

WINNERS, LOSERS AND PLODDERS WHO QUIETLY PROSPERED

The previous chapter dealt with patterned relationships in the economy of colonial Armidale. Class was seen as essentially the relationships between people as they acted out their economic roles. Power and resistance were depicted as strategies for achieving ends and for dealing with conflict. But these relationships, whether they produced negotiation and consensus or whether they produced conflict, were experienced by people differently positioned in the economy. Although some people such as small farmers were, at times, employers and at other times employees, the economic position of most people in the short term was stable. Colonial Armidale was a stratified community and the relationships which were so keenly felt and described in Chapter Four occurred across the major strata divisions.

Colonial Armidale was also a community which had been recently made. It was only in the 1860s that any adults could claim that they had been born and bred in Armidale, and even then the number of such people was small. The essence of this new community was not its buildings or farms which were only signs of human activity; not its individuals who never lived in isolation from each other; not its aggregates of population or production. The essence of the community was its human relationships, which were patterned in an Anglo Saxon, capitalist tradition. To describe the economic strata of this community adds a dimension of understanding to the relationships which were at the core of community life. A description of the strata also gives meaning to the aspirations of individuals, particularly men, and provides a measure to gauge their achievements across their life spans.

Armidale was an immigrant community. The immigrants expected to leave behind an old world of social closure and limited opportunities. They expected to arrive in a new country with far fewer barriers to social mobility. In fact their hopes became part of the legend of new societies. The existence of social mobility was seen as a 'safety valve' and a major source of stability in class

stratified societies.¹ It is not hard to find documentary evidence of immigrants who claimed to be doing well.

The German immigrants were perhaps the most enthusiastic. Typically they were in their twenties, married with young families although there was also a significant proportion of single males. They wrote of conditions which they were glad to have left behind in Germany — of hard work insufficiently rewarded, of coercive state and religious bureaucracies, of gridlocked land tenure systems, of the military draft, of famine, war and revolution. They marvelled at the distances they had travelled, at the vastness of Australia, and at the size of individual estates in New South Wales. They were bemused by the expense of some items and the cheapness of others. They marvelled at the climate and the flora and fauna and concocted stories of snakes and savages to thrill their readers back home. But above all they saw a land of opportunity.² As one immigrant wrote:

Brothers and sisters and all good friends, here in this country you can live free and easy; here they know nothing of paying taxes and tithes. Also no police come and demand overdue land lease dues. Here you can enjoy the freedom which was promised to us in Germany. I thank God each and every day that I am here.³

These published Germans held the immigrant dream of a better life, hopefully for themselves, certainly, vicariously, for their children. As one father wrote of his two toddlers:

The children are my pride and joy; I will do everything to make them into decent men. All my efforts and endeavours are for them alone so as to establish for them later on a free independent life.⁴

The vehicle for independence was to be hard work properly rewarded and many German immigrants could boast of their capacity for purposeful, rewarded labour:

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- ¹ Malcolm Hamilton and Maria Hirszowicz, *Class and Inequality in Pre-Industrial, Capitalist and Communist Societies*, New York, 1987, p.185.
 - ² Wilhelm Kirchner, *Australien und seine Vortheile für Auswanderung* (2nd edn), translated by Ralph G. Imberger, 1983, Frankfurt am Main, 1850.
 - ³ Letter of Sebastian Schubach to Mayor Johannes Jung and his other friends in Erbach on the Rhine, 24 June, 1849 in Wilhelm Kirchner, *Australien und seine Vortheile für Auswanderung*, (2nd ed.) (translated by Ralph G. Imberger, 1983), Frankfurt am Main, 1850, p.100.
 - ⁴ Letter of Englebert Hahn to his Father-in-Law, Jacob Kremer in Eltville, 27 August, 1849, in Kirchner, *op. cit.*, p.75.

We are particularly well liked because we do our work well and they also want it done well. We don't need to work as hard as at home. We leave work more cheerily than go to it at home.⁵

With hard work went thrift and abstinence from alcohol.⁶ There was a potential to save money that was absent in Germany and within six years in New South Wales, Joseph Horadam had enough money to buy a property.⁷ The capacity to save was acknowledged by English immigrant Joseph Scholes, who otherwise hated his first years in New South Wales and explicitly discouraged any of his family and friends from emigrating to Australia. As a brighter day dawned, Scholes wrote home:

. . . we are saving a few pounds every quarter and our wages are untouched, for Sarah gets as much by washing and by sewing as is sufficient to buy us any extra provisions we want and clothing, and I get a little by working at nights for the neighbouring settlers in the saddling way, so that we have no occasion to touch any of our yearly wages and can save a few pounds besides.⁸

The opportunities were seen to be there and for many immigrants, there seemed to be social mobility especially across the divide between employees on the one hand and independent small entrepreneurs on the other. In the peculiarly Australian context John Trim stands out for having moved from a young convict to a wealthy merchant and grey-bearded mayor of Armidale over the course of fifty years.

Josias and Bridget Moffatt were also notable. Josias Moffatt had arrived in the colony from Cornwall in 1857 aboard the *Tartar*, describing himself as an agricultural labourer.⁹ He worked initially at a saw mill near Sydney, then as a gardener and milkman for Captain William Dumaresq at Tivoli, his house at Rose Bay, on Sydney Harbour, before engaging as a tenant farmer for Richard Hargrave at Hillgrove near Armidale. While at Hillgrove he married Bridget Ryan from County Limerick, who was a house servant for

⁵ Letter of Christian Badior to his parents, brothers and sisters and other relations in Eltville, 23 September, 1849, in Kirchner, *op. cit.*, p.81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.84.

⁷ Letter from Joseph Horadam to his brothers and other good friends in Wiesbaden, 24 August, 1849, in Kirchner, *op. cit.*, p.63.

⁸ Joseph Scholes to Dear Brothers and Sisters, 15 January, 1843, Personality File - Scholes, New England Historical Resources Centre.

⁹ Passenger list for the *Tartar*, arrived 27 July, 1857, Immigration Department, Agent's Immigrant Lists, AONSW, 4/4794, Reel 2476.

Hargrave. In 1860 Moffatt purchased his first block of farming land at Saumarez Ponds and added to it over the years until, by 1879, he had 1,000 acres of freehold and conditionally purchased land upon which he ran beef and dairy cattle and cultivated wheat. By this time Bridget and he were raising twelve children.¹⁰ Josias and Bridget Moffatt were small farmers with a large family, and a strong faith in God and hard work. In the 1880s Moffatt expanded his farm by some 200 acres¹¹ and had probably reached the bounds which divine providence and personal effort would permit. Borne by this moderate success, the Moffatts moved into the last stages of their life course. But then rambunctious good fortune seems to have taken over from the more predictable rewards of God and grind. The Moffatts acquired lots of money. The basis of this fortune is not known precisely. Moffatt borrowed the considerable sum of £10,000 from a bank in 1890,¹² and there is some evidence to suggest that he may have been entitled to a patrimony from his father in Cornwall.¹³ About 1900 Josias Moffatt purchased Yarrowyck station west of Armidale and a couple of years later built an impressive retirement villa in town. At the time of his death in 1908 he left an estate of £27,100, his recently acquired pastoral property, Yarrowyck, comprising 90 per cent of the total wealth.¹⁴ Through gifts of property, stock and cash he had also set up at least one son and one daughter before he died.¹⁵ This was indeed a success story.

These were cases of outstanding social mobility, reinforcing the immigrants' dream by showing it was achievable. As well, there

¹⁰ Josias Moffatt to Dear Friend, 22 March, 1879, Personalities File - Moffatt, New England Historical Resources Centre.

¹¹ Conveyance, Official Assignee of the Insolvent Estate of John Cochrane to Josias S. Moffatt, 11 May, 1885 and conveyance, Joseph Cochrane to Josias Moffatt, 6 October 1881, LTONSW, Old System Registers, Book 310, No. 686 and Book 231, No 998, respectively.

¹² Mortgage, Josias Moffatt to the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, 19 September, 1890, LTONSW, Old System Registers, Book 560, No. 647.

¹³ Moffatt Snr appears to have owned four freehold and two leasehold properties near St. Columb Minor in Cornwall at the time of his death in 1898. If nothing else, this shows that the original Moffatt family were property owners of modest means. See Probates, County Record Office, Cornwall (ARB/WR/19-69).

¹⁴ Affidavit under the Stamp Act and Schedule No. 1, Valuation of Real Estate, Deceased Estate File 215882, Josias Moffatt, AONSW, 20/7068.

¹⁵ Statutory Declaration of Josias Moffatt Jnr, 6 July, 1908 and Adjustment Sheet, Deceased Estate File of Josias Sleeman Moffatt.

was downward social mobility, exemplified by the richly named St Aubyn Barret-Lennard, a Cambridge wrangler, grandson of Lord Dacre and son of Sir Thomas Barret-Lennard, owner of vast estates in County Monaghan and member of the reformed House of Commons, 1832-35.¹⁶ St Aubyn Barret-Lennard died in Armidale of an overdose of laudanum in 1866 while holding the less than exalted position of probationary school teacher at the National School.¹⁷ By contrast, Charles and Margaret Rich, demonstrate another dimension of downward social mobility. On the eve of their precipitate departure from Armidale Charles had been an independent bullock driver and Margaret owned a block of land with house and stockyards all free of debt. A little over a decade later, they were living in poverty on the goldfields of northern Victoria. Chronic ill health had consigned Charles Rich to a benevolent asylum, and Margaret struggled to raise eight children on what little she could earn as a nursemaid. It was not enough. Three of her children, malnourished and lousy, were taken from her for begging in the streets of a goldmining town, ironically called El Dorado. Charles Rich died a pauper, and Margaret simply battled on, by now well and truly living the lifestyle of the underclass.¹⁸

Examples of 'long range' upward social mobility¹⁹ were seen by contemporaries as indicators of a very desirable fluidity in colonial society where the social constraints of Europe were absent. There was certainly a populist belief that it was possible to rise through the ranks and make one's fortune by sheer hard work. It was written of Josias Moffatt when he died:

So successful was he as the result of steady toil, and a deep-rooted ambition to always better himself, that today, after starting practically unassisted, several important grazing properties in

¹⁶ Michael Stenton (ed.), *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (4 Vols), Vol. 1, 1832-1885, Sussex, 1976, p.234.

¹⁷ *Armidale Telegraph*, 7 April, 1866 bundled with William McIntyre to W. Wilkins Esquire, 9 April, 1866 Miscellaneous Letters Received, c. January-April, 1866, Board of National Education, AONSW, 1/439.

¹⁸ Admission of Charles Gibson, 16 October, 1869, Admissions Register, Ovens Benevolent Asylum, Beechworth Hospital Archives; 'Destitute Children', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 22 April, 1871, p.2; and Entry 5353, Emma Gibson; 5348, Henry Gibson; and 5350, John Gibson, 3 May, 1871, Admission Registers, Industrial and Reformatory School Office, Victorian Public Record Office, VPRS4527, Units 3 and 10.

¹⁹ The term is taken from Anthony Heath, *Social Mobility*, Glasgow, 1981 p.32. It refers to social mobility across several strata either upward or downward.

this district are owned by members of his family, while he died a wealthy man.²⁰

And they said of John Trim upon his death in 1892:

Possessing the severe handicap of no scholastic training, the late JOHN TRIM, in spite of no slight competition, succeeded in building up a commercial business of very considerable dimensions, and both far and near his name carried with it great respect as a tradesman of influence, integrity, and reliability.²¹

There were clearly some citizens of colonial Armidale who could be rated as successes. This was only to be expected in a society where the population was doubling and redoubling in a short time; where social structures had been partly re-defined rather than completely re-imposed; and where ambition and personal pride had swept away much of the cringing deference of old country order. Even in a small community like Armidale, the roll call of the successful was impressive but, as Shirley Fitzgerald has pointed out, 'the [list] would need to be very long indeed before it could give validity to the claims of contemporaries that upward mobility was an option open to the majority of citizens'.²²

Fitzgerald's work is important in providing a review and re-assessment of the question of social mobility in Australia. As she pointed out, many Australian historians such as Robin Gollan, Ian Turner and Humphrey McQueen took as read the existence of considerable social mobility and made of it what they would.²³ However there are a number of caveats, well stated by Fitzgerald, which remind researchers that this is a complex area of investigation.

The concept of social mobility, for instance, usually contained a gender bias. It was men who achieved success by rising through the ranks. Women were carried along by the success of their men, their public identity tied incontrovertibly to that of their husbands. When Elizabeth Craigie died in 1900 she left an estate comprising two farms, Box Hill and Craigielea, and a share in the *Armidale*

²⁰ 'The late Mr Moffatt', *AE*, 10 January, 1908, p.4.

²¹ *Uralla and Walcha Times*, 9 November, 1892, p.2.

²² Shirley Fitzgerald, *Rising Damp: Sydney 1870-90*, Melbourne, 1987, p.105.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.104.

Express, the newspaper her husband had founded in 1856. After her husband's death in 1879, she had managed her interests for many years, taking out and servicing mortgages, maintaining an active executive role in the publication of the *Armidale Express* and running the farms in the manner she had always done when her husband had been too busy at the newspaper. Yet, despite these years of economic independence, and the enormous contribution she made to the social advancement of herself and her family, her obituary was headed: 'Death of Mrs Walter Craigie'. This customary form of address exemplified the law of coverture²⁴ which saw a woman's identity entirely subsumed by that of her husband not only throughout her married life, but through a long and economically active widowhood as well.²⁵

It must be realised also that social mobility took place in the context of the general economy. When immigrants sent letters home telling of the greater freedoms and opportunities in the colony, they were forming these impressions in an economy that was expanding and a population that was growing. The new world might seem strange, even brutal, but the immigrants had never experienced an economy so dynamic. It is difficult to quantify this dynamic adequately and concisely given the frustratingly poor quality of nineteenth century census data.²⁶ However the census data do reveal a quadrupling of the overall population of Armidale between 1861 and 1891. As for occupations, effective comparisons can be made only between 1861 and 1871.

Nonetheless, it is clear that during the 1860s the professions were growing very rapidly as befitted Armidale's status as an important regional centre and, even more remarkably, the number of master tradesmen and their skilled employees had more than doubled. The number of domestic servants also doubled, this area being dominated by women, but the number of unskilled workers actually declined over the decade. Virtually unchanged was the number of producers and distributors of food and the number of

²⁴ The law of coverture will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

²⁵ 'Death of Mrs Walter Craigie', *AE*, 20 April, 1900, p.6.

²⁶ Fitzgerald discusses in detail the difficulties in using census data in New South Wales comparatively in the period 1861 to 1891 inclusive. See Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pp.109-110.

publicans.²⁷ Such data suggest that there could have been opportunities for advancement for retailers and publicans who had set up business before 1861, expanded as the town grew and effectively kept out competition. There is also the suggestion that skilled tradesmen coming to Armidale to establish a business after 1861 might have done well for themselves as might have skilled employees who decided to set up on their own. There were certainly opportunities in Armidale town in the 1860s but they were not general. Certain types of skill and access to finance seem to have been important factors in determining who would be successful. There did not appear to be too many opportunities for unskilled workers in this decade.

Another major problem with discussions of social mobility is the main measuring device. Most writers use changes in occupational status as the basis for determining mobility, and in her study, Fitzgerald preferred the term 'occupational mobility' to 'social mobility' although with reservations.²⁸ Occupational categories never describe precisely what a person does. For instance Josias Moffatt described himself as a farmer when he was employed by Richard Hargrave to tend the cultivation paddocks opposite Hillgrove headstation in 1858. He described himself again as a farmer when he owned a 1,200 acre mixed farm at Saumarez Ponds thirty years later. There is effectively a very significant difference between what was on the one hand an employed gardener and on the other a debt-free freeholder yet both occupations were described as 'farmer'. Similarly Barnett Aaron Moses often described himself as a bootmaker, as did his skilled employees, as did several small independent operators struggling to make a living in the same market as Moses. Thus what might seem a simple occupational category such as 'bootmaker' could have many shades of meaning.

Rather than use occupational categories solely as the basis for measuring social mobility it is better to employ broader strata based on class divisions which take into account stated occupations, property ownership and levels of debt. Such strata have the

²⁷ 'Occupations of the People' in *Census of the Colony of New South Wales*, Sydney, 1862, pp.566-567 and 'Part VI - Occupations' in *Census of 1871*, Sydney, 1873, pp.1166-1171.

²⁸ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p.108.

advantage of stating clearly the differences between entrepreneurial, small independent and employed bootmakers, and showing the changes in Josias Moffatt's fortunes over a lifetime of farming. Notwithstanding the advantages, there are empirical problems in integrating occupational, property and debt data. In a large community such as Sydney, the task would be enormous and probably unmanageable.

However, one of the advantages of studying a small community is that property data can be gathered for all property owners. As well, other relevant attributes can be determined. My methodology allowed me to determine, for each person who owned land in the period 1856-1891, an occupation for males and a marital status for women. Knowing an occupation could give an indication of the type of productive use to which a property might be put. In so far as individuals were buyers and later sellers of their property they entered the property market on two separate occasions at least. Thus changes in occupational status for men could be observed. As well, it was possible to determine all mortgage transactions which typically showed the mortgagee and the amount of the mortgage loan. Therefore for each individual it was possible to get a measure of the extent of his or her debt. Because it was possible to determine a sale price for most transactions and because a rating map of Armidale survived from 1867 and a rate book covering the period 1878 to 1884 it was possible to determine which allotments of land were developed and which unimproved. In many instances other sources such as newspaper advertisements made it possible to work out the type of economic activity taking place on most allotments of land. Finally, once a comprehensive list of property owners had been drawn up covering all years from 1849 to 1891, it was possible to use electoral rolls to determine at least the names of many of the propertyless males.

The data allowed for a model of stratification to be devised for colonial Armidale and the surrounding farming district. Most men in the community could be placed clearly in one of the strata. The model was influenced by the work of the late R.S. Neale who produced a five class model in his studies of eighteenth century Bath. This had some merits in dividing a propertyless working class into two groups and postulating a significant middling class as well as a middle class. But his data and his focus were English and not

all the elements of his model were transportable to colonial Australia.²⁹

My thoughts on class stratification have been influenced further by Erik Olin Wright. He conceived class stratification as based on three crucial processes: control of labour power; control of the physical means of production; and control of investments and resources.³⁰ In his later writings, Wright came to the belief that the key criterion for understanding class relations was the ownership of productive assets.³¹ From the data on colonial Armidale, it was possible not only to list all owners of land but to provide for each some data to indicate the main class attributes described by Erik Olin Wright: control of investment and decision making; control of the means of production and control of labour.

Such lists were made for the years 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891 (the list for 1861 is shown in Appendix 5.1). The level of debt was an indicator of the amount of control a proprietor had over investment and decision making. In all mortgages there was an actual transfer of legal ownership to the mortgagee (the person or organisation lending the money) and if conditions were not fulfilled by the mortgagor then a forced sale could result. When debt was high the mortgaged asset was under considerable threat and any major decision would need the concurrence of the mortgagees. There is no quantifiable measure of 'a high level of debt' but if a mortgage debt had reached about 70 per cent of asset value then

²⁹ R.S. Neale, 'Three Classes or Five?' in R.S. Neale (ed.), *History and Class*, Oxford, 1983, pp.160-63.

³⁰ Erik Olin Wright, *Class Crisis and the State*, London, 1978, p.87.

³¹ Erik Olin Wright, 'A General Framework for the Analysis of Class Structure' in Erik Olin Wright *et al.*, *The Debate on Classes*, London, 1989, pp.12-13. Wright moved away from a position of seeing class relations as domination or power relations to a position of seeing class as relationships of exploitation (see *loc. cit.*). There is a significant difference between these two positions and the difference is best shown by reference to the shearers' strike described in chapter four. If the relationship in the shearing shed was one of exploitation then the central and only issue would have been the rate of pay. As I tried to show the real issue in that struggle was one of power - of control of the workplace and its relationships. To this extent I do not agree with Wright. I see class relationships as basically power relationships as I have stated before and for support would refer to Anthony Giddens, 'Power, the dialectic of control and class structuration' in *Social Class and the Division of Labour: Essays in honour of Ilya Neustadt*, Cambridge, 1982, pp.29-45; and Phillippe Van Parijs, 'A Revolution in Class Theory' in Erik Olin Wright, *The Debate on Classes*, pp.220-221.

that was considered high.³² Control over the labour of others was also difficult to determine in any one year since there were no data which would provide, year by year, the number of employees in an enterprise. However, most major businesses were visited and described at least once by the editors of the *Armidale Express*, and so it was at least possible to distinguish between large and small employers.

The model of stratification which I arrived at from the data consists of four strata.³³ There was a middle class with control of the means of production, control of investments and resources and control of the labour power of others. There was a working class with control of none of the above but made up of individuals who nonetheless controlled their own labour which was refined and skilled so as to be valued in the labour market. As well as this simple dichotomy there were two other classes. There was an underclass, which resembled the working class in so far as the individuals in this class did not control any aspect of production. But, as well, these individuals possessed such low levels of skill that their labour was frequently not wanted or they were inflicted with some culturally-determined, disqualifying capacity such as race or gender which devalued their labour even when they could find work. To this group belonged the chronically or frequently unemployed; women working for wages, and especially domestic servants, who were poorly paid by comparison with unskilled and semi-skilled men working the same hours; most Aborigines; and those who, for personal reasons, chose to withdraw — to avoid playing the game.

³² This figure was taken from the case study of John Moore. When his debt to asset ratio reached 70 per cent in the early 1880s his bank became nervous and started to place restrictions on his further borrowing and to request reports on his business activities.

³³ Some writers like R.S. Neale would keep the concepts of class as a power relationship and class as a set of objectively determined positions quite separate. To this end he would reserve the term 'social class' for identifiable conflict groups and the term 'social stratification' for the groups that result from a sorting of individuals according to objective criteria. I do not believe that such a distinction is necessary for the purposes of this study. See R.S. Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1972, pp.7-9.

The other class was the middling class.³⁴ Here I placed those people who lacked control over one of the three basic class attributes outlined by Wright.³⁵ Those with high levels of debt were severely circumscribed in their control of investments and resources. The threat of a forced sale in the event of default or the need to consult mortgagees before any major decision about assets could be made were examples of the constraints experienced by those with high debt levels. Also in this middling class were those who had no legal title, conditional or otherwise, to productive assets but who had considerable control over the physical means of production and control over the labour of others. Such people as Arthur Hunter Palmer and John Rogerson, two well known and long serving managers of the Dangars' Gostwyck estate, were examples of people in such a position. It is important to bear in mind that these people were employees, albeit with a considerable degree of autonomy, as well as *de facto* employers. This middling class also included a large number of small entrepreneurs who controlled few, if any, full-time, contracted employees. Such businesses were based on the skill of the main operator. These businesses, which were often encumbered by debt, were usually carried on from one site combining residence and workplace. Most labour was performed by family members or temporary employees. This middling class, as a whole, was vulnerable to the vagaries of the economy — minor downturns and localised factors often proving fatal. It has been well labelled 'the uneasy stratum',³⁶ or the 'anxious class'.³⁷

As far as possible the personal data for the year 1861 were grouped according to the four class model described above. However, it was impossible to distinguish an underclass with any degree of accuracy. In terms of personal data a working class could

³⁴ I prefer R.S. Neale's terminology of a middling class rather than such terms as *petite bourgeoisie*.

³⁵ It should be noted that this middling class does not coincide with Erik Olin Wright's *petty bourgeoisie* which has full control over investments and the accumulation process, control over the physical means of production but no control over the labour power of others. I find the term 'full control' a little too unequivocal for the data. See Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State*, p.75.

³⁶ Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott (eds), *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative studies of the uneasy stratum*, New York, 1981, pp.ix-x.

³⁷ Stuart McIntyre, *The Oxford History of Australia* (5 Vols), Vol. 4, Melbourne, 1986, p. 49.

only be approximated from a list of those not owning property who appeared on the electoral roll for 1859.³⁸ From this group were eliminated those who held significant office in national organisations such as the churches, the police force, the Australian Joint Stock Bank and the Surveyor-General's Department. Also eliminated were those small businessmen, including tenant farmers, operating from leased premises. The final list would reasonably represent a propertyless working class (see Appendix 5.1). Unfortunately the names could not be matched with an occupation in most instances. A few working class men designating themselves as labourers or police constables, owned property consisting of an unimproved town allotment or a block of land with a small house thereon. This group was listed separately.

An economically independent middle class owning significant productive assets and either employing more than a few others or earning significant rents was quite easy to determine. The group was not large, consisting mainly of local graziers, hotel owners, larger farmers, larger storekeepers and major absentee investors. All of them were either debt free or had low debt to asset ratios. Twenty eight men and women were placed in this category. More than half the people in this group were not resident in the Armidale district.

The middling class was relatively easy to determine but there was some equivocation at the margins as there always is when compiling groups based on a number of attributes. The middling class was separated into the three sub-groups discussed above. First there was a debt encumbered group. These people employed a labour force outside their own families and had control of significant property assets which were however heavily mortgaged or covered by other forms of legal debt contracts. This group included storekeepers John Moore and John Trim, miller James McLean, publicans such as Ellen Molloy of the Wellington Inn, and squatters such as James Starr, William Maister and Edward

³⁸ It would have been far preferable to have had a roll for 1861. However, the 1859 roll was the only one to survive before 1870, because there had been an electoral dispute in the electorate of New England in that year. See 'List of Persons Qualified to Vote . . . 1859-60, Armidale Electoral District' in Report and Papers of the Elections and Qualifications Committee, 9 September, 1859. Tabled papers and Letters Received 1856-1891, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, PRS 108. LA.

Allingham. Most of this group were resident. The second sub-group were employed managers who supervised the work of others but were themselves subject to the periodic scrutiny of a boss. This group was only small. They owned few assets beyond unimproved land held as an investment for the future realisation of capital gain. Arthur Hunter Palmer was typical of this group holding twelve vacant town allotments and 386 acres of unimproved rural land much of which he sold to Grace Dangar of Gostwyck when he left her employ in 1863. The third sub-group consisted of small, independent entrepreneurs. This group included small shopkeepers, builders, blacksmiths, carpenters, small publicans, tailors, jewellers, brickmakers, solicitors,³⁹ doctors, bakers and the like as well as, in the rural areas, small farmers with holdings less than 640 acres. Virtually all those consigned to this middling class were resident.

As most people were assigned to class strata by name it was possible to follow individuals through the historical records and determine factors contributing to intra-generational social mobility. A number of different approaches were used to look at social mobility. Attention was firstly directed to the division between the working class and the middling class. The 1861 class lists contained 137 propertyless working class men from Armidale and the adjacent farmlands. This list was matched against the 1871 electoral list. There were 63 men on both lists. By 1871, nine men or 14 per cent of the long term working class had become property owners. Of these, Charles Daly had inherited a farm from his father, William Ewins held a vacant town allotment for a few years only, and George Clutterbuck, the carrier, purchased an unimproved block of land in 1864, borrowed money from the building society to build a house in the mid 1870s, defaulted in repayments, was forced to sell in 1882 and died without any property in 1892. Henry McShane was probably the most successful in this group

³⁹ In most studies, solicitors would not be included in a grouping comprising tradesmen and small retailers. However, the evidence for colonial Armidale indicates that this is where they belong. With one exception who only stayed for a few years, Armidale's solicitors operated very small businesses employing only one or two articled clerks and having few, if any real assets. Two solicitors in the period of this study went bankrupt. Edward Gibbon Wakefield had written, of England, that 'two thirds . . . at the very least of the professional men may be reckoned amongst the uneasy class' (quoted in Neale, 'Three Classes or Five?' p.153).

purchasing five acres of land on the outskirts of Armidale where he built a small house and prospered modestly as a carpenter. There were no rags to riches stories uncovered by this exercise. Indeed, there seemed to be little movement from the propertyless working class to the middling class.

By the same method a group of propertyless workers was determined from the 1871 electoral roll and this cohort was followed through to the 1881 roll. In this decade the movement from the propertyless working class to the middling class was greater. Of those workers who stayed in Armidale for the decade, 21 per cent became property owners by 1881. However, as with the earlier cohort, the moves were typically very modest and not always enduring or successful.

Another method of measuring social mobility was to concentrate on one occupation. Free selection was ideally suited to a study of social mobility. The free selector was a creation of the Robertson Land Acts of 1861. These acts were reputedly designed to allow the 'small man' to go onto the land. Free selection should indicate social mobility since the agrarian ideal of the nineteenth century made farming a catchment occupation attracting people from a variety of backgrounds. Independent farming must have been a dream for many wage labourers. The opportunity to farm also gave expression to the immigrant dream. Around Armidale, of the 145 selectors for whom a country of origin was known, 88 per cent were born overseas. Certainly the number of farmers in the Armidale district increased substantially throughout the period of this study. Indeed, by 1883, New England was regarded as one of the few areas of the colony where free selection had actually worked.⁴⁰

A study was made of the first 200 selectors to take up land in the Armidale Land District under section 13 of the Crown Land Alienation Act of 1861. The figure of 200 selections was reached by October 1868 with most concentrating in 1864 and again in 1866 when the squatting runs were thrown open to selection. The

⁴⁰ Augustus Morris and George Ranken, Report of Inquiry into the State of the Public Lands and the Operation of the Land Laws, *Journal of the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1883, Vol. XXXIV, Part 1, Sydney, 1883, p.335.

chains of title on each of the 200 selections were examined and only ten obvious dummies were found. Thus there were 190 *bona fide* first selections between January 1862 and October 1868.

The local conditional purchase register provided a status for each selector at the time of selection. In the case of most of those under the age of 21 their status was given as that of a minor. For women a marital status was given. For the remaining 170 adult male selectors an occupational status was given. Not surprisingly 139 selectors or 82 per cent of the adult males stated their occupation as 'farmer'. It seems clear that the occupational status recorded at the time of selection was that which the selector intended to follow, not necessarily that which he had followed in the past.

A variety of sources was searched to find a pre-selection occupational status for these farmers. The main sources used were the birth death and marriage entries prior to 1863; the signature book of the Armidale branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank which was the first bank in Armidale and the only bank between 1856 and 1864,⁴¹ and a huge petition containing 1500 signatures and accompanying occupations taken up in 1856 to press for an Assizes Court in Armidale.⁴² Altogether a pre-selection occupation was established for 117 of the 170 adult male selectors. Only nineteen of these 117 selectors had previously stated their occupation as 'farmer'. Virtually all of these already owned freehold land in the district and so were expanding their farms. Eighteen selectors came from backgrounds in a variety of skilled trades such as carpenters, sawyers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, brickmakers and others indicating that the occupation of farmer had a high status amongst artisans since farming was an occupation of later preference over earlier choice. Most of these artisans were independent, tendering for work on the open market rather than working for an employer. There were also fifteen former gold diggers whose mining operations seem to have provided them with an income and sufficient means to establish themselves on a selection.

⁴¹ Signature Book, Australian Joint Stock Bank (Armidale Branch), 1857-1878, Westpac Archives, 2714.

⁴² Petition, Legislative Assembly Tabled Papers 1856/287

Significantly, 37 selectors, or 31 per cent of those for whom a preselection occupation was known, had described themselves previously as labourers or shepherds. These designations would indicate a propertyless working class and so a little less than one third of selectors seem to have been socially mobile, crossing the demarcation between employee status and economic independence. This was no easy achievement. R.B. Walker, in a study of selection in New England, claimed, through an analysis of wages, that it was possible for shepherds, for instance, to save sufficient money to take up the smallest possible selection, but very difficult to improve their selection to the extent necessary to make it quickly viable.⁴³ I see no reason to dispute Walker's analysis.

Patrick and Ellen Fury would seem to fit the picture of the struggling selector. He had been a shepherd on Tilbuster, Gostwyck and Mihi Creek stations⁴⁴ in the early 1860s shepherding a double flock, with the help of his wife and sons and therefore earning about £65 *per* year. In 1865, when he was middle-aged, he selected on Gara station but died shortly after. Ellen and her sons struggled to keep the farm going in the years that followed. Their selection consisted of poor sandy forest with no permanent water. The homestead was a two roomed slab hut with an earth floor and a bark roof. Ellen Fury lived here for the remainder of her life, passing the farm to her boys who were eventually able to pay off the selection in 1904.⁴⁵

However, there must always be a warning against seeing occupations as stereotypes. Not all labourers and shepherds were what they seemed. Not all started from scratch, scrimping, saving over many years and eventually buying their own piece of land, then working very hard to bring it to a productive state and finally paying it off decades after the date of the original selection. Of those 37 selectors mentioned above as having been shepherds and labourers, some were selecting while still in their twenties. They

⁴³ R.B. Walker, 'Squatter and Selector in New England, 1862-95', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 8, No. 29, Nov., 1967, p.75.

⁴⁴ See Gostwyck Ledger, 1862-1868, f. 51; Patrick Fury v. James Starr Senior, *AE*, 28 November, 1863, p.2; and Account marked 'A' referred to in Affidavits of the Defendants, Supreme Court in Equity, Case Papers, Case 2022, Moore and others v. Cheesbrough and others, AONSW, 3/3794.

⁴⁵ Various documents, Lands Department, Conditional Sales Departmental Branch, File 04.4605, AONSW, 10/19468.

would seem hardly old enough to have saved the deposit. When the backgrounds of such selectors were checked it was found that they were either sons of local farmers, such as Donald Finlayson Junior, making selections as part of a family strategy, or they were quite recent immigrants probably with a little establishment cash to invest in free selection and, in almost every case, the sons of farmers in the old country. Josias Moffatt would serve as an example of this latter type of selector. Such people cannot be classified as socially mobile.

As might be expected, not all those who were socially mobile were successful. Some had sold their selections within five years. Taking the unsuccessful cases into account as well as the dubious, it would appear that about 20 per cent of the sample of free selectors used for this study were actually moving successfully from the working class to the independent middling class. This is quite a modest figure when one considers that the basic condition of free selection, putting a deposit on land and paying it off over time, should have encouraged quite a degree of social mobility. However, taking into account only *bona fide* selections, it would seem that the most significant move was a lateral one within the middling stratum as small farmers increased their existing holdings through free selection or independent tradesmen and modestly successful gold miners sought security and higher status by going onto the land.

The other major stratification amenable to investigation is the division between the middling class and the middle class. The most obvious strategy for movement between these two strata would have required the expansion of a small business by substantial borrowing, and the successful management of the larger enterprise until debt was reduced to a comfortable level and the future of the enterprise secured. This was precisely what John Trim succeeded in doing over the course of thirty to forty years and what Barnett Aaron Moses did between 1866 and 1879. Alternatively a small entrepreneur might have simply diversified into other businesses and prospered as a result. This was the Franklin Jackes story. Franklin Jackes was the son of a prominent Canadian storekeeper and political activist who was a councillor on the first city council of Toronto. He arrived in New England after the 1856 gold strike at Rocky River where he went into a storekeeping partnership with

his brother-in-law William Cleghorn. He opened his own Westend Store in Armidale eventually placing the business in the hands of a manager while he concentrated on establishing a sizeable orchard south of Armidale at Orchardfield. By the time he died in 1884 at the age of 54 he also owned the Great Northern Hotel and several shops in Armidale and an orangery at Parramatta. The net value of his estate was £15,171.⁴⁶

Some success stories were based on the shrewd and relentless pursuit of fortune. Carl Joseph Hirschberg came to Armidale as a young man in the 1850s establishing himself as a cabinet maker with a reputation for outstanding craftsmanship. He made money and invested it wisely and by the time of his death in 1910 he was worth over £12,000.⁴⁷ Others owed much to what they would have called sheer luck. Peter Speare, an immigrant from Malmo in Sweden, started his career in the late 1850s as a butcher. But his sizeable fortune came from tin mining. By 1877 he was able to build himself the grandest mansion in Armidale which he called Denmark House and went on to consolidate his fortune in gold mining. By the time he died in 1897 he was living in an impressive villa in Ashfield, Sydney, and owned a substantial brickworks a few miles away at St Peters.⁴⁸ By comparison, the fortunes of John Moore, Peter Speare's less fortunate erstwhile mining partner, were mercurial. In 1869, after more than a decade of hard work as the owner of Armidale's largest store, his debts were under control, and he claimed a net worth of £10,000.⁴⁹ He should have remained comfortably within the middle class. However his tin mining ventures in the 1870s were far from successful and he borrowed heavily to re-establish himself in the retail business in 1879. From this time he sank deeper into debt and by 1883 his liabilities were

⁴⁶ Edward M. Jackes, *A Genealogy of the Jackes Family in Australia* (typescript) held by the Society of Australian Genealogists, 4/1620(994); and Affidavit of Valuation, Deceased Estate File Z1185, Franklin Jackes, AONSW, 20/6977.

⁴⁷ Affidavit under the Stamp Act, Deceased Estate File Z13335, Carl Joseph Hirschberg, AONSW, 20/7028.

⁴⁸ Valuation by Bate, Judd & Purves, 3 August, 1897, Deceased Estate File, Peter Speare (duty paid 29 September, 1897), AONSW, 20/113; and *AE*, 27 July, 1877, p.6.

⁴⁹ Sworn statement of John Moore, Probate Papers of Alexander Hamilton Mather, Supreme Court, Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, Series 1, No 8059, AONSW, 14/3431.

£25,000, his assets totalled £28,000 and his bank was uneasy.⁵⁰ For the rest of his life he belonged undoubtedly to the debt encumbered middling class. His fortunes never recovered.

These stories were outstanding but they were not common. The middle class remained comparatively small especially in the early years. With the growth and prosperity of the town in the 1880s and the increase both in the number of prosperous pastoral properties and the number of resident graziers the middle class grew in size. Nonetheless, there was a limit to the number of large enterprises which could be established locally. Most who had hoped to make their fortune, abandoned the search and re-adjusted their aspirations. More typical was the constancy of a simple and contented life or the life of quiet despair. William Mutlow was the son of a Church of England clergyman from Gloucestershire. He arrived in the colony as a young man about 1840 and spent his sense of adventure managing various squatting runs in frontier New England. In 1858 he settled in Armidale opening a small chemist's shop in Beardy Street. The following year he married Mary Brazier from Bedfordshire. He was 39, she 20. They had no children. Mutlow made one fast friend at this time, Charles Thomas Weaver, Police Magistrate and later Member of Parliament for New England. Weaver and Mutlow had been educated together in Gloucestershire. In 1874, Weaver, in a state of despair at the death of his daughter, went to the Armidale cemetery and committed suicide on her grave. Thereafter Mutlow concerned himself with the futures of Weaver's children, taking vicarious pleasure from young Benoni Weaver's success as a chemist and Harry Weaver's establishment as a solicitor in Armidale. Mutlow endured his own personal tragedy when Mary Mutlow's mental health deteriorated and she was admitted to Gladesville Mental Asylum in 1881 suffering from 'mania and paranoid delusions'. She was never discharged and died in hospital in 1892 as a result of complications from epidemic influenza. Mutlow retired, passing his business to Benoni Weaver whose mother looked after Mutlow in his old age. He died in October 1900.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Minute, 22 May, 1883, Board Minutes, Australian Joint Stock Bank, Westpac Archives.

⁵¹ 'Death of Mr Charles Thomas Weaver', *AE*, 5 June, 1874, p.6; Entry, Mary Ann Mutlow, Gladesville Hospital Medical Case Book, Vol. XLIII, AONSW, 4/8169, f. 170; and 'Death of Mr W.H. Mutlow', *AE*, 19 October, 1900, p.4.

It was not the loneliness and tragedies in Mutlow's life but the constancies which made him typical. He was 35 years a chemist operating from the same shop, living in the same residence behind the shop. He was 25 years the treasurer of the New England Permanent Building Society and had a 30 year interest in the Armidale Hospital. Every Sunday he worshipped at St Peter's Church of England Cathedral. There were others like Mutlow who preferred to beat a sure and steady path: the widowed Angela Spasshatt, 54 years a school mistress; Martin Heagney, 40 years a farmer at Saumarez Ponds; Edward Baker, 45 years a gentleman farmer on the Armidale Creekland living off a 'nice fortune' he had inherited from home; Rev Thomas Johnstone, 50 years the Presbyterian Minister in Armidale; George Clutterbuck, 40 years a carrier; and Sergeant Patrick Rafferty, 30 years a policeman in Armidale.

This middling class was not a transitional class between the working and middle classes, but a class in its own right comprising people who were situated in that stratum for virtually all their adult lives. It was a class of some importance. It was a resident class. Its fortunes were tied to those of Armidale. If any class had a sense of community spirit, this was the one most likely. It was overwhelmingly an immigrant class comprising people from modest backgrounds perhaps with access to a small inheritance which could be put to good use in the colony. Education levels often reflect this modest background. Josias Moffatt wrestled with the English language, and the English language often lost as indicated in a paragraph he wrote to the Secretary of the Board of National Education requesting a new teacher at Saumarez Ponds:

I may also state that religious preswasion is not of so much consequence as temperate and energetic habits especiey in the country as the school is weeks and no one enters it except the Teacher and children and when visited by members of the Board rather than give offence by doing thair duty the shirk it altogether.⁵²

Joseph Scholes and James Venture Mulligan showed, in their writings, a plain style of communicative English unrefined by the nicer points of spelling and grammar. John Trim's success was all

⁵² Josias Moffatt to Wm Wilkins Esq., 19 June, 1877, Saumarez Creek School File, AONSW, 5/17596.4.

the more remarkable to his contemporaries since he had not been blessed with much in the way of formal education, and Michael Black, a creekland farmer and son of a British soldier in India, could not even sign his own name. Yet he prospered as a farmer and towards the end of his life was lending money to others on mortgage terms. It was this plainness in education and manners which obscured the economic differences between the middling class and the working class and probably helped many casual observers to arrive at the conclusion that there were few class differences in Australia.

In reality, the middling class was the cutting edge of capitalism exemplifying the dream of independence and individualism and always harbouring a belief in just rewards for hard work. It stood juxtaposed to a dependent working class and a despised or pitied underclass. The 'lower classes' were always sober reminders of where want of thrift and effort might lead the careless small entrepreneur. The middling class was always menaced by a variety of threatening circumstances. It was susceptible to the vagaries of climate and economy. Debt was an uncertain companion with a beckoning smile but a nasty nature and small business people were the ones most likely to stand before the official assignees of the court of insolvency.

The middling class was also susceptible to the expansion of big business. Large boot manufacturers could wipe out small shoemakers. Pastoralists could seize the best agricultural land and block the ambitions of those who wanted to become farmers. Insofar as the small business people of the middling class opposed the wealthy middle class, they were seen as radical. In so far as they opposed organised labour or government regulation they were seen as conservative, even reactionary. These people of the middling class cherished their independence, believed in the small triumph of becoming a masterless man, and saw in their mirrors the image of the noble pioneer.

The middling class has often been ignored by theorists. Marxists have seen it as a class that would or should disappear or

as a class that was simply a variant of the 'bigger bourgeoisie'.⁵³ This study, on the contrary, has found this resident class of small entrepreneurs very significant in an understanding of the economic life of a colonial rural community. It was a class which persisted over time, had its own characteristics and interests, and many of its members were stably located in this stratum.

In terms of the model used in this study to describe class stratification in colonial Armidale, the data on social mobility indicated that movement between strata during a lifetime was certainly possible but not widespread. It was easy to discover examples of outstanding long range social mobility as these were frequently celebrated in feature articles in the press, in speeches at testimonial dinners and in obituaries. The minders of community ideals was never reticent in composing praises to present to the successful. But these men of note were all the more exemplary because they were few in number. More common, less notable, were those who moved quietly and slowly across a stratification divide — from dependent worker to small independent entrepreneur, from the debt encumbered middling class to the comfort of a modest prosperity. But even in such instances, the numbers were not large. The great majority of men had ordered careers with no significant mobility. Over a life time they may have prospered in a career that had occupied their energies for decades. But this is quite another thing from large scale mobility upward and downward in a socially fluid society.

The belief that social mobility is a major factor contributing to social stability is not supported by the data on class in colonial Armidale. Nor is the assumption that colonial Australia was a remarkably fluid society. It could have been, of course, that the limited opportunities for prosperity in a small rural community induced the more adventurous to move to where chances were greater. But Fitzgerald's work found little evidence of significant occupational mobility in the metropolis either. If Australian society and Australian communities were notably stable, then the explanation does not lie in the existence of widespread social mobility blurring class boundaries and giving practical credence to the ideology that 'you are what you make yourself'.

⁵³ Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott, 'Petty Property: the Survival of a Moral Economy', in Bechhofer and Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp.182-183.

THE GENDERED DOMAIN OF FAMILY AND PUBLIC LIFE

There was a double helix at the core of community life in colonial Armidale. One strand represented the structured world of economic life, centred on the male body and symbolised by male prowess, male craft, male knowledge and male authority. The other strand was the equally structured world of family life, centred on the female body as sexual object, reproductive vessel, nurturing mother and devoted helpmeet. The wedding of man as 'labour' and woman as 'love' prefigured, not a relationship of equals, but one of dominance. Woman was subsumed by man, submitting to his authority, internalising his hegemony, cohabiting with the fortunes and misfortunes he created and assuming his public identity.

Whatever the reality, this was the ideal which was scripted in the texts by which we re-text the past. The family was depicted by its core values, not its key realities. Newspaper columns, short stories, novels, banquet toasts, even tombstone inscriptions constructed, re-worked and refined the images of family life as it ought to be. Consigned to the shadows was family life as it was. In many of the standard texts of the past women and children simply slipped from view as curtains of privacy were drawn around the family.

The public and private worlds of colonial Armidale were starkly contrasted and starkly gendered. The *Armidale Express* reinforced this world of gendered domains by focusing only on the public arena of men's affairs. The world of work was dominated by men but so, too, was the world of meetings, clubs and organised leisure. When John Moore left Armidale in 1872 to go in search of tin, a testimonial dinner was organised for him. About forty men sat down to lunch and although the after-dinner speeches contained frequent allusions to Mrs Moore, her kindness, her charitable works and her Christian and familial rectitude, she was not present. This was not at all unusual, but a few more liberal-minded men on that occasion expressed the thought that Armidale was a little backward in secluding its women so completely and 'not allowing them to exercise their rights'. Their thoughts were mocked by interjections

of 'Thank Goodness!' from Edward Baker, Armidale's most reactionary political and social activist, whose comments were followed by hearty belly-laughs from the other men.¹

It was almost a decade later before a major social event, largely organised by women, was chronicled. Over the course of twenty five years the *Armidale Express* had reported the death of the bushranger, Thunderbolt, the opening of two cathedrals, the spectacular burning of a few local buildings, a plethora of elections, the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh, the drowning of the first Anglican Bishop of Grafton and Armidale, the coming of the railway and numerous important social events. But the only issue of the *Armidale Express* which was reprinted to satisfy enormous demand was that of 6 August, 1880 — the issue which reported the brilliant success of the first fancy dress ball in the town. The ball was not without its opponents but the editors of the *Express* congratulated themselves and everyone else for their liberalism in resisting, for once, 'the stern and unrelenting law of the [local] aristocracy'. The ball was hosted by the Mayor, Alexander Richardson, but the success of the occasion was clearly due to Mrs Richardson and her committee of women. It was not just the reporting of this novel event which caused a rush for newspaper copies. The editors had taken the trouble skilfully to describe dozens of costumes and listed the names of over 250 guests and the characters they represented.² This was the first time in twenty five years that the *Express* had listed large numbers of women by name and highlighted women's roles outside the confines of the family.

The fascination with the fancy dress ball as a public affair highlighted the central importance of the family in the lives of most women. The family, as a pivotal social institution, is best conceptualised as a set of carefully patterned relationships based on an unequal distribution of power. If class can be understood as patterned relationships of power and resistance, as was established in Chapter 4, then so, too, can the family.

1 'The Moore Testimonial', *AE*, 29 June, 1872, p.2.

2 'The Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball', *AE*, 6 August, 1880, p.4.

In order to understand those power relationships it is necessary to pass beyond the fantasies of hearth and home so central to the constellation of Victorian values and to resist the confusing auras of happy well-balanced nuclear families — the recent legacy of American functionalist sociology. Marriage in the nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon tradition was a contract of inequality based on the common law principle of coverture. The law looked on the married couple and saw one body with the husband as the head.³ Marriage entailed the civil death of wives as it covered their identities beneath those of their husbands. But the unity which the law chose to see was not a solidarity of interest and a singleness of purpose in the hovels, homes, and palaces of real life. The conjugal family was the locus of male power and of female struggle. This does not deny the fact that many families in Australia were happy, but as one writer reminds us, 'such happiness was fragile and vulnerable, existing as it did *despite* the legal rules that gave any husband who cared to invoke them, virtually despotic powers over his wife'.⁴

Central to an understanding of the principles of coverture was the relationships of husbands and wives to marital property. In an historical perspective, that relationship, as it developed in the Victorian era, was extreme. Ancient laws had given widows certain legal entitlements to the real estate of their deceased husbands, but these rights to dower were repealed in Britain in 1833 and in Australia in 1836.⁵ The abolition of these vestigial rights increased the marketability of land as a commodity, but, in so doing, ushered in a period of extreme uxorial dependence. In both Britain and Australia during the Victorian era a husband assumed legal rights at marriage over his wife's property, those rights being total in terms of her personal property such as cash or stocks and bonds, and only slightly limited in terms of her real estate. A husband could not alienate his wife's real property entirely without her consent if that property was secured to her by trusts or settlement. But he was entitled to all rents and profits from it. As well, any

³ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* abridged by Robert Malcolm Kerr (4 Vols), Vol. 1, London, John Murray, 1874, p.105.

⁴ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*, Princeton, 1989, p.8.

⁵ Sir Richard Bourke to Lord Glenelg, 14 September, 1836, *Historical Records of Australia* (Series 1), Vol. XVIII (July 1835 - June 1837), Melbourne, 1923, p.539.

property, including inheritance, coming to his wife during marriage was legally his unless his claims were specifically barred by the deviser of the property and a husband could, if he so chose, exclude his wife from his will leaving her destitute in her widowhood. This extreme dependence was mitigated somewhat by the passage of a Married Women's Property Act in 1879 which provided wives with limited financial independence in relation to inherited property and to separate earnings from work.⁶ However, the common law concept of coverture with regard to all property of married women was not seriously challenged until the passage through the New South Wales Parliament of the Married Women's Property Act of 1893.⁷

In those instances where women owned real estate in colonial Armidale, it is usually possible to discern a family strategy operating, in part at least, in the interests of male members of the family. Appendix 5.1 lists separately female property owners in the year 1861. Half the females are designated spinsters, many of them young girls. John Moore, for instance, had purchased a block of land each for his daughters Mary, who was eleven years old, and Rachel, who was eight. Moore had done likewise for his sons. Publicans James Gordon and Bernard Naughten also purchased unimproved town allotments for their daughters as did brickmaker Richard Child and farmer, Thomas B. Fitzgerald. It seems that property purchased on behalf of young unmarried daughters represented a type of dowry which they could take to their marriage. Given the marked tendency for propertied men of this period to leave far less of their estates to their married daughters than to their sons when they died, it would seem clear that many men regarded their married daughters as almost entirely the economic responsibility of their husbands. Property invested in a daughter when she was young and unmarried would enhance her chances of marrying a man of means who could literally 'take her

⁶ An Act to amend the law relating to the Rights and Liabilities of Married Women. [20th March 1879], 42^o *Victoriae*, No.11, *Statutes of New South Wales (Public and Private)*, from 30 January, 1875 to 24 July, 1879, Sydney, Government Printer, 1885, pp.58-61. Alan Atkinson's summary of the situation prior to 1879 is not accurate. See Atkinson, *Camden*, Melbourne, 1988, p.148.

⁷ An Act to amend the law relating to the Rights and Liabilities of Married Women [17th April, 1893], 56^o *Victoriae*, No. 11, *The Statutes of New South Wales (Public and Private)*, passed during the Session of 1891-2, Sydney, 1892, pp.13-19.

off her father's hands' thereby leaving the patrimony to be divided, ultimately, amongst the sons.⁸

There were few married women who owned property in Armidale in 1861. It is clear that in some instances land containing a house or hut was purchased in the name of a married woman probably to protect that property from creditors should the husband's business collapse. Bootmaker Parish Deighton and photographer Andrew Cunningham appear to have acted in this way. The strategy was not common, probably because the legal position was never clear. John Moore thought he had placed the family home, Belmore Cottage, in his wife's name in 1879 when he borrowed heavily to return to business in Armidale. Sarah Moore certainly believed she owned the house and devised the property in her will.⁹ However, when John Moore and Sarah Moore had both died, Belmore Cottage was assigned to his estate, not hers, and therefore to the interests of his creditors.¹⁰

Ironically, John Moore should have been aware of the doubts as to good title that arose when married women held real property bought for them or transferred to them by their husbands. Bullock driver Charles Rich had acted as his wife's agent and purchased a block of land in her name in Armidale in 1857. Their strategy seems quite obvious. Rich, an ex-convict, was engaged in cattle stealing and he and his wife already had before them the example of their friend Abraham O'Dell, another ex-convict, who forfeited all his lands when he was convicted of cattle stealing in 1853.¹¹ In 1859 when Charles Rich was caught in the act of skinning a beast suspected of being stolen he fled Armidale after a warrant had been issued for his arrest. Margaret Rich tried to sell her land and follow him.¹² She was unsuccessful since her husband was not present to give his consent to the sale. Ultimately she returned to

⁸ Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850*, London, 1987, p.219.

⁹ Last Will and Testament of Sarah Ann Moore, died 24 September, 1894, Supreme Court, Probate Division, Series 4, No 8685, AONSW, 6/7885.

¹⁰ Affidavit under the Stamp Act and Solemn Declaration of William George Sandon Moore and Edward Charles Moore, Deceased Estate File, 8685, Sarah Moore, AONSW, 20/76.

¹¹ Robert Forster to the Colonial Secretary, 29 March, 1870, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence Received, File 17/31882, AONSW, 5/7511(b).

¹² AE, 24 September; 1 October; 8 October; 15 October; 22 October; and 29 October, 1859.

Armidale in 1866 and tried once more to sell the land. Again she struck difficulty and the prospective purchaser insisted she clear up any doubts about her good title to the land by having it transferred to the new Torrens Title which was superior to the old common law title since it was guaranteed by the government.¹³ The purchaser who insisted that Margaret Rich go to the expense and delay of such an action was John Moore.

The concept of coverture affected all women of the property-owning classes at all stages of their lives. The constraints on married women were obvious. But the concept of coverture also constrained widows who were frequently given no more than a widowhood interest in their deceased husbands' estates for fear that they might remarry and lose control of their inheritance. As in other countries, so in Australia, landed property was, indeed, a male concept.¹⁴

Property relations were at the centre of the law of coverture. However, other laws consonant with coverture reinforced the authority of husbands. Married men determined where the family domicile would be. Married women had no rights to veto their husbands' decisions. A wife was not responsible for her debts, including her pre-nuptial debts, and hence her ability to act, even as a consumer, might be circumscribed. When Sarah Dawson left her husband Ralph in 1870, he immediately cautioned all storekeepers against advancing her any credit.¹⁵ When a woman did leave her husband she was guilty of desertion and forfeited all property that might have stood in her name and lost custody of the children of the marriage.¹⁶ Many of these laws had just as severe an impact on the wives of working class men, as did the customs of the time which simply accepted male dominance, including 'reasonable' physical coercion, as natural.

Nonetheless, marriage was the lot of by far the greater proportion of women in the Victorian era. In England in 1871,

¹³ Application to Bring Land under the Provisions of the Real Property Act, LTONSW, Primary Application Form, 7567, AONSW, 6/10050.

¹⁴ John E. Crowley, 'Family Relations and Inheritance in Early South Carolina', *Historie Sociale - Social History*, Vol. 17, No. 33, 1984, pp.35-57.

¹⁵ *AE*, 18 June, 1870, p.3.

¹⁶ Shanley, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9;16.

nearly 90 per cent of women between the ages of forty five and forty nine were or had been married.¹⁷ In the Australian colonies in 1871 the equivalent figure was 96 per cent.¹⁸ In Armidale, the comparable figure for the same year was 98 per cent.¹⁹ Australian women were, indeed, an extraordinarily married lot. The reasons are not hard to find. As Shirley Fitzgerald pointed out the extent of genuine consent to marriage is problematic since women had 'Hobson's choice, that or none'. Fitzgerald continued:

Marriage for women, unlike for men, was an occupational choice. With very few exceptions, all other occupations open to women were either illegal or so poorly remunerated that marriage became, for the majority, the only viable method of economic survival.²⁰

However, a simple analysis of demography indicates that there was room for choice, even within Hobson's choice. Consistently there were significantly more men than women in the town and district of Armidale throughout the nineteenth century. In Armidale town there were 113 men to every 100 women in 1861, increasing to 120 men for every 100 women in 1871 and still showing an imbalance of 110 men to every 100 women by 1891. The imbalance was far more pronounced in the rural lands and goldfields around Armidale. For the census years 1861, 1871 and 1891 the number of men for every 100 women was 155, 140 and 134 respectively.²¹ This rural urban difference was typical of all parts of New South Wales where reasonable balance between the sexes was only evident in Sydney.²²

For the years 1871 and 1891 it is possible to break down these figures according to age and marital status. For those aged 40 years and over, there were ten times more unmarried men than unmarried women in 1871 in both the town and rural hinterland of

¹⁷ Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950*, Bloomington, 1984, p.3.

¹⁸ Gordon A. Carmichael, 'So Many Children: Colonial and post-colonial demographic patterns' in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia*, Sydney, 1992, p.119.

¹⁹ *Census of 1871*, Sydney, 1873, pp.824-825.

²⁰ Shirley Fitzgerald, *Rising Damp: Sydney, 1870-90*, Melbourne, 1987, p.170.

²¹ These figures are taken from relevant census returns. Most of the data for the 1881 census year were destroyed in the Garden Palace fire of 1882 before full analysis could be completed. See John Wade (ed.), *Sydney International Exhibition 1879*, Sydney, 1979, p.23.

²² Carmichael, *op. cit.*, pp.107-108.

Armidale. By 1891 there was an evident tendency towards balance in Armidale city where unmarried middle aged men outnumbered unmarried middle aged women by three to one but in the rural areas the ratio had dramatically increased. There were 230 unmarried men over 40 years compared to 16 women in the same category. The sharp increase was due to the goldrush at Hillgrove and it is clear that the goldfields attracted unmarried men of all ages.

Class seems to have been a significant factor in a woman's choice of marriage partner. A study of all unmarried adults over the age of 30 years, who died in alternate five year periods from 1856-1860 through to 1886-1890, showed that, in total, there were 172 unmarried adults dying in Armidale in those selected five year periods.²³ Of those 172 deaths, 93 per cent were male. This huge gender imbalance reflected the gender imbalances in the community as a whole amongst unmarried adults. However, just as pronounced was a class imbalance. Of 160 unmarried men who died over the age of 30 years, 130 or 81 per cent were recorded as having held occupations indicative of an unskilled propertyless working class. Most of the deceased were labourers or shepherds with the occasional boundary rider, miner and bullock driver. Of the remaining 19 per cent most were skilled workers, again, without property.

It is worthwhile making a few comments on these unmarried adult males since, as Michael Gilding has shown for the twentieth century, unmarried males as a sub-culture depicted by certain stereotypes, have had an impact on the behaviour of married men.²⁴ Certainly, historians have recently written of a 'cult of bachelorhood'²⁵ epitomised by what Sylvia Lawson called the 'wholly masculine ideal' of the 'lanky, resourceful, laconic, bushman'.²⁶ This ideal will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

²³ The statistics were compiled from the Armidale Court House death registers 1856-1893.

²⁴ Michael Gilding, *The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family*, St Leonards, 1991, pp.95-109.

²⁵ Raymond Evans, 'A Gun in the Oven: Masculinism and gendered violence', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, *op. cit.*, p.204; and Judith Allen, 'From Women's History to the History of the Sexes', in J. Walter (ed.), *Australian Studies*, Melbourne, 1989, pp.226-227.

²⁶ Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: A strange case of authorship*, Ringwood, 1987, p.192.

It is sufficient to say here that the ideal emerged from the demographic context outlined above whereby bachelorhood was closely correlated with an unskilled rural, working class. However serviceable the ideal was in late nineteenth century Australia, reality was often little more than the faintest shadow. J.F. Archibald's heroic Lone Hand was celebrated and enlarged from the reality of a lonely hand, sometimes drunk, sometimes impoverished, a sickly vagrant possibly incarcerated in gaol or hospital (the demarcation was never clear in colonial Armidale), disguising older identities behind an alias, the only name by which his mates knew him. There was the reality of men with no past, no known details, no next of kin, and a few threadbare stories of 'home' half a world and three quarters of a lifetime away. From time to time a dray would lumber into Armidale carrying the remains of a bushman, partly decomposed or torn apart by wild dogs or feral pigs. He had died alone in the bush without mates. The coroner and the registrar were his last friends as they collaborated to determine his name and approximate age for the final record. All other details for the death register were marked 'unknown' and the life was forgotten when the register was closed and shelved and the pauper's grave raked over and left to settle.

The fact that it was poor rural working class and underclass males who were left on the shelf (to use a cliché almost exclusively reserved for spinsters in colonial times), would seem to indicate that a significant proportion of women must have been upwardly mobile through marriage. Marrying women were in effect moving from one protector to another. Their choice was serious and it seems logical that women would try to turn a necessity into an opportunity. The demographic analysis described above seems, on the surface at least, to support the contention that men married down and women married up so that unmarried women were the 'cream-of-the-crop' and unmarried men the 'bottom-of-the-barrel'.²⁷

It is not hard to find clear examples of this supposedly widespread phenomenon. The children of publicans, Joseph and Sarah Scholes provide such an example within one family. Their

²⁷ Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage*, London, Souvenir Press, 1972, pp.31-34 quoted in Chilla Bulbeck, *Social Sciences in Australia*, Sydney, 1993, p.63.

two surviving daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah married professional men, Elizabeth a surveyor and son of an engineer and Sarah a solicitor. The two eldest sons, Robert Scholes and John Woolner Scholes married two sisters, Ann and Jane Llewellyn. Both the Llewellyn parents had been convicts. However, one swallow does not make a spring. The common wisdom that women married up and men down was not supported by Fitzgerald in her study of mid Victorian Sydney. She maintained that 'no obvious widespread "marrying up" was evident'²⁸ although she did admit that the situation in rural New South Wales could have been different because of a more obvious shortage of women.

The extent of social mobility through marriage was a major focus of a study of marriage patterns in the Armidale district from 1856 to 1885. Such studies are not without their difficulties. There was, for instance, a religious bias to the Armidale data.²⁹ As well, there were the usual problems associated with attempts to determine social mobility by comparing occupational categories. Shirley Fitzgerald has already pointed out that there is little reason to compare the occupations of brides to those of grooms because few brides were recorded as having an occupation and, for those who were so recorded, their occupational status was secondary to that of marriage.³⁰ Throughout the nineteenth century a woman would have perceived her own status according to that of, firstly, her father, and later her husband. Therefore comparing the occupations of grooms to those of brides' fathers was more relevant. But even here Fitzgerald encountered the usual problem with nineteenth century occupational data. As she pointed out: 'jobs like butcher and baker . . . [were] difficult to classify because some of

²⁸ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p.177.

²⁹ Court house registers provided only minimal data for each marriage entry and the full data had to be reconstituted by matching the court house entries to those in parish registers. Unfortunately this necessity produced a religious bias. The parish registers for the Church of England and the Wesleyan churches were complete with regard to the data needed. The Presbyterian records were patchy, possibly because the long serving incumbent, Rev. Thomas Johnstone, was not a man given to mundane paper work. But most importantly the Roman Catholic *Liber Matrimoniorum* did not contain secular information such as occupations, the church being more interested in the religious status of the brides and grooms. Therefore the analysis of social mobility excluded all Roman Catholic marriages and most Presbyterian marriages. Of the 934 marriages recorded for the period, only 565 could be used.

³⁰ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pp.175-176.

them would have been genuinely petty bourgeois, while others would have been skilled wage earners'.³¹ Such problems were overcome in this study by matching occupations with property ownership data as was done in Chapter 5. However, this only clarified the occupations of grooms and brides' fathers living in the Armidale district, who were, nonetheless, the majority. Where a bride's father lived in, say, Ireland it was difficult to determine precisely what the occupation 'farmer' meant. Still, the overall data was sufficiently precise to show trends quite clearly.

The data were divided into three decennial periods, 1856-1865; 1866-1875; and 1876-1885 and, in the first instance, cross-tabulated by groom's rank and bride's father's rank. The rankings chosen closely resembled the class and sub-class categories used in Chapter 5 and Appendix 5.1. Eight ranks were used altogether. For full descriptions of these ranks see Appendix 6.1.

Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 show the results of the cross tabulations for the three decennial periods respectively. Comparing the three tables there is, obviously, an increase in the number of marriages taking place over the thirty years as the population increased. The most noticeable increases appear to be in the categories of small farmers, skilled labourers and small entrepreneurs. It should be remembered however that there are no Catholic marriages included in these data and this fact would have had the greatest impact on the working classes by understating numbers across the period. The numbers in the top three ranks were not high. These ranks were small anyway (see Appendix 5.1). As well, people in these positions were more mobile, their children had greater scope in their choices of spouses and they often married outside the district.

Apart from such trends over the thirty year period, the three tables were quite similar. For this reason it would be worthwhile to focus on table 6.3 as representative of the other two. Each number in a cell represents a set of brides. Thus in the top left hand corner there is one bride whose father belonged to the top ranking as did her husband. About the middle of the table there are 48 brides whose husbands and fathers were both small farmers. The columns represent bride's father's occupations. Clearly the most common occupation for a bride's father was that of farmer with 111

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.174.

examples followed some way behind by 49 small urban businessmen and 46 skilled workers. The rows represent grooms' occupations. Here the most common rankings contained 61 skilled workers, 59 farmers and 55 unskilled workers. Stated in such simple numerical terms it is clear that bride's fathers were, as a whole, of higher status than their new sons-in-law. This is only to be expected when it is remembered that for most males their occupational status and their wealth holdings increased as they moved from young adulthood to middle age.

The bold diagonal cells represent the co-occurrence of bride's father's occupation and groom's occupation. Remembering that these tables represent the assignment of newly married women into categories, those brides who were placed in the bold diagonal boxes were not socially mobile through marriage. Those brides above the diagonal were socially mobile upward and those below were socially mobile downward. By totalling along the diagonal it is clear that 125 brides or 49 per cent of all brides were not socially mobile at all. For those who were socially mobile through marriage, the most obvious trend is not upward but down. Many daughters of farmers were marrying unskilled labourers and skilled workers.

However, the apparent downward mobility needs to be qualified. More than half of those labourers and skilled workers whom the farmers' daughters married were themselves young adult sons of farmers. In later life many of these men became farmers in their own right. Thus what looks like downward social mobility is, in fact, a trend towards stability. Extreme social mobility is represented by the cells farthest from the diagonals and it is clear that there are very few brides in such categories.

The main trend emerging from the data was one of stability. This is particularly noticeable if the tables are drawn up according to classes instead of ranks. This has been done in tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 where ranks 2, 3, 4 and 5 from the previous tables were merged to form the middling class described in Chapter 5 and ranks 6, 7 and 8 became the working class. Over the three decennial periods the percentage of brides upwardly mobile at marriage was quite low. In the 1856-1865 period, 11 per cent of brides married men of higher status than their fathers. In the period 1866-1875

TABLE 6.1

**SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO RANK
1856-1865**

FATHER'S RANK

	1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS	3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	4 SMALL BUSINESS	5 SMALL FARMERS	6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS	7 SKILLED WORKERS	8 UNSKILLED WORKERS
1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	3				3	1		
2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS								
3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	1	1	1		1			
4 SMALL BUSINESS				10	10		3	
5 SMALL FARMERS				1	20	1		5
6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS				2	3	1		2
7 SKILLED WORKERS				2	7	1	6	7
8 UNSKILLED WORKERS				2	17		3	8

TABLE 6.2

**SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO RANK
1866-1875**

FATHER'S RANK

	1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS	3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	4 SMALL BUSINESS	5 SMALL FARMERS	6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS	7 SKILLED WORKERS	8 UNSKILLED WORKERS
1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	7	2						
2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS				1	1			
3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	1	2	5	1	1			
4 SMALL BUSINESS	1			9	9			2
5 SMALL FARMERS			1	2	38		4	18
6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS			2	3	4			1
7 SKILLED WORKERS				5	10	2	12	5
8 UNSKILLED WORKERS				1	26		3	25

TABLE 6.3

**SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO RANK
1876-1885**

FATHER'S RANK

	1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS	3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	4 SMALL BUSINESS	5 SMALL FARMERS	6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS	7 SKILLED WORKERS	8 UNSKILLED WORKERS
1 LARGE ENTRE- PRENEURS	1				1			
2 INDEBTED ENTRE- PRENEURS			2	2				
3 PROFESS- IONALS AND MANAGERS	3		3	7			1	
4 SMALL BUSINESS	1		1	21	9		2	2
5 SMALL FARMERS				2	48		5	4
6 WHITE COLLAR WORKERS	2		2	7	7	1	5	
7 SKILLED WORKERS				5	19	2	28	7
8 UNSKILLED WORKERS			1	5	26		5	18

the figure increased slightly to 13 per cent and in the final decennial period, when the imbalance between the sexes was least pronounced, the figure dropped to 6 per cent. Therefore it would appear that women were upwardly mobile through marriage when there was greatest imbalance between the sexes but such mobility was never marked. Certainly there were very few instances of dramatic upward or downward mobility. Quite clearly the data indicate social stability rather than social mobility.

Such a result accords with the findings in Chapter 5 where it was noted that intra-generational social mobility, although evident in colonial Armidale, was limited. The results also agree with Shirley Fitzgerald's findings that social mobility through marriage in Sydney was also limited. Quite clearly, the notion that social mobility produces cohesion is, once again, not supported. The data also indicate that, if women were not 'marrying up' to any marked degree in Sydney or in rural areas similar to Armidale then it seems that the very high rates of bachelorhood amongst the unskilled working class were due to gender imbalances endemic to that class as a result of forced and free immigration patterns. Certainly the convict population had been heavily skewed towards males as had subsequent waves of unskilled immigrants, the Chinese being an extreme example of an overwhelmingly male, unskilled, immigrant group. As well, the existence of a large underclass of males who might never expect to marry and experience the supposed stabilising influence of family life, did not produce an extraordinarily unstable society. If Australian communities were noted for stability and cohesion then the reasons for such lay elsewhere.

The level of status homogeneity between the families of brides and grooms indicates that love was not blind, and that the courtship context which preceded marriage was controlled. It has been generally observed that, within the middling class, spouses were usually found through local kinship, friendship and religious communities, while men and women of the middle classes, with greater opportunities for travel, were more likely to contract

TABLE 6.4
SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO CLASS
1856-1865

FATHER'S CLASS

	MIDDLE CLASS	MIDDLING CLASS	WORKING CLASS
MIDDLE CLASS	3	3	2
MIDDLING CLASS	1	44	9
WORKING CLASS	0	33	28

TABLE 6.5

SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO CLASS
1866-1875

FATHER'S CLASS

	MIDDLE CLASS	MIDLING CLASS	WORKING CLASS
MIDDLE CLASS	7	2	0
MIDLING CLASS	2	66	24
WORKING CLASS	0	51	45

TABLE 6.6

**SOCIAL MOBILITY OF BRIDES ACCORDING TO CLASS
1876-1885**

FATHER'S CLASS

	MIDDLE CLASS	MIDDLING CLASS	WORKING CLASS
MIDDLE CLASS	1	1	0
MIDDLING CLASS	4	94	14
WORKING CLASS	2	72	66

marriages outside the local community.³² However, in colonial Armidale the role of religious communities in providing opportunities for young people to meet was probably more circumscribed until the churches were able to establish themselves both as a locus for worship and as centres for more secular gatherings of the faithful. Certainly, the records of the Catholic Church throughout the period indicate that about one in every three marriages involved couples, one of whom was a non-Catholic.³³ The Protestant and civil registers were not so ready to record the denominations of brides and grooms and so accurate levels of inter-denominational marriage cannot be determined. However, other local historians have noted that mixed marriages were common at Camden and on the Nambucca River.³⁴ Therefore, it would appear that economic factors were more significant than denominational considerations in marriage, at least until the churches were more confidently established. But even in the period 1876-1885 the *Liber Matrimoniorum* of the Armidale Catholic Cathedral recorded one in four marriages as mixed.

Family and kinship networks were the most crucial agencies for regulating the marriage market. Amongst the middle class, marriage was often an alliance between families and, although the daughter had some choice, that choice needed family approval. Margaret Dangar, eldest daughter of pastoralists Henry and Grace Dangar, learned that lesson when she fell in love with Arthur Hunter Palmer, the trusted manager of all the Dangars' pastoral properties. Henry and Grace simply did not regard their manager as a suitable match for their daughter and tried to end the relationship. Margaret had other plans and she and Palmer eloped from the Dangar home at Neotsfield in the Hunter Valley in 1856. In a classic example of the histrionics of Victorian elopement Henry Dangar and his men rode out after the couple, bringing Margaret home before, presumably, any damage had been done, and locking her in her bedroom with its windows bricked up until she came to her senses. Within twelve months she was steered in the direction of widowed banker, businessman and pastoralist Walter Lamb

³² Davidoff and Hall, *op. cit.*, p.219.

³³ Entries for *sponsus hereticus* and *sponsus conversus* in the *Liber Matrimoniorum*, Cathedral Church of St Mary and St Joseph, Armidale.

³⁴ Norma Townsend, *Valley of the Crooked River: European settlement on the Nambucca*, Kensington, 1993, p.176.

whom she married in February 1858. That alliance had dynastic potential. However, Margaret lived to see her erstwhile lover move to Queensland where he became Premier, Treasurer and Knight of the Realm, while her eminently suitable husband went bankrupt at the height of the 1890s depression and never recovered his fortunes.³⁵

Although the story of Margaret Dangar's elopement represents an extreme example of breach between father and daughter, it illustrates the point that in middle and middling class families a young woman's choice of husband might well be circumscribed by wider familial considerations and strategies. Status and family strategy were at the core of the concept of 'a good match'. It was a core surrounded by a pulp of courtship rituals, family match making and excited gossip. Letters and diaries were often filled with the intrigues and speculations of the marriage market. Richard Dangar's correspondence with his nephew Henry Cary Dangar in the late 1850s contained much English marriage gossip and many comments on the suitability of this or that match as well as some overt pressure on young Henry to find a wife lest his brothers and friends all 'slip ahead of [him]'.³⁶ In Armidale, the marriage pressures and attendant rumours became so preposterous, that a favourite practical joke was to send fictitious notifications of marriage between a mismatched couple to the Sydney or Maitland newspapers.³⁷

A good match often cemented business relationships or provided new business opportunities. Storekeeper Franklin Jackes, for instance, married Margaret, the sister of his business partner, William Cleghorn. When William Miller, young farmer of Saumarez Ponds, married Mary McKinlay, his neighbour's daughter, in 1877, they laid the basis for future co-operative ventures between the two families and members of both families were involved in the discovery of the spectacular Baker's Creek gold reef at Hillgrove in

³⁵ J.X. Jobson, 'Palmer, Sir Arthur Hunter (1819-1898)' and G.P. Walsh, 'Lamb, Walter (1825-1906)' in Douglas Pike (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 5 (1851-1890), Melbourne, 1974, pp.56; 390-393; and G. Dangar to My dear Harry, 28 August, 1856, Dangar transcripts 1846-1862, (typescript copies), U.N.E. Archives, A296 (Details of the elopement according to Dangar family tradition).

³⁶ See, for example, Richard C. Dangar to Henry C. Dangar, 14 May, 1858, Dangar Transcripts.

³⁷ *AE* 23 April, 1870, p.2; and 23 July, 1870, p.2.

1886. A similarly successful business partnership between kin began when John Moore's eldest daughter Mary married tobacconist George F. Todman in 1875. Todman later became a principal in the British Tobacco Company and, together with his brother-in-law Edward Charles Moore, developed the Sydney suburb of Kensington in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁸

Patricia Grimshaw and her collaborators have shown the importance of marriage and kinship networks in the successful operation of free selections in the vicinity of Horsham, Victoria.³⁹ Certainly the legislative restrictions on size of holdings were overcome by kin selecting contiguous portions until a viable enterprise was acquired and, with adult sons and sons-in-law as neighbours, the need to hire costly outside labour was greatly reduced. Certainly around Armidale there were many examples of kinship networks operating in the process of free selection. John McCully, for instance, called upon his wife, his sister and his father-in-law, as well as several dummies, to establish, through free selection, a substantial grazing property called Woodville north of Armidale on the old Tilbuster run.⁴⁰

The importance of the concept of the 'good match' and the watchful eyes of those who constituted the marriage market indicate that the choice for young women was somewhat restricted. This observation is reinforced by statistics on the age at first marriage for women which, in Armidale, was comparatively low. In the decennial period 1856-1865, the average age of brides was 19.8 years with almost one in five brides marrying under the age of 18. This average age rose to 21.0 in the period 1866-1875 and to 21.1 in the next ten year period. These figures were similar to those found for marriages on the Nambucca River of northern New South Wales although the periods when the most youthful marriages took place differed between the two localities.⁴¹ However, the figures for both brides' and grooms' ages at first

³⁸ J.F. McMahan, *Kensington: A model suburb*, Randwick, 1986, pp.26, 29.

³⁹ Patricia Grimshaw, Charles Fahey, Susan Janson and Tom Griffiths, 'Families and Selection in Colonial Horsham' in Patricia Grimshaw *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp.130-131.

⁴⁰ Indenture of Mortgage between Mary E. McCully and the Union Bank of Australia, 4 July 1890, Old System Registers, LTONSW, Book 488, No.40.

⁴¹ Townsend, *op. cit.*, p.178.

marriage in Armidale over the entire period 1856-1885 were considerably lower than other rural communities such as Camden in New South Wales,⁴² and Horsham,⁴³ Castlemaine,⁴⁴ and Bendigo⁴⁵ in Victoria. As well, the figures were much lower than the colonial rates found in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, the only colonies where accurate results for age at first marriage could be determined from nineteenth century census data.⁴⁶

Although one can agree with Norma Townsend that such low ages at first marriage indicate that young brides did not seem to 'have set a very high store upon their freedom and independence' it is hard to agree with her conclusions that women were in a 'buyers' market' or that 'they entered the marriage market willingly'.⁴⁷ If young women were in a buyers' market then presumably they would have shown a buyers' discretion by sampling a few products and delaying the decision to buy until they were presented with a particularly good item. The large numbers of teenage brides (48 per cent in the period 1856-1865) would indicate that women, notwithstanding willingness, were under considerable pressure to marry the first suitable man who expressed an interest. Rather than experiencing a buyers' market it seems more likely that the young brides were in a market where young men were particularly anxious and fathers were concerned that their daughters might make a love-governed 'bad match' given the excess of working class and underclass males in the community.

Figures on pre-marital sexual activity support this contention. Pre-marital pregnancy was not as significant a factor in inducing early marriages in colonial Armidale as it was in other places. In England in the early nineteenth century about one in three brides was pregnant on her wedding day,⁴⁸ although as Alan Atkinson discovered, rates in some English rural parishes were as high as 68

42 Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p.129.

43 Grimshaw, 'Families and Selection in Colonial Horsham', p.128

44 Ellen McEwen, 'Family History in Australia: Some observations on a new field' in Grimshaw *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p.189.

45 Charles Fahey, 'Bendigo 1881-1891: A demographic portrait of a Victorian provincial town', in Grimshaw *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p.147.

46 Peter McDonald, *Marriage in Australia*, Canberra, 1975, pp.103, 105.

47 Townsend, *op. cit.*, p.178.

48 F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectability: A social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, London, 1988, p.112.

per cent.⁴⁹ In Australia, Atkinson found a pregnancy rate amongst brides of 32 per cent at Camden⁵⁰ while Fahey found a rate of 21 per cent in Bendigo (with a further 25 per cent of first births illegitimate) in 1881⁵¹ and Townsend found rates in excess of 50 per cent on the Nambucca.⁵² In the town of Armidale and the adjacent farmlands in the period 1856 to 1861 of 114 marriages recorded, only 6 brides or 5.2 per cent were well advanced with child and another three brides were probably pregnant at the time of their marriage although they may well not have known. Forty percent⁵³ of brides, however, gave birth to a child between nine and twelve months after their marriage indicating that for most couples sexual activity started at about the time of marriage. The situation in the greater registration district, taking in the goldfields of Rocky River, the small towns of Uralla and Walcha and the pastoral properties around these towns, was somewhat different. Here, of 310 marriages contracted, 11.6 per cent of brides were pregnant, almost double the rate in Armidale town, but very much lower than in Camden, Bendigo or the Nambucca. A further 12 per cent of all first births in the period were illegitimate and this figure was more in keeping with rates at Camden.

The differences are difficult to explain partly because different writers use different measuring techniques.⁵⁴ Quite by coincidence, the total number of first births registered in Armidale in the period and the number of marriages celebrated were almost the same (319 and 310) despite the fact that an indeterminate number of married couples would have left the district after marriage and about 20 per cent of first births were to couples who had moved into the district after marriage. Therefore the low rates held constant no matter what technique was used. Atkinson attributes

49 Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p.133.

50 *Loc. cit.*

51 Fahey, *op. cit.*, p.148.

52 Townsend, *op. cit.*, p.180.

53 This figure is much lower than the 80% claimed by Townsend, *ibid.*, p.182.

54 Part of the problem is that measuring techniques are not consistent. Fahey based his calculations on total first births in one year and related illegitimacies and child births within eight months of marriage to that base. Atkinson calculates both illegitimacy rates and pregnant bride rates both at Camden and in England against a base of total number of marriages in a period. Townsend does not give precise rates although she used numbers of brides as her base but did not give an indication of the size of the population.

lower rates of pregnancy at marriage to improved living conditions leading to earlier marriages.⁵⁵ Certainly low ages at marriage for both brides and grooms in Armidale tend to correlate with low pregnancy rates although caution is suggested by research in England which shows that, as on the Nambucca, pregnancy rates could increase dramatically as age at marriage decreased.⁵⁶

Low ages at marriage and low rates of pregnancy could well be commensurate with class factors. It has already been shown that there was a very clear tendency towards status stability at marriage rather than social mobility upward or down. Table 6.4 shows that the great majority of brides were from the middling class. As described previously, the great majority of single men were from the unskilled working class. It could well be that women were rushed into marriage, young and virgin, to prevent the possibility of an 'unsuitable' match. In other words, young age at marriage and low bridal pregnancy could be indicators of a high level of control exerted by families upon their daughters. It is clear, however, that more research needs to be done on regional differences preferably in one study that could ensure both consistency of technique and due attention to class-based demographic patterns.

Young women had few alternatives to marriage, and freedom and independence were rare commodities. In the earliest decade of the period under consideration when brides were the youngest, there would have been few paid work opportunities for young girls. There were few advertisements for servants in the *Armidale Express* as many middle and middling class families were only establishing themselves in the community. Schools were small and teaching was male dominated. As well, there was virtually no factory or clerical work for women. By 1891 the opportunities for paid work for young women had increased substantially. There were frequent advertisements for female domestic servants and George Trim, son of the merchant John Trim, had opened a registry for servants in Armidale.⁵⁷ School teaching was a career for women and nursing was becoming one. Barnett Aaron Moses

⁵⁵ Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p.133.

⁵⁶ Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of reproduction, 1300-1840*, Oxford, 1986, p.306.

⁵⁷ *AE*, 13 January, 1891, p.5.

employed young girls in his boot finishing department and women sales assistants specialised in women's clothing and millinery in the larger general stores and in small specialty shops. Work may have given women a little independence before marriage but the overwhelming belief amongst men and women was that paid outside work for women was ephemeral and secondary to the virtues of a life of unpaid work and dependency in marriage — of giving selflessly and receiving gratefully.

With so much importance placed on marriage as the realisation of the essence of womanliness, it is necessary to make the point that an indeterminate number of couples lived in *de facto* relationships, most usually because one of the partners was already legally married, but sometimes because the couple simply never bothered to legalise their relationship. There was a class dimension to the numbers living together outside marriage. Research in Britain has indicated that amongst the urban poor legal marriage was not the norm until the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ From time to time in Armidale, court house officials or clergymen recorded, in the tongue-defying polysyllabic prose of the times, that a marrying couple had been 'heretofore living in concubinage'. Birth registers showed that almost one half of illegitimate births were to women who had been previously married and were probably either widowed or living in a *de facto* relationship with another man.

The most notable example of 'concubinage' in colonial Armidale was the relationship between Owen Gorman and Mary Millikin (alias Rupert, alias Stupart). Gorman had been a Brevet Captain in Her Majesty's Eightieth Regiment of Foot, and, having risen through the ranks, became the last commandant of the penal settlement at Moreton Bay before the district was thrown open to settlement in 1842. He left Brisbane, however, under a cloud with charges of immorality and 'improper intercourse' with young convict women having been substantiated.⁵⁹ He became estranged from his wife Margaret and, when he arrived in Armidale in 1856 to set up as a

⁵⁸ J. Bernard, *The Future of Marriage*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.122 quoted in Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, St Leonards, 1993, pp.28-29.

⁵⁹ Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 27 October, 1842, *Historical Records of Australia* (Series 1), Vol. XXII, Melbourne, 1924, pp.330-332.

storekeeper and auctioneer, he brought with him Mary Millikin, his *de facto* wife, and their young family. Mary was 25 years his junior and together they had six children before Owen Gorman died in Armidale in 1862 aged 63 years. The *de facto* relationship did not seem to cause outrage or even mild condemnation in Armidale. Owen Gorman was a significant leader in Irish and Catholic political causes in the town and enjoyed the confidence of Rev. Timothy McCarthy and Rev. John T. Dunne as well as leading Irish born businessmen and farmers. His obituary was generous in its praise as befitted a prominent citizen of Armidale.⁶⁰ In his will he specifically requested that his illegitimate children be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith.⁶¹

Mary Millikin and her family lived in Armidale for the next thirty years and more. She raised her six children on her own and eventually died of diabetes in 1891. The family seem to have suffered no great stigma. Two of her daughters trained as school teachers and most of the daughters seem to have married well. Her son became something of a hero in the New South Wales Police Force, being involved in a celebrated 'shoot-out affray' with bushrangers in 1879.⁶² However, in the last fifteen years of her life Mary Millikin took to calling herself Mrs Gorman and was generally addressed as such. There is evidence that, by the 1880s, illegitimacy and *de facto* relationships were more likely to cause a rustle of rumour or the sharper crack of outright scorn in the town. In 1888, the headmaster of the Armidale National School, Andrew Herd, advised his superiors that he did not enquire too deeply into the affairs of a Mrs Smith, a parent who had defaulted in the payment of her family's school fees, because he suspected Smith to be her maiden name.⁶³ Headmaster Herd was perhaps understandably sensitive on this issue. Only a few years before he had married one of the teachers at his school, Agnes Gorman, the daughter of Mary Millikin and Owen Gorman.

⁶⁰ 'Armidale Fifty One Years Ago', *AE*, 10 October, 1913, p.3.

⁶¹ Last Will and Testament of Owen Gorman, Supreme Court, Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, Probate Packet, Series 1, No. 5568, AONSW, 14/3353.

⁶² 'Murrumbidgee Bushrangers', *AE*, 28 November, 1879, p.6.

⁶³ Marginal Comments of Andrew Herd, Margaret Smith to Sir, 11 September, 1888, Armidale National School File, AONSW, 5/14678A.

Behind the story of Mary Millikin is the story of Owen Gorman and his legal wife Margaret which illustrates the change in the marital dependency of women during the course of the nineteenth century. Their marriage in effect fell apart while the couple were in Moreton Bay.⁶⁴ However, they had been married before 1837 and so Margaret was legally entitled to a one third dower interest in Owen's real property. He could not sell any land without her consent to the transaction. Nor could he provide adequately for Mary Millikin and her children while his wife held a widow's interest over his estate should he die. Thus hampered, Owen Gorman in 1860 arranged for his wife to release her rights to dower and a contract effecting the same was drawn up.⁶⁵ This widow's right to dower was a considerable power held by women of the property owning classes and there could be little doubt that Margaret Gorman secured a favourable return for her co-operation with her estranged husband. It was this right that was abolished for all marriages contracted after 1 January, 1837 and a regime based on the total marital dependence of women was thereby established.

But it was not only the legal position of women that enforced dependency. Custom demanded that the mother be the primary parent and large families ensured that she would spend the greater part of her adult life in reproduction and child care. As an extreme case there was Lydia Baker, daughter of farmer Thomas Baker whose dispute with his reapers was described in Chapter Four. At the age of 19, Lydia married neighbouring farmer Alexander McMillan and had 22 children during her life, 19 of whom survived to adulthood. Martha Allingham married at the age of 17 and gave birth to 14 children during her married life. Her eldest daughter was 24 years older than her youngest.⁶⁶ She therefore spent the best part of forty years in parenting. As was seen in Chapter Four, she had from time to time a servant to help her, but, coming from a heavily indebted small farming family, her husband was not able to pay the usual servants' wage and, in all likelihood, Martha was frequently without domestic help.

⁶⁴ Sir George Gipps to Lord Stanley, 27 October, 1842, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Indenture of Release, Owen Gorman and Margaret Gorman, 30 November, 1860, Old System Register, LTONSW, Book 70, No. 209.

⁶⁶ Death of Martha Allingham, died 11 December, 1908, Armidale Court House Death Register, No. 208/1908.

Martha Allingham's example is not at all unusual for the period. Although the size of her family was considerably above the average of seven children for her age cohort, 20 per cent of women in her age group had eleven or more children.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding the availability of domestic servants for some mothers, the strain of large families on women of all classes was enormous. The dangers of frequent pregnancies were well known. Emma Allingham, kinswoman of Martha, died in 1892 at the age of 40 years during her thirteenth confinement.⁶⁸ As well as the dangers of pregnancy, high infant mortality rates meant that many parents experienced the loss of one or more of their children. On a grave marked by an obelisk in Armidale cemetery is the most poignant reminder of the reality of infant death in colonial times. The inscription reads:

<p>In Loving memory of William Low Born 31 May 1839 Died 1 Dec 1891</p> <p>Also his wife Mary Low Born 3 Nov 1845 Died 4 Sep 1923</p> <p>Also their Children JAMES Born 22 Jan 1866 Died 24 Jan 1867</p> <p>MARGARATE Born 17 Mar 1868 Died 19 Dec 1868</p>	<p>MARY [MINNIE] Born 16 Mar 1869 Died 18 July 1924</p> <p>GEORGE Born 28 May 1871 Died 20 Dec 1871</p> <p>ROBERT Born 19 Jan 1874 Died 16 Feb 1874</p> <p>THOMAS Born 7 Jan 1876 Died 27 Jan 1876</p>	<p>ELIZABETH Born 18 Feb 1877 Died 25 Mar 1877</p> <p>ISABELLA Born 2 Feb 1879 Died 29 Mar 1879</p> <p>ADA Born 16 Sep 1881 Died 6 Mar 1882</p> <p>HERBERT Born 25 May 1884 Died 6 Nov 1884.</p>
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For many women the greater part of their married life was regulated by reproductive and nurturing cycles. For other women there was a world of work beyond the demands of family creation and maintenance. Travellers in the 1860s and 1870s would, not uncommonly, come across a woman, perhaps with toddlers in tow,

⁶⁷ G.H. Knibbs, 'The Mathematical Theory of Population, of its Character and Fluctuations and of the Factors which Influence Them', *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911*, Vol. 1 (Appendix A), Melbourne, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1917 quoted in Carmichael, *op. cit.*, pp.125-126.

⁶⁸ Death of Emma Allingham, died 3 March, 1892, Armidale Court House Death Register, 20/92.

shepherding in the open pastures.⁶⁹ Other working class women whose families had been of moderate size became nurses to large middle class families. Mary Millikin certainly worked briefly as a nurse at Saumarez Station in 1861 when her *de facto* husband was ill.⁷⁰ Women of the middling class who had time to spare from parenting were expected to help with the family business. Sarah Scholes ran the kitchen in the New England Hotel and both Sarah Moore and Elizabeth Trim were to be found regularly behind the counter in their husbands' respective stores. Farmers wives always had plenty of farm work to do.

For women of the middle class, the cycles of birth and nurturing could be just as frequent, just as tragic, just as dangerous as for women of any other class. However, some of the more laborious demands of child rearing and home maintenance were usually borne by nurse-maids, governesses, cooks and laundry maids. Like her husband, the middle class wife supervised the work of others. But in so supervising her servants, she had to create a home that was not just a family haven but also a social venue for friends and business associates. It was a home that would be scrutinised and talked about. She had to ensure that the ambience was both tasteful and hospitable. The network she entertained was the network her husband relied on for business success and she could spend hours ensuring that a dinner party seemed effortless.

These were the women who were most prominent in the social life of a community and it is their voices which are most clearly heard from the past. They gazed out from their photographs flanked by classical props near which they typically stood to reveal the rich cut and fall of dress and the figure deformed by stays, bustles and crinolines accentuating breasts hips and thighs. They were elegant child-bearers. They spoke, too, from their diaries — the testaments of their ordered lives. They wrote to remember, not just the vital markers, but the routines which brought them from one milestone to another. The diary itself became part of the routine, part of the discipline of life as faithfully executed as prayers and piano practice. These diaries, often running to twenty

⁶⁹ AE, 2 November, 1877, p.4.

⁷⁰ Entry, 22 October, 1861, Carolyn Thomas Diaries.

or more volumes over as many years, give the clearest picture of Victorian middle class family life.

Caroline Thomas kept a diary through most of the years she lived at Saumarez. In 1857, as a young bride with her first child, she had come to New England with her husband Henry shortly after he had purchased Saumarez station from the Dumaresq family. Her new home was an extensive slab house, low roofed and deeply verandahed, seasoned to a bush grey, overlooking Saumarez Creek. Hitherto it had been the overseer's house and was in need of restoration and redecoration. Here she created a setting and the joys and tragedies of her early married life played themselves out.

She had two families to claim her heart. Both families were triply coupled. Two of her sisters had married two of Henry Thomas' half brothers. Her parents and siblings were always on her mind. In her first year of marriage she lost her dear sister Cordelia, wife of Captain Lancelot Thomas of the Madras Artillery, from smallpox during the siege of the Lucknow Residency at the height of the Indian Mutiny. Her younger brother Jemmy (James Husband), who stayed from time to time at Saumarez, was a constant source of embarrassment as he moved from one scandalous love affair to another without regard to rectitude or fear of gossip. The financial misfortunes of her father, James Husband Senior, were a cause for acute worry and dear Mama and Papa were ever in her prayers in their troubled years. But it was her husband and children who claimed the greatest part of her emotions.

Caroline's relations with her husband were loving, and expressively so. She never seemed to tire of his company and missed him whenever he was away. She wrote tenderly of him in her diaries knowing that he would read her entries presently or at some future time. She delighted in his attentions. Henry was fourteen years older than she and, for him, marriage and middle age had coincided. His health was never robust and he suffered from some unspecified but recurrent fever, which was treated with quinine, as well as a degenerative problem with his feet. She worried about him endlessly. Her diaries describe a woman who worked assiduously to create domestic comfort and happiness for her husband. She entertained a continual stream of visitors, many

of whom were welcome but others merely tolerated with a smile. Frequent visitors included prominent local officials and their families such as successive Commissioners of Crown Lands, Abram Orpen Moriarty and Thomas Warre Harriott and District Surveyor William A.B. Greaves; local professionals such as Drs West and Spasshatt; solicitor Evan Rowsell; bank managers William Seely and Donald Larnach; and Church of England Vicar Septimus Hungerford, his wife and children, who were the closest friends of the Thomas family. From across the paddocks came neighbours and pastoralists Robert Perrott of Haroldston, the Dumaresqs of Tilbuster, the Marshes of Salisbury Court and Arthur Hunter Palmer from Gostwyck. All these people were Anglicans and were the centre of the 'squattling interest' in Armidale. Caroline's role in nurturing this network was crucial and even in the very last stages of a pregnancy she would find herself entertaining visitors.

The children of the marriage provided Caroline with constant joys and anxieties. She had eight children by the time she left Saumarez in 1874 but two of the girls had died in infancy. The family moved to Wivenhoe, near Camden, and she was to have another three children and lose her second son Harry before her marriage ended with the death of Henry in 1884. The children came about two years apart. Pregnancy had been treated coyly in her early diaries, and childbirth with excitement and delight. However, as she became aware of her fourth pregnancy, she recorded with anxiety and then resignation that 'I am very much afraid that something is again the case'⁷¹ and 'I did not feel quite well — begin to fear something'.⁷² By then, her own confinements and those of her sisters and friends were termed 'illnesses'. Confinement was perhaps a term more applicable to her entire lifestyle. With the constant round of pregnancies and nursing she spent most of her Saumarez years house bound. When she did go out she always went with Henry even if the outing was nothing more than a walk down to the creek before dinner. When Henry went away, life for Caroline became dull. This social and emotional need was another dimension to her dependency on her husband.

⁷¹ Entry 13 May, 1862, Diary of Caroline Thomas (typescript by Ann Philp), New England Historical Resources Centre.

⁷² Entry, 1 June, 1862, Diary of Caroline Thomas.

By every indication, this was a happy marriage. But that happiness was bound by the constraints of Victorian patriarchy. By custom and by law, Henry's power was paramount. He could easily assert his will and that reality shaped the marriage relationship. Tensions were more evident in the first two years of marriage as both partners tested strategies within this power imbalance. Caroline's diary was a part of the game. About eighteen months into the marriage the following entry was recorded.

Very busy all day Henry cranky still in his temper
 [Caroline very cranky also for some days past which has
 inoculated Henry — HAT]
 perhaps it's my fault he says so but I feel very tired and have to
 nurse dear baby so much that it is weakening & depressing so he
 ought to make allowances.⁷³

Since Henry read the diary and very occasionally added his comments, Caroline's entries were probably written with her husband's perusal in mind. With the passage of time she came to use her genuine love for Henry as an effective strategy in the face of his power and authority. Her love became selfless devotion. It did not have to express itself that way. But it did, and in so far as it did it became a tactic, the use of which was culturally acceptable for women of that time and place.⁷⁴ She always deferred to his decisions, accepting his desire to sell Saumarez in 1860 with the diary entry:

A letter from Huw Walker saying the Station is sold! Feel very
 sorry but hope all is for the best. Henry is pleased so I ought to
 be.⁷⁵

then supporting him when the sale collapsed and he decided to withdraw the property from the market. Even on the day of the birth of her sixth child, Bertha, when Caroline may have been forgiven for being a little self-occupied, her diary reveals another concern.

As usual I woke up about half past three in the morning with
 pains which I knew would get worse etc Got up about 6 & dressed —
 Sent for Mrs Millington who sat with me all day — Sent also for Dr
 West — baby born about 10 minutes past seven Dr W. very kind. I
 was dreadfully ill but thank God got over it very safely — Dear

⁷³ Entry 10 October, 1857, Caroline Thomas Diaries.

⁷⁴ Hilary M. Lips, *Women, Men, and Power*, California, 1991, pp.63-67.

⁷⁵ Entry, 20 February, 1860, Caroline Thomas Diaries.

H[enry] so ill all day with fever & ague he looked so miserable!! I felt so anxious about him.⁷⁶

This selfless devotion was the preferred expression of the Victorian ideology of motherhood and marriage. But it was also a form of control. There was the thorn of guilt in this rose of devotion. Ingratitude could be invoked if husband and children did not behave as they ought. It was a female tactic in the face of the massive authority of the male. The power structure within patriarchal families encouraged women to attempt to influence men through moral persuasion, deference, manipulation and even seduction.⁷⁷ Women legitimised their attempts at influence by claiming to be custodians of family morality. Men claimed to be arbiters with a legitimate right to expect that their 'will be done'. But not all families could or would play these games.

In many families the bounds of behaviour were never properly drawn. There was no balance between the strategies of influence and the strategies of authority. There was, rather, the unrefined clash of wills and the ready resort to physical coercion on the part of a feral patriarch.

There were no statistics on domestic violence in colonial society. One could expect that occasional abuse, at least, was widespread since it was apparently accepted as an inevitable part of married life. On the one hand, an educated professional like Commissioner of Crown Lands, Thomas Warre Harriott, could deplore the fact that the family midwife, Mrs Brady, had been beaten by her husband,⁷⁸ but magistrates, drawn from the same class as Harriott could condone at least a degree of domestic violence in their pronouncements from the bench. James Walsh beat his wife on Christmas Day and when she brought him to court the case was dismissed. After all, witnesses said, they were both drunk. Quipped one magistrate, no doubt to the amusement of his colleague on the bench, the defendant had given his wife no more than a Christmas Box. When John Trim brought his wife Elizabeth to court in 1862, after she threatened to run him through with a

⁷⁶ Entry, 19 January, 1867, Caroline Thomas Diaries.

⁷⁷ Lips, *op. cit.*, p.73.

⁷⁸ Entry, 29 January, 1869, Thomas Warre Harriott Diaries, 1854-1907, Mitchell Library Mss 4502.

knife while he was asleep, there was certainly an indication from his evidence that he occasionally gave her a beating, although, said he by way of justification, 'I have not beat you this year — not this two years'.⁷⁹

Even in quite serious cases of life-threatening violence as with Mrs Fattorini whose husband beat her frequently and severely, there was equivocation about the degree of violence acceptable within marriage. The Supreme Court judge, in dismissing Fattorini's petition for the restitution of conjugal rights and granting Mrs Fattorini a decree for legal separation, intimated in an aside that certain violence, particularly as the result of the 'mere explosion of passion repented of as soon as committed' was not of interest to the courts.⁸⁰ Certainly domestic violence was muffled by the curtain of privacy which surrounded the family. When Robert Cardwell beat his wife early in June 1882, the children ran into the street screaming that their mother was being murdered. The commotion brought their neighbour Henry Trim out of his house to investigate. The only reason the incident came before the court was that Cardwell then assaulted Trim for interfering and Trim laid charges. Mrs Cardwell withdrew her charges which the Police Magistrate said was 'not surprising, as women could seldom be induced to appear against their husbands', but added, somewhat self-righteously, that had she proceeded he would have imprisoned Cardwell for as long as the law would permit⁸¹ (which was two months⁸²). Perhaps the Police Magistrate failed to realise that there would have been no benefits for Mrs Cardwell or her family in that course of action.

For Mrs Cardwell and many like her there was no way out of an unsatisfactory marriage. Divorce was rare and exceedingly costly and only three cases were discovered in Armidale during the period of this study. There were many separations and desertions and many people longed to remarry. Minna Yang believed she was

⁷⁹ John Trim v. Elizabeth Trim, 5 May, 1862, Armidale Bench of Magistrates, Bench Book, 12 November, 1861 - 9 February, 1864, AONSW, 4/5492.

⁸⁰ 'Divorce Court Sydney: Fattorini v. Fattorini', *AE*, 26 September, 1879, p.6.

⁸¹ Henry Trim v. Robert Cardwell, *AE*, 6 June, 1882 (supplement).

⁸² Henry Connell Jnr, *The New South Wales Magisterial Digest*, Sydney, John Sands, 1866, p.536.

expressing some legal rights when she advertised in the *Armidale Express* as follows in 1863:

Having been married about four years ago to a Chinaman named Tang Yang and believing he has left the country or is dead, this is to give notice that unless he claims me in two months from this date I shall get married again.⁸³

h e r

Minna X Yang

mark

There were many other similar advertisements⁸⁴ despite the fact that the *Express* discouraged people from inserting them. But there was no legal basis to these declared intentions as John Coughlan discovered in 1874 when, as good as his word, he remarried, was promptly arrested, and received six months imprisonment for bigamy.⁸⁵

Given the power imbalance that defined marriage, it was women who suffered most when a marriage failed. A deserted husband could take his wife to court and demand the restitution of conjugal rights. Unless he was a brute, he was likely to succeed. The deserted wife could not order her husband to return and, in claiming maintenance for herself and children, would have been aware that court rulings were difficult to enforce especially if her husband left the district. For many women, desertion was the harbinger of destitution with re-marriage out of the question. However a few women tried to get away with it. When Johanna Meehan's husband was convicted of murdering a shepherd at Kellys Plains in 1868 his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Johanna, with four young children, remarried. She was arrested, brought before the court charged with bigamy and sentenced to six months gaol in Armidale. Two weeks later her children were found fending for themselves in a ruined hut on a pastoral property near Walcha and were charged with being neglected. They spent a week in Armidale Gaol with their mother

⁸³ *AE*, 22 August, 1863, p.1.

⁸⁴ *AE*, 11 December, 1869, p.1; 20 May, 1871, p.5; 17 June, 1871, p.5; 24 February, 1872, p.5; 6 July, 1872, p.5; 9 October, 1872, p.5; 17 January, 1874, p.5.

⁸⁵ *AE*, 7 February, 1874, p.4.

before being sent off to orphanages in Sydney.⁸⁶ Johanna Meehan thus lost everything.

In Victorian society, the family was a sacred institution with dissolution by death the only morally acceptable end. This chapter has shown that marriage was the lot of the overwhelming proportion of women, but for men there were large numbers who knew no family life once they had left their families of origin. The existence of a lower class of unmarried men in New England probably explains the strong suggestions from this study that there was a tightly controlled marriage market operating in the district. It would appear, also, that marriage reinforced class divisions and there was not a significant incidence of marked social mobility through marriage.

Family life was governed by power imbalances that were sanctioned by law and by custom. Roles were cast in terms of duty and displayed in auras of ideals. The family became a metaphor for public life. Men adopted fatherly roles in the churches, in the law courts, in business and in all aspects of community life. To be a man was to be a leader and a protector. Women were supposed to busy themselves with projects of decoration and adornment, become custodians of faith and morality and generally watch and applaud their menfolk from the sidelines. They were always mothers writ large — their pleasures vicarious. The imagery of the family was certainly pervasive beyond the bounds of home. But the reality of the family pervaded time. Children first learned roles within the family. They first learned the parameters and forms of power and resistance within the family. As boys and girls they learned to be men and women. As men and women they wrestled with the dissonance between the 'is' and the 'ought'. Family based ideologies were significant in shaping the lives of Victorian women and men. But there were also counter ideologies based on the lifestyles of the large numbers of unmarried men in colonial society. These ideologies were associated with both gender and class divisions in society and are the focus of the next chapter.

⁸⁶ AE, 11 October, 1873, p.5; and 25 October, 1873, p.4.