LIVING AND WORKING ON THE STATION, 1839-c.1860

‘Give me a home man for a master. An Englishman is a gentleman over any one and knows how to treat his men properly and do them justice.’

Reminiscences of William Telfer Jnr. 1

This chapter will consider several important aspects of Ollera’s management during its founding partners’ residence in Australia and the consequences for their workers of the paternalist precepts they followed. The degree to which the success of their attempt depended on the residence on the station of a co-operative management team will first be considered. The focus will then be upon the methods by which the Everett brothers applied paternalism’s assumptions and attitudes to the management of their vast, isolated ‘run’. The problems the brothers encountered in transferring traditional practices and ‘mind-sets’ to a new and alien environment and their reaction to the modifications imposed by these radically different conditions will be addressed. Discussion will then focus upon the impact of paternalist policies on the living conditions and future prospects of their workers. The seminal importance of the Everetts’ preference, after 1849, to assist in the immigration of families and family-groups rather than single men will be considered. The benefits to both masters and ‘men’ which resulted from the establishment and operation of a modified but clearly recognizable form of the traditional ‘family economy’ on the colonial frontier will be assessed.

The manifold transactions recorded in the detailed accounts kept by the founding partners during their residence in Australia provide much information about the living standards and conditions of the immigrant families. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of typical families’ living standards will be explored. Quantitative aspects to be considered include the security of the ‘breadwinner’s’ employment, the wages he earned, his opportunities for advancement and the availability, variety and value of supplementary income earned by members of his family. Qualitative aspects such as housing, diet, expenditure at the store and general well-being will then be considered. By comparing the living standards and lived experiences of these assisted-immigrant colonial workers with those ‘enjoyed’ by their English

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contemporaries, it will be possible to determine the extent of any improvement in the living standards and prospects of the first generation of rural labourers from Wiltshire. Though little other first-hand evidence has survived, the reminiscences of William Telfer Jnr, whose lifespan coincided almost exactly with the development of the Liverpool Plains and the adjacent slopes and tablelands from frontier outpost to prosperous ‘settled districts’, permit us to glimpse the attitudes and expectations of this first generation of immigrant families.

William Telfer Jnr was nearing the end of his life when he wrote the words which introduce this chapter. The old bushman was looking back from the start of the twentieth century to a way of life which, except in the remote interior and northern and north-western extremities of mainland Australia, had changed irrevocably. The son of one of the first Scots shepherds imported by the Australian Agricultural Company to its vast fiefdom at Port Stephens, the Peel Valley and the Liverpool Plains, Telfer was born in the early 1840s at the Company’s station on the Peel River, where his father was then overseer. Born on the then frontier of settlement, opposite the few scattered huts which would huddle together to form the nucleus of the town and future city of Tamworth, William Jnr spent the rest of his life in the region, where he worked as a general ‘hand’ on the stations of the Northern Districts of New South Wales and southern Queensland.²

Though rambling and subject in some of its details to the vagaries and conflations of an old man’s memory, Telfer’s Wallabadah Manuscript is therefore a rare example of ‘history from below’, the history of the truly silent majority. His memoir provides valuable insights into the attitudes, experiences, opinions and expectations of one of the seldom noticed ‘ordinary’ working men and women upon whose labour the development of the region depended. Significantly, Telfer’s view of the qualities and conduct of a good employer is expressed in the language of paternalism. Like the system itself, the old man harked back to an idealized past in which those best qualified to be ‘masters’ were ‘English gentlemen’ whose position and right to govern were legitimated by time, by traditional practices, by the individual’s acceptance of his ‘place’ in an ordered (and orderly) social hierarchy and by a mutually-acknowledged recognition of the duties and obligations implicit upon ‘master’ and ‘man’. Although this ‘social contract’ was almost always unspoken, it was nevertheless clearly-understood and

² Ibid, pp. 15-17.
honoured, however grudgingly, with an outward display of ‘lip-service’ by the very many over whom the paternalist few held power. Joseph Arch, the Warwickshire Dissenter who rose from ploughboy to parliamentarian and who by the 1870s had taken over from Cobbett as the rural labourers’ champion, put the case succinctly. ‘A smooth face and a smooth tongue was what their benefactors required of them, and they got both’.  

At the heart of the system lay the ownership of the land, which was seen as the sole validation of the right to govern. Having gained this right it was the landowner’s duty to play the part of a stern but good and caring parent, to ‘treat his men properly and do them justice’. As their master, his responsibility was to govern his dependents personally and fairly and to set a good example to his extended ‘family’ of blood-kin, ‘friends’, household servants, day-labourers and resident unfortunates. Working closely with the incumbent of his Anglican parish, who was usually his choice and to whom he was often related, he should oversee the religious education and monitor the behaviour of all who came under his aegis. In leading a useful and moral life he should guide and prepare each of his dependents for his or her allotted ‘place’ in the social pyramid, dispensing aid to those among the needy whom he deemed worthy of his benevolence. In return, the governed and in particular the many dependent poor had equally important reciprocal duties. These were to be sober, industrious and compliant, content with their station in life (whose subservience and disadvantages were promised redress in the hereafter) and above all to be openly grateful, deferential and unquestioningly obedient.  

Several elements in the Everett brothers’ background had combined to make them convinced followers of the tenets of the paternalist revival. As younger sons of a resident country gentleman and estate-owner, they belonged to the level of England’s governing oligarchy to which the philosophy had most appeal and was best-suited. While avoiding the worst excesses of some of his neighbouring squires and despite his retirement from parliament and the recent abolition of his ‘pocket borough’ seat, their father held social, economic and de facto political control over his over-crowded and under-employed ‘close’ parish. Well-educated, highly-principled and serious, his sons possessed the self-assurance and certainty of

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5 Ibid., p. 153
their right to govern, which resulted from their membership of the fully-accepted third
generation of a close-knit family which had strong links to the closely-embraced
manufacturing, financial, legal and socio-political networks of both county and metropolitan
‘Society’. Three of the young Everetts’ brothers were Anglican clergymen. Two, Charles and
Thomas, were graduates of Cambridge, a stronghold of the Evangelical Movement, while the
third, Edward, apparently preceded John Everett to Edinburgh University.\(^7\) The young men
who founded Ollera were therefore convinced Tory-Evangelicals who were determined to lead
purposeful lives. John Everett made this clear when, outward bound for New South Wales and
still in sight of the English coast, he recorded his satisfaction at the opportunity to lead a
‘useful’ as well as a financially rewarding life in the distant colony.\(^8\) When, after twenty years,
first George and then John returned permanently to England, the second element in their shared
ambition had been realized, for Ollera Station and the ‘GJE’ partnership were about to enter
upon more than two decades of expansion and prosperity. It is to the means by which the first
element of their ambition was achieved that we must now turn.

One of the first decisions and, in the long-term, perhaps the most important one the
Everett brothers made after their arrival in the colony was that they should live permanently on
the land they claimed. Although the district in which they would settle appears to have been
left open, given their family background, personal beliefs and the constraints of their adequate
though limited finances, this was probably always their intention. However the timing of their
arrival meant that external events would have made their decision inevitable. After fifty years
the economy of the mother colony was beginning a process of fundamental change; to the
nature of its labour-force and to the means by which the change from assigned-convict to
assisted-free workers was to be funded. As a result the price of land ‘within the boundaries’,
which had risen steadily since the allocation of grants to selected individuals had been
abolished in the early 1830s, had reached twelve shillings per acre.\(^9\) In limiting their
ambitions, or in being limited by financial constraints and external political decisions, to a
single, moderately-sized and personally-managed ‘run’ on the frontier of settlement, the

\(^7\) Ollera Station Records, ‘Genealogical Notes’, University of New England Regional Archives,
A103:V3052/15 [Hereafter UNERA]; Everett Records Guyra, Letter, ‘John to Dear Father’, dated 1833, for
reference to Edward’s advice on procedures at Edinburgh University.
\(^8\) Ollera Station Records, Everett Notebook, 1836-48, UNERA, A103:V231.
Everett brothers avoided, albeit perhaps narrowly, the financial disaster which befell many of their more entrepreneurial peers and non-resident estate holders during the economic crisis which plagued the colony during Ollera’s foundation years.

The presence ‘on site’ of one or more of the brothers meant that they could maintain consistent supervision of their workmen and carefully monitor the distribution of their precious store of tools and supplies and the well-being of their livestock, in which almost all of their capital was invested. Residence on the station meant that problems could receive immediate personal attention, rewards and punishments could be issued promptly and record-keeping could be both detailed and up-to-date. Evidence that the brothers were fully aware of the need to maintain a consistent, vigilant presence on the station can be found in many of the letters John Everett wrote to his family between the mid-1840s and the later 1850s. Again and again he referred to the necessity of postponing his long-awaited visit ‘home’ until a reliable superintendent could be found and installed.\(^{10}\) Even after the appointment of his eminently suitable replacement and despite Edwin’s continued presence, John Everett delayed his final departure by a year while he verified his choice of James Mackenzie. He had learned from experience. When, for a brief period, a few years earlier, all three brothers had been at Biddesden settling their father’s estate, the standard of supervision at Ollera had been unsatisfactory. Returning early from England, Edwin found that ‘nothing had been done’ during the brothers’ absence and, even worse, scarce tools had been ‘lost’ or mistreated. Instead, he reported disgustedly, there was...

\[\ldots\text{ a great deal of work to do and not an axe or a spade [remains] on the station. The saws are all buckled and if I had been away another month there would have been no tools left on the station except for the [indispensable] sugar hammer.}\]\(^{11}\)

But perhaps the most significant outcome of the Everetts’ permanent presence at Ollera lay in the good relationships that the cultured young men established and maintained with the resident Banbai people. It is this aspect of the blend of paternalism and enlightened self-interest with which they managed their ‘run’ that proved to be unusually successful and beneficial, drawing praise from the highest levels of contemporary officialdom and later

\(^{10}\) Ollera Station Records, Letters of John Everett, John to Rev. Charles, 12\textsuperscript{th} December, 1845; UNERA, A103:V3052/3. The reference in this letter is typical of several made in letters written in these year .

\(^{11}\) Ollera Station Records, Letters of Edwin Everett, Edwin to John, 30\textsuperscript{th} January, 1855, UNERA , A103:V3052/7
historians alike. Without doubt the benefits for the valley’s indigenous people were hugely qualified, for in the end Ollera’s original occupants were dispossessed as completely as their near-neighbours on the slopes and tablelands. Nevertheless the continuous presence at the head-station of a trio of well-educated, high-minded civilian squatters, who were sufficiently interested in the Banbai to learn their language and to accept their right to remain on and about the station, provided Alluran’s people with a rare degree of safety. As a result, the Banbai on whose country the Everetts had settled were spared the violence and barbarity which characterized the formation of the convict-manned and mainly emancipist-managed outstations on the river systems to the west and north-west of Ollera.

The fact that Wandsworth/Ollera was founded by a partnership between closely-related individuals who shared a common purpose must have contributed greatly to the newcomers’ ability to survive the difficult early years on their fledgling ‘run’. John Everett acknowledged this benefit in one of his first letters ‘home’;

… plenty of occupation makes the time pass quickly away. I should not like it alone but there being so many in the party makes it cheerful and our difficulties lighter…

While John Everett believed that the presence of ‘so many of ourselves constantly about the place’ afforded protection from Aboriginal attack, shared responsibility must certainly have assisted in the management of their flocks and herds. Faced with the perennial shortage of suitable shepherds and with the need to isolate scabbed or catarrh-infected sheep on new pastures, one or more of the partners could ‘take a turn for a week or two’ in the primitive bark ‘gunnias’ which served as outstations on the developing run. In the depths of a winter’s night on the high tableland where ‘half a dozen blankets are none too many to keep us warm during the night’, a lonely John Everett described his surroundings in a letter to his sister.

The gunnia is a framework like a roof with large sheets of bark, a sheet of bark also forms the door which is intended to keep the cold out, not to defend the inmates from intruders. A fire is made on the ground on the opposite end and a small hole is left at the top of the roof as a vent for the smoke. I am at this moment sitting Robinson Crusoe like upon a round block of wood writing to you upon a table made of a small sheet of bark supported by the stump of

12 I. C. Campbell, ‘Relations Between Settlers and Aborigines in the Pastoral District of New England 1832-1860’, Unpublished B.A Hons Thesis, University of New England, Armidale, 1969. p.24. For the interesting comparison between the treatment of the local indigenous inhabitants by squatters from different backgrounds. Men with a military background were almost invariably more punitive and aggressive towards the Aborigines than those who, like the Everetts, the Nivisons and Thomas Tourle in New England and Edward Curr and Alfred Joyce in Port Phillip were more sympathetic civilians.
15 Ollera Station Records, Letter, John to Ann, 16th July, 1841, UNERA, A103:V3052/3.
a tree as a pedestal. In the place of Friday I have two black boys who are now curled up asleep before the fire, having eaten the best part of a shoulder of mutton besides bread, potatoes and rice. My dog Smoker every now and then thrusts his head through a hole in the door partly enticed by the snug appearance of the fire and partly no doubt by the smell of beef steak which is left from my dinner. Rustic as the description of this hut may appear, yet there is some comfort in it, in fact a fire alone whether in a bark hut, under a gum tree, or in a drawing room gives a look of cheerfulness and comfort. I still however prefer an easy chair to a block of wood, a drawing room to a bark hut and pleasant society to black niggers (sic), but at the same time so long as I enjoy my health I can put up with this rough mode of life with pretty good philosophy, looking forward as I do with hopes, which I am thankful to say at present are not unfounded, that after a few years campaigning in the bush, I may again have an opportunity of experiencing the comforts of life, the enjoyment of which will be increased by knowing what it is to be deprived of them.  

In this letter and in one written to his brother William a few weeks previously, the young John Everett revealed his commitment to the hierarchic principles which underpinned paternalism. The product of a society which believed that ‘gentlemen may employ their hours of business in almost any degrading occupation and if they but have the means of supporting a respectable establishment at home, may be a gentleman still’ the Everetts, their partners and their fellow gentlemen-squatters nevertheless took care to distance themselves physically and socially from their white employees.  

John Everett took care to explain that his weeks at the outstations were spent as a supervisor rather than as a shepherd. Although the brothers worked willingly beside their workmen during the day, proving by example their fitness to lead, when they huddled around their lonely campfires in the vast, dark bush, the separation between the classes was carefully maintained. The difference was expressed in the separate makeshift shelters they occupied and in the different foods and beverages they consumed. While their masters ate steak, white sugar, better-quality tea and finer-grade tobacco, their men were provided with mutton, brown sugar, the cheapest tea and lowest-grade tobacco. However, so convinced were the Everett brothers of their innate racial superiority that, while maintaining the dietary differences, John willingly shared his flimsy shelter with the indispensable young Banbai men who were his guides, his helpers and, when necessary, his protectors. Believing them incapable of attaining full mental maturity, he therefore treated ‘his’ Banbai with a degree of tolerant acceptance which he was incapable of extending to the ex-convict Britons who were

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16 Ollera Station Records, Letter John to Ann, 16th July, 1841, UNERA, A103:V3052/3.
17 L. Davidoff and C. Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle class 1780-1850, London, 1992, p. 315. The quotation is from Mrs S. Stickney Ellis (1839), The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits, and concludes with the firm warning, ‘... while if a lady but touch any article, no matter how delicate, in the way of trade, she loses caste, and ceases to be a lady’. Ollera Station Record,. Letters, John to William, 21st June, 1841; John to Ann, 16th July, 1841, UNERA, A103:V3052/3.
his main source of labour. In breaking the law they had failed to honour their obligations under the paternalist ‘contract’, and were therefore suspect and unworthy of his good opinion.

The belief in European superiority was as widely-held in the colony as it was mistaken and is nowhere more evident than in a comical but inherently sad and telling vignette with which John Everett hoped to amuse his sister, Ann. The incident concerned ‘little Billy’ Cannings, the youngest and least-important of the European males on Ollera. Although the nine-year-old lad was still newcomer enough to marvel at the length of the ‘tremun (sic) frightful’ kangaroo tail on which they were to dine, he took for granted his right to lead the games he played with the Aboriginal boys whose bush-craft must already have been extensive. Though apparently trivial, the incident highlights the mixture of assured superiority and underlying fear which characterized Europeans’ relationships with Aboriginals on the frontier. Billy’s enjoyment and all-too-obvious ‘wish that [the Banbai boys should] think his joining them a piece of condescension’ were matched only by his mother’s terrified certainty that he would be abducted and eaten by his playmates’ relatives.  

Maria Cannings’ fears echoed those of the watchman who begged John Everett not to tell the Banbai that he had ‘mistakenly’ shot one of their dogs. Fearing reprisals he begged his master not to reveal that the ‘native dog’ he had thought responsible for the nightly attacks on the sheep folds beside his outstation belonged instead to an elderly female tribeswoman. Both this incident and the other potentially more dangerous one which also involved a dog were resolved peacefully. Each demonstrates the young Everett’s good judgement and their careful attention to their duties as resident paternalists. Badly handled, either incident could have led to violence as both racial groups were obviously treading warily. The retrieval of the valuable kangaroo pup reveals much about the early interactions between the races on Ollera. Alluran’s Banbai had apparently already found it prudent to retreat into a distant, easily-defensible gully on the valley’s edge where, with great hilarity, they permitted John Everett to ‘find’ them. In doing so they seem to have been making a point, for had they chosen otherwise an unwitting Everett would have passed within a metre of so of their well-concealed camp.

The Everett brothers’ treatment of the Banbai and their tolerance of an Aboriginal presence on their ‘run’ showed their high principles and the paternalist skill with which they

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managed the men they employed. They clearly had some experience in the management of their outdoor staff and of the strategies which would produce the best results. Despite its patronizing and manipulative overtones John Everett’s awareness of the value John Cannings would place upon a letter from his future master provides one example. The two-level, class-based competition into which they turned their first shearing sessions provides another. Though John’s youth and high spirits rendered him unable to resist boasting of his victory over his equally-unskilled Halhed competitor, his purpose was clear.

Of course, we remembered the little rivalry which appears to exist between the men as being greatly to our advantage.²⁰

However, and perhaps understandably when their age and inexperience in the management of female domestic servants is considered, the Everett brothers had less success with the voluble and quick-tempered Mrs Cannings and her adolescent daughter. From the start they relied for this upon the help of their sister Ann. Despite the thousands of miles and many months which separated her from her colonial charges Ann Everett maintained her role as arbiter of her distant brothers’ household. Six months after the Cannings’ arrival John relayed their dutiful ‘respects’ to their mistress and reported to Ann on Sarah’s demeanour,

I shall attend to your instructions respecting her keeping herself neat, at present she comes in with her hair nicely smoothed down and otherwise neat and clean.²¹

However eighteen months later, as 1843 ended, things were very different and the Cannings seemed determined to leave. Although the recipient of frequent ‘severe lectures’ from her masters, Maria Cannings’ conduct, John believed, could most charitably be attributed to her recent very severe illness, during which she had been ‘out of her senses [for] nearly a week’. However the teen-aged Sarah’s new hairstyle seemed to indicate a more serious problem.

Lately Sarah has made her appearance with her hair twisted up into two sort of tails behind, which I looked upon as an emblem of rising ideas.²²

Though trivial and probably having more to do with Sarah’s desire to attract the eye of her future husband Daniel Hutton, the incident reveals the importance that, throughout the nineteenth century, the upper classes placed on the maintenance of a visible and ‘proper’ distance between the classes. More than thirty years later, for a similar transgression, the nine year old daughter of Joseph Arch, the radical leader of the first Union for agricultural

²⁰ Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to William, 9th October, 1840, UNERA, A103:V3052/3.
²¹ Ollera Station Records, Letter, John to Ann, 16th July, 1841, UNERA, A103:3052/3.
²² Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to Ann, 12th December, 1843. UNERA, A103:V3052/3.
labourers, was publicly rebuked and threatened with punishment during a visit by the school’s overbearing patron.\textsuperscript{23}

The preservation of social boundaries was of even greater importance in the levelling conditions of life on the frontier, where the ‘lower orders’ consistently refused to remain in their ‘place’. At the end of his first trek ‘up country’ in 1842, Edwin Everett found it just as \textit{infra dig} that, when in sight of the homestead, he was bailed up by an anxious John Cannings and prevented from proceeding until he had given the man news of his brother who worked at Biddesden.\textsuperscript{24} In a letter to his brother Harry as gold-fever erupted in late 1852, John Everett vented his frustration at his inability to force his employees to keep to their end of the paternalist ‘bargain’. Having just lost Joe Cook and John Yeats, Everett was dangerously short of labour in peak season. Not only was ‘the impudence of the men unbearable’, but he was particularly offended by the attitude of Daniel Reeves’ eldest son. Despite his love of the life and regret at being forced by physical disability to cut short his residence at Ollera, Everett was unable to accept the social norms which were nurtured by ‘the land of contrarities’. In a letter to James Mackenzie written two years before his only return visit to the station in 1881, the old man grumbled about the prosperity of the erstwhile assisted-immigrant, Thomas Cotterell, who:

\begin{quote}
... has done pretty well for himself with 450 acres of improved land, 2000 four-year-old sheep and a pre-lease. Yet when I brought him out from Tedworth (sic) the Parish paid his outfit and the Government his passage.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The methods by which the Everett brothers applied their version of paternalism to the management of Wandsworth/Ollera must now be considered. As already noted the wages paid at Ollera were consistently higher than those paid on many stations in a region which suffered from a chronic shortage of labour. When, in late 1847, a desperate George Everett sought a southern acquaintance’s help in finding a good workman, Ollera’s shepherds were paid at least £26 a year whereas those nearer to Armidale received, on average, £17 per annum and those at

\textsuperscript{23} J. Arch, \textit{From Ploughtail to Parliament, An Autobiography}, Preface by Norman Willis, New Introduction by Alun Howkins, Gloucester, 1986, p. 51. In this case the wife of the local curate ruled that a beaded hair-net bought at the local fair was inappropriately ornate for a poor man’s child. ‘I shall not allow poor people’s children to wear hair nets with beads and if you dare to come to school with that trumpery on, I shall take it off and teach you a lesson’. She misjudged, for Arch protested to the teacher.

\textsuperscript{24} A.V. Cane, ‘Ollera 1838 to 1900: A Study of a Sheep Station’, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1949, p. 44, for Edwin Everett’s Account of his journey to Ollera in 1842

\textsuperscript{25} Cane, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 58. Though obviously available to Cane in 1949, this material and that which appears in footnote \#31 above is no longer held in either of the Ollera Archives. [Letter: John to James Mackenzie, 23rd April, 1879].
even-more isolated Byron Plains north-west of Ollera were paid £20 per annum. Faced with a workforce which was both scarce and increasingly independent, the Everett brothers clearly recognized that to have any chance of recruiting and retaining their men they had to pay them well. To employers who had been raised in a region in which for generations an over-supply of labour had reduced wages to the level of bare subsistence the situation was as unusual as it was unwelcome. In several of his letters from the 1840s John Everett railed against the unaccustomed power of his workers. In 1839, he deplored the ‘impudence’ of the man who complained of the inadequacy of his rations. In 1843 and again in 1845 he targeted the Cannings family, whose ‘good fortune in finding [themselves] possessed of a mare or two and a purse of money had turned their heads’. However his deepest resentment focused on the itinerant ex-convicts who formed the bulk of his workforce. Angry and frustrated, he complained in 1847 that,

The idle vagabond can get employment and is more often requested to do you the favour of working for you, than reduced to the necessity of asking...for a job – and moreover if he dislikes his job, he coolly walks off and such is the difficulty of apprehending a rogue that in nine cases out of ten the wretch walks off with impunity.

Wherever possible the elder Everett brothers applied traditional paternalist practices to the management of their run. Good service was rewarded with generous bonuses and stiff fines punished failure to meet accepted standards. Although they were not strictly differentiated, bonus payments of three kinds were recorded. ‘Premiums’, which were generally the most lucrative, were reserved for results which exceeded the standard set for tasks associated with the management of the sheep. Almost all were paid for work done during the lambing and shearing seasons, when the greatest skills and most careful husbandry were required. Lambing was the more critical period, attracting premiums equal to two to four weeks’ wages for shepherds who achieved above average rates of survival of their lambs. In 1852 Joseph Cook, who earned £26 per annum, received payments of £5 and a further £4 for his diligence, while in the following year Daniel Reeves received £5.10s.0d. Premiums worth from 10s (one week’s wages) to two to three weeks’ wages were paid for assisting at lambing, rearing

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26 Ibid; Ollera Station Records, , Everett Notebook, 1836-1848, Letter: George Everett to H. Solway, 20th November, 1847, UNERA, A103: V231
27 Ollera Station Records, Letter, John to William, February, 1840, UNERA, A103:V3052/3
28 Ollera Station Records, UNERA, Letters, John to Ann, 8th December, 1843; John to Rev. Tom, 23rd February 1845, A103:V3052/3
29 Ollera Station Records, Letters, John to Rev. Charles, 24th April, 1847, UNERA, A103:V3052/3
weaners and winter lambs, ‘good shepherding’ and ‘good shearing’ and for packing wool. ‘Presents’ and ‘rewards’ were recorded more often and usually acknowledged good work performed by the farm labourers. Usually worth from 10s to £1 or a little more than one to two weeks’ wages, they were paid for tasks as varied as horse-breaking, reaping and mowing, harvest activities, shifting sheep-folds and returning valuable equipment in good order. They could also mark special circumstances, reward outstanding attention to duty or provide encouragement and incentive. In the 1850s such payments included £5 paid as a wedding present to Sam and Mary Dudman; £1.10s.0d paid to Stanton to compensate for the loss of a mare and £2 to Lansley on the occasion of a fire; and £1 each in cash given to two of the newly-arrived Chinese workmen. In 1856, when Garrett Farrell returned safely with intact teams from an unusually long and difficult trip ‘down country’ with the wool, the station’s long-distance bullock-driver received an especially generous present of £10. But only the amount paid was unusual. In other years, for similar good service, Farrell and his fellow teamster John Griffiths received bonuses worth half that amount.

The ‘presents’ paid to Joseph Cook in 1852 and to George Thorpe in February 1853 provide important insights into the Everett brothers’ use of bonuses as a management tool. At a time when the already acute shortage of labour in New England was worsened by the discovery of gold in December 1852, both men were threatening to leave Ollera. Anxiety to retain the services of these valuable employees therefore probably lay behind the gift of £1 to Thorpe and the unprecedented return of the cost of his passage to Australia which Joe Cook had only recently repaid with his labour. Significantly, this is the only occasion on which such a reimbursement appears in the records. However, despite their best efforts, the Everetts were only partly successful. While George Thorpe lived out his life at Ollera, the receipt of premiums and presents worth £14 or six-and-a-half months’ wages (£9 in premiums and £5 passage money) failed to prevent Joseph Cook from leaving Ollera with his mate John Yeats.

A pattern was evident, for from their first application the Everetts’ use of incentive payments met with only partial success. Soon after the arrival of the Cannings family John Everett promised that if the children behaved well throughout the year, Sarah and Billy would

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be given a cow. In choosing the animal as a bonus the Everett brothers showed their shrewd perception of the value of such an incentive to a family newly arrived from a region whose rural populace had for generations been deprived of the ability to keep such an animal and to whom milk had long been an unattainable luxury. However, the very aptness of the Everetts’ choice of bonus created a problem. Its cause lay in the transference of a system suited to a low-wage, rural economy with a permanent over-supply of labour to a colony in which labour was perennially scarce and therefore increasingly independent. The chance to own such an animal would not only have given the Cannings family a powerful incentive to work hard but tangible proof that by doing so they could escape from the grinding poverty into which they had been born. This was the flaw structured into the attempt to transfer England’s centuries-old system of ‘governance’ to colonial Australia; the realization by the ‘lower orders’ that they were no longer bound to keep their side of the paternalist bargain. By mid-1843 John Everett’s resentment of this ‘failure’ and his incapacity to command his employees’ obedience had convinced him that the Cannings ‘would make their fortunes before their masters.’ The opportunities for social mobility which resulted from the perennial shortage of labour on the frontier meant that long-established power-relationships were under threat. The newly-arrived Henry Stuart Russell expressed the petulant incomprehension of his fellow gentlemen-squatters when he wrote,

... With gruesome smile I had to swallow many an unpalatable [incident]. Never before were masters – masters in a straight jacket - less than men. Shepherds, bullock drivers, hutkeepers, were pets in our isolated dependence, and they knew it.

The Everett brothers followed established paternalist practice in matching rewards for good work with heavy fines for sub-standard performance. The generosity with which they acknowledged the one was balanced by the severity with which they punished the other. Between 1848 and 1857 the account books contain the names of fifteen men who incurred fines and in

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34 J. Humphries, ‘Enclosure, Common Rights and Women: The Proteletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, Journal of Economic History, No.50, 1990, pp. 23-6, 31-34. [Hereafter JEH]. It has been estimated that at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries income from a cow was worth 6s. to 12s a year to the cottager., while a pig added as much as £2 to the family’s income.
all but one case the nature of the man’s offence was specified.\textsuperscript{37} Four men accrued six fines for ‘drunkenness’, three for absence from work, three for losing sheep, two for disobedience, one for leaving sheep unattended and another for an unspecified offence.\textsuperscript{38} Whilst Sam Dudman, who over several years was fined twice for being drunk and once for disobedience, was the most frequent of the four repeat offenders, two short-term employees who each committed two offences were treated more severely. Anthony Lonsdale, who was Ollera’s carpenter for less than a year in 1848-49, was fined twice for drinking on the job. On the first occasion he lost 4s, or more than two days’ pay, for being ‘absent from work through drink’ and soon after was fined a week’s pay (10s) for being found ‘drunk and asleep’. J. Kuley proved to be an equally unsatisfactory short-term employee. During his short stint as a shepherd in mid-1853, in June he was fined £1.10s.0d for losing five sheep and in September he lost 9s.0d for three days’ absence from work. Although neither Lonsdale nor Kuley was re-employed, the heaviest monetary fine was incurred by Thomas Cotterell, who was still serving out his bond. When his earnings for the year (£26.3s.4d) were calculated in December 1850, a full three weeks’ wages (£1.10s.0d) were deducted for ‘drunkenness &c’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Cotterell did not offend again. Whereas disobedience also resulted in the loss of a week’s pay, deductions for absence from work were calculated at about one-and-a-half times the daily rate (or around 3s per day) for the number of days lost. For example, in October, 1857 Davis was fined £1.10s.0d for his seven-day absence from work. The cost of lost or dead sheep appears to have been calculated at or near their replacement cost (5s.0d to 6s.0d per head).\textsuperscript{39}

Time, distance from Armidale and their inability to enforce compliance no doubt played a part in dissuading the elder Everettts from applying to external authority, first of the Commissioner and later of the magistracy, in disciplining their men. However the fact that they did so only once during their twenty years at Ollera indicates their preference for the personal and immediate assertion of their authority. These leanings can only have been strengthened by officialdom’s inability to enforce its authority over their absconder in 1839. Several incidents

\textsuperscript{37} Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to Rev. Charles, 30\textsuperscript{th} December, 1857, UNERA, A103:V3052/4. It is interesting and perhaps significant that the only man whose offence was unspecified was ‘Stud’ Hodgson. Like Thomas Lawrence he was both an English acquaintance of the Everettts and a social equal who was employed briefly at Ollera in early 1850s, perhaps as a stop-gap overseer. Unlike Lawrence, Hodgson was fined 11s and incurred the Everettts’ lasting dislike and distrust,

\textsuperscript{38} Ollera Station Records, \textit{UNERA}, Account Book, 1841-72, A103:V2259; Stores Issue Book, A103; V3054/14

\textsuperscript{39} Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1941-72, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V2259.
in the early 1840s show the complete confidence and good judgement with which the Everett brothers exercised their authority. In their treatment of the shepherd who was lost overnight with his flock and of the severely dehydrated convict absconder, real efforts were made to temper justice with mercy. However it was John’s decision to observe as Ollera’s Banbai punished Williams’ brother, who had raided Andrew Wauchope’s sheep, which distinguished the Everetts, an action for which they received official plaudits. Even so, in March, 1848, the payment of £2 to ‘[the] Constable from Armidale, for taking Martin’, who was a groom, was entered in the Account Book. While no reason for this unusual action was given, it is unlikely to have been as potentially dangerous as the knife fight between the Chinese labourers in which George intervened successfully almost a decade later.

The Everett brothers clearly took their duties as active paternalist masters very seriously. A careful account was kept of any worker-to-worker financial transactions which occurred during the hiring period and their debts were cleared at the six-monthly ‘settlement’. Other frequent deductions made from employees’ wages included small cash advances, the remission of money to their families in England and the cost of postage of letters from ‘home’, which was paid by the recipient (1s.3d.in Ollera’s case in the 1840s). Sam Dudman’s wage-record for the ten months from May, 1848 to March, 1849 shows the extreme care with which these detailed accounts were kept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. to Samuel Deadman [Dudman]</th>
<th>Hired as a Watchman on March, 13th, 1848 at £23 per annum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May, 2: Store Acct brought forward</td>
<td>£3. 1s. 5½d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Stores at Macdonald R.</td>
<td>£12. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 23rd</td>
<td>Fifty Bushels wheat at 1s.3d bushel £3. 2s. 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store a/c from May, 2 to Jun 28</td>
<td>£2. 17s. 3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Skipton for saddle</td>
<td>£3. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2: Cash to D. Hutton</td>
<td>£5. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept, 13</td>
<td>Six months wages as watchman £11.10s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Handsaw from Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty bushels of wheat grinding at</td>
<td>30s a bushel 17s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30 Cash</td>
<td>£1. 3s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug, 23 Cash given to Yeats</td>
<td>£3. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13 Cash</td>
<td>£1. 8s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct, 13’</td>
<td>£3. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash to Yeats</td>
<td>£3. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18: From Sept 18 to Oct 31: Store</td>
<td>£116s.3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20.14s. 5½d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Account and Cash</td>
<td>£24. 3s. 11½d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settled October 31st, 1848</td>
<td>£20.14s. 5½d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[£ 4. 9s. 6d]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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40 Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103:V2259.
1849  
Feb 24  
To Armidale Church  10s.0d  
For Sundries for D. Hutton  £4. 0s. 0d  
Cash on Mathers  5s. 6d  
March 7 From Kearns  £1. 4s. 6d

The seriousness with which the Everett brothers took their role meant that they were prepared, when necessary, to intervene to protect their employees’ interests from perceived injustice. Three letters written by George Everett to his Sydney agent William Dawes in the mid-1840s, copies of which are contained in the Notebook 1836-48, provide examples. 43 After John Cannings’ death in 1845 Everett wrote a stiff letter to one of the two doctors who had come from Armidale to treat the dying man. George responded indignantly when Mrs Maria Cannings received a bill for the final abortive visit, which would have involved the doctor in a two-day round trip.

I certainly never expected that you would make a charge for the last visit as the poor man refused to see you on that occasion. As the widow has already paid £18 to Anderson and £6 to you in addition to the loss of her husband, we thought we were justified in refusing to pay for the last visit unless obliged by law to do so. 44

In the following February George Everett asked Dawes to find out why his employee Hugh Boyd had been unable to cash a Sydney merchant’s ‘order’. A few months later he revealed how far he would go to help men who, significantly, had ‘always conducted themselves remarkably well and to the satisfaction of their employers’. The men concerned were John Hopkins and James Byrnes, who had worked as fencers for the Everetts and their neighbours for about five years. Having agreed, against usual policy, to hold the men’s earnings, in mid-April 1846 George Everett wrote to the manager of a Sydney bank forwarding ‘three orders totalling £67.15s.7d, to be paid to the Savings Bank to Credit of James Byrnes with power to withdraw’. When Byrnes, the only one of the two workmen who could ‘write a little’ died suddenly at Maitland a few weeks later, Everett wrote again to the bank manager on Hopkins’ behalf to request an authority to withdraw at least the fully illiterate survivor’s share of the deposited money. He added that on a forthcoming visit to Sydney, Fred Vigne of Tenterden for whom the work had been done, would call on the manager to verify Everett’s information and to collect receipts for the transaction. 45 Although Hopkins probably received

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43 Ollera Station Records, Everett Notebook, 1838-46, UNERA, A103:V3053/17.  
44 Ollera Station Records, Letter written by George Everett 1845, UNERA, A103:V3052/6.  
45 Ollera Station Records, Letters written by George Everett, 18 May, 1846; 24th June, 1846, UNERA, A103:V3052/6.
only his share of the full amount to which he believed himself entitled, had he been employed by less upright resident Tory-Paternalists he would surely have been left empty-handed.46

Three accounts for the first half of the early 1850s suggest that the Everett brothers may have again broken their rule that ‘we always object to take charge of any money’. Once again the man was a trusted ‘servant’, although in this case he was no longer employed at Ollera. He was Joseph Cook for whom, as we have seen, the Everetts apparently had much respect. When Cook and his mate John Yeats left Ollera at the end of 1852, they planned to ‘try their luck shearing’. However within a year or two Yeats settled in Armidale, where he began work as a carrier, while Joe Cook apparently spent time on the Rocky River gold-field. He was certainly there in 1858, for a diary fragment records that his luck ran out when he was accidentally killed by a falling tree.47 However ‘lucky strikes’ may explain three entries in Ollera’s accounts for 1853-54 and 1856. As the entries suggest, George Everett, who clearly respected Joe Cook highly, apparently agreed to hold his grub-stake and to bank it for him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December, 1853:</td>
<td>Received from Joseph Cook</td>
<td>£120.0s.0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 1854:</td>
<td>Paid to Savings Bank for Joe Cook</td>
<td>£120.0s.0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 1856:</td>
<td>Received from Joseph Cook</td>
<td>£110.0s.0d.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Everett brothers’ paternalist management-style was also evident in the financial support they extended to worthy elderly and/or disadvantaged ‘servants’ and to a variety of charities and religious institutions in the colony and ‘at home’. Payments to selected elderly workers began in the early 1850s and by the 1880s and 1890s had developed into the ‘free board and keep’ granted to such long-serving ‘old pensioners’ as George Thorpe, Garrett Farrell, Sam Dudman and the Chinese shepherd ‘Old Sam’, who began work at Ollera in the early 1860s. In the 1850s separate payments of £1 or £2 were made to William Fortescue, who took over as the station’s overseer after John Cannings’ death. The unfortunate ‘Cripple Turner’ received £2 in 1855 and a similar sum in 1856. Donations were also made to selected bereaved women. ‘Widow Campbell’ received £4 in 1854 while in 1856 £4.5s.0d was paid to the ‘Widow Fund’ established by or on behalf of William Dawes, the Everetts’ former Sydney

46 In Everetts’ explanatory letter to the bank manager, he mentions that Hopkins and Byrnes had agreed before witnesses that, if one of the pair died the other would inherit his share. While not doubting that such a pact had been made, Everett clearly doubted that the bank would honour this verbal agreement.
48 Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103:V2259.
agent.\(^49\) However the most intriguing entries are those which suggest that the Everettts may have operated a semi-'voluntary' tithing system at Ollera in the late 1840s. Semi-'voluntary' perhaps, for not all employees' wage-records contain evidence of the practice, suggesting at least a degree of willing participation by the many men who did contribute. Contributions of either 5s.0d or 10s.0d ‘To Armidale Church’ were deducted at half-yearly ‘settlement’ in 1848 and 1849. While contributors like Thomas and Mary Gray (10s.0d) and Daniel Hutton (5s.0d) were perhaps predictable, others such as the more racketsy Sam Dudman (10s.0d) and the seasonally-employed John Gallagher and James Maxwell, who each put in 5s.0d, were less so.\(^50\) But James Cook, for whom consecutive entries read ‘To Armidale Church, 5s.0d’ and ‘For being drunk, 10s.0d’, seems the least likely participant.\(^51\) One is left wondering to what degree ‘moral suasion’ was applied to influence his decision.

What is clear is the Everett brothers’ thorough-going commitment to the ideals of the nineteenth-century Evangelical paternalists. From 1846, as climatic and economic conditions eased, they subscribed £5 a year to the living costs of the district’s first Anglican minister Reverend Henry Tingcombe and in 1848 donated a further £3 towards the school which he planned to establish in Armidale.\(^52\) Throughout and beyond their residence in Australia, Ollera’s founders regularly contributed to a variety of religious and a few approved secular charities. However although they were among the early subscribers to the newly-founded race meetings at Armidale, from 1844 they withdrew their support. While the meetings would have been an ideal ‘showcase for [Ollera’s] superior nags’, the meetings were too poorly-managed and horse-racing was beneath the dignity of Everett gentlemen, who ‘should be sorry to become racing men’.\(^53\) Instead, in the five years from 1854-59 donations worth £59 were made to the more ‘worthy’ colonial charities whose names appear below. In the previous December John was also ‘happy’ to learn that his brother had advanced £5 on his behalf towards the new schoolhouse which was to be built in Ludgershall as a memorial to their late father.\(^54\)

\(^49\) Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V2259. Charitable donation to ‘Widow Dawes’. Dawes died in the mid-1850s and the Everettts’ business transferred all of their business to the firm of Lovegrove and Leathes. \textit{Cane, op. cit.}, p.85
\(^50\) For the details of Dudman’s wages, see above, p. 197.
\(^52\) Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to Rev. Charles, 24\(^{th}\) April, 1847, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V3052/3
\(^54\) Ollera Station Records, \textit{UNERA}, Accounts Book, 1841-72, A103:V2259; Letter: John to Rev. Charles, 4\(^{th}\) December, 1853, A103:V3052/4
1854: Maitland Hospital £5.0s.0d.
Rev. Hungerford, £5.0s.0d.
[Rev] Hungerford – Church Fund, £10.0s.0d.
1857: Clergy Fund, £5.0s.0d.
Education Fund, £3.0s.0d.
Newcastle Church Society, £11.0s.0d.
1858: Church Society, £6.0s.0d.
Rev. Hungerford for Glebe Fence, £1.10s.0d.
Armidale Hospital £5.0s.0d.
1859: Church Fund Armidale, £7.10s.0d.

In a letter written to his brother Charles, who was then rector of Netherton, John Everett identified his ‘biggest problem – educating the children and attending Church’. He accepted this responsibility and recognized ‘the duty which devolved upon those who sponsor immigrant families’. True to his political beliefs he urged his brother to raise funds in Wiltshire towards the private sponsorship of an itinerant Anglican clergyman for the New England district, stressing that ‘horses would be the greatest expense for such a man’.

From the late 1840s he deplored the dilatory attitude of his Church’s hierarchy, regretting that a representative of the Established Church had been preceded to the district by both a Protestant minister (Rev. John Morison) and a Roman Catholic priest. Nor did this ‘Low Church’ man entirely approve of Bishop Broughton, whose High-Church ‘bigotry’ and preference for brick in the construction of his church he found disappointing. Describing the collapse during construction of Armidale’s first Anglican Church, he wrote;

We also subscribe to the building of a church in Armadale (sic) but so badly was the work done that just as they had reached the roof down came the walls and there they remain and appear likely to do so for the present. The same money that has been expended upon that building would have built three wooden churches but our Bishop thinks that wood is not a proper material for building a church, Bishop Broughton is greatly inclined towards Puseyism and very bigoted, which does much mischief and makes him very much disliked by a large number of the Colonists. He is a very agreeable hospitable man and gives a good glass of Port wine at his table but these are not the first qualification of a Bishop.

One of the more important changes which took place at Ollera as a result of the introduction of fourteen-year leaseholds in the Unsettled Districts in 1847 was to the composition of the station’s core workforce. Increased security of tenure and the resumption of assisted-immigration to the colony in 1848 meant that the Everett brothers could at last embark on a concerted and staggered program which focused on the importation of selected and often related families of labourers from Ludgershall and its environs. Whereas in 1845 the high cost

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55 Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to Rev. Charles, 16th August, 1853, UNERA, A103:V3052/4
Emphasis added.
of supporting Jem Mundy’s parents and their many children had cost the Everettts their shepherding services and those of the experienced Jem, the brothers now felt able to offer several years of secure employment to working-age males in the immigrant families and to ‘invest’ in the future labour of their younger children.\footnote{Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to William, 9th October, 1842, UNERA, A103: V3052/3.} Because the white population of the New England Tableland was still predominantly male, the slight but increasing presence of ‘respectable’ women and their children on the widely-separated stations eased their isolation, ‘civilizing’ and increasing the stability of their workforces. Slowly but steadily, between the late-1840s and the mid-1850s families were settled on Ollera’s shepherding outstations. From 1853, with the exception of the bonded Chinese labourers who were hired in 1852, no payments were made to hutkeeper/watchmen, their tasks having been taken over by the shepherds’ wives and children.\footnote{Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103: V2259; Cane, op. cit., p.83(a).}

The newly-arrived women clearly had much ‘civilizing’ to do. Although most had new huts constructed for them, like those they replaced they were basic in the extreme. ‘Neither comfortable nor picturesque’ the roughly-built slab and bark huts housed one or two shepherds and a watchman, who had dual responsibilities.\footnote{R.H.Gennys, ‘Shepherds and Shepherding in Australia’, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, No.XI, 1926, p. 283. [Hereafter JRAHS]} Housekeeper, grain-grinder and fold-shifter by day, he slept at night in the moveable, coffin-like but reputedly quite comfortable watch-box which stood close by their sheep which were closely-confined within moveable hurdles. Armed with a gun and forewarned by two or three indispensable dogs and the flock’s bellwether, the watchman was then theoretically well-placed to drive off attacks by marauding dingoes or ‘myall’ Aborigines.\footnote{Millis, ‘Waterloo Creek’, op. cit., passim. Throughout the nineteenth century the term was in general use in the colony to refer to pre- and first-contact Aborigines.} However a rueful but exhausted John Everett once described how he had managed to sleep through a night in which a number of sheep were lost to ‘native dogs’.\footnote{Ollera Station Records, Letter: John to Ann 16th July, 1841, UNERA, A103; V3052/3} Where the outstation housed two shepherds, each with responsibility for a flock of about a thousand sheep, the folds were placed on either side of the hut with the watch-box placed between them. The folds had frequently to be moved as the close confinement of so many sheep meant that the ground beneath them quickly became foul, soiling the wool and harbouring foot-rot and the ever-present ‘scab’. Little wonder that, lacking the incentive of a
wife and children, many of these solitary, isolated ‘hatters’ eked out lives of squalid boredom in their flimsy dwellings.

... built of bark, with light stringy-bark or box poles for a frame-work, with bark roof, bark walls, bark chimneys, bark doors, and bark shutters, propped open when daylight was required; box-bark also for baking dampers, a camp oven, billy, and gridiron of iron-hoop, with knife, fork and spoon. The shepherd’s bed was a sheet of bark, on, perhaps, some old boxes; a pillow of dry grass, or, maybe, his spare clothes rolled up, with blankets and overcoat for warmth, with a ‘hipper’ thrown in, especially if he was rheumatic, which was often the case. The hipper was a portion of a sheep-skin having only a few months’ growth of wool, or... clipped short and cut to liking, or perhaps a month’s old lamb-skin. An old sheepskin or, maybe a kangaroo or emu skin was beside the bed for a mat. The bark walls were painted a sombre hue by the smoke and soot from the humble hearth. Outside, as a rule, no paddock, no garden, no fowlyard; nothing save a sheep-yard and a dog-kennel.  

The shepherd’s duties focused wholly upon the care of his flock. Even at shearing his task was to care for his sheep in the critical three days between washing and shearing.  

For the rest of the year his routine was unchanging, broken only by the arrival of his weekly rations (the legendary ‘ten, ten, two and a quarter’), by the half-yearly settlement of his wages and, with luck, by an annual holiday. But ‘over and over again, winter and summer; cold or hot, wet or dry, the flock must be fed and watered’.  

After a pre-dawn breakfast he counted them out of the fold and by sun-up, accompanied by his ever-present, ever-vigilant dog, he was trailing slowly behind them as they cropped outwards across the chosen four or five mile (c.5½-7kms) section of their vast range, at whose centre stood the hut and its adjacent folds. At about midday he paused, resting with them under the trees through the hottest part of the day. After a meal and a smoke he followed the grazing flock home, where the sheep were counted into the fold for the night. After tea, a pipe and perhaps a few minutes reading by the light of a smoky, foul-smelling slush lamp, he went early to bed.  

Though ‘crawling after smelly sheep’ was a much-derided occupation in the colony, the shepherd’s work, though monotonous, was far from unskilled. Each flock was confined within the unfenced boundaries of its own range, for ‘boxing the sheep’ (the mixing of separate flocks) had always to be strictly avoided. Travelling flocks were a special danger for, while involving long hours of tedious drafting to separate the flocks, the travellers carried with them

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62 Gennys, op. cit., pp. 283-4  
63 Hughes, op. cit., pp. 129-130  
64 Gennys, op. cit., p. 284. The standard weekly rations consisted on 10lbs flour, 10lbs, meat, 2lbs sugar and ½lb tea.  
the threat of the highly-infectious skin-disease called scab. The treatment for this was as
painful for the sheep as it was for the shepherd, for the popular treatment included sublimate of
mercury, which stripped the skin from the shepherd’s hands and almost certainly permanently
damaged his health. Another preparation used at Ollera contained a mixture of arsenic and
tobacco.\textsuperscript{66}

The shepherd’s work needed much common sense and a detailed knowledge of his
flock’s territory and of local weather conditions. Its pastures must be grazed evenly throughout
the year, ‘grass-seedy’ country had to be identified and avoided or where possible kept short
and choice patches of country should be chosen and burnt-off safely to provide fodder for
weaners and sweet new ‘pick’ for new-born lambs. Along with the bushman’s ‘well-developed
bump of locality’, the shepherd needed to be self-sufficient and to possess sufficient skill to
detect and report any change in his flock’s behaviour. Lost sheep should be found, common
diseases detected, identified and treated, torn flesh stitched, broken legs splinted with sticks or
a piece of bark and out-of-season or orphaned newborn lambs located and carried back to the
hut.\textsuperscript{67}

However this was the standard which all shepherds were expected to meet. Only the
most experienced and most skilful men were given care of the most valuable and difficult
flocks; the breeding ewes and their newborn lambs. Lambing, which occurred over five to six
weeks, was the busiest and most fraught period of the year, requiring the preparation of
sheltered yards, round-the-clock vigilance, much care and good judgement. At Ollera it lasted
from late August to mid-October and extra rations were issued to those who took part in the
tiring work, in which the whole family was usually involved.\textsuperscript{68} Throughout these weeks an
intricate and constantly changing system of hurdle-yards was constructed beside the hut.
Reluctant or surrogate ewes and their lambs were confined within individual triangles of
hurdles to encourage nursing, and separate yards were formed to contain the three flocks which
were created as the ewes gave birth and their offspring grew as the season progressed. These
were the ‘green mob’ of mothers with lambs at foot, which were held closest to the hut; the
stronger lambs or weaners; and the mature ‘dry’ sheep who ranged furthest and grazed most
efficiently. The daily separation of the older sheep from the ‘green mob’ and, later, the ewes

\textsuperscript{66} Ollera Station Records, Everett Notebook, 1838-46, \textit{UNERA}, A103; V3053/17.; Hughes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{67} Gennyx, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 287; Hughes, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.129-130.
from their about-to-be weaned lambs, tested the shepherd's skill and his patience to the utmost. The skills and experience which John Cannings, Daniel Reeves and his sons and the nephews who followed him to Ollera had gained on the Downs above Ludgershall must therefore have been of inestimable value to the foundation and development of the Everettts’ flocks. Though they had travelled far from the Downs where they had learnt their craft, and the seasons were different, the skills they needed and the conditions in which they performed their duties on the ‘chilly plain’ in New England, were the same as those described in John Clare's *Shepherd's Calendar*.

March: And shepherds that wi’ in their hulks remain
Night after night upon the chilly plain
To watch the dropping lambs that at all hours
And come at dawn like early flowers

June: Shrill whistles barking dogs and chiding scold
Drive bleating sheep each morn from fallow fold
To wash pits where the willow shadows lean
Dashing them in their fold staid coats to clean
Then turned on sunny sward to dry again
They drive them homeward to the clipping pen

Till toiling sheers gain ground upon the tale
And brakes it off – clear from the timid sheep
The fleece is shorn and wi’ a fearful leap
He starts – while wi’ a pressing hand
His sides are printed by the tarry brand
Shaking his naked skin wi’ wondering joy
And fresh ones are tugged in by sturdy boys.⁶⁹

These men were therefore far from being the ‘hatters’ and ‘old crawlers’ of bush legend. Instead, they provided the skill-base upon which their masters’ success depended. Little wonder that the Everett brothers tried so hard to retain the services of Joe Cook who had proved himself a worthy member of this elite group.

These were the living and working conditions experienced by the women who moved with their husbands and children into Ollera’s lonely shepherding stations in the late 1840s and 1850s. Although makeshift, roughly-constructed from unfamiliar ‘stringy-bark and greenhide’

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⁶⁹ John Clare (1827), *The Shepherds Calendar*. (Edited by Eric Robinson, Geoffrey Summerfield and David Powell, Oxford, 1931 pp. 35, 65-66, 67. I am indebted to Professor David Kent for this particularly apt reference, especially for the use of ‘hulks’. Although Clare gives the word its older meaning; (‘hut, hovel or temporary shelter’) given that so many early shepherds were assigned convicts and ticket-of-leave men the resonance of its Australian context is striking.
and sparsely ‘furnished’ in the extreme, their housing may have been equal to and in some ways better than that of the rural, southern-English parishes they left. For Ludgershall to have been dismissed by Cobbett as ‘one of the most mean and beggarly places that man ever set his eyes on’, its dilapidated, over-crowded tied-cottages must have been very like those described by the Morning Chronicle’s investigative reporter in 1849 and 1850. The middle-class Londoner was appalled by the conditions in which the agricultural labourers of England’s southern counties subsisted. In wet weather cess pits overflowed and raw sewage filled the gutters and seeped through the poorly-laid floors of their ramshackle hovels. In rural Dorset he described a house which:

...was occupied by a family...consisting of husband and wife and two children. The rent charged was £3.10s.0d [p.a. or 1s.4d p. wk]...The man’s earnings were only 6s.0d a week,[£15.p.a.]...There were great fissures in the wall through which the wind could freely enter, but...it was prevented from so doing by broad patches of London newspapers pasted against the plaster...I visited several other houses...all equally bad.71

If conditions on the frontier were strange and filled with new difficulties for the newly-arrived immigrant families, employment at Ollera offered advantages and opportunities which were unavailable to those who remained in England. Therefore, despite the intimidating silence of the miles of bushland which separated their huts, the myriad ants and the hordes of flies most families’ situations had improved. Not only were their men and boys guaranteed secure employment and high gross wages, but the rations which were issued weekly, though basic and monotonous, provided the families with a regular supply of food. Another of life’s necessities surrounded them, abundant and free for the taking; the fuel which, in England, they had for generations been denied.72 In August, 1853, John Everett reported the newly-arrived Coombs’ delighted comment; ‘plenty of firing, that’s what he looks to, its [sic] no odds about cold when a man has plenty of firing’.73

But perhaps the greatest relief from poverty was offered by the expanse of empty land which surrounded the huts, and on which they were not only permitted but encouraged by their new masters to grow fruit-trees and vegetables and to keep a few farm-yard animals. In encouraging their employees to become at least partly self-sufficient the Everetts aimed to

71 Morning Chronicle, 28th Nov., 1849, p.6.
reduce, wherever possible, the high cost to the station of transporting bulky foodstuffs which
often spoiled on the long trip from Maitland to Ollera or from the newer port on the Clarence.
In addition to the orchard and the wheat paddocks on the property’s ‘home farm’ at Tangleby
on Sandy Creek a few miles from the head station, the Everetts encouraged the immigrant
families to set up, in modified form, the ‘family (or cottage) economies’ which had functioned
in rural society in proto-industrial England. As dedicated mid-nineteenth paternalists who
had strong links to the Evangelical movement, the Everetts may have been influenced by the
success of the allotment system in improving the living standards and also the tractability of
the relatively few rural labourers in Wiltshire and Dorset who were fortunate enough to gain
access to them. At Ollera in the mid-nineteenth century, the domestic spinning which had
traditionally been the principal source of alternative employment for women was replaced by
the assumption by the shepherds’ wives and children of the male hut-keepers’ duties. Unlike
their female forebears and their English contemporaries who were progressively denied any but
the most menial seasonal farm work, these women were not only employed but were
performing work which was usually reserved for males. In doing so they provided
considerable financial benefits to the Everetts, as women’s wages were calculated at about half
that paid to males, while children under the working age of twelve earned even less. Though
they come from a few years before the Everetts’ acquired Tenterden, several entries in the
station’s accounts in the late 1850s provide an example. They show that women were paid
only slightly more than their adolescent shepherd/watchman sons. It is noteworthy that as
rations are stipulated in only one of the three similar entries, it is possible that the other
families may have already been largely self-supporting.

Robt. Ferguson, his wife and son, as shepherds and watchmen for two flocks at £80.
Pat Heffernan and two sons, as shepherds and watchmen for two flocks at £75.
George Barry, self and two sons, as shepherds and watchmen, for two flocks at £75 and rations.

Although in 1856 Thomas Marsh and his wife were paid £47.10s.0d per annum for
shepherding a single flock, in each of the next two years they received only £40 for their

74 M. Berg, ‘Age of Manufactures; Industry, innovation and work in Britain 1700-1820, London, 1985,
pp. 121, 123.
75 British Parliamentary Papers, (1843), ‘Report of the Select Committee on Labouring Poor (Allotments
of Land), pp. 11-13; B. Moselle, ‘Allotments, enclosure and proletarianization in early nineteenth century
76 K.D.M. Snell, ‘Agricultural Seasonal Unemployment, the Standard of Living and Women's Work in the
South-East’, Economic History Review, No. 34, p. 204. [Hereafter EHR]
77 Ollera Station Records, Account Book for Tenterden Station, 1856-1893, UNERA, A103:V2256 rear.
efforts. The reduction was apparently general as William Underwood and his wife were paid the same amount.\textsuperscript{78} It is interesting to note that Tenterden’s male shepherds were then earning at least £5 a year less than those at Ollera.

As generations of their female predecessors had done until the enclosure of the commons, the wives and children of Ollera’s shepherds and labourers supplemented their families’ income by keeping a milking cow, raising a few pigs, and tending poultry of several kinds. Several of the immigrants’ wives also worked as laundresses for the station in the 1850s. Mrs Maria Bryant earned £21.12s.0d for ‘washing etc’ in 1851. Mrs Jane Reeves received £10 in 1852, a further £10 in 1854 and £17 for this and other tasks in 1855. In the previous year Mrs Mary Anne Coombs was paid £4 ‘for six months’ washing’. In 1856 Jenny Garrett earned £3.15s.0d for cooking the overseer’s meals.\textsuperscript{79} As we have seen, horses, which were an expensive necessity, were often paid-off or taken in lieu of wages and there are several cases of their purchase by women. Mrs Jane Farrell, whose husband was frequently away with the bullock team, paid £25 for a horse in 1859.\textsuperscript{80} A few flowering plants often softened the rawness of the huts’ fronts, bee-hives were kept under the fruit trees and a variety of vegetables were grown. Like those of their work-mates in England who could afford to rent an allotment, many shepherds also found time to dig enough ground for small crops of potatoes or grain. As was customary, the crops were then planted, cultivated and harvested by the women and children.\textsuperscript{81}

Payments for potatoes grown by their employees appear regularly in Ollera’s accounts for the period.\textsuperscript{82} Throughout the 1850s John Clark and his family sold their produce most frequently to their employers. The Clark family earned £1 from potatoes in 1851, £2.6s.0d in 1852-3, £28.7s.6d in 1854 and £6 in 1856, realizing a profit of £37.13s.6d, or almost an extra year’s wages over the six years. In 1853 the Everett brothers bought potatoes worth £2.15s.0d from ‘Oliver’, others worth £1 from Mrs Maria Bryant, and in the same year Saunders, who

\textsuperscript{78} Ollera Station Records, Account Book for Tenterden Station, 1856-1893, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V2256. rear; Cane, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{79} Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, \textit{UNERA}, A103: V2259.

\textsuperscript{80} Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V2259.


\textsuperscript{82} Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V2259, See recurrent entries for the 1850s and 1860s.
was then the station’s overseer, earned £4.5s.0d for his crop. In the next year Joseph Coombs was paid £8 for his potatoes.

In 1857 the Clark family also sold wheat worth £71.4s.0d and ‘10 couple of fowls, £2’ to the station. The Everettts also bought grain from other workmen. In 1851 Hutton sold them barley worth 18s.0d and in 1858 ‘the Ryder family [at] New Valley’ was paid £65.10s.0d for ‘120 bushels of wheat and 12 [wheat] bags’. Between 1853 and 1856 Daniel Reeves’ wife, Jane, earned £4.10s.6d from regular sales of poultry to her employers. The Everett brothers also bought oranges worth £1 from J. Skinner in mid 1854 and pigs, ducks and a halter to the total value of £8.3s.6d from Thomas Cotterell in 1856 and 1857.

The male labourers were paid for a multiplicity of small, probably spare-time, jobs. Making and repairing the much-needed tack for the horses and bullock-teams provided a regular, handy side-line. The following examples come from the 1850s. In 1851, J. Rothwell (sic) received £1.5s.0d for bits and James Jeffreys was paid 12s.0d for making whips, while in the next year Charles Abbott received £1.10s.0d for three stockwhips and J. McDermott earned £2.8s.6d for twelve hide halters and 50 yards (c. 40m) of hide. In 1854 Beasley was paid £4 for repairing the dray, while in 1856 Dudman earned 16s.0d making girths, and James Reeves and John Munday each was paid £1.5s.0d for breaking-in horses. The Banbai man ‘Crooky Tommy’, who worked regularly with the horses, earned £2 in May, 1857 and £9 in the following January. In 1857 Tom Pitkin received £1.5s.0d for making whips and £4 for cutting slabs and gathering bark. A year later he was paid £1.4s.6d for ‘Hobbles etc’ and Skinner who in the 1850s was paid 10s.0d each year for delivering rations to the outstations, received an unspecified sum for making brooms.

It is clear that, barring accident or debilitating illness, the immigrant families who came to Ollera in the 1840s and 1850s could, with concerted hard work and determination, provide themselves with a sizable nest-egg with which to fund their future. The wages received by several families who shepherded double-flocks in the 1850s provide typical examples. Daniel Reeves, the shepherd who brought his wife and three sons to Ollera in 1848, was paid the following amounts between 1854 and 1858. As was the practice, the families’ earnings were usually settled half-yearly. With one of his sons he earned £69 in 1854, £77 in early 1856

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83 Wherever possible individuals’ full names (given and family) are used. However these are either not entered in the records or, as in the case of the Skinner family, many share either a given name or an initial.
84 Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103:V2259.
85 Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103:V2259.
and £83.10s.0d six months later, and £62.10.0d in March 1857. At the next settlement, nine months later in February 1858, by which time young Evan had not only been paid for his assistance at lambing but had been rewarded for his expertise, the family received £107.10s.0d. Over fifteen months the Reeves men had therefore earned £169.10s.0d from which £43.17s.0d was deducted for their purchases at the store. With his housemaid wife Emma, the labourer James Reeves, who was Daniel’s nephew, earned £61.10s.0d in the first half of 1856 and £27.13s.2d six months later. In February, 1858 the couple was paid £37.12s.6d from which £9.5s.3d in store costs was deducted. At the same settlement James Ryder and his two sons, who were shepherds at New Valley, earned £60 and in the following May they were paid £100. When the profits from the Ryders’ wheat sales are included, in these nine months the family had earned a total of £326.17s.0d. Within a few years James Ryder could therefore afford to establish an inn beside the Glen Innes road which ran though the property. This inn formed the nucleus for the village of Wandsworth around which, from the late 1870s, many of Ollera’s assisted immigrants selected land.86

Further indications of the degree to which the assisted immigrants’ living standards had improved can be found in their ability to save and in the extent and variety of their purchases from the station store. From the late 1840s some employees requested that money should occasionally be sent to family members in England. Having worked off the cost of his passage to Australia, in August, 1848 Joseph Cook asked that £1.1s.3d should be sent to his family.87 Between May, 1855 and August, 1859 on nine occasions the Everetts recorded that money was to be sent to England on behalf of seven individual employees. Between 1855 and 1859 William Batt sent a total of £25 home to his family. He sent successive gifts of £10 in 1855 and 1856 and a further £5 in 1859. In 1855 Thomas Cotterell sent £10 to England for ‘Widow Cook’ and Charles Cummings sent £10 to his family. The sum was about equal to six months’ wages for a Wiltshire day-labourer who was fortunate enough to be given the chance to earn it. George Munday sent home £6 in 1858, while in the next year Mrs Ryder sent £5 ‘to her father in England’, Mrs [George] Cook sent £6 and £9 was sent on behalf of Daniel Reeves.

The spending patterns of the immigrant families are highly informative. Not unexpectedly, Daniel Reeves and his family of three or four seem to have been both frugal and

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86 Ollera Station Records, Account Book, 1841-72, UNERA, A103:V2259; Everett Records Guyra, Letter: Edwin to John, 11th May, 1863, in which Ryder’s sale of the inn is mentioned.
almost entirely self-sufficient. At settlement on 3rd February 1855, when the Reeves men were owed £77 for their six-month’s work, the family’s debt to the station store for the period was £18.10s.6d, or just under a quarter of their income (24.2 per cent). Of this £5.1s.0d was spent in July on blankets (21s.pr), three pairs of trousers, two of which were moleskin, (£2.10s.0d) and a ‘Great-coat’ (£3.10s.0d). Wheat was the next most expensive item purchased, one-and-three quarter bushels costing £1.3s.9d being bought in November. Of the remaining items listed, the only ones which could in any way be considered ‘luxuries’ were the 7s.8d spent on pre-Christmas currants and raisins and the ‘1lb Negrohead Tobacco’ which cost 7s.0d each month. Suet which was bought in large quantities for 4d lb was the most regular and frequent purchase, followed by such household necessities as soap, sugar (6d lb), a quart pot (1s.), and two single purchases of pickles (3s. bottle) and pepper (1s.).

Between April and October 1857, during the nine-month period in which the Reeves’ men earned £107.10s.0d the family’s store account was £11.0s.4d, the items purchased were remarkably similar. Blankets, trousers and a great-coat were again purchased to which boots (£1), five yards Osnaburg cloth (3.9d), three vests (£1.1s.0d), 2¾ lbs sole-leather and two tin dishes (6s) were added. Butter appears only twice among the purchases made in both these years. It was bought in two consecutive weeks in October 1857, ½ lb costing 1s.0d on the first occasion and 4lbs (8s.0d) on the second. The remainder of the items bought during that half-year were identical in nature and frequency to those bought two years previously.

Clothing, boots, blankets and the calico with which to line their draughty huts were again the most expensive items purchased by James and Emma Reeves and their fellow labourers Sam and Mary Dudman, as they were for all the Everetts’ employees. That they could do so was highly significant for observers of their English contemporaries were often at a loss to explain how they managed to afford to clothe themselves. However, while both couples were paid about £70 in 1855, their expenditure at the store varied greatly. Whereas James and Emma accrued a debt of only £8.12s.6d for the whole year, the Dudmans spent £11.16s.4d in the nine months from January to September. A comparison of their budgets is informative.

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88 The records imply that only two of the Reeves’ three sons were still at Ollera as one wage entry reads ‘Daniel Reeves and son…’, while the second, in which Evan, the youngest is named, is for ‘Daniel Reeves and two sons.’ It therefore seems likely that ‘young Tom Reeves’ had carried out his threat to leave Ollera.


### J. & E. Reeves: Feb,’55-Feb ’56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing and Household Goods</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boots</td>
<td>14s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico</td>
<td>16s.8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts*</td>
<td>£1.12s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>£1.1s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Quart Pot</em></td>
<td>1s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£4.4s.8d</td>
</tr>
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**Foodstuffs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>£1.6s.4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>16s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suet</td>
<td>2s.8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>17s.10d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raisins</td>
<td>9s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>1s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinegar</td>
<td>2s.6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starch*</td>
<td>7s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>1s.6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>10d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** £8.12.6d

### S. & M. Dudman: Jan,’55-Sept, ’55

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Clothing and Household Goods</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boots</td>
<td>£3.13s.0d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calico</td>
<td>8s.0d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trousers*</td>
<td>10s.0d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gunabur [Cloth]</td>
<td>10s.6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash Tub</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker’s Last</td>
<td>£4.17s.5d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foodstuffs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>9s.0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>6s.6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suet</td>
<td>12s.4d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>4s.0d</td>
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<td>Raisins</td>
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<td>6d</td>
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<td>Beef</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pickles</td>
<td>3s.6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>1s.9d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** £11.16s.4d

*Note: Italicics are used when different items were purchased by each family.

It must be remembered that, like many of Ollera’s workers, these families’ purchases were additional to the generous rations which were issued to Ollera’s full-time workers each week. The quantities issued varied according to the size of the family and with the season of the pastoral year, with one-and-a-half the quantity of the usual ration being issued during the lambing period and, shortly after, to the shearsers. A daily ‘tot’ of rum was also supplied to the sheep-washers who spent days struggling with unwilling animals in waist-depth water. In 1860 Sam Dudman and his wife Mary, who was apparently still separately employed and who by then had at least one son, were issued with the following rations: 20lbs beef, 15lbs flour, 6lbs tea and 3lbs sugar. 92 This seems to have also been the standard issue for men who had at least one child of working age. Shepherding families which, like that of Edward Lansley, had children too young to work received 15lbs beef, 15lbs flour, 6lbs tea and 3lbs sugar, while those men with large families or whose sons had reached the working age of twelve were issued with double rations. John Matley was one such shepherd, receiving 30lbs beef, 30lbs flour, 12 lbs tea and 6lbs sugar per week. Single men and those like John Clark, whose family appears to have been partially self-supporting, received 10 lbs beef, 10 lbs flour, 4lbs tea and 2lbs sugar a week in 1860. 93

The contrast with the diets which they had known in the rural south of England and which remained largely unchanged until the beginning of the twentieth century could not have

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92 An entry in the Stores Issues Book for the mid-1850s records that Dudman purchased a pair of boys’ boots.

been more stark. It must have been as apparent to Ollera’s assisted-immigrant families as it was to Joseph Baker, whose reactions have survived. The skilled labourer’s interruption of the meeting of farmers and landowners at Devizes in the winter of 1850 was as forthright as it was unexpected and unwelcome. Dismissing the alternative of the despised workhouse, to which, ‘thousands would rather rob or starve than go’, he challenged his masters openly.

...we have not nearly victuals enough. How would you like to sit down with your wife and young children four days a week to not half bread and potatoes enough, and the other three days upon not half enough boiled Swedes and with but little fire to cook with them?\(^{94}\)

When, a year or so later, in response to the publicity attracted by his unusual actions, his application for assistance to migrate to South Australia was accepted, his family’s diet and thus their living standards had improved substantially. Coombs’ comment shows that the wonder with which Jacob Baker described the abundance of food to which he had access and had fuel enough to cook, was shared by his Wiltshire compatriots at Ollera. Not only were Baker and his four sons provided with ‘a joint of meat every day’, but as there were no game laws in the colonies,

...Tim and me can take our guns and dog and shoot all we can without any licences. We have plenty of beautiful parrots and wild turkeys, and ducks and other birds.\(^{95}\)

Though life in their bark humpies on the frontier of a new and, to early twenty-first century people, almost unimaginably remote country remained as precarious as it was difficult, the assisted-immigrant families from England’s rural south therefore seem undoubtedly to have been better off than those they left behind in England. They had secure, full-time employment, the ability to feed and clothe themselves and the realistic hope of a better life for themselves and their children. Already several of Ollera’s employees had either risen to more responsible and/or attractive jobs in the station’ workforce or had struck out on their own. By dint of the Cannings family’s misfortune, in the second half of the 1840s Fortescue had been promoted, apparently with some success, to the oversight of the station’s workforce. In the early 1850s Joe Cook and John Yeats were attracted away, first by the more lucrative rewards of shearing and soon after by gold in the case of the unfortunate Cook and, in Yeats’ case, by the more reliable opportunities offered by short-distance carrying from his base in Armidale. He remained in contact with the station, with which he did steady business in the 1850s. At least three other men who were first employed by the Everetts as shepherds and labourers moved up


\(^{95}\) *Ibid*, p. 75.
to become full-time long- or short-distance teamsters at Ollera. Though Garrett Farrell, who served longest, is perhaps best remembered, the erstwhile jobbing-fencer John Hopkins probably invested the savings which George Everett sought to regain for him in the bullock-team which, though privately owned, worked solely on Ollera’s behalf throughout the 1850s. The third man was William Millis, who seems to have spent much of his time at Ollera as a teamster. Daniel Hutton and Charles Cummings also made occasional trips to Maitland or the Clarence as watchmen on the drays, as did Sam Dudman, who at other times was also employed as a groom. Between trips these men served as shepherds, labourers, shearers and washers. Though Daniel Reeves, his sons, and from 1858 his nephew John, remained shepherds, with the Clarks, their special skills saw them promoted to the care of the most valuable and difficult of the Everettts’ flocks. The Ryders’ ability to move up in the world has already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{96}

Though Edwin Everett remained in residence at Ollera until his move to Tenterden in 1864, James Mackenzie assumed full responsibility for the management of the station in mid-1858, albeit initially for a one or two year period. The \textit{Monthly Ration Book: June, 1858 to March, 1859}, which is the first of a series which thereafter recorded details on a weekly basis, shows that in those nine months a total of sixty-three people, in three different areas (‘House’, New Valley and Tangle), received rations from the station.\textsuperscript{97} The names of six women, four of them Banbai, were among the sixty-four people listed. Of the fifty-eight men named, among whom Mackenzie was included, one was Chinese and twelve were Aboriginal. The sixty-four were ‘on the books’ for the following lengths of time. Thirty-one were rationed for between five and the whole nine months, twenty-two for between two and four months and eleven for a single month. The figures, unfortunately, are not exact for, while reduced rations were issued to several casual Banbai workers, neither the identity nor the number of these casual workers was recorded. [See Appendix L, below]

However the names of the all-important shepherds who were employed in 1858-59 and in many cases the type of flock for which they cared can be found in the Sheep Returns for the four years from 1857.\textsuperscript{98} The following names are listed:

\textsuperscript{96} Ollera Station Records, \textit{UNERA}, Account Book, A103:V2259; Stores Issue Book, A103:V3052/14; Cane, \textit{op. cit.}, p.69.
\textsuperscript{97} Ollera Station Records, Monthly Ration Book, June, 1858-March, 1859, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V3052/27.
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<th>1861</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Reeves</td>
<td>Tom Reeves (ewes)</td>
<td>George Cook (ewes)</td>
<td>George Cook (ewes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Cook</td>
<td>George Cook (ewes)</td>
<td>Ed. Lansley (ewes)</td>
<td>Ed. Lansley (ewes)</td>
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<td>Old Bob Cummins (young wethers)</td>
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<td>Weatherspoon (wethers &amp; rams)</td>
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<td>Weatherspoon (wethers &amp; rams)*</td>
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<td>Donaldson (ewes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matley (lambs)</td>
<td>Matley (lambs)</td>
<td>Matley (mixed ewes)</td>
<td>Matley (mixed ewes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matley (wethers)</td>
<td>Matley (young ewes)*</td>
<td>Matley (ewe hoggets)</td>
<td>Matley (ewe hoggets)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Matley (wethers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Dawson (ewes)</td>
<td>Dawson (ewes)</td>
<td>Dawson (ewes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Clare (ewes)</td>
<td>Clare (wethers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Dawson Snr (wethers &amp; lambs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dawson (7th wethers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Dawson Jnr (mixed lambs)</td>
<td>Dawson (lambs)</td>
<td>Dawson Jnr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>‘German’ (ewes)</td>
<td>‘German’</td>
<td>‘German’ (ewes)</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Holland (wethers &amp; lambs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>M. Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Young Ryan</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Woods</td>
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<td>Kear</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Stephen Cox</td>
<td>Stephen Cox (young wethers)</td>
<td>S. Cox (wethers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>J. Reeves (rams &amp; wethers)</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Pitkin</td>
<td>Pitkin (wether hoggets)</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>John Chinaman (wethers)</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Ch’man (crawlers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Sam Chinaman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sam Ch’man (2yr old mixed ewes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Tunian Chinaman [Tonyan?]</td>
<td>Tunian (mixed ewes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>..................</td>
<td>Dicky [Banbai ?]</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>MclInnes (rams)</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Hutzen</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Man Po [Plain]</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>MacIntosh</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Wicks (ewes &amp; crawlers)</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Gillis</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>Ramage</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>J. Cook</td>
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<td>..................</td>
<td>J. Jockey [sic]</td>
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</table>

**Note:** * Denotes repetition of name, which in Weatherspoon’s case may indicate care of a double flock, which may also be so with at least one of the Dawsons. However, from this time, Tom Dawson and several of his sons work continuously at Oillera.

During the thirty-years in which he was supervisor at Oillera-Tenterden, James Mackenzie kept a series of Diary-journals in which he recorded his daily activities, the everyday business of the station and significant events in the life of the growing community.99

Although as much a ‘gentleman’ as the Everetts, as superintendent rather than owner he clearly lacked their status in the colony and therefore may not have found it necessary to maintain as

99 Oillera Station Records, Diary of James Mackenzie, 1862, UNERA, A103: V3052/23.
great a social distance from the men and women he employed. Though brief and to the point the entries in Mackenzie’s journals, most of which survive from mid-1862, record snippets from the personal lives of both masters and men. Regular visits from Armidale doctors are recorded; one by Dr. Brien, who ‘kept [a] Hotel at Boorolong’, and many by Dr. West, who in September 1862, ‘called on [the] way to see a Chinaman’s child at Cope’s Creek’. Births and deaths were equally frequent, as were accidents, ‘I ran a nail into my foot which hurt me much’ and the search for a lost shepherd. October 18th, 1862 was apparently a very full day on which Mackenzie recorded the birth of his daughter Ethel, the visit of ‘Mr. Dangar’ (of Paradise Creek station) to whom he was to sell some sheep, the branding of foals and the receipt of ‘one ton of potatoes’ which Jackson had grown at his outstation. Mackenzie’s day was not finished for he then went to Balls’ shepherding station where he:

…rode about till dark and came home. Went back with E. Everett and D(onald) Stewart in the morning and found him. He had been lost for three days.

November was even busier and more difficult. Shearing always caused problems and in the 1862 season the men refused to begin work unless each received more than the two pairs of shears which were deemed sufficient. Although the ‘row’ was settled on the second day and the men agreed to start work, an entry a fortnight later ‘had great row with two shearers’ suggests that feelings were still running high. McKenzie’s problems continued, for three days before shearing ended on 5th December, he recorded that a serious accident had occurred during the baling of the wool. ‘Gus Darby nearly killed with the wool press leaver (sic.)’ Ten days later there was another death, this time of an unfortunate man from ‘farther out’.

December, 15: Found that a poor man from Paradise [Creek] who was on his way to Armidale Hospital had died down at the stock yards, placed him in the Store, set Rummings to work to make a coffin.
16: Buried the man who died
17: Harvest.

The early 1860s saw the beginning of a new stage in Ollera’s development and the end of an era in its management. Not only had both of the station’s founding partners returned permanently to England but, with his wife and baby, James Mackenzie was settled in the newly-extended homestead where the rapidly-enlarging family would remain for almost thirty years. Although the paternalist management practices established by George and John Everett remained largely unchanged under Mackenzie’s skilled superintendence, the recording-style altered markedly. Possibly because of the accelerated growth of the station and the increased complexity of its operations, from this time entries in the Account Book became more general,
the revealing day-to-day financial transactions with individual workers no longer being entered. It seems likely that these were contained in a steady stream of letters by which Mackenzie kept John Everett informed of Ollera’s progress, but which unfortunately no longer survive. John’s highly detailed responses, of which only a few survive from the period, suggest this likelihood. Similar reports may also have been preserved in, and later lost with, Edwin Everett’s correspondence, which was burnt after his death at Tenterden in 1907.  

This was the stuff of everyday life at Ollera as it entered upon its prosperous maturity in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. More than two decades of hard work and an almost constant struggle against the combined vagaries of a difficult environment and of a severe economic depression lay behind them and Ollera and its people were poised to reap the benefits of their combined efforts.

100 Information supplied during author’s interview with Mr. and Mrs Skipper during visits to Ollera Station.