From Dream to Reality: A study of British migration to Western Australia in the 1960s, with special emphasis on those who travelled on the SS Castel Felice

Hilda June Caunt
University of Notre Dame Australia
FROM DREAM TO REALITY

A study of British migration to Western Australia in the 1960s, with special emphasis on those who travelled on the SS Castel Felice.

HILDA JUNE CAUNT

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Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Hilda June Caunt                      Date
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Abstract

This work is a unique contribution to the history of Western Australia. Over a million people left the British Isles to migrate to Australia during the 1960s. One hundred thousand migrants, not all of whom were British, came on the Castel Felice, one of the many ships travelling between Europe and Australia in the post-war movement of peoples. My thesis addresses the question of what motivated those who left Britain to do so at that time, for in Britain there were improving housing conditions, generally full employment, an impressive national social security system and the active social experience of the ‘swinging 60s’. My thesis then questions whether the reality of life in Australia matched the better life they expected for their children and themselves. Often they became known as ‘whingeing Poms’. Some of the participants in my study felt that information given to prospective migrants in the 1960s with regard to housing and employment was exaggerated. Many who had left Britain in this period gave up modern homes, friends and relatives to come to a country where it seemed that the insects were more welcoming than its people and where, to many, the housing appeared to be primitive, work difficult to find and the public transport system untenable. Was there a reason for the ‘whingeing’? Finally, responses from migrants that have now returned to live in the United Kingdom are analysed.

There have been many books written on the migration phenomenon, and many which address the problems of assimilation to the Australian way of life by people from other nations. This thesis considers why in the 1960s British migrants made the decision to migrate, their experiences in the process of leaving, the voyage, the arrival, and why they eventually settled in Western Australia. It does so by assessing the responses of more than 100 people to a questionnaire: A survey of migrants arriving in Western Australia during the 1960s, and the information given by others who participated in an oral history interview. Some of the respondents had first migrated to one of the eastern states of Australia but later decided to settle in Western Australia. Interesting stories of the parting from home and the experiences on the voyage are followed by their memories of what happened to them on arrival in Western Australia, where they went, who they met and where they settled. Most of the participants stayed in the city and suburbs, but some went to the bush. In some cases they returned to live in the United Kingdom. Sherington estimates that 25% of all migrants who came to Australia in the 1960s returned to their homeland.1

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First I must thank my supervisor Dr Deborah Gare and the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle for without their support and assistance this thesis would not have been written.

I must thank all the participants in the study, many of whom offered private documents, memories and other valuable information about their migration experience in answer to questions on the surveys that they returned to me. Some provided time for oral history interviews.

Research was made easier by the cooperation of the staff at the St Theresa’s Library, University of Notre Dame, other academic and public librarians and the staff of the National Archives and Western Australia State Records Office.

I acknowledge the help I received from the media, including the West Australian, Fremantle Gazette, and West Australian Senior, each of which published reports on the search for 1960s ‘Ten Pound Poms’ that encouraged many of the participants to contact me.

Michele Drouart, member of the Society of Editors, copy edited the textual content of the thesis. Finally I thank Carole Stabb who has been a constant support and corrected many of the typographical errors during the writing of this thesis.
Note on referencing

My thesis makes extensive use of the instrument, *A survey of migrants arriving in Western Australia during the 1960s*. The survey was completed for this study by over 100 migrants who came from all parts of the British Isles to Western Australia in the 1960s, many of whom did so aboard the SS *Castel Felice*. Oral history interviews were also conducted with some of these respondents.

A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 1. Responses to this survey were returned by post to me over a period of nearly a year. Each survey included a consent form which was signed and dated by the respondent. Many of the respondents requested that their contributions remain anonymous. As a consequence their names have been withheld.

When each survey response was returned I allocated to it a consecutive number according to the date of receipt.

When citing the responses in this thesis I have given a name of the participant, the survey number and the date of arrival in Australia. For example, a survey’s first citation is formatted as follows, wherever possible the month and year of arrival will be included:


In further footnotes the ‘name withheld’ will be replaced by ‘Anon’

Wherever possible in this work I have used the spelling, punctuation and grammar used by the respondents in their answers to the questions. In many cases the answers were in the form of notes and comments with little punctuation.
INTRODUCTION

To construct this unique contribution to the history of Western Australia I have used the words of over 100 British migrants who came here in the 1960s. Over a million people left the British Isles to migrate to Australia during the 1960s\textsuperscript{1}. Over one hundred thousand migrants, not all of whom were British, came to Australia on the \textit{Castel Felice} between 1959 and 1969.\textsuperscript{2} She was one of the many ships travelling the route between Europe and Australia in the great post-war movement of peoples. The British migrants were labelled by many as ‘whingeing Poms’, but more recently Hammerton and Thomson have written of them as ‘Australia’s invisible migrants’.\textsuperscript{3}

My study is important and timely because many of the people who experienced the event are now senior citizens whose memories need to be recorded while it remains possible to do so. In exploring the experiences of over 100 British migrants who settled in Western Australia in the 1960s the thesis gives personal stories that have not been written before. Scholars have explored the experiences of other ethnic groups in Western Australia such as the Irish and Dutch as well as the displaced persons of Europe more generally.\textsuperscript{4} The British post-war migration to Australia had been recorded mostly in general terms.\textsuperscript{5} This thesis concentrates on the decision by Britons to migrate to Western Australia in the 1960s, their sea

\textsuperscript{3} Hammerton and Thomson, passim.
\textsuperscript{5} James Jupp, various titles; Allen Richardson, various titles; Appleyard, various titles; Hammerton and Thomson, various titles.
passage to Fremantle and the varying experiences of those who chose to settle here.

Many British migrants of this period came as part of the greatest and last sea-borne movements of willing peoples in the world. Towards the end of the 1960s the airplane took the place of the ship, to a large degree, as the means of bringing migrants to Australia. This important research has allowed the participants to tell, in their own words, the story of why they decided to come to Australia (and more particularly to Western Australia), the experiences of their travel to Australia and their arrival and settling in, and, in the end, why some chose to return to live in Britain.

To define the term British can be problematical; even the dictionaries cannot agree on a shared definition. One believes the British are ‘people of Great Britain or of the British Empire but more especially the English’. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is more specific, suggesting that the British are the descendants of the ancient Britons, and Britain is said to be ‘the whole island containing England, Wales and Scotland more fully called Great Britain’. Chetkovich also expresses the difficulty in defining the term ‘British’ for her doctoral thesis in 2003. She says that in modern usage ‘Britain is commonly used for the United Kingdom, a political entity in which England is the dominant part’. According to the Australian Department of Immigration, the United Kingdom was created in 1801 and comprised England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and such off-shore islands as the Isle of Wight. In the 1920s the primarily Catholic states of southern Ireland were partitioned and became known as the Irish Free State. In 1948 these states became the Irish Republic and left the British Commonwealth. Since then Irish Republicans are not be considered ‘British’, unlike the citizens of Northern Ireland.

The majority of my respondents departed from what might be more specifically called Great Britain, the largest island of the British Isles. In all, though, participants

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originated from Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and also the Irish Republic. They seem to have used the terms English, British and ‘from the U.K.’ indiscriminately in their responses. It is also apparent that the place from which they say they left on their migration journey was not necessarily their place of birth or where they were ‘from’. Many respondents had travelled around the United Kingdom for work, after marriage and for other reasons, especially those who had served in the armed forces. It remains particularly difficult to determine exactly how many of the post-war British migrants to Australia were in fact Irish. Official records of the time make no distinction between the nationalities of those passengers who left British ports, but list only the port of departure. Chetkovitch notes that the £10 assisted migration scheme was only extended to the Irish in the late 1960s, and that up to that time those Irish who wished to participate were forced to take up residency in England for six months before being considered eligible.\(^\text{10}\) The significance of this is that while this study examines the British experiences of migration to Australia, it is possible that some of the participants were of Irish origin, just as some of the thousands who left Britain for Australia on the *Castel Felice* were also Irish. It is impossible to guess at what those numbers might be.

This thesis looks at the dreams, hopes and expectations of some of the thousands of assisted British migrants who came to Western Australia during the 1960s. They left a country which had a National Health and Insurance Scheme with free medical and welfare benefits, often in a time of booming employment, to travel 12,000 miles to the other side of the world either on their own or with their families. The decision to emigrate was often based on expectations raised by promises they found in migrant information publications. Some found their new life in Australia was all they had hoped for—and more. Others found their expectations were not fulfilled immediately and so were very unhappy when they tried to settle in Australia. It has been estimated that over 25\% of all people who migrated to

\(^{10}\) Chetkovich, ‘The New Irish in Australia’, p. 65.
Introduction

Australia from the United Kingdom (and all parts of Europe) in the 1960s returned to their homelands.  

The major part of the thesis uses the words of over 100 Britons to tell of their decision to migrate, their voyage and their early years in Western Australia in the 1960s. To give depth to the work the actual words and phraseology of the responses have been used. Most travelled on the Castel Felice, the ship which brought my family here; thirty of them came in the same year, 1966. Some of the accounts are humorous, some are poignant, but all reflect the different experiences of those £10 Poms. It is unquestionably an immigration history. Thomson, who researched the accounts of post-war British migrants in the archival holdings at the State Library of Victoria and the University of Sussex in England, says there are noticeable differences in the accounts of the migrants made at the time of migration and those that were made later. It may therefore be true, that had my participants been surveyed upon arrival in the 1960s, their responses might then have been different.

The study of immigration in Australia has been extensive, which is not surprising given the vast influence which assisted and unassisted migration has had on the nation since colonisation. (It is also true that Australia’s immigration story pre-dates 1788). Yet there has been surprisingly little attention paid to the large numbers of British migrants who arrived by ship in Western Australia during the period of the 1960s. Lost in the story of the declining White Australia Policy, these migrants were considered to be most acceptable because it was thought that they would blend invisibly and culturally into the Australian nation without effort. This assumption has also made them practically invisible in our history, yet their numbers alone make them worthy of attention. There were more than 1 million who arrived in the 1960s. Despite these numbers very little has been written specifically about these

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11 Sherington, p. 148.
12 Alistair Thomson, “‘The Empire was a Bar of Soap’: Life stories and race identity among British emigrants travelling to Australia, 1945-1967”, in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), Cultural History in Australia, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2003, pp. 203, 208.
13 Immigration-Federation to Century’s End.
British ‘boat people’ of the 1960s who came to Western Australia.

When I arrived from Britain with my family in 1966, I was one of many of the British migrants who came to Australia in that year. I am a ‘Ten Pound Pom’. I came with my husband and young family from the midlands of England to Western Australia on the Castel Felice and settled for the first two years in a forestry settlement of Pimelia just outside Pemberton in the south-west corner of Western Australia. In researching material to write the story of our migration experience I realised there was very little literature about the Britons who came to Western Australia in the 1960s. Though there are many academics, such as Jupp and Richardson, who have written on British migration to Australia they tend to focus on the migrants’ political and cultural similarity to Australians; but these writings largely ignore the personal narrative. Few deal specifically with Western Australia, separated as it is by geography, psychology, politics, economy and in so many other ways from the eastern states. Others have written of the experiences of the Italian, Irish and Dutch migrants as well as the refugees and displaced persons who came to Western Australia in the years following the Second World War. But few British migrant voices of the 1960s have been recorded. I realised that after forty years many of these migrants, like myself, were ageing and their stories needed to be recorded before they died.

Research Design

My thesis in some ways expands on the work of James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson who brought together two rich archives of testimony by post-war British migrants held at the University of Sussex in Britain and the State Library of Victoria. Using these primary sources their work is a general look at British migration from 1945 to the 1970s and gives an in-depth report on the phenomenon of the migrants who returned permanently to the United

14 James Jupp, various titles; Allen Richardson, various titles; Appleyard, various titles; Hammerton and Thomson, various titles. (See Bibliography)
15 Chetkovich, Peters, Loretta Baldassar, Visits Home: Migration experiences between Italy and Australia, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2001
16 Hammerton and Thomson, p. ix.
Kingdom. My work differs, and is more important to Western Australia, because it focuses on the experiences of British migrants coming to and settling in this state in the 1960s. Other writers, such as Jupp, appear not to have conducted surveys or interviews specifically with people who came to Western Australia in the 1960s, though Richardson did conduct a helpful survey in the 1950s of migrants who were then living in Medina, a suburb of Perth.\footnote{A. Richardson, ‘British Immigrants in Western Australia: Study of British migrants in Medina’, in C.A. Price, \textit{The Study of Immigrants in Australia: Proceedings of a conference on immigration research convened by the Dept. of Demography}, Australian National University, Canberra, 1960, pp. 33–43.}

It was decided that data could only be considered by the qualitative method. A case study would be an opportunity to fill the gaps in the understanding of the migration of British migrants to Western Australia. The data gathered is in the form of words and pictures rather than numbers and it could be assumed that the results might be generalized across the experiences of many British migrants arriving in the 1960s. Furthermore, it was impossible to guess at the size of the response from migrants until the study began.\footnote{David Evans and Paul Gruba, \textit{How to Write a Better Thesis}, 2nd edn, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2002, pp. 83–100.}

To make the study more manageable I chose to canvas the passengers who, like me, migrated here in the 1960s on board the \textit{Castel Felice}. In creating the history of those British migrants I wanted to use their own words to tell of their emotions on leaving home and the adventure of the voyage, the reality of life on arrival and if their new life fulfilled their expectations. Because of the age of the expected respondents I decided that the least intrusive means to find the information I required was by a questionnaire. Participants could then choose to answer some or all questions in the survey, or indeed not return the survey at all. A consent form allowed for the respondents to request anonymity in published materials. Some surveys were not returned and more than half the respondents requested that their anonymity be retained.

The survey, a copy of which can be found as Appendix 1, included the following questions:
Introduction

- What was the date of your voyage to Western Australia? (Include month and year if possible.)
- What were the names, approximate ages and occupations of those with whom you travelled?
- Why, of all the Australian states, did you choose to migrate to…? (e.g. Western Australia?)
- Where did you receive information about Australia before migrating?
- What were the official procedures you had to follow to apply to migrate to Western Australia? (e.g: vaccinations, interviews, letters, documentation etc.).
- What were the reactions of your friends and family to your decision to migrate to Australia?
- What was your ‘home town’? Could you describe your journey from home to the ship? For example, did you travel by private car, train or some other motor vehicle? Did friends come to wish you well? What were the emotions you remember feeling as you prepared to leave?
- Could you describe the voyage on the (Ship Name or plane)? Consider such questions as: How long was the journey? Was it a positive experience? Did you make friends with other people on board? If so, did you remain in contact with them after you arrived? Where did the ship stop en route? What were the conditions of your cabin like? Were people excited by the voyage and the promise of what lay ahead? Nervous? Were the food and other conditions of the ship good?
- What were your first impressions of Australia before you landed? eg: when first seeing land, or from tales told by other passengers.
- Did you have somewhere to stay, or was that arranged on arrival? Did you go directly there?
- If you went to a hostel what were your impressions of the: Accommodation, Facilities, Food, and Transport? Other.
- Did you (or your parents) obtain the work which you had expected to gain on arrival?
- How long was it before you settled into permanent accommodation? Was it near facilities such as work, school and shops?
- Did the reality of life in Australia match the promise which had been offered before emigration?
- In the first 3 years did you consider returning to Britain?
- Did you later consider returning to Britain?
- What made you stay in Western Australia?
- Did any of your family return to Britain, if so what made them return?
- Are you now happy with your life in Western Australia and your decision to migrate here?
- How do you think the life of you and your family has changed by moving here?
- Are you now an Australian citizen?

The survey was accompanied by a letter explaining the aims and objectives of the
research. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the University of Notre Dame’s Research Ethics Committee in August 2005. It was acknowledged in the project’s ethics application that some of the memories the survey might provoke could be distressing for respondents. Indeed, one of the participants writes, ‘I am reliving that time now and feel more upset now than I think I did then’. While similar feelings were expressed by others, some expressed pleasure at the opportunity to remember their past, especially when they did so in a family situation. One participant, who filled in the survey for his 92 year old father, said: ‘Thanks for the opportunity to do this we had a lot of fun talking about the past’.

The Maritime Museum of Western Australia lists on its Welcome Walls project the names of many migrants who travelled to Western Australia on the Castel Felice. Six participants were recruited through this source. Others were invited to contribute to this project through an advertisement placed in the ‘Can You Help’ section of the West Australian. Further publicity for the project was obtained through articles and photographs later published in the West Australian, the Western Australian Senior and the Fremantle Gazette.

Of the 128 people who responded to such advertisements, 102 completed and returned the survey I posted to them. Seven more surveys were completed by migrants who now live permanently in the United Kingdom. A list of my respondents by year of arrival can be found as part of the bibliography. They came from all parts of the British Isles including England, Scotland, Wales, as well as Northern and Southern Ireland. One respondent came from South Africa (though a British subject) and one from Germany. The participants brought a wide range of skills and experiences to Australia, which are listed, in later chapters.

20 Name withheld, arr. May 1963, Survey 5.
21 ‘Can you help?’, West Australian, 13 June 2005, p. 46.
22 West Australian, 5 December 2005, p. 9; Western Australian Senior, November 2005, p. 5; Fremantle Gazette, 6 Dec 2005, p. 21. Note: Copies of photographs in appendices.
It’s their 10 quid’s worth

They set off in search of a better life, and found it here. Pam Casellas talks to some Aussie ten-pound poms

But some were young children when they made the journey and their experiences often differed to that of the older migrants. Four of the respondents later took part in interviews which I conducted to obtain further information on life in the United Kingdom in the 1960s. Transcripts of my interviews were sent to the interviewees inviting them to make alterations and sign the consent form before the material was used in this thesis. The completed surveys, tapes and transcripts of the interviews are kept in a secure filing cabinet in my home for possible use in further research. It has been suggested that this material would be a valuable addition to the holdings of the JS Battye Library. On the acceptance of this thesis I will ask...
the participants if they would be willing to transfer the material to such an archive or if they would prefer the materials to be returned to them.

Research for this project commenced in December 2004 and is based on careful analysis of primary and secondary sources, including records held in the State Records Office of Western Australia, National Archives of Australia, JS Battye Library of Western Australia, State Library of Victoria and other academic libraries. Documents studied include shipping registers, migration records, transcripts of interviews and materials published in the 1960s. It was interesting that a catalogue search of the oral histories in the Battye Library revealed records for such terms as ‘Polish migrant’, ‘Dutch migrant’, ‘Jewish migrant’, but nothing for ‘British migrant’. A search of the transcripts held there did not produce any material of relevance to this project. Immigration records held in museums in Western Australia and Victoria were also examined. In 2005 I attended a national conference on post-war British migration held at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne. I met with prominent researchers in the field at the one-day symposium and at the book launch for Hammerton and Thomson’s publication, *Invisible Migrants: Post-war Immigration to Australia*. I was able to talk with some of the leading academics in this field.

The extensive literature research in Western Australian academic libraries was extended to academic libraries throughout Australia using the internet and inter-library loan facility of the St Theresa’s Library at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle. Efforts to find informational publications produced by the various Australian departments, and other sources, for prospective migrants had limited success, despite extensive searches in the State Records Office, Battye Library and the National Archives in Western Australia. I also searched the online catalogues of the National Library and the National Archives in Canberra. Staff at the National Archives conducted searches but were unable to find relevant materials. Five migration handbooks were made available by the National Library from its collection. I found one publication at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in Nedlands, and
was fortunate to be loaned some relevant material by the Reverend K. J. Patterson who was a chaplain on the *Castel Felice* in 1967. I was very disappointed to learn that a publication I had found in St Theresa’s Library in 2005, published by the Western Australian Department of Immigration in the 1960s, *What Every Migrant Needs to Know*, had been destroyed by the library at the beginning of 2006. This perhaps gives some indication of the value libraries have placed on such material.

It took many months to complete a detailed literature review. It was necessary to read works on post-war British migration to Australia and the political, economic and social conditions in both Australian and Britain at the time. I also studied the history of Australia since 1788 making particular note of the histories of assisted migration, Western Australian immigration and the experience of the British migrant. I needed to understand the law and policies covering immigration from the nineteenth century, changes which were implemented after Federation, and in particular the long term impact of the White Australia Policy. I also looked at the various schemes put in place to encourage British migrants to our shore, such as the Group Settlement Scheme of the 1920s. Many of these schemes were influenced by economic conditions both in Australia and Britain. I looked especially at the economic and social conditions of the United Kingdom and Western Australia in the 1950s and 1960s and at the changing relationships between Australia and Britain with the decline of the empire, other shifting international allegiances, the growing importance to Australia of the United States and the increasing attraction of the European Economic Community to the United Kingdom.

In developing the thesis I first looked at the history of migration to Western Australia from the indigenous peoples to the post-war era of ‘Populate or Perish’. I then concentrated on the wave of British immigration in the 1960s, especially the migrants who travelled on the *Castel Felice*, to settle in Western Australia. The surveys were received between July 2005 and August 2006. I created a database listing the answers to each question. The responses were analysed with the answers to each question being compared and contrasted to form
separate chapters in this thesis. In an effort to increase the number of respondents from Ireland and Wales I approached the media, and there were some responses to this request. I received one reply after an approach to the Western Australian Welsh Club. The approach to the Australian Irish Heritage Association was unsuccessful. It was also difficult to make contact with the British migrants who had returned to the United Kingdom to live; one contacted me from the original advertisements but I was only able to contact six other returnees. However, the subject of the returning migrants has been well covered in another project undertaken by Hammerton and Thomson.

The La Trobe/Sussex project on British migration to Australia found that some 75% of the participants travelled here as families, with or without children. The composition of the respondents to my survey shows a similar ratio. Jupp says families were favoured for assisted transportation and that many parents were approaching middle age when they came to Australia. They did so for the benefit of their children. This too seems to have been borne out by the responses to my survey as most of the participants came to Australia as part of a family. Many of the breadwinners were over 35 years of age when they arrived in Australia and some brought relatives who were over 50 years of age.

Although my thesis mostly addresses the experiences of migrants who came to Western Australia in the 1960s on the Castel Felice I received responses from migrants who came in the 1940s and 1950s, also a few from passengers on other vessels. Their contributions were not ignored but incorporated into the work where appropriate. Some of my respondents went initially to other Australian states and came later to settle here. Their stories have been included because their decision to migrate, the journey and arrival in Fremantle follows the same path as those who intended to settle in Western Australia. They also give a small

24 ‘Ten Pound Poms’, Bulletin: The University of Sussex Newsletter, Http://www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin/05may00/article5/html, (12/12/05); Hammerton and Thomson, p. ix.
window into the conditions at the time for British migrants who began their new life in other parts of Australia. A few respondents came by air, one as a backpacker and one on a motorcycle and sidecar. These different ways of travel give a broader insight to British migration in the era. The study intends to determine whether the reality of life in Australia fulfilled the expectations the participants held when they made the decision to migrate. In particular we will follow the tale of the four respondents who gave interviews telling something of their lives and experiences in Britain before deciding to migrate.

**Britain in the 1960s**

A comprehensive welfare state was in place in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 1960s. The National Health Service provided free hospital, medical and dental treatment, and National Insurance and National Assistance took care of those who were unable to work for a living. However, in 1966 new thinking on both sides of Parliament brought a revision of the National Health Service and introduced charges for prescribed medicines. The National Assistance system was also changed to make supplementary payments dependent on a means test. These new measures were seen to have drawbacks because they could lead people to be caught in a ‘poverty trap’. Under the cohabitation rule, for instance, single parents with children to support could be deprived of benefits if they were found to be sharing accommodation with a person who was deemed to be able to provide support.

Britain in the 1960s experienced a decade of change which may have influenced the decision of some migrants to leave the country. In 1961 deflationary measures by the government caused widespread unemployment. Then, in 1963, tax changes increased people’s ability to buy houses and cars. In 1964 the Conservative government was ousted by the Labour Party. The new Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was determined to modernise

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28 Marwick, p. 264.
Britain. Housing was built at a rapid rate and older run-down areas were cleared. However the clearance of slum dwellings and the redevelopment of older suburban areas into high-rise housing disrupted formerly close-knit societies and increased crime rates.\textsuperscript{30} Disaffected youth provoked gangs of ‘mods and rockers’ to cause trouble in many seaside towns.\textsuperscript{31} Wages were increased and the steel industry was nationalised.\textsuperscript{32} It was expected these changes would bring about greater social equality and stop the strikes which had devastated the country. Efforts were made to regulate union unrest, but these measures could not be passed through Parliament. In 1965 the Trade Disputes Act (UK) made industrial stoppages even easier by giving trade unions full protection in cases of disputes involving redundancies. Wage freezes and wage restraints were introduced in an effort to stabilise the economy.\textsuperscript{33} In the late 1960s further attempts were made to join the European Economic Community while at the same time Britain reduced overseas commitments by withdrawing military forces east of Suez.\textsuperscript{34}

Britain had always prided itself on being the ‘spiritual home’ of anyone born in its empire.\textsuperscript{35} This attitude, however, was challenged as more and more Indian, Pakistani and West Indian peoples started to migrate to England. The British Nationality Act of 1948 gave free access to the United Kingdom for Commonwealth citizens who wanted to work or settle. More and more of these new settlers from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent flooded into the country, until the Commonwealth Immigration Act (UK) was passed in 1962 in an effort to restrict their entrance with the introduction of a voucher scheme.

Colour made these new migrants visible and they tended to congregate in densely populated areas; some people saw them as a threat to the British way of life and feared the influx could lead to widespread unemployment of the white man. Race riots occurred in

\textsuperscript{30} Marwick, p. 339.
\textsuperscript{33} Rebecca Fraser, \textit{A People’s History of Britain}, Chatto & Windus, London, 2003, p. 747.
\textsuperscript{34} Fraser, p. 749.
\textsuperscript{35} Marwick, p. 230.
many British cities. The government, in an effort to address the problem, brought in the Race Relations Act 1965 (UK), which made it a criminal offence to incite racial hatred. In 1968 amendments to the Commonwealth Immigration Act (UK) effectively closed the door on free entry to all Commonwealth citizens, including many Australians, by stating that people who wished to enter freely must be in possession of a British Passport, only available to naturalised citizens of the United Kingdom, or to the children and grandchildren of such British citizens. Australians became like other foreigners and had to obtain visas to work in England. They were no longer welcome guests.\footnote{Fraser, p. 746.}

The 1960s saw the growth of such movements as Flower Power, the Hippies and a general youth culture, which rebelled against conservative society. In all areas there was declining moral restraint. Early in the 1960s literary censorship ended when D. H. Lawrence’s book \textit{Lady Chatterley’s Lover} was ruled as not obscene. Sexual permissiveness was portrayed in magazines and in the theatre.\footnote{Marwick, p. 146; Fraser, p. 745.} The fight for ‘women’s liberation’ and the introduction of the contraceptive pill heralded a movement towards more rights for women. There were an increasing number of women attending universities. Imported cultures such as the ‘disco’ from France and espresso coffee machines from Italy joined the mini-skirts, the Beatles and ‘pop stars’ in a further expression of the new freedom being demanded by young people with money to spend. According to Marwick some people thought that the stability of life, as they knew it, was breaking apart,\footnote{Marwick, p. 680.} while Levy writes that the whole moral fabric of England changed during the 1960s. Homosexuality was decriminalised between consenting adults, divorce laws were reformed, there was an increased use of drugs, especially LSD, institutions were openly criticised and capital punishment was ended.\footnote{Levy, pp. 242, 320.}

Advances in technology supplied new and exciting means of individual expression and life enjoyment. The affluent youth could indulge in transistor radios, extended and long
play records, modernised telephone systems and jet travel. For housewives there were more sophisticated washing machines, refrigerators and other domestic appliances, giving them the time to pursue careers outside the home. By the end of the 1960s Britain and France had cooperated in manufacturing the first supersonic jet airliner, the Concorde, and Telstar provided a transatlantic connection for television. So, as Lloyd says, ‘things were not too bad in England’. True, not all aspects of the home country’s society and economy were doing well, especially in the north of England where some factories were introducing automation reducing the availability of employment to the manual worker. The differences between the affluent south and the industrialised north were such that Levy says the journey between Liverpool and London was a ‘trip between two worlds’.

But was this reason enough to leave? What were the incentives offered to bring migrants from the British welfare state to a country where medical treatment had to be paid for and where there was less social security? In the 1960s over one million British migrants flooded to Australia. They left a Europe threatened by the Cold-War hostilities between Russia and the western alliance. But they found that in Australia young men were being conscripted by ballot to fight in Vietnam as Australia moved her allegiance from the British Empire to a reliance on the United States.

**Australia in the 1960s**

Australian social and economic conditions also changed rapidly during the decade of the 1960s, but perhaps not as quickly as in the United States, Britain and Europe. According to Gerster the 1960s in Australia was an ‘age of cults and fads’. In the early 1960s in Australia the sexual revolution was waiting to happen. The contraceptive pill may have been available,

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40 Marwick, p. 17; Fraser, p. 744.
41 Lloyd, p. 390.
42 Levy, p. 64.
but there was difficulty in finding doctors willing to prescribe it.\(^{44}\) Addictive drug use was not widespread; some say it was introduced to Australia in the late 1960s by the American troops on leave in Sydney from the Vietnam War.\(^{45}\) The conservative establishment of Australia in 1961 saw bikini clad girls being ordered from Sydney beaches for being improperly dressed.\(^{46}\) This attitude was perhaps epitomised by the scandal that arose when an English model, Jean Shrimpton, appeared at the Flemington racetrack on Derby Day in 1965 wearing a sleeveless mini-dress which was four inches above the knee—and no stockings or gloves! Society was scandalised. Lady Nathan remarked, ‘We do know so much better . . . we all dress correctly’.\(^{47}\) In 1965 literature was still censored, books were seized and booksellers prosecuted for stocking copies of The Trial of Lady Chatterley.\(^{48}\) In 1969 actors in the stage-play Hair were arrested and convicted for using obscene language.\(^{49}\) There was no Australia-wide daily newspaper until the mid-1960s and all world news came to Australia from British sources. Television had been introduced in the 1950s; still it was often difficult to receive the transmissions in outlying country areas. Drive-ins were the most popular form of cinema for families and young people who owned a car. Mechanisation had reduced the need for agricultural labour and there was a movement of people from rural to metropolitan areas. There was high unemployment in 1960 and 1961 but the situation soon improved. Living standards also improved, people began to build larger houses and cigarette smoking was regarded as one of the social graces.\(^{50}\)

The Liberal Party was in power, and although there was a sense of stability there was also a fear of communism. The ‘domino theory’ forecasted the fall of Asian nations to

\(^{44}\) Roger McDonald, Barry Humphries Flashbacks, Harper & Collins, Sydney, 1999, p. 56.
\(^{46}\) James Cockington, Mondo Weirdo: Australia in the sixties, Mandarin, Port Melbourne, 1992, p. 56.
\(^{48}\) Don Scott, Lindsay Dan, Australia in the Twentieth Century, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 137.
\(^{49}\) Scott and Dan, p. 140.
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Communist China and the subsequent invasion of Australia. Australians were also nervous of the growth in armed forces in Indonesia. For much of the 1960s Australia joined the United States to fight communism in Vietnam. Towards the end of the decade public resentment had built up against what some considered to be an unjust war and also against conscription by lottery as the means of selecting men to fight in that war. Peace rallies and student activism made this feeling known and there was public action by other groups such as the Women’s Liberation Movement.\

Activists also lobbied for improvements to political and other circumstances for Aboriginal people. The White Australia Policy was increasingly challenged as its supporters left politics. This was combined with pressure from the United Nations and the influence of the civil rights campaign in the United States. Bob Hawke, later to be the prime minister of Australia, suggested that Britain’s involvement with the Common Market forced Australia to trade with its Asian neighbours and break down the White Australia Policy. He says it was important to recognise that Asians were ‘worth equally with people from Europe to become citizens of this country’.

Sexism in Australia

A major area of concern shared by many of the female participants in my study was the low status of women they encountered in Australia. In the 1960s Britain, Europe and the United States witnessed the rise in demands for greater respect of women in the workforce and in the home. Australia was still a patriarchal society as had existed in other western countries in the nineteenth century, and the continuance of this attitude can be partially explained by the ideal of ‘mateship’ which, according to Dixson, involves ‘powerful, sublimated homosexuality and is deeply antipathetic to women’. Mateship, according to Clark, is a peculiarly Australian sentiment reserved for the ‘native born’ men which was founded in the early colonial period.

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52 Gerster and Bassett, pp. 61–66.
when men far out-numbered women. Some form of dependable relationship was necessary in the harsh conditions that characterised Australia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This male bonding was partly responsible for the White Australia Policy and coloured the Australian male’s attitude towards women.\textsuperscript{55} Some aspects of this trend were reversed in the twentieth century, for example Australia was the second country in the world, after New Zealand, to give the vote to women. This right to vote was not granted as a national policy but by individual states over the period 1894 to 1909. Western Australian women gained the right in 1899. However, in other respects patriarchy remained firmly entrenched. Sims thinks the social standing of women in Australia ‘the ‘lowest in Western Democracy’\textsuperscript{56} In the 1960s Australian women were expected to keep their place in Australian society as mothers and wives, and it was difficult for them to find a career in male-dominated professions or to take up places at universities. Burgmann says it was only in the late 1960s that women were given a more general education rather than being trained as housewives and mothers.\textsuperscript{57} Crawford goes further by suggesting ‘maternal citizenship was the fundamental aspect of women’s identity’.\textsuperscript{58} They were expected to be dependent on the menfolk: father or husband. Although the first women’s liberation meeting was held in Sydney in 1969, until 1972 women were obliged to resign from the Australian public service on marriage.\textsuperscript{59} They were certainly not expected to work when they were pregnant. It was considered very modern when in 1966, the Reserve Bank allowed married women to take maternity leave—with pay!\textsuperscript{60} Migrant women found it strange at social events when the men always gathered (usually near the keg) at the opposite end of the room to the women. Females who joined the men were looked on

\textsuperscript{55} Manning Clark, \textit{A Short History of Australia}, (1963), 2\textsuperscript{nd} rev. edn, New American Library, New York, 1980, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{57} Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), \textit{Constructing a Culture: A people’s history of Australia since 1788}, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Fitzroy, 1988, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{59} Eveline, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{60} Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{A Shorter History of Australia}, p. 216.
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as abnormal.\textsuperscript{61} Women were not welcome in the male bastions that were the hotels; their place was outside with the children.\textsuperscript{62} ‘Quests’ such as the ‘Australian Beach Girl’ were popular among young women. For the married woman there was the ‘Housewife of the Year’ competition. These ‘quests’ promoted the ideal woman as being models of what men should expect in their wives.\textsuperscript{63}

In Australia in the 1960s female virginity before marriage and fidelity within it were still cultural norms. By the 1970s there had been an about face in attitudes to sexual mores, especially following the introduction and acceptance of the contraceptive pill and the legalisation of abortion.\textsuperscript{64} What I found surprising was that in all the material I read on feminism in Australia none of the authors spoke of the possible influence of the post-war female migrants on the improvement in the status of women in Australia. Perhaps this could be an area for further research.

\textit{The economy}

The booming economy, especially in Western Australia, was largely a result of the discovery and development of Australian mineral resources and the money the United States was pouring into Asian countries which, in turn, opened up those markets to Australia.\textsuperscript{65} Gold had always been a valuable Australian export, but in the 1960s other minerals also became valuable commodities. Uranium was found in Queensland and oil and gas exploration in the north-west of Western Australia produced export levels of these resources. Large deposits of iron ore were discovered in the Pilbara, bauxite in the Darling Ranges and nickel at Kambalda. Nickel and bauxite were processed and exported from Kwinana, south of Perth. By the early 1970s mineral exports were Australia’s major source of income.\textsuperscript{66} Overseas

\textsuperscript{62} McDonald, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{63} McDonald, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{64} Cohen, pp. 52, 83; McDonald, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{66} Blainey, \textit{Shorter History}, p. 204.
investors, especially American companies, were involved in the development of these industries; so consequently a lot of the profits were sent overseas.\(^{67}\) Roberts writes that at the time of this expansion Western Australia accepted twice as many migrants as other states.\(^{68}\) However, my research into the passenger lists of the *Castel Felice*\(^{69}\) shows that a minority of its passengers disembarked at Fremantle. At the same time that Western Australia needed more workers to develop its expanding industries during the 1960s, economic conditions improved to such an extent in Europe that it became more and more difficult to attract British or Western European migrants. As a consequence assisted immigration schemes were signed between Australia and Italy, Turkey and other Mediterranean countries.\(^{70}\)

Australians had always regarded themselves as British subjects, with loyalty to the British Commonwealth, as formerly to the Empire, but there had been a movement towards independence in Australia even before the need to call on the United States during the Second World War. In 1948 the *Nationality and Citizenship Act* created the new legal status of ‘Australian citizenship’. In 1949 the words ‘British Subject’ were replaced by ‘Australian Subject’ on the front of Australian passports.\(^{71}\) However in the census of the time Australians were still required to describe themselves as British subjects and it was not until 1984, under the *Australian Citizenship Amendment Act*, that the dual status of Australian citizen and British subject was finally ended. The recognition of the need to control access to Australia was recognised in 1958 by the *Migration Act* which replaced the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901*. Differences included the deletion of the dictation test and the control of entry and departure of non-citizens, including the

\(^{67}\) Blainey, *Shorter History*, p. 207.
\(^{68}\) Hew Roberts (ed.), *Australia’s Immigration Policy*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1972, p. vii.
\(^{69}\) Australian Government, National Archives, *Incoming passenger list Castel Felice arrived Fremantle 19/1/1966*, K259/4
right of deportation. Later amendments to the White Australia Policy led to changes in the eligibility to be an Australian citizen, but it was not until 1984 that British subjects who were not Australian citizens were denied the right to an Australian Passport.

Charlie Fox writes that the 1960s was one of the most important decades in Australian history. Gerster says ‘there was a “cargo-cult appetite for all things American to such an extent that many Australians were confused about where their loyalties should be’. The rapidly changing scenario in Western Australia during the decade covered by this study meant that the incoming migrants were faced with not only political changes but also cultural changes as Australia moved towards multiculturalism. The conservatism of the long serving Liberal government was challenged by the social changes being introduced by an increasingly influential socialist movement. The White Australia Policy crumbled, and social and environmental movements became active. It was into these shifting sands that the migrants of this study came to settle.

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73 Chesterman, p. 37.
74 Charlie Fox, ‘The Times They Were A-changing: The sixties was a time of transformation for Australia as a culture of slow moving, unified, Anglo-centrism became one of diversity and shifting boundaries’, *West Australian*, 12 August 2006, p.62.
75 Gerster and Bassett, p. 33.
CHAPTER ONE

Migration and the Building of the Nation

The migration story is as old as time. Steve Olsen asserts that we are all each other’s brothers and that ‘all 6 billion people on the planet descended from a single ancestor’. Migration is a fact of humanity. The current emigrations from developing nations and the influx into Australia of Asian and African peoples is similar to the situation in Europe during the Industrial Revolutions when more than 17 million people left Europe for North America. The British immigrants who forged new worlds in the Americas and Australia were already a multinational race descended from Picts and Celts, Romans and Jutes, Saxons and Vikings, Normans and colonials, with some French and Russian émigrés added to the mix. They found in Australia inhabitants who were also descendents of a range of peoples, a complex mix of nations. They called these people ‘Aborigines’, though that was not a name used by these indigenous people themselves. When the first fleet landed in New South Wales in 1788 it has been estimated that there were about 275,000 Aborigines in Australia. They were divided into approximately 680 tribes, each of which occupied a separate territory and spoke a different dialect. Modern Australia has been populated by more than 70 different ethnic groups, with different languages and cultures.

3 Rebecca Fraser, A People’s History of Britain, Chatto & Windus, London, 2003, p. 4.
5 F. D. McCarthy, Australian Aboriginal Culture, Brochure produced for the Australian Aboriginal Culture Exhibition, NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1957, (unpaginated).
6 Fraser, p. 4.
The Aborigines

If Australia is a ‘nation of migrants’ then, as Terrill suggests, the Aborigines were the first boat people to land on its shores. According to some historians the indigenous population had been in Australia for over 40,000 years at the time of British colonisation. The Aborigines were nomadic for the most part and had no need to develop houses and towns, roads or a civic infrastructure. The origin of our indigenous people is a matter of speculation. There have been diverse claims that their ancestors came from the hill tribes of southern India, from Sri Lanka or from Malaysia. Archaeological research has shown the presence of people similar to the Aborigines in Celebes, New Guinea and Java. The peoples of Tasmania, however, are thought to have come from other areas, possibly Melanesia. Hence the Aborigines are descended from waves of people who came across the ancient land bridge or by sea over the centuries and gradually spread across the continent. Their environment was altered by natural forces and by such practices as firestick farming, all of which led to changes in the landscape: forests shrank in size, the seas rose and Tasmania became separated from the mainland.

Geoffrey Blainey writes in his seminal book, *Triumph of the Nomads*, that the Aborigines had a good lifestyle and a plentiful diet which consisted mainly of vegetables, roots, fruit and seeds. They lived in family groups as hunter gatherers, moving from place to place according to the season and the availability of food. The population growth of indigenous Australians was contained by such natural conditions as plague, wars, drought,

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9 Cigler, pp. 9–11.
floods, and the occasional volcanic eruption.\textsuperscript{12} The Aborigines developed a calendar based on the constellations, the flowering of vegetation and the migration of birds. Food was shared. Their appearance of poverty was deceptive. Though the British colonisers regarded the Aborigines as uncivilised because they did not weave cloth, make pottery or employ beasts of burden, their simple lifestyle allowed the Aborigines to inhabit all parts of this inhospitable continent.\textsuperscript{13} Despite their long history of occupation and land use the British government ignored Australia’s indigenous peoples’ ownership of the land—a policy which was only remedied by the High Court in the 1992 Mabo decision.\textsuperscript{14}

**Early visitors**

The British were not the first non-Aboriginal people to visit Australia. There is evidence that Phoenician/Egyptian ships landed in Australia as early as 2,700 BC,\textsuperscript{15} while it is has been suggested that there were Chinese visits from around 2,500 BC.\textsuperscript{16} Much later there were visits from the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Danes and French, as well as traders from Japan, Indonesia and Macassar. In 1616 the Dutchman, Dirk Hartog, landed near Shark Bay in Western Australia and other Dutch ships are recorded as having landed on Australia’s west coast, including the ill-fated *Batavia*. Abel Tasman, who claimed Van Dieman’s Land (Tasmania) for the Dutch also visited the north-west of Western Australia, giving it the name New Holland. The first recorded visit to these shores by an Englishman was in 1688 by William Dampier on the *Cygnet*.\textsuperscript{17} French explorers were very active in the charting of Western Australia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; many Australian landmarks still have French names evidencing this.

\textsuperscript{15} Cigler, p. 7
\textsuperscript{17} *Western Australian Yearbook*, no. 6, 1967, p. 1.
British settlement

There is argument as to why Australia was chosen as a place of settlement by the British in the 1780s. The most accepted reason is that there was need for a penal settlement to ease the overcrowded conditions of British prisons after the American War of Independence meant that Britain could no longer despatch its unwanted criminals to the American colonies. Others, such as Blainey, argue that a port of call was necessary to preserve British naval strength in the Pacific region and the convicts provided an affordable workforce to make this happen.\(^{18}\) He and others also point to Australia’s rich resource of raw materials required by ships, such as flax for ropes and sails, and tall timbers for masts, as the incentive to form a settlement in Australia.\(^{19}\) Few free migrants were keen to make the long, hazardous journey to the antipodes at first. The transportation of convicts was therefore a forced immigration of people necessary to populate the new colony as a naval base and trading outpost.\(^{20}\)

Some 100,000 British convicts, including about 800 women, arrived in eastern Australia between 1788 and 1852. Though most were tried and sentenced in England it is also true that many came from other parts of the British Empire or Europe. Stasiuk says the convicts included ‘Irish, Italians, Spaniards, Polish, Sri Lankans and African Americans’.\(^{21}\) They also included court martialled soldiers and seamen from all parts of the world, as well as Irish political prisoners.\(^{22}\)

Britain was already a multicultural collection of peoples when the first convicts were sent to Australia in the eighteenth century. In the distinct countries of England, Scotland and Wales as well as Ireland, different cultures, social and economic conditions flourished. There were readily identifiable differences in social status, religion, dialect, class and land


\(^{20}\) Wilson, p. 27.

\(^{21}\) Alan Atkinson, ‘English Convicts’, in Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People*, p. 278; G. Stasiuk, ‘... Till the day we die: Multiculturalism from an indigenous perspective’, in Wilding and Tilbury (eds), *A Changing People: Diverse contributions to the State of Western Australia*, p. 50.

ownership. Indeed it was not until the passing of the Education Act (UK) of 1870 that the language of the British Isles was standardised.\textsuperscript{23} Religion was one of the most important social divisions when the British colonised Australia. The majority of Irish migrants were Catholics which produced some tension with the Protestant ascendancy. The distinctiveness of the Irish—and particularly the Irish-Catholic—experience in Australia was evident up until at least the mid-twentieth century, and to some extent beyond.\textsuperscript{24} Jupp argues that these migrant peoples, although they may have had difficulty in understanding each others’ dialects, nevertheless had much more in common in Australia than they did in Britain because they were coping together in a land which was alien to all of them.\textsuperscript{25}

The colonisation of New South Wales in 1788 began a process which ultimately saw the British take possession of the whole of the Australian continent. The convicts were followed in the nineteenth century by free settlers and assisted passengers from Britain and various other countries to swell the labour force. Britain was the preferred source of migrants—but Australia was at a disadvantage in this respect because of the distance separating the two countries. Most prospective British emigrants preferred to go to the United States or Canada because the fare was cheaper and the distance less.\textsuperscript{26} Various schemes had to be put in place to encourage migrants to come to the other side of the world. Jupp proposes that assisted migrants came because they were paid to do so and Blainey says it was Edward Gibbon Wakefield who suggested that the immigration of poor British labourers and farm workers could be financed by the sale of government land in Australia.\textsuperscript{27} Many assisted migrants, who came to work on established holdings, moved off and took up their own land or left for other parts of Australia.


\textsuperscript{25} James Jupp (ed), \textit{The Australian People: An encyclopaedia of the nation, its peoples and their origins}, Angus & Robertson, Melbourne, 1988, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{26} Derry, p. 136.

The gender imbalance in colonial Australia remained acute. By 1833 men outnumbered women three to one and females, including Aborigines, were exploited and deemed to be dependent on the protection of white men. Assisted passages were offered to women as a means to address the gender imbalance. At first those targeted were poor women from Ireland in the hope they would swell the colonial work force. Later, under the influence of Caroline Chisholm, genteel English women were encouraged to migrate on assisted passages. Chisholm also started a family colonisation program in an attempt to address the problem of the overwhelming population of single men. White says that Australia was a ‘dustbin of the unwanted and the unsuccessful’. The male population again increased in the second half of the nineteenth century when thousands of prospective miners rushed to Australia in the hunt for gold.

**Western Australia in the early years**

The British Government was not initially interested in founding a penal colony in Western Australia. But there was concern raised when the French proposed to establish a convict settlement in the south west of Western Australia. In response the brig Amity was sent to establish a colony around Albany in 1826. It was abandoned after only 5 years. The first permanent British settlement of Western Australia commenced in 1829 along the Swan River. Reports of good soil, safe anchorage and a navigable river brought free settlers to its shores in 1829, led by the ambitious James Stirling and his supporters. The lure was the picture painted of the ‘land of promise’. These settlers were people with money looking for somewhere to make an investment. Wealthy settlers brought capital, seeds, tools, furniture and livestock as

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33 White, p. 47.
well as employees.\textsuperscript{34} Thomas Peel had a grandiose scheme to settle 100,000 persons in the colony, over a period of four years, in return for a government land grant of four million acres.\textsuperscript{35} If the settlement in Botany Bay was established to create a British outpost in the Pacific, the Swan River Colony was valued as the British outpost on the western side of the continent, because of its proximity to existing trade routes in Asia.\textsuperscript{36} The new Western Australian community was permeated by British values for the next century or more and there were numbers of schemes to attract British migrants as free or assisted settlers in that time. At first the colony was faced with stunted growth, owing to a small population and the enduring attraction of the eastern colonies to prospective migrants and settled Western Australians.\textsuperscript{37} The distance between the new colony and Britain (and New South Wales) even then plagued the settlers.\textsuperscript{38}

When the development of the colony continued to falter it was agreed to accept convict labour, thereby increasing productivity and assisting in the development of civic infrastructure. Western Australia used convicts for this purpose from 1850 to 1868. The colonists stipulated that the convicts they received should be males under 45 years of age, and should include juvenile offenders who could be recruited as apprentices. Not all the convicts were common criminals. On the last convict ship to Western Australia in 1868, the Hougoumont, there were 62 political prisoners, Irish Fenians, from a failed 1867 uprising in Ireland in support of an Irish Republic. The Fenians were an Irish-American revolutionary secret society founded in 1858 and the group achieved fame of a sort when some of their number escaped from Western Australia on the Catalpa in 1875\textsuperscript{39}.

The influx of male convicts again increased the imbalance of the sexes in the colony

\textsuperscript{34} Jupp, \textit{The Australian People}, pp. 29-30.
\textsuperscript{36} Blainey, \textit{Tyranny of Distance}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{37} Manning Clark, \textit{A Short History of Australia}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} rev. edn, New American Library, New York, 1980, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{38} Blainey, \textit{Tyranny of Distance}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{39} Crowley F.K., \textit{A Short History of Western Australia}, (1959), Macmillan, Melbourne, 1961, p. 24.
so the British government agreed to subsidise an equal number of free settlers including some women and girls from workhouses. Many of the immigrant women sent to Western Australia on the so called ‘bride ships’ were of Irish descent. Unlike the sons of gentry and middle class Irish, who had come to take up land, these girls were poor and often barefoot. They were sent as servants and although mainly of the Catholic faith they were married indiscriminately, it would seem, to Protestant men. The values of the Swan River Colony with respect to women reflected that of the situation in Britain. The place of women was considered to be in the home, to support their menfolk, bear children and also in many cases to help clear and work the land. According to White, prospective migrants from the United Kingdom in the 1800s were ‘assured of wealth and happiness in a garden of Eden’; though this promise reflected little of the reality they encountered.

The early settlers that arrived in Australia were soon followed by other people who saw the prospect of advancement in the newly developing country. Prospective settlers had to provide their own provisions for the voyage, some food, their own bedding and a water jug. The long voyage (from 3 to 6 months) meant the food they had brought with them often went bad before the voyage was completed. They then had to exist on ship’s biscuit, salted meat and dried fish. Passages to Australia improved over the nineteenth century with the achievements in the steam technology and the opening of the Suez Canal. In October 1897 the new harbour Fremantle was opened, steam ships were able to run to strict schedules, some carrying refrigerated cargo, and this enabled a revolution in the state’s overseas trade.

41 Jean Chetkovich, “‘There would seem to be a wonderful freedom out here’: The Irish in Western Australia’, in Wilding and Tilbury, *A Changing People: Diverse contributions to the State of Western Australia*, pp. 222–235.
43 White, pp. 34–35.
Asian labour

Australia changed further in the mid-nineteenth century with the gold rushes and the expansion of the pastoral regions: cities grew and investment increased.\textsuperscript{46} Despite the assisted passages offered to British migrants there was never enough labour to work the developing land. Although schemes to encourage permanent settlers were in place, such as a grant of land for those staying more than two years, most newcomers still drifted east. Shiploads of Chinese men were brought from Hong Kong as labourers or to act as domestic servants. In Queensland Indians and Pacific Islanders were imported to work in the sugar and cotton industries. The influx of these non-white races was not encouraged though they remained an important part of the colonial workforce. In the north of Western Australia, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese and Malays became indentured workers in the pearling industry. They were not required to leave the country when the indenture was complete. Some Chinese became market gardeners to supply the metropolitan region or worked as cooks on pastoral stations. Soon antagonism grew; most of the former Australian colonies had banned immigration from Asia by the 1870s.\textsuperscript{47} Asian immigration to Western Australia was severely restricted when the \textit{Chinese Immigration Restriction Act} of 1889 came in to force.\textsuperscript{48}

Settlers from interstate and overseas were attracted to Western Australia after the major discoveries of gold in the 1890’s. The colony’s economic and social fortunes were soon on the mend. Conditions improved for workers too, as they began to organise trade unions. With the formation of the Australian Labour Party (ALP) workplace bargaining power increased.\textsuperscript{49} While settlers from the east and overseas were fully accepted, those who were from Asia were less welcome than ever before.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{46} Wilson, pp. 90–106.
\textsuperscript{47} Jupp, \textit{Immigration}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, p.70.
\textsuperscript{48} Christine Choo, ‘Chinese-Indigenous Australian Connection in Regional Western Australia’, in Wilding and Tilbury, \textit{A Changing People: Diverse contributions to the State of Western Australia}, pp. 110–112.
\textsuperscript{49} Blainey, \textit{The Tyranny of Distance}, pp. 169, 328.
\textsuperscript{50} Appleyard and Baldassar, p. 41.
Migration and the Building of the Nation

Federation

The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900, was an act of the British parliament which came into force in Australia on 1 January 1901. Based on American federalism and the British parliamentary system the constitution did not give Australia independence as a nation in its own right. Indeed, Australian independence was not even on the agenda.\(^{51}\) Members of the Australian Parliament came from all levels of society and voting in parliamentary elections was soon compulsory for those who had the right to vote. Women first gained the right to vote in South Australia in 1887 and in Western Australia in 1899. It was not until after federation however, that they gained the vote in other states, the last being Victoria in 1909.\(^{52}\) But Dixson says that even after women won the right to vote they were ‘ignored in any serious discussion of national identity’\(^{53}\). Responsibility for Australia’s foreign affairs remained with the British colonial office. The governor general acted to protect the interests of the British government in Australia.\(^{54}\) The Australian monetary system was based on British currency and Britain retained the right to annul any Australian law within one year of it being proclaimed.\(^{55}\) While Australians were claiming their uniqueness they were still noted for their ‘Britishness’.\(^{56}\) This was understandable because most white Australians were recent migrants from the British Isles or had British ancestry.

Individual Australian colonies each had in place laws restricting Asian immigration but at federation the responsibility for immigration control fell to the federal government. The new nation’s first piece of legislation was the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 which formed the basis of the White Australia Policy. There were no explicit barriers on race or

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\(^{52}\) Clark, p. 181.
\(^{56}\) Clark, p. 190.
colour in this Act, because Australia was under pressure from Britain whose empire was composed of mainly coloured nations. But a dictation test was introduced under the Act requiring prospective immigrants to pass a short dictation test in any European language (though from 1905 this was changed to any language, to placate Japan). 57 This exclusionist immigration policy reflected the attitude which many white, western nations of the early twentieth century practiced, as Marilyn Lake recently explored. 58 In 1895 John W. Burgess, founder of the School of Political Science at the University of Columbia, had already put forward the ideal of homogeneity and, more specifically Teutonic racial homogeneity, as being fundamental to the American state. 59 The ideal of a ‘pure’ race is still in existence in Japan today according to Chris Burgess who says:

Because it is no longer tenable to maintain (national) identities through processes of overt exclusion, the maintenance of Japanese identity often manifests itself in rather sophisticated forms. 60

The fear of Asian invasion by infiltration and its perceived negative influence on the ‘pure white’ culture of Australia was increased when an outbreak of the Bubonic plague, raging through the eastern states of Australia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, was blamed on the Chinese. The Quarantine Act of 1908 was to meet the threat of invasion by disease and infestation which was blamed on the Chinese and the ‘Queen’s Nigger Empire’. 61 This and the Immigration Restriction Act were intended to keep Australia ‘pure, healthy and white’. 62 They brought the power of law to the policy of keeping Australia a white nation, if necessary by ‘restriction, deportation and discrimination’. 63 The White Australia Policy gave

58 Marilyn Lake, ‘Whiteman’s Country: Locating Australia within the world’, in Deborah Gare and David Ritter (eds), Making Australian History: Perspectives since 1788, Thomson Learning, Melbourne, 2007, in press.
62 Souter, p. 47.
63 Clark, pp. 197–198.
preference to British immigrants and racial discrimination was used covertly to exclude many non-Europeans until the 1970s.\textsuperscript{64} According to Brauer the settlement of Australia was based on the ‘AWESOME (Assist White English Speakers Other Migrants Exclude) principle’.\textsuperscript{65} Aborigines were victims of this same discrimination after federation, politically, legally, economically and socially excluded from full citizenship for many decades.\textsuperscript{66}

Dread of the ‘yellow peril’—of invasion from the north by Asia—dogged Australia for much of the nineteenth century. When Britain entered into an alliance with Japan during the Sino-Russian War in the early 1900s and the Japanese fleet became active in the Pacific, these fears increased. Australia formed an early alliance with the United States and petitioned Britain for its own navy when the protection of the British fleet seemed to be diminishing.\textsuperscript{67} Macintyre says the Australian nation was ‘shaped by the fear of invasion and the concern for the purity of the race’.\textsuperscript{68} But from 1905 there was strong support to allow the immigration of Anglo Saxons, including Scandinavians,\textsuperscript{69} and from 1901 to 1914 many Italians, Greeks, Jews and other European peoples also came to Australia.\textsuperscript{70} The estimated number of British migrants during the period from 1903 to 1914 exceeded 55,000. Bolton suggests many were under the misapprehension that they would become landowners when Australia only wanted labourers.\textsuperscript{71} This influx of British migrants helped create an anti-British feeling among Australians who feared their conditions of employment and standards of living would deteriorate because of the increase in available labour. By 1912 British migrants were no

\textsuperscript{66} Clark, pp. 198–199.
\textsuperscript{67} Souter, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{68} Stuart Machintyre, \textit{A Concise History of Australia}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2004, p. 148.
\textsuperscript{70} Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{Shorter History of Australia}, Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1994, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{71} Geoffrey Bolton, \textit{A fine Country to Starve In}, (1972), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1994, pp. 31-38.
Migration and the Building of the Nation

longer called ‘new chums’ but ‘Pommies’. Despite the attitude to the new arrivals, working men and women were still encouraged to come, and schemes were introduced for child migration. The sponsorship schemes by various institutions to bring numbers of children to Australia were increased in the early twentieth century when similar schemes in Canada declined. The idea was to ‘save’ working class children, who were thought to be deprived and neglected, and to provide a pool of rural and domestic workers. This practice continued into the 1960s and has since been the subject of many claims of abuse and loss of identity.

During the early 1900s responsibility for recruiting migrants lay with the Commonwealth, on advice from state governments as to the numbers and classes of immigrants that were required. Thus Western Australia retained the right to approve specific migrants needed to fill the labour requirements of male agricultural workers and female domestics.

**The Great War**

In 1914 the young Commonwealth demonstrated its loyalty to the motherland and its empire by committing its people to the war in Europe. At the cessation of hostilities in 1918, in an effort to increase international markets for British goods and to alleviate the problem of finding employment for returning servicemen in the United Kingdom, the British government encouraged the emigration of its ex-service men to the Dominions, including Australia. To further this high level of emigration the British government put capital into colonial development projects. Australia was ready to subsidise immigration to increase its population at minimal cost. In 1923 the Western Australian government began a group settlement scheme which granted land to people who would co-operatively develop their land allotment. Monetary incentives to settle on the 6,000 dairy and pig-raising holdings to be established for assisted British migrants were impressive for the time. The Commonwealth

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75 Roe, pp. 21–22.
76 Roe, p. 42.
government loaned $1000 per settler, which was later increased to $1,250, plus $750 towards the cost of land. Over 5,000 soldier settlers were attracted to Western Australia but some had war related disabilities and many lacked farming knowledge. This, added to the poor production levels of the soil, meant the scheme largely failed and much of the land was eventually returned to the state government. Knightley says the soldier settlers were:

Promised land, housing, tools and advice, but when they arrived they found the promised homestead a shed, the tools a pick and shovel, and the land covered in trees.

This wave of migration continued until the late 1920s when complaints by the new settlers of poor land and development problems invoked hostile feelings towards the influx of migrants into a country where employment was increasingly difficult to obtain. There were more schemes for child migration but with the onslaught of the Great Depression there was again an outcry that Pommies were ‘taking Australian jobs’, and there was therefore no assisted British immigration during the period 1929 to 1932. However there was at this time an increase in the numbers of (un-assisted) refugees fleeing from the increasing unrest in Europe coming to Australia. By 1936 there was a renewed interest in population growth. Robert Menzies, then federal Attorney General, believed that new migrants were needed to increase Australia’s population to 20 million. In 1938 a general fare subsidy was introduced in the place of assistance to individuals. There was an agreement between the British and Australian governments to subsidise the passage for relatives and friends nominated by Australian residents and by various organisations. It would appear, as Roe says, that the United Kingdom wanted a high level of emigration to offset the threat to social stability by unemployment and at the same time Australia generally wanted more people.

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77 Western Australian Yearbook, No 6, 1967, pp. 243–244.
78 Knightley, p. 12.
79 Roe, p. 166.
81 Sherington, Australia’s Immigrants, p. 112.
82 Roe, p. 175
83 Roe, p. 35.
The 1923 shack home of Sarah and Bill Grimes in a group settlement scheme in the state’s southwest. Note the flap propped open as a window.  

The Second World War

In 1939 war threatened Europe, and Japan invaded China. When Britain asked for support to fight Germany, Prime Minister Robert Menzies accepted automatically that Australia would support the war effort. Influenced by New Zealand, and assured that Japan could not invade Southeast Asia, Australia sent troops to the Mediterranean region. The ALP actively opposed re-armament and conscription, yet called for willing volunteers to serve anywhere in the world. After a series of debacles Menzies was attacked for ‘slavishly’ following Britain. The ALP assumed power in 1941 and major disputes arose between the Australian political leaders and Britain’s Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Australia was alarmed at signs that Britain regarded the Pacific region as dispensable until victory was achieved in Europe. After the fall of Singapore in February 1942 Australia was left largely defenceless, having so far relied on Britain’s naval base there as its first line of defence. The full extent of the Japanese threat was withheld from the Australian public as Darwin and the north-west of Western Australia were bombed and Japanese submarine attacks occurred in and around Sydney Harbour. Britain’s apparent disregard for Australian security left the Australian

85 Souter, p. 407.
86 Andrews, p. 90–94.
87 Knightley, pp. 180,189–204.
people feeling betrayed; the Australian government had little choice but to turn to the United States for military support. The Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, distrusted Churchill’s schemes and promises, while others appeared unaware that Britain was no longer a powerful naval force, unable to defend Australia. When the United States sent General Douglas Macarthur to set up headquarters in Darwin in 1942 he criticised Britain for not returning the assistance that Australia had rendered to them and demanded that the experienced Australian troops be recalled from the Middle East. After the Japanese had invaded New Guinea, the decision was made to fight them in the Pacific rather than try to defend the Australian mainland. Yet the assistance of the United States was not without its problems. For example the arrival of African-American troops in Australia was perceived by some to be contrary to Australia’s White Australia Policy and gave rise to much disquiet. Some Australians complained that the government was replacing the ‘Mother Country’ with ‘Uncle Sam’.

There was a new awareness of Australian national identity after the Second World War and, if temporarily, a new independence in its foreign policy. The Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, was not in favour of sending troops to Malaysia to support Britain in what he thought was a fight for independence rather than a communist takeover. However, when the Liberal Party coalition came to power in 1949, Menzies sought to establish Australia’s international role through the traditional ties with Britain, and Australia became involved in the conflict in Malaya. There was pressure to supply Britain with whatever support was needed to contain the communist insurgents. This support was recognised by the United States as part of the western alliance against communism. The ‘domino theory’, which predicted the successive collapse of the Southeast Asian nations to communism, and

90 Souter, p. 390.
92 Lowe, p. 17.
93 Knightley, pp. 87–97.
the fear that Australia would be forced to defend itself, caused Menzies to introduce compulsory military training in 1950.\textsuperscript{94} Despite the success of Australia’s new wartime alliance with the United States, Australia’s loyalty to Britain was confirmed when Menzies was sent to Egypt as a negotiator in the ‘Suez Crisis’ of 1956. However, the cracks in the imperial British-Australian relationships that had been developing over a number of years were becoming more visible.\textsuperscript{95}

Post-war migration

Recognition of Australia’s vulnerability to invasion while the population was so small had been the impetus to the post-war ALP government’s new migration slogan ‘populate or perish’. Although immigration was often seen as a means to provide for the defence of Australia, Rickard says the real reason for increased post-war immigration was the government’s commitment to economic growth.\textsuperscript{96} The early intention that the thousands of new Australians would come from Britain was not realised. The lack of suitable shipping and the need for the United Kingdom to rebuild its own country after the ravages of war meant that it was difficult to fill the desired migration quotas. In Britain there was a dichotomy of opinion on the subject of migration. Lord Bernard Law Montgomery, a former British Field Marshall famous for the action during the Second World War at El Alamein, said Britain could not support the British population after the war; and that to give the soldiers homes and work, as had been promised, emigration was the answer. Yet Winston Churchill, ever the pessimist, said migrants were simply ‘leaving the sinking ship’.\textsuperscript{97} To satisfy the need for an increased population refugees and displaced persons from Europe were brought into Australia from the late 1940s and in the 1950s.

The difficult conditions in Britain in the immediate post-war years, where food

\textsuperscript{95} Lowe, p. 112.
rationing and shortages of housing and other materials persisted into the 1950s, encouraged the emigration by British people to Australia which seemed to promise an abundance of food and a better, sunny lifestyle. The War Service Land Settlement Scheme a cooperative venture between the Commonwealth and Western Australia saw monies being made available as loans to benefit those men who had served in the Second World War, and later in Korea and Malaya. It would seem more thought went into this scheme than into previous plans to develop the Western Australian agricultural areas because not only was guidance and technical advice made available through the Department of Agriculture, but also the land was provided cleared and fenced, and an assessment was taken of the applicant and the suitability of the land for the proposed development. Initially allotments of land were held on perpetual lease, but in 1951 the settlers were allowed to purchase land after they had occupied it for more than ten years.

By the 1960s the situation in Britain and Europe had vastly improved. Housing and employment were more readily available and rationing had ended. The ‘swinging 60s’ had arrived and for some it was a ‘golden age’. The culture was dominated by young people with money to spend. It was a time of Hippies, ‘flower power’, recreational drugs, rock and roll, and sexual liberation. The British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, told the British people they had ‘never had it so good’. While most of England enjoyed the good times, in the industrial north there remained a fear of the return of unemployment. Much of the shipbuilding industry was in decline as Japan became the world leader in that field. The wool and cotton industries were gradually being replaced by synthetic materials and coal mines were becoming mechanised. The population began to drift south, especially younger

99 War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act of 1945 (Commonwealth); War Service Settlement Agreement Act of 1945 (Western Australia).
100 Western Australian Yearbook, no. 6, 1967, pp. 244–245.
103 Derry, p. 225.
people who were attracted by employment opportunities and the bright lights of London.  

For a short time in 1961, as deflationary measures and unemployment increased, ‘people thought they were entitled to something better’.  

   By this time it was also the height of the Cold-War. Europeans were intensely afraid of an attack by the Soviet Union and a war involving atomic bombs. In the early 1960s pamphlets were circulated in Britain with information on the precautions necessary to prepare for a nuclear attack. In Britain Neville Shute’s book, *On the Beach*, was popular literature. It told of the extermination of the human race as the outcome of nuclear warfare, with Australia being the last place where people survived. I saw films in British cinemas depicting the effects of nuclear war, and the end of civilisation as we know it, such as an adaptation of Shute’s novel, and the famous Stanley Kubrick 1964 classic, *Dr Strangelove: Or how I came to love the bomb*. In 1961 the Berlin Wall was built and the United States and the Soviet Union were seen to be on the brink of a real war when an American reconnaissance plane was shot down over the Soviet Union. The Soviets were soon reported to be erecting atomic missile stations in Cuba. The American President, J. F. Kennedy, was said to have won a war of nerves in the crisis which followed, and the Soviets were forced to take back their missiles to the Soviet Union. In the light of such frightening brinkmanship many believed a third world war was almost inevitable.  

   It was in this climate of uncertainty that many of my respondents left Britain. Whatever their fears or motivation, my respondents turned their back on the social security and increasing affluence of the United Kingdom to come to a country which they thought was a safer, healthier place to bring up their children.  

**Bringing in the migrants**  

In 1947 in an effort to increase the number of British migrants coming to Australia, Arthur Calwell, the then Australian immigration minister, introduced an assisted migration scheme

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105 Lloyd, p. 378.  
106 Marwick, p. 247.
offering passage to British citizens at reduced rates. The assisted fare was £10 for adults over

19 years, travellers between the ages of 14 and 19 years travelled for £5 and younger children travelled free. These migrants were the ‘Ten Pound Poms’. Assisted passages agreements were also signed at the same time with countries such as Malta and the Netherlands.\(^{108}\)

Appleyard points out that the apparent cost to Australia of an assisted passage was recouped within the first year by the tax on migrant wages.\(^{109}\) According to Jupp ‘the assisted passage


\(^{109}\) Appleyard, Ray and Segal, p. 149.
scheme was at its zenith in the 1960s’. During that period, of the 676,000 British migrants who came to Western Australia, 79.4% were assisted. They were solicited by advertisements in the media, interviewed, given medical checks and offered a passage to Australia. Some came because they were sponsored by organisations or friends and relatives, but Murphy put forward the theory that selection according to the skills needed in Australia was the preferred way to obtain migrants because nominations put forward by friends or relatives were less specific in the choice of occupation. Whatever motivated the migrants to leave the United Kingdom they brought to Australia many skills, but they also brought with them expectations that their life in Australia would be better than the life they were leading in Britain. The social, political and economic changes of the 1960s both in Britain and in Australia, encouraged a cheerful optimism among the migrants, but in many cases, they found Australia was not all that they had expected.

My thesis uses the voices of over 100 British migrants who came to Western Australia in the 1960s to tell a unique story of their decision to leave Britain, the reactions of friends and family and the formalities engaged in before departure. Stories of the journey from home to the ship and the sometimes emotional partings are told in the migrants’ own words, in most cases for the first time. Experiences on the voyage, considered ‘a rite of passage’, were an important part of the respondents’ memories and the section which tells these stories is one of the largest chapters in this thesis. While the arrival in Australia and the settlement period were traumatic for some, others said it was far better than they could have imagined. Although many met with plenty of difficulties initially most of my respondents overcame these and, through struggle, gained success. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson used research conducted by Sussex University in England and La Trobe University

Jupp, The English in Australia, p. 133.
John Jackson, ‘Changing Patterns of migration to Western Australia’, in Ruth Johnson (ed.), Immigrants in Western Australia, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 20.
in Australia to tell experiences of many British Migrants who ‘turned back’ to their homeland.\textsuperscript{114} This thesis also includes personal experiences from the six participants in my study who returned to live permanently in Britain and others whose return was merely a sojourn before they finally settled in Western Australia.

The participants in my study were asked why they decided to migrate to Western Australia. Both Murphy and Stalker state that the primary reason for migration was the idea that the migrants would be ‘better off’ in the country to which they sought access.\textsuperscript{115} However, other authors think more personal reasons affected the decision making.\textsuperscript{116} Zamoyska thinks that for some it was because of friends or relatives extolling the virtues of a new country, for others it was the sun, improved work opportunities or expectations for the future of their children.\textsuperscript{117} Richardson finds in his study that migrants came to Australia of their own free will and that few came from areas of high unemployment. Generally, he says, they had stereotyped ideas about Australia based on information received from the media. He also found immigrants had more outgoing personalities, fewer family ties and were more mobile in their employment and housing. On the down side he put forward the theory that once a decision was made to migrate they resisted any form of negative influence.\textsuperscript{118} Perhaps my participants also overlooked anything that might have been contrary to their views of a better life in the new country. This could help explain the dismay expressed by some of my respondents on the conditions they found on arrival in Australia.

Knightley thinks the Australian Government ‘offered bribes to lure British

\textsuperscript{115}Stalker, p. 20; Murphy, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{116}Betka Zamoyska, \textit{The Ten Pound Fare: Experiences of British people who immigrated to Australia in the 1950s}, Viking, London, 1988, p. xv.
\textsuperscript{117}Zamoyska, p. xix.
\textsuperscript{118}Alan Richardson, \textit{British Immigrants and Australia: A psycho-social study}, Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, pp. 13, 16, 19, 21.
migrants’. Indeed the £10 scheme was a powerful incentive, as one of my respondents said, ‘2 years for £10? Who wouldn’t for an adventure?’.

Promotional publications circulating for migrant information in the 1960s advertised sunny weather in Australia and lauded the continent’s wide open spaces, beaches and its British way of life; but there was little suggestion that wages and employment conditions were better than those in the United Kingdom. Appleyard writes that the typical British migrant believed Australia was always sunny and prosperous with a classless society. But the reality was often different to what had been anticipated. One migrant, Gwen Good, complained that there was ‘inadequate information about Western Australia provided to intending migrants’. It was a common complaint. Yet Jupp argues that though such accusations were often made, and that migration officers may have been over enthusiastic in their efforts to attract migrants, accurate facts and figures were published.

In 1961 and 1962 for example employment statistics and opportunities in Western Australia was an important feature of the films and other informational events presented when W. S. Lonnie led a government sponsored mission to Great Britain to encourage migration to the state. By 1965 four teams had been established in Britain to inform prospective migrants about Western Australia.

It has been difficult to verify statements with regard to the inaccuracy of information featured in government and other migrant publications because so few original copies are still available. Scholars I have spoken to remain unaware of the location or availability of such

119 Knightley, p. 224.
122 Appleyard, Ray and Segal, p. 145.
documents though it would be a valuable field for further research.\textsuperscript{127} Searches in the Battye Library, the State Records Office, the Victorian State Library and Immigration Museum, and the National Archives failed to locate much of this type of material. A further search by staff at the National Archives in Canberra was equally unsuccessful. Some items were still available in the National Library and made available on loan. I did approach the Australian Embassy in London without success, but I have not been able to pursue other possible holdings in Britain.

Individuals’ different expectations for their future in Australia may have influenced what information they obtained, how it was evaluated, and which state they considered most attractive. My respondents said they used many resources to aid in their decision to migrate to Australia including publications provided by Commonwealth and state governments, British and Australian newspapers, travel agents, books, films and the letters from friends and relatives. According to Richardson, who did a survey of people living in Medina, a suburb of Perth, in 1959, 72\% of the immigrants he interviewed had only considered Australia when making their emigration decision and 90\% were looking for more opportunities for themselves and their children.\textsuperscript{128} In my study few respondents had applied to migrate to other countries, except New Zealand, but often their perceptions of life in Australia were inaccurate or unrealistic. Many, as Zamoyska writes, ‘believed what they wanted to believe’.\textsuperscript{129} Among my participants it was rarely the women who made the decision to migrate.\textsuperscript{130} In one response to my survey I was told that although the wife made the decision to come to Australia, she also made the decision to return—the family left just two years and one day after they had arrived here.\textsuperscript{131}

Many of my respondents thought they would find jobs and housing as soon as they

\textsuperscript{127} ‘Invisible Migrants?: Post-war British Immigration to Australia’, One day symposium held at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 1 July 2005.
\textsuperscript{128} Richardson, ‘British Immigrants in Western Australia’, pp. 7, 13.
\textsuperscript{129} Zamoyska, p. xx.
\textsuperscript{130} Hammerton and Colebourne. p. 93.
\textsuperscript{131} M. Collyer, arr. Nov. 1965, Survey 105.
landed in Western Australia. Few expected the harshness of life in migrant hostels, and even fewer the lower standards of living that they found in some country areas. One participant was told by an immigration official in Britain that the Aborigines were a ‘dying race’. She was distressed when she saw their living conditions: ‘camping around the rubbish tip and drinking in the gutters of Collie’.

*Leaving home*

Blainey says there are a number of records written by early passengers to Australia. He gives a lengthy discourse on the conditions for migrants in the early nineteenth century. There were three classes of passenger: the wealthy migrants who paid three times the normal fare to enjoy the comfort of private cabins, another group of passengers enjoyed some privacy just below the main deck, but the bulk of immigrants travelled as steerage, sleeping in lower decks. Their accommodation was a long room divided to separate the men from the married couples and the single women who were chaperoned. There was no privacy. This dormitory accommodation was arranged so that the space could then be used to ship bales of wool to Britain more easily on the ship’s return voyage. In the 1800s, Blainey writes, the ship provided the bulk of the food for the voyage, but there were no dining tables, seats or eating utensils. My respondents travelling in the 1960s did enjoy dining tables, seats and eating utensils on the voyage, but there were many complaints about the quality of the food. Blainey says various acts of parliament in England tried to improve conditions by restricting the number of passengers according to a ship’s tonnage. A century later many of my participants still complained of overcrowded shipboard conditions on their voyage to Australia.

The International Refugee Organisation (IRO) provided many of the ships bringing refugees and displaced persons from the aftermath of war in Europe to Australia. Peters says

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they were less luxurious than the ships used to transport the British migrant. The passengers on these IRO ships, apart from pregnant women or women with small children, had to perform duties such as ‘cleaning, cooking, washing and teaching English’. All passengers were strictly separated according to gender. Later ships provided by the International Committee for European Migration offered better quality travel, sometimes using luxury liners such as the SS *Himalaya*. On whichever ship they travelled some of my participants had private cabins, but others had to share dormitory accommodation which was not much better than that of Blainey’s nineteenth century migrants. These shared cabins were cramped, offered no privacy and were generally on the lowest deck. Families were sometimes separated on board, with women and children sharing one cabin and men sharing another together. To fit as many people as possible on the boat even newly married couples were often separated.

Overcrowded dining rooms led to meals being served at different times for children and adults, though generally despite comments to the contrary, the meals were good and varied. The shared laundry, toilet and bathing facilities also caused problems, and the ships’ hospitals were often fully occupied. Various forms of entertainment were provided. However, women with young children often found the voyage very tedious.

Most of my participants travelled to Western Australia in the 1960s on the *Castel Felice*. The ship arrived at regular intervals throughout the year, disembarking passengers at Fremantle, before travelling to the eastern states. It then acted as a cruise liner, often taking disenchanted migrants back to Europe, there to pick up new emigrants for the return journey to Australia.

The first sight of their new country, for all the ship borne migrants, was the Western

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Australian coastline. On arrival in Gage Roads, off the coast of Fremantle, an official party, comprising customs, immigration and quarantine officers, doctors and bank officials boarded the ship. Passports and medical records were checked and bank officers provided money exchange and advice on transferring accounts to Australia.\(^{137}\) Some of my respondents agree with Jupp who reported that many thought Fremantle ‘old fashioned’ and like a ‘Wild West town’.\(^{138}\) All new Australians, even those travelling on to interstate locations, were faced with the vagaries of Australian weather in Fremantle. One of the respondents was struck by the heat of the wharf.\(^{139}\) Others who came in the winter were surprised to find cold, wet weather. Many were astounded by the anti-British feeling they experienced including such remarks as ‘the only good pom is a dead pom’.\(^{140}\)

Some of the migrants were welcomed by friends, relatives. Those who had been sponsored by employers normally had accommodation waiting in hotels or apartments, but most were loaded onto a bus on the wharf to be taken to a migrant reception centre. They had been promised ‘temporary’ accommodation on arrival provided by the Commonwealth Government at Point Walter, Graylands or later Noalimba. For example we were told that our accommodation at Point Walter would be available for approximately six weeks. When the migrants arrived at a hostel they often found ‘old huts’ which seemed more like a concentration camp than the expected introduction to Australian life as portrayed in government publications.\(^{141}\) According to Peters many migrants felt that the hostels had been ‘glamorised’ and had they known of the isolation and the conditions in the Point Walter Hostel they would not have come to Australia.\(^{142}\) Sadly some of my respondents who disembarked in other states found the hostel conditions there just as depressing. The hostel at Broadmeadows in Melbourne was said to be ‘like a prison camp, no hot water, no TV, no

\(^{137}\) Peters, *Milk and Honey*, p. 103.


\(^{140}\) Zamoyska, pp. 31, 92.

\(^{141}\) Zamoyska, p. 64.

carpet'. Appleyard reasoned that the shared facilities and meals were the cause of much discontent and unrest. He also says that rental accommodation away from the hostels was difficult to obtain.

His findings are confirmed by many of my respondents. The lack of public transport and the shortage of rental accommodation in the 1960s, especially for families with young children, could not have been visualised before leaving Britain. Generally, for incoming migrants, not only was rental accommodation difficult to find, but buying your own house, the ideal for many, was hard because banks and building societies were reluctant to lend money to migrants and charged a higher interest rate. This was not just in Western Australia; other writers have commented on this problem and Jupp says migrants felt isolated and as though ‘the rest of the world didn’t exist’. The migrants were surprised to find that here the ‘children went barefoot, [there were] fly wire doors, tin roofs, and sand everywhere’. According to Lack one of the major problems for British migrants was the difficulty in coming to terms with a culture that differed so surprisingly from that which they had known at home.

Life in Australia

The first priority for the migrant breadwinner was to find a job. Peters found in her studies that the principle government idea was to place migrants in jobs the Australians did not want to face, and that non-British immigrants were put to work in areas that would be of service to the rest of the community. My respondents did not report that they faced this situation but they often found the transition from the British workplace to the Australian job market

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144 Appleyard, Ray and Segal, p. 124.
147 Thomson, ‘Good migration’, p. 112.
difficult. Although unemployment was low in the mid-to-late 1960s, finding the work for which the migrants had skills was sometimes very difficult, if not impossible, according to my respondents. British apprenticeships were not recognised; instead experience and union membership seem to have been the most important requirement in obtaining work. Australians were given the first preference for any job and some employers and unions expressed hostility, particularly towards British women workers.\(^{150}\) Zamoyska says that the migrant workers found poor working conditions and that it was the unsafe work practices that led them to become active in the trade union movement. Strikes became known as ‘the British Disease’.\(^{151}\) Unemployment was a particular problem for migrants with families to support.\(^{152}\) Lack says the early hardships suffered by many British migrants were exacerbated by a sometimes vicious hostility that many encountered ‘though this has been largely forgotten today’.\(^{153}\) A letter to the *Manjimup Times* in 1966 reported incidents which were upsetting to a migrant couple at Tone River. Stones had been thrown through their windows and malicious letters sent, including one which read ‘go home crawler Pommy, we don’t want you here’.\(^{154}\) But Jupp, writing in 1966, says he thinks that the British migrants were too sensitive and that the ‘mild hostility’ was resented by the British.\(^{155}\)

Women probably found it the hardest to settle because their homes were often not up to the standard they had enjoyed in Britain.\(^{156}\) In times of trouble they missed the security of the family and friends they had left behind; some migrant women experienced mental illnesses.\(^{157}\) In the early 1960s there was little work for married women and some of my respondents say they found this particularly difficult when families were trying to save money

\(^{150}\) Ruth Johnson (ed.), *Immigrants in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 47.

\(^{151}\) Zamoyska, pp. xxv, 73, 84.

\(^{152}\) Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, p. 111.

\(^{153}\) Lack and Templeton, p. 79.

\(^{154}\) *Manjimup Times*, 28 September 1966, p. 4.


\(^{157}\) Zamoyska, p. 80.
to buy houses and re-establish their lives.

In Britain at this time the population had become used to a comprehensive welfare system—including free health and education—which protected people from birth to death. In Australia while some forms of medical insurance and benefits existed, all medical treatment had to be paid for at point of service. There were good public hospitals, but people were expected to join private medical insurance schemes (payments to which could be claimed against tax) for treatment in private hospitals. Australia also offered a safety net which included such benefits as maternity allowances, child endowments, sickness and unemployment benefits and old age pensions; but unlike the British welfare system all these benefits were means tested. Education was free at the primary and secondary levels, but in contrast to the British system, there were school administration fees, text books and other materials which had to be bought. Fees were also charged at universities.\footnote{Western Australian Year Book, No 6, 1967, pp. 146–149; Western Australian Government, Immigration Department, \textit{What every migrant needs to know}, Western Australian Government Printer, Wembley, c 1966, pp. 41, 43, 50.}

There was a state housing scheme in Western Australia, and other states, but the waiting list for tenancy was often very long, especially in the later 1960s. Sponsorship for assisted migration was offered in Britain by Western Australian building companies such as the Realty Development Corporation (RDC). Under the agreement migrants paid a deposit in Britain on a house the family would occupy when they arrived in Western Australia. The sponsors also gave a promise of help to find employment in Australia. Many who came under the scheme found that the promised house was far from being finished and ready to move into; they often had to pay rental fees for many months while the dwelling was completed. This was often difficult as they had not allowed money for a long-term rental. New houses were often built in outer suburbs and people found they were living in an English community, remote and inconvenient, where there was little public transport.\footnote{H. M. Morrow, 'The Relationship between Quantity of Possessions transported and Homesickness in Migrant', B.A.Hons. Thesis, Edith Cowan University, Perth, 1993, p. 12.} Many British migrants, whose social lives had revolved around the ‘pub’, found the drinking habits in Australia
strange. They were surprised at the exclusion of females from the hotels. Another peculiarity was the ‘session’. The session operated on Sundays when hotels were allowed to open only for short periods—except within 20 miles of the Perth Town Hall where no hotels opened at all on Sundays!\textsuperscript{160}

In the 1960s British migrants enjoyed most of the privileges of Australian citizenship, including the right to vote. The comment by Jupp that some Britons refused to become naturalised because they feared the prospect of being conscripted to fight in the war in Vietnam\textsuperscript{161} was supported by some of my respondents. Their allegiance to Australia did not extend to the sacrifice of their children. Richardson points out that they still felt essentially British:

\begin{quote}
For the average adult British migrant no amount of reshaping will make them Australian. They have a different set of memories, personal experience and tradition.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

In the late 1960s, because of the shortage of willing British migrants, people from Mediterranean countries were also given assisted passages to Australia.\textsuperscript{163} By the end of the 1970s ‘assimilation’ was replaced by ‘integration’. Australia had dismantled the remnants of the White Australia Policy and formally adopted multiculturism.

\textit{Let’s go home}

Return migration in the 1960s by people born in the United Kingdom was probably not as high as the London newspapers reported, and was lower than that of people from other nations who had migrated to Australia. Jupp says that in 1963 one in every fifteen British migrants returned home, while the ‘ratio of Dutch departures to arrivals was one to two, and three in five Germans’.\textsuperscript{164} Nevertheless it was the displeasure of the Britons, often regarded as ‘pampered’, which was most heard; they were highly critical in their comparisons of what

\textsuperscript{160} What Every Migrant Needs to Know, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{161} Jupp, Arrivals and Departures, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{162} Richardson, ‘British Immigrants in Western Australia’, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{163} Murphy, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{164} Jupp, Arrivals and Departures, p. 100.
they had left and what they found in Australia. No finite figures were recorded and estimates on the numbers of migrants leaving Australia vary; Murphy says 20%, Jupp, 23%, Sherinton 25% and Appleyard 29%. Thompson suggests that 50% of single men and women migrants did not stay in Australia, and that some migrants came with no intention of staying beyond the obligatory two years. Whatever the true figure it is estimated that these departures cost Australia in the region of $480,000 per month. Thomson says only a minority of those returning complained about experiencing a reduced economic situation in Australia. Murphy agrees, saying there were several factors that led to the decision to return home, including homesickness and tragedy.

Jupp contends that much of the unhappiness and inability to settle migrants often experienced was provoked by unfounded expectations. Their decision to leave England had been based mainly on such hopes as improved opportunities for their children and a better climate, housing and employment. Some found that in Australia education seemed to be less effective and housing and jobs hard to find. There were frequent references to Australian unfriendliness, hostility and rudeness. Some migrants decried the greediness of shopkeepers and land sharks, the cruelty to animals and the apparent lack of respect for law and order. Yet the reasons that many returned were as varied as the reasons for first coming: some didn’t like Australia; others had to return for family and other reasons not of their making.

This thesis is mainly composed of the stories of British migrants of the 1960s who settled in Western Australia. Many were dissatisfied at first but overcame this initial discontent to make a comfortable home for their family. They speak of success in their personal lives and many are proud of the achievements since of their children. The following chapters tell of their motivation to come to Australia, their parting from the life they had

165 Lack and Templeton, p. 15.
166 Murphy, p. 6; Jupp, Immigration, 2nd edn, p. 75; Appleyard, Ray and Segal, p. 142; Sherinton, Australia’s Immigrants, p.148; Thompson, ‘Voices we never hear’, p. 53.
167 Appleyard, British Emigration to Australia, p. 147.
168 Thomson, ‘Voices we never hear’, p. 54.
169 Murphy, p. 167.
known and sometimes, after a never to be forgotten journey, how they finally settled in Western Australia.
CHAPTER TWO

Leaving England

The Dream and the Decision to Migrate

The decision of migrants to leave their home country with all its memories and social contacts and to travel the 12,000 miles to the antipodes was usually influenced by an idea that there would be some improvement in their lifestyle in Australia. Historians have long considered the various reasons which provoked the migrations of individuals and families to Australia. Blainey tells us of one young migrant in 1857 who wrote that he was dissatisfied with his prospects in England and expected to make a fortune in Australia. According to Jenkins, ‘there is a point in time when little things add up’ and a family might finally decide to start life anew elsewhere. Jupp speaks of ‘overcrowded cities and awful weather’ in Britain which many hoped to escape. Appleyard thinks there is a relationship between fears of unemployment and the decision to migrate. But he also feels it was not usually socio-economic conditions that were the paramount reason for deciding to emigrate, but the idea of a better life. Cigler is concerned with the ‘push, pull factors’, and cites political changes in Britain and the shortage of skilled people in Australia as the reason for the increase in migration from Britain in the 1960s. Lack says that because of the ‘wide social spectrum’ of the British migrants there were many reasons for an individual’s decision to leave home. Isaac confesses that the ‘motives behind the decision to migrate are extremely vague’.

1 Geoffrey Blainey, A Shorter History of Australia, Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1994, p. 162.
2 Thomas Jenkins, We Came to Australia, Constable, London, 1969, p. 25.
As in the findings of Hammerton and Thomson and Wallis the majority of my participants say their decision was influenced by the promise of warmer weather and then by the idea of a better lifestyle in Australia with more opportunities for themselves and their children. In most cases it was the husband who initiated the idea of migration. The women complied, as the poet Gee suggests:

They left the vine wreathed cottage and the mansion on the hill,
The houses in the busy streets where life was never still,
The pleasures of the city, and the friends they cherished best:
For love they faced the wilderness—the Women of the West.

The participants in my study say they lived in a comfortable home in Britain and that the breadwinners were in full-time work. Some came from small villages and others from large towns; many were buying or owned their own houses. Some were couples with their children, some newly married, and others were young singles. A few of my respondents were children when they left the United Kingdom. Most women gave their occupation when they emigrated as ‘home duties’, though some were teachers, hairdressers, office workers or nurses. Men’s work covered a broader spectrum. There were butchers and bakers, builders, carpenters and plumbers, a number of teachers and policemen, instrument fitters and other technicians, farm workers and factory workers, skilled tradesmen and sales representatives, television and telecommunications engineers, one virologist, a veterinarian and a university professor. Jupp says that by 1965 over 80% of British migrants were assisted and there was no attempt to impose any limit on eligibility by occupation or ability to pay. Appleyard concludes, however, that the selection criteria for assisted migration did ensure that the majority were ordinary working families with a regular income but adds that professionals,

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who arrived without government assistance, often had their fare paid by their employers.\textsuperscript{11} Richardson, in an effort to define settler migration, says settlers were those migrants intending to live permanently in their new community.\textsuperscript{12} In my study some participants say their initial intention was to stay for a limited period but they became permanent settlers and others, as we shall later see, left Australia though they at first expected to settle here. The changing economic conditions in Britain over the decade of the 1960s did not seem to change the reasons given by my participants for emigrating though the stories reported in my study are reliant on the memories of the respondents and these memories may have been affected by later circumstance in their lives. Some may even have written what they thought I wanted them to say, although I tried to avoid that effect in the way I constructed my survey questions. Most of the respondents to my survey have made a success of their lives in Australia after initial hardship. This is reflected in the research by Hammerton and Colebourne who say the ‘dominant story is of successful struggle’.\textsuperscript{13}

The motivation for migrants to leave Britain in the 1960s may have been different from that of earlier immigrants, even of those who had left England in the late 1940s and the 1950s.\textsuperscript{14} Jupp says the ‘numbers of migrants coming to Australia actually increased as conditions in Britain improved in the 1960s’.\textsuperscript{15} In the same period Australia’s policy on immigration was changing. This was set out by Australia’s then immigration minister, Hubert Opperman, at a conference held in Canberra in 1966 at which he welcomed every migrant application, ‘on its merits’. He hoped though that each ‘would find work and become Australian in the shortest possible time’, and that Australia would remain a ‘substantially homogenous society’. In conclusion he stated that because the immigration policies affected

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{15} Jupp, \textit{Immigration}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, p. 134.
\end{flushleft}
‘hundreds of thousands of men, women and children’ the procedures must, ‘recognise the importance of the individual’.  

In the early 1960s an aggressive publicity campaign on emigration was set in place in the media of the United Kingdom. Australian migration offices were established in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Belfast, Birmingham and Glasgow. Similar offices were also set up by individual Australian states in most major cities of the United Kingdom. There had been a decrease in migration to Western Australia in the late 1950s due to the adverse publicity generated by reports from disillusioned migrants who had returned to Britain on the availability of housing and employment for the newcomers. During 1961 and 1962 the state government sent W. S. Lonnie to lead a mission to Great Britain to encourage migration to Western Australia. Initially the intention was to concentrate on unemployment areas in Glasgow, Northern Ireland and the Tyneside. Soon film nights and displays promoting the opportunities awaiting the new migrant in Western Australia were set up in all major cities of the British Isles. Assisted passages were offered even to those who had previously migrated to Australia, and returned to live in Britain. Later the officers went into northern Europe to canvas migrants. A report of the visit was presented to a Western Australian sub-committee headed by Charles Court, later to be premier of this state. Promises made to prospective migrants applying under the scheme included: employment on arrival in Western Australia; immediate accommodation at the Point Walter Hostel, and availability of housing within a reasonable period after their arrival. It is interesting that the emphasis of the Lonnie mission was to canvas areas of high unemployment because Richardson in his research concludes ‘few

16 Hubert Opperman, Minister of Immigration, ‘Australia’s Immigration Policy’, A paper delivered at Canberra to Youth & Student Seminar on International Affairs (organised by the National Youth Council in association with the National Union of Australian University Students and the Australian Institute of International Affair), 26 May 1966.

migrants came from areas of high unemployment’. Indeed all of the breadwinners in my study were in full employment when the decision was made to emigrate.

Although for most of England the 1960s were a time of prosperity, in the north the ship-building industries were declining due to overseas competition; the clothing and carpeting industries were being affected by a change from wool to synthetics, and coal mines were being closed. Jupp suggests that immigration abroad was a continuation of the drift south by the unemployed from the northern industrial areas. Many of my respondents who came from the north of England and Scotland did express concern with respect to future unemployment and careers for their children. There were efforts by other Western Australian agencies, such as the Western Australian Employers’ Federation, to increase the intake of migrants to fill the vacancies that existed in Australia for skilled workers. These efforts seem to have been effective. A large number of applications (3,200) had already been received as a result of advertisements placed in British newspapers seeking immigrants when in 1965 the West Australian reported that the premier of Western Australia, David Brand, was doubling the number of teams, which consisted of representatives from the Commonwealth Immigration Department and the Western Australian Employers’ Federation, touring Britain to encourage more migrants to come to Western Australia.

Life in Britain

Florence and Paul Weber migrated to Australia with their children in July 1966. They later returned for a short time to England and then decided to make their permanent home in Western Australia. Mrs Weber’s grandfather, a gypsy, had fled to London from Germany during the troubled period of the 1930s. Her parents’ house was destroyed during the blitz of London and she was evacuated with her mother to the small village of Horton-cum-Studley.

18 Alan Richardson, British Immigrants and Australia: A psycho-social study, Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, p. 13.
20 Jupp, Immigration, 2nd edn, p. 35.
about 12 miles from Oxford. She remembered the small church school where she was educated (and which her children later attended) being supplemented by classes in the ‘big house’. She spoke also of the rationing of clothing and furniture as well as food shortages during the Second World War. In Horton-cum-Studley Mrs Weber was surrounded by family and friends, meeting her husband when she went as a nanny to a farm where he worked. They set up home in a two storey semi-detached house in the village and had four children. Paul Weber had regular work as an engineer and her daughter worked in an office.

The Webers were in a position to take occasional holidays away with their children. On one such opportunity they visited Paul’s family in the Russian sector East Germany. She described this visit:

When we went the first time we’d bathed the children, and I was getting ready to go in the bath myself, so it couldn’t have been very long. There was a knock, knock, knock on the door. “I believe you are illegal immigrants”, pause, “foreign”, and he had to show all his papers and everything. We’d been reported, they’d been dobbing us in, but they couldn’t do anything we were legal.

Mr Weber visited his relatives in East Germany on a number of occasions. He recalled that:

My mother was over there, she told me not to go back there or they would send me to Russia. Because I was an engineer they wanted these people. On the second visit I think it was, they offered me a job in Berlin because I spoke English. She said “let’s take it.” But I speak my mind what I think is right and you couldn’t do that there. In fact the last time I went there I had to go out there quick because I said something out loud in a restaurant and my niece said “Oh, uncle, you better get out quick they are after you”—they were after me.

The Webers therefore had first hand experience of life across Europe during the Cold-War, and enjoyed life in England. Yet after seeing an advertisement in a newspaper and discussing the idea with their children they decided to come to Australia to improve their children’s future prospects.22

Another respondent, Kathleen Platts, had been married for only two years when she and her husband left for Australia. She had lived in the north of Scotland until she left school

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and trained to be a supervisor in the public service. Though the countryside around where she was born was beautiful there were few opportunities for a career and most young people left the district upon marriage. Soldiers, sailors and airmen were stationed close to where she lived then. She had met her husband, who had been in the air force, at a dance in her home town. After marrying, the Platts moved to be near to her husband’s family in Stockton, County Durham, in the north of England. Because both she and her husband had well paid jobs, they set up home in a modern two-storey house in the grounds of an old manor house on

23 Photographs loaned by Mrs F.E. Weber.
the outskirts of the town. There were shops within a ten minute walk and a regular bus service into the town where her husband’s family lived. The Platts enjoyed the outdoor life, going for holidays, hiking and staying at youth hostels. Although they enjoyed the usual Christmas festivities, Kathleen, coming from Scotland, was used to celebrating at Hogmanay, New Year’s Eve. When she had lived at home the young people had started the festivities with a dance and at midnight a pipe band played in the town square. Later they went from house to house ‘first footing’. Visiting friends and family took up most of the night then there was another dance on New Year’s Day. New Year celebrations also formed part of their life in the north of England.

Her husband, Dennis, worked as an instrument fitter in England. He was recruited under the Lonnie Scheme to work in the new industries that were opening up in Western Australia. They attended an interview and a film evening in Newcastle-on-Tyne with a number of Dennis’ workmates, many of whom were also attracted by the offer of work and accommodation if they migrated to Western Australia. Kathleen felt that Dennis had always wanted to migrate; that he saw it as a ‘huge challenge’. In her interview with me she thought they were ‘leaving the old to be in at the start of something good’, and that her husband was ‘chafing at the bit to go to Australia’; he saw immigration as ‘an opportunity to spread his wings’. She, on the other hand, had not even thought of leaving England. However, because both she and her husband had lived away from home, the thought of leaving England may not have been as challenging to them as it might have been for other couples.24

Jennifer and John Calnon came from the midlands of England, where they lived in the village of Little Carlton, about 13 miles from Newark in Nottinghamshire. The village had few facilities. The butcher and the baker came to the door, and local farms were able to supply other produce. Newark was the place where they went to shop or for entertainment. The children were taken by bus to the local primary school. Generally the Calnons seem to

have had a happy life there, living in a modern, centrally heated bungalow with views over farmland and a garden in which they grew their own fruit and vegetables. Jennifer was involved in the life of the village. She was a member of the table tennis club and had many friends of her own age and circumstances. The family took regular holidays, driving their car to Cornwall or staying on a cruiser on the Broads—a large expanse of marsh and open water, known as the Norfolk Broads, noted for the bird and wildlife in the area. Mrs Calnon remembered that they had had a very comfortable existence and John was the head of a department within the Nottinghamshire education department. However, when Jennifer’s sister, who was living in South Africa at the time with her family, decided to move to Australia, this prompted the Calnons to think of emigrating too. They were recruited and sponsored by the Western Australian education department.²⁵

Young people often had little option but to accompany their migrating parents. Michael Geurds was only 15 years old and at high school when his parents decided to come to Australia. His father, a rigger, was looking for a more permanent place of work and residence, as he regularly travelled overseas with his job to Africa and Canada. Geurds was born in a Nissen hut on the outskirts of Stockton in northern England, soon after the war when housing was still in very short supply. The family later moved into a brand new semi-detached council house in the suburb of Roseworth, also near Stockton. His focus in life then was on sport and the Boy Scout Movement. He had travelled to Switzerland with his school and he was completing activities towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award (which was forwarded to him after he arrived in Western Australia). As part of the scheme he cycled from one side of England to the other and learned to look after himself. Soccer was his main activity although he also played cricket. There was an oval across the road from his home where he regularly played sport with his friends. He was able to walk, ride his bicycle or use the regular public transport to visit friends and relatives. Guerds later said he thought coming to

Australia would be a big adventure, though it meant giving away his pet rabbits and budgerigars. His parents came out under the Lonnie scheme, with his aunt and uncle and two small cousins. At 15 he knew this was a permanent move, not just a holiday. Three groups of neighbours also came to Australia at various times under the scheme, but the family did not know any one in Australia when they left England.26

_Migrant information publications_

Prospective migrants used a range of sources to obtain information regarding Australia and, in particular, Western Australia. Articles and advertisements could regularly be found in British newspapers from governments, industry and other organisations such as religious groups. Sheila and Fred Saville remember reading a book about Western Australia which was serialised in the English _Sunday Times_.27 Among the most important of such sources, though, were the promotional flyers and booklets provided by government and private agencies to Britons interested in migrating to Australia. They were, mostly, glowing in their praises of the new country. Much later Al Grassby complained that the Australian government had promoted Australia as ‘a paradise where the sun always shone.’28 Jupp defended such publications, arguing that their intention was to recruit as many people as possible and that they contained accurate facts and figures at the time of printing.29 However economic and other conditions changed in Australia and the printed material might therefore have been misleading for some British readers. One respondent complained that the information he received was ‘out of date by years.’30

These kinds of promotional drives were not new. Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century official guides to migrating to Australia (and other dominions) were made widely available across Britain. But few from the 1960s have now survived. Some were

29 Jupp, _The English in Australia_, p. 144.
30 Name withheld, 14th December 2005, Survey 15.
preserved by migrants such as Reverend K. J. Patterson who loaned copies to me during this study. In the ‘Australia Invites You’ pamphlet, produced by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration, prospective migrants were promised high standards of living and told of Australia’s rural economy, beaches, social security, health provisions and educational opportunities. Australia, promised the government, maintained a British way of life and that a million or so recent migrants had received a welcome from ‘predominantly British stock.’ The pamphlet claims in some areas the sea is ‘warm enough to swim in all the year’.  

Ian Campbell, who arrived as a backpacker in 1970 and settled in Western Australia, remembered the promotional literature circulating in Britain at the time he left home regarding Australia:

I looked at the migration material in the UK in the mid and late 60s it was aimed at a target audience of young families. It emphasised the healthy outdoor sporting life in a much better climate—One advert I particularly remember showed before and after of a family. One side had the family in raincoats, umbrellas and looking miserable. The other side showed them in light summer clothes looking happy.

The Commonwealth was not the only source of migrant informational materials. In the 1960s the Western Australian state government also produced its fair share of advertising material, enticing prospective migrants to the state, including the pamphlet called ‘The English Family Brown’. 

Private organisations and corporations offered information and promises of life in Australia. The Commonwealth Bank and a range of employer’s federations did so in the hope of attracting new clients and new labour, and even sent copies of the *West Australian* newspaper to prospective migrants in information packs. Religious organisations also offered information to prospective migrants. Material from the Methodist Church in Australia added a degree warning:

It is a mistake for people who have a grave domestic or personality problem to believe that migration to the other side of the world will solve it. People bring their problems with them.

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34 Name withheld, arr. Dec./Jan., 1967/8, Survey 63.
35 *So you are going to Australia?* Immigration Committee of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia in conjunction with the Home Mission Dept. of the Methodist Church Great Britain, London circa 1960s.
But some, like Sheila Saville, relied on ‘instinct’ when it came to the final decision.\textsuperscript{36}

The following table indicates the range of resources my respondents used to gain information to aid in their decision making: they were non-specific as to what type of information they received from any of these sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main sources of information for prospective migrants, as listed by participants.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australian government migrant information</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspapers in Britain</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamphlets</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family members living in Australia</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>British government migrant information</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends who were living in WA</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family or friends who had visited WA</td>
<td>2</td>
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While many of the respondents seem to have conducted a thorough research one said:

‘Looked at a map of Australia, seen there was one little dot in Western Australia and said that’s where I want to live’.\textsuperscript{37}

Whatever promotional materials they acquired, it is probably true that most migrants believed what they wanted to believe and had ideas of Australia that were often unrealistic but which suited their dream of a better life.\textsuperscript{38} Some were influenced by popular films: ‘I imagined kangaroos and koalas, hot temperatures, dirt roads and everyone rode horses’.\textsuperscript{39}

Information about work opportunities could have been inaccurate, complicated by the ebb and flow in demand for skilled workers during the 1960s. Some said they received no real information about work. Others found that on arrival their skills were not required at all.\textsuperscript{40}

Richardson suggests that many migrants attracted to the promise of a better life, found it

\textsuperscript{36} Saville, arr. 1969, Survey 85.
\textsuperscript{38} Betcha Zamoyska, \textit{The Ten Pound Fare: Experiences of British people who emigrated to Australia in the 1950s}, Viking, London, 1988, p. xx.
\textsuperscript{39} Leslie Jean Ross, arr. July 1964, Survey 10.
difficult to absorb negative information.41 An open letter to migrants by the Australian Migration Office in London outlined the various ways those who wished to travel to Australia under the £10 scheme could qualify. Sponsorship deals were set out and the age limits delineated. 42 (Most of the participants in this survey fulfilled one or other of the conditions. Some were sponsored by relatives, friends or companies and a few came prepared to find their own accommodation; most were part of an assisted passage scheme.) Printed materials generally provided information regarding Australia’s climate, British way of life, employment opportunities and the like, as the following illustrations demonstrate. By 1968 most

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41 Richardson, *British Immigrants and Australia*, p. 19.
42 ‘Australia Invites You’. (Loaned by Rev. J. K. Patterson)
‘For only £10’. Those marketing the attraction of Australia to the United Kingdom stressed the Britishness of Australia, as well as its natural resources and living conditions.
Leaving England


Bottom: ‘Thinking of Australia? A guide for travellers’ was produced by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, hoping to capitalise on the business which thousands of immigrants might bring with them.

emphasised lifestyle and opportunities for children.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Why they left}

Some of my respondents gave more than one reason for their decision to migrate, but most gave only a perfunctory answer concerning what was perhaps one of the most important decisions of their lives. Had these migrants been interviewed closer to the point of departure or soon after their arrival in Australia they may have offered more detailed reasons for their decision to leave England. The most common reasons given by participants to my survey for making the decision to come to Australia are as follows:

- Weather 26
- Children’s future 17
- ‘Better Life’ 9
- Reunite with friends or family 6
- Parent’s choice 5
- Working Holiday 4
- Spouse returning to Australia 4

The most popular reasons given for immigrating specifically to Western Australia included:

- To reunite with friends and relatives. 18
- Weather 8
- Promised work 8
- ‘Lonnie Scheme’ 4
- Seminars and film nights 4
- ‘Better Life’ 3
- ‘Not so many people’ 3
- First Port of call 3
- Perth – same as Scottish city 2
- Children’s future 1

Seventeen of my respondents had settled first in the eastern states before relocating to Western Australia. Their responses have been included in the above table. The most common

\textsuperscript{45} Jupp, \textit{The English in Australia}, p. 133.
reason to come to Australia was the expectation of better weather, though most chose Western Australia to be with relatives and friends.

These results are similar to the findings of Hammerton and Thomson. Of 89 people they surveyed who arrived in Australia between 1949 and the mid 1970s, the most frequent reasons given for choosing to emigrate included better weather and reunion with families. Some of my participants gave a very personal explanation for migrating to Australia or Western Australia, including trouble at home with in-laws. In my own case the reasons were numerous: my husband’s employment was very irregular, as he worked in the production of seats for motor cars. He was sent home without pay when other parts of the industry were on strike and the seats were not required. One of my children suffered respiratory problems every winter and a doctor said she needed to be in a drier climate. We lived about a mile away from a coal mine and railway marshalling yards. Every time I took the babies out in a pram their blankets were covered with black specks, as were the clothes when they were hung outside to dry in the winter. Not only was it cold and wet but smoke-induced ‘fogs’ were frequent. As well as all these problems I had an overwhelming fear that an atomic bomb would be dropped on England, the country in the middle, should conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States escalate. When we saw an advertisement placed by the Western Australian Employers’ Federation in a national newspaper seeking welders we applied to emigrate. But perhaps the most important factor was the £10 fare. I don’t think we would have even thought of emigrating if we had had to pay the full fare.

Hammerton suggests that the decision to migrate may have been influenced by one of three relationship dynamics: the friction of the ‘reluctant wife’, the harmony of ‘a consensual agreement’ or even, rarely, that the decision to emigrate was of the wife’s initiative. While in most instances my respondents say there was an accord in the decision in some cases the wife or husband decided without the partner’s full approval. Participants

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46 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 65.
47 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 78.
Leaving England

who were children at the time of emigration mostly claim that they were not involved at all in
the decision. Hammerton did not mention the children, or in some cases the influence of the
grandparents who might also have formed another dynamic. Children were counted as being
dependent on their families until they were 21 years old and were therefore expected to
emigrate as part of the unit. But Marilyn Fonte considered running away because she didn’t
want to go to Australia: ‘I was devastated at being dragged away from friends and school—I
hated leaving my dog’. 48 Some of the younger migrants thought the stay in Australia was not
to be permanent, one saying that the parting was ‘quite emotional, but not very as we intended
to return in 2 years’. 49

It is perhaps the response of Ken Ward, who came on the SS Asturias in 1947 and
was the earliest of my participants to arrive in Western Australia, which sums up the over-
riding reason why most migrants left their home country and came to Australia at any time:
‘unsatisfied with living conditions and job opportunities’. 50 This response had changed little
when in 1969 Chris Moore had ‘several reasons; to get away from miserable weather, there
had to be something better than what I was doing in England’. 51

Where they came from

This study did not try to try to differentiate between those born in England, Ireland, Scotland
or Wales, although some respondents identified themselves as from those areas. One said he
was a South African living in England who had married an Australian and one was a German
who had been working in England. Some say they had been working overseas and on return
to the United Kingdom were unable to settle down. Others had met Australians while with
the British Army, Navy or Air Force, and some had served on Merchant shipping that had
called in to Australian Ports. One remarked; ‘Having been in Australia when in the Royal

49 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1966, Survey 32.
50 Kenneth Leslie Ward, arr. 1947, Survey 75.
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Navy on an aircraft carrier, I was impressed by the climate and lifestyle’. Another, having resigned from service in Tanganyika, when that country became an independent Tanzania, had intended to settle down in England. But he did not enjoy the English climate—‘difficult after the sunny skies in Tanzania’—and he had trouble in finding suitable employment so he decided to migrate. On being refused permission to migrate to New Zealand because he had too many children (four) he determined that ‘Australia was the land of opportunity’ and that it would ‘support its population in the event of future conflict’. Most, however, were influenced by the post-war migration drive in the United Kingdom—and the £10 fare!

Racial tension

The 1960s saw a large influx of people from Commonwealth countries into the United Kingdom claiming British citizenship. The resulting tension developing in Britain, as a result, was enough to provoke some to leave.

One of the respondents, Victor Humphries, who arrived in 1965, was concerned with possible outcomes of coloured immigration into the United Kingdom at that time. He enclosed with his survey a poster of more recent origin which seems to confirm his fears of the problems that might be caused by the influx of immigrants in to Britain in the 1960s:

After fighting for King and Country saw in the 1960s England was being invaded by various people from all points of the British Empire and I

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52 Anon, arr. Dec/Jan1968, Survey 64.
53 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
could see the predictions of Enoch Powell (MP) coming true—as it has done.\textsuperscript{54}

Another participant who arrived in 1969 goes further, describing some of the outcomes he saw of coloured immigration.

After listening to the now famous speech by Enoch Powell at Easter 1968 about the problems of immigration to the UK (which included the takeover of Battersea by West Indians, and the Bristol riots (involving knife fighting Asians) we decided to apply to Canada, Australia and New Zealand, finally decided Australia was our first choice due to the opportunities offered and the climate.\textsuperscript{55}

Chris Davies also cited ‘racial problems’ as one of the deciding factors in his emigration.\textsuperscript{56}

The movement into Britain by peoples from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent, mainly to the low socio-economic areas of large cities, led to racial tension and even riots. Enoch Powell was well known in England in the 1960s for his stand against the continuing influx of colonials into Great Britain. Indeed, his strong stand against the British Conservative Party’s approach to immigration is thought to have led to the downfall of the Conservative government and to the rise in power of the British Labour Government under Sir Harold Wilson.\textsuperscript{57} However, political slogans at the time included: ‘If you want a nigger for a neighbour—vote labour’. These famous words have recently been revisited in the political sphere in Britain.\textsuperscript{58} The change of government in 1964 did not immediately assuage the ordinary citizen’s concern with unlimited immigration into Britain. In the Times (London) during March 1965 there were a number of articles on the increasing concern among the ordinary citizens with the influx of people from the West Indies, Pakistan and India, one saying; ‘There is a deep disquiet all over the country about the recent tide of immigration’.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{54} Victor Humphries, arr. Dec. 1966, Survey34.
\textsuperscript{55} Name withheld, arr. Jan/Feb. 1969, Survey 83.
\textsuperscript{56} Christopher Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
www.guardian.co.uk/racism/story/0,276347965300.html#article (09/05/06)
Marwick said the problem was that the British People were basically xenophobic. A survey conducted in Britain the mid 1960s showed four out of five people thought that ‘too many migrants had been let into the country. All citizens of the British Commonwealth had the same freedom of movement into Britain as the Australians or Canadians, but the Asian and West Indian migrants were more visible because of the colour of their skin and therefore raised the most complaints. This problem led to the tightening of entry for all to the British Isles in the late 1960s.

**Returned servicemen**

A few participants had returned from service with the British Armed Forces and were disappointed with the conditions in the United Kingdom. One had ‘just finished National Service and felt no future so went looking for a better life’. While another says, ‘Leaving British Army did not want to return to Scotland, wanted to start afresh’.

**Fear of war**

The fear of imminent nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union was one of the major reasons that the Caunt family decided to emigrate. Although I was not the only person whose decision to migrate was influenced by this fear I was surprised that the Cold War was mentioned by so few of my respondents. One respondent expressed his reasons for leaving Britain as being; ‘the threat of the Russians and the cold war threat’. Bill Gillbard was also concerned. He wrote that Australia was a ‘better place to bring up a family as the cold war was current in Europe and Australia was half a world away’. Jim Yeomans said he and his family migrated because of ‘the danger presented by the threat of possible nuclear

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64 Name withheld, arr. Mar/Apr 1965, Survey 78.
war’. Perhaps the memory of the nuclear threat in the 1960s has faded with the general regression of the fear of communism.

**Health**

The problem of ill-health was frequently cited as a reason to leave Britain. Loretta Young said that in 1951 the ‘doctor’s advice to Mum and Dad was that if they didn’t get me to a warmer climate I would not survive another winter so they decided to migrate to Australia’. Jennifer Calnon was also worried by a health problem: ‘we were looking for a better climate as our daughter had lung infections from our then proximity to fogs caused by the River Trent’. Josephine Stanbury’s parents made the decision to migrate because Josephine developed asthma during the winter. This, she said, made her father very worried. ‘My chest got very bad Christmas 1963, for 6 weeks my bed was a big armchair in the kitchen by the fire’. The promised improvement in the health of her two children should they be moved to a warmer climate was also a deciding factor for Jeanne Reid. Her village doctor, who was an Australian, said the children would be much better off in Australia.

**Families reunited**

In the 1960s there were no formal policies for the reunification of British families but families and friends did act as sponsors to bring in assisted migrants under the ‘Bring out a Briton’ scheme. One respondent wrote that he came because members of the family were already in Australia. Lillian Clarke’s ‘father’s brother, sister and families had migrated—one in 1965 the other in 1966’. Some were returning to Australia after a sojourn in the British Isles. Margaret Bolton had left Australia for a working holiday in England when she ‘met and married a South African in London’. Her husband had not been to Australia before so when

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71 Name withheld, arr. May 1963, Survey 45.  
he applied to migrate she became eligible, as his spouse, to travel with him on an assisted fare. The wife of another participant had migrated with her family to Victoria in 1954 and she too had returned on a working/teaching holiday in the United Kingdom. The respondent said that after they were married his wife ‘wished to return to her family and I was keen to go overseas to better prospects and weather having lived in East Africa and USA—away from UK mostly since 1950’. They also were eligible for assisted migration because the husband had not previously applied to be part of the assisted passage scheme. Moyna Harland met her future husband who was visiting his family in Edinburgh in 1963; she ‘became engaged after four weeks’. Her fiancé returned to Western Australia in January 1966 and ‘I followed in May 1966’, she said.

**We came to work**

There were no restrictions in the 1960s on British subjects coming to Australia to work or live. As British subjects they could come and go as they pleased, enjoying the same rights and benefits as Australian citizens. However, a clause in the £10 assisted migration scheme stipulated that if the assisted migrants wanted to leave Australia in less than two years they would be expected to pay not only the return fare but also the balance of the outward fare. This did not seem to concern the prospective migrants. One respondent remarked that she ‘viewed it as an opportunity to see Australia for £10,’ presumably being prepared to stay the two years before returning. Later some did regret agreeing to the stipulation and suggested they would have left Australia within the first two years if they had been able to afford to do so.

Many came because of perceived job opportunities. Tom Rollo was ‘disillusioned

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74 Name withheld, arr. March 1966, Survey 17.
76 Anon, arr. Nov. 1966, Survey 32.
with working conditions and career prospects in UK'.\textsuperscript{77} Sheila and Fred Saville said that in 1969 ‘there was a strong demand for tradesmen to work in Australia’.\textsuperscript{78} Chris Davies made his decision on the toss of a coin: ‘Advert in newspaper by Australian Employers’ Federation for tradesmen. I tossed a coin between W.A. and a job on the south coast of England building a new power station . . . WA won and so did I’.\textsuperscript{79} A number of the respondents were attracted to Australia as teachers, one said Australian ‘teaching methods at the time were held up as an example to UK’.\textsuperscript{80} Two of the participants were looking for work that did not involve travel. One confessed he came because ‘work in Stockton was hard to get and he had to travel away all the time’,\textsuperscript{81} and another ‘because he was tired of travelling with his work’.\textsuperscript{82}

Most people were looking for a better life for themselves and their children and expected to enjoy a better climate in Australia. One had been romanced by the ideal of a better life here by a film she had seen as a child:

> I had seen a black and white film when I was 12, kids riding to school on horses, the seed was planted then of a better life outside UK. My brother Rob and I made a pact we would migrate when we were 20/21 after he had finished his apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{83}

Some decisions were influenced by rising living costs in Britain.

> Life was getting expensive in UK; I had two jobs, wife also worked full time. Shire rates kept increasing as did interest on the mortgage, cost of living up, didn’t own a car, wages at a standstill, dissatisfaction with way of life.\textsuperscript{84}

### We only came for a holiday

There were those who wanted to take the opportunity of assisted passages to have a holiday abroad. Another who came from Germany had met people from Australia and New Zealand

\textsuperscript{77} Tom Rollo, arr. Apr. 1963, Survey 44.
\textsuperscript{79} Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
\textsuperscript{81} Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 5.
\textsuperscript{82} Anon, arr. Nov. 1963, Survey 46.
\textsuperscript{83} Name withheld, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 68.
\textsuperscript{84} Name withheld, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
while working in England and so, ‘when I heard of cheap (Government) fare I decided to go to Australia for a few years, not for good. I was in my 20s, and single, I considered it an adventure’. Phena Pritchard who also came on a working holiday with friends said, ‘Having qualified as a State Registered Nurse in London, we did not speak any language well enough to work in a non-English speaking country, Australia seemed a wonderful alternative’. Some migrants who arrived in the 1960s were unassisted and two of my respondents fell in to this category. Ian Campbell came as a backpacker in the 1960s; he enjoyed the working holiday he had in Australia so much that he came back to live in 1970. The Perrins came to Australia on a one year’s work visa in the 1960s, travelling overland from Luton to Pakistan by motorbike and sidecar and then flying on to Perth. Their experiences here also led them to immigrate to Western Australia in the 1970s, but later they returned to live in England.

**Why Western Australia?**

Seventeen of my respondents migrated initially to other states and came to Western Australia later, a process of continued migration which perhaps deserves further research. Others chose to settle in Western Australia while on the voyage here. The Webers, the family from Horton-cum-Studley, for instance only made the decision to come to Western Australia when they became friendly with some Australian people on the ship and went to a seminar with them: ‘We heard how lovely it was and were persuaded to get off the ship in Fremantle instead of going on to Melbourne’. At least eighteen of my respondents came to Western Australia because they had friends and relatives here. Josephine Stanbury said, ‘My brother had migrated to WA a year

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85 Name withheld, arr. Sep/Oct 1960, Survey 86.  
before due to no work in the north of England and he told us it was wonderful in WA’.  

Others came on recommendations of friends. Some were impressed by the Western Australian immigration staff. One said, ‘the immigration official who interviewed my wife and I at Australia House, London was darn good at his job—pleasant, perceptive, persuasive—we were hooked’. Jeanne Reid and her family had intended to go to New South Wales where they knew there was work for her husband, but were persuaded to come to Western Australia ‘by an enthusiastic immigration officer from Swanbourne’.  

In the early 1960s the Lonnie Scheme attracted many migrants to Western Australia and a number of the participants cited this as a reason they chose to come here. The Geurds’ were attracted by the offers of work and housing under the scheme, Kathleen Platts recalled

Under the Lonnie Scheme the West Australian Government undertook to arrange work and rented accommodation for skilled migrants. This prompted a lot of people to come here as it seemed less of a leap into the unknown for those who had no contacts in Australia. 

Platt’s memory, and perhaps her perception of the time, weren’t altogether correct. Rental accommodation was not promised by the state government though immediate, temporary hostel accommodation was. This is as one other respondent recalled it to be: 

Mr W. Lonnie headed a team to England mid 1962 recruiting tradesmen for WA. We were accepted when I showed my qualifications. We were promised a job but no accommodation.

Some were offered specific employment before migrating. One came ‘to take up an appointment in the Veterinary Laboratories at the Western Australian Department of Agriculture’, while another says he was able to take up a position in Perth with the company

97 Lonnie Report.
he had worked for in England. One respondent was offered a job with the Post Office and his wife a position at Royal Perth Hospital before leaving home. Tom Edwards, who came from Wales, had a job waiting with the RSPCA, and David Phillips, also from Wales, was taking up a position with the University of Western Australia. Certainly the promise of work was attractive to prospective migrants, and skilled labour was in demand everywhere—including Albany, which is where one respondent was sent. Another, a bricklayer, recalled advertisements in the press at home offering work to bricklayers in Western Australia (in desperate need due to post-war housing shortages) which provoked his interest. Two respondents say they chose Perth because of its connotations to the town in Scotland with the same name. Some of the other reasons given were that ‘it was the ‘youngest state’ or ‘had the least population, or might be the friendliest. In the end the reasons why the participants chose Western Australia can only be described as numerous and varied.

Completing the formalities

Having decided they would like to migrate to Australia the applicants had to undergo certain formalities before they were accepted. All experienced a similar process: forms, interviews and medicals, including eye and hearing tests, dental examinations and chest X-rays. Complete dossiers of this process are kept for all assisted British migrants at the National Archives and can be accessed and copied. My own and that of my family were obtained for this study. It was surprising to be reminded of events and procedures I had long forgotten. For instance, a letter in my folder, dated 23 September 1965, gave the date for us to sail as 10 October 1965 on the SS Australis. The letter we sent refusing this passage because we had been promised at least three months to settle our affairs in England was also in the folder.

100 Anon, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
The originals of letters written so long ago in England are now stored in Australia together with other documents such as medical records. Information in this dossier was most useful for this research as it contained material generated in 1966 when the decision to emigrate was made. It is a wonderful resource for genealogists!

The ‘Application for Assisted Passage’ submitted by each prospective migrant required extensive information to gauge his or her suitability. Information on marital status, including date of marriage, was recorded. Migrants were advised they would be considered as married if the wife or husband was still living unless proof of divorce was offered. No provision was made for ‘partners’ or de-facto relationships. Married men had to give the name of their wife and children under the age of 21, state when and where they were born and if they were also travelling to Australia. Particulars of all employment (for the male) since leaving school had to be given, including service in the armed forces. Migrants were required to declare how much capital they intended to bring and in which state they planned to settle. Applicant interviews were held in the closest major city in the United Kingdom to where they lived. In our case this was Nottingham, some distance from our home and which required two long bus rides. Children had to be present at the applicant interview to evaluate their health and mental capacity. The colour of each family member was scrutinised. One of Hammerton’s respondents even reported that, ‘we had to drive the man to Mike’s home so he could check we weren’t trying to smuggle a black baby into Australia’.

Once migrants had been assessed as suitable they had to undergo rigorous medical examinations by practitioners appointed by the Australian government. The medicals seem to have been very thorough. One respondent remembers being taken to see a specialist in Harley Street, London, because of a bone disease she had had as a young child, and she says it ‘almost stopped us all coming out’. Family documentation, such as birth and marriage certificates as well as trade certificates and evidence of other qualifications, were expected to

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107 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 90.
On application to immigrate, prospective migrants would be interviewed and assessed on a range of criteria by which they would be judged suitable for entry to Australia. Forms such as these were completed by migrants, immigration officers and medical staff.

These documents regarding the migration of my family to Australia in 1965-66 were copied recently from the records of the Australian Archives, Perth, File PP276/1, and are now in my personal collection.
Leaving England

One of my respondents had to prove he was white because he had been born in South Africa. He says, ‘I had to provide a full face photo as well as documents
Leaving England

(birth certificates) to prove I was white’. ¹⁰⁹

When the interviews and medicals were completed the prospective migrants waited for the news that their application had been accepted or rejected. In our case the acceptance came through less than a month after we were interviewed on the 14 July 1965. Our medicals were on the 28 July and the acceptance was dated 5 August 1965. The letter stressed that one should not give up employment, sell one’s house or finalise one’s affairs before receiving a notice of embarkation. It also pointed out: ‘Persons who had benefited under the Assisted Passage Scheme are required to repay the Government contribution towards the cost of their fare should they leave Australia before completing two years residence’. On the back of the letter were a number of terms of agreement, including the demand for the £20 fare (for two people) and the request that any passports held by the intending migrants be forwarded with application for a document of identity which gave the migrant access to Australia. Although the whole family was listed on the documents of identity only photographs of the head of the family and his spouse had to be sent along with the application. ¹¹⁰

As set out by Peters the paper trail for a displaced person or refugee was much more

Nonja Peters documented the paper trail which most displaced persons from Europe endured in seeking migration to Australia in the post-war years. ¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Caunt, Private papers acquired from the National Archives, Perth, File PP276/1.
complicated (see illustration, previous page). She says the preference of these migrants was to go to the United States of America; coming to Australia was often pure chance.\textsuperscript{112}

**Now we have to wait!**

From the answers to my survey there seem to have been large differences in the time between the notice of approval and the sailing date. Hammerton also reports that the waiting time for sailing dates could vary from a few weeks to a year and that when the notification did arrive there was often a ‘period of frenetic preparation’.\textsuperscript{113} Some of my respondents say they were given immediate approval, possibly on the basis of their trade qualifications. One was Jim Yeomans whose trade was a ‘master bricklayer/subcontractor and self builder’.\textsuperscript{114} Teachers were also in short supply and offered immediate appointments.\textsuperscript{115} Most participants were given three to five month’s notice of the embarkation date. A few respondents had to wait for longer periods due to the arrival of new babies. Women were not allowed to travel if they were more than 6 months pregnant and new babies had to be 3 months old.\textsuperscript{116} One respondent was kept waiting for over two years. He had a daughter in Perth who brought the matter before the Immigration Department. ‘Result permission to proceed within less than a week, and embarkation notice to sail in one months time—panic stations’.\textsuperscript{117} It is fortunate that most respondents had far more time to get their affairs in order. Most had a house to sell and work commitments to finalise. Furniture and personal property and pets had to be disposed of or crated for transport to Australia. Sheila Saville says her husband, Alfred, had made all crates in which to pack their furniture.\textsuperscript{118} The logistics of moving so many people must have kept the immigration departments very busy. One participant believed that ‘75,000 Poms left

\begin{footnotes}
\item[111] Peters, *Milk and Honey*, p. 64.
\item[112] Peters, *Milk and Honey*, p. 64.
\item[113] Hammerton and Thomson, pp. 89–90.
\item[115] Anon, arr. Dec/Jan. 1967/68, Survey 64.
\item[116] Caunt, Private Papers, National Archives of Australia, Perth, PP276/1.
\item[117] Anon, arr. Feb. 1964, Survey 47.
\end{footnotes}
Leaving England

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR AUSTRALIA

CHIEF MIGRATION OFFICER,
AUSTRALIA HOUSE,
STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2

3rd August, 1965.

Mr. D. Count, wife & 2 children,
137 Kingsway,
Kitchin-Ashfield - NSW.
Dear Mr. Count,

Your application for settlement in Australia under the terms of the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme has been approved and you have been selected for settlement in the State indicated in Item 2 on the back of this letter.

The contribution payable by migrants towards the cost of passage is £10 for each person 19 years of age and over, whilst persons under 19 years will travel free. If your contribution has not yet been paid it will be necessary for you to send, at your earliest convenience, the appropriate sum by Cheque, Money Order, Postal Order or Postal Order, made payable to the "Commonwealth of Australia" endorsed "Cash Pagas". It should be forwarded direct to the Chief Migration Officer, Australia House, Strand, London, quoting the reference shown at the top of this letter.

Your passage will be arranged by this office and every endeavour will be made to give you at least four weeks' notice of the date of embarkation. Full instructions concerning movement arrangements will be forwarded to you, and in the meantime, you should continue in your employment and not finalise your affairs in the United Kingdom. There is no occasion for you to write or query verbally about your passage until you hear from this office again as you will be notified should any unforeseen circumstances require that your assisted passage should be cancelled.

On the back of this letter you will find a list of items which you may have to do or matters of which you should be aware. To assist you in this regard we have marked with an "X" those which will affect you. It is most important and in your own interests that you read them most carefully and comply with requirements as soon as possible. In particular, that only those marked "*" affect you.

Referring to item 5, it will be necessary for you to forward two passport size photographs of yourself and each member of your family, 16 years of age and over who are travelling with you. The photographs must be coloured on the reverse side with the signature of the person concerned and the date.

In conclusion, I must invite your attention to the declaration you signed when completing your assisted passage application. Persons who have benefited under the Assisted Passage Scheme are required to repay any Government contribution towards the cost of their fare should they leave Australia before completing two years residence.

P.S. This acceptance is issued under the nomination lodged by the West Australia Mission (No. 175) for employment as an experienced factory worker.

Details of this nomination are enclosed.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Chief Migration Officer.

Documents such as these were issued by the Commonwealth of Australia to inform a prospective migrant of their approval to migrate under the £10 scheme, as were identification papers and additional instructions to consider before travel.119

119 Caunt, Private papers acquired from the National Archives, Perth, File PP276/1.
### COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA HOUSE   
LONDON

**DOCUMENT OF IDENTITY**

This Document is valid for a single journey only and is issued in lieu of a Passport to the Bearer and his wife/family for travel to Australia as Approved Migrants. Details shown below:

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<th><strong>CHILDREN</strong></th>
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<td><strong>HUDIA JANE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND</strong></td>
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**Photograph**

[Image of photograph]

Signed: [Signature]

[Signature]

[Stamp]

**Date:** 25th September, 1965

[Stamp]
Leaving England

UK for Australia in 1968'. Official records say 28,739 migrants settled in Western Australia in that year.

*Mum was heartbroken*

A major obstacle to leaving the United Kingdom was facing the reactions of family and friends when they were told of the decision to migrate to Australia. Hammerton puts it mildly when he says ‘leaving Britain could be an emotional experience’. He went on to say that while some were excited by the idea, others were sad and had feelings of guilt. Peters says that breaking the news to the family, ‘was remembered as one of the most stressful in the migrant’s life’ and parents were often totally opposed to the separation. Relatives were often worried that they would not see their loved ones again. The feelings expressed by my respondents ran the whole gamut from a sense of freedom to feelings of remorse at leaving elderly parents. The participants in my study met with mixed reactions when they told people they were going to emigrate. The families of the Webers and Baldwins thought they were crazy, while the Platts found people were concerned they would not see them again and were worried about them going into the unknown: ‘Travel was then a lot more expensive and time consuming than it is now’. One remembered that her family were ‘very distressed’, while another recalled that the reaction of most people he knew was that it was a good idea to migrate because of the growing possibility of unemployment in England.

Respondents, who had been children when leaving Britain, often found the partings traumatic. Loretta Thomas wrote in her survey response that: ‘Mum was heartbroken having to leave all her family behind’. Her grandmother died just before she left and her grandfather

120 Davies, arr. Feb/Mar, 1968, Survey 35.
122 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 96.
127 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 5.
while she was on the ship. Her friends ‘thought we were all mad coming to a country full of savages and where kangaroos hopped down the main streets’. For Jeanne Reid there is a poignant memory. Despite the farewell parties and the good wishes of friends and family, she remains broken-hearted because her nephews and nieces accused her of giving up on her family when really she ‘never, ever, really wanted to come in the first place’. Marilyn Fonte, when asked about reactions of friends and relatives gave this response: ‘Teenage dismay and plotting to run away’. Lesley Ross seemed to be keener to come to Australia. ‘As a 12 year old my friends were all excited for me for the adventure I was about to undertake. My grandparents although devastated never conveyed their concern to me or my brother’. This repression of emotions was also expressed by Patricia Paleeya. ‘Being English a lot was left unsaid although I saw the sadness in my father’s eyes’. Moyna Harland had a similar experience. ‘Widowed mother hid her feelings for my sake but very upset’.

Nevertheless many respondents found their friends and relatives were supportive of the proposed move, especially those who thought the migrants were leaving for a short stay only. Phena Pritchard says people were supportive, but ‘we only intended at the time to stay for a two-year working holiday’. Another said: ‘They were upset about us coming here but we told them that we were thinking of staying 3 years and here we are 40 years later!’ Friends pronounced John and Joan Baldwin ‘would be back in a year’. Ted Parry reported that his family in Wales believed he would ‘pull out at the last minute.’

Some recalled marked differences in the reactions of family and friends: ‘Our

133 Harland, arr. July 1966, Survey 22
135 Anon, Survey 46.
families were heartbroken; our friends thought it a great idea’. Another wrote: ‘Family members were upset, they told us cautionary tales and tried to dissuade us. Friends were supportive and envious’. Similarly Chris Moore found, ‘People outside the family were supportive and wished me well, but most of my family thought I was mad’. Chris Davies met with mostly negative reactions: ‘Some people could not understand why I would leave the old country. It was snowing at the time’. Many families in the post-war years had moved away from the area in Britain where they had grown up, and this tended to ease the pain of separation because in many cases family bonds were already weakened. One participant summed the reactions: ‘Mixed; friends—encouragement, disbelief, envy, curiosity, not too much sadness. Family—dismay, discouragement, some resentment (not obvious)’. I personally don’t think my mother-in-law ever forgave me as she saw me as the prime instigator of the move.

My participants gave many different reasons and motivations why they made the decision to emigrate to Western Australia. All underwent interviews, medicals and other formalities and waited nervously to hear of their acceptance. There were mixed reactions from relatives and friends, some supportive, some negative and some even dismissive of the decision. These memories may have been coloured with time, though they are similar to the findings of Hammerton and Thomson. In coming to Australia they ignored the cautionary tales, negative feedback and family woes. They sold their homes and many of their belongings, packed their bags, gave up their jobs and finalised their affairs in England. Whether they were prepared or not, the time had come to leave home and take passage to Australia.

141 Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
142 Hammerton and Thomson, pp. 83–84
144 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 65.
This chapter contains a rare personal record of the sea voyage of over 100 migrants who came to Australia in the 1960s. Most of them came on the *Castel Felice* or her sister ships, SS *Fairsea* and SS *Fairstar*. They were part of one of the greatest voluntary ship borne migrations in modern times. According to Hammerton, most £10 Poms chose to travel by sea,\(^1\) though this option became less available when towards the end of the 1960s most migrants were brought to Australia by air.\(^2\)

Assisted passage schemes for Britons introduced after the Second World War were hindered by the short supply of ships available for migrant passage in the post-war years. Nevertheless influenced by the changes to the White Australia Policy then taking place, 1,150,000 people migrated to Australia from Britain and Europe. Of these 86% travelled as assisted migrants.\(^3\) Some 100,000 of these travelled on the *Castel Felice*. Of these migrants 16,126 were breadwinners and the others dependents.\(^4\) I found that Western Australia received only about 5% of the British migrants who travelled on the *Castel Felice* in 1959, (161 of 3,250). I noted further that during the 1960s Western Australia attracted fewer passengers from the *Castel Felice* than other states. In the late 1960s large numbers of migrants were leaving the ship in Adelaide. Disembarkation from the *Castel Felice* at Brisbane or Auckland was infrequent in the sample of passages I inspected at the National Archives. Her sister ships, the *Fairsea* and the *Fairstar*, also plied the route. The responses to

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\(^3\) Hammerton and Thomson, p. 96.

\(^4\) Western Australia, State Records Office, State Immigration, *Migration information issued to press*, 1193/228 42/5.
The SS Castel Felice

my survey from migrants who travelled on these ships are very similar to those of the passengers of the Castel Felice.

The Castel Felice was launched in 1930 for the British India Line under the name Kenya. She sailed in the Indian Ocean for ten years until she was requisitioned by the British Government and converted into a troop carrier and landing ship. She was then renamed Keren and took part in the Allied landings in Sicily. The British India Line did not reclaim her after the war and for a time she was laid up at Holy Loch, Scotland, before changing hands a few times. In 1950 she was transferred to the Sitmar Line and sailed under the Italian flag, initially to service passages between Europe and South America. She was again refitted after the Sitmar Line gained a British government contract to carry migrants to Australia. Although she was a small ship of some 1478 tonnes, the refit nevertheless provided basic accommodation for 1200 passengers.

Saying goodbye

Hammerton says the migrant farewells to friends and relatives ‘evoke the meaning and significance of emigration’. When the time came to say goodbye migrants were leaving

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behind the home they had known, the goods they had accumulated, their pets, family, friends and the social life they had built up. One remembered that when she left England in 1963, ‘everything happened so quickly, selling the home, packing etc’. Michael Geurds stayed with relatives and friends in the week or so before leaving Britain. He recalls that he and his family spent the last six weeks at his grandmother’s home: ‘she was a great cook’, and as promised they were given a different sweet every night they were there. His sister Jeanette recalled saying goodbye friends and relatives with several other migrant families at Stockton station after staying with her grandmother. Another participant had to wait with other migrants, ‘before boarding the train to Southampton, our minds now in limbo—our life in just a few suitcases and trunks’. One family travelled from their Nottingham home to Bournemouth ‘to say goodbye to family and friends’ before boarding the ship. Others tell a similar story. ‘We stayed at Uncle’s house in Southampton for a couple of weeks before sailing’. ‘We spent the last week with my grandparents’. Because the heavy luggage had to be despatched to the ship some time in advance, staying with relatives and friends was an alternative to sleeping on the floor as Geoffrey Shapland had had to do. He remembers, ‘We had dinner at a Chinese Restaurant, first time I had eaten out, I slept on the floor with Dad, and everything was packed’. Marilyn Fonte also remembers her last meal in England, ‘I can’t remember the trip but do remember eating jellied eels’.

The survey participants came from all parts of the United Kingdom. Many journeyed overnight and some, as previously described, had to stay with relatives, friends or in a hotel before boarding the boat. The majority travelled by train because a rail pass was

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6 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 96.
provided by the Australian Immigration Department. Others travelled by taxi or in private cars with relatives and friends for at least part of the journey. Moving vans, buses and the underground were all mentioned as means of transport to the dockside by the respondents. It is not hard to visualise the experience in 1965 of one large family from London: the mother, father and eight children all leaving home. One of the children recalls that they were ‘marched to the bus stop carrying our suitcases’.\(^{16}\) Travel by car was not without problems. The Baldwins, who also came from London, nearly missed the boat because of a flat tyre.\(^{17}\) For Patricia Paleeya, who travelled in a tense silence to the boat in her parents’ car, it was ‘akin to having a tooth pulled’.\(^{18}\) Geoffrey Shapland said that he travelled in the moving van while his parents and sisters travelled in a friend’s car.\(^{19}\) ‘The children slept in the back of the van as we drove through the night from Liverpool’, wrote another.\(^{20}\) My respondents from Ireland tell a similar story. Terence Milligan remembered an emotional parting with his family as he left Belfast on his way to London.\(^{21}\) Another immigrant from Ireland, David Shaw, who left as a 14 year old recalled that his family:

> Left Craig Avon by road, stayed with relatives in Dublin for a couple of weeks, saw grandparents, travelled ferry train to Southampton, stayed with relatives, then joined Fairstar.\(^{22}\)

> Where ever the place of parting from friends and loved ones, or the mode of travel to the ship, the final farewells were often traumatic. According to Hammerton some migrants felt that a refusal to come to the quayside indicated opposition to the move by family and friends.\(^{23}\) None of my respondents tell of this feeling, but one, leaving England in January 1969, explained, ‘We were not farewelled by family and friends due to the appalling...
Many of the respondents said they endured terrible weather on the trip to Southampton. Some explained it was ‘cold and foggy’ or ‘it was snowing’. There was sometimes panic due to long delays on the rail journey to the ship because of ice on the tracks, as one found travelling in December 1967: ‘the delays caused by bad weather meant we boarded the Castel Felice with minutes to spare’.

Some participants said they wanted to make their farewells in familiar surroundings and were disappointed when relatives insisted on coming with them to the ship. Friends and relatives were not able to mix with the migrants once they had passed through customs, and the consequence was distressing:

It was terrible she (mother) stood on the dock all day by herself, we had to leave her to find cabin, where we went for meals etc. It was most upsetting as she stood there waving a big red scarf as we slowly moved out to sea. I was watching the scarf until we disappeared over the horizon. I always wished she had listened to us and said goodbye at home.

One respondent wrote that her mother ‘was choking back tears as I waved goodbye. The band played ‘Auld Lang Syne’, a favourite of my mother’s. It was the last time I saw her’. Lesley Ross was overcome when ‘Nan kissed me so hard it hurt. As we sailed down the Solent River we saw my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends waving. My Mum was crying’. One participant has a memory of ‘Dad’s blue eyes filling with tears and I swear I could still see that in detail as we looked down on the quayside’.

Loretta Thomas said that ‘when the family took us to the ship; we kids thought it was just going to be a holiday’. Some young people migrating as part of a family unit were in relationships. One young traveller remembered, ‘My boyfriend saw us off, he didn’t want me

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26 Chris Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
to go, I didn’t really want to go, but daughters had to do what their parents told them’. 33 Two sisters remembered:

I had a boyfriend who went there (to the dockside) on a motorbike, I didn’t want to go but I had no choice I cried buckets. My Dad made me carry my youngest sister on the ship so I would get on. 34

My elder sisters were very upset about leaving, one was engaged and one had a long time boyfriend. Dad was very upset. 35

It seems too that it was not just the children who were coerced into such a journey. In some cases extended families formed the group. One participant spoke of her grandmother who travelled with them causing anxiety: ‘she was struggling emotionally because she didn’t want to go to Australia’. 36

**All board**

Alistair Thomson thinks that the voyage was a special event for many migrants, and ‘a significant rite of passage’. He thought that the journey was ‘one from memory to imagination’. 37 The voyage from Britain, which held all the memories, to Australia, the land of their dreams was never easy. The time taken to reach Australia may have been reduced over the previous decades, but it was still a long voyage and passengers, as the convicts had been before them, were kept in confined spaces and with company they may not have ordinarily chosen. The sea is unforgiving and seasickness and boredom are part of the ongoing tale of migrant passage to Australia. For many of my participants it was their first trip overseas, and while there was excitement at the thought of the new life ahead, there was also sadness, apprehension and sometimes guilt. A few began to doubt the wisdom of the migration and some, especially teenagers, were angry at not being consulted in the decision to

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36 Name withheld, arr. Mar. 1968, Survey 68.
leave Britain.

Many migrants had to leave well paid jobs, good schools and sell well equipped houses. They were advised not to take furniture which had heavy freight charges but to pack cutlery, linen, toys, items of sentimental value, tools of trade, and small electrical appliances. Personal effects were transported free but larger items such as refrigerators and washing machines attracted an excess baggage charge. Animals or birds could not be carried. The Castel Felice was not a cargo vessel and alternative arrangements had to be made for the transport of personal effects if there was no room on the vessel. Restrictions existed on the placement of baggage on the ship; limited luggage was allowed in the cabins. Passengers were advised that other luggage that would be required during the voyage should be labelled for the baggage room. All other luggage, including such baby furniture as prams, had to be stowed in the hold and could not be accessed during the voyage. Folding push chairs could be put in the baggage room but could not be used on the ship. Goods which the migrant wanted to be sent in the baggage room or hold had to be forwarded so that it reached the ship no later than 3 days before the ship sailed. Special vans were attached to the trains at Waterloo Station in which migrants were asked to place their cabin baggage. Peters says the amount of luggage taken by the post-war migrants in her research varied. Some brought the whole household, and others came with a few clothes and personal treasures. Hammerton concluded that where people could afford the freight costs they did so. Other people had to make do with hand luggage and the free allowance to be put in the hold.

Many migrants found that boarding the vessel and leaving England’s shores was a traumatic experience. Alan Huckins said, ‘neither of us could watch as the coastline of

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40 *General Information for Passengers*, Sitmar Line.
42 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 91.
England slipped away'. This sentiment is echoed in the words of another, possibly upset at leaving behind her boyfriend: ‘I’m glad no one came to see us off. Those on board who had family and friends waving goodbye were in tears, I was ready to jump ship’. William Coackley, who left England in 1966, wrote, ‘On embarkation the crew’s attitude was to pack in as many people as possible (like sheep). If you didn’t like—then get off the boat’. Steve Gallagher, who was a seaman on board migrant ships in the 1960s, confirmed this: ‘When I brought out immigrants from Britain, the immigrants were treated like animals’.

Gallagher’s remark made me recollect my own feelings of the time. We were herded and harried because, I suspect, the boat was due to leave. I can remember thinking: We are like
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Passengers Surname and Initials</th>
<th>Indicates by Star</th>
<th>Intended Address in Australia</th>
<th>British NO British</th>
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<td>79 Hood Terrace, Sorrento</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>ALEXANDER H.</td>
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<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ALEXANDER H.D.</td>
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<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ALEXANDER S.F.</td>
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<td>do</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>B A L L W.F.</td>
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<td>11 Boulder St., Bantley, Perth</td>
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</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>B A L L M.</td>
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<td>BANKS M.</td>
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<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>BOLTON P.</td>
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<td>do</td>
</tr>
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<td>BRYSON J.</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>CLARK O.A.</td>
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<td>CLARK J.C.</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<td>do</td>
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</table>
the peoples of the holocaust—we don’t know where we are going, we don’t know what conditions we will travel in or what lies at the end of the voyage, we don’t even know where our luggage is. But we were on a conveyor belt from which there was no turning back.

The *Castel Felice* was fitted to accommodate up to 1200 passengers but an analysis of a sample of 13 passenger lists indicate that it often carried many more. Nearly 1400 were on each run between Britain and Australia in 1963 and 1964. Most passages until 1969 carried more than 1200 passengers. (See table below).48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
<th>Fremantle</th>
<th>Melbourne</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Brisbane (Port Said 1)</th>
<th>Adelaide</th>
<th>Auckland</th>
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<td>675</td>
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<td>544</td>
<td>262</td>
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<td>721</td>
<td>373</td>
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<td>568</td>
<td>442</td>
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<td>746</td>
<td>399</td>
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<td>725</td>
<td>393</td>
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<td>579</td>
<td>484</td>
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<td>239</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>182</td>
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<td>204</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>569</td>
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<td>30/04/1969</td>
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<td>316</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>310</td>
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<td>313</td>
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</table>

Many respondents to the survey complained about ‘overcrowding’ on board the *Castel Felice*. One participant claimed the voyage leaving England in December 1965 and landing at Fremantle in January 1966 had ‘1460 passengers on board’,49 though the passenger list gives a total of 1,287, of which only 224 disembarked in Fremantle, the majority sailing on to Melbourne and Sydney.50

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48 Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, Series K269/4, Western Australia.
50 Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, Series K269/4, Western Australia.
Many migrants were surprised at the small size of the ship; especially those who saw her tied up alongside such luxury liners as the *Himalaya*. One participant, a South African, was scathing:

*Castel Felice* was a shitty old ship, I had worked a couple of voyages on the *Kenya Castle* as a steward and I would sooner work on the *Kenya Castle* than be a passenger on that rotten old converted auxiliary aircraft carrier.\(^{52}\)

On seeing a copy of a postcard illustrating the *Castel Felice* included as part of the survey Chris Davies remarked; ‘Looked nothing like the picture postcard, 12,000 tonnes of floating scrap’.\(^ {53}\) Another said, ‘I would never go on a boat again, it was so small’.\(^ {54}\) Others had a different view—‘when first coming to the ship I thought how grand’\(^ {55}\)—and Loretta Thomas remembers the pageantry of the departure ‘there were lots of streamers thrown to the people on the dock’.\(^ {56}\)

The *Castel Felice* had a number of decks, some of which were below the water line, and these were where the most crowded cabins were located. At the top of the ship was the ‘Sun’ deck where the life boats were held. The ‘Saloon deck had the swimming pool, ladies

\(^{52}\) Name withheld, arr. Dec. 1963, Survey 82.
\(^{53}\) Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
\(^{54}\) Anon, arr. Nov. 1963, Survey 46.
\(^{56}\) Thomas, arr. June 1951, Survey 37.
room, card room, writing room and a library, there was an outside area where the deck games were played. There were some cabins on this deck. Next down was the ‘Promenade Deck’ the main features of which were the huge dining rooms and kitchens. ‘A’ deck held the main foyer with the grand staircase and such shops as a barber, gift shop and hair-dresser. On ‘B’ Deck were the laundry and medical rooms. ‘C’ deck contained the laundry drying rooms which were in reality part of the engine rooms, with ropes strung here and there between pipes for drying lines. The Caunt family travelled on ‘D’ deck. According to my participants ‘D’ and ‘E’ decks were the home of people with young families and singles in dormitory type

57 Plowman, p. 211.
accommodation. ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ cabins had portholes. On the lower decks, even in cabins where a porthole existed it was so close to sea level it was shut most of the time, especially in rough weather.\textsuperscript{58} There were no lifts so the lower decks were accessed by steep staircases, a special problem for families with young children who had to climb up and down many times a day to cater for different meal sittings and other chores such as washing and fresh air. All toilet and bathing facilities were communal—another difficulty for families with children. The time taken for the passage to Australia by the \textit{Castel Felice} and her sister ships was about four weeks, and although this time was shorter than that of the eighteenth and nineteenth century passages, the privation of ship board life was much the same. The sea route to Australia was never easy, and to some the voyage on the \textit{Castel Felice} seemed horrendous. Hammerton says migrants often did not enjoy the ‘luxury cruise they expected although he thought (unlike some of my respondents) that it was a great improvement on that of the nineteenth century migrant’.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{The cabins}

Many of the participants were expecting accommodation similar to that which they had seen portrayed in movies. Peters, referring to post-war migrants from Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s, speaks of ‘refugees packed like sardines,’ and says, ‘the facilities on the ships ‘were barely adequate’. She also thinks the British migrants had a more privileged voyage and ‘enjoyed the benefits of a long cruise’.\textsuperscript{60} Though a few of my respondents did have an enjoyable time many did not agree with Peters’ statement and found the voyage to be an unpleasant experience.

In a brochure issued by the \textit{Castel Felice} there are illustrations of cabins that would appear to be far better appointed than those experienced by some of the participants in my

\textsuperscript{59} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 101–103.
\textsuperscript{60} Peters, \textit{Milk and Honey}, pp. 100.
At Sea on the *Castel Felice*

Typical cabin layout on a migrant ship.  

study? Unlike the illustrated roomy appearance they found their cabins were claustrophobic.

One participant wrote: ‘Cabin very small, I shared with two old ladies on the bottom bunks and a young girl and I had the top bunks. I found I was claustrophobic’.  

Another had the same fear: ‘The first shock was to discover I was claustrophobic and the small cabin was not too good for me’.  

Others were more fortunate in being assigned a cabin on an upper deck, but even they found that shipboard life had some drawbacks: ‘The cabin was next to the dining rooms we were awakened every morning by the stewards preparing breakfast’.  

The comfort of the cabin was most often related to its location. Being on ‘A’ deck with a porthole and easy access to the shops and entertainment venues was a far better situation than travelling in the bowels of the ship and having to make many journeys up and down steep narrow-stepped staircases. Some respondents were quite happy with their allotted space. Peter Norris said, ‘My wife and I were lucky for we were on ‘A’ deck that being the top passenger deck, it was a short walk to the lounge and dance floor’.  

Others wrote ‘We were lucky as we were allocated a nice cabin with a porthole on the main deck; our porthole

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61 Caunt, private papers.
63 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
64 Name withheld, arr. Jul/Aug. 1968, Survey 71.
overlooked the front deck’. 66  ‘Our cabin was on ‘A’ deck and we were the only occupants’. 67
‘We had a good cabin with 5 berths’. 68  ‘Family had a comfortable 4 berth cabin on the same
floor as the purser’s office’. 69  The Gawthrops were also satisfied as ‘the cabin was outside
with porthole’. 70  The Baldwins who travelled on the Fairsea considered themselves lucky:
‘Above waterline cabin, very nice’. 71  Another considered her family to be fortunate:

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At least we had a cabin to ourselves; it was a small cramped room at the
bow of the ship so we really felt every movement of the ship. It had two
single bunk beds and a small cupboard on the wall. The floor space was just
enough to stand in and get dressed one at a time. There was no porthole so it
was very claustrophobic. Bathroom facilities were shared. 72
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However, most remember only too well the discomfort they endured. Teenager
Michael Geurds recounted during an interview:

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Our cabin was below the water line next to the water tanks. Remember
lying in bed in our very small cabin listening to water slopping around as
the boat rocked and rolled.
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He shared the cabin with three other boys with whom he spent a lot of time on the ship
playing table tennis. 73  Phena Pritchard ‘shared a six berth cabin on ‘D’ deck’, 74 while Lesley
Ross remembered: ‘I shared with my parents and younger brother. It was very small and
consisted of two bunk beds, a hand wash basin and a small porthole’. 75  Christopher Moore
who came as a single man found the accommodation was pretty basic, ‘we had three sets of
metal bunks in our cabin’. 76  However, one said that:

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My family and I were fortunate to have a four berth cabin allocated to us on
the lower deck near the stern. Somewhat cramped but at least we were
together. The bulkhead at the back of the cabin was all that separated us
from the ships workshop from which noises of metal against metal and
voices could be heard at most times day and night. 77
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68 Anon, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
69 Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
Lillian Clarke recalled:

Cabins were horrible. Mum and I shared a cabin with four other women, (two sets of three tier bunks) with about two feet between them, had to get up one at a time as there was no room to move.\(^{78}\)

Families often suffered in the allocation of accommodation, finding the cabins variously undersized, under equipped, and sometimes infested by insects. The family cabins were often on the lower decks and even then families were split between cabins once on board.

Nor was there much attempt to configure accommodation space by age or interests. Moyna Harland, a young woman coming to Western Australia to join her fiancée, complained, ‘Shared a cabin with two elderly women . . . would have preferred sharing with people my own age’.\(^{79}\)

Other respondents wrote:

They took us to our cabin I could not believe my eyes it looked like a prison cell or how I thought a prison cell looked like. It was lovely and clean with four bunk beds no where for the baby to sleep. My husband saw one of the stewards who quickly sorted out a big basket.\(^{80}\)

We had a cabin with four berths, two bunk beds and a cot for the boy—it was down near the engine room so no windows—the cot was jammed up against the hand basin—a metal wardrobe was full of steam beetles.\(^{81}\)

For many the greatest shock was the separation of families and even newly weds.

Hammerton says this ‘segregation’ was to make the best use of space and facilities and was universally unpopular.\(^{82}\) Reverend Patterson, Chaplain on the Castel Felice in September 1967, noted in his report that:

There were several young married couples who had not been married very many weeks who were separated cabin-wise for the whole of the voyage. As there were 82 cabins for two on the ship, it would seem to me that a little more careful planning on the part of arranging cabin allocations would have made it possible for these couples to have been allocated two berth cabins. It would appear that some cabins were free at the commencement of the voyage and that some traffic took place. I would suggest that special consideration be given to young

\(^{80}\) Anon, arr. Dec. 1967, Survey 66,
\(^{81}\) Anon, arr. Nov. 1968, Survey 73.
\(^{82}\) Hammerton and Thomson, p. 105.
couples who have been married for less than six months.\textsuperscript{83}

It would seem this suggestion was never implemented. Segregation remained a problem for participants who travelled in 1968 and 1969. Peter Thomson said that when he travelled in 1968: ‘Couples were separated in six berth cabins’.\textsuperscript{84}

The complaints from participants in this study demonstrate the extent of the problems which followed the separation of families. As one remarked, ‘Many families found themselves separated due to the overcrowding which, one can imagine, gave rise to indignation and anger on the part of those affected’.\textsuperscript{85} Another was disgusted:

Four families were squeezed into three cabins, done by putting four husbands in one cabin. My wife was stuck with a woman with one small kid still on the potty. Babies slept in laundry baskets.\textsuperscript{86}

Lesley Ross faced a similar situation: ‘Mother slept with four children while father was assigned to a lower deck sleeping with three men’.\textsuperscript{87} Tom Rollo said, ‘We were allocated separate cabins, Mary shared with three other girls and I shared with their husbands all strangers’.\textsuperscript{88} It was the same for another:

I was in a cabin with my daughter and another woman and her daughter—her husband was one of the men in my husband’s cabin and a second daughter was in another cabin.\textsuperscript{89}

Some used their initiative to sort out the problem for themselves, ‘We were in separate cabins but had a swap around with another couple then there were two couples in our cabin’.\textsuperscript{90} On husband wrote:

Was originally separated by cabins, one for wife and others, one for me and others, but did a swap with helpful others and firm stand – just us three in a four berth cabin.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{83} Copy of a letter loaned by Rev. K. J. Patterson, Chaplain on the \textit{Castel Felice}, Sept. 1967.
\textsuperscript{84} Peter Thomson, arr. Jul/Aug. 1968, Survey 72.
\textsuperscript{86} Anon, arr. Jan. 1966, Survey 15.
\textsuperscript{87} Ross, arr. July 1964, Survey 10.
\textsuperscript{88} Tom Rollo, arr. Apr. 1963, Survey 44.
\textsuperscript{89} Anon, arr. Nov. 1963, Survey 46.
\textsuperscript{90} Margaret Bolton, arr. Dec. 1963, Survey 76.
\textsuperscript{91} Name withheld, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 17.
Others had to resort to other arrangements to spend time together. Peter Norris recalled that:

We found husbands and wives had been separated cabin wise, four men to a cabin, and four women to a cabin. One could foresee intimate moments taking place in very cold places on the ship, as proved later, and the cause of much hilarity.  

William Watkins joked that though seven couples on his ship were separated, six wives somehow became pregnant by judicious use of lifeboats and under dining room tables on which the cloths hung to the floor. Others complained: ‘As a newly married couple I shared with two elderly and one middle-aged man while Roberta shared with three elderly women’. For one mother it was very difficult: ‘Alan was in a different cabin . . . it was awful having four children and myself being sick’. Alan Huckins writes, ‘Mum, Dad and sister had a four berth cabin between them. My brother and I shared a four berth cabin—two up two down—with two individual migrants’. In at least one instance this situation led to comical errors of assumption. ‘One big family the husband was put in with the men. After so many days he was reported missing at sea—he was in his wife’s cabin’. Victor Humphries was more philosophical about the problem of separated families; ‘The cabins were only used at night for sleeping’.

**Conditions at sea**

There was a constant worry of what might happen in the case of an emergency. Passenger safety was sometimes a real concern. Lifeboats appeared to be in short supply and some complained that safety precautions seemed compromised. Emergency drills were poorly
attended and were confusing. One participant expressed the thoughts of many of the passengers:

I was thankful that there hadn’t been any untoward crisis because up to that point, an emergency drill had been previously conducted that left most, if not all passengers in total confusion. The ships crewmen seemed almost as confused and I have no doubt that the over crowding was the reason for their lack of order and confusion.

It was my own experience in an emergency drill that half the passengers did not bother to attend. The chaos was not helped because the crew spoke Italian or broken English. There were children screaming and parents trying to fit life-jackets that were too large on babies and toddlers. On my voyage in 1966 the whole thing was abandoned without one life boat being lowered.

Despite the many complaints about other conditions on the ship most found the crew helpful and friendly. Children were cared for when left in the minding centre or in the cabins to sleep while the parents dined when the stewards acted as baby-sitters. One participant writes that the crew were ‘marvellous’. Phena Pritchard wrote:

The cabin staff were friendly, but not overly so. And looking back they must have been frustrated by young people that partied half the night and then never wanted to get up in the morning. However much we pleaded we would make our own beds we were told it had to be done properly.

Patricia Thyer expressed the feelings of most of the passengers: ‘I think the crew tried to make the journey pleasant’.

A few however, were not so impressed: ‘I found the crew creepy’, wrote one, while another found: ‘Sailors on board a bit like bush flies, sticky’. Patricia Paleeya explained, ‘The crew being Italian and hot blooded pursued the young girls whenever they got

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107 Name withheld, arr. Apr/May 1969, Survey 74.
the chance and at times it was very difficult avoiding them’. Geoffrey Shapland noted that the English passengers were not accustomed to providing the tips the Italian crew expected.

Some found the crew amusing. Margaret Bolton, a young married woman, says, ‘We got to know the Captain and he asked me if I would go and visit the ship next time it came to Fremantle—I never did’. Norris recorded events at one of the dances held on the ship:

The Captain and the ship’s doctor were always in attendance, both of them with a keen eye for the unattached female and in some cases the married ones. The doctor was short but obese in stature he believed he was the dancing king of Italy but in fact was a terrible exponent of ballroom dancing. With perspiration dripping down his face he would gallop and run some poor unwitting girl around the floor, much to the amusement of the other passengers.

On board ship the day tended to revolve around mealtimes, the food was generally very good, though some found it fattening and monotonous. ‘Most found the food to be of a very high standard though a few found the Italian influence foreign to their English palette. Special efforts were often made such as birthday cakes for children and banquets on special occasions such as Christmas and New Year. There were banquets to welcome and farewell the passengers and another crossing the equator’. There was plenty of food available—‘miracles’ were performed and alcohol was affordable’. There were a few complaints such as the use of powdered milk and finding weevils in the bread. Some found the menus monotonous and said the standard declined as the voyage progressed

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At Sea on the Castel Felice

The Castel Felice was a comparatively old ship and many of the respondents tell of a rough passage, sometimes in the Bay of Biscay, in the Mediterranean and often in the Indian Ocean. In 1966 one participant experienced heavy seas in the Mediterranean where the vessel was pitched violently and the stern literally ‘corkscrewed’ across the surface of the ocean.\(^\text{114}\)

Crossing the Bay of Biscay, December 1965.\textsuperscript{115} Travellers in 1967 were puzzled when the crew began to thread ropes through the handrails in the passageways, but soon found these to be in preparation of a ‘force 9’ gale: \textsuperscript{116} The Geurds had a rough start and end to their voyage, while crossing the Bay of Biscay had been turbulent, their last night on the ship was frightening with ‘crockery being smashed as the ship rolled in the storm’.\textsuperscript{117} On a voyage in 1966 it was so rough that bunk heads were separated from the bulkhead, fire extinguishers broke away from the walls and a sealed porthole broke open. The mood of the passengers soured and fights broke out.\textsuperscript{118} Paleeya recalled a rough passage around Cape Town when tablecloths were dampened to prevent crockery from slipping, while ‘passengers and waiters held hands to form a chain’ so people could safely leave the dining room.\textsuperscript{119}

Added to the discomfort of the inclement weather were concerns about the

\textsuperscript{115} Caunt, Private papers.
\textsuperscript{116} Anon, arr. Jan/Feb. 1967, Survey 60.
\textsuperscript{118} Anon, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 17.
seaworthiness of the vessel. These complaints included: the air conditioning, which broke down on several occasions, many toilets that did not work and rooms that were infested with cockroaches.\textsuperscript{120} One participant was a turbine operator and worried through the entire voyage at the ‘steam leaks and blows everywhere’.\textsuperscript{121} Geoffrey Shapland shared his concerns when he said; ‘the ship was a real rust bucket (we sometimes wondered if it was going to sink) the crew seemed to be continually painting over the rust on the outside’.\textsuperscript{122}

Passengers in March 1966 had a real scare:

During our passage through the Mediterranean thick black smoke began to pour from the ships one and only funnel spewing tiny black particles of oily material across the upper deck in whatever direction the wind may have been blowing. My first thought was ‘fire down below’ but my fears were groundless and the black smoke attributed to an engine mal-function (or so we were told) which slowed the vessel and resulted in a late arrival in Fremantle.\textsuperscript{123}

Most of the participants in the study suffered from seasickness at some time during the voyage, possibly due to rough seas, but also no doubt due to the stress of the unknown. Some were given injections of anti-nausea medication.\textsuperscript{124} A number of passengers were sick for the entire journey, including Penelope Lennon’s brother and Mary Rollo.\textsuperscript{125} Even the crew were seasick. The vessel apparently had no stabilisers and as a result was tossed violently in rough weather. Moyna Harland recalled how the passengers complained about the lack of stabilisers and says that on her voyage in 1966 the ship was renamed ‘Castor-oil Felice’.\textsuperscript{126}

Other forms of illness descended on the overcrowded passengers including gastro-enteritis, sunburn and other childhood ailments such as measles and chicken-pox. Jeanne Reid was plagued with illness from the very start of the voyage. She became seasick before

\textsuperscript{121} Anon, arr. Mar/Apr. 1965, Survey 78.
\textsuperscript{123} Anon, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 19.
\textsuperscript{124} Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 41.
\textsuperscript{126} Harland, arr. Jul. 1962, Survey 22.
the ship left Southampton Waters and lamented the inadequate sterilisation facilities for baby
bottles and the food which made her children vomit. She complained at the hygiene of the
Italian passengers who were collected at Naples, though Hammerton and Thomson
suggest that in their research here was little evidence of racial tension on board. Children
were often sick with even the smallest ailments and the ships doctor was kept very busy. One
participant complained that he and his wife spent much of the voyage in the sick bay as their
children were so ill. A participant told of another problem: ‘During rough weather I fell
out of bed and badly bruised myself at the top of my legs’. Heat stroke affected adults and
children alike. Some participants remember that there were deaths during the voyage.

**Life on board**

The enjoyment of the voyage was often dependent on the age and responsibilities of the
passengers. Families with young children seem to have had the worst time. Hammerton
notes that the mothers may not have had to cook and clean but that they had a full time job
looking after children and washing and drying clothes while on board. He points out, ‘child
care facilities were not good and the playrooms were often chaotic.’ All respondents
agreed that life for mothers on the migrant ships was difficult: ‘the laundry facilities were
limited—no drying machines—just a hot room full of clothes lines, very difficult for those
who had several children’. One mother wrote, ‘I didn’t go ashore because of my daughter
being ill’, and another that, ‘I think we only had one part evening to dance and were then
called back to attend to our baby boy in distress’. Frank Plummer was bothered by a ‘rebel

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129 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 45.
130 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 46.
133 Hammerton and Thomson, pp 105–106.
teenage daughter . . . The fact that there were 500 (mostly young) children on board did not contribute to a peaceful voyage’. Another writes, ‘Tony and I ate at different sittings so that the children were never left alone’. Some parents constantly worried about children falling overboard, and struggled to move them safely around the ship, including up and down the stairs. However, one participant was concerned about the lack of child supervision: ‘Kids left to fend for themselves, found a four year old climbing over the rail unsupervised, others running in groups down below while parents partied’. Participants who were children at the time, on the other hand, found the voyage more pleasurable. It seems there were lots of things for them to do. Jean Pope said, ‘the children enjoyed the facilities for young ones and found great amusement in the antics of their seniors in the crossing the line ceremony’. Davidson remembers that her two sons loved the freedom to run on deck, and nearly everything about the voyage though they ‘hated the smell and taste of garlic’. Children were generally well catered for with a school, pool and activities on the deck. Some appreciated the unusual opportunity to spend time with their parents. Jeanette Geurds learnt to play chess. Other children were excited with the food and the entertainment they encountered:

When Mum and Dad thought us two younger ones were asleep we could sneak out and peek through the railings at all the entertainment and boy! What a grand sight. In the day we had movies, ten pin bowling and a special room for teenagers, music etc.

For the young, single traveller the voyage was often the pleasure cruise of their dreams. For 23-year-old Phena Pritchard the voyage on the Castel Felice was wonderful:

Meeting people, dining, sunbathing, dancing, concerts, it was a five star cruise. We young people stayed in our own group and I think we all knew

140 Name withheld, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 80.
141 Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
142 Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 41.
each other after the first week . . . There were some romances, but with 4 and 6 in a cabin I don’t think there was much sexual activity. I think as a young traveller I was delighted with all aspects of our care. The most often requested song on our trip was ‘Moon River’.  

Patricia Reed enjoyed the time spent with new friends and the entertainment on board. Teenagers made friends quickly and Marilyn Fonte partied every evening.  

Some drank heartily of the cheap grog, one being hospitalized in 1968 due to alcohol poisoning according to Davies.  

Entertainment, including theme nights and concerts, was a regular feature of the voyage; often these were run by passenger volunteers. Special events were celebrated on board, including such occasions as Christmas and New Year. Most respondents fondly remember crossing the equator and the crew’s antics. Certificates were distributed and a banquet held. Jeanette Ross wrote; ‘crossing the equator ceremony was hilarious with lots of spaghetti being thrown and smeared over all the participants’. Some could recall the date: ‘Remember crossing the equator on Sunday 9 Jan. 1966’ and ‘Crossed equator 22 May, crossing the line ceremony I was a judge’. Others simply remembered the fun: ‘Crossing the equator was a riot; everyone threw themselves into the parts. It was a great party’. Education of sorts was also provided, a school for children and information sessions for adults. Chris Moore also remembered attending ‘Life in Australia’ classes, I went to one and learnt that you walk on your left, how civilised, not more than 5 mins in the sea and not more than 10mins on the beach in Australia, otherwise your pale skins will burn.
At Sea on the Castel Felice

DAILY ACTIVITIES

**Ir. Castel Felice**

At Sea with Sitmar

Wednesday 11th October 1967

Sunrise 6.22 a.m. Sunset 6.59 p.m.

**RELIGIOUS SERVICE**

- 7.15 a.m. Holy Mass (Roman Catholic)
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (C. of E.

**ENTertainments:**

- 9.00 a.m. School Class
- 10.00 a.m. Light Music - on tape
- 10.30 a.m. Keep Fit Class (for Ladies)
- 11.00 a.m. Morning Melodies - by Stardust Quintet
- 2.00 p.m. Kindergarten
- 5.00 p.m. Around the World Musical - by Stardust Quintet

**Marin for Children under 14 years of age**

- 3.00 p.m. Battle in Outer Space
  (2nd part)
  Starring: Minoru Tokada - Elias Richter
  
  No Ticket Required

**AUSTRALIAN DOCUMENTARIES**

- 2.30 p.m. Brisbane
- 9.15 p.m. Pioneer City
- 8.00 p.m. Week End Fishing

**Horse Race & Dance**

Plays the Stardust Quintet

**TONIGHT ON THE SCREEN**

- At 7.45 & 9.45 p.m.
- F.B.I. - Code 90
  Starring: Jack Kelly - Ray Danton
  Featured for two more nights

**NEWS AND NOTES**

**Mileage Sweepstake** - Passengers can bet on the number of miles run by the ship from noon yesterday to noon today. Bets are accepted at the Purser's Office from 9 to 11 a.m. daily except on Sundays.

**Tournaments** - Participants are kindly requested to check the time of their games posted on the notice board in the Foyer and to play games regularly.

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At sea on the Castel Felice: Daily activities guide, 11 October 1967.\(^{155}\)

\(^{155}\)Patterson collection.
Passengers celebrated crossing the equator. Certificates such as this were distributed on the Castel Felice to commemorate the occasion. 156

156 Caunt, Private papers

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Ports of call

Perhaps the most exciting diversions were the various ports of call for the migrant ships. Depending on the route taken these could include Naples, Port Said, Port Suez, Aden, Colombo, Bombay or the Canary Islands and Cape Town. Those who came through the Suez Canal speak of the sand and the pyramids they saw along the banks. Some were troubled by the standards of living they saw in the ports of call. Many participants who stopped in Aden were confronted by the poverty of its people, and the children who swam to the ship to sell the small items they dragged behind them in the water. Traders surrounded the ship whenever it docked, and through the Suez Canal some were allowed on board. The haggling that followed was new to the English passengers. Some were revisiting parts of the world they had first seen as service men in the Second World War. Norris remembered that his first view of the African coast was memorable because:

It was AFRICA, not part of Europe. After a cruise through the Mediterranean we docked at Port Said. Having left there in 1946 after army service in the Middle East I noted nothing had changed, the smelly bum boats coming out to the ship, the same buildings most in need of demolition, it was as though I had never been away. We were not allowed ashore, our stay only being for 4 hours, and night time in Port Said for a visitor ain’t healthy. Whilst docked I retired to bed only to be awoken by Vicky my wife with ‘you speak a smattering of Arabic (Barrack room version) come out and help the girls who are trying to barter with the sellers from the bum boats that have pulled up alongside our docking’. For the next two hours I was haggling with the boat merchants over the price of watches, handbags and jewellery, and advised the ladies not to buy the watches no matter how cheap. When the Arabs discovered I could speak their tongue re money matters they commenced to drop their prices. At 3am I retired knackered to my bed wishing I had not learned a little of their language. A quiet trip through the Suez arriving at Aden where we were permitted ashore for 2-3 hours. The conditions there were awful with a surfeit of beggars and poverty and dodgy traders.

Frank Plummer remembered

The ship stopped at Port Said where my daughter and I joined a crowd from the ship and travelled overland to Suez stopping overnight in Cairo (where 5 of us visited a Cairo nightclub) rejoining the ship at Suez whilst my wife

and boys stayed on board and travelled through the Suez Canal. This way we were able to exchange experiences and make the most of the voyage.\textsuperscript{160}

Hammerton says ‘British migrants experienced their journey and stopovers as excited tourist.\textsuperscript{161} But for some the circumstances were frightening, especially in 1966 when they thought they were on the last boat to pass through the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{162} Others were shocked in 1966 at evidence of gun battles in Aden and the armed guard who accompanied them on the shore.\textsuperscript{163} One passenger recalled the experience in 1966:

We stopped at Aden, what an experience that was the Arabs were trying to get the British soldiers out and fighting for that right. The British army was on guard there (the Black Watch). We were only allowed in one street to shop. We bought an electric fan which was put to good use when we got to Australia. The soldiers were armed and on guard on foot and in trucks at each end of the street. There was sniper fire and as the ship pulled out of the harbour the local radio station was blown up. If we had realised how dangerous it was we would never have taken the children ashore. We also went through the Suez Canal – we were the last convoy to go through. Not long after lots of ships were blown up blocking the canal.\textsuperscript{164}

The risk to the impromptu tourists was real. Victor Humphries recalled

When we arrived in Port Said ready to go through the Suez Canal a coach trip was arranged to Cairo and stay overnight then pick up the \textit{Castel Felice} up at he other end of the canal. I took my daughter as my wife was frightened of being abducted by Arabs. We went to the Cairo museum and saw the treasures of Tutankhamen and it cost us £8 each and the overnight stay was in a 4 star hotel. We went ashore at Aden but the British army were there and having trouble with the locals and 4 soldiers with machine guns came into a big store looking for radicals so we went back on board only to be told a bomb had exploded 30 mins after we had left.\textsuperscript{165}

Another said

Some passengers left at Port Said to go overland to Aden but Ted wouldn’t let us. He had served in the 8\textsuperscript{th} army during the war and wasn’t keen to go again, thought on board was so much safer. There was a lot of trouble there at the time.\textsuperscript{166}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{160} Plummer, arr. Aug. 1966, Survey 58.
\textsuperscript{161} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{162} Name withheld, arr. July 1966, Survey 25.
\textsuperscript{164} Anon, arr. Jan/Feb. 1967, Survey 60
\textsuperscript{165} Humphries, arr. Dec. 1966, Survey 34.
\textsuperscript{166} Anon, arr. Dec. 1964, Survey 50.
\end{flushright}
Though some endured a tough passage, most participants now remember the voyage favourably. Some, enjoyed their time on the ship, and made many long-term friends. One wrote, ‘think everyone wanted it to go on for ever’. Others regretted leaving behind the friends they had made. Many felt excited at the prospect of their new life, and as the
At Sea on the Castel Felice

ship neared Australia the migrants’ dreams, excitement and worries about the new life ahead of them increased. Phena Pritchard remembered the voyage as:

A five star cruise, news bulletins were posted daily which I think helped the ‘out of touch’ feeling. It was around one of these that we grouped silently to read the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Some were more nervous than others I think about what would await us in Australia.

However, the reality of the voyage was, in some cases, worse than they could possibly have imagined—a ‘ship of horror’, as one suggested. One thing is certain, though many of the participants travelled on the same ship, many on the same voyage, all had different stories to tell. To some it was a positive experience, to others a ‘total disappointment’. The memory of the passengers of their voyage to Australia, unquestionably, has now, been coloured by time. For some it might now seem better than it was; for others, worse. Many had hoped for a luxurious, relaxing cruise. It came true for some, but never for all. The crew were regarded by many as the trip’s saving grace, yet by others as lecherous. The medical facilities were praised by some and lamented by others. The food was plentiful and varied as the menus demonstrate, yet some remember it as bland and repetitive. There seems to have been plenty of entertainment provided but often family responsibilities meant it could not be enjoyed to the full. There were also genuine concerns at the ship’s hygiene, accommodation and seaworthiness. The voyage was for some, the first of a number of failed promises, and may well have coloured the perspectives of many as they settled in Australia.

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CHAPTER FOUR

‘Another boatload of bloody Poms’
Arriving in Fremantle

The British migrants who came to Australia in the 1960s were accustomed to a wide range of social services and benefits. Under the British National Health Scheme pharmaceuticals, visits to doctors, dentists and hospitals were all free. There were sickness benefits, old age pensions, social security payments for the unemployed and maternity allowances paid to mothers of new babies. Many employers gave new mothers paid maternity leave.\(^1\) There had been an expansive post-war reconstruction effort during the 1950s. Much of the substandard housing had been demolished and new estates created where homes had modern conveniences including indoor toilets, double glazing and electric heating systems. Food rationing and other shortages had been alleviated and the shops were full of the latest gadgets and fashions. The free education system was being overhauled. New schools at all levels were built; grammar and high schools were replaced by a comprehensive system of education.\(^2\) People were travelling to the continent for holidays—no longer bound to the seaside holiday camp or guest house and the inclement English weather.

Another world

In coming to Australia many British migrants assumed that because people in Australia spoke the English language and observed English law they were coming to a ‘Britain in the South Pacific’,\(^3\) or as Wentworth said ‘a new Britannia in another world’.\(^4\) This was surely a

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\(^2\) Marwick, The Sixties, p. 369.
country where the weather was better and there was a ‘society not constrained by class or status’.

There is a land where honey flows,
Where laughing corn luxuriant grows,
Land of the myrtle and the rose,
On hill and plain the clust’ring vine
Is gushing with the purple wine,
And cups are quaffed to thee and thine—Australia.

But they found conservative attitudes, sexism and a country at war in Vietnam. Far from being a classless society, Australia had its own class system—just one which was different to that in Britain. Money and property were important. When my family moved to Medina, a suburb developed to house workers from the burgeoning industries in Kwinana, in the late 1960s it was clear that houses had been allocated to employees on basis of their work status. Most of the rented houses were weatherboard, some had entrance halls, some not. Foremen were given larger houses with entrance halls and the executives had brick houses in a separate area. Social activities within the industry were strictly divided by class; even at the morning teas in private houses the wives of workers and the wives of foremen or higher executives did not mix. Social confusion arose when people outside the industries came to live in the area, especially when they bought a brick house. Sexism was evident in the all male society of the 1960s; I found, like Hammerton, that women were discriminated against in employment and could not obtain loans to buy property.

Charlie Fox writes that the 1960s was one of the most important decades in Australian history. Change was everywhere. For some it was a ‘golden age’, but for others

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7 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 140.
an ‘unmitigated calamity’. Hudson suggests that Australia’s connection to the United Kingdom was still important in the 1960s but that Britain’s attempts to enter the European Common Market and the withdrawal of its troops east of Suez signalled the end of the relationship. The manner in which it was done provoked Malouf to suggest that Britain was ‘selling Australia down the sewer’. Australian foreign policy became more focused on North America and Asia. Trade changed to such a degree that Gough Whitlam suggested that Australia ‘had ceased to be an English farm and was now a Japanese quarry’.

The involvement of Australia in the war with Vietnam was part of this gradual breakdown of the relationship with Britain. Australia had become more reliant on the strength of the United States and needed to show its solidarity by supporting the fight against communism. With that came an increase in American cultural influence on Australia. Gerster speaks of a ‘cargo cult for all things American’. In 1966 the Australian currency was changed from pounds to the decimal dollar.

One of my respondents, after overcoming the initial shock of arriving at Fremantle’s corrugated iron sheds, described her first impression of Australia as ‘Americanised’. Hammerton says some of his respondents had expressed a similar surprise, describing Fremantle as ‘like stepping into a Wild West film expecting to see a ‘Posse’. The British migrants were perturbed to see policemen with guns and thought it was ‘how they imagined America to be’. Peters, on the other hand, says many European refugees and displaced persons expected a primitive place with kangaroos and dingoes in the street. She also says

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8 Charlie Fox, ‘The Times They Were A-changing: The sixties was a time of transformation for Australia as a culture of slow moving, unified, Anglo-centrism became one of diversity and shifting boundaries’, West Australian, 12 August 2006, p. 62.
16 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 132.
Britons thought they were supposed to be the most welcome of all immigrants, so one family was surprised to be greeted by a wharfie who cried ‘another boatload of bloody Poms’. However, authorities assumed that the British migrant would be easily assimilated into the Australian way of life, because ‘the major institutions, government, law, trade union movement, health and education were all modelled on the British institutions’. However, as Thomson notes, it was a struggle for the migrants to make sense of their new life and understand the differences in the world around them. In reality most of the newcomers found things to be not as they had expected. They were not impressed by ‘the excessive familiarity and informal social contacts’. Methods of work were different and many were dissatisfied with the standard of housing. Those who went to stay in the government hostels experienced a great cultural shock. Peters says, ‘A number of migrants expressed the opinion that if they had known the conditions [in Point Walter] they would never have come to Australia’. A majority of the participants in my study were most unhappy with life in the migrant hostels. Perhaps it is true, as Lack feels, that the British migrants were ‘psychologically unprepared for the tremendous transition to the Australian way of life’. 

Australia in the mid-1960s had a booming economy, due in the main to the development of its vast mineral resources, but it lacked the cultural sophistication of Britain and Europe. Western Australia was in the forefront of Australia’s economic resurgence, with the mining of large deposits of bauxite in the Darling Ranges, nickel in Kambalda and oil in the north-west of the state. As the state joined the rush to supply overseas markets,

22 Lack and Templeton, p. 88.
processing plants for these minerals were set up in the Rockingham/Kwinana region, increasing the need there for skilled workers.23 The male basic wage (in dollar terms) in Western Australia in 1966 was $32.80 per week, while the average weekly wage was $47.20.24 The basic wage for women was not mentioned in the yearbook, reflecting their place in the workforce. At the time, notes Eveline, women could expect 75% of the male basic wage for doing the same work. Often their careers, particularly in the public service, were terminated on marriage. Protective legislation restricted the employment opportunities for women into the 1990s.25

In the early and mid-1960s, Australia had not yet caught up with the social changes of North America and Europe. Knightley says that at this time Australia was ‘hedonistic’ with economic stability, growing prosperity, low unemployment and strengthening ties with the United States.26 Jenkins seems to agree suggesting that Australians in the 1960s spent ‘a lot of time enjoying themselves’.27 The White Australia policy was still in existence and strongly defended despite pressure from the United Nations and the United States for the recognition of the rights of the Aborigine. To be an Australian was to be a white male, while Australian women were generally valued mostly for their place in the home and were not welcome in hotels or clubs.28 Lange proposes that the experience of women before they migrated affected their acceptance of conditions in Australia. The Italian women would find little difference in the expectations here of women, but the Yugoslav women, who had been used to legal abortions and equal pay for equal work before they migrated, were not impressed by the lowly status of women in Australia.29 Many of my female participants had

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29 Lange, p. 205.
pursued professional public service careers as women in Britain. They found continuing their careers in Australia practically impossible. The plight of the migrant displaced person, male or female, was even more difficult than that of the British migrant. As Peters points out, ‘the non-Anglophile’ work force was perceived to be inferior to the rest of the community.\textsuperscript{30}

The Australian involvement in the Vietnam War saw young Australian men, including children of migrants, being conscripted by ballot and called up for overseas service in the armed forces. The conscription was in force from 1964 to 1972. Twenty year old men were chosen at random using their date of birth; yet people at the time had to be 21 years of age in Australia before being allowed to vote. There was a chance of deferment of military service, for instance if you were a student at a university completing your first degree, but men who refused to enter the armed forces could be fined or imprisoned.\textsuperscript{31} British migrants were sometimes unaware of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. One of my participants, Mrs Collyer, says her family returned to England because they feared their sons might be called up to fight.\textsuperscript{32}

Jenkins says that, like other new migrants, he ‘blandly assumed Australia wanted us’.\textsuperscript{33} This assumption was not always true: in many cases the new migrants were confronted by open hostility. Remarks such as ‘the only good Pom is a dead Pom’, ‘Pommy Bastard’, ‘Pommy Pig’ and ‘you lot only bath once a week’, were common.\textsuperscript{34} Zamoyska writes that migrants were regarded as outsiders and that there was a general ‘anti-British feeling’.\textsuperscript{35} Appleyard agrees, adding that, ‘some experiences were quite nasty’.\textsuperscript{36} In 1966 one British migrant family, who went to the forestry town of Tone River in the south west of Western Australia, had stones thrown through their windows and received a letter saying ‘Go home

\textsuperscript{30} Peters, Milk and Honey, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{32} M. Collyer, arr. Nov. 1965, Survey 105.
\textsuperscript{33} Jenkins, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{34} Betka Zamoyska, The Ten Pound Fare: Experiences of British people who emigrated to Australia in the 1950s, Viking, London, 1988, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{35} Zamoyska, p. 31.
crawler Pommy. We don’t want you low crawlers’. ³⁷

There were problems in Australia for the immigrant housewife. Jenkins, writing in 1969, commented that in Australia the food and cleaning products in the shops were not the same as the British women had been used to; there were different cuts of meat and different fruits.³⁸ In 1966 butter cost 50 cents a pound, and eggs 60 cents a dozen. Pork was the most expensive meat at 56 cents a pound for pork chops and 76 cents a pound for bacon. Lamb was much cheaper and mutton the cheapest of all. My own experience was that the Australian furniture seemed to be of very poor quality by comparison with what was available in Britain. Jenkins writes that in 1969 he found that there was less variety in the shops than he had known in Britain and the prices were about one third higher.³⁹ The electrical goods were not as sophisticated: to most British housewives the Australian electric jug seemed to be inferior to the English electric kettle. Modern appliances brought from Britain were not compatible with the local electricity supply, although some smaller appliances could be adapted by replacing the power plug. Licences were required for radio and television services ($5.50 for radio and $12 for a TV) and British telecommunication appliances that the migrants may have brought with them were also found to be not compatible.⁴⁰

One of the major differences was the disposal of waste-water and sewage— in the 1960s almost the whole of England had deep sewerage, but much of Western Australia relied on a septic tank system. In some outer metropolitan suburbs and country towns there was the ‘dunny’ (earth or pan toilet) at the end of the garden with the human waste being collected at night by the ‘night-soil men’. There was also the grease traps installed outside the kitchen window so that the grease from the kitchen effluent would not contaminate the septic tanks. The traps became very smelly, attracted flies, and needed cleaning regularly. The Western

³⁸ Jenkins, p. 42.
³⁹ Jenkins, p. 46.
Australian Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Board only came into being in 1964. Most migrants had been told of the glorious weather—an average of eight hours of sunshine a day, but few knew about the flies, the mosquitos, the bush fires, the danger of sunburn and the septic systems that were such a surprise to many. Jenkins listed other differences he encountered:

- The moon hangs upside down;
- Traffic lights ‘Walk’—‘Don’t Walk’, lay-by for Christmas, light bulbs called globes, Aussie Rules football, counter lunches and drive in bottle shops and cinemas, strange illnesses, school sores and sudden, severe diarrhoea and vomiting.

**We see the land**

Hammerton described the arrival as a ‘frenetic process’, with people expressing a mixture of anxiety and excitement. As the migrants in the 1960s neared the shores of Western Australia their thoughts were probably the same as those of the early settlers. Some would have been relieved to see the long stretches of coastline that meant the end of their voyage, while others were perhaps worried about losing the security of the ship. Some may well have felt doubt concerning their decision to emigrate. All had been on the ships for a number of weeks and many had not enjoyed the experience at all. Some, who had made friends on the voyage, would be regretting the end of the friendships, while others, for whom the passage had been stressful, would be rejoicing at the prospect of land. Peters says many migrants formed a close community on the ship and found ‘getting off was not as appealing as they originally imagined’. Hammerton says that one of his respondents felt sad at the end of the voyage and ‘he dreaded leaving the safety of the ship’. Although none of my respondents expressed a similar emotion, Jim Yeomans said that when he ‘realised my family was now committed to a different regime I felt a little exposed’.

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41 *Western Australian Yearbook, no. 6, 1967*, p. 247.
42 Jenkins, p. 246; Note: and to my amazement the perambulators were hung on the back of buses.
43 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 125.
45 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 117.
route to other Australian cities, but for all them the first sight of Australia was the Western
Australian coastline. Often it was the beaches of Rottnest. Christopher Moore described the
scene:

When we arrived off the coast of Western Australia all we could see was
this coast with a strip of sand—nothing else, no buildings nobody. Then
somebody said it was Rottnest Island. We then came round the island from
the north and then we saw the coast again. In the heat haze we saw a long
strip of sand, as we got close we saw houses, someone from Yorkshire said
that suburb there is Scarborough. The next thing we saw was the pine trees
and the Dingo Flour Mill. Then the harbour, a big cheer went up when we
went past the end of a groyne.\(^{47}\)

Other people also remembered the pine trees and Dingo on the flour mill in North
Fremantle. One respondent said she felt happy when she saw ‘children and families fishing
and waving from the mole’.\(^{48}\) Jeanette Geurds, however, was not so pleased when she saw
‘many signs saying go home’.\(^{49}\) While some respondents reported a general excitement on
the ship, others were more circumspect. David Roberts remembered thinking, ‘What the hell
have I let myself in for?’\(^{50}\) Another, who was a young girl at the time, recalled her parents
saying ‘God what have we come to?’.\(^{51}\) Hazel Jackson was sure ‘every passenger on the
vessel was up at dawn lining the rails from every vantage point to look at Fremantle and their
newly adopted land’\(^{52}\).

**Disembarking**

Peters says many migrants expected a band, flowers and ‘even a handshake’, while
European displaced persons were often shocked to find that the immigration officials
expected them to understand English.\(^{53}\) Immigration officials and Australian doctors
boarded the boat in Gage Roads and for some it was the ‘first Australian accents we

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\(^{48}\) Name withheld, arr. Apr. 1966, Survey 18.
\(^{52}\) Name withheld, arr. Nov, 1963, Survey 46.
Tom Rollo was surprised when immigration officials ‘tried to convince us to move to Adelaide as quote—there was no work or accommodation here’. There was general confusion among the passengers who were required:

To queue up in the ship’s lounge to have health and quarantine checks prior to landing. The checks were something of a joke; I was obviously ill but allowed to disembark with no query as to the cause of my weakened state.

But the Savilles remembered ‘Much movement on board and the crew very busy as we were processed, every one polite and pleasant’.

Most respondents were greeted by the sunshine they had been promised. Peter Norris remembers the temperature being ‘35 degrees’. Another wrote, ‘The heat was awful I remember I laughed at seeing business men in shorts carting brief cases’. Unfortunately some arrived in Fremantle during very bad weather, so did not get a first sight of land from the sea. One participant’s memory of the time was that it was ‘like being on a cattle ship, lots of cases and last minute packing’. Marilyn Fonte recalled: ‘The sky was grey and the rain fell lightly, I think I can remember a large welcome sign’. Another had to smile: ‘a sign at Fremantle said “Welcome to Sunny Australia”’; it was pouring with rain at the time.

Landing in Western Australia in January 1968, Rosemary Howarth, upon seeing the rain wondered ‘were the stories about 8 hours of sunshine true?’ Christine Scambler, too, was greeted by rain:

My Dad had told us stories as he had been here when he was in the Merchant Navy. I thought it would be hot but it was raining when we docked at Fremantle. I remember thinking how huge the wharf was and seeing the ‘Welcome’ sign on the wall of the terminal.
So contrary to the findings of Hammerton and Thomson, many of the participants in my survey did not immediately find Fremantle sunny and hot, or even clean. One wrote, ‘I remember the rain and the dirty old Fremantle sheds, a bit of a shock not having any sun’. Perhaps it was this kind of weather that left some passengers with such a poor first impression. ‘Fremantle and environs most unimpressive’. Patricia Reed remembered being surprised that after:

Being told what a new land this was it was a bit of a shock to see dirty old Fremantle. The buildings were old with tin roofs and I thought it looked like a cowboy town.

While another described her first impression as ‘Sandy, Americanised like the “Wild West”’. Not everyone was dismayed. One participant commented on the blue water and wrote ‘How great the weather, how many trees there were and how green the land looked, not an emerald green, a grey green’. Another who had served in the Royal Navy remembered, ‘From a distance Fremantle was most attractive’. And Chris Moore recorded that:

The sky was blue and it was a hot day, the boat listed badly when everyone crammed the starboard side and the Captain put over a message across the speakers asking for people to move to the port side to stabilise the ship.

Setting foot in Australia was often accompanied by drama and chaos. A respondent told the story of the passenger who wanted to be ‘the first one on Australian soil, dashing down the ramp straight into a glass door, which made him the first one in hospital’. Some had vivid memories:

An unforgettable incident in the Customs Hall at the Fremantle Terminal occurred shortly after docking with the arrival of a young man who asked for us by name. As we were 12,000 miles from England in a country where

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65 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 125.
69 Anon, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 80.
70 Name withheld, arr. Jan/Feb 1967, Survey 60.
71 Name withheld, arr. Dec/Jan1967/68, Survey 64.
we knew nobody this is an amazing happening. This is a true story—the manager of the ANZ Bank at 237 Murray Street, Perth (now Target) to which we had transferred our money prior to departure had sent this young man. He had been directed to meet us at the ship and welcome us to Australia and offer any assistance we required. When we tell this story to the disillusioned and mainly ex-bank customers it is greeted by jaw-dropping disbelief. However we were so impressed with this service we remained ANZ customers for more than 20 years. After clearing customs this young man helped us to secure accommodation at a hotel (no longer there) in Mount Street, Perth for a few nights.74

Isabella Mitchell had a wonderful welcome:

My husband rushed in and said, ‘come quickly we are nearly in dock’. We went out to see this huge mound of rocks which was the approach to Gage Roads. [?] Soon we heard a brass band playing ’76 Trombones’. It was the RAAF band to meet us, it was thrilling. We got off the ship as soon as we could and met our new friends; they made us feel very welcome. There was a bouquet of Australian wildflowers for Nell and I and we were told a party had been arranged for us that night.75

Many of my participants had friends or relatives waiting for them on the dockside.76

Margaret Bolton, who was returning with her new husband after working in England for a few years, was met by ‘family and friends’ as were several other passenger.77 Kenneth Ward recognised his ‘Grandfather and Uncle who I had not seen for 20 years’.78 Others were welcomed by their future employers.79 Religious organisations were often waiting to welcome the new migrants.80 But Moyna Harland who was coming to Western Australia to join the fiancé she had not seen for 6 months became worried, thinking:

What if either of us had changed our minds? I hid behind a pillar in the arrivals hall for ages watching him looking for me. Eventually as the crowds thinned I stepped out to face him and Australia.81

Chris Davies ‘walked down the gangplank with suitcase in one hand and a toolbox in the other with about £20 in my pocket’.82 There was no one to meet the Rollos either—nor had

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77 Margaret Bolton, arr. Dec. 1963, Survey 76.
78 Kenneth Ward, arr. 1947, Survey 75.
82 Arthur Christopher Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
they pre-booked accommodation. Tom Rollo said:

> Had to use Traveller’s Aid to recommend a guest house and how to get there. We went to Perth and stayed at the Cloisters Boarding House in St George’s Terrace. \(^{83}\)

The participants who were going interstate often left the boat for a short time in Fremantle. They toured Fremantle and Perth or went to the beach. Some travelled by taxi and Alan Huckins reports going to Perth on a ‘very old-fashioned looking train’. \(^{84}\) Another couple who were headed for Sydney were greeted by a couple of Western Australians at the dock and taken to ‘Perth and Kings Park’. The Watkins became good friends with these strangers who were later influential in the family’s decision to settle in Western Australia. \(^{85}\) David Roberts, on his way to Sydney, was given a tour by the CWA. \(^{86}\) Many of those who were to sail on from Fremantle took the opportunity, like Iris Wilson, en route to Melbourne, to go for a decent meal’. \(^{87}\) Lesley Ross, also going to Melbourne, remembered that; ‘After eating Italian versions of English cooking for the past four weeks and five days all I wanted was some good old bangers and mash’. \(^{88}\)

Those who were to settle in Western Australia had mixed emotions. The Baldwins remember the feelings of ‘relief, fright and chaos’. \(^{89}\) Others expressed the sense of disempowerment as they were ‘herded out like cattle’. \(^{90}\) Lillian Clarke also wrote of her helplessness: ‘we were rounded up, loaded on buses and taken to the hostel’. \(^{91}\) Migrants were often confronted by big queues when disembarking. \(^{92}\) Sometimes the port was so busy with passenger ships the migrants were off loaded at the cargo shed, ‘hot dirty—with no

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\(^{83}\) Rollo, arr. Apr. 1962, Survey 44.
\(^{84}\) Alan Huckins, arr. Apr/May 1967, Survey 61.
\(^{87}\) Wilson, arr. July 1964, Survey 11.
\(^{89}\) John and Joan Baldwin, arr. May 1966, Survey 57.
\(^{91}\) Lillian Clarke, arr. July 1966, Survey 2.
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facilities’.\(^{93}\) Having been advised by a ship’s officer to change into light clothing Frank Plummer remembered standing ‘shivering in a cold south westerly wind’.\(^{94}\) Being processed by the customs officers was the next issue to cause dismay. Peter Thomson remembered the confusion as to ‘where their baggage was’,\(^{95}\) while Marilyn Fonte was embarrassed when her suitcase was opened and her clothes checked.\(^{96}\) Peggy Parkin was surprised when her husband’s pistol was impounded.\(^{97}\) Peter Norris had a very interesting tale to tell of his first experience on the shores of Western Australia:

We were greeted by a customs official; I happened to be carrying a book I had been reading called the *Caine Mutiny* so I gave a brief resume of the story. Much to the amusement of the bystanders he took the book and flicked through a few pages saying, ‘we are trying to stop pornography entering this country and we have to be careful’. He returned the book to me. So much for my “Welcome to Australia”. Whilst waiting on the dockside I noticed men, all of them wearing shorts and blue singlets, carrying Gladstone bags. Was this some kind of cult or perhaps a sports team? On enquiring I was told they were ‘wharfies’ which left me still pondering for I had not caught up with Australian colloquialisms.\(^{98}\)

Christine Scambler was disappointed when she had to leave behind ‘a lovely pair of red shoes that came from Aden’.\(^{99}\)

**Somewhere to go**

Most of the respondents to my study had accommodation waiting for them when they arrived. Peters has completed two works on migrant hostels in Western Australia. In her research she found accommodation was largely determined by the entry category.\(^{100}\) Some moved in with family and friends who had sponsored them, others were reliant on immigrant centres

\(^{93}\) Name withheld, arr. Apr. 1963, Survey 6.
\(^{95}\) Peter Thomson, arr. Jul/Aug. 1968, Survey 72.
\(^{100}\) Peters et al., *Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre*; Nonja Peters, Fiona Bush and Jenny Gregory, *Graylands and Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres*, Centre for Western Australian History, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, 1996.(Passim)
especially set up to receive them. While there were many complaints from British migrants about the hostel accommodation they were offered, they were nevertheless fortunate not to have been sent to some of the migrant camps at Cunderdin and Northam where refugees and displaced persons were accommodated in basic dormitories and blankets were strung up as the only form of privacy.

The building companies (such as RDC and Landalls) and other sponsors found apartments for their clients. In Melbourne the Wilson family, who were sponsored by the Baptist Church, ‘moved into a rented flat complete with borrowed furniture’. After being met by a representative of the RSPCA Tom Edwards and his family were taken to the Belmont Hotel. One family arrived very early in the morning and were met by representatives of the Western Australian education department and relatives, and then taken to a hotel, their accommodation paid for by the education department.

Perhaps the saddest stories are told by those passengers who were to go on to government hostels. ‘Wives were separated from husbands as men had to sort out the baggage’. Jeanette Geurds remembers, ‘Women and children were put on buses whilst the men remained to claim luggage’. I personally have memories of that time. On a January day when the temperature was about 104F my two little girls and I (six months pregnant, wearing winter clothing), were crowded onto a hot bus with other mothers and children to be whisked away, leaving our menfolk behind on the dockside. Hot and exhausted and not a little scared, we did not know where we were going or even if we would see our loved ones again.

We did not realise how lucky we were to keep our children with us. Some respondents told of how their children were separated from them. One saw his ‘seven

Another boatload of bloody Poms’

children taken to Fairbridge Farm’, 107 Pinjarra, and another, then a child, remembered ‘being taken away from my parents with younger brothers and sisters’. 108 One respondent who was only about 14 years old when she arrived recalled how:

Fairbridge Farm was arranged but we were not told we would be separated from our parents. All of the children 15 years and below were taken off on a bus. I remember my parents saying they’ll see us soon. Terrible feeling – God what was going on? 109

Her sister, who was then 18 years old, remembered being left with two older siblings; ‘We were all huddled down the gangplank waiting to go wherever; Mum and Dad and six children were sent Fairbridge’. 110 The Fairbridge Society Migration Scheme was negotiated between the Commonwealth government and the Fairbridge Society in 1958. The idea was to ease the labour shortage by sponsoring large families to become assisted migrants. Central to this agreement was ‘separating children from their parents upon arrival in Australia’. Many parents did not understand that this meant passing over custody and guardianship of their children to Fairbridge and the Australian government. The parents and children over 16 years were housed in migrant hostels in Perth, some 100kms north of Pinjarra. They were expected to work and find suitable accommodation so that the family could be reunited. The period of separation could sometimes be many months because the wage earners had to pay the costs of accommodation at the hostel and maintenance for the child or children at Fairbridge before setting aside monies to find accommodation. Distance, and the sparsity of transport, meant that the children often did not see their parents during this time. By 1969 the Scheme ceased to operate, mainly because of the actions of a group of Irishmen who took their children to Graylands and set up community housing for incoming migrants. But ‘many children remained guardians of the state, even once returned to their families’. 111

Basic, temporary accommodation was available to new migrants at such hostels as Point Walter and Graylands. Here the Commonwealth Bank promised comfortable facilities in its guide book, *Thinking of Australia*? Many considered the hostels to be far worse than promised.

**Hostel life**

Gough Whitlam attacked the Liberal government over the housing situation, employment and social security policies, which he says were the major sources of discontent. The assisted migrants were housed in the two major hostels offering accommodation to newly arriving British migrants who had been assisted by the Commonwealth or Western Australia state agencies during the 1960s. The Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre was open from 1947 to 1969 and Graylands from 1951 to 1986. Point Walter was the focus of most complaints, mainly because of the lack of public transport servicing the camp. Magnificently situated on high ground overlooking the Swan River it was leased from the defence department and converted for basic family accommodation. Hostels were intended to be a temporary

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112 *Thinking of Australia*, pp. 62–63.
113 Appleyard, Ray and Segal, p. 147.
114 Peters et al., *Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre*, p. 10.
Another boatload of bloody Poms’

resting place while the migrant family found work and suitable housing. However, in Western Australia they seem to have fallen far short of the services said to be provided in the hostels by the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council. These publications promised a ‘community hall, full hospital and outpatient centre, infant health, children’s playgrounds’\textsuperscript{115}. Peters says a number of migrants claimed that Point Walter had been ‘glamorised’ in the literature supplied to them and the distance of the hostel from employment centres such as Fremantle and Perth had been underestimated.\textsuperscript{116} Used for amphibian training and convalescence during the Second World War, the location of the camp already had a chequered history when it was converted to house 350 families. Peter describes the conditions the migrants faced: there were no fly wires fitted to windows or doors, and where there were barbed wire fences and stop signs at the entrance—surprising many migrants—and where the spraying of DDT was regularly carried out.\textsuperscript{117} One participant recalled that she, ‘woke up one morning and all the walls were covered with little white spiders, millions of them, but we had our trusty ‘bug spray’ which we were given when we arrived’.\textsuperscript{118} One wonders just how many migrants sprayed DDT around without knowing of its toxicity.

Hammerton found there was a universal feeling of ‘shock’ when the migrants were taken to these hostels.\textsuperscript{119} My respondents agree. Loretta Thomas wrote that ‘I’m sure Point Walter would be classed as hostel accommodation but it didn’t have the facilities that immigrants enjoy today. I can remember eating our food off tin plates and drinking out of tin mugs’.\textsuperscript{120} A respondent, who had come to Australia under the Lonnie Scheme, expected to be housed almost immediately. She was not impressed by the conditions at the Point Walter Migrant Centre:

Accommodation—pretty awful. Facilities even worse. Food OK but monotonous the same weekly menu was used the entire four months we

\textsuperscript{115} Thinking of Australia, pp.62-63.
\textsuperscript{116} Peters et al, Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{117} Peters et al, Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre, pp 16–21.
\textsuperscript{119} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{120} Loretta Thomas, arr. June 1951, Survey 37.
Migrant Camp Rules. These rules were nailed to the wall of Northam’s migrant camp where many European workers were sent. Each hostel, though, operated under guidelines of a similar nature.

Jeanette Geurds also had memories of the Point Walter hostel:

Accommodation—1 small hut with 4 single beds, curtains to secure privacy, 1 small cupboard. Clean food in dining room, well catered for. Transport –

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121 Peters et al. Graylands and Swanbourne Migrant Reception, Appendix 5.
very isolated needed a car or had a long walk to Canning Highway to catch a bus.\(^{123}\)

In an interview her brother Michael recalled that when they arrived at Point Walter they hung around until they were ‘allocated a shack, shed’:

It was like going back because it was exactly like the Nissen huts we come out of 12 years before; I remember them, so it was like going back to that. I loved it. I went straight in with soccer, so I would spend my time, my free time, would be down Britannia, playing down there, you could walk, or I had a bike I brought from England…There was no Transport at Point Walter. Dad couldn’t drive, Mum couldn’t either she had to learn, she learnt quicker than Dad did so we bought a car.\(^{124}\)

Another voiced the same complaint especially with regard to the lack of public transport which he says ‘was practically non-existent, we walked everywhere. He believed the authorities had a ‘hidden agenda not wishing migrants to get too comfortable’.\(^{125}\) One respondent summed up the feelings of many of my participants who went to the Point Walter Hostel.

Camp Hot! Hot! Hot! Temp.104°F heat off the sand made it 140°F. Tin army hut, 2 double bunks, wardrobes—door wouldn’t stay closed, card table, 2 rickety chairs. Food—pretty awful but we ate it. Transport, hardly any, 2 buses a day out of camp. Not to forget the ants, huge things, and spiders!\(^{126}\)

While many complained about conditions at Point Walter,\(^{127}\) the Baldwins found the accommodation adequate and spoke of the ‘beautiful views, walks and wonderful weather, only rained at night’, but even they were concerned by the lack of transport.\(^{128}\)

It is obvious from the responses that there was a major problem with the lack of public transport servicing the Point Walter hostel. This should have been recognised when the camp was converted to house incoming families. Perhaps, as Peters says, its distance

\(^{123}\) Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 5.
\(^{124}\) Michael Geurds, arr. May 1963, Interview 22 May 2005
from both Perth and Fremantle had been underestimated. The new migrants had a basic need to get out and about to seek work and housing. Mothers needed to go to shops to buy their families clothing suitable to Australia’s climate, and to entertain their children. Most migrants, although they had brought their money to buy a house found they had to buy a car first before they could make any other decisions. Car dealers often took advantage of the situation. One respondent said ‘the local car dealers got in touch with me by telegram, picked me up and took me to buy a car—obtained our name and address from the ship’s manifest’. Patricia Thyer went to Graylands, where there was a large sign at the entrance declaring ‘No Hawkers’. Yet she remembered:

Within 24 hours we were approached by an off duty policeman offering to help us obtain a drivers licence (obviously with the view to purchasing a car). Within a couple of days a car salesman arrived. This person was an emigrant on the same ship—he had a list of new arrivals. I understand there was an arrangement with the management. No Hawkers???

Most migrants who went to Graylands hostel reported better access to public transport. Eunice Woods, who arrived in Western Australia in September 1962, found the accommodation there ‘basic but adequate’. She went on to say, ‘We thought the first meal of pie and chips was wonderful after all the rich food we had been having’. Jeanne Reid and her family, though, were shocked at the conditions at the Graylands hostel in 1966:

I couldn’t believe what I saw. The Nissen hut was filthy. The brown lino was torn and had nails sticking out of it. We went for our Christmas lunch. We were in a large communal area where we were shown cutlery and where to queue for our lunch which was Army style as one walked along. We sat down at a table. Obviously most people had had their Christmas lunch but there were children playing around at the tables. Again I was horrified. Children running around with large sores on their torsos which I later found out were ringworm. Now I really thought I would go mad. The children were touching chairs, tables and all the places other people were to go and no one was stopping them . . . Perth was built on sand. The trouble was that was where the ringworm came from, the cats defecated in it and the children caught it. The ablutions were communal too. The bath, one had to wait your turn and I couldn’t wash them in there, had to buy a bath and carry all

129 Peters et al., *Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre*, p. 24.
the water over to the Nissen hut. When one went to the communal bathing area, parents washed nappies out in the bath and left excreta in the bottom.\textsuperscript{133}

The Savilles went to Noalimba, which was opened in the late 1960s; they say they were housed in a self-contained apartment and that ‘there was ‘transport available when required’.\textsuperscript{134} But the children who went to the Fairbridge Farm School found the conditions there very different from city life they had known in the United Kingdom. They remembered the ‘primitive facilities’ and the lack of affection. They were surprised that they had to work out of school hours tending cattle and collecting wood, as well as cleaning the buildings.\textsuperscript{135}

The hostels in the eastern states were also subject to complaint. In Victoria the public transport service was a problem and the ‘Nissen huts hot and cramped’.\textsuperscript{136} The hostel accommodation in New South Wales also described as ‘poor’,\textsuperscript{137} but conditions for British migrants in South Australia in 1966 seem to have been more acceptable.\textsuperscript{138}

\textbf{Finding a job}

The employment situation throughout Australia during the 1960s fluctuated according to the country’s economic circumstances. Jupp says the migrant families were ‘financially vulnerable’; they had to find work as soon as possible to pay rent, school and medical bills. He also says the British migrants found that they lost their position and skill status when they took work.\textsuperscript{139} Jenkins reports that when the men could not find the employment they preferred there was a ‘rapid decline in morale’.\textsuperscript{140} According to Knightley, in 1960 to 1961 Australia was in the throes of an economic downturn yet the government saw no problem bringing in immigrants even during periods of high unemployment.\textsuperscript{141} Most of my male

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Jeanne Reid, arr. Dec. 1966, Survey 99.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Saville, arr. Jun/Jul. 1969, Survey 85.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Anon, arr. Sep/Oct. 1965, Survey 52; Anon, arr. Sep/Oct. 1965, Survey 54.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Penelope Lennon, arr. Jan. 1963, Survey 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Lillian Clarke, arr. Jul. 1966, Survey 20.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Anon, arr. June 1966, Survey 21.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} James Jupp, \textit{Immigration}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2004, p. 111.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Jenkins, p. 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Phillip Knightley, \textit{Australia: A biography of a nation}, Jonathon Cape, London, 2000, p. 217.
\end{itemize}
participants found work within a reasonable time after arriving in Australia. By the mid-1960s, as more mineral resource developments came on line, there was an abundance of jobs in Western Australia. The only problem was that the work available did not always equate with the skills which the migrant possessed. Thomas Atkinson found that the work he had been assured existed was not forthcoming. Because there was a delay between the publication of the informational materials and the migrants’ arrival in Australia, the true employment situation could not be known until the worker tried to find a job. But Jackson says that when in the late 1960s inflation again saw a rise in unemployment the Australian government reduced the number of assisted passages.

In 1973 a survey was carried out by the Australian Population and Immigration Council. From the results it was reported that many migrants did not have proper information on employment before they arrived:

> Because of the importance of employment to the economic welfare of migrants, it is disturbing that family heads who obtained most of their information about employment in Australia from Immigration officials reported that the information they obtained was often wrong.

The situation was exacerbated by what Jupp calls ‘local resentment to “ten pound tourists”’. Johnson found the country towns showed a ‘positive discrimination’. British migrants were not welcomed in the job market and Australians were ‘particularly hostile to British women workers’. In my study more than half of my respondents either had work to go to on arrival or found a position within the first two weeks. However, the work they found was not always what they expected to take up in Australia; some even found the skills they had been told in Britain were needed did not exist in Western Australia. The more fortunate ones were helped to find employment by the realty company with whom they had arranged to

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143 John Jackson, ‘Changing Patterns of migration to Western Australia’, in Ruth Johnson (ed.), Immigrants in Western Australia, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 21.
146 Ruth Johnson (ed.), Immigrants in Western Australia, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979, pp. 45–47, 83.
According to migrants, much of the information they received regarding conditions in Australia was incorrect.\footnote{A Decade of Migrant Settlement, p. 123.}

buy a home before leaving the United Kingdom.

Public transport was an important factor in the ability of the newly arrived migrant to take up employment. The lack of an adequate public transport service to the Point Walter hostel ‘made it difficult to take up a position’.\footnote{Anon, arr. Oct. 1965, Survey 13; Anon, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 19; Baldwin, arr. May 1966, Survey 57.} Initially Tom Rollo had to take two buses to work each day. Later he moved to Bunbury to work on a construction site, working from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon, then hitchhiking to Perth and back again on the Sunday night. He decided ‘a car was an essential commodity after being dropped off at Harvey one night and sleeping in a cemetery’. He told of an incident which gave him an insight to his Australian workmates:

In the lunch shed I was horrified to see a large trail of ants flowing into one of the lunch boxes on a bench. When the box owner arrived I pointed this out and offered him one of my sandwiches. He opened the box, took out his lunch, gave it a shake and wiped it on his shirt. “She’ll be right mate,” he said, “these little buggers don’t eat much.” And promptly ate the lot.\footnote{Rollo, arr. Apr. 1962, Survey 44.}

Describing the reactions of her husband and herself to the difficulty in finding employment,

Patricia Thyer wrote:

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Information correct or incorrect} & \textbf{Number} & \textbf{\%} \\
\hline
\textit{Information received correct conditions in Australia differ} & 144.2 & 64 \\
& 81.7 & 36 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & 225.9 & 100 \\
\hline
\textbf{Differences reported\textit{(b)}} & \textbf{\%} & \textbf{\%} \\
\hline
- for the better & 11.2 & 9 \\
- for the worse & 110.9 & 91 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & 122.1 & 100 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Heads of Families: Correctness of Information Received Overseas}

(a) Excludes those who have not worked overseas, who have neither had nor sought full-time work since arrival and those who have previously been in Australia as settlers or visitors.

(b) Includes 40,400 respondents who reported two differences.
\end{table}
Very dejected by employment prospects, Robert paid for welding experience with a job guaranteed—this was honoured by one week’s employment. Patricia was told at a job interview ‘You are no good to us where you come from’. We assumed this to refer to the hostel.  

Thomas Bowles had chosen a particular realty sponsor because of the promise of help in finding employment. Imagine his surprise when he went to their offices:

They got the *West Australian* newspaper out and said ‘have a look through this’. Well I was gob smacked to say the least. Back in the UK I worked for a large contract cleaning company. I had held the position of area manager with 20 years experience. This was in all my references. Eventually the sponsor phoned a cleaning firm had a chat with someone and they came out to the sponsor’s office. The chap was wearing bib and brace overalls, looked at my references etc. and said I was too experienced for him and that I could probably teach him a thing or two.  

While most of the migrants found work within a short time of landing in Australia, for many it was not the work that satisfied their skill levels. Mr Weber, who was an engineer, found work as a panel beater in a car firm. Another wrote ‘I got a job which I had been told would be available but not the one I was led to understand I would get’. Kathleen Platts had imagined that her well qualified husband would find work immediately, but that was not to be. He was an instrument fitter, a skill much in demand by the developing industries, but unfortunately he found the authorities ‘had some difficulty in accepting his qualifications, which had been thoroughly checked in the UK’. He found a position himself, though at a lower level than his skills warranted. The Gillbards were more fortunate as Bill had been sponsored by Wesfarmers for work on the state ships; he had a ship waiting.

The Baldwins found John’s trade was unknown to the authorities here, although he had declared his trade (a die cast operator) on his application form. And Jeanne Reid said:

One of the biggest disappointments about all the lies we had been told was that of my husband’s profession (precision engineer). We were told that Western Australia was ‘crying out’ for his profession but they had never

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heard of it here. He eventually took the only job closest to what he did and that was ‘inspection’ of combine harvesters at Chamberlains in Welshpool.157

Then there was the problem of being told you were too old. One respondent said that her ‘Dad was demoralised to be told by the greeting immigration people that he was too old and would have trouble finding a job’.158 The Thyers also found the situation;

Difficult—quite contrary to the information supplied prior to departure. We felt after arrival that our 30—40 age group was disadvantaged, many returning to the UK after 2 years. Several 14—17 year olds returned—unable to settle, younger and older children did not find it so difficult. Robert whilst in the UK applied and was accepted for a position—the age limit was 40. When he contacted the firm he was told we had taken longer to emigrate and the age limit had been reduced to 35. Patricia was repeatedly told she was too old at 36. A senior position was 21. We had given up what would have been secure and pensionable jobs.159

Before leaving England Eunice Woods and her friends had been assured by the RAAF, their sponsors, that work would be found for them. Her husband George was able to start work almost straight away at Boans, but Cyril their friend who was over 40, could not find a position. Eunice wrote of Cyril and herself:

Was out of work for a long time eventually getting work as a school caretaker. I could not get a job either, at first, as nurses had come from all over the world for working holidays to see the Empire Games.160

However, most of my respondents who were in this age group do not report any particular prejudice against older people.

Men found employment of some sort eventually, but it was a different situation for those women who wanted to work. Kathleen Platts realised, when she had difficulty in finding work, that at the interview in England her skills had not been asked for—only her husband’s. She said:

It never occurred to me, and perhaps I didn’t ask, I assumed things were the same here because it was presented as a modern go ahead country. My husband was able to find work quickly and with not too much trouble. As a

married woman I was not so lucky. I had left a well paid, responsible job in the Public Service in the UK. Australia House neglected to tell me that female public servants, and that included teachers, nurses, bank officers etc. were required to resign on marriage—quite a shock to the system.161

One was surprised that her qualifications were queried when she applied for a position. ‘As far as I was concerned the West Australian training was way out of date compared to mine’.162 Migrant women in the eastern states seemed to have found work more easily; Penelope Lennon’s mother became ‘head chef/cook at the hostel’.163 The ladies who went to Sydney164 and Melbourne165 say there was plenty of work there. Yet even in the eastern states people had to take up work that was available, not necessarily the job they would have preferred. David Roberts was sent to work on a dairy farm when he really wanted to work on a sheep station.166

The participants had vastly different experiences during those first few days after leaving the ship. Some were disappointed at their reception when they landed, while others were overwhelmed by the kindness given to them by the Australians they met. Those who had been sponsored for a particular position or by an organisation such as the Baptist Church were the most pleased, and those who had been sponsored by realty companies had mixed feelings. But there was a general expression of dissatisfaction on the conditions the assisted British migrants found in the hostels. Yet, in fairness, it might have been expected. The Commonwealth Bank, for example, advised potential migrants of the accommodation they would receive on arrival including the fact that it would be in a Nissen hut and that toilet, bathing and laundry facilities would be communal.167 Perhaps, like me, most did not know what a Nissen hut was and were not aware of just how inconvenient communal facilities could be. Perhaps the negative aspects of hostel living may have been overlooked when migrants

167 Thinking of Australia, pp. 62-63.
were promised adequate furnished accommodation and the child-minding centres that were featured in the Commonwealth Bank of Australia’s publication—but these were not provided at the Western Australian hostels. Our accommodation at Point Walter was a shed with two sets of bunk beds and a small table with two folding chairs. There was a curtain which could be drawn between the beds and the table, but there was only a one central light which served both areas. To use the communal facilities we had to cross an area of sand infested with fleas. There were no children’s playgrounds, only a small area of grass overlooking the river which seemed to be constantly watered preventing the children from playing even there. But the major problem for migrants at the Point Walter hostel was the lack of transport, and the distance from work and other amenities; factors which were not mentioned in the literature for prospective migrants.

The problem of finding work commensurate with the skills and experience of the individual caused many complaints. This was exacerbated by what were thought to be unsafe work practices and the sometimes hostile reception by other workers. At the time, says Hammerton, jobs were plentiful in England and the British migrant was unlikely to have been unemployed when they left.168 Peters thinks that in Australia the need to work overshadowed most other priorities.169 So for some the promise of work was met but for others the reality was more harsh: a loss of status, inability to find work satisfying their skill level, and even for some the inability to find regular work at all.

Did the ‘Poms’ whinge’ without cause? It appears that the promise of a better life was not met immediately for many of my respondents on their arrival in Australia. Rather, my respondents often faced inadequate and poor accommodation, job dissatisfaction and a lack of public transport. As we shall see in the next chapter, for most of the participants to my study, life in Western Australia did improve over time.

168 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 130.
169 Peters, Milk and Honey, p. 189.
CHAPTER FIVE

'It was even better than they advertised'

Settling in to life in Western Australia

In such promotional material distributed in Britain as ‘Australia invites you’, prospective migrants were promised a ‘British way of life’ in Australia, social security, a healthy lifestyle, and, indeed a better standard of living ‘among the highest in the world’. Immigrant propaganda was certainly persuasive; so much so that Knightley suggests the Australian government offered bribes to the British immigrants. But the promise of a better life looked for many, on arrival, to be unattainable. Participants in this study were asked to consider the degree to which their experience in Australia matched the promises they had received before leaving Britain. My respondents told of statements made by immigration officials who, they said, gave misleading information and some then told of their despair at the conditions they found when they first arrived in Australia. But for how many migrants did conditions improve over time?

Lack says new migrants suffered from loneliness and that this was often made worse by unfriendliness, aggression and even open hostility that was shown by some Australians. He thinks there might be historical reasons for this, and that in any case the British migrants were thought to be the ‘pampered products of a welfare state’. Hammerton agrees, saying the sources of antagonism could be partially due to the criticism and complaints by the British who said that the standard of living in their home country was better than they found in Australia. He writes that there were many unjust comparisons between the ‘whingeing Pom’

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2 Jupp, Arrivals and Departures, Cheshire Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1966, pp. 100, 111.
3 Jupp, Arrivals and Departures, p. 110.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

and the ‘Aussie battler’. Zamoyska, too, speaks of ‘anti British feeling’ within Australia. Chetkovich found, equally, many Irish people who had migrated to escape sectarian violence, were met here with anti-Catholic feelings based on English attitudes, and that some Australians could be ‘loud, rude and insular’. Nonetheless, most of her Irish participants found friendly people in Western Australia.

Jenkins suggests that the British were not very good at making friends, and migration led to a confrontation between them and the Australians. My respondents on the whole were not greeted by the hostility that was spoken of by these authors, though perhaps memories might now have been altered by time. Lack and Templeton certainly suggest that ‘this anti-British feeling of the time is often forgotten today’.

Richardson, speaking in 1960 at a conference on immigration held in Canberra, reported that British migrants based in Medina, complained of a range of problems. The major one was the lack of public transport, but women complained of homesickness, the lack of good education standards in the schools, and a generally lower standard of living than they had enjoyed in Britain. Men had also expected a better standard of living, more job satisfaction; and now found reduced enjoyment in their leisure time.

My respondents tell of similar experiences as they settled in Western Australia in the 1960s. They also found, as Peters did, some exploitation in accommodation within the rental market. But many also said that they found kind Australians who helped them in the settling-in process. Some

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5 Betka Zamoyska, The Ten Pound Fare: Experiences of British people who emigrated to Australia in the 1950s, Viking, London, 1988, p. 31.
6 Jean Chetkovich, Not for Economic Gain: The story of Elsie Butler in Western Australia’, The Irish in Western Australia: Studies in Western Australian history, 20, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, 2000, pp. 54, 142.
7 Thomas Jenkins, We Came to Australia, Constable, London, 1969, pp. 48, 156.
8 John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, Bold Experiment: A documentary history of Australian immigration since 1945, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 79.
10 Nonja Peters, Milk and Honey but no Gold: Post-war migration to Western Australia 1945-1964, University of Western Australia Press, 2001, p. 220.
thought the school life was different and a few complained of a lowering standard of education. However, many reported with pride that their children went on to university. This, then, is the story of the reality of settlement in Western Australia as it was experienced by the British migrants of the 1960s who participated in this study.

Let’s find somewhere to live

After finding work the next priority for the newly arrived migrant seems to have been to find somewhere to stay which was located conveniently close to shops, schools and transport. What was perhaps misunderstood by most Australians was the relatively high standard of living which had been enjoyed by most of the British migrants in their own country by the 1960s. Most of my participants say they came from well-equipped homes in built up areas offering easy access to amenities and where public transport was readily available.\footnote{James Jupp, \textit{Immigration}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2004 p. 93.} Few of my migrants speak of owning cars in Britain, or needing to. Parts of the United Kingdom had become increasingly prosperous with full employment and rising living standards—many respondents speak of taking holidays before emigrating. It was said of the time that Britain had ‘never had it so good’.\footnote{James Jupp, \textit{The English in Australia}, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2004, p. 137.} In

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.jpg}
\caption{Pictures such as these were shown in prospective migrant brochures, suggesting the type of family accommodation the ‘English family Brown’ might anticipate. The reality for many was rather different. See Thomas, \textit{English Family Brown}, p.25.}
\end{figure}
Australia much of the housing available for rental to migrants was in the older suburbs where deep sewerage did not exist. Houses were often constructed of asbestos or wood, with a tin or asbestos roof, and not the double brick and tile home the British migrant was used to. In the 1960s Western Australian homes were often equipped with a wood stove for cooking and heating, and a ‘chip heater’, a contrivance near the bath into which chips of wood or paper were fed, to heat the water for bathing or for the laundry. These were an abomination to the housewife who had been used to modern bathrooms with copious hot water, electric or gas cooking and other household conveniences. In the newer suburbs, around Perth, the realty companies were building more modern homes with up to date fittings but they were often built on poor sandy soil. Even these new houses were connected to a septic tank system for sewerage. In the new suburbs there were no shops or other facilities and public transport was virtually non-existent. Many migrants moved from the inhospitable hostels to private rental accommodation or to state housing, but few bought their first home immediately.

Tom Rollo, who arrived in 1963, described the first rental accommodation they took which was about 1km from the facilities.

We walked a lot. The ‘flat’ in Scarborough was a sleep out added to the front of the house. It was no palace but accommodation to rent was very scarce at that time so we were happy to have it. We immediately had problems with mosquito bites mainly due to inadequate fly screens. Some days Mary looked like a boxer who had been beaten around the head as her eyes were so swollen. It took some time for us to build up immunity to them. The toilet was outside the house around the back and shared with other tenants. We were allocated use of the laundry (without washing machine) and a drying line on Mondays only which was not really convenient. One day I went to work and inadvertently locked Mary in because there was a latch on the outside of the door which I absentmindedly used. She had to wait for one of the other tenants to check the letterbox for mail later in the day to let her out to go to the ‘loo’. Needless to say I was not a popular migrant when I came home.¹³

Scarborough seemed to have been a popular location for rental properties. Another participant who came to Western Australia in 1967 reported a similar situation to that of the Rollos:

¹³ Tom Rollo, arr. Apr. 1963, Survey 44.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

This was our first experience of flat dwelling and we were unprepared for some unpleasant occurrences associated with this form of accommodation. E.g. Clothing, mainly jeans, disappearing from communal laundry line, or the refusal of the local newsagent/deli to deliver the morning paper because of the number of ‘Bloody Poms in flats who did a flit before they pay their bills’.  

Margaret Luck wrote that:

Within 4 days of arrival we rented a house in Subiaco with a toilet at the end of the garden. We had jumped in too quickly and I couldn’t get used to it. Within 2 weeks we had moved to a 7th floor in a block of flats overlooking the river.

Arriving in 1965 Doreen Cook and her family said they found living in the hostel made finding rental accommodation difficult. The accommodation rented to them by an Italian workmate: was a ‘bit of a culture shock’. But Chris Moore, a young single migrant, was thrilled to share and flat in South Perth where the building was ‘full of young single people’.

Jenkins says migrants of this time were unaware of the vagaries of buying a home in Western Australia. He found they were disadvantaged when applying for loans and often had to take out expensive second mortgages. They were faced with ‘mistakes in quotes and price variations’. My respondents often made comparisons with their home in England to their first house in Australia. Those moving to the rural areas found life very difficult and their houses there ‘the ultimate culture shock’. One participant was not too unhappy with the accommodation she was given but her relatives in England were not impressed. ‘Our first house was a wooden mill house made nice by being painted inside, my family in England were shocked they said it looked like my mother’s garden shed’. The conditions were even worse for another family who went to Albany to a house they had rented, by telephone, from an advertisement in a newspaper. After a nightmare journey from Perth, ‘thirteen and a half hours on the Albany Progress’, the family were horrified on arrival to find the house was

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18 Jenkins, p. 151.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

rundown and rat infested.\textsuperscript{21}

Participants who had signed agreements in the United Kingdom to buy homes through realty companies such as Landalls or RDC Homes were generally pleased with their decision, but some seem to have found problems.\textsuperscript{22} Victor Humphries said he had difficulty getting a loan because he did not have a ‘credit rating in Australia’.\textsuperscript{23} The Baldwins had a similar problem but were fortunate to find a guarantor.\textsuperscript{24} Many remembered the procurement of housing, and the general settling in to life in Western Australia favourably. The Rollo family’s first home was a ‘cottage on a quarter acre of land, it looked like it sat on a sand strip, no gardens, no fences, or garage, but it was new’.\textsuperscript{25} One described their new home in Australia as being ‘like a palace’;\textsuperscript{26} while others were extremely pleased with a ‘single storey bungalow that was so much in demand at home’.\textsuperscript{27} Eunice Woods was impressed when she saw houses with blue roofs. They bought a house under construction in Tuart Hill so that she could get the roof of her dreams.\textsuperscript{28} Sheila Saville told in detail the process of building a home and starting her new life in Australia:

For some reason we chose land at Willetton and made contact with the local builder ‘Fini’ who lived in Rossmoyne. He was kind enough to let us view a home he had built—also for English migrants—and a primary school which was due to be built close by. When the 6 weeks at Noalimba was up we rented a duplex in Riverton. It was unfurnished and we did not want to unpack all our furniture which had then arrived. A lady in Mount Pleasant rented us her garage until our home was built. We extracted a couple of chairs and a coffee table and bought beds for us all and a refrigerator and managed with that. My husband teamed up with a man from the ship and did carpentry work on new homes to get the feel of the trade. ‘Fini’ could see my husband had plenty of work experience and immediately offered him a job as a building supervisor but my husband thought he would experience how things worked first. ‘Fini’ allowed my husband to do his own internal woodwork on our house to save money. The duplex we rented was very hot and the shops not very close, it was too hot to walk too far with the children so shopping once a week. The building of homes was very quick in those

\textsuperscript{21} Name withheld, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 19.
\textsuperscript{22} Francis Plummer, arr. Aug. 1966, Survey 5; Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1968, Survey 73.
\textsuperscript{23} Victor Humphries, arr. Dec. 1966, Survey 34.
\textsuperscript{24} John and Joan Baldwin, arr. May 1966, Survey 57.
\textsuperscript{25} Rollo, arr. Apr. 1962, Survey 44.
\textsuperscript{26} Anon, arr. Jan/Feb. 1967, Survey 60.
\textsuperscript{27} Name withheld, arr. Jan. 1966, Survey 15.
\textsuperscript{28} Eunice Woods, arr. Sept. 1962, Survey 102.
days and our home was ready to move into by 1 January. Willetton Primary School in Apsley Road was being built and opened the first day of school term February 1970 and so Julie started her school life there. Meanwhile Roger was in kindergarten 2 days a week and so we all made friends quite quickly. On reflection it is amazing how easily we slotted in to our new life.  

Settling in country areas was perhaps more difficult than settling in Perth. One respondent complained that she found the accommodation she was given in regional Collie to be far beneath what she had been used to at home. There was a definite gap in what she had been promised and what she then encountered in Australia:

Our original housing definitely didn’t live up to the glossy brochure we had seen on Perth housing—I felt like a pioneer with my chip heater, copper, wood stove and the grease trap in the drain was putrid.

My family and I moved to a forestry settlement a few kilometres from Pemberton in the southwest of Western Australia. Douglas had to take work with the forestry department because he could not find anything else; the job he had been promised as a welder was not forthcoming. Our house was a wooden four-roomed hut with sleep-outs on the back veranda. The lavatory and laundry facilities were across the garden and a haven for frogs and spiders. There was a bath in one sleep-out but it had no running water, so we had to heat water in a wood-fired copper and then carry it from the laundry across the garden every evening. There was one tap in the kitchen. However, because the water came directly from the mill dam, when it was used tadpoles and other wildlife often fell into the sink. There was a large rainwater tank outside the back door which was used for drinking water and of course there was the wood stove, the cause of much anguish and many tears. The power supply was switched off every evening at 10pm. At first the house was alive with mice. They played in the lounge room where we sat in the evenings; they left their droppings in the children’s beds. When we put ‘Ratsack’ in the roof we succeeded in killing a rat which fell down between the wooden walls and was only discovered when large white maggots began to fall out of the wall.

on to the floor. I was also horrified when I tried to eliminate the ever-present blowflies and found that they laid not eggs, but maggots that crawled around the busily buzzing bodies of their dying parent. The settlement was miles from anywhere and groceries were delivered twice a week. In the winter the washing froze on the line. But our Australian neighbours were wonderful and made us feel very welcome. They also cared for my family when two of my children were born in the Pemberton Hospital. I remember the mopoke or tawny frogmouth sitting so silently on the tree outside the ward window and the carolling of magpies that greeted us every morning.

**Reality**

Many may have found the settling into new homes, work and schools to be challenging, but most also agree that for them their new life in Australia was as good, if not better, than they had hoped for. Chris Moore now believes that:

> It was even better than they advertised. A woman came up from Australia House in London to interview me. She actually painted a somewhat gloomy picture.  

The Gawthrops were pleased: ‘Our life here was a better living standard than we had in UK’. Another, said, ‘Life was much better here, everything I was told came true’. One respondent and wife were also very happy: ‘The way of life seemed to suit us straight away, distance was a bit daunting, realised we would soon need a vehicle for work and shopping, a bit limited on public transport’. Others agree, including Peggy Parkin who wrote, ‘Climate lovely—people friendly if you didn’t take offence at being called a ‘Pom’’. Jim Yeomans could not have been more satisfied: ‘Weather as promised—yes very much better, so free and easy, people made us welcome to their BBQs’. Another was happy but he had a few reservations:

33 Name withheld, arr. June 1963, Survey 43.
34 Name withheld, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

We were enjoying the “freedoms” that England couldn’t provide, uncluttered roads, clean air, stacks of sunshine and above all a relaxed beautiful environment despite the arrogant misplaced attitude of many Australians towards us—calling us whingeing Poms!!!

Iris Wilson was welcomed by the Baptist Congregation who had sponsored her family but she still felt homesick and ‘missed her neighbours popping in for a cuppa.’

In 1960 one participant discovered that:

It was not Britain down under which I had believed to be the case. I came to realise (as I lived with Aussies) that in many respects it was a foreign country where the language was similar but the outlooks were quite different. Aussies in the 1960s were defensive of their own culture, though local identities were world known.

The family that went to Yarloop did not find people ‘very friendly towards migrants. I was horrified at being called a Pommy Bastard’.

There were some very unhappy migrants.

Loretta Thomas recalled:

Dad settled in quite quickly, meeting his mates for a drink. Mum was very lonely and yearned for her family back home. Mum found life very hard, but it did not seem to worry Dad.

John Talbot said that ‘things were not as had been promised, indeed life was ‘worse, UK agencies gave little advice at all, they were woeful’.

One participant found ‘the summers were too hot and the place too vast, not much to do if you don’t like the beach’. Another, who was separated from her parents and sent to Fairbridge Farm, complained:

Being separated was really horrific, that was a terrible start to this new country. Very lonely, new school was lonely; everything was different, eating lunch outside whereas in England because of the weather we had a hot school meal every day. A huge difference, being a young lady, I really can’t remember anything good about Aussie.

Another recalled that there were ‘No jobs for my husband and rentals were almost
impossible’. Many were disappointed by the quality of the clothes, shoes and other products and said that the reality was that ‘we all worked very hard’. Geoffrey Shapland agreed but found things got better with time. Children seem to have had the idea of life in Australia was one of rural domesticity. ‘The films we saw of Australia showed kangaroos and people riding horses to school—that didn’t happen’.

Peters says the ideology of assimilation which was prevalent in the 1960s caused children to have more problems in adapting to the Australian school system than the authorities or their parents appreciated. While she was speaking mainly of the non-English speaking migrant child, nevertheless there seem to have been differences between the school life in Britain and Australia. Michael Geurds was caught between the two age requirements for school leavers. In England the school year ended in July, but in Australia it was in December. Arriving in Fremantle in April he says ‘I went to John Curtin for a day and I got kicked out, I lasted just one day’. His sister was about 5 years younger when she started school here: ‘she was in a group of nine and ten year olds, and she struggled for a while until she made, you know, got, her own circle of friends and then she was off and running’. Geoffrey Shapland was a bit lonely initially but found he ‘started making friends when I went to school and what was really impressive was how friendly the kids were—unlike England’. Lesley Ross who went to Victoria was pleased with her social adaptation:

Settled in very easily at school as the ‘Beatles’ had recently visited Melbourne, all the girls at school were asking me to say ‘love’ hoping to hear a Liverpool accent—they were disappointed when I said ‘luv’ and not ‘loov’.

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45 Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 41.
51 Shapland, Survey 31.
52 Ross, Survey 10.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

But other children were not so fortunate; ‘children were teased at school’. 53 ‘Loretta Thomas remarked, ‘kids could be cruel even way back, I went to school in a hat and coat and shoes too big, quite a few asked me if I’d sailed out in my shoes’. 54 Some were made to feel unwelcome. Marilyn Fonte says, ‘The Australian children didn’t like me and made fun of my accent and lack of knowledge of the country, I felt very sad and lonely’. 55 One of the major differences was the school meal system. In the United Kingdom cooked meals in a dining room were provided by the local authorities at lunchtime. In Australia children took sandwiches or used the canteen run by volunteers and ate in the playground. 56

When asked if anything met with their immediate approval many spoke of the friendliness and the help they had received. One happy couple wrote:

We were very impressed by the gentleman who took us from Fremantle to the Wentworth Hotel. By the time we got out of customs all the taxis had disappeared. The said man was taking luggage in a horse and cart, I think, and gave us a guided tour of places of interest on the way and wouldn’t accept payment. We were made so welcome by all the education department staff in Perth and the teaching staff at the high school and the Collie community. 57

But another, who also went as a teacher to Collie, found ‘the manager of State housing in Collie who was less than helpful with things that were faulty in the home’. 58

‘Best Ten Pound I Ever Spent’

Most of my respondents overcame their early difficulties on settlement and declared in their surveys they were now happy with their lives in Western Australia. One respondent said ‘Best ten pound I ever spent’, 59 while Penelope Lennon who has travelled and lived in most states of Australia thinks that ‘Western Australia is best of all’. 60 Some say although it was not their decision to come to Western Australia they were pleased to be here, like Loretta

54 Thomas, Survey 37.
55 Fonte, Survey 59.
56 Platts, Interview, 11th May 2006.
58 Name withheld, arr. Jan/Feb. 1969, Survey 83
59 Anon, arr. May, 1968, Survey 70.
Thomas, who wrote, ‘I can never thank my parents enough for making the decision’.

Jacqueline Rawling says neither she nor her family wanted to return to Britain and they had never regretted ‘leaving cold, grey UK behind’. However, her father always worried whether he had made the right decision. Others had reconciled themselves to living here: ‘it wasn’t my decision to come to; Australia but have two wonderful children who have excelled in most things and a wonderful husband’.

Some still have regrets: ‘it’s a good life style, but if the decision had been mine we would have stayed in England’. While others who didn’t have any choice in the migration have been very happy here, ‘but still feel the urge to return home’. The Huckins’ said they ‘still miss having no extended family; this has impacted on our children’. Lesley Ross regretted not ‘growing up with my grandparents, aunties and uncles’. This sentiment was echoed by another respondent. ‘The only regret I have is that our children have been denied close ties with the rest of my family’. Patricia Reed said she still misses living in England ‘but not the cold weather . . . I will always miss Christmas—and Pearl’. ‘To a degree I still miss England’s countryside and my family back there’, wrote Merle Franklin, and another agreed: ‘Still miss the streams, the hills and villages I knew’.

Participants were also asked whether their lives had been changed by coming to live in Western Australia. Some were ambivalent, ‘I will never know’, and ‘who knows what we would have been like if we had still been there?’. Some compared their life with those of friends back home. ‘We have not gained socially or financially but prefer the environment

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62 Name withheld, arr. Mar. 1968, Survey 68.
64 Anon, arr. May 1966, Survey 56.
73 Anon, arr. Nov. 1968, Survey 73.
and lifestyle’. Patricia Thyer confessed that it is not easy to compare today with 40 years ago:

> We obviously have no idea how life would have been had we remained in Britain. However observing, listening and experiencing the British scene on the occasions we have visited the UK we have no doubt we made the correct decision by staying here.

And another expressed the same sentiment, but most thought they were better off in Australia. Of the 102 respondent who settled in Western Australia only four participants say they regretted spending their lives in Australia.

Many conclude that their lifestyles have improved and that their children have had better opportunities. ‘My wife and I often discuss this point (change of life style) with our family and all are of the opinion we would never have achieved any of this if we had stayed in the UK’. The Thyers now ‘enjoy a good lifestyle involved in community activities and voluntary work and we feel we have contributed to Australia’. Many spoke of the successful lives now led by their children. One wrote, ‘Our daughters have done well and are married and own their own homes. Australia has given them a better life and opportunities they would not have had in Britain’. Geoffrey Shapland is particularly proud of the work he and his father had been involved in—constructing the Ord River Dam and other developments throughout the state. He also feels he has ‘been well rewarded for very hard work and enjoyed some great experiences’. The Baldwins said they ‘would never have had house ownership in UK, kids would have had less opportunities after school years to get jobs’.

Chris Davis said there was a radical change:

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78 Anon, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

Negative situation to a positive. I have achieved all my ambitions and created new ones. I’ve had some incredible experiences and met up with some fantastic people. Have been successful in all my endeavours (except marriage) Have four beautiful children and 4 beautiful grandchildren. 83

Yet for Patricia Reed:

It will never be the same. I think you come here to make a new life and make good, but not everyone had the same idea. Dad would go back anytime but Mum didn’t want to. Gradually we nearly all married as time went on split up through arguments. Whether things would have been different if we had never come here we will never know. 84

Some migrants still get together and discuss their immigration experiences and rationalise what happened:

When I think about it and discuss it with friends who made the move to WA about the same time, we really had a limited notion of what we were coming to. I suppose we must have had youthful confidence in our own capabilities. On the whole we made a success of our life here—certainly more pluses than minuses. 85

We are Australian citizens now

During the 1960s the imperial relationship between Britain and Australia was ending. While there were still emotional attachments to the British Commonwealth there was no longer a vision of a shared way of life. Sir Robert Menzies and other members of his cabinet had been part of the British school system and still saw Britain as the great power it once was. They maintained a close relationship with Britain: for them Australia was linked inextricably with the British Empire and the British way of life. 86 But in 1966, when Menzies retired, Harold Holt became the Australian prime minister and welcomed the visit of the United States President L. B. Johnson who attracted more crowds than the British Queen Elizabeth had in 1954. In his support for the United States Holt assured Johnson that Australia would go ‘all the way with LBJ’. 87 As the ‘ethnic lobby’ became more vocal in 1964 the assimilation

83 Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
section of the Department of Immigration was disbanded and moves were made to integrate
the many nationalities that were living in Australia. The words ‘British Subject’ were
removed from the Australian Passport and in the late 1960s Britain decided that Australians
(and other Commonwealth citizens) would no longer have free right of entry into Britain
except under special circumstances. When the Australian currency changed from sterling to
dollars in 1966 it ended Australia’s relationship with the Sterling Bloc and by the late 1960s
American investment in Australia exceeded that of the British. It is said that the British
migrant influx in the 1950s and 1960s did little to change the Australian way of life, but by
1969 the influence of continental Europeans and of non-Europeans was broadening Australian
eating and drinking customs and changing the Australian culture.

In the 1960s when most of my respondents came to Australia they did not have to
worry about becoming Australian citizens. There was no restriction on British subjects
entering or leaving Australia, except those assisted migrants under contract to stay for 2 years.
They were entitled to many of the social security benefits and could vote in Australian
elections. Those who arrived before 1984 now retain the right to vote but they need a visa to
enter Australia unless they become Australian citizens. According to Hammerton and
Thomson some migrants who thought they had residential status in Australia were unable to
re-enter the country after 1984. Perhaps the interest in becoming naturalised is dependent
on a British migrant’s need to travel. Chetkovitch found that there were ‘strong links between
mobility and ability to travel and the adoption of Australian citizenship’. She found some of
her respondents had not taken out Australian citizenship because they felt they were not going

89 David Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket: Australian and the end of the British Empire, Melbourne University
90 Wayne Reynolds, ‘Labor Tradition, Global Shifts and Foreign Policy of the Whitlam Government, in David
Lee, and Christopher Waters (eds), Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy, Allen &
Unwin, 1997, p. 129.
92 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 312.
‘It was even better than they advertised’

to leave the country.\textsuperscript{93}

Of the 108 respondents to my survey only 18 had not taken Australian citizenship, and some have retained dual citizenship. One said that he could not see the point in being naturalised, although his wife had done so.\textsuperscript{94} However, Alan Huckins was proud to announce, ‘Yes and we support Oz in all sports even cricket—even when playing England. Which means we are now fair dinkum Aussies’.\textsuperscript{95} Even one of the migrants who returned to live permanently in England, was proud to tell me, ‘We are Australian citizens, as are our children’.\textsuperscript{96}

It is not easy to assess whether the reality of the way of life encountered in Australia lived up to the promise. One of the major difficulties is finding exactly what promises were made to individual migrants. Few of my respondents could now recall the specific promises they were made, but those with the most complaints have the clearest memories of a promise which was not fulfilled. Most found that initial discomfort has often been replaced by a satisfying lifestyle; they told of early struggles and difficulties which had been overcome. A few say they wish they could turn back the clock and others still have a longing for the sights and sounds of home. One said; ‘If I had known before I agreed to emigrate, the kind of life I would live in Australia, I would never have come’. But she has two children who are university graduates and she has worked tirelessly in a volunteer capacity for many agencies, various environmental and wild life activities, and the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{97} One wonders how her life would have been improved had she stayed in Britain? The reality for most of the respondents was that whatever promises they were made that encouraged them to come to Western Australia the reality of their lives in Australia is one of success, both for themselves and their children.

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\textsuperscript{93} Jean Chetkovich, ‘The New Irish in Australia’, PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, 2003, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{94} Anon, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 17.
\textsuperscript{95} Huckins, arr. Apr/May 1967, Survey 61.
\textsuperscript{96} Eileen Perrins, motorbike and sidecar. 1960s, settlers 1977, Survey 101.
\end{flushright}
CONCLUSION

‘We still love England’
Making a happy home in Western Australia

Gerrie says that the £10 Poms were ‘lured by promotional films featuring exotic fruits, cheap meat and dream homes’.¹ This thesis examines the decision of Britons in the 1960s to migrate to Western Australia, their departure from home and voyage to Fremantle, their arrival and settling in, and finally whether the dreams they held of Australia were realised. The participants in my study are a fair sample of those British migrants who settled in Western Australia in the 1960s. The ratio of families to single persons is similar to that given by Appleyard² and also to the passenger list of the Castel Felice when it arrived in Fremantle in January 1966.³ While relying, as it does, on the memories of over one hundred British migrants who made the journey in the 1960s, it is possible that these memories may have been altered by time. However, in general, the responses in many ways reflect those reported by Hammerton and Thomson.⁴

The respondents, who came from all parts of the United Kingdom, said that they used a variety of sources to gain information to help in their emigration decision. One of the realities for me has been the difficulty in gaining access to the publications that may have lured these migrants to come here. Migrant information publicity was put out by federal and state immigration departments and other bodies, such as employer organisations, to attract people to Australia. Extensive searches in Australian archives and libraries have revealed only a few and it was fortunate that one of my respondents, Ken Patterson, loaned to me some of the material that has featured in this work. In an immigration survey by the Australian

² R.T Appleyard, British Emigration to Australia, Australian National University, Canberra, 1964, p.122.
³ Australian Government, National Archives, Incoming passenger list Castel Felice arrived Fremantle 19/1/1966. K259/4
⁴ Hammerton and Thomson, various titles.
Population and Immigration Council in 1973 it was found that there were difficulties in obtaining correct information about life in Australia at the time. This was seen as a real problem by at least 50% of new migrants and there was also the problem of prospective migrants misunderstanding the information they were given. Both assisted and sponsored migrants had access to the services of the Australian Immigration information services, and sponsored migrants often received supplementary materials from their sponsor. The official objective of the £10 assisted passage scheme was to bring out as many British migrants as possible, writes Jupp. It is perhaps important to understand that whatever information there was in the publications, the interviewing officers, who wanted to persuade as many people as possible to migrate, may have painted a picture that was not strictly accurate. Perhaps, as one of my respondents said, the officers ‘were all bullshitters’.

Although the participants came from all parts of the United Kingdom the majority came from the north and midlands of England. While the study concentrated on those migrants coming here on the Castel Felice in the 1960s the survey attracted responses from a few who came on other ships or by plane. One participant came in 1947, one in 1951, three in 1957 and three in the 1970s. One was a backpacker who stayed and another came in the 1960s as part of a round the world tour and then decided to migrate later. Some of the participants had first migrated to the eastern states of Australia but later settled in Western Australia. At that time all British migrants travelling by sea landed first at Fremantle, so all ship borne participants had experienced a similar route here and comparable conditions. The few participants first going to the eastern states seem to have found work more easily, but their experience in other ways, especially in government hostels, and the difficulty in finding suitable rental accommodation, resembled that of the migrants who had chosen to stay in Western Australia.

The main reasons given by the respondents for coming to Australia did not change greatly over the decade covered by the study. Most were coming for a better life. Many came to be reunited with friends and relatives who were already settled in Western Australia, however, in keeping with the changing policy of promotion of the Australian way of life, more people in the later years say they came for the ‘weather’. The Lonnie Scheme and advertisements for jobs offered by the Western Australian Employers Federation attracted a few of the participants, though all my respondents say they were in full-time work when they made the decision to emigrate. Other reasons included health problems and racially motivated trouble in the United Kingdom at the time. A few voiced their fears of the ‘cold war’ and threat of nuclear proliferation. Extended families, aunts, uncles and grandparents came with one or two of my respondents. Some of the respondents had been sponsored by various organisations who found them accommodation and work on arrival. A few had served in the armed forces and found it difficult to settle back into civilian life, and some had known Australians whilst in the services and this had persuaded them to migrate. In most cases the husband made the decision, the children were sometimes consulted but often they were just brought along having no say in the move. The majority were sponsored by federal or state governments and initially housed in one of the migrant hostels.

Although the drive to attract migrants was generally the prerogative of the federal government, the states were also active in recruiting. The Lonnie Scheme, for example, was an initiative of the Western Australian government in the early 1960s to encourage migrants to this state. Many participants said they saw advertisements in newspapers, applied to migrate and then were interviewed, had medicals and waited to be accepted. The waiting time could be very short—two to three weeks—or in some cases considerably longer, and in one case two years. The migrants had to settle their affairs in Britain sell their homes, finalise work contacts, even in some cases wait for babies to be born or reach the age of three months. They also had to deal with the sometimes negative reactions of friends and relatives before
making the final move to Southampton docks, or to the airport.

After often emotional goodbyes, many were surprised at the relatively small size of the *Castel Felice* and her sister ships. The idea of a leisure cruise on a luxury-liner often paled when they found they were on a ship specialising in migrant travel. People were packed into cabins to make the most economical use of the ship’s accommodation. Families and even young married couples were separated, women in one cabin, men in another. It was unfortunate that the dormitory style cabins were often in the lowest part of the ship. The respondents found sharing toilet and bathing facilities, or washing and drying clothes in such circumstances difficult. All meals, except for breakfast, were served at separate times for children and adults and although there were a number of complaints, generally the food was adequate and the menus varied. Entertainment included cinemas, dances, a pool and deck games. A school of sorts was offered on some voyages with the lessons being run by willing passengers. A number enjoyed the ‘cheap grog’. There were rough seas in different parts of the voyage. Childhood diseases such as measles and chickenpox, as well as travel sickness, caused many adults and children to visit the ship’s hospital. Others, especially the teenagers, seem to have enjoyed a wonderful time. Children, often with little supervision, had the run of the ship.

Ports of call varied. In the early 1960s the voyage was through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, but by the middle of 1967 this route was closed during the Suez blockade. The respondents who came by the Mediterranean route often toured Egypt as the ship sailed through the Canal. The respondents spoke of the traders who beset the ships in their small boats, and also of their surprise at the impoverished conditions in some of these ports of call. Many say they were afraid to leave the boat when confronted by armed soldiers. Those passengers who sailed via the Canary Isles seemed to have a happier time ashore, although they were shocked by conditions in Cape Town where apartheid was still in operation. Migrants who came by ship experienced a voyage of four to five weeks, those who arrived by
The migrants who had sought better weather were surprised when they arrived in Australia and found extreme heat or cold rain. Most of the respondents went to the government migrant reception centres at Point Walter, Graylands, or Noalimba, and to similar accommodation in the eastern states. These hostels were the focus of much dissatisfaction. The most frequent complaint concerned the lack of public transport from the centres to places of employment, although the dilapidated state of some of the accommodation also raised comment. Those who had been sponsored under the Fairbridge scheme had often not fully understood the terms of the agreement and were upset to be separated from their children. Many of the respondents had to learn to drive and buy a vehicle so they could go to work.

I was surprised by the variety of professions and trades my participants’ say they brought to Australia; over 53 different skills were reported. These included a veterinarian, a lay minister with the Methodist Church and an academic taking up a position with the University of Western Australia. While most of the women were caring for children, many had held professional positions in the United Kingdom. Although they had been assured by eager officials that they were urgently needed some of my respondents found their work skills were of little use in Western Australia. Finding jobs for those over 40 years was difficult and women, like migrants of other nationalities, found it even harder to gain employment.

The respondents say it was not like living in Britain; most were surprised to find the food, the customs and, in some cases, even the language different. Many were shocked to find they were not particularly welcome. The lowly position of women in Australia in the 1960s provoked much comment. Children especially were disappointed by the lack of wildlife; many of them expected to see kangaroos and koalas on the streets, and a few expected to ride horses to school. The neighbourhood in which the migrants settled also caused concern. While some were very pleased to find people who had been on the ship—or other English migrants—living next-door, others seemed disappointed not to have Australian
neighbours. Housing was the source of a great deal of disappointment. Chip heaters, wood stoves, toilets at the end of the garden and septic sewerage systems were below the expectations of people used to ‘electric everything’ and deep sewerage. Those who moved into the ‘spec’ homes built by the realty companies often found they were in an isolated community with little public transport or other amenities and they still had septic sewerage.

The comfortable life my respondents said they enjoyed in the United Kingdom was in some cases replaced by job insecurity, shoddy accommodation, heat, mosquitos, flies and sand. They had not imagined they would be unwelcome and derided as ‘Pommy Bastards’. Despite this most of the respondents to this survey seem to have settled quite happily in Western Australia although a few returned to the British Isles at some time for a holiday or a short term stay. Many of their children have also returned on working holidays. Some of the families have split up; there have been divorces, remarriages and deaths, and some did return to live permanently in the United Kingdom. While this thesis concentrates on those migrants that have settled in Australia it is useful to see why some returned.

**Going Home**

Many migrants would have returned home to Britain within the first two years if they could have afforded to do so—returning early would require them to repay the full cost of their outward fare—and Hammerton suggests that a few who returned for a short stay to alleviate homesickness often did not come back to Australia.\(^8\) Though most of my participants conclude in retrospect that the migration to Australia was a positive experience, many were unhappy with conditions they experienced on arrival. Such grievances provoked a number of migrants to return to their countries of origin. Others returned because of family circumstances compelled them to do so though they would have preferred to remain here. Accurate statistics are difficult to collate as dissatisfied migrants are not listed as a separate

\(^8\) Hammerton and Thomson, p. 279.
entity in the figures of people travelling from Australia\textsuperscript{9}, but a figure of 25\% is generally accepted.\textsuperscript{10}

Appleyard lists a number of personal factors that were involved in the decision to return, including homesickness and changing family relationships. Some he concluded had just ‘made a mistake in coming’.\textsuperscript{11} Sherington suggests that advances in air travel in the late 1960s made it easier for people to return to their country of origin, for visits or for permanent re-settlement. This was enhanced by the improved economic circumstances in both the United Kingdom and Europe in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{12} Richardson suggests that if a wife was unable to settle this could, in turn upset the husband. ‘It is usually because they did not find what they were looking for or discovered a loss of something they had not previously appreciated’.\textsuperscript{13} Murphy saw other reasons including; inability to handle basic changes in life style, tragedy, bad luck’.\textsuperscript{14} Homesickness was a problem for many women in particular who were separated from their support systems in the United Kingdom and were housed in accommodation they found substandard.\textsuperscript{15}

My respondents gave many instances which provoked disillusionment on arrival. Some have bitter memories of being labelled a ‘whingeing Pom’. In an article in the Western Australian \textit{Sunday Times} in 1997 Gerrie says more than 150,000 disillusioned Poms returned home, ‘many before their two years were up’. One of her interviewees is reported as saying:

\begin{quote}
We thought we were coming to paradise. They kept pushing the fact that Australia was a land of milk and honey. But what looked as lush and green as England on film was a lot hotter and drier on the land. The house was something else—only two bedrooms for the 11 of us. Weatherboard—full of ants, you could poke your finger through the wall. The house we had in England was big and beautiful.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{9} Andrew Hassam, ‘The Bring Out a Briton Campaign of 1957 and British Migration to Australia in the 1950s, \textit{History Compass}, vol. 5 no. 10, 2007, p. 10
\textsuperscript{13} Alan Richardson, ‘British immigrants in Western Australia: Study of British migrants in Medina’, in. Price The study of Immigrants in Australia: Proceedings of a conference on immigration research convened by the Dept. of Demography, Australian National University, Canberra, 1960, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{14} Brian Murphy, \textit{The Other Australia: Experiences of migration}, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{15} James Jupp, \textit{Arrivals and Departures}, Cheshire Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1966, p. 112.
However, it would appear even the English had little sympathy for some ‘whingeing Poms’. During my research at the National Archives I found a letter with an attached newspaper cutting published in *The People* in England on 29 July 1962. It told of a family who had immigrated to Melbourne in 1956 and were unable to settle. The mother stowed away on board an ocean-going liner with her eleven children in an attempt to get back to England; or perhaps the attempt was meant to attract public sympathy—a stowaway with so many children would have found it hard to keep a low profile. They were discovered and off-loaded in Adelaide. A number of the children in the family were working, but not the father. After six years in Australia, they managed to save enough money to buy their tickets back to England. Michael Dale from the *People* newspaper met them at the docks and was able to take them to a house in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, which had been offered to them rent free for five years. The family refused to live in what they considered to be substandard accommodation despite the offer of help by professionals to renovate the house. The reporter concluded, ‘They just don’t know when they are well off’.  

Alistair Thomson argues that the experience of the ‘Ten Pound Poms’ who returned to the United Kingdom has been largely unrecorded until recently. He compiled accounts from over 250 British migrants, some archived at the University of Sussex in England together with over 1,300 accounts held at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He with Jim Hammerton wrote *Ten Pound Poms: Australia’s invisible migrants*, in which they discussed the range of causes behind the discontented migrant. Some returned, they argued, because they had only ever intended to stay two years. There were people who had never really wanted to emigrate, many who were homesick and those who returned because of family responsibilities. Homesickness was a problem for many women in particular who were separated from their support systems in the United Kingdom and were often housed in accommodation they found


substandard. Hammerton prepared two tables, one listing the factors which he found influenced the decision to emigrate and another which influenced the decision to return to Britain. These tables reflect the responses of the participants to my study:

Left, below: Factors cited by Hammerton having influenced the decision of Britons to migrate to Australia, 1945 – 1970s.  
Right, below: Factors which influenced the return of British migrants to the United Kingdom, of those who had migrated in the same period.

In the responses to my survey, the decisions and motivations and the reason for leaving Australia, often matched the findings of these authors. Participants were horrified by the conditions in the migrant hostels and others by the unexpected heat and insects. Few said they never wanted to emigrate. Though some of my participants came because it was a family decision into which they had no input, these migrants, generally, settled happily.

Some of my participants returned because of marital breakdowns, deaths and family

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20 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 65.
21 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 277.
responsibilities. One never wanted to grow old and die in Australia, and another complained of racial attitudes in Australia. Most of my participants, whether they had stayed in Australia or returned, experienced feelings of homesickness. Many still refer to Britain as ‘home’, though they have lived in Western Australia for many years. One explained, ‘When I am here I call England “home”, but when I am in England I call Australia “home”’. The idea of being homesick was often dismissed as being an unimportant ‘female problem’; in the male it was presented as a physical or emotional breakdown related to the inability of the breadwinner to achieve the aims he expected. Hammerton found that homesickness could appear after many years, even much later in life, when people retire and express a ‘growing desire to live out their lives in Britain’.

Some of my participants were ‘boomerang migrants’ returning to Britain more than once before finally settled in Western Australia. One returned to marry the ‘girl he had left behind’ and bring her back to Australia, while another went back because she missed her ‘closest family members’, but then found she missed friends and family here more. The Webers say their return to England was a costly mistake. One woman returned to England after her husband died but returned to Australia within a year. Many of the respondents said they would have gone back straight away if they had had the money, but never again considered it seriously once they had settled. Most agree that though they are now happy Australians; ‘We still love England’.

Although this thesis is primarily about those migrants who made the decision to stay in Western Australia it must be acknowledged that some did not. As part of the research I received 6 surveys completed by people who have now made Britain their home. Some had

26 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 289.
27 Alan Huckins, arr. Apr/May 1967, Survey 64.
31 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1966, Survey 32.
decided to return almost immediately but for others the decision was made much later. Chris Moore returned to England after 31 years in Australia. He says the main reason was because of his ‘ageing mother, and to allow children to get to know her and their UK family’. 32 His wife, Clare, added this rider:

Can I please add that, compared with the rest of the family and friends that I have met in all the times we have been coming back to England, Chris has a much broader understanding of the world and its people. He is more welcoming and accepting—he really likes the Australian idea of giving everyone a go and accepting them for themselves. I think if he had stayed in Bromborough he would be similar to his siblings—fairly narrow minded and set in their ways—old before their time—not very adventurous and distrustful of outsiders (anyone who lives outside the Wirral). He is the middle child and evidently always a bit of a larrikin—a perfect Australian. He still does not fit into his family—only now it doesn’t seem to bother him. Living in Kent is so different from up north, we would never have stayed so long if we moved back to his old family surroundings, it would have swallowed us up and spat us out. We will one day go back to Australia, perhaps when our girls have settled.33

But the Collyer family decided two weeks after arriving in Australia that they wanted to go home. They stayed here for two years and one day. They did not like the conditions at the hostel, though they stayed there for the whole time. Bothered by the heat and the flies, they thought Australia was ‘10–15 years behind the times’ and were disappointed because they thought their two boys (aged 12 years and 13 years) would not be able to find apprenticeships and might be called up to serve in Vietnam.34 Others who could not ‘stand the summers’ were the family of Thomas Bowles.35 Another confessed that ‘After a month we realised we missed things like the green countryside in England. . . .Almost constant heat in WA was too much.’ Although they now call England home they have returned to Australia six times since 1970. Eunice Woods admitted ‘We will never regret the time we had in Australia’.36 Nobby Clarke knew ‘it was a big mistake in leaving Australia. I look back with great fondness and I am glad I had the opportunity on being in such a wonderful country’. But his wife was ‘very

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disappointed with the whole thing as she felt ‘let down’. Eileen Perrins with her husband first travelled overland by motor cycle and sidecar from Luton (England) to Pakistan, then by train to India, plane to Bangkok and Perth. They enjoyed the sunshine and outdoor life here so after the visa expired they applied to emigrate. On arrival they met up with friends they had known while staying here on their visa. They had jobs waiting for them in a mining laboratory where they had worked previously. She says she left Australia the second time mainly because she wanted her children to meet their relatives, but she also ‘disliked the racist attitudes of many white Australians and the overpowering consumerism’. Nevertheless she says she and her children are all Australian citizens and they have returned here on holiday on a couple of occasions. She finishes by saying, ‘it will always have a profound influence on us.’ Another confessed ‘I never wanted to grow old and die there’.

The reasons for a migrant’s return are probably far more complex than those outlined in my stories. It would appear that some had difficulty in settling back into life in Britain when they returned, but still stayed there. While I would have preferred to obtain more responses from ‘returnees’ to the United Kingdom, I was fortunate that the responses I did receive were so disparate. However it was noted that those who stayed in Australia often wrote of Britain as ‘home’ though they have no intention of living there.

**Conclusion**

For the insight it offers into the British migrant experience my study resembles the findings of Peters for the Dutch and other Europeans and Baldassar on the Italian migrant. Chetkovich has written on the ‘new’ Irish, covering a later period in the history of migration to Western Australia. My work extends that of other academics, but it concerns the British migrants of the 1960s who have rarely been the subject of such studies. Hammerton and Thomson have written a more general story of the ‘invisible migrants’ and my work parallels their
contribution to a large extent while concentrating on those 1960s British migrants who came to Western Australia, by boat. A major contribution by Hammerton and Thomson was the story of those migrants who returned to live in Britain.

For the majority of the respondents to this study the dream of a better life was met as they settled in Western Australia. They are now Australian citizens, even some of those who now live permanently in the United Kingdom. Some have retained dual Australian and United Kingdom citizenship. In the long term most migrants found that the reality of life in Australia was as good as or even better than, they had expected, and despite early struggles had adopted what they considered to be an Australian way of life. The study also shows that many of the British migrants had very good reasons to complain and were unfairly labelled as ‘whingers’. However, my study has also revealed that, despite many British migrants of the 1960s being disappointed in the difference between the expectations of their new life in Australia and the conditions that they found on arrival, these early grievances disappeared as they became more settled. They have lived full, productive and successful lives here and truly regard themselves now as Australian citizens.

There are areas of research that justify further investigation. Jupp says research needs to be carried out on the location of the promotional materials that were available to British migrants in the 1960s. Of some social and historical interest would be a study of the reasons why migrants came to Western Australia after initially settling in other states, as 17 of my respondents had done. After reading many authors on feminism, and the changing status of women in Australia, I believe that research into the effect that British migrant women may have had on the advancement of women’s rights would be interesting. Of interest to me and a possible area for further is the reason British migrants still keep coming to Australia even though the £10 assistance scheme finished in 1972. Now they are no longer the most sought after but must compete with other nationalities to become Australian citizens.
Appendix 1.

Questionnaire, Information Letter and Consent Form.

A survey of migrants arriving in Western Australia during the 1960s

Conducted by June Caunt for research towards a Master of Arts degree at the College of Arts, University of Notre Dame Australia.

Please phone 08 9432 2745
or email junecaunt@yahoo.com
with any queries or comments.

Questionnaire

Your answers may be as long or as short as you wish. Please attach additional sheets should you wish to offer more detailed comments or replies to the questions. Please also feel free to disregard those questions which you do not wish to answer.

The information collected in this survey is to be used for this research project only and will not be distributed to any third parties. The privacy of all who respond will be carefully guarded.

If we can follow up some of these questions with you in person or conduct oral history interviews regarding your migration experience, please provide us with your contact details:

Name:

Postal address:

Phone: Email:

What was the date of your voyage to Western Australia? Include month and year if possible.

Did you travel with family or friends? (If so, which?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the names, approximate ages and occupations of those with whom you travelled?

Why did you decide to migrate to Australia?

Why, of all the Australian states, did you choose to migrate to…? (e.g. Western Australia?)

Where did you receive information about Australia before migrating?

*please tick those below which are relevant:*  
other:

- family who were living in WA
- friends who were living in WA
- family or friends who had visited WA
- newspapers in Britain
- pamphlets
- Australian government agencies
- British government agencies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the official procedures you had to follow to apply to migrate to Western Australia? (eg: vaccinations, interviews, letters, documentation etc).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did it take before you were permitted to migrate to Australia?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did it take before you left home for Australia after your approval?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the reactions of your friends and family to your decision to migrate to Australia?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have family or friends in Western Australia who you planned to join in migrating? If so, how many?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your ‘home town’? Could you describe your journey from home to the ship? For example, did you travel by private car, train or some other motor vehicle? Did friends come to wish you well? What were the emotions you remember feeling as you prepared to leave?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Could you describe the voyage on the *(Ship Name or plane)*? Consider such questions as: How long was the journey? Was it a positive experience? Did you make friends with other people on board? If so, did you remain in contact with them after you arrived? Where did the ship stop en route? What were the conditions of your cabin like? Were people excited by the voyage and the promise of what lay ahead? Nervous? Were the food and other conditions of the ship good? *(Please attach additional pages to describe your voyage if necessary).*

What were your first impressions of Australia before you landed? eg: when first seeing land, or from tales told by other passengers.
What happened when the ship docked in port or the plane arrived at the airport?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you went to a hostel what were your impressions of the:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you have somewhere to stay, or was that arranged on arrival? Did you go directly there?

Did you (or your parents) obtain the work which you *had expected to gain* on arrival?

How easy or difficult was it to obtain work in Australia? How long did it take for your family's 'breadwinner' to find work on arrival?

How long was it before you settled into permanent accommodation? Was it difficult to get from there to facilities such as work, school and shops?
What was your first home like in Australia, and how did it differ to the home you left in Britain?

<p>| |</p>
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</table>

Did the reality of life in Australia match the promise which had been offered before you left Britain? If not, was it better or worse?

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</table>

Were you immediately satisfied with your new home and community on arrival? Explain why….

<p>| |</p>
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</table>

Was there anything that caused immediate complaint on arrival?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anything that gained your immediate satisfaction or approval on arrival?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the first 3 years did you consider returning to Britain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you later consider returning to Britain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What made you stay in Western Australia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did any of your family return to Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an extended period before coming back (not Holidays)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so what made them return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you now happy with your life in Western Australia and your decision to migrate here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think the life of you and your family has changed by moving here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you now an Australian citizen?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Promises and Realities**  
**A history of British migration to Australia in the 1960s**

I am a mature-age Masters student in the College of Arts at the University of Notre Dame. The requirement for my degree is to write a thesis covering the topic of British migration to Australia in the 1960s.

As a British migrant of that period, myself, I have chosen to re-tell the stories of the thousands of Britons who made the voyage to Australia by sea. I want to uncover the reasons why many people left home, what the voyage to Australia was like, how they settled in on arrival, and why they either stayed or returned.

You can help this study by completing a brief written survey which I have compiled. The questions are designed to help me piece together the trends of British experiences: why migrants made the voyage, who they travelled with, how they made friends on board and in Australia, what jobs were (or were not) accessible, and what kind of housing, education and other opportunities were available.

I would also like to conduct a survey of a few of the Ten Pound Poms who returned home after a short stay in Australia to compare their experience with those who stayed here. If you were one of these migrants the survey has been adapted to cover not only your journey to Australia, but why you made the decision to return, I know of many returned for family reasons, but your particular experience will add to the fabric of the research.

You can also help this project by loaning to me original documents, diaries, photographs and other ephemera which tell part of the migration story. I will return all such material to you in good condition, and would like to make photographs of them in case they can illustrate the research.

I am conducting this research as a way of preserving the stories of the British migrants from this period. There will be occasions when I would like to publish extracts of the research or speak of the research at conferences. Participants will be given the opportunity to remain anonymous in such published work if they so choose.

Participants can decide to withdraw from this project at any time. Please feel more than welcome to speak with me or my supervisor, Dr Deborah Gare (08 9433 0560), at any stage should you wish to have more information about this project.

Thank you for being part of the Promises and Realities project. I will look forward to hearing your stories.

June Caunt  
College of Arts  
University of Notre Dame  
PO Box 1225  
Fremantle WA 6959  
junecaunt@yahoo.com

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which this research project is conducted, please contact the researcher, their supervisor or, alternatively, the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08)94330846.
CONSENT FORM

Yes, I (full name)

Of (address)

☐ Have read and understood the introductory letter relating to this project.
☐ Acknowledge that I am free to withdraw myself and any information that I have given at any time.
☐ Understand that all information, unless I have otherwise consented, will be treated as confidential.
☐ Acknowledge that the research data gathered for the study may be published and that identifying information will only be disclosed where consent is given
☐ Give permission to allow June Caunt the use of information which I have provided by Questionnaire,
☐ By Oral history interviews,
☐ As material for academic publications that may arise from the Promises and Realities

Signed (participant)……………………………………………………………………..Date……………

Signed
(researcher)…………………………………………………………………………..Date……………

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08)94330848
Appendix 2

Publicity

Western Australian Senior (November 2005, p. 5.),
It’s their 10 quid’s worth

They set off in search of a better life, and found it here. Pam Casellas talks to some Aussie ten-pound poms.

Before Bill Watkins left Britain in 1964, bound for Australia, one thing he did was ensure that he had a few words of advice. When you get off the ship and walk along the streets of Fremantle, Bill, a bloody careful of those bloody curving corners. They’re sharp and they’ll do you a bit of damage.

It was a common saying that those who made the long trek overseas were not seeking a better life, but rather a chance to escape. Bill Watkins was one such person, his family’s story a testament to the challenges faced by those who chose to migrate.

Pam Casellas, a journalist, had the opportunity to interview some of these migrants, their tales a reminder of the sacrifices made in pursuit of a better future.

The result was a series of articles, with each piece focusing on a different aspect of the migration experience. These stories highlighted the struggles, challenges, and triumphs of those who ventured across the seas to Australia.

The articles were published in the West Australian, providing readers with a unique insight into the lives of these immigrants and the impact of their journey on their families and communities.

West Australian, 5 December 2005, p. 9.
‘10-pounders’ reflect

This “ten-pound Poms” of the 1960s may have had a much easier ride getting to Australia than today’s migrants, but June Caunt, of Coogee, maintains it was far from the “beer and skittles” many believe.

Mrs Caunt and husband Doug arrived in Fremantle aboard the migrant ship Castel Felice with their two children and a third on the way, and immediately found life tough.

Last Tuesday, at Fremantle’s Notre Dame University, they were able to reminisce with more than 50 other “ten pounders”, who helped Mrs Caunt with her MA thesis on their migration experiences.

They all survived the first three-year “make or break” period of intense homesickness and hardships to make a good life in Australia.

Mrs Caunt hopes to complete her 50,000-word thesis by next November. She had more than 100 replies to her request for help in her thesis.

Appendices

Appendix 3

List of Participants

List of respondents by given date of arrival in Western Australia on board the Castel Felice unless otherwise stated

1947 Ward, Ken  
1951 June Thomas, Loretta  
1957 Oct Mitchell, Isabelle,  
1957 Nov Goldstone, Joan  
1957 Dec/Jan 58 Sclater, John B  
1959 Dec-Jan 60 Austin, Ann  
1960 Sep-Oct Olsson, Renate (Left Bremerhaven Germany  
1962 January Bartley, Coral Phyllis  
1962 Aug Wilson, John Edward  
1962 Sept Woods, Eunice  
1962 Nov Davidson, Joyce M  
1962 Nov Pope, Jean Barbara and Frank Richard  
1962 Nov Scambler, Christine  
1962 Nov-Dec Roberts, Robert David  
1962 Nov-Dec Stirling, Mr Robert  
1962 Dec Steed, John  
1962 Dec Rhodes, Jack  
1963 Jan Lennon, Penelope  
1963 Apr Atkins, Brian  
1963 Apr. Rollo, Tom and Mary  
1963 May Geurds, Jeanette  
1963 May Geurds James (Michael)  
1963 May Talbot, John William  
1963 June Hall, Mary  
1963 Nov Jackson, Hazel  
1963 Nov Norris, Peter  
1963 Nov Platts, Kathleen
1963 Dec  Bolton, Margaret
1963 Dec  Bolton, Quinton R
1963 Dec  Pritchard,(nee Dean)  Phena Angela
1964 Feb  Houghton, William
1964 Feb  Stanbury, nee Turner, Josephine
1964 Mar  Watkins, William George
1964 July  Ross, nee Wilson, Lesley
1964 July  Wilson, Iris
1964 Dec  Berryman, Jean
1965 -    Kendell, Richard
1965 Mar  Cook, Gerry and Doreen
1965 Mar  Jupp, Howard Queensland
1965 Mar/Apr  Ogilvie, Margaret
1965 Mar-Apr  Whitehouse, Clifford
1965 Apr  Gawthrop, Anthony C R & Jean
1965 Jul Aug  Gillbard, Bill & Helen
1965 Sep Oct  Minett, nee Terry, Susan
1965 Sep-Oct  Reed, nee Terry, Patricia Ann
1965 Sept-Oct  Turner, nee Terry, Kathleen
1965, Oct  Mayers, Brian and Frances Ann
1965 Nov  Collyer, Mrs M  SS Fairsky  RETURNED
1966 Jan  Caunt, Doug and June
1966 Jan  Clithero, Sybil M  SS Canberra
1966 Jan  Parkin, Peggy Pamela
1966 Jan  Phillips, David
1966 Jan  Stone, Eileen and Ken
1966 March  Gatey, Peter G
1966 March  Hilton-Shepherd, Brian and Sylvia
1966 Mar/Apr  Coackley, Bill
1966 Apr  Rajala, Joy
1966 May  Baldwin, Joan and John  SS Fairsea
1966, May  Snowden, J G  SS Fairstar
1966, June  Alexander, Maureen May
1966, June  Kerry, Albert Norman
1966 July  Clarke, Lillian
1966, July  Harland, Moyna
1966, July  Joyce, Kieran Patrick
1966, July  Macaulay, Douglas
1966, July  Weber, F E
1966 Aug.  Ellinor, Jean Margaret
1966 Aug    Plummer, Frank
1966 Aug    Thyer, Patricia
1966 Aug    Yeomans, (Jim) Edwin James
1966 Sep    Fonte, Marilyn (nee Yeomans)
1966 Sep    Penberthy Ball, Susan Doreen
1966 Nov    Parry, Ted
1966 Nov.   Young, David and Roberta
1966, Dec   Beer, Les
1966 Dec    Humphries Victor
1966 Dec    Reid, Jeane
1966 Dec    Shapland, Geoffrey
1967 Jan-Feb Taylor, Myra and Alan
1967 Feb Mar Keohane, Marian Rose
1967 April  Clarke, Nobby
1967 Apr-May Huckins, Allan
1967 Jul-Aug Paleeya, Patricia
1967 Dec    Franklin, Merle
1967 Dec Jan 68 Howarth, Rosemary
1967-68, Dec-Jan Rix, Eddy Fairsea
1967-68, Dec-Jan Rix, John Fairsea
1967-68, Dec-Jan Rix, Ida Fairsea
1968 Feb    Mullender, Joyce
1968 Feb-Mar Davies, Arthur Christopher
1968 Feb-Mar Range, Jacqueline
1968 Mar    Rawling, Jacqui
1968 May    Bowles, Betty
1968 May    Jackson, Anna and Gordon
1968 Jul Aug Calnon, Jennifer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968 Jul-Aug</td>
<td>Thomson, Peter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968 Aug</td>
<td>Edwards, Tom</td>
<td>Plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968 Aug</td>
<td>Luck, Margaret</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968 Nov</td>
<td>Concannon, James Edward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Jan-Feb</td>
<td>Moore, Chris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Jan-Feb</td>
<td>Paul, Valerie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Apr</td>
<td>Atkinson, Kathleen Joan</td>
<td>Plane RETURNED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Apr-May</td>
<td>Moller, née Cotton Betteridge, Georgina A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Jun-Jul</td>
<td>Saville, Sheila and Alfred (Fred)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Sept</td>
<td>Bowles, Thomas and Doreen</td>
<td>Plane RETURNED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 Sept/Oct</td>
<td>Shaw, David</td>
<td>SS Fairstar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 Backpacker</td>
<td>Campbell, Ian</td>
<td>Backpacker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s, 1970</td>
<td>Milligan, Terence John,</td>
<td>Plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s, 1977</td>
<td>Perrins, Eileen, m/bike &amp; sidecar, RETURNED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Gallagher, Steve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CA 969, Department of Immigration, South Australia Branch

CA 2318, Immigration Group, Department of Labor and Immigration, Regional Administration, Western Australia, 22 Dec 1975 - 24 Jul 1987

CA 2328, , Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs [I], Regional Administration, Western Australia, 24 Jul 1987 - 24 Mar 1993

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Oral interviews

Michael Geurds, Survey 5, at his home in Byford on Monday 22 May 2006
Kathleen Platts, Survey 7, at her home in Hamilton Hill on Thursday 11 May 2006
Mr and Mrs Weber, Survey 25, at their home in Munster on Monday 1 May 2006.
Mrs Jennifer Calnon, Survey 71, at her home in Casuarina on Thursday 18 May 2006.

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