolated frontier town left to develop along its own lines. It was founded in an already established pastoral district which was close to a centre of government authority in Robe. The government at Adelaide took the responsibility of providing for the social and economic welfare of extensions of settlements such as this one. By the eighteen sixties parliament had accepted the idea that one of the functions of the government was to provide the public utilities that private enterprise could not afford. Port Caroline was regarded as the future port for the wheat of the agricultural areas which were to be established in the neighbourhood and the government was ready to build the port facilities, the lighthouse at Cape Jaffa and the access roads

or railway. Nevertheless the Cooke brothers saw to it that Kingston gained what it needed and they repeatedly reminded the government of what should be done, with letters and petitions sent to parliament and the heads of any government departments likely to be concerned. Kingston was thus pushed along the road to progress by private enterprise and by a considerable amount of government expenditure.

In the eighteen sixties Kingston was a small village of about two hundred people. The total population of the Hundred of Lacepede was estimated to be between 250 and 300 in 1866.[1] A visitor from Adelaide coming by coach along the Coorong Road knew that he was approaching Kingston when he saw the first farms and homesteads about eight miles out from the town. On the coastal side of the road the Cooke brothers and about five other farmers were cultivating the land and experimenting with cereal crops. They had already found wheat-growing unprofitable except for hay and they were trying root-crops and mangel-wurtzels and even potatoes in the black soils of the Maria Creek Swamp. When he passed over the bridge for vehicles spanning the Maria Creek, the town spread out before him, small and scattered and backed by low-lying swampy flats.

Sir George Kingston had made the best use of the land behind the anchorages selected by the Cooke brothers. He had surveyed his town on the low sand-dunes on the side of the Creek away from the swamp. His grid of varying sized allotments intersected with straight streets fitted neatly into the curve of the Creek on the higher ground above the marshes and the beach. The government town was a coastal ribbon of blocks separated from the private one by a road which was then only a track over a sand-dune ridge. The two

1 See South Australia Parliamentary Paper 65, 1866; 'Report of Select Committee upon South Eastern Improvements'. James Cooke's estimates.

towns did not grow together until the expansion of industry that followed the opening of the Naracoorte railway. Even then there were large stretches of vacant allotments belonging to the original English speculators separating small clumps of houses and shops huddled together in the residential and commercial areas. The Cooke brothers subdivided part of section 511 in 1867 for the private town of Lacepede,[2] but this was a purely speculative action based upon the expectation of the Border railway. Lacepede never became a real suburb. The area was enclosed in the eighteen eighties and used for pasture.

The government town commanded the entrance to the jetty and the business sector grew up around the post office, police station and court-house that were built there. The police station was decided upon after the proclamation of Port Caroline and it was erected on government contract by a local builder in 1866.[3] The post office and court-house were built in 1869-1870 by a similar means in preparation for an influx of business from the new hundreds.[4] The government charged less for its blocks than Kingston did and consequently the growth in the sixties was in the government rather than the private town. The Cooke brothers' wool stores were there for the convenience of the shipping. They were flush with the esplanade and close to the jetty. The new hotel, "The Royal Mail", was there too. It was the Kingston terminus of the Adelaide to Port MacDonnell coach service and

2 Lands Titles Office, Adelaide; Plan 239, 1867.

3 Archives Department, Adelaide, Research Notes. Police Commissioner's Dockets Nos. 661 1865 and 871 1866.

4 The earliest post office listed by the Post Master General's Department (Adelaide) was in 1866. It was a small wooden building. The new post office and police station were completed in 1869-1870. Money was also voted for the Cape Jaffa lighthouse in 1869.

PLAN OF KINGSTON

1879

A. & J. Cooke's Sale Brochure 1879
in possession of G. Cooke, Adelaide.

a convenient place of call for the teamsters who brought the wool from the outback stations to the Cookes' stores on the opposite side of the road. The hotel was an important centre for the civil organization of Kingston. The circuit judge stayed there and conducted his cases in its commercial travellers' room.[5] The local justice of peace, James Cooke, also used it and visiting government officials met the deputations from the town there.

As they had been surveyed on the beach side of Kingston's town, the government blocks were subject to flooding. At high tides the water lapped around the flagstaff outside "The Royal Mail" and a perpetual marsh lay between the wool-stores and the jetty and around the police quarters and the school. The mouth of the Maria Creek was widened in 1863, but the drainage operations made little difference to Kingston. The Cooke brothers petitioned for the drainage of the swamp around the approaches to the jetty year after year. In 1866 some attempts were made to drain the marsh, but since they consisted of digging channels to divert the water elsewhere, they were not successful.[6] The government made matters worse in 1877[7] when they surveyed the new suburb of

5 Judge Boothby was the circuit judge. He arrived to hold his first court before the town was ready and they had no cases to present. Border Watch, 20 February 1868. The local court was formally opened in "The Royal Mail" in June 1869. Border Watch, 20 June 1869.

6 Part of the improvements to the Adelaide-Mount Gambier Road following on the report of the Select Committee of 1866. See note 1.

7 In 1877 the government town of Rosetown and the suburban blocks to Kingston were surveyed and opened for sale. Department of Lands, Adelaide 1964. 'Notes on Kingston Area'. The suburbs which eventually grew up were Rosetown, Greytown, Queenstown, Bullocky Town and Kingston South.

Rosetown near the jetty on the north-western side of Maria Creek. Every winter the swamp invaded Rosetown and the government either lacked the money or the necessary knowledge to drain it successfully.

There are several descriptions of Kingston in 1868-69 written for the Adelaide and Mount Gambier newspapers. These were the years of the battle for the Border or the Naracoorte railway. They were also the eve of the opening of the South East for selection. The two most interesting descriptions of Kingston were found in the letters of Ebenezer Ward, politician and journalist, who thought that the South East was eminently suitable for agriculture and closer settlement and the contributions to the Border Watch by a writer who signed his letters, "Rambler". Ward wrote for the South Australian Advertiser and the Chronicle. Both visitors to Kingston were impressed with its active growth and latent prosperity in 1868 and 1869, although neither found it an attractive looking town. Both recorded that it was so small that it had only about three stores and five work shops. Ward thought that the town was "scattered and incongruous". He wrote that the Cooke brothers' wool stores were large and well built and the growing prosperity of the town could be detected in the neat houses, the freshly painted cottages and the busy inns and stores "each with significant clusters of saddle horses at the bridle posts".[8] The incongruity for him lay in the conglomeration of houses, tents, huts, stores and aboriginal wurlies that made up the township. "Rambler" presented another picture of Kingston. He also saw its growing prosperity, its houses and gardens, but he was shocked by the apparent lack of town planning. He did not

8 Ebenezer Ward, The South Eastern District of South Australia; Its Resources and requirements (reprinted from letters written for South Australian Advertiser and Chronicle, Adelaide 1869), pp.15-17.

find its appearance "incongruous". He thought it "singularly unattractive" with its buildings appearing to have been "flung pell-mell upon a bed of sand without any regard for architectural design".[9] The first record in the District Council's Rates Assessment book of 1874, bears out the truth of both of the above impressions. Kingston was then a huddle of stone buildings, slab and thatch huts, wooden houses, tent houses and galvanized iron sheds and workshops.[10] The Cooke brothers had been more interested in selling land and persuading people to settle there than in town planning. Everyone was free to build as his tastes, needs and pocket dictated and the local fruit and vegetable seller kept a tent house for years. The Cooke stockyards and the slaughter hcuses were on the outskirts of the residential area and horses, cattle, sheep and pigs grazed in the streets. The aborigines camped in the town and the lubras squatted in the do orways of the shops and inns, accompanied by children who varied from full-bloods to octoroons. Wherever they went, they were usually accompanied by large packs of dogs.

Kingston started upon a period of rapid building operations in 1868. They were stimulated by the knowledge that the government intended making the town a railway port for wheat and wool. As soon as the Border Railway Bill was tabled in parliament ,three Adelaide banks formed branches in Kingston and by 1870 there were also agents for a Geelong company of wool-brokers and a well known Adelaide land company.[11] James Cooke had been labouring to gain the interest of companies in Adelaide and Melbourne since 1864.

9 Border Watch, 31 March 1869; 'A Journey from Strathalbyn'.

10 Lacepede District Council, 'Rates Assessment Book', 1874; by courtesy of District Clerk(1966).

11 The Savings Bank was established in January 1868, and the Bank of Adelaide and the National Bank in December 1868. By courtesy of the District Clerk (1966). The wool firm

He had to depend upon urban interests for the capital investments and the commercial business that the town needed because the district was poor and the local pastoralists were not prosperous enough to invest in Kingston until the late seventies. The districts around Mount Gambier, Penola, Naracoorte and Bordertown were richer and most of the local capitalists put their money into these towns and the ports of Robe and Port MacDonnell.

The presence of the banks and commercial firms stimulated the business activity of Kingston by making money and credit more readily available in the locality. The land-selling agency was prepared to lend money and buy land for absentee clients and the banks were willing to lend money for commercial undertakings. Before their arrival the inhabitants of the district banked at Robe and had to turn to Ormerod or the banks in Adelaide for loans. The Cooke brothers did not advertise that they would lend money. The arrival of Guthrie, Bullock and Company in 1870 was very important to Kingston because they brought the district into direct contact with the colonial markets in Geelong and Melbourne and the first class ships visiting these ports. They were wool-brokers and stock and station agents in Geelong. Wool, wheat, skins and bark were bought at Kingston or advances were given upon them before they were shipped to the markets at London, Melbourne or Adelaide.[12] D. Guthrie and J. and A. Cooke, shared the shipping business until the arrival of John Grice and Company, also of Melbourne, in 1878. Guthrie bought a steam lighter which was a great asset in loading the wool ships. Cooke had

11 (continued) was Guthrie Bullock and Company of Geelong. They are listed in the Rates Assessment Book of 1874. They had become D.Guthrie and Company by 1877. The land company was Green and Wadham of Adelaide.

12 Advertisements in the Border Watch, 8 October 1870 and in Naracoorte Herald, 3 January 1877.

TABLE 1

The quantity and value of wool exported from Port Robe, Port MacDonnell and Port Caroline from 1865 to 1872.

YEARS	PORT ROBE		PORT MACDONNELL		PORT CAROLINE		TOTAL FOR S.A.	
	QUANTITY	VALUE	QUANTITY	VALUE	QUANTITY	VALUE	lbs.	£
1865	1,892,460	127,860	1,217,013	84,047	-	-	16,269,890	821,482
1866	1,539,500	102,630	1,423,919	85,966	266,703	12,350	19,739,523	990,173
1867	1,625,100	108,370	1,059,285	62,492	249,442	12,037	19,350,195	919,532
1868	1,793,289	121,429	1,927,369	116,687	359,288	19,316	28,899,190	1,305,280
1869	1,477,990	89,310	1,693,108	91,545	53,751	2,187	27,022,671	1,008,669
1870	1,768,520	88,408	2,296,105	125,126	375,137	20,664	25,908,728	902,753
1871	1,229,450	73,230	2,683,027	149,049	739,146	51,542	28,539,567	1,170,885
1872	911,150	61,355	2,402,392	146,588	459,602	33,992	33,709,717	1,647,387

FROM S.A. PARL. PAPERS, STATISTICAL REGISTER, 1872.

two sailing lighters, but they were useless when there was no wind.

With the two merchant and shipping firms established in Kingston,[13] it was able to attract some of the business of the wool firms in Naracoorte who began to use it in preference to Robe even as early as 1870.[14] Sometimes they worked through the agents at Kingston and sometimes they engaged their own ships. Nevertheless, the amount of wool annually exported from Port Caroline between 1868 and 1872 was very small in comparison with the exports from Robe and Port MacDonnell.(Table 1, page 85.)

The business of the port suffered from the general depression in the pastoral industry during the late sixties and early seventies. London wool prices began to fall in 1867 and they reached their lowest level in 1869 to 1870.[15] In January 1868, the Border Watch gave the average price of South-Eastern wool as from seven pence to eleven pence a pound. In 1869 it had fallen to between ninepence and sevenpence and some of the poorer wool could not be sold at all.[16] The depression in the wool industry was reflected in the decline in the exports from all of the South-Eastern ports in 1869. The opening of the district to selection also had a depressing effect on the wool trade. From 1867 to 1869 the hundreds of Robertson, Jessie, Binnum, Hynam, Naracoorte, Lochaber and Glenroy had been proclaimed as agricultural

13 I could not find any record of Cunningham and Macredie after 1864.

14 Border Watch, 10 September 1870; Advertisement, W.P.Walker of Naracoorte engaged the steamship, "Royal Shepherd" to call permanently at Lacepede Bay each way on the run between Adelaide and Melbourne.

15 See Alan Barnard, The Australian Wool Market, p.200.

16 Border Watch, 11 January 1868. See also Statistical Register of South Australia, No.95 1876.

areas and the pastoral runs in the localities were resumed. Even around Lacepede Bay hundreds were opened. Mount Benson, Bowaka and Murrabinna were proclaimed in 1871 and although they were not surveyed until 1878, the pastoralists were given notice to remove their stock from the new hundreds and some of them packed up and left the district. These were bad years for a port to become established in a pastoral district especially when it was not yet in contact with its best market beyond the border and the shipping facilities were still to be built.

While there was little else except the local wool trade, Kingston was being by-passed by the larger coastal sailing vessels and the steamships that were coming on to the Adelaide to Melbourne run. Cooke had been trying since 1864 to attract steamships to the port so that he could gain the trade of Naracoorte, but he was unsuccessful. Kingston needed the Naracoorte railway to gain the local shipping as well as the border trade. The inadequacies of the port facilities also retarded shipping. The small jetty was only 511 feet long ending in water that was no more than four feet in depth at low spring tides. The larger ships were by-passing Kingston because they could not tie up at the jetty. However there was a regular service of coastal sailing ships provided by Cooke's vessels and the "Resolute", a schooner from Port Adelaide which had been built for the south-eastern trade in 1866. It could cover the trip between Port Adelaide and Port

16 (continued)

London Prices of Adelaide Wool

(Average for greasy wool. Pence per Pound)

	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876
Feb.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mch.	10	8	8½	-	-	-	-	-	11
Nov.	9	9	7½	12½	-	12	12	12	11½

Caroline in twenty four hours. The "Resolute" was a comfortable passenger ship and according to the advertisements in the local papers,[17] it had separate accommodation for ladies and gentlemen.

Besides the shipping, early Kingston had another industry which became very important during the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, that is while horses were used for transport and heavy work. The industry was wattle-barking and the export of the bark to Europe for the curing of leather. The surrounding countryside was the natural habitat of Acacia decurrens the bark of which was a valuable source of tannin, used in the curing of skins for leather. There was a strong European demand for both stick bark and the powdered form throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The woodlands of Cape Jaffa and Mount Benson were the chief sources of the local supply, but even the stands of wattles along the roads and around the homesteads and farms were stripped annually between September and January. The work was done mainly on a contract basis by local men or casual labourers who were employed by the land-holders and the District Council which eked out its revenue in this way. The bark was dried and bundled and then carted to the receiving stores at Kingston. The first load to be exported from Kingston directly to London left Lacepede Bay in 1868.[18] The loading had been done off the beach to the overseas ships lying at anchor out from the shore. The bark ships usually did not come into the jetty at Kingston because the anchorages were too shallow. They were more usually loaded in the deeper water in the south of the Bay about a mile and a half from Cape Jaffa. The bagged bark was carried out to the ships in dinghies and in 1869 it took fourteen days to load 120 tons.[19]

17 Border Watch, 22 May 1869.
18 Ibid., 6 June 1868.

There were no other industries except the farming along the coastal road on the north-western approach to Kingston. Some of the owners made profits out of growing hay for the coach horses. It was a very important commodity in the nineteenth century. The cost of the hay for the horses was at the basis of most price and wages fixation in Kingston. Progress in the cultivation of any other crops was very disappointing. The soils were lacking in most of the necessary mineral nutrients and the attempts by a wheat farmer of Mount Benson to make the land more fertile by spreading it with sea-weed were not successful enough for the others to follow suit. The farm lands on the outskirts of the town never provided for its self-sufficiency and Kingston imported its food from Adelaide, Beachport, Port MacDonnell and Melbourne. The owners of the farms eked out a living by contract work for the government or the district council, or drove the mail coaches. While there was plenty of work available during the burst of building activities in the sixties and early seventies, there was no undue worry that, after the wool and bark season was over, there was no other industry to provide employment for the population of the town. Cooke was working hard to persuade the government to build the railway to the Victorian border and if he succeeded, there would be plenty of work at the port in the subsidiary industries which would arise to provide for the needs of the wheat farmers and the station owners of the Tatiara.

The passing of Strangways Acts in 1869 and the Naracoorte Railway Acts of 1871 and 1872 had an immediate impact upon Kingston. Land dealers and finance companies established themselves in the town offering liberal loans for the purchase of blocks at heavy interest rates, sometimes twenty per cent and the value of town allotments and blocks along the

19 (page 88) Ibid., 17 February 1869.

railway line rose sharply. The declaration of new hundreds all over the South East in 1872 to 1873 also stimulated the business of the builders in the town. J.J.Jarman, for example established the Kingston saw mills and imported large quantities of timber from Tasmania. He built to order wooden houses which he sold in Kingston or transported by bullock waggon to the newly opened areas. Lawyers, doctors, financiers, merchant and shipping companies established themselves in Naracoorte and extended their operations to Kingston as well. The local pastoralists deserted Robe when George Ormerod died in 1872.

James Cooke prepared for the role of Kingston as a wheat port by agitating for a longer jetty. The wheat ships would be large vessels which needed plenty of water under their keels while they were being loaded. The existing jetty would be useless unless it were lengthened and the wheat would have to be lightered to the ships in the anchorages about a mile and a half to two miles from the beach. Lightering was an important item in the shipping of wheat. The labour involved in bagging and loading it was costly and world wheat prices were not high enough for it to be worth heavy lighterage charges as well. In order for Kingston to retain the wheat trade, the lightering costs would have to be reduced to a minimum. Cooke put his faith in a long jetty. In 1871 he petitioned for one of about four thousand feet.[20]

In 1872, when the government was ready to put the question of the Naracoorte Railway Bill before parliament, serious consideration was given to the problem of the anchorages at Kingston and the possibility of building a new jetty in deeper water about five miles to the south of the town. Captain Howard, of the Royal Navy, was commissioned to find the best anchorages with the deepest water and the

20 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 238, 1876; 'Report on Kingston Jetty'.

safest holding ground at the least distance from the shore. He thoroughly surveyed the bay and prepared a chart of the soundings and of the channels of deep water leading in to the best anchorages. He recommended a place about five miles to the south of the town and about one and three quarters of a mile east-north-east of Cape Jaffa. Here, a large vessel could anchor in twenty one feet of water at low tide at about three quarters of a mile off shore.[21] It was to the east of the usual anchorage of the bark ships. However the matter was left until 1875 when the Naracoorte railway was nearly completed.

The government tried to economize by proposing a jetty of only 1,000 feet, but it would have been useless and they were finally persuaded to build a longer one on the grounds that the success of the railway would depend upon the "facilities for rapid and convenient shipment without damage to goods".[22] As for the site, the government found that a jetty at Kingston would have to be 6,080 feet and one at the place recommended by Howard would have to be about 3,600 feet,[23] but in view of the financial loss which would be involved if the port were shifted to a site five miles from the existing town, it was decided to build the new jetty on the old site. English manufacturers were producing iron screw-pile jetties that were cheaper in the long run than wooden ones and the government decided to import them for Rivoli Bay and Lacepede Bay. The new jetty at Kingston was planned to reach 18 feet of water, but the shipping firms protested when they began counting the cost of hay. Horse-drawn trucks along a jetty 6,080 feet were out of the question and even a locomotive was not likely to pay. When

21 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 165, 1872; 'Report from Captain Howard R.N.'.

22 See note 20.

23 Ibid.

the government had built about 2,000 feet of the jetty, a deputation from Kingston complained that it would be too long and narrow. The plans were altered in 1878 to make it 4,000 feet long ending in 15 feet of water.[24] In 1880 it was extended to 4,005 feet and ended in 16 feet of water.

The expansion in the shipping business attracted a large number of workmen, tradesmen, shopkeepers, engineers and mechanics. Many who wanted to select land in the area, also went to Kingston first in order to earn the necessary money. They found employment in the railway, the government works on roads and drains and in the shipping business.

The government established railway workshops in Kingston and a large number of the employees lived in the rows of small cottages that were erected for them along the railway line and in Rosetown. Rosetown was opened by the government in 1877 as a suburban housing area for the increase in the working population which was a consequence of the completion of the railway. The opening of the workshops was a boon to the shipping industry, for, until then, the port had suffered from a shortage of highly trained engineers and mechanics. When the workshops were removed to Naracoorte for the construction of the Tatiara railway line in 1881, several of the skilled men left the Railway Department and set up their own workshops in Kingston.

The population of the Lacepede district increased from about 250 to 300 in 1865 to 542 in 1875.[25] Of these about 256 lived in Kingston. The increase in the population of the town and the surrounding district brought social problems which had to be solved. One was the provision of church services. James Cooke used to pay the Reverand Sinclair from Mount

24 Border Watch, 1 April 1879. Copy of the Report of the Engineer of Harbours and Jetties supplied to the South Australian Register on the works done in 1878.

25 Census, 1866 and 1876.

Barker to visit the town and provide services for the members of the Free Presbyterian Church, but they were not ~~now~~ then the largest religious group in Kingston. The Congregationalists were. In 1868 they established the first organized church and they held their services in the school room which also did duty as the library, the council chambers and the place for the public protest meetings and entertainments. Their minister was the energetic missionary, David Milne, who persuaded them that since the town was able to support three hotels and several stores it was also able to afford a church. He was ordained in Kingston in 1869. In his time a Sunday school was established by the Union of Christian Churches. The school was unsectarian and open to anyone who believed in the teachings of the New Testament. In 1875, it had three teachers and nineteen scholars and, in 1876, five teachers and fifty two scholars.[26] The Free Presbyterians built themselves a handsome stone church in 1874. The squatters of the surrounding district were mainly responsible for the necessary funds and their generosity was so great that the building cost was paid off in four years. The first minister was the Reverand Sinclair. The increase in the number of children in the town after the opening of the seventies gave an opportunity for the separate churches to take over their own Sunday schools and the Union Sunday school was split up. The members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Church of England were smaller in numbers and did not build their churches until later.

The various religious sects in the towns of the South East had a hard battle to provide services for all of the congregations in the towns themselves and in the new agricultural settlements. The towns tended to share the responsibilities. They worked out ways and means of providing services for the congregations, of the neighbourhood. The

26 Naracoorte Herald, 14 November 1875 and 10 October 1876.

Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, for example, held services in turn for Kingston, Robe and Baker's Range (Lucindale)and the Church of England at Robe sent clergy to hold services in Kingston, Naracoorte, Penola and Millicent, once every five weeks.

The battle against scepticism engaged a large share of the attention of the local clergy, who used the press as a pulpit in order to reach those who did not go to church. The Reverend Sinclair also employed a Tract Society which published the "Presbyterian Monthly" and he, himself, held series of discourses during the week. Atheism was an interesting topic of discussion and long articles for and against it, were printed in the local papers by the clergy and the lay population. The Naracoorte Herald and the Border Watch also carried frequent sermons upon the virtues of temperance and the impropriety of getting into debt.

That the general advance in scientific thinking had reached the South East was apparent in the lively interest that was shown in the physical and biological sciences. The newspapers published articles, devoted to these subjects and public speakers, like Father J.E.Woods, who was an expert in geology, geography and biology, always drew large audiences to their institute lectures. Sometimes visiting lecturers used the panorama, which projected pictures on to a screen for the purpose of illustration. The pantescope was similarly used in order to show and lecture upon the works of famous artists. The catalogues of books advertised in the local newspapers and held in the institute libraries, again revealed an interest in natural science, religion and history.

An institute was established early in the history of Kingston. The reading enthusiasts had organized a committee for the building of an institute and the provision of a library and reading room in the schoolhouse by the latter half of 1867. The reading room was open for three nights a week and offered two daily local papers regularly, one daily

and weekly paper from Adelaide, one Australian weekly and a few London papers like the Illustrated London News and Punch. In the seventies it added the Scientific America. In 1869, the library had a hundred and thirty volumes and it was receiving boxed books from the South Australian Institute, every four months.[27] The committee were anxious to erect a suitable institute the aquisition of which was normally regarded as an essential to set the seal of worth upon a town. Besides, they needed a hall for public meetings and dancing. Although there were a small group of consciously literate people in the town the bulk of the population were unconscious of their need for the churches, the library and the institute and the enthusiasts had a hard task in extracting contributions from them. Consequently the squatters, the leading commercial men and the small floating population of the bank clerks, the teachers and the doctor and other professional men carried the burdens of organizing and financing the cultural pursuits. In order to raise money for their institute they began a series of musical evenings, plays, concerts and courses in public speaking which became a regular feature of Kingston life mainly because they gave a chance to the talented in the community to enjoy their gifts. An Amateur Dramatic Society was organized in the late sixties and it was full of lusty life in the seventies. James Cooke and Charles Gell were particularly interested in debating and public speaking and a society was established to teach these arts. They must have been quite successful, for the local correspondent of the Naracoorte Herald reported that the town had a wealth of good speakers. By 1878, the institute had been built. It had "a beautiful stage with a drop curtain depicting a scene of the River Danube. On either side of the stage were large columns and two figures portraying commerce and music, while on the sounding board on the top of the

27 Border Watch, 26 January 1869.

proscenium was the figure of Hope".[28] It was thought a fit place in which to welcome Governor Jervois when he arrived in Kingston in 1879, after a tour of the South East drainage system.

The increase in the population brought new problems in the provision of education for the children in the district. The children of Kingston had been provided with schooling from the early sixties by a Mrs. George, who kept a private day school.[29] In 1863, the little wooden building in which she taught was blown down in a gale which also destroyed the jetty and unroofed Cookes' stores. It was decided to ask the government for a site and a grant to build a stone school. The Board of Education had the right to recommend that grants of money be given to subsidize the erection of private schools and the payment of the teachers[30] and it granted a block of land for a new stone school-house. Since the maximum grant that could be given was £200, the school-house at Kingston was small and inadequate. However, it had the distinction of being one of the first in South Australia to be built by means of assistance from government funds and vested in private trustees under the control of the Board of Education.[31] Parents who sent their children to subsidized schools like this one,could not be charged more than a shilling a week for each child and the children of destitute parents were to be provided for by a payment of sixpence a week out of public funds. Primary education was not then

28 Ibid., 7 September 1878.

29 All schools were then privately run. A minimum of £40 a year was guaranteed to teachers in 1852. Females were paid at the same rate as males. Report of Inspector of Schools 1852 in the South Australian Register, 1 January 1852.

30 Education Acts of 1847 and 1851.

31 South Australian Government Gazette, Education Report of 1868.

compulsory and many of the children of Kingston did not attend school regularly. In 1868, there were 87 children in the Board school; in 1869 there were 42; in 1870, 30; 1871, 43 and 1872, 86.[32]

By the Education Act of 1875,[33] school attendance was made compulsory for children from seven to thirteen years of age and the school-house at Kingston was too small for the increased members attending. In 1878 the government opened the Hundreds of Duffield, Landseer, Townsend, Murrabinna and Bowaka to selectors and since these were within the district of Lacepede, the people of Kingston expected an overflow of children at their schools. In that year a public meeting held in the town sent into the Board a request for a new school since the old one would accommodate only 140 whereas 400 were expected to attend.[34] In view of the growing importance of the town, the Council not only built a new and bigger school on a better site, but also sent one of its best teachers from the Hindmarsh Model School to take the place of the man who had been there for fourteen years.[35] However, the government had a hard job enforcing attendance when fees still had to be paid. Many of the children living in Kingston and on the selections in the neighbourhood rarely attended, either because their parents could not afford to do without their labour, or because the distance that they had to travel was too great. It was not until 1891 when education became free, compulsory and secular and schools were established in the

32 S.A.Parl. Paper, 19, 1868-69, 'Education Report'; also Education Reports from S.A.Govt. Gazette. 1869 to 1873.

33 By the Education Act of 1875. The public schools in South Australia, still supervised by the Boards of Advice, were put under the control of a Council of Education which was responsible to a Minister of Education.

34 Naracoorte Herald, 22 January 1878.

35 Ibid., 7 January 1880.

areas around Reedy Creek, Blackford and Mount Benson, that the majority of the local children went to school. Then several young adults voluntarily attended the primary schools so that they could compete with their fellows who had been at school while they had been working at home.

The aborigines had always been too noisy and undisciplined for the comfort of the white population. In 1864, the townspeople had complained that they were "almost daily or nightly annoyed by riotous conduct of the natives who rendezvous here in great numbers".[36] James Cooke had a wholesome respect for the ability of teachers "to instil moral order into children and teach them lessons of restraint". He thought that no government grants, not even those spent upon the opening of avenues for trade, were so wisely spent as the one on education. Providing for schooling was "the highest form of political move" because it was serving the public good.[37] The aboriginal children were therefore sent to a school of their own during the eighteen seventies. It was run by a Miss Armstrong, a friend of Mrs. Cooke's. The aboriginal school in Kingston seems to have been more successful than the early ones in Adelaide, for it persisted for many years and a number of aboriginal and part-aboriginal children were still going to their own school on the Blackford reserve at the end of the century. There is a suggestion of segregation in this move and also in the action of the Council during the eighties, which sought to have the aboriginal camps moved out of the town to the Blackford reserve. The camp was moved because the councillors wanted to make Kingston more attractive to tourists, but there were still dark people living in the town and suburbs, who had been able to hold

36 Colonial Secretary's Docket No. 415 of 1864 (Adelaide Archives).

37 Naracoorte Herald, 10 Feburary 1880; James Cooke speaking at the opening of the new school in 1880.

steady jobs and build or rent their own cottages. The Council helped them in many ways, providing material for example, for the fencing of their cemetary, persuading the government to supply them with a boat for fishing and providing for the destitute families. Aboriginal women tended to command high respect from the townspeople who valued them for their dignity, hard work and reliability.

Until the amending act of 1870, Kingston had no local court and only one Justice of the Peace, in James Cooke who was appointed in June, 1864. There were the half-yearly circuit courts held by itinerant judges, but otherwise the plaintiffs and defendants had to go to the District Court at Robe. This was regarded as an unnecessary hardship especially since numerous summonses for the illegal depasturing of stock on Crown lands were served on the local inhabitants.[38] Until the local court was established by the act of 1870,[39] the itinerant justices conducted the cases in the hotels which were the only places dignified enough and large enough to accommodate the rest of the town, who went to all of the court sessions as a matter of interest. The people of the South East were not entirely happy with their local courts. The magistrates were appointed by the government from local inhabitants and the general objection to the system was that good business/men would not necessarily make good justices. They had no knowledge of the law and they could possibly be biassed in their judgments. However, the duties of the local courts were limited to questions of fact. Any question

38 Stat. Registers, 1865 and 1866.
Litigation in Kingston;1865 fines 270, cases tried by jury 1: 1866 fines 394, Cases tried by jury -.

39 Act 12, 1870; Local Courts Amendment Act. The government could appoint a District Court in a district or port and appoint clerks or bailiffs to them. They had to open every day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

involving legal interpretation was sent to the supreme court on appeal.[40]

In general, the cases that the local court in Kingston dealt with, were:- summonses from the Crown Lands Ranger, the stealing of stock, absconding from employment, failure to destroy declared noxious weeds, assault, drunkenness, mainly of sailors, debt and "bolting over the border". The selectors in the neighbourhood as well as the townspeople were frequently involved in cases involving debt. Possibly there would have been many more brought before the courts if the local businessmen had been able to get redress from people who evaded their pecuniary responsibilities by moving to Victoria. Until 1887, when South Australia and Victoria made reciprocal regulations for the extradition of debtors, the whole South East suffered from "bolters over the border".[41] In a predominantly pastoral community, where wool and wheat cheques came once a year, credit had to be allowed and while Victoria had no regulation for the return of debtors to South Australia, irate shopkeepers had to chase offenders by coach into Victoria and try to get their money by their own exertions. Another disadvantage in Kingston was the chronic shortage of bailiffs. People gave up bringing debtors before the courts when their verdicts could not be put into effect because there were no bailiffs.

The rate of progress of South Australian country towns depended to a large degree upon the initiative of local people who were responsible not only for the industry and commerce, but also for the instalment of the institutions which were necessary before growth could be assured. The Cooke brothers were the pioneers of Kingston in this respect. James in particular hurried Kingston into new institutions before the town could feel the lack of them. In 1872 the

40 See South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 1870 col. 512.

41 Act 407, 1887; Absconding Debtors Act.

government provided for the expansion of agricultural settlement by making the new districts self-governing by the formation of district councils. James Cooke petitioned for a district council to be set up in Kingston. The town needed a council because such a body would have the legal power to collect rates from the land owners and carry out the necessary improvements which the central government had left undone.

The government had not been enthusiastic about handing country districts over to local self-governing bodies and they had tried to evade the necessity by creating central boards which were to be responsible for specified spheres of activity. For example, the Central Roads Board was created in 1849.[42] However, the expansion of the eighteen fifties had made the road building in country districts too onerous a burden for the Central Roads Board and District Roads Boards were established mainly to collect the necessary funds and organize the road works to be done.[43] During the eighteen seventies, the Albert District Roads Board was the local organization for road building and maintenance in the Albert District which had been formed by the Electoral Act of 1869.[44] (In view of the expected influx of population the South East was divided into two districts each with its own funds for public works.) Kingston was represented on the Albert District Roads Board, but the townsmen felt that their needs were neglected for more pressing ones in other parts of the district. The Board did good work, but it was hampered by the lack of drainage in the northern flats. A large proportion of its funds had to go into the maintenance of

42 Central Board of Main Roads Ordinance No.14 1849.

43 The District Roads Boards arose out of the ideas of Governor Young on local government in 1852. The District Councils grew out of the Roads Boards. See S.A.Parl. Debates, 1858 col. 377.

44 Act 18, 1869-70; Electoral Act.

existing roads. Although there were plenty of local contractors to do the work, the funds were always too low because the district was sparsely populated.

The people of Kingston suffered from the constant irritation of having their requests for roads refused by both the Central and the District Boards on the grounds that the particular job was the responsibility of the other body. Business suffered from the effects of the bad roads. In winter the people of Avenue Range could not get to Kingston. The townspeople wanted good accesses to the port and they thought that the only way of securing them was by means of a district council. Such a body was also badly needed to organize the supervision of travelling stock which was likely to destroy the local pastures, and the local supervision of aid to the destitute and the aboriginal population. Funds for such purposes came in miserly grants from the central authorities who found the drain on public revenues too great. Only the squatters objected to district councils because the establishment of such in the neighbourhood would involve their stations being included in the districts thus formed and they would have to pay rates. However, councils could be established in places where the inhabitants asked for them[45] and the townsmen of Kingston were successful in their petition of 1872.

The District Council of the Hundred of Lacepede was opened with a carnival flourish in 1873. Since the district was then too small to be divided into wards, there had to be five councillors who were elected by the ratepayers owning property in the town or in the hundred. When the district was divided into wards in 1888, the problem of a man owning property in more than one ward was overcome by the recognized South Australian principle of one man one vote. The chairman

45 Act 10 1858; Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws Relating to District Councils.

as well as the councillors, was elected by the ratepayers.

The functions of the Council were to preserve local law and order, to see that government regulations were carried out with regard to matters within its province as laid down by the Local Government acts, to construct local by-roads that were not within the spheres of the Central or the District Boards, to provide amenities for the town and to make such regulations as it thought fit, in the interests of town-planning. In order to carry out its duties, the Council acted as inspector of building and sanitary and garbage arrangements; the road-making authority; the local health and destitute board; supervisor of travelling stock and the reserves for that purpose and collector of rents and fines for the legal and illegal use of the commonage. The Council revenues came from rates supplemented by grants-in-aid for special purposes like road-making, loans and the sale of the common lands handed over to it by the government. Road-building in the District of Lacepede was a particularly difficult undertaking and the Council was always short of money. Its revenues were so depleted by the construction and maintenance of roads that it rarely had enough money to do anything else. The local ratepayers were no more willing to pay rates than they were to pay taxes and they often complained that the assessments were too high. Part of the Council's revenue came from the fines imposed on defaulting ratepayers, but they were no easier to collect than the rates had been. In the eighties, the Council engaged the services of a lawyer and brought such cases to court. A defaulting ratepayer could then be gaoled for fourteen days if he refused to pay his fine.

The Council employed an overseer of works whose responsibilities involved anything from the supervision of drainage and road-building to the employment of someone to clear the rubbish and bottles from the beach. In the seventies the Council employed a man with a horse and cart for the

everyday tasks and expected an eight and a half day from him. His wages were primarily determined by the cost of hay. Contractors were often paid in kind. For example, the man who cleared the wood from the streets was told that he could have the wood. Road-making was done by contractors under the supervision of the Overseer of Works. It was usually completed in sections, the extent of which was usually limited by the price of hay and the amount of road-making material available.

The chief officers[46] of the Council were the District Clerk and the Overseer of Works. For a small salary, (£125 a year, in the eighties) besides all of the clerical work of the council, the District Clerk had to draw up all plans that did not require a licensed surveyor, act as the registrar of dogs, the inspector for the Board of Health, the secretary for both the Board of Health and the Vermin Board, inspector of weights and measures and lodging houses, collector of rates and curator of the cemetary. He also had to issue licences, pay money for the killing of wild foxes and dogs, do all of the clerical work involved in the assessment of rates and defend the Council in the court cases that did not require a solicitor. The first Clerk, Benjamin Morris, went daily to the Council office and did his own watch making there as well as his council duties. The second was dismissed because he neglected council work for his own and the third Charles Crump, was clerk for so long, that his surname became household word in Kingston.

The overseer of Works and the Vermin Inspector were usually overworked. This was particularly the case during the rabbit plague of the eighteen eighties and the drainage works. The resignations of the Rabbit Inspectors were fairly frequent and rapid. Council meetings were regular fixtures,

46 From the Minutes of the Lacepede District Council. By courtesy of District Clerk and Mr.Curkpatrick of Kingston

but during the shearing season, there were frequently too few present to constitute a quorum.[47]

The Council at Kingston played an important part in the development of the town. Always to the fore with well prepared requests for public works whenever the governor or a parliamentary delegation passed through or visited the town, it was able to draw the attention of the central government to necessary improvements more successfully than petitions signed by the townsmen had done. However, the duties which devolved upon it from the central administration left it little opportunity to develop schemes of its own.

With the influx of population and the arrival of John Grice and Company after the opening of the railway to Naracoorte, the establishment of the District Council, the local court and the cultural institutions like the churches and schools, Kingston had become a fully fledged centre of local self-government and social services as they were known in the eighteen seventies. James Cooke lost, or seems to have voluntarily given up, the position of leadership that he had in 1868. His work in the foundation of these institutions was done. He did not become a member of the Council, but chose to concentrate his energies upon his campaign for a railway to the border.

Although Cooke and the inhabitants of Kingston played their part in the rapid development of civil and social institutions in their town, the importance of their efforts must not be overrated. The same pattern of growth was occurring in country areas over the greater part of the colony at that time. It resulted from the surge of expansion caused by the Selection Acts and the progress of wheat farming. The conferring of local self-government upon District Councils arose out of a need to make the country

46 (continued) who noted them for me.

47 Ibid.

inhabitants share the burden of the costs of expansion with the urban population. Furthermore, the government policy of providing Kingston with these civil institutions together with adequate port facilities , access roads and the railway arose out of the intention to turn the northern South East into an agricultural district. Kingston was being prepared to function as its port.

Chapter six

KINGSTON'S BRIEF HEY-DAY

FROM 1876 TO 1886

In 1876 the Naracoorte railway was opened with a flourish of speeches and a horse-drawn train carrying passengers and mail from Kingston to Naracoorte. The event was hailed in Kingston as the beginning of a new era since the swamps which had retarded its progress for twenty years, were now bridged. The opening of the railway certainly heralded a period of prosperity for Kingston during which the activities of the port reached their highest level. As a railway terminus it had a considerable advantage over the other ports of the South East and even before the line was opened, the squatters began to desert Robe. Thousands of bales of wool and bags of wheat were piled on the Naracoorte siding early in 1876 awaiting the first steam-driven train.

The most important effect on Kingston was the transfer to Lacepede Bay of the export of wool which had previously gone from the South East and the border districts of Victoria to Geelong and Melbourne. It became the wool outport of the South East and held the position as long as the pastoralists of the district sold in London rather than in the colonial markets; that is until after the First World War.

The parliamentary debates of 1868 to 1871 reveal that the government built the railway to Kingston primarily as a means whereby selection could be made more successful in the northern South East, but there was a further purpose as well. It is clear that they also meant to give Adelaide merchants and shipping companies an opportunity to share in the trade

of the South East. This was one reason for the choice of Kingston as the railway port rather than Port MacDonnell. The jetty was lengthened so that the coastal steamers could go alongside to unload the merchandise of Adelaide and load the wheat which would be sold in Port Adelaide or be exported from there overseas. Cooke hoped to add to this the wheat trade of the Wimmera and also its wool export trade, but the government was not really concerned about the Victorian trade.

Kingston gained the wool export business and the coastal shipping trade but not in the way in which the government and the merchants of Adelaide had hoped. The merchants, the wool-brokers and the shipping companies of Melbourne and Geelong still dominated the South-Eastern commerce as well as that of the Wimmera only they now funnelled it through Kingston instead of overlanding it through the Wimmera. The railway which was to give access to the interior to the Adelaide merchants also reduced the costs of the Victorians and the companies who had been dominating the border and South Eastern commerce before 1876 continued to do so. They established stores in Naracoorte and shipping offices in Kingston and held such a strong position that the Adelaide merchant and shipping companies could not compete with them. The only difference for the Victorians was that they transferred their South Eastern shipping headquarters from Robe to Kingston. D. Guthrie had sent an agent there in 1870 and John Grice and Company followed soon afterwards. Both firms had been involved in the commercial and financial side of the pastoral business and the marketing of wool along the border and in the Wimmera for many years. Sumner, Grice and Company had been affiliated with Ormerod at Robe and when he died, they took over his business. By 1878, as John Grice and Company, they had bought Ormerod's store at Naracoorte and Guthrie's at Kingston. They received the baled wool at Naracoorte where it was dumped (compressed by machine) and then sent it by railway to Kingston for its shipping

either directly overseas, or to the Geelong and Melbourne markets.

Grice and Company and the other Victorian wool-brokers and consigning agents like Richard Goldsbrough and Company, were too well established in the Wimmera and the South East for any South Australian firm to compete successfully with them. Richard Goldsbrough and Company amalgamated with T.S.Mort of Sydney in 1878 and were also affiliated with the Australasian Agency and Banking Corporation which was founded in 1877. They had enough capital resources to expand their wool-broking and their buying and selling of pastoral stations without any need to rely on banks.[1] They were far too strong for Elder Smith and Company and Bagot, Shakes and Lewis of Adelaide who attempted to compete with them by setting up agencies in Naracoorte and Kingston in the eighteen seventies. Bagot, Shakes and Lewis had to close their Naracoorte agency in 1892 and Elder Smith's agency in the town had opened and closed several times by then.[2] South Australian merchants and marketing firms never succeeded in taking the trade of the South East away from the Victorians. The geographical situation of the district and the superiority of Melbourne as a commercial centre worked against them. The natural commercial affiliations of the South East were with Melbourne, Geelong and Portland rather than with Adelaide and the centralizing policies of the South Australian government did little to change the situation.

It is ironical that James Cooke who had founded Kingston and had done more than any other single person for the opening of the South East by means of railways, should have only succeeded in setting up easier conditions for the

1 See Alan Barnard, The Australian Wool Market, pp.157, 162 and 166.

2 See Judith Murdoch and Heather Parker, History of Naracoorte Herald, pp.83 and 84.

Victorians to beat him on his home ground. The situation was clear enough in the late seventies and early eighties. The Naracoorte Herald regularly published the details of the shipping at Lacepede Bay and their records taken from the ships' manifests show that Cooke's business did not appreciably increase after 1876. He did no more than hold his own against the competition of John Grice and Company and the other smaller agents in Kingston. Grice and Company were too big for Cooke. They had larger resources of fluid capital. The Cooke brothers had most of theirs tied up in land and in their pastoral pursuits. It was rumoured in 1879, that they intended merging with a British company,[3] but nothing came of it. Archibald Cooke died in 1883 and James Cooke lost heavily in the sale of the estate since the land had to be sold in a period of depression.

Grice and Company had a distinct advantage over Cooke in that they had close contacts with the colonial wool and stock markets in Geelong and Melbourne and also with the first class ships that visited these ports. They were agents for Goldsbrough Mort whereas Cooke was the agent for Elder Smith and Company and the shipping firms of Port Adelaide. Although he still engaged overseas ships each year to send large quantities of wool to London, he lost in the bid for the coastal trade. The South East did not send the wool that they sold in the colonial markets to Adelaide. They sent it to Geelong and Melbourne where they thought that they obtained higher prices. The clip of the South East was generally offered for sale with the wool of the Western District which it resembled more closely than the South Australian. It was cleaner and brighter than the wool from the northern stations which was often discoloured with dust and carried more burrs. The importers in the towns also tended to buy from Melbourne rather than Adelaide, because transport costs were lower and

3 Naracoorte Herald, 18 February 1879.

the manufactured goods, clothing and food-stuffs were cheaper.[4]

The situation might have changed if the surrounding country had been successfully converted to agriculture. There might have been more business to be divided up amongst the merchant and marketing firms that hastened to the northern South East after the introduction of the Selection Acts. The failure of the government to establish agriculture in the Naracoorte plain and the Tatiara during the eighteen seventies had a depressing effect on all of the local marketing agents. It is easy to see why Cooke fought so persistently for the Border Railway. He needed an access to the wheat farms of the Wimmera and a chance to transfer to wheat marketing in which business South Australian companies had established themselves more firmly than the Victorian.

Although the completion of the Naracoorte railway and the arrival of John Grice and Company had not worked for the best interests of Cooke's shipping business, they had made an appreciable difference to the town and they must have enhanced Cooke's chances of selling and renting land in the late seventies and early eighties. Land values rose to such an extent in Kingston after 1876 that the government opened Rosetown and the suburban blocks to Kingston in order to supply cheaper allotments for the working population. Blocks in Rosetown, which was not part of the commercial centre but only a housing area for workmen, were sold in 1877 for £300 to £400 per acre.[5] Anyone who wanted to buy land in Kingston's town must have been obliged to pay far more. When the bill for the railway to the border was defeated in 1878, the Kingston correspondent of the Naracoorte Herald regarded the set-back as a blessing in disguise and he hoped that some

4 From records of the parcels carried by the ships at Lacepede Bay published regularly in the Naracoorte Herald.

5 Naracoorte Herald, 29 October 1878.

of the land jobbers might be jolted out of asking exorbitant prices for blocks in the town. The local pastoralists speculated in Kingston during the seventies and bought land in both the town and the suburbs. John Gall for example bought more than half of the blocks in Rosetown. The Rates Assessment Book of the District Council shows that the sale of land went on briskly until 1884. The number of people owning blocks in Kingston and its suburbs was 149 in 1874, 258 in 1878 and 886 in 1884.[6]

James Cooke had argued that the railway would be a creative force in the development of the South East and he was right as far as Kingston was concerned. The railway brought John Grice and Company to the town and the firm was certainly a creative force. They brought to Kingston the bulk of the border shipping business and they carried the town with them in their efforts to spread their influence in the north-western Wimmera, the Tatiara and the Coorong country. They were progressive in their ideas of fostering trade and worked to provide better marketing facilities in the area. They also fostered the local industry of the Lacepede District by giving better opportunities for the marketing of the wool, skins, bark and stock and stimulating the growth of bark milling in and around Kingston. They attracted people to Kingston to work as their employees several of whom became strong leaders in the commercial and social growth of the town. Charles Gell, their manager, gradually assumed the responsibilities which James Cooke had carried for so long.

The difference that the Company made to the commercial activity of the port is revealed in the number of bullock teams working between the railway-head at Naracoorte and the border. In 1876, Cooke and Guthrie had twenty. In 1878, Grice and Company had seventy. One of the most striking changes

6 Rates Assessment Book, Lacepede District Council, 1874-1887.

after their arrival was the growth in the number of coastal ships visiting the port. The steamers and the clipper schooners of the Mount Gambier Steamship Company which had neglected it for so long, began to call regularly and with the vessels already coming from Port Adelaide they provided a bi-weekly service connecting Kingston with Port Adelaide, Beachport, Robe, Port MacDonnell and Melbourne.[7] Grice and Company also bought the steam lighter, "Kingston" to supplement the work of Guthrie's steam lighter. The "Kingston" was a steam launch and the Company also used it for the coastal trade.

Despite the activity of the shipping agents, Kingston in 1879 was still only a small wool port. The wheat that it handled came chiefly from Lucindale which besides Naracoorte was the only local agricultural settlement that was at all promising as a feeder to the port. While the land gave better returns for the depasturing of sheep, no amount of government selection legislation was likely to convert it to agriculture. However the red and grey soils of the Wimmera were suitable for wheat-growing and the Victorian Selection Acts were more successful in this area than the South Australian ones were in the South East. In 1878, the Victorian Minister of Lands reduced the yearly amount that the selectors in the Wimmera had to pay per acre over a period of ten years from two shillings to one and permitted the completion of the contract in three years if the residence and cultivation regulations had been observed and the farmers paid the balance. In 1878 selectors went to the Wimmera "like diggers to a gold rush" [8] and the area between Lillimur and Horsham was eagerly taken up. Many of the selectors were bonafide farmers from South Australia and

7 Naracoorte Herald, 4 January 1881, 3 January 1882, 12 January 1883, Advertisements.

8 T.Landt, History of Kaniva, p.12.

some were large property owners from the South East. The farmers in the north-western Wimmera had an immediate problem of marketing their wheat. They were about three hundred miles from Melbourne and one hundred and sixty from Adelaide. Cooke had been agitating for the Border Railway since 1866 because he had believed that this situation would arise. Kingston was the nearest port and if the Border Railway were constructed it must surely gain the coastal shipping of the wheat.

The government of 1878 was not unwilling to build a railway to the border because there was still hope that the Tatiara would fulfil its promise as a valuable wheat producing district. However the route originally planned by Cooke was unsuitable. The government aimed to build a line which would serve the greatest possible number of settlers in the South East. A Railway Commission of which Goyder was the leading spirit, had been appointed in 1875 to consider the best means of extending the railways in the colony.[9] For the South East the commissioners recommended a line from Mount Gambier to Rivoli Bay and thence, via Millicent to Penola and also two extensions of the railway from Kingston to Naracoorte to reach the border. One was to go from Lucindale to the border near the Tatiara pastoral station and the other from Naracoorte to the border near Apsley. Goyder also recommended that the lines in the South East be connected with a broad-gauge railway leading to Adelaide. The present line from the capital to Nairne should be extended to Murray Bridge and thence along the Victorian boundary to Bordertown. The line was to be broad-gauge so that it could be joined to the one that the Victorians were building towards the border.

In 1878 Cooke renewed his agitation for the Border railway. By means of a line from Lucindale to the Tatiara

9 South Australia Parliamentary Paper (House of Assembly) 22, 1875; Report of Commission to Inquire into Railway Construction Including the Line to the Victorian border.

station Kingston could gain access to the "2,773 square miles of country around Horsham" which was being taken over by wheat farmers and which was "sixty five miles closer to Lacepede Bay than to the nearest Victorian port of Geelong".[10] Cooke's proposal was not popular with the rest of the South East. The people of Bordertown wanted the line to be extended to their town so that they could gain the commercial advantages of its being a railway head[11] and the majority in the district thought that the extension to Jessie was too obviously an attempt to take the Victorian wheat trade for South Australia to escape retaliation from Victoria. A petition from Bordertown, Robe, Naracoorte and thirty five people from Kingston asked that the line to Jessie be stopped. They expressed a fear that it would offer even better opportunities for Victorian merchants to monopolize the trade of the South East. They wrote that such a line would act as "an inducement to Victoria to carry her lines to the border, in which case communication would be established directly between the South East, Melbourne and Portland and it would end in the South East being virtually annexed to Victoria".[12] Since the Victorians were already taking their lines to the border the first section of the petition carried no special weight but the second part was an expression of a general feeling among the merchants of Adelaide. The other argument that the South East put up against the line to Jessie was that it would neglect the needs of the settled areas without serving any useful purpose. This was the deciding factor as far as the government was concerned. The route which was finally decided

10 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 152, 1877; Cooke's petition.

11 S.A. Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 153, 1877. Petition against line to Jessie and requesting one to Bordertown.

12 Ibid.

upon, was a compromise suggested by the Naracoorte Herald.[13] It was extended from Naracoorte in the direction of Jessie and reached the border at Frances. It then diverged northward towards Binnum and the Tatiara and ended in land which had been donated to the Adelaide University at Custon, a few miles from Bordertown. It ran close enough to the border to pick up a great deal of trade from Victoria and it also served the Mosquito Plains and the Tatiara. The only people who were displeased with the route were the inhabitants of Bordertown. However they did not have to wait long for the railway to reach them. Enthusiasm for railway building had taken hold of parliament in 1879 and most of Goyder's recommendations for the South East were taken up. The Tatiara line, begun from Naracoorte to Custon in 1880, was extended to Wolseley in 1883 and the extension of the broad-gauge line from Adelaide, Nairne and Murray Bridge through the Ninety Mile Desert to Bordertown was completed in 1886. A line from Mount Gambier to Rivoli Bay was given parliamentary sanction in 1878 and opened in 1879 and the bill for the Mount Gambier-Naracoorte line was passed in 1884. James Cooke's plan for a feeder railway to Kingston in 1866 had grown into a network of lines to service the settled areas, open up the unsettled and connect them all with Adelaide.

Kingston became the chief port in the South East after the construction of the railways from Mount Gambier to Beachport and Naracoorte and from Naracoorte to the border. The cheapest way to market wool in the district was to send it by rail to Kingston and thence by ship to London. The government made the freight charges on the railways from Mount Gambier to Beachport and Kingston so low that it was cheaper to send wool from Mount Gambier to the two South Australian railway ports than to Melbourne or to Portland. Much of the wool carried to Beachport was taken by Grice and

13 Naracoorte Herald, 8 July 1879.

Company's steamer to Kingston for direct export to Britain. In 1880, the value of the annual exports from Kingston was £207,777 and from Port MacDonnell, £144,928. The value of the imports through Kingston rose to £52,316 while those from Port MacDonnell were only £32,854.[14] Port MacDonnell had been deprived of its trade by its geographical position and also by the government policies of selection, railway building in the South East and centralization. In 1868 it had been passed over as a railway port because of the dangerous nature of the harbour and its proximity to Portland. In 1878 its career was terminated by the construction of the railway lines to Lacepede Bay and Rivoli Bay and the preferential freight charges for the wool from Mount Gambier and Penola. Selection had to be preserved in the South East and Adelaide's commercial interests protected against encroachment from Portland, and MacDonnell Bay had to suffer the consequences. Kingston took and maintained command of the shipping of the South East from 1880 to 1886 when the intercolonial railway line was completed. Even after it had lost the wheat trade and the importing business for the South East, it retained the shipping of wool which was considerable because the South East remained mainly a pastoral district.

When the railway to Custon was opened in 1881, it seemed that the whole of the South East and north-western Victoria were opened to Kingston and it made rapid progress in the prosperity that it gained from the virtual monopoly of the wool traffic and the handling of the wheat. In 1883 Hutchison and Dunn bought John Grice and Company. They kept to the old trading name and followed the same policy. In the same year, the Adelaide Steamship Company showed its belief in the progress of the South East when it bought the coastal steamers belonging to the South East Coast and Intercolonial

14 Statistical Register of South Australia, Nos. 14 and 15 1883, 1884 and 1889.

Service and Port Caroline was so busy in September, that nine ships called there in one week. The steamers and the coastal sailing ships visited Port Caroline regularly all the year round, bringing coal for the railway and supplies for the stations all along the line to Custon and loading up with wheat, wool, bark, skins and sometimes guano (from the Naracoorte caves). The wheat was sold in Melbourne or Adelaide depending upon the ruling prices in both places. The population of the District of Lacepede rose to well over 800 in 1882, 713 of whom lived in Kingston.[15] During this period, there was full employment in the town. The railway receipts on the Border to Kingston line bounded upwards. For the year ending the 30th June 1884, the excess of revenue over expenditure was £8,946. For the same period of the succeeding year, it was £15,708. With the carriage of the Victorian wheat, the receipts upon this line became the second largest in the colony.[16] The Statisticians Returns giving the value of the exports and imports of each port in the colony show that the best years of trade for Port Caroline occurred between 1882 and 1885. The total values of the exports were £270,050; £247,055; £310,332 and £259,276. Of these, the total value of the products from Victoria were:- £76,530; £65,514; £75,822 and £55,709.[17] Despite the droughts and recessions, Kingston continued to export large shipments of wheat until 1889.

These years of prosperity coincided with a brief period of relaxation of customs duties on some of the goods overlanded between Victoria and South Australia. Victoria had been a Protectionist colony since the first mild tariff was passed in 1866 as a measure to combat the unemployment,

15 Census for 1882.

16 Blue Books 1881 and 1882 also 1884 and 1885, South Australian Railways Traffic Manager's Reports and Public Works Reports.

17 See note 14.

declining wages and strikes which came as an aftermath to the gold boom. In 1877, Graham Berry's Act put duties on practically everything that went into the colony. South Australia, being a primary producing colony, was inclined towards Free Trade although it had a fixed tariff since 1846. The quarrels and losses involved in the border trade along the Murray and the heavy Victorian tariff of 1877 forced South Australia into a policy of greater protection and, in the new customs list of 1877, fixed duties were imposed on many imported items and ten per cent ad valorem duties were placed on a few others.[18] In 1881, South Australia and Victoria were building their railways to the border. The narrow-gauge line to Custon was completed in September and it was to be continued to Bordertown and be so constructed that it would allow for adaptation to the broad-gauge lines from Murray Bridge and Horsham. South Australia and Victoria concluded an "Arrangement" to facilitate the movement of goods across the border. Instead of establishing Customs officers at all of the stations on the border, the respective governments were to keep customs tallies and settle accounts annually. In order to protect the interests of the settlers along the border, permits were to be given in Victoria and South Australia for certain goods to move duty-free provided that they were bought and sold within twenty miles of the border, but they did not include protected items or those taxed for revenue purposes. No agricultural implements, machines, engines, power condensers, fittings, jewellery, watches, cordials, tobacco or live-stock were allowed to go duty free.[19]

The Permit Officers were stationed at the border railway

18 From C.E.Williamson, 'Short History of the Department of Customs and Excise Since 1884', by courtesy of South Australian Harbours Board, Port Adelaide.

19 S.A.Parl. Papers (House of Assembly) 34, 1881 and 38, 1882.

stations and the regulations were in force by February, 1882. Grice and Company joined the South Australian flour millers and exporters who hastened to Wolseley, Custon and Lillimur North (now Kaniva), the railway head in Victoria, to buy wheat and wool or offer advances on the loads to be exported. They copied the idea of John Dunn, the Bridgewater miller who offered prizes for the best wheat sent to his mill.[20] The amount that they received at their stores in Kingston, depended upon the prices that they offered compared with those obtainable at Dunn's and Simpson's mills at Wolseley and Custon and Carroll's at Naracoorte, which began grinding in December 1883. It also depended upon the ruling prices in the markets at London, Port Adelaide and Melbourne. The tonnage of wheat carried by the Kingston-Tatiara railway line steadily increased during the period of the border agreement. It rose from 1,335 tons in 1880 to 1,859 in 1881; 4,445 in 1882 and 5,878 in 1885.[21]

In the early eighteen eighties Kingston was more prosperous than it had ever been. The local builders and contractors took advantage of the expansion of settlement in Kingston itself and the opening of villages along the new railway lines to extend their activities. They built houses in Kingston, Rosetown and in the suburban blocks to the government town and railway stations and institutes in Lucindale and the new villages on the Tatiara line. A wool scouring and fell-mongery works was started by A.G.Abbott at Reedy Creek. The wool markets of Melbourne were being dominated by American buyers who gave high prices for washed

20 Naracoorte Herald, 3 April 1883. On and after 1 January they offered to receive and take charge of wheat at Custon and give advances on same. Elder Smith and Company offered to start a local regular market.

21 Blue Books 1881 and 1882 also 1884 and 1885, South Australian Railways Traffic Manager's Reports.

and scoured wool and Abbott took advantage of the demand to establish the plant and machinery for the cleaning of wool. He also established a wool dumping machine at his premises in Kingston.[22] During this period P.G.Patterson who owned the general store, extended it into a small clothing factory which specialized in made-to-order garments and hats. When a wholesale and retail merchant Edward Goode of Goolwa went to Kingston on his honeymoon in 1880 he was so impressed with Patterson's store that he returned later in the year and bought it. Thomas and Edward Goode already had a store at Goolwa and they decided to work the two, Thomas at Goolwa and Edward at Kingston. When Goode took over Patterson's store in 1880, it was a flourishing concern, employing five to six hands daily and it also had the service of a first class milliner and dress-maker. Its turnover was about £14,000 a year.[23]

The three hotels improved and extended their premises to accommodate tourists and businessmen and the "Ship Inn" had a large room set aside for commercial travellers to display their samples. Ambrose Soar had a large boarding house and many of the private families eked out their incomes by taking in boarders. The town became a travelling centre as people stayed overnight in order to connect with passenger ships, the railway, or the Coorong mail. The coastal steamship service catered well for passengers and both ships and the railway began carrying greatly increased numbers of people.

The increase in the population stimulated the development of a greater sense of pride in the town and more efforts to improve its appearance. The Council sought to grow trees in the streets, to remove the aboriginal camp to the Blackford Reserve and to complete the kerbing and drainage of

22 Naracoorte Herald, 1882 and 1883, Advertisements (eg. 23 January 1883.

23 Information by courtesy of Miss G.Goode of Kingston.

the streets. New stone council chambers were built in 1884 and Councillor Jarman started the cultivation of lawns along the esplanade although he did not receive much co-operation from the townsmen who grazed their cows on it. There was also a healthy development in the organization of clubs and societies. The sailing enthusiasts held their first meeting to arrange Kingston regattas in 1876; the first move to start an agricultural and horticultural show in the town was made in 1877 and the first show was held in 1886. A football club was started in 1877 and the first meeting to form a rifle club occurred in 1879. The cricket club played regular matches with Robe and also organized some with Naracoorte. Balls were very frequent in the early eighties, some of the largest gatherings being those organized to entertain the officers of the visiting overseas ships. The dramatic and music clubs took on a new lease of life with the influx of people with more money to spend and the institute entertainments began to draw large and fashionable audiences consisting of the elite of the town and the local pastoralists.

The conditions of the working class people were somewhat improved by the development of building and investment societies which enabled them to build their cottages on a co-operative lending scheme. Such a society had begun in Naracoorte in 1870 and the people of Kingston were contributing to the West End Building and Investment Society in 1878. Rows of stone cottages appeared along the railway line and in Rosetown. Jarman's made-to-order wooden houses were also erected in the suburbs. The care of the sick was more efficient in this period because the town was able to afford to give a bonus to the new doctor to entice him to stay there and a hospital had been built in Naracoorte in 1879.[24] The Council was willing to send annual donations to

24 See Judith Murdoch and Heather Parker, History of

the Naracoorte hospital provided that the doctor in Kingston could send his cases there. In some years the hospital did not have the facilities to treat the sick of Kingston as well as its own and the Council refused its donation.

Kingston had had the service of a local doctor, Dr. Britton, since 1870. He hailed from Edinburgh and had come to South Australia as a supervising medical officer on one of the migrant ships. He had been highly skilled in the medicine of his day and he treated his patients at the "Ship Inn" charging 2/6 a visit. He was however a little out of date in the eighteen eighties. He always wore a frock coat, striped trousers and top hat and his medical knowledge had not advanced with the times. He used a few drugs, but he tended to rely on leeches and bleeding as cure-alls.[25] Kingston was such an isolated place that the inhabitants had continual difficulty in attracting doctors to the town. They had to rely on Edward Goode, a member of the Pharmaceutical Chemists Society of London and several trained nurses and midwives to treat and care for the sick for long stretches at a time.

In the decade of the eighteen eighties Kingston might have developed into the port that Cooke had dreamed of, had the northern South East become agricultural, or the southern portion patronized Lacepede Bay instead of Portland and Adelaide instead of Melbourne, or if free trade had been permitted to continue across the border and centralization policies had not been pursued by the governments of both colonies. It would never have been a port for the direct export of wheat because it was not deep enough, but it could have prospered on its coastal trade in wheat and heavy produce which went normally more cheaply by sea than by rail. However the commercial interests of Adelaide had failed to establish themselves in the South East and the border

24 (continued) Naracoorte, p.108.
25 Information by courtesy of Mrs. P.Parker of Kingston.

agreement had made conditions easier for the Victorians to strengthen their commercial position. Attempts were made to attract the trade, particularly of Mount Gambier, to Adelaide through a benevolent policy of railway freight charges.

The first set-back to Kingston's prosperity in the handling of the border wheat came in 1883, when the railway line from Adelaide had reached Wolseley. In April of that year, 90 trucks were sent from Port Adelaide to collect wheat from the Tatiara. Once the intercolonial line was completed, Kingston had too much competition to face from Melbourne and Adelaide, particularly since the break of gauge at Wolseley worked against goods being transported on the Tatiara-Kingston line. The double handling increased the freight charges by about 8d. per ton in 1885. The centralizing policies of both colonial governments combined to destroy the coastal import trade and wheat shipping. As soon as the Victorian railway from Horsham reached the border, the freight charges for the wheat of the Wimmera were so reduced that it was cheaper to send the grain to Geelong and Melbourne than to Kingston. Cooke pointed out that Horsham was equidistant from Kingston and Geelong, but the cost of railing wheat to Geelong was 16/6 a ton as against £1.3.3 to Kingston. Dimboola was 84 miles closer to Kingston than to Melbourne and yet the farmers there could send their wheat to Melbourne for 3/9 a ton less than to Kingston.[26] The differential freights were a serious set-back to Kingston since 90% of the wheat shipped from the port came from the Victorian side of the border. In 1886, the South Australian Railways reduced the rates on the Tatiara line and the

26 Naracoorte Herald, 3 April 1885. There were several long articles and editorials in the Naracoorte Herald under the heading, "Killing our Wheat Trade". Naracoorte had been handling a large proportion of the flour milling of wheat from the Wimmera.

Victorian wheat again went to Kingston, but in the same year when the broad-gauge line reached Bordertown, the South Australian Railways gave preferential freight charges for the Tatiara wheat going to Adelaide and Kingston lost the shipping of it.

Bad times came in 1886 and worse were to follow. The year 1886 was one of devastating droughts, red rust in wheat, poor harvests, low wool prices and colonial depression. The farmers and pastoralists could not pay the interest on their overdrafts and loans and English investors would not put money into more loans. The South Australian government faced a deficit of £700,000 in the revenue of 1885 and a larger one in 1886. All expenditure was curtailed and places like Kingston which were only beginning to pay their own way, suffered severely.

Port Caroline fell a victim to Protection and the persuasive arguments of the Adelaide merchants that the Victorians were using the border agreement to take over all of the trade of the South East. Accusations were made of smuggling along the border and a thorough examination was made of the effect of the arrangements upon the customs revenues. It was found that South Australia had lost £3,090 in customs revenues between February 1882 and September 1884 and was likely to go on losing large sums because Victoria had a higher Customs tariff than South Australia.[27] The arrangement was terminated in 1886 and the South Australian government revised its tariffs.[28] In 1887, the wheat imported into South Australia was subject to a ten per cent customs duty and that going into Victoria was taxed at the rate of 2/- per cental (100 pounds).[29] The effect on the coastal

27 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 257, 1883-1884. 'Results of Border Agreement with Victoria'.

28 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 55, 1886. 'Cancellation of Agreement'.

shipping was disastrous and the total amount of wheat railed to Kingston from Wolseley and Custon in 1887, fell to a little over 1,800 tons.[30] In the depression of the late eighteen eighties, the price of wheat at Port Adelaide fell to 3/6 a bushel and the border wheat tended to go by rail to Melbourne. There was little chance for Kingston to handle any wheat for overseas export, since the ruling price at London in 1888 was 4/4 a bushel.[31]

In the depression that followed, the South Australian government gave some assistance to wheat-growers by reducing the freight charges on the railways. The regulations of 1894, for example, guaranteed a rebate of five per cent on all rail cartage of wheat until the ruling price at Port Adelaide rose above 2/9 a bushel.[32] The coastal shipping was owned by private enterprise which could not afford such low rates. The shipping at Kingston was practically brought to a standstill. All that was left of the regular work was the annual export of wool and bark. Similar reductions on railway freight also applied to wool, but this made no difference to Kingston since the cheapest means of marketing south-eastern wool was still to rail it to Beachport or Kingston and ship it from there. Whether it went overseas or to Melbourne, the wool

29 (page 125) S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 64, 1887. ' Comparison of Border Duties'. S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 67, 1887. 'Proposed Tariffs'.

30 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 94, 1887. 'Wheat and Flour carried from Wolseley and Custon by rail to Kingston during the past year'. September 27, 1887.

31 Naracoorte Herald, 13 April 1888. Transport from Kingston to London cost 30/- a ton.

32 S.A.Parl. Paper 123B, 1894. 'Railway Commissioner's By Law 17'. The charge was not to be reduced below 2/6 ton. The power was conferred by the South Australian Railways Act of 1887.

always went by sea. Hardly any was sent by rail to Melbourne or Adelaide. After the depression, Port Caroline regained its wool trade, but the competition of the railways strangled the rest of the shipping. The townsmen blamed the short-sighted policies of the colonial governments which refused to see that the South East and the Western District were a geographical unity and that it was uneconomical for the inhabitants to cart their products three hundred miles to the capital cities when they could be exported locally. The South East had been honeycombed by a network of railways and provided with four ports which had been destroyed by a policy of low freight rates to attract the leading products to Adelaide. The break of gauge at Wolseley was unfair to the South East and the reduction of the service to three times a week on the line to Kingston reduced its chances of recovering trade. The South East impatiently awaited Federation, which they thought, would remove the barriers to their trade. However, Federation did nothing to change the centralizing policies of the colonial governments.

Chapter seven

THE SELECTION ACTS AND THE DISTRICT OF LACEPEDE FROM 1870 TO 1890

We have seen how developments in the town of Kingston were carried along on the wave of government investment in the closer settlement of the Tatiara, the Naracoorte agricultural area and the Mosquito Plains during the eighteen seventies. Kingston was prepared as the port of these areas and the administrative centre of the District of Lacepede. In order to find the full explanation for the subsequent history of the town it is necessary to see how successful were the attempts to convert the northern South East from pastoral holdings into farming blocks. Other questions which must also be answered are those dealing with the District of Lacepede itself. What happened to the pastoral industry which had been the mainstay of the population before the Selection Acts and with what success was credit selection introduced?

The opening of the northern South East to selectors occurred mainly betseen 1873 and 1874 after Strangways Act of 1869 had been amended to include compulsory cultivation clauses designed to prevent dummying.[1] The Naracoorte-Port Caroline Railway Act had also been passed and it was expected that adequate transport would be provided for all of the new hundreds proclaimed from Wirrega and Bordertown to Penola. However the results were generally disappointing. The land had not been drained and although Goyder selected only the more fertile sections of it for the new hundreds, the farmers

1 Acts of South Australia No.18, 1872. One fifth of the selection had to be cultivated.

had a hard battle to make their blocks pay. Even the best areas around Bordertown, Naracoorte and Lucindale could not produce crops as good as those in the better-drained land in the southern part of the South East. The average yield per acre of the cultivated land in the Hundred of Naracoorte in the thirteen years from 1870 to 1882 was 8.23 bushels, whereas for the same period, in the hundreds of Gambier and Blanche in the south-eastern corner of the district, it was 12.36 and 14.56 respectively. For the Hundred of Tatiara from 1876 to 1882, the average yield per acre was 9.54 and for the Hundred of Joyce between 1878 and 1882, it was 5.57. In the swampy hundreds on the coastal flats the average was nearer two bushels per acre.[2] Many of the people who had purchased blocks were not bona fide selectors and their land remained pastoral, but there were also many other selectors who wanted to farm but who could not cope with the lack of drainage, the infertility of the poorer soils that the pastoralists left for them and the inadequacies of transport facilities. They had neither the money nor the knowledge to effect the necessary improvements or to carry out the necessary experiments to find the most suitable crops. Few of them had the inclination. They expected to reap golden harvests of wheat on virgin soils as their fellows were doing in the north and when they failed to do so, they wanted to abandon their blocks and start again somewhere else. In a period when South Australian wheat sales were booming and the good harvests in the north were stimulating further expansion of agriculture beyond Port Augusta and Quorn, the selectors of the South East were selling out in large numbers to the pastoralists as soon as they completed their contracts.

The attempts to keep them on their blocks by amendments to the Selection Acts of 1868-1869 which extended the

2 See South Australia Parliamentary Paper, 76 1883-84; Vol. 1V; also No.39 1882.

currency of the contract period and lightened the financial burdens of the selectors made no significant difference. The report of the commission of inquiry into the situation of the selectors in the South East in 1876-1877 revealed that more than half of the blocks in the hundreds had gone to people who were not selectors. In 1876 non-selectors had bought 34,134 acres in the district. Three thousand nine hundred and twelve acres of this land had been sold in the Hundred of Tatiara, over 7,000 in Hynam, 2,600 in Lockaber, 6,748 in Jessie and over 13,000 in Naracoorte.[3] By 1877, the total number of acres in the hands of people who were not selectors had reached 59,628 while the number of acres still held by selectors was 17,596½.[4] Of the forty nine selectors who had taken up land in Naracoorte, thirty five had sold out by 1877 and their blocks had gone to six people.[5] Most of the blocks purchased in the other hundreds had gone to the one or two local pastoralists who had originally leased the land.

Credit selection was even less successful in Lacepede Bay than in the districts around Bordertown and Naracoorte because everyone knew that the land was too wet and much of it was quite unfit for wheat or cereal growing. Nevertheless, the Hundred of Lacepede was proclaimed as a selection area in 1868 and Murrabinna and Bowaka in 1871. The lessees of the stations of Woolmit, Bowaka, Murrabinna, Blackford and Mount Scott were given notice to remove their stock from those parts of their runs which were then in the new hundreds.[6] They were given the right to buy the land at the upset price,

3 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 124, 1876; 'Report of the Select Committee upon Purchases of Land Completed under Credit Regulations'.

4 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 41, 1877; continuation of the above report.

5 See note 3.

6 South Australian Government Gazette, 3 January 1871.

but they sensibly passed it in, preferring to spend their money on better runs around Naracoorte or Penola. No selectors bought land in the Hundred of Lacepede and in 1873, after being open to purchase for five years, it was offered to lease at sixpence per acre as the upset price with the right of purchase during the currency of the lease.[7] The other hundreds were planned to be opened to selectors in 1872, but Goyder's policy was to withhold from agriculture lands which needed draining. He thought that to permit selectors to buy these lands was tantamount to inviting their ruin and the purchase of their blocks by the lessee pastoralists at less than the upset price.[8] In 1875 the government was advised not to drain the northern flats for the time being[9] and Goyder reserved the land around Lacepede Bay for pastoral purposes only. The country was then given back to the pastoralists under new conditions of tenure and higher rents. The Waste Lands Regulations of 1870[10] provided for annual leases in the hundreds where the proclamation had not taken effect and thirteen-year renewals to the lessees of the original runs which were not going to be used for agriculture. If the lessees did not take them up, they could be auctioned for lease for tenures of not more than five years.[11]

The local pastoralists had to effect changes in their industry in order to meet the greater expenses involved in the higher rentals and the need to work upon smaller runs. Some of the pioneer pastoralists left the district, but the

7 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 68, 1873.
8 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 168, 1874; 'Goyder's recommendations on the Drainage Lands'.
9 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 68, 1875; 'Report of the Select Committee upon Drainage in the South East'.
10 S.A.Parl. Paper, 33 1870; 'Waste Lands Regulations'.
11 Ibid.

others survived by cutting their costs wherever possible. William Hutchison and Andrew Dunn built up a large scale enterprise by buying the other stations in the district as the original owners left them. They bought "Bowaka" from Thomas Morris, "Murrabinna" from Donald Gollan, "Conmurra" from Frederick Vaughan, "Mount Benson" from Donald McBain and "Morambro" from the Oliver brothers. By taking over a string of stations in both good and poor land, they were able to build the estate as a whole into a profitable enterprise. It seemed the best way to meet the problems of declining prices and government resumptions. "Morambro" was one of the richest stations in the South East. It was situated in the better-drained country along the Victorian border and William Hutchison drained parts of it for cereal growing. It was also famous for Hutchison's stud horses and sheep. The H bar horses were well known in Victoria as well as South Australia and the "Morambro" stud produced many fine race horses. Before the estate was cut up in the late eighties, Hutchison and Dunn owned a continuous line of country from Morambro to Kingston and thence through Mount Benson to Robe and inland to Conmurra. The effects of the selection legislation on Lacepede Bay were thus the absorption of most of the district into a large pastoral estate belonging to Hutchison and Dunn. The only other pastoralists were James Brown who still held "Keilira" and "Blackford" until the late eighteen eighties, the Cooke brothers who owned the land along the coast and around the town, Frederick Vaughan who held "Mount Scott" until it was resumed for the Hundreds of Minecrow and Townsend in 1877 (see the map showing the leases to be sold in 1877) and John Gall who owned "Cantara" and land along the Coorong.

During the second half of the eighteen seventies the government made strenuous efforts to prevent most of the South East from reverting to the pastoral industry. It was regarded as one of the richest districts in the colony which should support a large population. All possible encouragement must be

given to selectors to keep them on their blocks and to encourage others to buy land in the district. Goyder was always dubious of the suitability for agriculture of large tracts of the South East especially when they were not drained. The government decided that experimental farms should be established in doubtful areas.[12] As a result one was begun at Millicent in the late seventies. The government also re-examined the questions of supplying the district with better transport facilities and re-opened discussions on the drainage of the flats. There were so many delegations from the Lands Office and the Public Works Department to the South East during the late seventies and early eighties that the local inhabitants wondered whether the district had a special appeal as a holiday resort. However a whole series of changes were effected in a renewal of effort to get the area settled by small proprietors.

The new legislation of the late seventies and eighties was more successful than that of the previous years because it embodied a recognition of the special needs of the district. In the Crown Lands Consolidation Act of 1877[13] and those which succeeded it in the eighties, the cultivation clauses were relaxed in the areas not suitable for cereal growing and provisions were made for the little man to establish himself in mixed farming or even in sheep raising. The accumulation of vast areas of Crown land by the wealthy squatters was prevented by the decision to prohibit the sale of the country lands and permit only the leasing of them. The sale of land to selectors on time payment was discontinued. Selectors' leases with right of purchase and finally perpetual leases were

12 See D.W.Meinig, On the Margins of the Good Earth, p.65 for the establishment of a similar farm in the north at Manna Hill.

13 Act 36, 1877.

offered instead. The recognition of the right of the pastoralists to lands not taken up by farming was also built into the new legislation and they were given security tenure in long leases.[14]

The first of the new acts was the Crown Lands Consolidation Act of 1877 which gave to the pastoralists twenty one year leases with three years' notice of resumption in the scrub lands not being used for agriculture. The selectors' blocks were increased in size from 640 to 1,000 acres and personal residence on one block was sufficient qualification to hold two or more. The period of time payment was extended to nine years in order to give the selector a better deal and also to extend the time before a dummy could complete his contract and give the land back to the pastoralist who was backing him. The repayment regulations were also very liberal. After the payment of the initial deposit, no more was demanded until after three years during which time the farmer had a chance to establish himself. At the end of six years a quarter of the purchase money had to be paid and the final amount was not due until the end of nine years.

The first genuine attempt to take up land on selection in the Lacepede District occurred after the above Act. The townsmen of Kingston who until then had to be content with seasonal work because the port was fully occupied only in the wool season, saw that the Act of 1877 gave them a chance to take up mixed farming in the better parts of the district and they agitated to have them opened for selection under the new regulations. Goyder had been keeping to his policy of reserving the lands in need of drainage for pasture, but the government acceded to the local clamour[15] for land for the

14 See G.L.Buxton, 'South Australian Land Acts 1869-1885.'

15 Naracoorte Herald, 27 February 1877; report of a public meeting in Lacepede Bay.

little man early in 1878 and opened the hundreds of Duffield, Lacepede, Naracoorte, Joanna, Mingbool, and Hindmarsh. The Commissioner of Crown Lands and Goyder went over these areas in the same year to determine the site of the experimental farm in Rivoli Bay and to examine the prospect of extending the drainage works to the northern flats. What they saw only convinced the Commissioner that Goyder had been right to withhold the undrained lands from selection and they were again closed off.[16] A new hundred was opened at Bakers Range, but the others were left to the pastoralists until they were drained.

The settlement at Bakers Range was successful from the beginning and the village of Lucindale became the centre of a satisfied community of wheat farmers, many of whom had migrated from the local towns. The others who were still waiting for farms, held public meetings and sent petitions to the government asking again that the better parts of the district be opened to them. As a result the hundreds were re-opened and the selectors moved into them in 1878. In 1879 those in Bowaka, Townsend and Mingbool were flooded out and wanted their money back. The government permitted itself the pleasure of reminding them that their plight was their own fault for going against the better judgment of the Lands Department and allowed them to re-select elsewhere on the basis of their original deposits. Goyder closed the drainage lands again and refused to grant a request from Kingston in 1879 that 198,000 acres opened by the Naracoorte railway be thrown open for agriculture.

The whole problem of the settlement of the South East

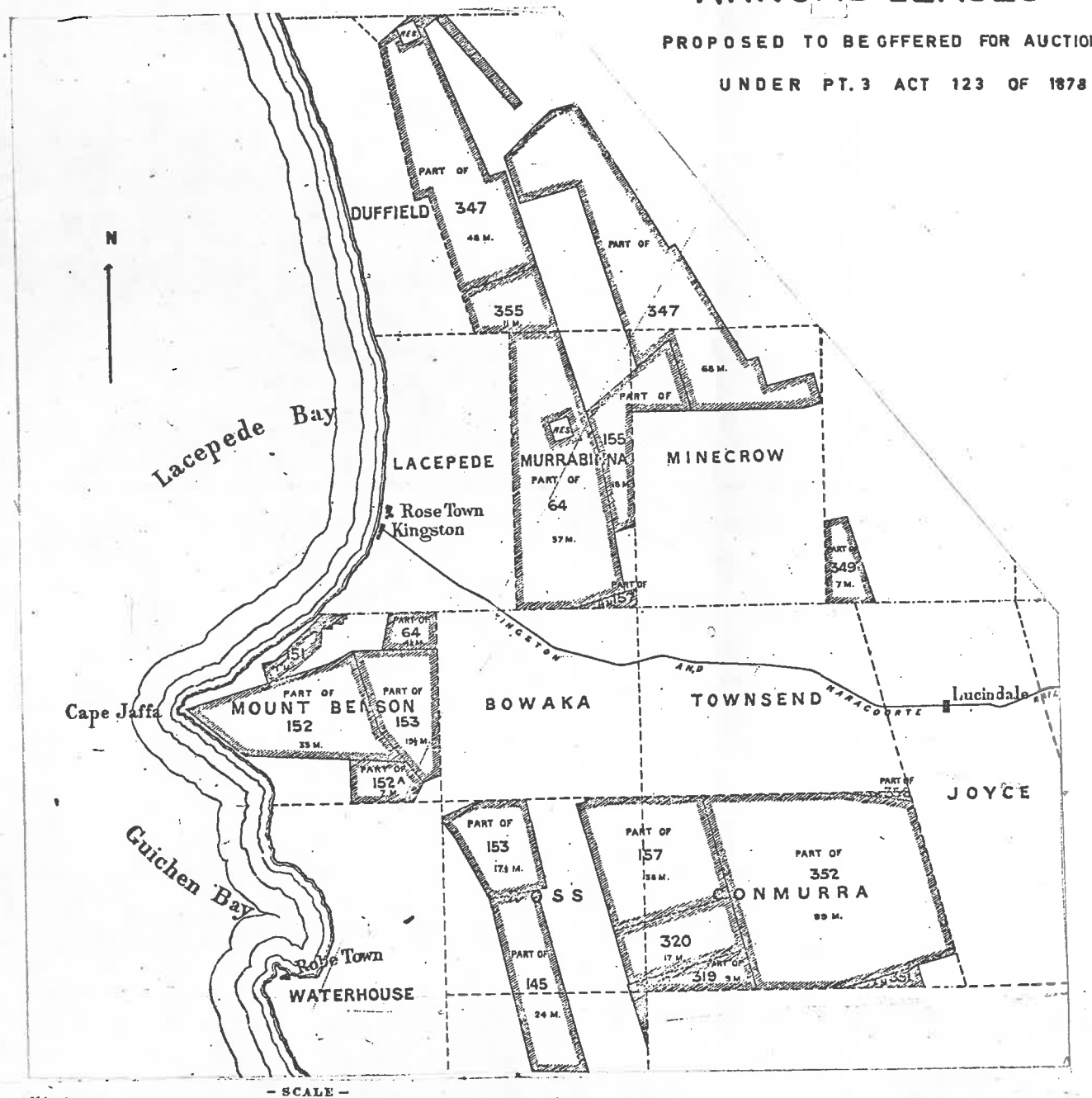
16 Ibid., 19 February 1878; Publication of a report given to the South Australian Register by the Crown Lands Department. The report was that lands had been opened in the South East for selection which were unsuitable and they were being withdrawn until they were drained.

LEASES FOR SALE, 1880.

PART PLAN
ANNUAL LEASES

PROPOSED TO BE OFFERED FOR AUCTION

UNDER PT. 3 ACT 123 OF 1878



S.A.P.P. 113. 1880.

seemed to revolve around the question of cultivation. It was becoming abundantly clear that agriculture was not likely to succeed in the greater part of the district whether it were drained or not. Draining the land might make the grasses grow, but it did not necessarily make good conditions for cereal farming. Even in the best lands of the Tatiara, sheep farming was proving more profitable than wheat. The relaxation of the conditions of cultivation had led to the more open use of the land for sheep. Selectors pushed olive cuttings in the ground along the boundaries or ploughed around the fences to comply with the regulations and used the rest of the blocks as sheep runs. In the early eighties the government began to believe the local farmers and pastoralists who said that the selectors would not succeed until they were permitted to use their blocks for the purpose to which they were the most suited and that was sheep farming.

The problems of the Tatiara were deemed able to be solved by the provision of better marketing facilities. A close inspection of the district in 1878 revealed that most of the selectors along both sides of the border were bona fide farmers but that they were being crippled by the lack of adequate means of transport.[17] The Tatiara was a very important agricultural area and the government decided to take the advice of the Railway Commission of 1875[18] and build a railway to feed the district. This was the Tatiara line which was begun in 1880 and later connected with the intercolonial line. Railways were also built to feed the settled areas around Millicent, Mount Gambier and Penola

17 South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 1878, col. 856.

18 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 22 1875, 'Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Subject of Railway Construction including the Line to the Victorian Border'.

during the decade of the eighteen eighties.[19]

The drainage problem had to be faced if the government intended going on with the schemes of settling the South East. The wider the area of settlement the more widespread had been the failures due to flooding and diseases caused by soggy conditions. However it was felt that since all but a few districts in the northern South East were not suitable for agriculture a makeshift scheme of drainage would serve the purpose of drawing off the surplus water from the flats. In 1881 the cheapest way to do this was advocated. Instead of following Goyder's original plans of cutting through the coastal ranges to allow the water to run along the natural lines of drainage into the sea, it was decided to cut costs by merely deepening the water courses which ran north-west through the flats between the ranges so that they would flow into the desert or the outlets to the sea at Maria Creek and Salt Creek. From 1881 to 1885, bars were cut in the channels of Reedy Creek and Avenue Creek in order to divert the water to the north-west. The official opinion was that it did not matter that some of the water remained on the flats because it would soak away in the desert country to the north, or harmlessly evaporate. The Jacky White Drain was cleared first then the southern half of Reedy Creek and finally the channel to Maria Creek and Salt Creek.[20]

Excavation equipment was brought to the South East for the clearing of the channels and the building of the necessary embankments and the work provided jobs for the unemployed of Adelaide and Kingston throughout the eighties.

19 See Chapter VI.

20 See Naracoorte Herald, 31 July 1888; 11 June 1889; 23 September 1891; 18 March 1892; 16 September 1893; 6 November 1894. Also S.A.Parl. Paper, 17 1948; 'First Report of the Parliamentary Commission on Land Settlement on South Eastern Drainage and Development'.

The hundreds on the inland flats were cleared of at least the worst of the swamps, but Lacepede Bay and Kingston were then afflicted with the worst floods that they had ever experienced.[21] The water did flow more rapidly from the higher south-eastern areas, but the fall in Reedy Creek and Avenue Creek was not steep enough to facilitate the flow into the outlet drains. Consequently the Bowaka, Murrabinna, Lacepede, Mount Benson and Blackford lands were submerged and the railway to Naracoorte ran through a lake or inland sea. The District Council finally persuaded the government to widen the mouth of the Maria Creek outlet in 1884, to carry the drain from it for about eleven and a half miles inland and to construct the Bowaka drain which was completed in 1887.[22] The new works relieved some of the flooding, but the whole south-east to north-west scheme was only a makeshift effort. As Goyder pointed out in 1890[23] and the people of Kingston kept pointing out for another seventy years, the natural flow of the water was not into the inland desert, but towards the sea and Goyder's original scheme of cuttings through the coastal ranges, was the cheapest and the most effective in the long run.

Once it was decided not to permit large areas of country lands to be purchased by wealthy pastoralists and land-companies, the way to make them easily available to the small men seemed to be through the discontinuation of the old time-payment scheme for outright purchase within a few years and the substitution for it of selectors' leases of twenty one year tenures with the right to purchase during the currency

21 By courtesy of the South Eastern Drainage Board who compiled a history of the work of the Board in the Kingston area.

22 Ibid.

23 Goyder's Report on the South Eastern Drainage to House of Assembly, July 10 1890. S.A.Parl. Paper, 60, 1890.

of the leases. From 1880 to 1890 a series of laws gave astonishingly liberal conditions for such leases in both the first class lands and the undrained areas. They were designed primarily with the purpose of helping the selectors in the north where drought conditions made the farming position fairly hopeless, but they also served to solve the problems of the unsold swamp-lands in the South East.

In 1882 the selectors on time-payment were given the right to surrender their unsatisfactory blocks and either cancel their agreements or take up other selections using their previously paid instalments as deposits or purchase money on the new blocks.[24] Cultivation conditions were relaxed where the land was unsuitable and so were residence conditions where it was deemed necessary. In 1884 selectors were permitted to purchase drained lands as well as first class lands; a thousand acres of first class land being regarded as equal to 640 acres of reclaimed land.[25] The Act of 1884 permitted the cultivation of wattle trees instead of cereal crops or fruit trees. Only one fifth of the land had to be cultivated or one thirtieth planted with approved trees. No interest charges were to be made on the purchase money. All instalments henceforth were to be regarded as payments upon the principal.

The idea of selectors' leases was also introduced in 1884. Selectors could surrender their old agreements and take up leases of not more than three thousand acres on tenures of twenty one years. The only provisions were that the land should be fenced in two years and the first year's rent should be paid as deposit. The selectors were promised that three quarters of the costs on all drains put in should be repaid at the expiration of the leases.[26] In 1885 selectors'

24 Act 275, 1882.
25 Act 318, 1884. See G.L.Buxton, 'S.A.Land Acts', p.88.
26 Ibid.

leases were permitted in the undrained lands as well as the first class and the reclaimed lands and in the same year the Land Department opened for credit selection and selectors' leases the hitherto valueless undrained land around Lacepede Bay and in the flats between Kingston and Naracoorte. Much of the country along the coast from the Coorong to Mount Benson was then taken up by selectors on the conditions of the Act of 1884.[27] The selectors at Mount Benson satisfied the cultivation conditions by growing wattle trees and the people of the district began to approach the business of the cultivation of wattles from the germination of the seeds to the de-barking of the trees with a more scientific outlook. Bark mills were established at Noolook on Mount Benson and in Kingston and large quantities of stick and powdered bark were annually exported.

In 1885 the depression in agriculture and trade led to the idea of cutting wages bills by giving the workmen the right to own small blocks of land upon which they could build their houses and grow produce to supplement the food that they could buy with their wages. Homestead blocks for working men were made available on twenty one year lease to anyone over eighteen years of age who gained his living by his own labour.[28] They were to be of not more than twenty acres which were deemed sufficient for a family to keep a cow and fowls and grow a garden. They were to be made available in all towns and suburbs through the colony. Aboriginal reserves and travelling stock reserves could also be used in country areas. The only conditions were that the lessees paid the first year's rent as a deposit; that the price did not fall below a penny per acre; that no one should hold more than one block and that personal residence or residence of the wife

27 From records of the Crown Lands Department by courtesy of the Adelaide office.

28 Act 363, 1885.

and family was required for nine months of each year.

George Ash, the editor of the Naracoorte Herald waxed enthusiastic over the great-hearted gesture from the government. Henceforth there would be no need for any thrifty and industrious man to suffer penury. By the help of the local building and investment society he could erect a house which would become his own in a few years and he could keep his family well fed from the products of his block.[29] The government began the survey of the working men's blocks in the suburbs of Kingston in 1886. Unfortunately the area decided upon was inundated with water during the winter months. Many of the townsmen selected blocks, but since the drainage schemes of the eighteen eighties did not clear away the swamps around Kingston, the blocks were never taken up. The thrifty and industrious had to build their houses in Rosetown or in Kingston itself. Nevertheless many of the selectors took advantage of the opportunity to build cheaply by means of the building societies and owned houses in Kingston. Before local schools were built in the Reedy Creek and Mount Benson areas, the wives brought the children to live in Kingston during the school term.[30]

The offer of selectors' leases in the undrained lands in 1885 did not please all of the local people. The idea of giving the small man a large enough holding to work upon with some chance of success had general approval, but thoughtful people in Kingston and Naracoorte were afraid that the extension of the selections from 640 to 1,000 acres and the additional provision of selectors' leases of 3,000 acres could result in the land falling into the hands of the squatters and the defeat of twenty years of legislation for the purpose of establishing the small man on his own block. There was no way in which the Lands Department could prevent

29 Naracoorte Herald, 5 January 1886.
30 By courtesy of Mrs.C.F.Barnett of Reedy Creek.

the large landholders and pastoralists from aggregating selectors' leases into their estates by the old device of dummying. Both Kingston and Naracoorte were opposed to the offer of the long leases upon these grounds. There was no guarantee that three thousand acres of swamp lands would be sufficient for the small grazier to make a success of his holding and it was likely that he would have to sell out to the land owners as in the eighteen seventies. Men in Naracoorte and Kingston could not see the sense in forming hundreds and building railways for agriculture and then letting the land out to pastoralists.[31] James Cooke thought that such a policy would put Kingston back twenty years.[32]

The battle against the return of the land to the pastoralists was taken up by George Ash who believed in closer settlement and the preservation of the rights of the small capitalists. From 1885 to 1887[33] he led such a strong public agitation against the leases that 160,000 acres of land were withdrawn and 91,789 acres in the hundreds of Joanna, Hynam, Binnum, Bowaka and Comaum were re-offered for ordinary selection. However, the government was right in believing that they would not sell, since only 3,000 acres were taken up. The selectors' leases were offered again under more stringent conditions to prevent dummying in the Crown Lands Consolidation Act of 1886 and the Crown Lands Amendment Act of 1888.

The work of George Ash had not been in vain, for Vigilance Committees had been established by the interested

31 Naracoorte Herald, 27 March 1883.

32 Naracoorte Herald, 19 January 1883. "Sheep now graze over the sites of farmers' homes". James Cooke thought that the leasing of the land to the pastoralists would put the development of Kingston back twenty years.

33 Naracoorte Herald, 9, 24 January, 10 May 1885; 10 February, 18 March, 29 June, 16 September 1887.

people in Naracoorte and Kingston to see that the land was allocated fairly and their agitation against dummying led the government to appoint a Lands Commission in 1888 to recommend the best way of dealing with the problem. The Commission advised the repeal of the earlier acts and the division of the land into districts each one being given a Land Board to deal with the allocation of blocks in each locality.[34] All of the lands were then opened only for selection, right-of-purchase leases or perpetual leases[35] and the cultivation and residence clauses were abolished. The attitude of the Commissioners was that the Land Boards should have as their main duty, the revaluation of the rents of the perpetual leases. The threat of dummyism by the squatters was thought to be more or less a thing of the past.

Most of the people of Kingston, the contractors, the labourers, the farmers and the pastoralists took up land in the Lacepede District under the conditions of the Acts of 1884 and 1886. In order to see that justice was given to each one the District Council asked that the land near the town be surveyed in small blocks of one to two hundred acres and larger ones be marked out in the scrub, further inland. They also strictly supervised the allocation of the blocks and professed themselves well pleased with the results. In 1887 Wangolina was opened up and the Hundreds of Lacepede and Murrabinna surveyed. The Lands Board for the district was duly appointed and the allocation of the lands began. George Ash attended the meetings and reported the proceedings in full in the Naracoorte Herald, but there was no real trouble in Lacepede Bay. The Hutchison family selected a number of blocks in Murrabinna, but no ill feeling arose because they

34 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 28, 1888. 'Report of Royal Commission to Determine the Best Way of Dealing with Lands in South Australia'. para. 11.

35 Except for town or suburban allotments.

were well liked in the district and in several cases they were the only applicants.[36] The Gall family were accused of dummying in the Hundred of Duffield and John Gall replied to the accusation in an amusing letter to the Naracoorte Herald in 1889 assuring the public in general that no member of his family, neither his sons nor his daughters, nor his man-servants, nor maid-servants, nor his ox nor his ass had secured a single acre that had been applied for by any other person. Gall's letter provides an explanation of some of the growth of the large estates that appeared again in the eighteen nineties. The sons of the local pastoralists selected blocks in the same way as the sons of the contractors and labourers. The selectors' leases were open to any male over eighteen years of age who lived within ten miles of the land that he wanted to lease and William Hutchison and John ~~and Joseph~~ Gall took the opportunity to put their sons on the land. The legislation and the allocations by the Lands Board had thus provided for large family estates to be built up. Andrew Hutchison established the station of "Ashmore", and the Gall family owned land along the north-western coast of the Bay from their station of "Cantara" to about forty miles from Kingston. Some of the contractors in Kingston were able to do the same. The Redman family for example either owned or leased so much land in Marcollat and its neighbourhood that they could practically travel from Keith to the sea without crossing anybody else's property. Edward Goode who bought the station which he called "Barooka" in 1886 also built up a large pastoral concern which included leases of about 106 square miles of scrubland near Tintinara.

36 S.A.Parl. Paper, 78 1889, 'Report of South Eastern Land Board'. The Land Board reported that W.Hutchison, the pastoralist concerned was given his two blocks in Murrabinna because nobody else applied for them.

The depression of 1893 caused the ruin of Hutchison and Dunn and the sale of their estate resulted in the stations being transferred to several large owners who carried on in much the same way as they had done during the seventies. Thomas H. Fraser bought "Murrabinna" and J.F. and T.S.Ryder purchased most of the "Mount Benson" estate. The new owners found that they could make their stations in Lacepede Bay pay if they ran them in conjunction with better ones elsewhere and they built up a fairly large estate. Thomas H. Fraser, for example, had an estate of ninety eight thousand acres which included the head station of "Murrabinna" and land which he had selected or bought in the Hundreds of Ross, Murrabinna and Lacepede and also large pastroal leases in the Hundreds of Peacock, Landseer and Marcollat. His estate extended from Kingston to Desert Camp which was forty miles from the town.[37]

J.F. and T.S.Ryder started with "Wongolina" in the early nineties and added to it "Ashmore" and the "Mount Benson" estate including the "Woolmit" and "Biscuit Flat" stations. Freehold and leasehold, this estate totalled twenty seven thousand acres. They later sold "Woolmit" and the "Biscuit Flat" lands to Allan and Harold Morris and the "Mount Benson" station to the government for closer settlement. They themselves bought five thousand acres of the

37 From information collected by resident holders of the pastoral properties and also articles on sales of the estates in the Naracoorte Herald.
Naracoorte Herald, 2 January 1894 (sale of "Morambro"); 25 June 1901 (closer settlement of Mt.Benson); 19 January, 7 March 1911 ("Woolmit"); 28 August 1914 (death of W.Hutchison); 13 February 1920 (sale of "Conmurra"); 6 November 1920 (John Gall's sale); 19 February, 1 May 1925 (clearing sale H.W.Morris); 11 February 1928 (death of Thomas H.Fraser).

"Morambro" estate and J.F.Ryder established himself at "Ashmore" while T.S.Ryder took over "Wangolina", "Morambro" and "Killanoola". They were well known for their breeding and racing of horses both in South Australia and Victoria.[38]

It was not until the progressively heavy land taxes and the poor wool prices of the first two decades of the twentieth century made the station owners decide to sell out, that the government was able to re-purchase these lands for closer settlement. Many of the pastoralists of Kingston sold out in 1923-24. Despite the fact that there were these large stations in the district, the country around Lacepede Bay rapidly filled with selectors on right-of-purchase leases. Small graziers gained a footing in Reedy Creek, Lacepede, Mount Benson, Blackford, Keilira and Mount Scott. They were men who came from Kingston, from other parts of the South East, from Goolwa and the Adelaide Plains or from the northern agricultural and pastoral areas. Although they were hard hit by the depression of 1893 and some of them had to give up their land, many of them battled against cruel hardships to build their grazing properties into efficiently run and profitable enterprises and they took the lead in experiments with pasture grasses and stock breeding. They took their places in the District Council, the local branches of the Agricultural Bureau and the Stock Owners Association and played an important part in the constant agitation by the district to have the north-western flats properly drained. The families of many of these men still hold pastoral properties in the district. Avenue Range, Reedy Creek and Mount Benson became the centres of small satellite communities to Kingston and the Hundred of Lacepede and although the town later lost its importance as a port, it survived to function as the social and business centre of quite a large pastoral district.

38 Ibid.

The outcome of the selection acts in the area around Kingston was thus the re-establishment of the pastoral industry. Nevertheless the objectives of the men who framed the legislation did not all go unrealized. The primary motive was to put the small man on the land and although it was not achieved in farming as was first planned, it was carried out successfully in the establishment of small graziers upon the land by means of the selectors' leases with right of purchase and the perpetual leases which had been made possible by the legislation of the eighties and nineties. Subsequent government policy in the re-purchase and subdivision of the freehold estates as the owners sold out has tended to maintain a large number of small pastoral holdings in the district. There is still a large estate held freehold at Kingston. "Ashmore", "Keilira" and "Murrabinna" are part of the pastoral properties belonging to the McBride estate. This large private concern has proved to be an essential factor in the progress of the neighbourhood for the owners have had the initiative and the necessary capital to carry out the experimentation necessary to make the best use of the country by the employment of power-driven machinery for the cultivation of the heaviest soils, the improvement of pasture grasses and the introduction of better strains of cattle and sheep. Government enterprise and research have also played a valuable part, especially in the preparation of the land for soldier settlements and the discovery of the role of micro-nutrients in soil fertility and the prevention and cure of coast disease.

Chapter eight

DEPRESSION AND LONG DECLINE

Among the factors responsible for the rise and decline of Kingston, government policy would seem to be the most powerful one. The government of the eighteen sixties built the port and supplied it with feeder railways for two purposes. One was to use it as a means towards effecting successful agricultural settlement of the northern part of the South East and the other was to give the merchants of Adelaide an opportunity to take over the trade of the district from the Victorians.

By the eighteen eighties it was apparent that neither objective was going to be achieved. The Victorian merchants still controlled the trade and the northern South East remained largely pastoral. The gamble on the port at Kingston had failed and the government had no further use for it. It was left to decline just as Robe and Port MacDonnell had done before it.

The poverty of the lands to the north-west of the Mosquito Plains resulted in their being left for pasture and the little man's clamour for land was satisfied with the offer of selectors' leases with the right-to-purchase. Pastoralists did not need railways, nor would lines constructed to pastoral areas pay. The routes of new railways that were built in the South East in the eighteen eighties were an acknowledgment of the defeat of the schemes to open up the northern section. They were built for the settled districts around Mount Gambier, Millicent, Penola, Naracoorte and Bordertown.

However, although the merchants of Adelaide had been beaten in the South East, final defeat was not yet accepted.

The railways were planned to achieve what the ports had been unable to do. The fast transport which they provided should attract the products of the settled South East to the markets of Adelaide. All of the lines led to Adelaide and Port Adelaide and, provided that the freight charges were low enough, the commerce of the district should go to the capital.

Kingston did not retain the wheat shipping business of the Wimmera because the Victorian and South Australian Railways became involved in cut-throat competition. The abnormally low freight charges which resulted, destroyed the carrying trade of the coastal shipping. The Protectionist policies of both colonies also destroyed the import trade. The wheat trade of the Tatiara was lost to Kingston as soon as the intercolonial line reached Bordertown. The shipping agencies could not avoid the competition of the railways by exporting wheat directly overseas. Kingston was not a deep-sea port and the lightering costs were too high to make this a practical solution. World wheat prices fell rapidly during the late eighties and the nineties and British prices for wheat were too low for any such scheme to work. Once or twice marketing agents in Naracoorte thought of chartering a ship to send their wheat to England, but gave up because it would not pay. (One such occasion was 28 February 1888 See. Naracoorte Herald).

During the depression of the eighteen nineties, the freight charges on the railways were further reduced to help the farmers and to make the railways pay. Normally it would be reasonable to expect that heavy goods would travel more cheaply by sea, but the Commissioner of Railways made the reverse true. The battle between the railways and the coastal shipping became one between government enterprise and private companies. Government enterprise won and the shipping companies were driven out, but the Railways Department had to run at a loss to achieve their victory. During the first twenty years of the twentieth century they reduced the train time tables in order to cut their losses and in doing so they

impaired their service to the district as a whole and caused great losses to places like Kingston which were already crippled by the depression and were in need of efficient means of communication and transport to help local business to recover.

The change in government policy in relation to transport in the South East occurred so quickly that Kingston and Beachport became anachronisms almost immediately after the railway from the settled districts had been built to them. The main trade route moved away from the coast to the richer, more thickly populated districts along the border. Mount Gambier, Penola, Naracoorte and Bordertown which had always been more prosperous, gained the additional advantages of the railway and grew rich in commerce and population. The old cry of the South East for service to the settled districts had been answered.

The coastal plains from Meningie to Robe and the townships in them were neglected because they were poorer and more sparsely settled. The discovery of the causes of the infertility of the coastal soils did not occur until 1934 and it would not have been good economic policy to provide the area with any means of transport other than the Coorong Road. The coastal towns and the pastoralists on the right-of-purchase leases in the vicinity suffered from the lack of cheap transport as well as the deficiencies of the soils and they made several attempts to persuade the government to build a narrow-gauge railway from Meningie to Kingston[1] or a steam-boat service along the Coorong from the Murray lakes to Salt Creek.[2] None of them were practicable enough to be given

1 James Cooke began agitation for this scheme in 1882 when he saw that the intercolonial line would ruin Kingston's trade. See Naracoorte Herald, 3, 10 January, 28 February 1882.

2 The first attempt to persuade the government to clear the

much consideration. The settlers and the townsmen had to wait for the days of motorized transport along the Coorong Road (the Princes Highway) and the revolution in soil science which enabled them to improve the soils and expand their pastoral activities.

Kingston suffered severely in the depression which descended upon the South East in the years between 1886 and 1893, because the loss of the border trade occurred at the same time. The town also lost the government support upon which the port had developed and the whole district was impoverished by the falling wool prices and the collapse of the banks in 1892-93.[3] No more money was available for public works that were not immediately remunerative. The attention of the government was focussed upon the distress in the more thickly populated urban and suburban areas. The country districts were left to deal with their own problems as best they could and by acts like the Local Courts Act of 1883-84[4]

(continued)

2 Coorong occurred in the eighteen sixties. See Ebenezer Ward, The South Eastern District, pp.6 and 7 and S.A.Parliamentary Paper, (House of Assembly) 141, 1872; 'Estimated cost of clearing the Coorong'. The idea was that Goolwa and Kingston should be connected by barge transport along the Coorong to Salt Creek and thence to Kingston by road. Other ideas included the deepening of Reedy Creek and Maria Creek to complete the water channel from the Coorong. See Vice Admiral Creswell's Scheme for a Port for the Murray Valley published in the Naracoorte Herald, 7,28 May 1926. Also S.A. Parl.Paper, 80 1883-4; 'Report on Dredging the Coorong'.

3 Most of the closures were in 1892 between April and July. The National Bank suspended business on 1 May. The bulk of its business was in South Australia and many of the pastoralists around Kingston had accounts at its local branches.

4 Act 299, 1883-4; Local Courts Act Amendment Act. This act

TABLE 11

No.1

Total value of Produce exported from Beachport, Kingston, Port MacDonnell and Robe, 1878-1897. Declared value in £s. of South Australian and foreign produce.

	BEACHPORT		KINGSTON		PORT MacDONNELL		ROBE	
YEAR	S.A.	F/RN	S.A.	F/RN	S.A.	F/RN	S.A.	F/RN
1878	-	-	185,700	71,167	152,803	826	15,226	35
1879	3,678	451	151,977	43,984	107,491	192	5,807	5
1880	11,634	32	154,117	53,660	114,615	313	1,658	-
1881	7,956	659	140,531	42,865	82,238	120	1,872	-
1882	32,984	213	204,520	67,580	96,144	1,138	6,341	-
1883	29,826	48	181,541	65,514	86,221	26	7,815	412
1884	36,350	192	135,010	75,822	102,579	50	16,987	310
1885	20,403	2,309	204,567	55,709	61,037	82	11,825	99
1886	23,508	89	119,418	46,105	65,674	77	10,052	-
1887	31,102	70	141,777	51,903	74,738	620	7,455	5
1888	35,961	119	118,968	37,716	60,802	88	8,983	163
1889	45,917	155	140,186	59,521	71,524	38	6,797	10
1890	40,270	12,288	120,555	37,576	85,640	-	9,503	-
1891	31,446	238	141,028	33,891	44,977	-	5,946	-
1892	26,697	63	136,858	38,446	43,320	-	9,594	-
1893	27,684	4	114,874	23,474	45,966	-	4,066	1,000
1894	39,423	62	137,977	16,581	64,381	625	7,941	25
1895	26,330	-	103,442	8,970	63,721	-	4,133	-
1896	24,560	-	122,966	7,711	54,400	-	4,185	-
1897	10,216	-	169,386	7,852	36,275	-	976	-

No.2

Total value of Produce exported from South Australia 1878-1889.

VALUE IN £S.

YEAR	PRODUCE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	FOREIGN PRODUCE
1878	4,198,034	1,156,987
1879	3,957,854	804,873
1880	4,829,577	744,928
1881	3,643,402	764,355
1882	4,187,840	1,172,050
1883	3,487,827	1,395,634
1884	5,292,222	1,331,482
1885	4,385,599	1,031,546
1886	2,822,138	1,666,870
1887	3,348,561	1,982,219
1888	4,670,773	2,313,325
1889	3,694,692	3,564,673

From Statistical Register of South Australia, Interchange, Return Number 15 1882, 1884, 1889, 1891, 1892, 1898-99.

TABLE 111

No.1

Total Value of Produce Imported for Years 1879-1892.

VALUE IN £S.

YEAR	BEACHPORT	KINGSTON	PORT MacDONNELL	ROBE
1879	4,618	32,621	39,209	2,143
1880	1,841	52,316	32,854	1,898
1881	5,132	48,691	28,199	2,082
1882	7,867	56,238	33,405	1,081
1883	3,261	67,323	26,721	480
1884	-	-	-	-
1885	29,362	86,305	21,854	342
1886	5,537	41,505	14,021	1,819
1887	3,530	35,302	16,473	565
1888	2,378	28,697	13,335	311
1889	3,221	23,313	15,430	98
1890	7,040	14,633	8,647	196
1891	9,227	13,109	4,139	70
1892	5,728	10,428	2,670	52

No.2

YEAR	TOTAL FOR S.A.
1879	5,014,150
1880	5,581,498
1881	5,224,063
1882	6,707,788
1883	6,310,055
1885	5,289,014
1886	5,096,293
1888	5,413,638
1889	6,804,451

From Statistical Register of South Australia, Interchange, Return Number 14, 1883, 1889 and 1892.

and the District Councils Act of 1887,[5] as much as possible of the expense of administration was transferred to them from the central authority. The District of Lacepede, for example, was enlarged so that it took in the supervision of the drainage and it had to take the greater share of the financial burden of road making, since the old Albert Board of Main Roads ceased to exist.

The private shipping companies had found that they could not compete with the railways and by 1892 they had given up trying. Kingston's coastal shipping came to a standstill. The only vessels that came to the port were those engaged by the stock and station firms for the export of wool and bark. The value of the annual exports from Kingston fell from £199,657 in 1889 to £183,348 in 1893 and £112,412 in 1895.[6] The imports had already fallen away. In 1889, they were valued at £23,313 as against £86,305 in 1885. The number of ships entering the port, fell from 40, in 1885, to 6, in 1890[7] and from 1892 to 1895, the only vessels entered in the Port Caroline shipping Register, were those bringing coal for the railways from Newcastle.[8]

Some of the population began moving out of Kingston in 1886. In 1889 twenty houses were pulled down and transported elsewhere. Some of their owners left for the silver mines at Broken Hill while others tried their luck at Port Pirie which

4 (continued) reduced the number of courts in the colony.
5 Act 419, 1887; District Councils Act which extended powers of Councils and also their responsibilities especially in road making.
6 See Table 11,
7 Statistical Registers, 1886 and 1890, Interchange, 'Returns of Ships entered and cleared at the separate ports of the colony'.
8 The Port Caroline Shipping Register, 1884-1924 (Adelaide Archives).

was developing into the port of the Broken Hill mines. By 1890, the depression was so general in the South East that the people of Kingston did not leave in any great numbers. They thought that the situation was just as bad elsewhere. There were records on the Naracoorte Herald of meetings of the creditors of bankrupts all over the South East and the depression was general through the colony.

The District Council did its best to give work to the local unemployed, but its own funds were reduced by the inability of many of the landowners to pay their rates and the ruthless reductions in the grants-in-aid given by the central authority for road-works. The opportunities for local men to find jobs on public works were also limited by the government's policy of sending its own workmen to repair public buildings instead of hiring the jobs to contractors in the town and its habit of using the drainage works as a means of giving jobs to the Adelaide unemployed. The District Council did what it could with the meagre funds available, to keep the roads in repair and, at the same time, share out the work fairly among the contractors. Both tasks were practically impossible since the ratepayers were asking for reductions in their assessments and objecting to the policy of making Peter help to feed Paul. In April 1895 there were fifty five tenders sent to the District Council for the twelve contracts that it had the money to finance. When the Council attempted to distribute the work fairly between those contractors whose charges were nearly the same, the contractors in a body protested and insisted that the work be given to the lowest bidders.

The Council was suffering not only from the depression, but also from the change in the nature of the community. When Kingston was an active and growing port, the population was large enough and sufficiently consolidated into a village community for local self-government to work in a small way. During the eighteen nineties when the commerce had

deteriorated and the population of about 885 was dispersed on sheep farms over about 1,165 square miles it was not surprising that the pastoralist rate-payers did not see eye to eye with the town rate-payers or that the members representing the different wards, quarrelled over the disposal of the Council funds. However, the Council survived the turmoil and the town remained the focal point of commerce and community interests for the population of the district. Kingston did not become a ghost town for it continued to function as the outport for the South Eastern wool, the railway head of the surrounding district from Robe to the pastoral holdings along the Coorong and the administrative, social and marketing centre of the Lacepede district. With the reduction in its business activities the population in the town declined to about 300 and that of the district of Lacepede to between 750 and 800.[9] The pastoralists and the townsmen sought new functions for Kingston and put their capital into several enterprises none of which were successful. Prices in world markets for the products and the high costs of transport to Adelaide were the main factors working against success. A rabbit and fish cannery was started in 1903 and had a chequered career before it finally closed. The local people took up the trapping of rabbits and railing them to Adelaide, but the rail costs were too high to make this enterprise profitable over a long period of time. The bark-crushing mills established in the eighteen nineties were more successful, but they closed in the early part of the twentieth century and efforts to revive the industry in the nineteen twenties also failed. A furnace was erected on the beach for the extraction of minerals from sea-weed, but it was also unsuccessful and when it was blown down, nobody replaced it. There was no other function for Kingston than to be the township of the pastoral

9 The census figures give the population of the District of Lacepede as 860 in 1891, 807 in 1911 and 751 in 1921.

district.

Out of the many attempts to found new industries the only lasting one was deep-sea fishing. In 1889 when J.Winter found that he could make no profit out of his sandy and rabbit-infested block, he decided to build a boat suitable for fishing in the deep waters of the bay and around Cape Jaffa. He was anxious to catch schnapper, baracoota and crayfish which he hoped to sell in the Adelaide markets. The idea became popular and, by 1890, there were fifteen fishing boats operating in Lacepede Bay. The local men were working on a new design for boats and were selling fish to firms in Adelaide. They were also hopeful of opening markets in Ballarat and Melbourne. Their enterprise was not rewarded with any easy success. After the long train journey in wet bags to Adelaide, a large percentage of the fish were worthless and the men at Kingston suffered the losses. They could not persuade the Railways Department to supply a refrigeration car for the fish because they were too small in number to guarantee that it would pay. They tried to open a shop in Adelaide and find markets in Ballarat and Melbourne, but they were defeated on the one hand by the distance from their markets and on the other by intercolonial tariffs. In 1893, a tax was put on fish imported into Victoria. They realized that they were too small in number and too weak financially to overcome their difficulties in Adelaide and they tried to help themselves by forming an association and opening markets in the inland towns. A Kingston Fishermen's Association was founded in 1912[10] and the cooking and bottling of crayfish for sale in Broken Hill was begun.[11] However they did not make significant headway until 1945 when they formed part of the South Australian Fishermen's Co-operative founded at Beachport.[12] ~~in~~

10 Naracoorte Herald, 6 September 1912.

11 In 1934 they sent bags of live crayfish to Broken Hill by air. Naracoorte Herald, 29 November, 1934.

1945.[12] By this time they had beaten the problem of distance from markets because they had the advantages of motorized transport, refrigeration and good roads. By 1949 there were filleting and freezing plants at Beachport, Kingston and Robe and the Co-operative had secured an open contract to send their surplus crayfish to firms in America.[13]

The rate of progress in the town was henceforth determined by the speed with which advances were made in the pastoral industry of the district and from 1900 to about 1938 it was so slow as to be almost imperceptible. The records of the District Council show that the people were enterprising enough, but their efforts to pull the pastoral industry out of stagnation and to revive the commerce of the town were retarded by the poverty of the soils and the small number of people scattered over the large area of the district. In 1887 under the regulations of the Local Government Act, the boundaries of the Lacepede District were extended to include the neighbouring hundreds given over to selectors' leases. It then contained, as well as the Hundreds of Lacepede, Murrabinna, Bowaka, Minecrow and Mount Benson, the undeveloped lands of the Hundreds of Landseer, Duffield, Marcollat and Woolumbool. In the heath country of Woolumbool, the land was so poor and the winter floods so bad that it had been given to the settlers at very low rentals. The small landowners holding grazing and right-of-purchase leases, had suffered considerable hardship from the depression. Most of their blocks were too small and even with low government rents on them, it did not pay to raise stock or grow wool.[14] Many of the new men were

12 Information by courtesy of South Australian Fishermen's Co-operative Limited, Adelaide, 1966.

13 Information supplied by South Australian Fishermen's Co-operative Limited. Adelaide, 1961.

14 Naracoorte Herald, 24 February, 1892.

contractors from Kingston or even labourers who did not have enough capital to run the leases efficiently and certainly not enough to withstand a depression. They had borrowed heavily from the banks and stock and station agents in order to establish their flocks and pay for fencing, wire netting and all of the other paraphernalia involved in the unequal fight against the rabbit infestation which reached plague proportions by 1886. The rabbits threatened to eat out the sheep, but while the landowners in the better land around Naracoorte could fight low wool prices and rabbits by turning to wheat-growing, there was little chance to do so in the undrained and infertile soils in the hundreds which belonged to the District of Lacepede.

The hardships of the settlers were reflected in the decline in the pastoral industry of the district from 1890 to 1897. In 1890, the numbers of stock kept in the District of Lacepede were 2,536 horses; 416 cows; 3,020 horned cattle and 129,681 sheep. In 1897 they had fallen to 1,743 horses; 219 cows; 1,204 cattle and 85,105 sheep.[15] There were probably losses caused by drought, but the decrease in production was due mainly to the depression. The most thrifty and industrious of the small pastoralists found difficulty in meeting the interest on their loans and the banks and finance firms foreclosed fairly promptly. The squatters on the larger stations were little better off since most of them had also borrowed heavily when they tried to meet low prices by stocking more heavily. In the disastrous conditions of 1890 to 1893, many banks and stock and station firms were on the verge of collapse themselves and foreclosed on the pastoralists in order to gain some resources upon which they could draw. Hutchison and Dunn lost "Morambro" to the bank in

15 Statistical Register, 1890, Production Livestock, The number and description of livestock in each county and district; Ibid., 1897, Pastoral Occupation.

this way. Their capital was tied up in their pastoral and shipping interests and they did not have enough ready cash to meet the demands of their bankers. They had to dissolve the partnership during the depth of the depression in 1893.[16] In these harsh times many honest and hard-working men had to walk off their land with empty hands. The big landowners who were not sold up to their creditors, either sold their land to the government for subdivision, or, more rarely, found private buyers with ready funds. The selectors struggled on or sold out to their more fortunate neighbours who used the depression to amalgamate the too-small holdings into properties of workable size. The depression had in general a drastic levelling effect. The selectors and squatters who retained their land were those who learned to live on what it produced, curtailing their cash purchases to the absolute minimum and to the detriment of the traders of Kingston.

The rabbit pest was probably one of the most destructive forces that the district and the whole colony had to suffer. The landowners, the councils and the government spent thousands of pounds on fruitless attempts at extermination between 1883 and 1900. In the unequal fight small landowners went bankrupt and the selective feeding habits of the rabbits resulted in the destruction of the pastures. They first appeared in alarming numbers in the district around Kingston and Naracoorte in 1883. They spread from the wheat lands of the Victorian border in 1884 and by 1886 they had converged upon Naracoorte and Kingston from Wirrega, Keith, the Tatiara and across the unsettled scrub-lands of the new hundreds of Marcollat, Landseer and Duffield. In 1886 the district was swarming with them.

The early efforts to exterminate the rabbits were defeated by the inability to find a successful poison and the inaction of the landowners who were often too poor to deal

16 Naracoorte Herald, 3 October, 1893.

effectively with them. In 1888 the District Council of Lacepede found the task was so impossible that it sought to return to the Crown the hundreds of Narcollat, Landseer and Woolumbool which were the worst infested and the least settled.[17]

Relief came finally with the droughts and the depression of the eighteen nineties. The spread of the rabbits was retarded by the lack of feed and the depression caused the country towns to look for new avenues of profit-making. Rabbit canning was one. Between 1896 and 1897 most of the South Eastern towns had built canneries and the unemployed went out trapping and shooting.[18] The improved prices for rabbit skins encouraged further effort and the number of rabbits decreased so markedly that in 1906 they were scarce in the South East. The rabbit cannery which had been started in Kingston in 1903 closed in 1905 and thenceforth opened and closed in a desultory fashion for a few more years.

With the improvement in conditions after the depression the trappers found other jobs and the rabbit populations increased again, though not in plague proportions. However, it was not until the discovery of the effectiveness of the Myxomatosis virus in 1950 that the landowners were successful in their war on the rabbit. Although Myxomatosis-resistant populations have appeared, they can be kept down by new poisonous compounds and the use of power-driven plant which destroys the warrens far more successfully than the old machines could do.[19] The rabbit pest was a disaster to the pastoral industry all over Australia, but in Kingston there were some small recompenses that were gained. The trapping

17 Naracoorte Herald, 7 January, 1887.

18 Millicent began the idea in 1896 and Robe followed in 1897. See Naracoorte Herald, 2 February, 1897.

19 W.S.Kelly, Rural Development in South Australia (Adelaide 1962), pp. 67, 86-87.

and shooting of rabbits for their meat and skins provided work for a large number of the unemployed in the depressions of 1893 and 1928 and during the lean years between 1900 and 1914.

The district began to make some headway in the early years of the twentieth century despite the depression and the rabbit plague, mainly because of the help given by the ministries of the late eighteen nineties and the change in the government attitude to land settlement and the pastoral industry. Warnings had been sounded in the eighteen seventies that in the enthusiasm for the settlement of farmers upon small holdings, the government was cutting up too many of the pastoral stations in the colony and destroying an old and lucrative industry to serve the interests of wheat farming.[20] It was fortunate for the South East that although the government abandoned its former cautious policy of selecting only suitable land for agricultural settlement and leaving the rest for the pastoralists, Goyder did not. His reservation of the undrained lands helped to preserve the pastoral industry in the days of selection fever. The Lacepede District owed the retention of its pastoral industry to him. The unsuitable nature of many parts of the South East for agriculture finally forced the government into the policy of leasing small holdings to selectors for pastoral purposes and leaving untouched many of the large stations on either freehold or leasehold land.

The depression in agriculture in the eighteen nineties served the pastoralists well, for it resulted in the change of attitude in the colony. The pastoral industry was one of its main props of the state and therefore, it should be preserved. The recovery in the wool and stock markets and the tentative beginnings of the frozen meat export trade led the wheat

20 S.A.Parl. Paper (House of Assembly) 33, 1891; 'Report of the Pastoral Lands Commission'.

farmers to change to mixed farming and the government to see that closer settlement was possible through small pastoral holdings as well as mixed farms.[21] The reduction of costs through machine shearing, the development of better farm implements like the rotary-disc plough, cheaper methods of fencing and the improvements in sheep-breeding made it possible to keep large flocks on small holdings. Under these circumstances succeeding governments were willing to promote the pastoral industry by new policies on land settlement. They were eager to continue with the small pastoral holdings on perpetual lease, but they were also aware of the need to preserve the large stations for the sake of their contribution to the pastoral industry in general. The big landowners were the only pastoralists who had the capital to experiment with new breeds of stock, draining methods and irrigation with the use of fertilizers and with improved pastures. They gave the lead to the small men in their districts. For example the owners of stations like "Hynam", "Binnum", "Moy Hall" and "Morambro" were the leaders of the local experiments in the pastoral industry in the nineties and in the Lacepede district itself, "Ashmore", "Murrabinna", "Mount Benson" and "Barooka" contributed similar leads in soil treatment and the improvement of pastures. The policy of subdividing all of the stations for small holdings on perpetual lease was never carried to an extreme in the South East, partly because it was prevented by the large amount of land on freehold and partly because it would not have paid to do so.

The smaller pastoralists were well treated by the Lands Department in the years after 1900. The Pastoral Board, established in 1893, gave them a fairer deal when it reduced the rentals and increased the tenure of the leases from twenty

21 See W.S.Kelly, Rural Development, pp.64-68; also Naracoorte Herald, 15 March 1918; 'Revolution in Sheep Keeping', reprinted from The Australian Farm and Home.

one to forty two years. Closer settlement was achieved after the Lands Re-purchasing Bill of 1897[22] and more of the better land was subdivided for the little men as the large station owners sold up or offered their land to the government in the depressions. In 1897 for example, the Mount Benson station was subdivided into smaller blocks on perpetual lease and a new community of selectors settled there. They were given some assistance by the government at the end of the century when the State Savings Bank was established and loans for the opening of land were made possible by the State Advances Act of 1895.

Help was also given in experimental work on pasture improvements, soil development, cereal growing and stock breeding by the Roseworthy Agricultural College and the Agricultural Bureau which had established branches in most of the towns of the South East by the early nineties.[23] Although the first selectors had been so disheartened by the infertility of the soils and the lack of drainage that they sold out as soon as they were offered enough for their farms to pay their debts, the new men had the advantages of the knowledge on super phosphate and shallow drainage and they were more willing than their fathers had been to listen to the advice of the experts from the Agricultural Bureau and also the manager of the experimental farm established at Kybybolite in 1893-94.

The Agricultural Bureau meetings[24] were a regular event in Kingston and attracted lively interest. The Professors at Roseworthy College certainly gave the local people valuable

22 Act 688, 1897. Recommendations by the Land Board for blocks on perpetual lease.

23 Established in 1888, it was sending questionaires and pamphlets to the South East in 1889.

24 Naracoorte Herald, 31 March, 1899; 27 March 1903; 1 November 1918; 8 March, 1929. (examples)

assistance in dealing with their own problems, but they did more than this. They encouraged the pastoralists to experiment for themselves. Letters, pamphlets and articles, both by experts of the Bureau and local farmers and pastoralists, kept the emphasis on scientific methods and the enterprising men in the district used the knowledge thus gained to improve their pastures with the species of clover, lucerne and annual grasses that were found to thrive on local soils.

The pace of development was still retarded by the initial poverty of the district and various troubles that arose in soil treatment, drainage and the preservation of stock together with the over-cautious policies of the banks and stock firms. However the encouragement given by the officers of the Agricultural Bureau and the wisdom of the Lands Department in its methods of allotment of better class lands began to bear fruit by the nineteen twenties when wool prices were higher than they had been since 1893.[25] It was retarded again after the fall in wool prices in 1926 and the onset of the Great Depression which began in 1928.

The South East began to recover again in the early thirties when the district began on a conscious policy of self help. The District Councils Association, The Stock Owners Association and several other organizations set to work to achieve the necessary changes for themselves or to coerce the government into them. The Liberal and the Labour Party candidates henceforth had to woo the South East with policies based on the de-centralization of industry, the improvement of roads and railways and planned land development before they were sure of the votes of the district.

The shipping of the South Eastern wool had been resumed after the depression of 1893 and Dalgety and Company, who had bought the business of Hutchison and Dunn, resumed the

25 See S.A.Parl.Paper, 77, 1931; 'Report of the Agricultural Settlement Committee'.

practice of engaging overseas ships to take the clip to London each year. The Company bought a steam launch for the coastal trade and imported stevedores from Port Adelaide to load the wool. The bigger steamships could reach London in forty three days and the pastoralists were well supplied with contacts in the Melbourne markets through Dalgety's and the Adelaide sales through Elder Smith and Company. They began playing the markets and continued to export to London as long as they thought that they would receive better prices. The London sales generally gave the tone to the local markets and the pastoralists had to solve the problem of selling early in London or late in Geelong or Melbourne in order to catch the best markets. The Australian season was officially opened by the first sale in Adelaide, but although it was growing in favour, Adelaide did not gain much of the trade of the South East. The greater part of the wool was still exported to London from Kingston and the bulk of that which was sold in Australia, went to Geelong or Melbourne. Parcels of South-Eastern wool were still generally sold with the clip from the Western District because the shearing season there was also late and the prices in the Geelong and Melbourne markets at the end of the season were often higher than in Adelaide.

The ships' manifests and the cable translations from Dalgety and Company in London as well as the schedules of wool prices published in the Naracoorte Herald, show that the majority of the pastoralists in the district exported wool to London from Kingston until the beginning of the First World War. In 1911, for example, wool was sent to London from "Ashmore", "Murrabinna", "Fairview", "Wattle Range", "Blackford", "Barooka" and "Binnum" as well as from "Mayurra", Penola, Millicent, Mount Schank, Comung and Messamurry in the lower South East. Kingston became a busy port in the wool season despite the opposition of the Railways.

The wool for London went to Dalgety's stores at Naracoorte to be dumped before it was sent on to Kingston

while the loads for Port Adelaide, Geelong and Melbourne went directly to Kingston. In 1913, the steam dumping press was sent to Kingston and so most of the wool must have been diverted at that time to the Australian markets. From 1925 when the Australian growers held a virtual monopoly of world wool supplies and were expecting high prices in the London markets, depressions in the English, French and American demand caused a large drop in prices.[26] The Australian markets remained more lively owing to the increase in the local textile manufacturers and the increasing amounts of wool purchased by the Japanese. The growers turned in increasing numbers to the home markets and by the early thirties the majority of the South Eastern pastoralists were sending their wool to Melbourne, Geelong and sometimes Adelaide. The shipping from Kingston gradually ceased and the wool went by road or rail to Melbourne and Geelong rather than to Adelaide. The competition for its carriage was then fought out between the Railways Department and the road transport companies.

Several attempts were made to re-open Kingston as a port. The most important of these was the effort launched in Naracoorte on the eve of Federation to gain a port for the northern South East. The nearest port at that time was Portland and Mount Gambier, Penola and Millicent were anxious to export and import from there. They were agitating for a railway to connect Mount Gambier and Portland. However, Portland was too removed for the northern districts, particularly when there was only a slow narrow-gauge railway from Naracoorte to Mount Gambier. The need for a northern port was felt to be more pressing as the pastoral industry revived, the wool market recovered and the European demand for frozen meat was expanding.

In August 1900 a large section of the traders of

26 Naracoorte Herald, 12 February, 1925. Reference to meeting of Australian Woolgrowers' Council and National Council of Wool Brokers of Australia.

Naracoorte began an agitation for a railway from Goroke (on the Victorian border near Frances) to Naracoorte and Kingston and the re-opening of Port Caroline. The feeling was that "it was better to have a mediocre port in one's own district than have an excellent one sixty miles away."[27] A.H.Peake, the member for the district carried the move on the parliamentary level and the District Council of Naracoorte appointed a committee to form a league which would protect the trading interests of the town. A Border Railway and South Eastern Ports League was formed and it was joined by enthusiasts from Kingston.[28]

Parliamentary interest was sufficiently aroused in 1901 for Lindon Bates, overseas engineer, to be engaged by the government to inspect the south-eastern harbours for the best site for the construction of a port. The report[29] handed into parliament in 1901 really ended any serious attempts to build a deep-sea port in the South East. Lindon Bates saw, as James Cooke had done fifty years beforehand, that the Western District of Victoria and the South East of South Australia needed an outlet for its produce and that the first port to be built for deep-sea ships would become the outlet of the whole area. However harbours at Lacepede Bay, Guichen Bay, Rivoli Bay and MacDonnell Bay were so unsuitable that the construction of the necessary works at any one of them would be so costly that it was doubtful whether the expense would be warranted.

The government decided against Kingston again in 1906[30] after fresh agitation had occurred for a port in the South East and it was agreed that if they were to build a port there at all, Robe would be the most economical site. In the years that followed the site for a port in the South East moved to

27 Naracoorte Herald, 10 August, 1900. They preferred Kingston to Robe Beach port or Port Macdonnell
28 Ibid., 15 January, 1901.
29 S.A.Parl. Paper, 50, 1901.
30 S.A.Parl. Paper, 20, 1906.

Port MacDonnell and Beachport but the district did not give undivided support to either. In 1912 the majority felt that broad-gauge railways connecting them with Adelaide and Portland constituted the more practicable solution. Portland was the best harbour in the area. A deep-water pier had been opened there in 1902 and it was in the true spirit of federation to promote trade by supporting the improvements of the best site. The Portland Railway Bill was passed in the South Australian parliament in 1912 and Mount Gambier was connected by rail with Portland.[31] The Victorian government started on works that would make Portland the great western port of Victoria and Lindon Bate's prophesy become fact. "The sea-emporium of this portion of the Commonwealth will be situated where there is prepared soonest a safe, commodious and deep harbour with a judiciously located railway system and with modern facilities for dealing with car load and cargo."[32] James Cooke's vision for Kingston was to become a reality for Portland.

Sir Thomas Playford revived the question again between 1946 and 1953 but by then the district had come to realize that a local port would be too expensive an undertaking and its success could not be guaranteed. When Playford promised that he would build one if the district wanted it, the majority of the towns voted for the money to be put into broad-gauge railways between Naracoorte and Mount Gambier and Kingston. The enthusiasm for a port for the South East had burnt out. The problems of transport had been overcome by the drainage of the flats, the construction of good highways and the more general use of motorized transport. The railways had removed the barriers of the deserts and with their low freight

31 Act 1097, 1912. South Australian and Victorian Border Railways Act. Victoria was to build a 5'3" line to connect Heywood and Portland with Mount Gambier.

32 See note 29.

rates they had overcome the chief problem of distance. By 1953 the District was satisfied with the port at Portland and could no longer be stirred into lasting enthusiasm for coastal shipping.[33]

33 S.A.Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, Vol.1, 1953, 219; Mr.Corcoran during the Address in Reply.

Chapter nine

ENVOI

Spectacular development occurred in the South East during the nineteen forties when the government began to put into operation the changes that had been approved by the Regional Planning Commission at the same time as wool prices began their phenomenal rises and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization published the discoveries of the cures for coast disease and soil deficiencies. In 1934 research and experimentation, often with the help of the local pastoralists, resulted in the discovery that copper and cobalt used together would prevent coast disease and by the nineteen forties the role of micro-nutrients like zinc, copper and cobalt in soil fertility was fairly common knowledge.[1]

The knowledge that permanent improvement was possible encouraged the banks, the insurance companies and the stock and station companies to invest in the South East and they not only lent money more readily to the pastoralists,[2] but actually encouraged them to invest in the fertilizers and the new power-driven farm machinery.

The pastoralists themselves were profiting from the high wool prices and in the Lacepede District at least, they were able for the first time to pay off their debts and plough back their wool profits into the land. The development of land was made possible by the use of modern power-driven machines[3] and

1 See W.S.Kelly, Rural Development, pp.88-108.

2 Naracoorte Herald, 30 March, 1953; 'The Pace of Development'; also S.A.Parliamentary Paper, 71, 1947; Land Settlement in Hundred of Bowaka.

3 Ibid., 3 May 1948; 'Modern Plant the Key to Land

the completion of the drainage in the South East which was commenced in the nineteen forties. In 1948 the South Eastern Drainage Board began work on the northern flats and 400,000 acres on the western side of Bakers Range were given an intricate network of channels to drain the surface waters of the flats into the sea. In January 1959 work was started on the drainage of the country around the Lacepede district by the construction of the Blackford Drain and the continuation of the Jacky White's Drain to the sea-coast through Reedy Creek and Maria Creek. Some 140,000 acres of land in the hundreds of Murrabinna, Minecrow and Townsend were thus successfully drained.[4] The diversion of the waters of the long winding drains of the eighteen nineties from the supposed "soakaways" in the desert to the nearest outlets on the coast showed that the Drainage Board thought that Goyder had been right a hundred years beforehand when he had first advocated a similar policy.

The government policies for the development of the South East during the nineteen forties and fifties stimulated a tremendous surge of progress in the district. In the tradition of the modern governments, experts advice was sought and able men like the Principal of the Roseworthy Agricultural College were appointed to the executive controlling the development at work in the region. The approach to closer settlement was thus a more scientific one and had the greater chance of being successful. It was achieved by regional planning made possible by the regulations of the Crown Lands Development

3 (continued) Development'; also 10 May, 1948; 'Land Development on the Grand Scale'.

4 From a summary of the drainage works in the Kingston area supplied by the South Eastern Drainage Board, Adelaide, 1 February, 1963. See also Michael Williams, 'The Drainage of the Swamp Lands of the South East' in Journal of the Institute of Australian Geographers Vol.11, (October 1964)

Act of 1943, the Lands Settlement Act of 1944, and the War Service Land Settlement Agreement of 1945. The Lands Board was given authority to decide for what kind of production each district was best suited, the state undertook at least the partial development necessary for re-settlement and guaranteed that the incoming settlers would be in a position to meet their commitments immediately. After the Land Settlement Act of 1944 which provided for the compulsory sale to the government of under-developed land, a huge programme of developmental work took place. Thousands of acres of swamp lands were re-claimed. Provision was made for the erection of many Housing Trust homes[5] and broad-gauge railways and good highways were provided.[6]

As a result of all of this development since 1940, the Lacepede district changed from a backward region of scattered pastoral holdings and vast areas of under-developed land into a fairly closely settled, highly productive district. The population increased to over two thousand in 1966 and the area has become a prosperous one for the depasturing of sheep for wool and for fat stock.

The development of the new farm machinery made possible the cultivation of heavy soils and scrub-lands which could not be cleared by the use of the old machines. The addition to the soils of the trace elements and the sowing of selected clovers and annual grasses not only improved the pastures for sheep, but also made necessary a swing to cattle. As the pastures developed, the sheep could not keep down the prolific growth and cattle were kept in greatly increased numbers. The

4 (continued) pp. 101-102.

5 See S.A.Parl. Papers. Nos. 42, 1946; 42, 1958, Housing Trust Reports.

6 The broad-gauge railway line reached Mount Gambier in 1953 and in 1954 work was begun on the Naracoorte to Kingston line.

depression in wool prices during the nineteen sixties and the improvement in beef prices caused a big swing to cattle in those years. The improvement in the Australian beef market and the American demand for poor quality beef for canning made the swing very profitable.[7] Kingston to-day is re-vitalised. It is the busy commercial centre of the Lacepede District and runs two stock markets a month for which the average number of sheep yarded for sale is 3,000 and cattle 1,000.[8] The continued strong world demand for meat and wool gives promise of long prosperity.

CONCLUSION

The recurring theme in the history of Kingston S.E. and the Lacepede district is imminent failure; the constant threat of failure to the pastoralists in the pioneering days, the failure of the attempts to convert the area to agriculture, or settle it more closely during the eighteen seventies and the failure of Port Caroline to gain the wheat trade of the Wimmera, or to survive as a port in modern times.

The unattractive nature of the country meant that the pioneer settlement of Lacepede Bay was difficult from the start. Only those who arrived in the South East too late to take up better land, settled there. They were generally not big pastoralists with the necessary capital to drain the land and treat it with fertilizers, but small stockowners who would not have been able to afford to found stations at all had it not been for the liberal government regulations in leasing land for pastoral purposes.

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7 Information from Messrs. P.McBride, R.C. Barnett and T. Goode who own properties in the district.

8 From estimates given by the Clerk of the District Council, Kingston, 1966.

They formed a scattered community of little men on big holdings and since they worked on marginal lands, they were threatened with losses whenever wool and stock prices fell, or rents rose. Their position gradually improved during the eighteen sixties when the London wool markets were favourable and stock prices were kept fairly high by the expansion of settlement within the colony. The foundation of the port at Kingston also helped to reduce their marketing costs. In the meantime they learned to combat the inadequacies of the soils and the prevalence of coast disease by using alternating pastures and taking out other leases in better areas.

The district suffered a set-back at the end of the sixties with the government attempt to parcel out the land for selection and agriculture, but although some of the pastoralists left, the industry was preserved mainly because Goyder recognized that the land was unsuitable for anything else. The failure of the government to drain the swamps, together with the resumptions of the leases led to many of the old stations being built into the large family estate of Hutchison and Dunn. The government failed to establish the selectors on the land and in their attempt to do so, they drove out a number of the small pastoralists.

The depressing theme of failure runs through all of the history of the government attempts to make a success of the district during the nineteenth century. The story of Kingston is an interesting example of the co-operation between the government and private enterpreneurs towards the economic development of the colony. Private capitalists like the Cooke brothers supplied the inspiration for development and the government made every reasonable effort to assist those enterprises that promised to add to the wealth of the colony. Kingston was founded upon private enterprise at a time when land was readily sold to settlers and it was

fairly common practice to speculate in private townships. It was established by pastoralists who saw the threat to their industry that came from the government intentions to promote selection and closer settlement. The Cooke brothers founded the port in what they thought was a strategic place in order to profit from closer settlement instead of losing on it. The foundation of a town was within the scope of private enterprise, but the building of a port was not. They needed government support not only in getting the port proclaimed, but also in the construction of the shipping facilities and the access roads. The site that the Cookes had chosen had a sea of swamps separating the port from its clients along the Victorian border and an access railway became a necessity.

James Cooke gambled on the natural advantages of Lacepede Bay as the outlet for the Wimmera and the Tatiara and the anxiety of the government in Adelaide for the agricultural settlement of the Tatiara and of the merchants for a share in the South-Eastern trade. The gamble succeeded in that the government built the required railways and the port so that it should serve the proposed agricultural districts.

James Cooke's scheme appealed to the government of the late sixties and early seventies because it fitted neatly into their schemes of selection and closer settlement. Although some members of parliament supported the idea of closer settlement just because they were envious of the more prosperous of the pastoralists and their extensive estates, the majority honestly believed that if the land were left to pasture, its resources would be wasted. The pastoral industry would not provide for closer settlement and the development of subsidiary industries, whereas agriculture would. The amount of government assistance given to a rural area like Kingston and the Lacepede District was, however, usually less than that which had been expected, the limitation being the result of the

pecuniary difficulties of the government. South Australia rarely had the financial resources to provide for the development of the country districts. The area of the colony was too large and the population too small. The history of Kingston shows that the period of state-initiated expansion coincided with a period of heavy borrowings from overseas investors. The centralizing policies of the government were, themselves, the consequences of the financial limitations of the state. The most heavily populated areas had to be served first and the government could not afford to build more than one or two first-class ports. Hence the centralization of the marketing in the urban areas. For the sake of closer settlement and the Adelaide merchants, the government paid out large amounts of money on Port Caroline and its feeder railways. By 1884 they had spent £40,117 on the jetty alone.[9]

However, closer settlement in the northern South East failed and the South Australian merchant companies lost the battle against the Victorians to control the trade of the South East. The district was let out on pastoral leases and the new railways were built to the settled areas along the border. Lacepede Bay was too shallow for overseas wheat ships and the surrounding area too sparsely populated for the government to spend any more money on its improvement. As in Port MacDonnell and Robe before it, Kingston had become a stronghold of a Victorian shipping and merchant company. The twin aims of the people in Adelaide had not been realized and the government had no more use for Kingston. The port suffered from the competition of the Victorian and South Australian railways for the border wheat trade and Cooke's vision of the Liverpool of the South East was never realized. The depression of 1893 hit the town at a time when it

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9 S.A. Parl. Paper; H. of A 1885; Marine Board Report.

was already suffering the curtailment of its border trade and Hutchison and Dunn, the new owners of Grice and Company's business, were broken by the collapse of the banks in 1892. The port recovered its wool trade and some of its commerce when Dalgety and Company from Victoria took over the shipping business and it continued to function as the centre for the export of South Eastern wool until the depression in the nineteen thirties.

One could say that Kingston as a port at the end of a spur railway line was an anachronism almost as soon as it was given the entry into the Tatiara and the Wimmera in the early eighteen eighties. Railway lines of the district were centralized in Adelaide with the completion of the intercolonial line in 1886. That the centralization of commerce in Adelaide was not achieved by the railway policy is obvious from the frequent efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to attract South-Eastern trade to Adelaide in the years after 1900.

Kingston and the district owed a great debt to James Cooke for his work towards the economic and social development. He inspired the building of the railways which were the only means of opening up communications in the soggy terrain of the South East, and he also led the townsmen in the building of a strong town community. During the hundred and twenty years of the existence of the settlement around Kingston, the people have developed into an integrated community largely through the convenience of having Kingston as a well-established centre for social services and local government as early as the turn of the eighteen seventies.

The irony of the situation for him (Cooke) was that he had to suffer for the success that he achieved. He had to work hard to attract other marketing companies to Kingston and when he succeeded, the firm that established itself there, drove him out of business. He spent a large part of his life in the campaign for railways and when they were built, they were

built, they were responsible for the destruction of the port that he had founded. His career could be cited as a case to illustrate the theory that a man's failure can be attributed to some fatal flaw in his character. His son thought that it was his overpowering optimism and his failure to give God His due place in the ordering of man's affairs.[10] It could also have been his failure to doubt his own wisdom and to listen to the criticisms of his cherished schemes. It is easy to be wise after the event and it seems now that Cooke was over-optimistic in his plans for Kingston, particularly when he made them after Robe had passed over Lacepede Bay for Guichen Bay in 1846. However, he paid for his mistakes very dearly, for he lost all of his money and lived out the end of his life in a house rented for him by Thomas Elder.

The government recognition that small men could be established on the land on pastoral holdings just as effectively as on wheat farms led to the more successful settlement of the district and the development of satellite communities at Mount Benson, Blackford and Reedy Creek. The devastating effects of the depression destroyed some of this work, but the re-purchase of land as the old estates were sold helped to place the small men on the land again in the early years of the twentieth century. The large pastoral holdings did not entirely disappear nor was it thought desirable that they should.

The need to live on the rim of failure was removed in the nineteen forties with the greatly improved prices for wool and stock and the continued world demand for wool and meat. The revolutionary changes in soil

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10 From a note written by Alan E. Cooke to his children on the back of a plan of the Cooke property to be sold in 1893. (No date).

management, the use of power-driven machines and irrigation and the widely spread reports of success with the new fertilizers and sown pastures came at a time when the landholders in the district could afford to take advantage of them. Heavy government spending on programmes of regional development did the rest and the Lacepede District became more closely settled. However, the area never proved to be a suitable one for the small pastoralists who could not afford heavy investment in their holding. The most successful graziers around Kingston are the McBride Company. The history of the district has been that the small men, who battled to establish the pastoral industry there, were defeated by economic circumstances or government policies and that all of their hard work only succeeded in making conditions easier for the bigger men to take over.

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