



Coronation procession mounted by townspeople in Gympie, Queensland, in 1937.

CARTER COLLECTION

## CHAPTER 38

# SOCIAL HISTORY

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**S**OCIAL HISTORY is perhaps more difficult to define than other kinds. It threatens to overlap with many other disciplines so that books from this list inevitably appear also in other chapters of this volume. Probably the most influential article in recent English writing on social history is E.J. Hobsbawm's 'From social history to the history of society', first published in *Daedalus* (Winter 1971, pp 20–45). This article contains some brilliant insights, but seems astray in its central thrust—namely, that social history, as distinct from other kinds of history, addresses the history of society as a whole, complex yet total. The truer verdict surely is that virtually all kinds of history can, most of the time should, and much of the time do, have this high purpose. Political history, economic history, women's history . . . and the list runs on. The author's own *Quest for authority in eastern Australia 1835–51* (MUP, 1965) is considered to be social history and while it is unquestionably a history of society, it is cultural as well as social history. The divide, of course, is narrow: some of the references, most obviously White (1981), might be thought to lie on the same side as *Quest for authority*.

While not having monopoly rights in the matter, social history most certainly is concerned with the history of society. It studies ways in which material conditions of life react with human relationships and attitudes. Another way of making the point of the previous paragraph is first to equate 'relations and attitudes' with 'the history of society', and then to recognise that not only 'material conditions of life' react with those relations and attitudes. But the rest of that story belongs to other historians while the dynamic effect of 'material conditions' is that of the social historian.

The language of our definition is no more clumsy than meaning demands. 'Material conditions' conveys the point that economic facts are crucial to social history. So are they crucial to many areas of experience, but with particular immediacy in this instance. Such economic facts affect both work place and living place; they affect all parts of the living place—backyard (that is, leisure activities) and bedroom (sexual mores) as well as kitchen (diet and living standards).

Whereas older traditions of social history were often narrow, threatening to reduce the subject to triviality, our definition follows current theory and practice in linking 'material circumstances' with 'relations and attitudes'. The most obvious of such relations are those of class, and Marxists of various kinds have contributed much to recent social history, as McQueen (1976, 1977) and Connell and Irving (1980) exemplify. But 'class' is a concept used by other than Marxist writers, less confident though they might be of its precise meaning and less apocalyptic in their

interpretation of its effect. For many, 'class' is too protean an idea for effective handling. 'Groups' and 'types' are easier terms to use, although (and because) they carry less portent. They are the terms appropriate to many of our books. A principle of selection has been that authors should refer to important classes, groups or types, and convey through a study of their interrelationships a sense of society in the round.

'Attitudes' is specified in the definition so as to assert that social history centres on the sense-experience of humankind. It is rooted in consciousness, and so earns its claim to high standing in the realms of humane learning. Social history often deals with consciousness of a simple and direct kind. These qualities are not akin to pettiness: the matter treated by, say, Gammage (1977) or Facey (1984) is simple and direct, but also profound and moving. A further criterion of choice has been the presence of some such grand or elemental quality.

The ugliest phrase of our definition is 'react with'. It would have been simpler to say 'shape', but not so true. Material conditions are more positive than many facts, but not absolutely so: they acquire meaning from consciousness, as well as giving meaning to consciousness. That is to say, the two elements in our definition mutually react.

So, with pedantic pen, a definition can be offered and explained. Yet having done that, many issues must be resolved before its application makes good sense. They are best tackled by starting with the more abstract.

One concerns the dilemma of national-ness. Australia has become a political entity which relates in turn to more-or-less a geographical entity. Is it an entity conforming to social history? Everyone's answer would surely have a yes-no quality. Although of long and at times interesting provenance, Australian nationalism has never been extremely potent or pervasive; political loyalties and (still more) financial interests are often directed to the particular rather than to the whole. Yet Australia is probably as homogeneous as any nation, with similar groups and types prevailing from region to region. Speech is the best symbol: one can find a few variations (boys educated by Christian Brothers, especially in Queensland, tend to say 'umberella' and 'fillum'; Tasmanians use more nicknames and accent second syllables—Huddo [Peter Hudson of Australian Rules football fame] first played with New Norfolk—but they amount to little.

It is convenient, and perhaps even necessary, to assert Australian homogeneity if one also believes, as does the compiler, that much of the best social history is local history. There is no mystery why this should be so. Social history requires an intensity that naturally predisposes the student to work within narrow geographic bounds. In today's scholarly world (probably less in Australia than most similar countries), a vast amount of academic effort is being expended in social history research, which a while back would have seemed antiquarian. Indeed, some of these efforts do seem rather extravagant, but they confirm the affinity between local and social history. The overrepresentation of Tasmania in the bibliography results from this situation: anyone who knows one region and its literature particularly well will know certain works to be such good local history that they impose themselves upon his or her judgment. Yet (to return to and clarify the opening assertion of this paragraph), if one sees Australia as socially homogeneous, one need have no guilt about such a bias in a national list, for truths derived from one area are, reasonably speaking, therefore likely to be of general pertinence.

This argument has a double edge. Might not the most important truth of the matter be that social history has a homogeneity not only and importantly within Australia but for much of the world? Accordingly, the argument might continue, social history lacks that definition of particularity and change which should be an aim of historical study. There can be various responses to this charge. Revealing particularity may not be essential to historical study after all. Manning Clark's multivolume history of Australia has won praise from one acute observer essentially because it establishes that humanity has undergone the same range of experience and emotion in Australia as elsewhere (P. Munz, 'Gesta Dei per Australianos', *Australia 1888: bulletin* 3, 1979, 5–27). Perhaps social history should strive for that same accolade, or at least be ready to accept it. Changing perspective somewhat, one could say that Australia's social history is no more derivative and comparable vis-a-vis the outside world than are other aspects of its history.

Nobody knows enough to decide this question, and never will until that unimaginable day when the total history of the world is written. All this can be said, with sense and truth; yet a nag remains that even the best of our social history tells a tale, not hackneyed, nor yet unique and virgin.

The relationship between social history and social ideology offers some thorny problems. An oft-spoken virtue of social history is its democratic quality, resulting from concern for the common people as against the elitism of politics, management and growth. A natural and even necessary result might be for its texts and scholars to side with underdogs against establishments. That Marxists have written good social history apparently attests the thesis. More generally, there is indeed much sympathy for the humble in, say, Barbalet's (1983) study of state children and Ward's (1978) of bush workers.

Another appropriate example of this relationship is the treatment accorded to bushrangers by historians during the past hundred years. While some of the reasons for the widespread disruption of society, notably rural, in the nineteenth century can be explored in works about bushrangers and their role, these men attracted popular imagination and sympathy against a background of rural depression. Some of the past authors (for example, J.J. Kenneally, *The complete inner history of the Kelly gang*, 1929; repr, Moe, Vic, Kelly Gang Publishing Co, 1969) have argued that police persecution and the unbending superior attitude of the judiciary were the main causes of the Kelly outbreak and similar events. More recent histories such as McQuilton (1979) have assessed bushranging as a social rather than a purely criminal phenomenon.

Social history must address itself to the common people. Less conventionally it can also be claimed—on both moral and intellectual grounds, although ultimately more the former—that the very best history results from its writers having sympathy with their subjects. This is especially true of social history, which therefore is obviously subject to the eternal tension of sympathy's Janus effect: prompting insight and understanding on one hand, sentimentality and subjectivism on the other.

Despite all this there is little sociopolitical bias in the listed books. Social history does give a sizeable place to the common people, but no monopoly. Note such books as those by Kiddle (1980) and de Serville (1980)—who, furthermore, have an affinity with the values of their elites which counterweighs the underdoggerly of other authors. Again, whatever might be the truth as to the best studies requiring sympathy between author and subject, some important ones have emerged in (and from) its absence: Robson (1976) is cool towards convicts; McQueen (1976) scathing about New Britons. At most, then, social history (compared with other subdisciplines) is just a shade more oriented to the left, and just a shade more vulnerable to the distortions of ideology and sentiment.

One has to worry about such matters, but not for too long, lest the mind boggle and stall. What then about these particular books? Why them and not others, or other kinds?

In the most general terms, items are chosen because they tell much about Australian social history in terms of the definition earlier discussed. They touch little upon Aboriginal history—partly because of 'overlap' considerations (see section IV), but mainly because the compiler is wary of imposing on Aboriginal experience concepts drawn from European culture. Otherwise the attempt has been to offer a comprehensive spread as to both time and social group and place (saving the excess Tasmaniana). Experiences therein told are judged to be authentically Australian: not universally shared by Australians of course, but running with mainstream currents of Australian history. Accordingly, they are likely to evoke a sizeable degree of identification, or at least comprehension, from other Australians.

All the books listed are good books, well worth reading. As the annotations suggest, some might be thinnish or tendentious or dated—but no author need be ashamed of having written any one of them. The entries fall into two broad categories: history and contemporary report. The latter includes academic enquiry of sociological bent; interpretative essays, often by visitors; and autobiographies. To make distinctions as to the relative quality of these various subgroups is a forbidding task, but perhaps the palm should go to the autobiographies.

Biases other than locality might have affected the compiler. Time, like place, is a distorter. This

list dates from the second half of 1984 and comprises a large number of books published in immediately preceding years. Those from earlier periods have, as it were, had to undergo more rigorous tests of survival capacity; they might be finer works than the overall average, whereas some of the later ones could prove unworthy of the dignity of selection.

The choice is made by an academic. It is likely that there are more non-academic books in this list than in most others. But maybe there should be still more, for this is an area requiring such sensitivity of judgment and breadth of experience as academics have in no exclusive way. Conversely, only a few scholars have brought together the best of relevant academic qualities—rigour in handling socioeconomic data and acuteness of analysis—to produce surpassingly good books: Davison (1979) and Waterson (1968) are probably the best exemplars of the academic ideal.

Finally, the compiler might have been guilty of bias through ideological commitment. If so, it is bias of the most insidious sort—that which leaves the perpetrator ignorant of the deed. Ideological blinkers might even blind him to the existence of some major books. Who will ever know?

Certain kinds of material have been excluded. Among them are histories 'of society' (to return to a concept discussed earlier in the essay). Most books of this kind are at a level of generality which excludes them from even so modestly specialised a list as this. That does not apply however to, say, Serle's studies of Victoria, or Pike's of South Australia, or Robson's of Van Diemen's Land. It is because these are considerably more than social history, not their lack of relevance thereto, that they are absent.

Novels present no less a problem, especially when they depend heavily upon personal experience. Is there any justification for including Alexander Harris (1847; facs, 1964) yet not *Ralph Rashleigh* (A & R, 1975)? Once that gate is opened, many would press for entry: Leakey's *Broad arrow* (London, Bently, 1859), exploring the fusion of convictism with master-servant bonds; Tasma's [J. Couvreur] *Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill* (1889; facs, Melbourne, Nelson, 1969), a fine revelation of high bourgeois Melbourne in its heyday; Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923; repr, A & R, 1982), arguably the most brilliant of traveller's tales; Hardy's *Four-legged lottery* (London, T. Werner Laurie, 1958), a powerful study of the gambling life; and plenty of others. Novels offer insights into the history of society, but not through social history. Their special concern is moral and emotional experience.

At another end of the scale are raw documents. Most history is based on them and some make wonderfully good reading—many a parliamentary paper, for example, or Pearl's *Australia's yesterdays* (Sydney, Reader's Digest Services, 1974), or Ward and Robertson's two-volume collection *Such was life . . . 1788-1913* (Sydney, Alternative Publishing Co, 1978-80). The current vogue for the collection of oral reminiscences adds another species to this genre, albeit one that has to be handled with greater care as a historical source. The principle of excluding documents was more straightforward than with the novels: the aim was to offer readers books in which the genius of authorship operated to a degree impossible in even the best of editing.

No principle determined the absence of biographies. In fact none pressed for inclusion (unless Durack, 1981, is considered biography more than 'saga'). Perhaps there is some underlying logic: are studies written only of people who, at least in the biographer's eye, transcend norms of interaction between material circumstances, relationships and attitudes? Autobiographies on the other hand are often rich in precisely this way, and so have their ample representation even though some have affinities with novels and others are somewhat documentary.



- ADAM-SMITH, P. *The shearers*. Melbourne, Nelson, 1982. 416 p, illus, maps.  
 Although weak in its historical research, this study has vigour and resonance; its author has written similar studies (concerning timber-getters, railwaymen, soldiers, Bass Straiters) of similar quality.
- ADAMS, F.W.L. *The Australians: a social sketch*. London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1893. 314 p.  
 Adams was a young, sensitive, English intellectual. He posited a very sharp difference between townsmen and inlanders, seeing the latter as the true Australian type.
- BARBALET, M. *Far from a low gutter girl: the forgotten world of state wards, South Australia 1887-1940*. OUP, 1983. 286 p, illus.  
 Draws upon a rich archive to give a view of life from below, unique in its detail and breadth; the protagonists were 'outsiders' in multiple ways.
- BARKER, J. *The two worlds of Jimmie Barker: the life of an Australian Aboriginal 1900-1972, as told to J. Mathews*. Canberra, AIAS, 1977. 218 p, illus, maps. (AIAS. Ethno-history series, 4.)  
 A story of great authenticity, telling about Aborigines, Europeans and their interaction.
- BEAN, C.E.W. *On the wool track*. London, Alston, Rivers Ltd, 1910. 296 p.  
 Life in outback NSW presaged the author's fame as official historian of Australia in World War I. Latest edition published in 1963.
- BLAINEY, G.N. *A land half won*. Melbourne, Sun Books, 1983. 388 p, illus, maps.  
 The most relevant of the author's many books, this explores byways of nineteenth-century life with skill and insight. First published in 1980.
- BOLGER, P.F. *Hobart Town*. ANUP, 1973. 237 p, illus, maps.  
 A well-written historical essay of a smaller nineteenth-century city, with its particular problems of a convict background and uneven economic growth.
- BOLTON, G.C. *A fine country to starve in*. UWAP, 1972. 278 p, illus, maps.  
 Concentrates upon the impact of the depression of the 1930s in WA, yet gives a flavour of the difficulties of Australian settlement.
- BOYD, R.G.P. *Australia's home, its origins, builders and occupiers*. MUP, 1952. 320 p, illus.  
 A successful attempt, by an architect and social commentator, to trace the changing style of a basic constituent of Australian society. New edition published in 1978.
- BRENNAN, N. *John Wren, gambler: his life and times*. Melbourne, Hill of Content, 1976. 259 p, illus.  
 A sympathetic study of an extraordinary but common man, who made a fortune out of gambling in Melbourne around 1900 and who sought to build an empire of influence. First published in 1971.
- BROOMHILL, C.R. *Unemployed workers: a social history of the great depression in Adelaide*. UQP, 1978. 220 p, illus.  
 Drawing on statistics and theory as well as conventional sources, gives an enlightening view of the South Australian workforce between the wars.
- BUXTON, G.L. *The Riverina 1861-1891: an Australian regional study*. MUP, 1967. 338 p, illus, maps.  
 A history of the small-farmer movement, of considerably greater success than the stereotype allows.
- CANNON, M. *Australia in the Victorian age*. Melbourne, Currey O'Neil, 1982-83. 3 vols, illus.  
 An informative but sometimes superficial panorama. The volumes are separately titled respectively stressing class differentiation, country life and city life. First published, 1971-75.
- CHIDLEY, W.J. *The confessions of William James Chidley*. Ed by S. McInerney. UQP, 1977. 307 p, illus.  
 Chidley was far from being an ordinary man, but his autobiography gives many glimpses into popular life, and especially into sexual behaviour.
- CONNELL, R.W. AND IRVING, T.H. *Class structure in Australian history: documents, narrative and argument*. Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1980. 378 p, illus.  
 An ambitious, neo-Marxist history which strives to comprehend 'class' in virtually all its subtleties, including style of life.
- CONWAY, R. *The great Australian stupor: an interpretation of the Australian way of life*. Melbourne, Sun Books, 1971. 282 p.  
 The author, a Catholic and a practising psychiatrist, applies clinical insights to modern Australian society; he finds it cold, withdrawn, even alienated—but possibly capable of redemption.
- CUMES, J.W.C. *Their chastity was not too rigid: leisure times in early Australia*. Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1979. 378 p, illus.  
 Sometimes too sweeping and assertive in its judgments, yet tells much in an entertaining way.
- CUSACK, E.D. *Caddie, a Sydney barmaid: an autobiography written by herself, with an introduction by Dymphna Cusack*. A & R, 1966. 199 p.  
 A moving and persuasive story of life as seen from the other side of the bar; set mainly in Sydney between the wars. First published in 1953.
- DAVIES, A.F. *et al*, *Australian society: a sociological introduction* (3rd edn). Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1977. 490 p, illus, maps.  
 Competent essays ranging over the key features of latter-day Australian society. First published in 1965.
- DAVIS, R.P. *The Tasmanian gallows: a study of capital punishment*. Hobart, Cat & Fiddle Press, 1974. 119 p, illus.  
 Tells much about the texture of society in general, and attitudes to crime and to death over a long timespan.
- DAVISON, G.J. *The rise and fall of marvellous Melbourne*. MUP, 1979. 304 p, illus, maps.  
 An illuminating account of an Australian city, concentrating on the later nineteenth century, when it was indeed 'marvellous'. First published in 1978.
- DENHOLM, D. *The colonial Australians*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1979. 202 p, illus, maps.  
 A discursive account, embellished with detail and erudition, of aspects of colonial life as diverse as table manners and religious belief.
- DE SERVILLE, P.H. *Port Phillip gentlemen and good society in Melbourne before the gold rushes*. OUP, 1980. 256 p, illus.  
 A determined attempt to describe the style and role of an elite, defined (if rather vaguely) by Old World standards.
- DINNING, H.W. *Australian scene*. A & R, 1939. 225 p.  
 Something of a period piece, and concerned more with Qld than Australia generally, this essay nevertheless has vitality and commitment.
- DIXSON, M. *The real Matilda: women and identity in Australia 1788-1975*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1976. 280 p.  
 Attempts at a historical explanation for the inferior position of women in Australia in the 1970s. Links their lack of identity with white Australia's convict origins.
- DUNSTAN, K. *Wowsers: being an account of the prudery exhibited by certain outstanding men and women in such matters*

as drinking, smoking, prostitution, censorship and gambling. Melbourne, Cassell, 1968. 315 p, illus.

'Wowzers' were moralists who sought to curb drinking, gambling, fornication and the like; they had most power early in this century. Dunstan is not sympathetic to his subjects, but he is informative.

DURACK, M. *Kings in grass castles*. Melbourne, Currey O'Neil, 1981. 395 p, illus, maps.

A powerful saga, telling of the author's family and its pioneering ventures across vast areas of northern Australia. First published in 1959.

FACEY, A.B. *A fortunate life*. Ringwood, Vic, Viking, 1984. 342 p, illus, maps.

The autobiography of a countryman (born 1894), who had the qualities of a saint and the ability to write prose of great simplicity and power. First published in 1981.

FENTON, J. *Bush life in Tasmania fifty years ago*... London, Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1891. 192 p. 203 p.

The literature offers very few autobiographical accounts by small farmers; this is probably the best of those few. New edition published in 1964.

FITZPATRICK, B.C. *The Australian commonwealth: a picture of the community, 1901-1955*. Melbourne, Cheshire, 1956. 337 p.

More discursive and 'social' than the author's other works, but maintaining the radical critique which he upheld over many years.

FITZPATRICK, J. *The bicycle and the bush: man and machine in rural Australia*. OUP, 1980. 250 p, illus.

Studies on one hand of the life of the bush worker, and on the other the working of a transport revolution.

FRELAND, J.M. *The Australian pub*. Melbourne, Sun Books, 1977. 192 p, illus.

The author is a historian of architecture, which determines the focus of his work; nevertheless, he tells much about the drinking life. First published in 1966.

GAMMAGE, B. *The broken years: Australian soldiers in the Great War*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1975. 382 p, illus.

Remarkable for its interweaving of documents and text to present a deeply moving account of the soldiery's hopes and fears, life and death. First published in 1974.

GRIFFIN, G.M. AND TOBIN, D. *In the midst of life: the Australian response to death*. MUP, 1982. 177 p, illus.

An informative study, adequately historical in depth, ranging from styles of grief to cost of funerals.

HAINSWORTH, DR. *The Sydney traders: Simeon Lord and his contemporaries, 1788-1821*. MUP, 1981. 264 p, illus, maps.

Primarily a study in economic history, but illuminates an extraordinarily interesting group—the successful ex-convict businessmen of early NSW. First published in 1971.

HARRIS, A. *Settlers and convicts: or, recollections of sixteen years' labour in the Australian backwoods, by an emigrant mechanic*. London, C. Cox, 1847. 435 p, illus, maps.

Part-fiction though probably it is, this remains the surpassing personal account of pre-1850 Australian life by an ordinary man. New edition published in 1964.

HICKS, N. *This sin and scandal: Australia's population debate, 1891-1911*. ANUP, 1978. 208 p, illus.

Takes as its focus a parliamentary inquiry into population, and illuminates attitudes to family, sex and geopolitics.

HIRST, J.B. *Adelaide and the country, 1870-1917: their social and political relationship*. MUP, 1973. 266 p, illus.

Presents very effectively the role of this particular city in serving

and satisfying not only its own residents but also those considerably more distant.

HIRST, J.B. *Convict society and its enemies: a history of early New South Wales*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1983. 244 p, illus.

A learned presentation of convict life, at least as rewarding as its denizens merited: rough and tough rather than cruel or evil.

HORNE, D. *The Australian people: biography of a nation*. A & R, 1972. 285 p, illus.

Although less well known than the author's *The lucky country* (Penguin, 1964), this has more substance, notably in charting the force of the suburban, self-help style in middle-class Australia.

INGLIS, K.S. *The Australian colonists: an exploration of social history, 1788-1870*. MUP, 1974. 316 p, illus.

The first of a projected four-volume work which investigates Australian identity with subtlety and grace.

JEFFREY, M. *A burglar's life; or the stirring adventures of the great English burglar, Mark Jeffrey*. Launceston Examiner and Tasmanian Office, 1893. 137 p.

Although a 'ghost' doubtless penned this work, it gives an authentic flavour in telling the tale of one who went through the rigours of convictism, and survived. New edition published in 1968.

JENKINS, J. *Diary of a Welsh swagman, 1869-1894, abridged and notated by W. Evans*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1975. 216 p, illus, map.

The author was a Welsh bard of some local fame who migrated late in life to Australia, ultimately to write a personal account of the itinerant life.

KIDDLE, M.L. *Men of yesterday: a social history of the western district of Victoria, 1834-1890*. MUP, 1980. 591 p, illus, maps.

Concentrates on the landed elite, but is informative about many aspects of rural life and people. First published in 1961.

LAWSON, R. *Brisbane in the 1890s: a study of an Australian urban society*. UQP, 1973. 373 p, illus, maps.

While limited in its timespan, depicts a growing city and its people with an effective range of detail.

McINNES, G. *The road to Gundagai*. London, Hamish Hamilton, 1965. 285 p, illus, maps.

The first of the author's series about everyday events in the 1920s, as lived by a bourgeois Melbourne boy.

McQUEEN, H. *A new Britannia: an argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1976. 261 p.

A central work in Australian historiography, emphasising petty bourgeois elements in virtually all ranks of Australian society—including convicts, goldseekers and trade unionists. First published in 1970.

McQUEEN, H. *Social sketches of Australia, 1888-1975*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1977. 255 p, illus.

In an impressionist yet effective way pursues eight themes: work, urban life, rural life, health, Aborigines, New Guinea, 'White Australia' policy and the wider world.

McQUILTON, F.J. *The Kelly outbreak, 1878-1880: the geographical dimension of social banditry*. MUP, 1979. 250 p, illus, map.

Presents Kelly as a product of an angry quasipeasant society, asserting its social protest.

MARTIN, J.I. *The migrant presence, Australian responses 1947-1977: research report for the National Population Inquiry*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1978. 261 p. (Studies in society, 2).

An outstanding synthesis of its subject, enriched by strong historical awareness.

- MAYNE, A.J.C. *Fever, squalor, and vice: sanitation and social policy in Victorian Sydney*. UQP, 1982. 263 p, illus, maps. Draws upon archival sources to present the grimmer side of urban life and politics.
- MENDELSON, R.S. *The condition of the people: social welfare in Australia, 1900-1975*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1979. 408 p.  
Combines much statistical and official information with a sensitivity to human experiences as the ultimate touchstone of 'welfare'.
- MURRAY, R.A. *The confident years: Australia in the twenties*. Ringwood, Vic, Allen Lane, 1978. 263 p.  
One of the very few attempts to write a 'social history' of the nation over a brief timespan. The patterns of the 1920s were long-lasting.
- OESER, O.A. AND EMERY, F.E. *Social structure and personality in the rural community*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954. 279 p.  
A study of a Victorian country town and its inhabitants, covering family life, social structure, beliefs and behaviour. It remains outstanding in the literature.
- OESER, O.A. AND HAMMOND, S.B. eds, *Social structure and personality in a city*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954. 344 p.  
A pioneer of sociopsychological investigation (centred on Melbourne) in Australia, this remains impressive in its substance and quality. Work, family, class and minorities are among the key issues.
- PEARL, C. *Wild men of Sydney*. A & R, 1977. 255 p, illus.  
Not a work of academic scholarship, yet gives an enlightening picture of the seamier side of big-city life, politics and journalism early this century. First published in 1955.
- PORTER, H. *The watcher on the cast-iron balcony: an Australian autobiography*. London, Faber, 1967. 255 p.  
Tells of childhood spent first in Melbourne and then in a country town, with great literary skill and emotional effect; its successor volumes are only slightly less potent. First published in 1963.
- PRINGLE, J.D. *Australian accent*. London, Chatto & Windus, 1958. 203 p, illus.  
The years around 1960 saw a number of perceptive essays concerning Australia by journalists-literati; this one was particularly successful.
- RICKARD, J.D. *Class and politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the early commonwealth, 1890-1910*. ANUP, 1976. 371 p, illus.  
An analysis of Australian politics which is based upon a subtle and comprehensive study of class differentiation at a crucial time.
- RITCHIE, J.D. *Australia as once we were*. Melbourne, Heinemann, 1975. 279 p, illus.  
An effectively sustained endeavour to write a one-volume social history of Australia.
- ROBERTS, K. *Captain of the push*. Melbourne, Lansdowne, 1963. 137 p, illus.  
An account of Sydney's half-world in the later nineteenth century, focusing on the life of boxing champion Larry Foley.
- ROBSON, L.L. *The convict settlers of Australia: an enquiry into the origin and character of the convicts transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1787-1852*. MUP, 1976. 269 p.  
An analysis of those transported to eastern Australia, giving essential data as to their personal situations, and their relationship with the law in both Old and New worlds. First published in 1965.
- ROE, J.I. ed, *Twentieth century Sydney: studies in urban and social history*. Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1980. 273 p, illus.  
A symposium from younger historians who pursue a critical yet constructive approach to their subject.
- ROLLS, E.C. *A million wild acres: 200 years of man and an Australian forest*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1984. 465 p, illus.  
A regional history of northern NSW, outstanding for its imaginative stress on the interaction of humanity with nature. First published in 1981.
- SKEMP, J.R. *Memories of Myrtle Bank: the bush-farming experiences of Rowland and Samuel Skemp in north-eastern Tasmania 1883-1948*. MUP, 1952. 256 p, illus, maps.  
A sensitive and comprehensive study of community life.
- STANNAGE, C.T. *The people of Perth: a social history of Western Australia's capital city*. Perth, Carroll's for Perth City Council, 1979. 364 p, illus, maps.  
A study concentrating on the nineteenth century and on social relationships.
- SUMMERS, A. *Damned whores and God's police: the colonization of women in Australia*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1975. 494 p.  
This influential work examines the causes and consequences of women's oppression, relating it to past and present sexist stereotypes.
- TROLLOPE, A. *Australia and New Zealand*. London, Chapman & Hall, 1873. 2 vols.  
A commentary on mid-Victorian colonial society by a visiting Englishman. New edition published as *Australia* in 1967.
- TWOPENY, R.E.N. *Town life in Australia*. London, Elliot Stock, 1883. 247 p.  
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