Mount Barker (population 1000), 40 kilometres east of Adelaide, was founded in 1839. Wheat grown here in the early days won gold medals in London, Paris and Vienna. By the 1880s the district was noted for the production of fruits, dairy products and wattle bark for tanning, and the town was a popular health resort in summer. Lithograph by an unknown artist, c1886.

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Chapter 18

Community

At the beginning of May 1888, 200 people attended the funeral of Thomas Gardiner at Thargomindah, a small village in Queensland 1250 kilometres from Brisbane and the centre of an isolated pastoral district. Gardiner, a stockman and a member of the jockey club, had drowned in the Bulloo River on the night of 2 May. One report said he had been reducing weight to ride in the races, which might have caused a fever. Another said that he had been ill for some time, complaining of pains in the head. At the time of his death he was 29 years old and 'well known and respected throughout the district'.

The mourners, 'many of whom were much affected', comprised well over half the population of the village and surrounding cattle stations. The funeral, said the local paper, was

> the most impressive ceremony of the kind ever witnessed here. The funeral procession was headed by Thomas Ord, a well-known jockey, and an intimate friend of the deceased, leading the racehorse Dundee, and twenty jockeys followed the hearse on foot, wearing their colours.

If death was a private affair, normally taking place at home among family and friends, the funeral was a public occasion. It was one of the many points at which private needs were dealt with by public means.

Gardiner's funeral was unusually spectacular, but in towns and cities across the continent the living would gather to pay their last respects to the dead. As a funeral procession wound along the main street of a country town, it would pass the buildings which had been put up to serve the population. The bigger and wealthier the town, and the prouder its citizens, the bigger and grander were its public buildings. A village of five hundred or so people usually boasted only the basic needs of civilisation; a pub, a shop or two, perhaps a church, a school and a hospital. In a small town of 1500 or 2000 people there would be a greater variety of shops, several hotels, and churches of different denominations. Larger towns of two thousand or more people would have solid banks and courthouses, a town hall with

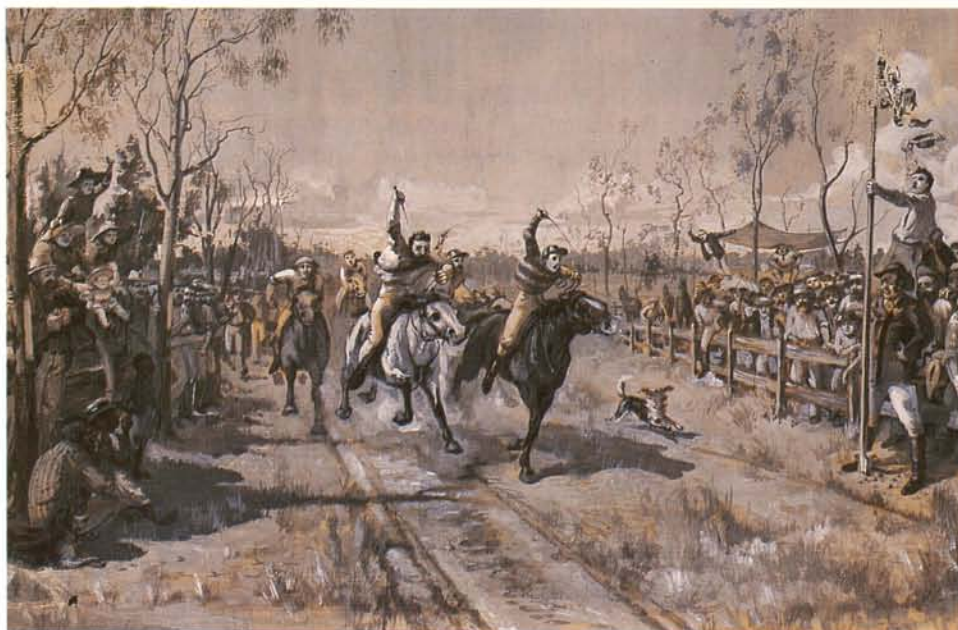
a clock and a railway station. Provincial cities of 20 000 or more provided grander versions of those amenities and other services not available to country towns; specialised manufacturing, big stores, art galleries, botanical gardens and orphan and benevolent asylums.

In a time of declining church attendance, most people still looked to the church to sanctify the solemn moments of life. The young man usually married in a church, where he and his wife would later take their children to be christened. Eventually their friends would gather there to attend his funeral. As the children grew up, the parents looked to a local school for their education. In pursuit of a decent living, the man might unite with others by joining a trade union or a local chamber of commerce. To safeguard his family in time of sickness, he might join the local branch of a friendly society or lodge.

Married or single, wealthy or poor, people faced common problems: where to post letters or obtain safe drinking water, how to dispose of rubbish or find transport to the next town. How could goods and livestock be moved along public thoroughfares that were often dustbowls in summer and flowing streams in winter? But life was not all serious. There were public holidays, celebrations and leisure times when everyone wanted amusement and perhaps mental stimulation. People joined together not only to meet their material needs, but also for companionship.

LEISURE

Thargomindah was typical of country towns in having a flourishing jockey club. Animal sports flourished in the country where people lived close to nature and gained all the exercise they needed at work. The annual race meeting was an important fixture, rivalled only by the annual show. Rough animal sports such as greasy pig races, which had long disappeared from the cities, continued to be popular in the country. As the roller-skating craze swept the country, the Shepparton rink merged the old with the new and staged a pig race on skates. At Bairnsdale's St Patrick's Day sports a rooster and a turkey competed against other



A bush race meeting, Darling Downs, *by S.A. Lindsey. Gouache wash drawing.*
NATIONAL LIBRARY

farm animals in a 220-yard (201-metre) menagerie race. The rooster would not budge and the turkey got halfway down the course and refused to go any further, to the great amusement of onlookers.

In the cities, where the physical demands of some kinds of work were lighter, vigorous team sports were more popular. Suburbs that could not have supported a race club had five or six cricket clubs and a football club. Most country areas had cricket teams and some had football teams, but it was hard to get members to matches, let alone practices, when the players were working up to sixteen hours a day with no regular holidays. City people also followed sports such as tennis, lawn bowls and bicycling which had reached few country areas.

City people had more specialised organisations devoted to culture: musical societies, literary and debating clubs, mechanics' institutes, libraries. In most country towns the mechanics' institute, school of arts or Athenaeum attempted to combine them all. Enthusiasm could be hard to sustain. In January 1888 the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* wrote a mock description of the opening of the town's new mechanics' institute building in January 1988 one hundred years on. The organisation had existed for years but had still not raised enough money for its own building.

Bodies promoting self-help and popular education continued to flourish in Australia's mining towns. Work underground was hard but regular enough for miners to look forward to spending their evenings in quiet but mentally stimulating pursuits. Mechanics' institutes teaching science, mathematics and technical subjects abounded. The electorate of Northumberland in the Newcastle coalmining district had more mechanics' institutes than any other in New South Wales. Elsewhere the institutes might have provided no more than social activities and a library, but on the mining fields they held classes in mineralogy, coalmining, surveying and geology, and built up extensive collections of minerals. By 1885 the Queensland town of Herberton, established for less than five years, had built its second mechanics' institute and a school of mines. Its resident curator assayed ores and lectured on mineralogy. Ballarat had a school of mines that supplied qualified personnel to the rest of the Australian mining industry.

The old and new buildings of the Mechanics' Institute, Hamilton, Newcastle, New South Wales. Town and Country Journal, *25 Aug 1888.*

In the country, leisure organisations such as bands, choirs and sporting clubs

Cricketers. Long, golden summers and shorter working hours offered sportsmen in Australia more encouragement than their counterparts in the old country.
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competed against those of other towns and became a focus of local pride and solidarity. In the cities, where most suburbs had a range of such clubs, people might be dispersed among them. As well as a school of arts, the Sydney suburb of Balmain had a literary and debating society and two drama clubs. Many leisure groups were not local associations at all. The Sydney Mercantiles, a sporting club recruited from city employees, included residents from various suburbs. The Leichhardt Mutual Improvement Association described itself as a 'purely unsectarian body of male and female residents of Leichhardt and other places'.

Commercial Rowing Club Fours, Maryborough, Queensland, winners of the Champion Fours held on the Queen's birthday, 24 May 1888. Many saw rowing as a sport for office workers and other gentlemen rather than for working men. In the Sydney suburb of Balmain, working men had to form their own club.
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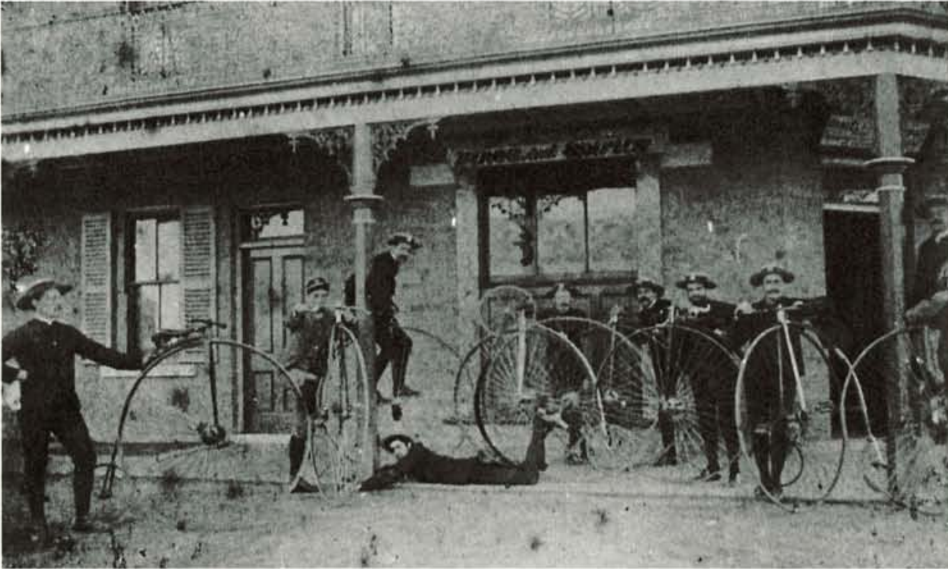
In country towns the pool of potential members was small and people met each other in several different organisations. Everyone knew everyone else's needs and tried to help. At Colac in Victoria the band turned out for the races in March, the fire brigade sports in May and the Roman Catholic bazaar in November. Mechanics' institutes such as that at the mining town of Plattsburg, near Newcastle, hired out committee rooms to other groups. The Plattsburg main hall, built like a theatre with stage and gallery, was much used by the drama society and dance clubs.

The close co-operation between voluntary associations in country towns recalls the solidarity expressed at the funeral of Thomas Gardiner. In an isolated frontier town such as Thargomindah, Gardiner's skills as a stockman and jockey might have earned him more respect than he could have expected in a larger, more sophisticated town. In June Robert Watson, a grazier and very old resident of Gippsland was given a huge funeral service in the Bairnsdale Presbyterian church. Watson was on the committee of the Bairnsdale racing club as well as being a Freemason and president of the Pastoral and Agricultural Association. His fellow committee men were graziers, businessmen, bank managers and large storekeepers.

Unlike its Thargomindah counterpart, the Bairnsdale racing club was run exclusively by the leading citizens, who were sensitive to the class divisions of the

Rugby football was the dominant game in Queensland and most of New South Wales. Australian Rules football was played in the southern colonies and in the Riverina and Broken Hill, which were economic as well as sporting provinces of Melbourne and Adelaide.
Town and Country Journal, *16 June 1888.*



Bicycling club, 1885.
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town. Tickets for the ball after the St Patrick's Day sports were, at 10s 6d a double, beyond the means of the local working class of stockmen, hop pickers and journeymen. But just in case, the committee also reserved the right to refuse admission. When the Philharmonic Society held its first meeting in May, those invited decided that the ability to pay a subscription was not enough. Applicants had to be proposed and seconded, and those who did not receive the votes of two-thirds of the committee were to be excluded.

In the suburbs social distinctions were more subtly expressed and less directly enforced. Sporting clubs naturally took on the social characteristics of the suburbs from which they were recruited. Balmain's rugby and cycling clubs had more working-class members than its middle-class neighbours, although where a suburb boasted two or more clubs, the members were generally recruited from different social strata. The Newtown rugby union club had no working-class members, but the rival Oxford club, under the mayor's patronage, had (despite its name) no upper middle-class members and at least one-quarter of members were workers. Some fashionable and expensive sports, such as tennis and sailing, were largely confined to the well-to-do. So were the bowling clubs of Newtown and Balmain.

Farmers and rural workers played little part in the cultural and sporting life of country towns, not because they were excluded, but simply because they did not choose to participate. Just as they did not have the time or energy for sport, neither did they have the energy to drive or walk into town for evening meetings of the mechanics' institute. In Warracknabeal on the Victorian wheat frontier, a few farmers joined the local football club, but there was no cricket club as summer was harvest time. There was a gun club and a tennis club, but only townsfolk joined. The farmers could be brought out when their interests were involved, or for occasional events. Fourteen of the twenty members of the Agricultural and Pastoral Society whose occupations are known were farmers, and farmers comprised a quarter of the committee of the Turf Club. A day's racing could be squeezed into the agricultural calendar, especially as it was held after the harvest.

Cricket, football, shooting and racing—the main forms of organised rural leisure—were male preserves. The newer sports of tennis and bicycling, which had reached the cities, spread rapidly among women. However, women did not take an active part in local clubs. Even when admitted to literary and debating societies,

as they often were in the cities, women did not assert themselves. At the height of an anti-Chinese fever which swept Australia in 1888, the Stanmore Mutual Improvement Society spent an evening discussing several papers on Chinese life and literature at home and abroad. The only paper by a woman was read by one of the male members. At the end of May the Hebrew Literary and Debating Society discussed whether women were intellectually equal to men. The question was carried narrowly in the negative, 'many ladies abstaining from voting'.

CHURCHES

No church service preceded Thomas Gardiner's burial, for Thargomindah, like many outback villages, had no church. Larger centres like Narrabri, a pastoral and railway town on the blacksoil plains in northwestern New South Wales, had Anglican, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches, but they were poorly supported. The town had built its first hospital by 1866; the first church did not go up until the late 1870s. Parishes based on Narrabri stretched for hundreds of kilometres. The Church of England clergyman had to cover the whole area north of the Liverpool Range. The Catholic priest divided his Sundays between Wee Waa, Narrabri and various pastoral stations. The Wesleyan circuit was similarly extensive, and in 1868 the Reverend J.E. Carruthers had explained that the large district with its sparse population prevented any continuity of work. The high turnover of clergy did not help. The clergyman's life was easier and more rewarding in larger towns, which had enough adherents to gather into class and prayer meetings. Clergymen believed that they were making even more progress in the suburbs of provincial and capital cities, which sustained a variety of organisations devoted to temperance, piety and education.

A service at a nonconformist church in South Australia. The artist's theme is 'a long sermon'. Pictorial Australian, *Dec 1888.*

No other institutions in colonial society claimed as many members as the churches. Almost all Australians professed loyalty to some branch of the Christian Church, even though no more than half of them attended church on any given Sunday. For many hardworking people the Sunday service was almost the only regular social event of the week. George Towner, a Wesleyan farmer living near Lismore in northern New South Wales, attended church on 42 Sundays of the year, and his few other outings—a bazaar, a picnic, an occasional Good Templar's meeting and the quarterly meeting of the Wesleyan Synod—were connected with his church.

Urban clergymen worried about the growing indifference of the working classes. 'It is pretty well agreed that the majority of workingmen do not go to church', a Sydney churchman observed. Like many of his fellow British immigrants, Tom Dobeson saw the church as a preserve of the well-to-do. One day he and a friend decided to go and sample the service at St Andrew's Anglican cathedral, 'the boss church of Sydney'. 'We got through the service somehow', he remarked afterwards. It was hard to find the right place in the prayerbook, the sermon was 'very, very monotonous' and, when the plate came round, the two hard-up working men had to pretend not to see it. Dobeson was not an infidel, but he felt that 'God never intended there should be all this bother'. The Centenary Hall that the Wesleyans erected in 1888 as the headquarters for their central mission in Sydney was part of a strategy to offer people like Dobeson, culturally estranged from religion, forms of worship without 'bother'.

The churchgoing habit was weaker among Anglicans than among Catholics and Presbyterians, and weaker among Catholics and Presbyterians than among descendants of English nonconformity such as Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists. In South Australia and Victoria, where these churches were strong, overall

levels of churchgoing were higher than in New South Wales with its stronger population of Anglicans and Catholics. Within each colony, too, the distinctive ethnic and occupational characteristics of communities were evident in their religious life.

Lutheran churches followed the spread of German settlement from the Barossa valley in South Australia through the Wimmera towns in Victoria to Albury at the eastern end of the Riverina. At Moonta in South Australia, where Cornish miners established their own Wesleyan and Bible Christian churches, Methodists were twice as strong as in the colony as a whole. Primitive Methodists were only 2 per cent of the New South Wales population, but the migration of miners from Northumberland and Durham brought a Primitive Methodist church to every village of the Newcastle coalmining district. Coalmining also drew Welshmen, who were six times stronger in Newcastle than in the rest of the colony, and they founded their own Welsh-speaking Congregational and Baptist churches. At Broken Hill the Bible, Christian and Primitive varieties of Methodism arrived in advance of the Anglicans and Presbyterians. Since 1881, when the first emissaries of William Booth arrived in Adelaide, the Salvation Army had extended rapidly through the eastern colonies, establishing beachheads in the working-class neighbourhoods of Sydney and Melbourne (1882), Launceston and Hobart (1883) and Brisbane (1885). Soon it gained strongholds in many working-class areas outside the capital cities, especially in the mining towns of the Hunter valley and the Yorke Peninsula and in Charters Towers and Broken Hill. By 1888 Salvationist missionaries in horse-drawn caravans—'cavalry forts'—were touring the towns of the far outback and the *Town and Country Journal* believed that there was hardly a town in the whole of New South Wales where the Salvationists' *War Cry* was not received.

Salvation Army barracks, Armidale, New South Wales. The building was newly constructed, the Army having been in Australia for only a few years.

ARMIDALE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

The Salvation Army was a new and disruptive element in a religious climate that had gradually calmed since the sectarian strife generated by the education debates of the 1870s. In most small towns, people seemed anxious to maintain religious concord. People who had struggled to build their own churches sympathised with

Wesleyan Church, Hawthorn, Melbourne, built in 1888 for a prosperous middle-class Methodist congregation at a cost of £24 000. The boom in Melbourne led to the construction of many new churches.

REV G. VERTIGAN

the struggles of others, no matter what their creed. When the people of the Church of England at Shepparton in northern Victoria held a sacred concert to celebrate the arrival of their church organ, they invited members of other denominations who had subscribed to the fund. On meeting to plan a bazaar, the women of the Presbyterian church at Alexandra in the Victorian highlands were told that several ladies outside the congregation had offered to help. Any denomination that could put on a good show attracted outside support.

While co-operation between Protestant churches was routine, it could also be extended by and to Catholics. At the Wodonga Church of England harvest thanksgiving, pride of place went to a large loaf of bread baked by P. O'Connor, the local baker and an active Catholic. As well as public co-operation there was much private intermixing. In New South Wales one in four Catholic wives and one in eight Catholic husbands was married to a non-Catholic. Many Protestant parents in Forbes in central New South Wales sent their children to the Catholic school, partly because it was close by, and partly because it offered music classes to girls and free instruction for public examinations. Strongly Presbyterian Bairnsdale had a public holiday for the St Patrick's Day sports organised by the Catholics. The *Bairnsdale Advertiser* wrote

> Of all holiday gatherings and celebrations the Saint Patrick's Day festival is perhaps the most popular because there is usually so much animation and enthusiasm imparted to it by the Hibernians themselves that the spirit becomes contagious.

Even where religious rivalry persisted, most communities sought to avoid outright conflict. St Patrick's Day was celebrated with a public holiday and sports in overwhelmingly Catholic Koroit in western Victoria. While the Catholics enjoyed their sports, the Presbyterians drove out of town for their Sunday school picnic. At Methodist Walhalla in the Gippsland hills, temperance supporters opposed holding Boxing Day sports in the main street, as fighting had broken out the year before after liberal drinking. When their attempt failed, the Temperance Union and the Salvation Army took themselves off on a picnic for the day.

The militant and noisy activities of the Salvation Army nevertheless disturbed the peace of many country towns. Bairnsdale Shire Council was among those who refused to let Salvationists march through the streets. Such processions were dangerous, said councillors, and besides, concessions should not be granted to one section of the community. Yet it was the council that had granted a public holiday for the St Patrick's Day festivities in March. Salvationists could be the more easily banned because they were few and because, though Protestant, their vulgar enthusiasm made many a respectable Anglican or Presbyterian wince. Salvationists provoked hostility, moreover, because they refused to consider the interests of others. At Kapunda in South Australia the town council had passed a by-law prohibiting street processions on the grounds that the Army incited larrikins. But the larrikins were not the only ones provoked. While the town band played for dinner on the balcony of a hotel, the Army was in the habit of gathering below and starting up in competition.

When other groups refused to conduct their affairs with regard to the interests of the rest of the town, they too encountered hostility. At Coleraine in western Victoria the townspeople became indignant when the Catholics did not call tenders locally for their new church. 'The Catholic authorities will stand a poor chance of obtaining [the balance required for erection] from the residents of this district if they continue to snub them', one Coleraine man protested.

Interdenominational amity was less evident in cities, where churches drew on a

Primitive Methodists on a picnic. At the 1881 census, 253 000 people in Australia declared themselves to be 'Wesleyan and other Methodists', and by 1888 they numbered perhaps 350 000, some 10 per cent of all denominations. Methodists were strong in South Australia (19 per cent) and weak in Queensland (6 per cent).

MRS E. SALKIN

larger population and catered for a wider spread of tastes and interests. A large suburban church supported a range of organisations from choirs and prayer fellowships to literary, debating and charitable societies. In Newtown, St Joseph's Catholic church sponsored its own Literary and Debating Society, the Church of England ran St Stephen's Young Men's Institute and the Presbyterians founded a literary society. When these clubs needed help they were more likely to turn to co-religionists in neighbouring suburbs than to other churches in the locality. Amateurs from the city helped when the Camperdown branch of St Vincent de Paul held a concert. When the Burwood Presbyterian church got up a bazaar it sought the assistance of Presbyterians in other suburbs. 'Strathfield and Homebush', 'Enfield and Concord', 'Croydon and Ashfield' and even 'St Leonards and Manly' were blazoned across the stalls, and the bazaar was held at the Sydney Town Hall, not at Burwood. The tensions between Protestant and Catholic, ignited during the 1860s and 1870s, were healed sooner in the country than in the suburbs of Sydney, where Loyal Orange Lodges, the agents of militant Protestantism, remained strong.

Organised religion, like other forms of voluntary organisation, was dominated by middle-class people. Throughout the colonies the Church of England remained the church of the establishment, the richest graziers and farmers and people at the top in professions and business. Only in some regions of old Scottish settlement, such as western Victoria, the Riverina and New England, was its influence rivalled by the Presbyterians.

Catholic worshippers formed social structures determined above all by the distribution of Irish immigrants and the fortunes of themselves and their children. In the country they were more strongly represented among small farmers than in pastoral or mining districts. They were more visible in the oral professions of law and journalism, and in politics, than in occupations having to do with the handling of money; and they were most numerous in the ranks of unskilled labour and domestic service. Methodism was largely lower middle-class in adherence, strong among shopkeepers and small tradespeople, though mining areas such as Newcastle, Broken Hill, Victoria's central goldfields and South Australia's 'little

Cornwall' had concentrations of working-class Methodists. The smaller Protestant denominations, Congregationalists and Baptists, recruited most strongly in the cities, especially among the lower middle class. The Salvation Army drew its converts mainly from the unskilled working class, in city as well as country. After a fight broke out at a Salvation Army street meeting in Narrabri, six of the seven witnesses called to give evidence at the subsequent court hearing were labourers.

People attended church on Sundays for their own mixtures of reasons. Their religion provided them with spiritual guidance and comfort. The church building, small or grand, provided a setting for the celebration of the most important rituals of their lives. In church they also marked the passing of the seasons and they came together to pray for rain or to give thanks for the harvest safely gathered in. For many people much of their social life centred on the church and the companionship of the congregation provided support in times of need or trouble. There were times, however, when the resources of the church could not meet all the demands placed upon them by the needy, and it was then that people looked to the wider society for help and charity.

SELF-HELP AND CHARITY

Residents of Thargomindah did not forget the death of Thomas Gardiner when they left the cemetery. They knew that whatever his circumstances his widow and children could have money troubles. The Gardiners were lucky that their father's death was swift, not delayed by a lingering illness that left a pile of medical debts. Even so, Mrs Gardiner had more than grief to contend with at a time when there was no widow's pension and no family allowance.

The people of Thargomindah did what most people did for the fatherless, the injured, and families who had lost their belongings in a bush fire. They sent round the hat. Such collections put together as much as the district could manage. Often it was not much. A widow might be able to pay off medical and funeral expenses. A disabled miner might get a horse and cart that would help him earn a living. Some widows could buy mangles and set up as washerwomen; a few even bought shops. But seldom was enough capital or cash raised to make the needy independent of the community's continuing charity.

The collection was a donation to friends by friends, and it meant more in goodwill than cash in poorer areas. Working people often got up entertainments that gave donors something in return for their money and raised more than a simple collection. At the West Australian port of Geraldton working people held concerts for workers injured in accidents on the wharves. In the Newcastle coal towns the choir, the drama society and talented individuals raising money for disabled miners supplied more of the town's entertainment than did professional companies.

Widows and orphans attracted the benevolence of the rich as well as the help of friends and neighbours. A colliery manager, squatter or businessman could match the combined charity of a hundred labourers who passed round the hat. When evident need outran their individual philanthropy, rich people might join forces. The wives of leading townsmen formed benevolent societies that provided aid to families they considered to be in need. At Bairnsdale the wife of hotelkeeper Charles Peterson was president. Mrs Sandford, whose husband was a solicitor, was secretary and other members included wives of Presbyterian and Anglican clergymen, shipping and commission agents, the chemist and the proprietor of the Belle Vue limeworks.

The town's elite also took prime responsibility for establishing and maintaining

the local hospital. In the nineteenth century hospitals catered principally for those sick people who had no relatives or friends to look after them, or no money to pay for medical care. They were therefore important institutions in outback towns such as Narrabri which had many single men. They were run as charities rather than as places of healing for the whole population and were under the control of the same gentlemen and their wives who ran the cricket club, the jockey club and the churches. Fewer than one in five patients contributed to the cost of care, and about one in ten was chronically ill and old; in the cities, such a patient would have been sent to a benevolent home.

The scented, gloved hand of the lady visitor from the benevolent society stank in the nostrils of the working man who valued his dignity and independence and was earning enough to keep it. If his betters could draw on British charitable traditions to assist the needy, he could draw on British working-class traditions to help himself. Working men organised friendly societies and accident funds that for a contribution of around 1s 3d a week entitled them to free medical care and sickness and funeral benefits. Membership was largest in working-class areas, rural and metropolitan. While only about 15 per cent of the male population over fifteen belonged to friendly societies in New South Wales as a whole, in the Newcastle mining towns of Adamstown, Hamilton and Merewether the proportion was over half. Many better-off miners took out extra insurance by belonging to several friendly societies. All lodges of the miners' union had a pit fund to assist accident victims. So did branches of the Amalgamated Miners' Association at Creswick and Walhalla. At Broken Hill the union existed solely as a medical and funeral benefit society, as did the Working Man's Association at Port Pirie.

Hospital, Charters Towers, Queensland. The substantial brick hospital had eight wards and 46 beds. Charters Towers and district had a population of 20 000; there were many mining accidents, and in summer there was much dysentery owing to the poor water supply. Most illness was treated outside the hospital.
OXLEY LIBRARY

Hospitals were rare in mining towns, and where they did exist, they depended on working-class subscriptions as well as middle-class support. People in the Newcastle mining towns of Wallsend and Plattsburg did not think about building a hospital until 1886, and then only because miners needed the specialised surgical care required for mining accidents. It was the miners who ran the friendly societies and pit funds who also organised the hospital benefit concerts and payday collections to finance the hospital; it was they who ran the hospital through their majority on its board.

A ward in the Adelaide hospital. In capital cities hospitals were sustained by various mixtures of charitable and government enterprise.
STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The hospital was usually the favourite cause for fundraising by local drama and musical societies. In Bairnsdale, Zulu Thompson's Kosmotechnic, a travelling show, was prevailed upon to give a performance to raise funds, the local band playing outside the hall beforehand to attract custom. Pupils of Miss Mahoney's private school presented the hospital with handmade pillowslips and the mechanics' institute donated its out-of-date newspapers and periodicals. The hospital committee, conscious of such goodwill, decided that the new building would be surrounded by grass which could be kept down by allowing the public to graze animals.

In country towns fundraising activity brought everyone together under the people who ran the charitable institutions. In cities the links of mutual aid were weaker. Balmain, with its own cottage hospital run by the council, its own drama society and friendly society lodges, behaved rather like a country town. But the main government-funded charities such as the old Sydney hospital had served a wide area for decades. By the 1880s accident victims from all over the inner city were conveyed to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown. Those with infectious diseases were despatched to the coast hospital far away at Little Bay. Benevolent societies, although found everywhere throughout the metropolis, were usually branches of larger colony-wide organisations. Donations were collected locally, but the societies followed policies determined by central committees. The Sydney United Labourers' Society operated from the city centre, but its members came from all over the metropolis. Many friendly society members joined lodges many kilometres from where they lived.

From villages such as Thargomindah to the suburbs of the capital cities, the scale and range of self-help schemes and charities varied according to the needs and size of the population. As it grew larger, the personal concern of friends and neighbours was replaced by organised activity of bodies no longer in the hands of members they served.

PUBLIC LIFE

People banded together not only to help the needy but to provide essential services for the whole population. As new lands were opened up, new mines sunk and suburbs extended along the railway lines, people settled in places where previously there had been native vegetation or market gardens. Roads followed the ruts of bullock wagons and at first there were no post offices, courthouses, parks or gardens. Until a place had a pure water supply new settlers endured the risks of typhoid and cholera. If fire broke out, as it did in the main street of the newly founded Broken Hill, there was no water that could be tapped to fight it. Unlit streets limited night meetings and concerts to once a month, at the time of the full moon when people could find their way into town. Anyone who ventured out on a dark evening risked a nasty accident if thrown out of a buggy that struck a hole in the road.

A place such as Thargomindah had to rely on direct representation to government to get trafficable roads, bridges and dams. Towns of over five hundred could get up a petition of incorporation that enabled the election of local councils to levy rates, borrow on their value and pass laws binding on the whole population. Local government became the most powerful and responsible body in the district, and its vigour in pursuing the good of the town determined the rate of progress.

If a district agreed to incorporation, local taxation was imposed. In 1888 some long-established areas remained unincorporated. On the shores of Botany Bay, polluting factory owners and jerrybuilders had been fighting off incorporation, and were not defeated until May. Although a principal resort for Sydneysiders, the area

A country town begins. Many new towns scarred the landscape, especially in mining and forestry areas. The telegraph, to be carried on the poles in the centre of the picture, came early to new towns. Good roads were built later.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

remained unsewered, unlit and isolated from the city by appalling roads. Noxious trades were unregulated, nightsoil was still buried in backyards, and the district's only water supply came from underground tanks and wells.

Many new towns had been incorporated only recently. Without the accumulation of rates over the years there was not enough money to improve the quality of local life. Cheap, quick remedies often proved disastrous. Towns on the railway, such as Narrabri and Wodonga, could draw on the railway tank. The result was instant water, but only so long as the railways were not operating at full capacity. By early November Wodonga was totally without water for washing or drinking. 'Will some person of authority look into this and give us a chance to rid ourselves of the Wodonga dust without having recourse to a jack plane?' William Hamilton wrote to the editor of the *Wodonga Sentinel.* 'I am quite aware,' he said

> that my request is a most unusual one for any commission agent to make, but in plain English, now that the warmer weather is coming on, we must dilute our whiskey. I merely mention this as I know the astute public is not to be gulled with such a transparent yarn as that of any sane man wanting water for a bath.

Everyone knew what he was talking about. Discomfort had grown with the duststorms that replaced the harvest rains in that dry spring, and had wrought havoc in the unpaved, unguttered town streets.

During the Newcastle coal strike in August and September the Victorian government trucked vast quantities of coal from other New South Wales fields. Wodonga was the first station on the Victorian side of the border for the many goods trains bound for Melbourne after the change of gauge at Albury. At Wodonga the steam engines were refilled with water; hence the water famine. But Wodonga residents knew that even when the water flowed again it would not be much good, for scientists in Melbourne had already tested it and found it unfit for human consumption.

Older and larger towns were in the forefront of municipal improvement. The former copper town of Kapunda in South Australia had been incorporated for over twenty years. A gasworks that provided street lighting had been built in 1868, and

in the 1870s a beautification program of parks and tree planting had begun. The gold towns of central Victoria, once a byword for ugliness and squalor, had been transformed with municipal art galleries, libraries, town halls and botanical gardens. In Tamworth, on the Prince of Wales's birthday, the mayoress turned a gold key to complete the circuit and switch on the first electric street lighting in New South Wales under municipal ownership.

The municipal council stood at the apex of local society. Elected by the ratepayers, councillors were generally drawn from the same class of well-to-do people who ran the district's churches, hospitals and sporting clubs. The council was a provider of basic services, a local lawmaker in matters of public health and amenity and the collective voice of residents in their dealings with the central government. The good councillor was a vigorous spokesman for the ratepayers' wants, whatever they might be. The mayor of Balmain was asked to chair meetings to discuss holding a poultry, pigeon and canary show and the government's discontinuation of aid to the unemployed working on corporation projects. The mayor of Narrabri convened meetings on protection, the brass band and whether the town should push for a circuit court. The town or shire hall was a venue for concerts, wedding receptions, bazaars and lectures as well as the centre of local administration. And the council helped to nourish the spirit of voluntary effort through rate concessions and donations to churches, mechanics' institutes, brass bands, sporting clubs and hospitals.

The solidarity nourished by voluntary associations was strongest in country towns. In the cities it was weakened by the anonymity of a large population and the rising costs of public utilities, which demanded joint action or central government control. A suburban councillor was not as intimately acquainted with his constituents' needs as his counterpart in the country. His electors might be twice as numerous; many worked outside the district in which they lived and the councillor himself might be an absentee landlord with property elsewhere in the

Main Street, Dubbo.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

1	E.W. Meredith	Board inspector	9	H.R. Brown	Storekeeper
2	Chas Kemp	Schoolmaster	10	McDonald	Police magistrate
3	Gordon Forbes	Bank accountant	11	Geo Cummings	Telegraph operator
4	L.E. Tuckerman	Aramac station	12	S. Lockhart	Publican
5	S. Payne	Storeman, Cashion & Co.	13	S. Sharwood	Auctioneer, agent
6	I.H. Maxwell	Bank manager	14	J.W. Booker	Manager, Cashion & Co.
7	L.E. Norris	Chemist	15	Chas Moeser	Saddler
8	Dr. Hewes				

Principal residents of Aramac, central Queensland. Aramac, a township of 400 people, was situated 700 kilometres west of Rockhampton. The surrounding country was taken up by sheep runs. In larger towns, the chemist, telegraph operator and saddler would not be listed among the top fifteen citizens.
OXLEY LIBRARY

city. One symptom of the growing mistrust of aldermen was the formation of local vigilance committees. The ratepayers of Leichhardt and Randwick, two of Sydney's most rapidly developing suburbs, had founded associations to maintain a watch on municipal affairs and to see that their money was being properly spent. Despite professions of goodwill, the aldermen did not view the new bodies with confidence.

The sense of powerlessness increased as the responsibility for providing essential services such as water, drainage and gas passed from the municipalities to larger organisations. These services were badly needed in closely settled areas, but as the cities grew the costs of providing them rose steeply. Councils might combine forces and save money, but local independence died hard and in New South Wales joint action was prevented by anomalies in the Municipalities Act. The central government filled the gap by creating statutory authorities composed of government appointees and elected council representatives. Such bodies reduced participation by local councils, and their special powers often overrode local authority. When in 1886 the Upper Nepean Water Supply scheme was completed, the government transferred control of water supply and sewerage from the Sydney City Council to the Water Supply and Sewerage Board. In 1888 the City Council and 23 suburban municipalities had only two members to represent their interests. The president and most other members were government appointees and construction was in the hands of the minister of works. To add insult to injury, the board had the power to tear up local streets without the permission of the councils who had made them.

In the cities, local organisations were controlled by middle-class people and working men had little say in council affairs. Suburban councillors were mainly professionals or owners of factories, shops, or transport vehicles. Even predominantly working-class areas seldom elected working-class representatives. In Balmain, two-thirds of electors were workers, but nine out of ten aldermen were professionals, businessmen with Sydney offices, manufacturers or builders. Close settlement and good transport enabled trade unions to attract strong support in the central city. Some unions also sponsored benefit societies, sporting clubs and bands organised on occupational rather than geographic lines. While the suburban middle class might talk of local identity and their own community, the working-class city dweller was more likely to develop a sense of class identity that transcended locality.

The Newcastle coalmining district was a striking exception to the pattern of middle-class dominance. Group organisations abounded, based on local areas and controlled by working men. Cricket and football clubs, the mechanics' institutes, the hospital, relief for the widowed and disabled, even the churches, were dominated by workers. Despite large-scale land ownership by mining companies, more than two-thirds of local aldermen were manual workers. The Salvation Army, composed of working men not normally admitted to voluntary associations in country towns, did not attract the hostility it experienced elsewhere. Everyone complained that the Salvationists' band was out of tune, but no one tried to stop its processions. Such a tightly organised working class was unusual. In most towns, the middle classes were firmly in control.

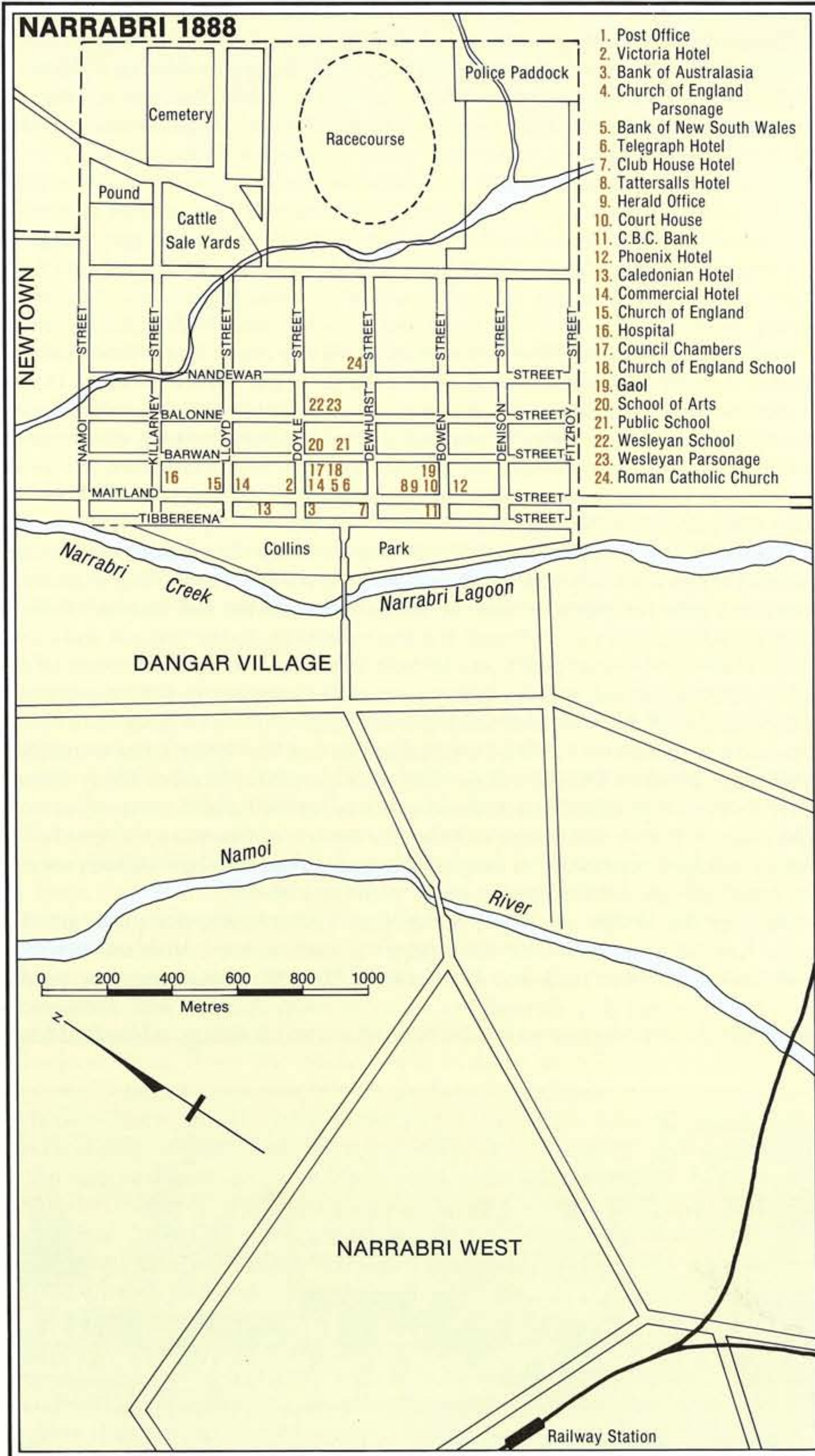
NARRABRI

The role of middle-class people in town life could be seen in the physical appearance and organisation of the town, as well as in the management of town life. Many towns were divided geographically and socially by the coming of a railway. In Narrabri, the better-off among the 1800 residents occupied the older section of the town. Their territory was the properly surveyed grid of streets from Maitland Street north to Nandewar Street, from Namoi Street on the west to Fitzroy Street on the eastern boundary. With all public buildings, the best hotels and residences, and the town's three churches, this was respectable Narrabri.

The newer Narrabri was carefully screened from the gaze of its middle class. The railway travelled up from Gunnedah on the west side of the Namoi, stopping at Narrabri West. Here were located the goodsyards and here lived the porters, signalmen, fettlers and their families among the soot and the noise. The respectable traveller was obliged to travel a further four kilometres by road to Narrabri proper, for although Narrabri West had four boarding houses and four hotels, they did not cater for the 'best' people.

As the only railway station in the 141 kilometres between Gunnedah and Wee Waa, Narrabri West was the destination of carriers and their teams. In 1884 the local schoolteacher had asked the Department of Public Instruction if he could sleep in the school porch, presently used as a lavatory, because there was no suitable accommodation within four kilometres. At the time he was staying at one of the boarding houses, but there was too much noise to sleep, and it would become unbearable once the wool season got under way. Carriers had attracted an array of blacksmithing, coachbuilding and saddlery shops, and there were two wool scours.

The population of Narrabri West consisted mostly of railway workers, whose contact with Narrabri proper was as customers of the Maitland Street shops and regular patrons of its pubs. A few like Thomas O'Brien, a wheelwright, and



SUE TOMLINS

William Beavis, a fettler, walked in to Salvation Army meetings. Only the publicans and the stationmaster, Alfred Levien, were welcome on the committees of Narrabri clubs and societies, and then only in auxiliary positions. In April Levien, Charles Parker of the Carriers Arms and John Gately the storekeeper were appointed assistant committee members of the Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society in order to drum up support in Narrabri West.

The road into Narrabri crossed two watercourses, the Namoi and its tributary, Narrabri Creek. By January the drought had turned the smaller stream into stagnant waterholes. Between the creek and the river lay Dangar village, the property of Thomas Dangar MLA. Dangar had refused to let the council do any work on his village streets. Unpaved, unformed and filthy, they matched the shabby calico dwellings of the poor and the disreputable fringedwellers who inhabited the settlement. Here Aborigines could buy cheap liquor from publicans. W.&D. Moffat, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, and William Hays, builder, contractor and undertaker, could carry on their dirty, noisy business with no complaints from Mr and Mrs Stewart, who were too busy shouting obscenities and beating each other up to notice. In May, the *Narrabri Herald* reported, Mr Stewart was away in gaol for a week while his wife, recovering from two black eyes and other disfiguring injuries, was in no position to care.

The traveller entered Narrabri proper after crossing the creek. Along its banks, Collins Park was maintained by the council. Apart from providing seats for the weary and grass for picnics it was the home of the cricket and football clubs. The council gave £20 to the cricketers for improvements to the ground and allowed the football club to erect goal posts. In most years this was a pleasant place of small lagoons in wet seasons, and dry grassy areas in summer, but in 1888 the water left in the creek smelt horribly, and since animals were allowed to graze in the park, it attracted few picnickers. Collins Park, the bridge and low-lying Tibbereenah Street were more a part of Dangar village than of respectable Narrabri. Away from the watchful eyes of Maitland Street, drunks such as Arthur Ireland gave way to riotous behaviour in Tibbereenah Street. Under the bridge, oblivious to the stench, Mary Jordon indulged repeatedly in unspeakable goings-on with half a dozen men, and was eventually gaoled for three months with hard labour.

On over the bridge, up Doyle Street, past Tibbereenah, was the heart of the town. Kerbed, guttered, with footbridges at each corner, Maitland Street had finally been cleared of cattle and drovers from Wee Waa by arranging a route that went around rather than through the centre of town. Anyone who disfigured the street, like the unfortunate man who erected a calico building, might find himself

Victoria hotel, Narrabri. The building on the right incorporates the original small hotel. The hotel coach picked up guests from the railway station four kilometres away in West Narrabri.

NARRABRI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

before magistrates with a personal interest in keeping their end of Narrabri in order. The squatters and station managers who made up half the bench may not have cared, but the businessmen of Maitland Street—storekeepers such as Charles Collins and Guelielmus Williams, and Stirton the forwarding agent—could rely on the support of the stipendiary magistrate and usually got their way.

Among the landmarks of Narrabri's main street were seven hotels, which as well as dispensing alcohol, provided board and lodging, meeting places, employment for servants and grooms. On the main corner of Maitland and Doyle streets, opposite the post office, stood the Victoria Hotel, host to the football club and F.G. Huet, visiting dentist from Maitland. W.G. Thurlow, the proprietor, was on the committees of the hospital and the jockey club, and a full committee member of the Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society. The courthouse on the corner of Bowen Street was flanked by public houses. Across the road was Thomas Lovelee's Phoenix Hotel, and a few doors west was Luke Malone's Tattersall's, where the jockey club met. Luke Malone was a quiet man, but his relative, another Malone, was the proprietor of the *Narrabri Herald*. When the Salvation Army began to enter hotels and pray for the souls of publicans, he reminded readers that alcohol was used at the marriage feast of Cana.

The publicans mingled freely with the business and professional men who dominated the affairs of Narrabri. Clement Stanton, the manager of the Bank of Australasia, was treasurer for the hospital and mechanics' institute and served on the Church of England parish council. Charles Collins, proprietor of the Victoria stores, was a JP, chairman of the jockey club, member of the band committee and provider of cricket trophies. C.J. Druitt, manager of the Commercial Bank opposite the courthouse, was president of Narrabri United Cricket Club, secretary of the mechanics' institute, auditor of the Pastures and Stock Protection Board and on the committees of the hospital, brass band and jockey club.

North of Maitland Street stood Narrabri's most important cultural institutions. Next to the post office, facing Doyle and Barwan streets, were the council chambers while on the opposite corner was the school of arts. The rest of that side of Barwan Street was taken up by the public school. Both schools were far enough away from the centre of town to allow quiet concentration. On the corner of Dewhurst and Balonne streets the Wesleyan church stood quietly among middle-class residences and on the next corner stood the Catholic church. Further northeast, in the open spaces beyond Horse Arm Creek, the cemetery, showground and racecourse had been laid out.

But Maitland Street was the heart of the town and everybody who was anybody had business there, from Mr McLean the herbalist to Mr Kenyon the police magistrate. These were the people who ran Narrabri. McLean, a lesser member of the Maitland Street set, was on the school picnic committee. Kenyon was president of the mechanics' institute and on the Pastoral Society and jockey club committees. Like the local solicitors and town JPs, he kept a private residence in the quiet area beyond the bustle of the main part of Maitland Street. Here too were the remainder of Narrabri's public buildings. At the far end the hospital fronted Killarney, Barwan and Maitland streets and stood on a three-quarter-hectare block beyond the hotels on the east side of Maitland Street.

At the opposite end of town, facing Barwan and Bowen streets, were the courthouse and a gaol. Most of Narrabri's people seldom passed this way and almost never ventured inside. Yet for them, as well as for the unfortunate few who appeared before Mr Kenyon, the institutions of law and order were powerful reminders that beyond the disciplines of family and local life, their lives were bounded by the power of the state.