

Rus in Urbe:

Country Students at St Andrew's College in the Nineteenth Century

Ian Jack, 3 June 2009

This paper is much more limited in scope than I had originally intended. When Alan put out the gentlest of three-line whips for contributions to this series, I was stampeded into offering to discuss the country student at the nineteenth-century university. This is not a topic where I have any ready-made product. No PhD thesis, no substantial book lay behind my proposal. I offered it on the brave assumption that I would be able to harness a wide experience in writing about rural heritage, particularly pastoral heritage, alongside my connections with some old grazing families, especially ones of Scottish extraction. These draught animals yoked together ought, I reckoned, to plough the fields of Grose Farm and raise a braird before my turn came around. And now that my turn has come around, the green sprouts of the braird may indeed be visible, at least to me, but a good deal of the necessary fertilizer for turning braird into harvest has not been available.

I had a perfectly good research strategy. I planned to find out about the incidence of different categories of students from the country through the records of the four nineteenth-century Colleges and through the University Archives and then I would try to isolate what might be distinctive about the experience of these young people in an equally young metropolitan institution. All this got swept aside by a number of unexpected but unavoidable commitments with time constraints over which I had little or no control. The State government, the Federal government and the Roads and Traffic Authority, even the Orange and District Historical Society, all combined to take over my life for the last four weeks. So here I am with a much more modest paper. But I hope that it will encourage comparative comments today and later on coax out papers from those familiar with relevant archives which are not located in St Andrew's College.

So despite myself I have become parochial, and I apologise. But St Andrew's is a rewarding and well-documented parish. What I have done is to document every student attending the College from the beginning in 1874 until the end of the nineteenth century in 1900. The first College Roll, kept in a majestic volume briefly under Adam Thomson and then for the rest of the century under John Kinross, gives systematic information about each student: his place of birth, his father's name, his last school, his Faculty and year and the name of his sponsor, often his Presbyterian minister, are always given meticulously and frequently the student's age on entry is also recorded. The only piece of information that is lacking is his home address while at College, but that can often be deduced from his father, his minister and his birth-place.

I was perturbed to realize that I had been custodian of the College Archives for over twenty years, but had never tried systematically to get to know just who our students were beyond names on an arid list published in *The Andrew's Book*. Rosemary Annable has given Women's College an invaluable biographical register based on similar record material, but the rest of us have been slow in publishing anything comparable.

During the first 27 years of Andrew's, 199 young men enrolled at the College. Some of these came from one family - there were five Bowmans, three Browns - but I am treating the 199 as individuals, as they deserve. The majority stayed for more than one year, some stayed for three years and a few hardy ones were around for up to six years consecutively or came back for more after an interval: the long-serving ones were, of course, usually medical students or candidates for the ministry, since Andrew's was distinctive in running a theological hall initially for the Presbyterians but later, in the twentieth century, for Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists also. But since in these happier times, the Presbyterian ministry was a learned ministry, most of the theologues, like some of the medicos, had an Arts degree under their belt and most of them had attended College as Arts undergraduates, so they have already been counted in the total. It is true that a stern distinction was drawn

by the senior professors between subjects taught by University staff towards a University degree on the one hand and, on the other, professional training for the ministry conducted on campus but within a College. But, because the Presbyterians were already graduates, they do not, I think, distort the figures in the nineteenth century. I readily concede that the United Theological Hall students would distort the figures a bit if they were included in a comparable exercise for the twentieth century.

My group of 199 students is also more representative than the number itself might imply. Andrew's housed about 25% of the entire University enrolment in the 1870s, and probably a higher proportion of the senior undergraduates. A surviving photograph of the third-year students at the University in 1881 shows eleven in all: six of them were at Andrew's.¹ By the end of the 1880s, however, with the expansion of the University, the percentage of College boys fell dramatically. In 1889 only 8% of the students were resident at Andrew's. From the beginning of the University, Presbyterians had played a quite disproportionate part. Before Andrew's was up and running, Paul's was viable only because of Presbyterian demand.

Charles Badham remarked at the Commem Day celebration in 1868 that one group of parents in the colony and one group only had been consistent pillars of strength in tertiary education:

I mean the Presbyterian body of Christians. By far the largest contribution of our students is from them. They are Scotchmen; that is to say, they are men who, by hereditary right, are cautious, prudent, and temperate. They

¹ University of Sydney Archives, G3/224/990; the students are identified uniquely in another print of the same photograph in the St Andrew's College Archives.

are men who, by the conservation of wholesome traditions of domestic simplicity, yet maintain the character of a God-fearing community.²

I have always warmed to Professor Badham.

Three-quarters of the 199 students who came to Andrew's over these 27 years were not Sydney-siders born and bred. I was mildly surprised and very gratified to find that 86, 43% of them, had been born in country New South Wales and that 45 of them, 22%, had been educated in country schools within the state and 14 more in country schools in Queensland. A little more about Queensland later.

It's worthwhile to look at the feeder schools in New South Wales, because the schools offered the initial exposure of the future undergraduates to learning among a cohort of peers from a diversity of backgrounds..

Sydney Grammar supplied almost a quarter of Andrew's intake up to 1900, but on a decreasing trajectory: 20 boys out of 46 in the 1870s, 13 out of 73 in the 1880s, 12 out of 80 in the 1890s. The places of origin of the boys educated at Grammar who came to Andrew's were equally balanced between Sydney and country New South Wales. During the entire period that I have looked at, the presiding genius at Grammar was, of course, Albert Weigall. What Grammar lacked was land: it was an exclusively urban environment.

Other than Sydney Grammar, the most significant feeder school in the 1870s was Joseph Sly's Calder House in Redfern. Calder House closed in 1879 when the government bought the house and the four hectares surrounding it for the railway's Eveleigh workshops complex. Calder House boarded a lot of country boys, including a cross-section of major grazing families. The Whites who were already

² *Speeches and Lectures Delivered in Australia by the late Charles Badham, D.D., Professor of Classics in Sydney University*, ed. Thomas Butler, Dymock, Sydney 1890, 'Sydney University Commemoration, 1868', 9.

dominant in the Hunter sent their boys to Calder House; so did the Gilmores whose sheep occupied most of the country round Wellington; and also the Mackays of Dungog who owned most of the Upper Manning in the biggest consolidated landholding in New South Wales. The Mackays sent their elder son to Andrew's in 1876.³

Sly's school, with its semi-rural environment in the Redfern of the 1870s, was an important staging post for boys like John Jacob Cohen. Cohen was the son of an ambitious store-keeper, businessman and local politician at Ulmarra, down the Clarence from Grafton. He had attended the newly opened local public school at Ulmarra and then boarded at Grafton Grammar School until he was fifteen, when he came to Sydney for the first time. During the week, young Cohen boarded with Sly, and he spent his weekends with family friends at Millers Point. In Cohen's notes for his uncompleted memoirs, it is significant that he names over sixty of the boys with whom he shared eighteen months at Calder House, along with brief aides-mémoires about their origins and their subsequent careers.⁴ When we are thinking of the country child's experience in the city, Calder House gives an insight into the transitional phase enjoyed by some. Remember that the young community at Calder House was larger than the entire enrolment in the University at any time up to 1878, and, viewed as a residential community, it had more than twice the number of students at the three University Colleges combined. When Calder House closed in 1879, there were only thirty-five students in the Colleges, eight at John's, seven at Paul's and twenty at Andrew's.⁵ For a boy in his early teens – Cohen came to Andrew's in 1876 when he was only sixteen – Calder House offered a cross-section of humanity comparable, but larger, to that which some of them were about to encounter at College. Although the graziers were prominent, the parents of the Calder boys included country ministers, country-town lawyers and businessmen like Samuel Cohen, alongside a variety of occupations within Sydney.

³ Judge John J. Cohen, *Memoirs*, n.d., 14-15.

⁴ Cohen, *Memoirs*, 14-15.

⁵ Clifford Turney, Ursula Bygott and Peter Chippendale, *Australia's First: a History of the University of Sydney, Volume I 1850-1939*, University of Sydney and Hale & Iremonger, Sydney 1991, 160, 165, 642.

This community worked and played in an enclave of four hectares, exactly the same acreage as they would find at Andrew's. Four hectares was no doubt very small beer to John Mackay, who left the College to join his father on the 160,000 hectares of Cooplacurripa Pastoral Holding.⁶ Young Mackay also joined his younger brother, William, on the Manning: William had not gone to University, but instead became one of the legendary, fearless horsemen in that unforgiving environment which would make the Man from Snowy River pause.⁷ John was no less fearless but more sedentary. The rural environment of Calder House and St Andrew's had different effects on different personalities, but it was, I think, an important mediating part of the country boy's first exposure to metropolitan education.

One further thing arising from Cohen and Calder: John Cohen was an observant Jew. Later in life, when he was a judge, he was prominent in the Great Synagogue. As a boy of fourteen, he was made welcome by Joseph Sly, an ex-Congregationalist who had turned to Anglicanism.⁸ When Cohen came to St Andrew's, he recalls that with some trepidation he interviewed Kinross (not that Kinross interviewed him) and he recalled with gratitude that Kinross and the Council gladly admitted him to College and specifically exempted him from attendance at Christian worship.⁹

Newington was also a metropolitan school feeding Andrew's. Newington had been smaller than Calder House in the 1870s and sent only two boys to Andrew's in that decade, but it spread its wings with its move to the present site at Stanmore in 1880. Almost all the boys from Newington who thereafter came steadily to College had originally come from country New South Wales (15 of them in all up to 1900). This is not a surprise, because Newington's planned capacity in the 1880s was 200 day pupils and 70 boarders, so there was always a decent minority of country boys at the

⁶ State Records New South Wales, Pastoral Holdings File, 3/1226/477.

⁷ Obituary, *Pastoralists' Review*, 50, 1940, 16 January 1940, 23.

⁸ Bruce Mitchell. 'Sly, Joseph David (1844-1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, VI, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1976, 136.

⁹ John J. Cohen, 'Early Reminiscences of St. Andrew's College (1876-1879)', *St Andrew's College Magazine*, 1, 1908, 13

school.¹⁰ Newington had, of course, been founded by the Methodists instead of proceeding with a University College: Wesley did not appear until the First World War, so before that Andrew's was the natural place for Newingtonians at the University.

Even at Sydney Boys High School, which sent eleven students to Andrew's after 1887 (the school only opened late in 1883), eight of these boys had been born in the country. There were quite a few country boys at Sydney High because of its scholarship policy and pupils came from country schools to get polished for University entry at Sydney High from the outset. By 1889 Sydney High was second only to Sydney Grammar in its number of passes in the University examinations. Charles Badham had been the principal speaker at the opening of the school – this is the last of Badham's spectacular oratory published in his collected addresses - and the founding second-in-command had been John McManamey, who was an Andrewsman and a country boy.¹¹ So it is not surprising that Sydney High is so well represented at Andrew's.

The University itself was very aware of the needs of potential students from the country . Badham himself said at the Commem Day celebration in 1876, the year in which St Andrew's opened as a residential College:

I wished to convince my fellow-citizens that this University was no inaccessible shrine for the glorification of a few, and no sullen fortress, in which a certain privileged band was to batten on the public revenues; but that we were a beneficent guild ... exhibiting every inducement that we could devise to allure the youth of this colony, sending forth our invitations to him that was near and to him that was far.¹²

¹⁰ David S. Macmillan, *Newington College, 1863-1963*, Newington 1963, 44.

¹¹ A. Ferguson, ed., *High: the Centenary History of Sydney High School*, Child & Henry, Brookvale 1983, 6, 12.

¹² *Speeches and Lectures by Badham*, 'Sydney University Commemoration, 1876', 97.

As a result of the efforts of Badham and the Chancellor, Deas-Thomson, a number of country towns had pledged themselves to give financial support to a system of local bursaries.

But we know what country towns are [said Badham] – we know, for instance, that in Albury there are other things fermenting besides wine [a reference to the early aspirations of Albury to be the Federal capital]¹³. And, indeed, in all those towns it is difficult to get people to act at all, and most difficult to get them to act together. But if we do not release them, still less can we release the squatter, for he has obligations antecedent to any proposal of ours, arising from the very nature of his position, inherent in the very tenure of the soil. Every landed proprietor is bound to all his poorer neighbours as his natural clients.¹⁴

Badham saw these deserving clients as the children of local doctors, local lawyers, ministers of religion and public servants or, strikingly, the children of the widows of such men. Badham had a wide human sympathy. This is part of the background to the University bursaries, which Roderic Campbell, Julia Mant and Julia Horne have been documenting from 1874 onwards and which are very relevant to any study of country students.¹⁵

Inside this context, it is interesting to look at which country schools sent their best pupils straight to Andrew's. Far and away the most significant was Coerwull Academy at Lithgow, the first Presbyterian boarding-school in the colony, which

¹³ The reference to Albury wines is to a dispute in 1875-6 about their alcoholic content. The British Customs had insisted that wine imported from Albury was so strong that it must be reinforced with spirits and therefore was in a higher excise category: Albury reacted fiercely through J.T. Fallon, its leading storekeeper, wine-merchant and vintner, who was also the local MLA, and proved that the wine was all grape juice, which just happened to contain 35% alcohol. The reference to 'other things fermenting' is, I think, to Sir Hercules Robinson's speech in Albury on 31 October 1876 suggesting that Albury would be a good place for a Federal capital. (Arthur Andrews, *The History of Albury, 1824 – 1895*, Albury 1912, reprinted Albury and District Historical Society, Albury 1988, 66-68.)

¹⁴ *Speeches and Lectures by Badham*, 'Sydney University Commemoration, 1876', 97.

¹⁵ Roderic Campbell, "'The Modest Hospitality of a Scholar': Badham and the First Bursaries", *University of Sydney Record*, 2005, 13-22.

opened its doors in 1883. Coerwull had been built entirely at the expense of a foundation member of the Council of St Andrew's College, Andrew Brown, a self-made Scottish grazier, resident near Lithgow, but with extensive sheep-runs on the Castlereagh in the Gulargambone area. It opened with thirty students, mostly but not all boarders, and by 1892 it had 68 rooms and 33 separate bedrooms for boarders. It was endowed with 16 acres, 6.4 hectares, of land between the Great Western Highway and the northern escarpment of Hassans Walls. The stone buildings are singularly attractive and, although the climate was a bit bleak, the school had a warm heart and high standards.

The purpose of Brown's philanthropy was to allow country children access to the equivalent of Edinburgh Academy and to encourage the ablest to go on to University. He endowed scholarships both to attend Coerwull in the first place and then to live in St Andrew's College on admission to the University. To clinch this educational deal, Brown gave the entire property to St Andrew's College soon after the school opened in 1883. Thereafter the College ran the school until its closure during World War I. It is no surprise that twelve Coerwull students came to Andrew's up to 1900 and that two headmasters of the school, Charles Flint and John McManamey, were old Andrewsmen.

All Saints, Bathurst, is older than Coerwull – it opened in 1874 - and boys who would later have gone to Coerwull were sent there in the 1870s. Like Coerwull, All Saints did not cater only for the well-to-do grazier families. Two brothers, James and John McManamey, were sons of the mounted constable stationed in Wellington and they were sent to All Saints. But before this they attended the local public school in Wellington. There the boys were inspired by their teacher, J.W. Turner, who was later a famous headmaster of Fort Street and one of the royal commissioners on education in 1903. The McManameys were lads of pairts and both were gifted classicists. The doctor in Wellington, moreover, was Greek and all five McManamey boys became fluent in Modern Greek as well as proficient in

Ancient Greek.¹⁶ So when John McManamey became the medallist in Classics at Sydney University in 1889, he had the rare distinction of knowing the living language of Greece as well and caught the attention of Mungo MacCallum, the Scottish Professor of Modern Literature, who wrote a warm testimonial for the young graduate.¹⁷

The McManameys, like John Cohen, are pleasing evidence of the quality of boys coming through country schools. Good students also reached Andrew's direct from the grammar schools at Albury, Singleton, Armidale, Newcastle and Goulburn, not to mention the Queenslanders. There were twenty boys from Brisbane Grammar, and fourteen more from the grammar schools at Ipswich, Toowoomba, Maryborough and Rockhampton. Until the University opened in Brisbane in 1911, the towns and grazing properties of Queensland naturally looked to Sydney for tertiary education.

Boys at Andrew's also came through the New South Wales public school system, from Wellington, Shoalhaven, Cambewarra, Morpeth, and both the Maitlands, as well as no less than six coming from the small schools at Kiama and Jamberoo (where Kinross had been the parish minister before he went to Andrew's). The social mix among country lads at Andrew's in the nineteenth century was far more egalitarian than it became in the course of the twentieth century.

The McManamey brothers, who are such strong examples of a meritocracy, give uncommonly valuable evidence about the country student who was not going to go home after graduation to run 160,000 hectares of cattle country. James, the elder brother who came to University and Andrew's on one of the new bursaries in 1878, wrote informative letters back to his parents, who were by that time in Orange.

¹⁶ R. Philips, 'Turner, John William (1849-1913)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* XII, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1990, 296-7; R. Porter, *History of Wellington*, author, Sydney 1906, 62; Gertrude McManamey ed., *The Poems of John Fraser McManamey, B.A.*, Sydney University, editor, Woodford [c.1980], iii; Watson A. Steel, *The History of All Saints' College, Bathurst, 1873-1934*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1936, 29-45, 94-95.

¹⁷ Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, McManamey Papers, ML MSS 1507/1, p.3.

These letters are in the University Archives. They are the unique source of the information that the College under Kinross supplied a bare bedstead and a washing stand, but nothing else in the student's room, not even a desk. Each boy, moreover, had a fireplace in his bedroom, but was forbidden to light it. So the impoverished student Jim McManamey and his policeman father had to find £3 10 6½ for bedding, towels and a table (which is \$388 in 2004 money: the multiplier is 55.3).¹⁸ The Heads of Colleges have gone soft. On the other hand the basic fees were only £50 a year, which is the 1878 equivalent of \$5530, only a third of today's figure.¹⁹

This sort of material is more likely to come from country boys just because of their distance from home. There is, for example, an entertaining account of College life by two Coerwull brothers, grandsons of the founder, Andrew Brown. One of them published it in the second issue of the school magazine in 1892 under the pen-name *Juvenis*, a Young Chap. The Brown boys, who were not bursars, divided College men into two categories. The first consisted of those who 'did not miss lectures, and worked, worked as if their very bodies and souls depended on it'. These students also 'attended worship twice a day, when once would have been sufficient'. This group was known to the rest of the students as the Holy Order of Dead Heads. The other category was the 'rowdy lot':

as rowdy in a gentlemanly way as the order were dead in a defunct way.
College life for us was a round of enjoyment, as that life always will be, as long as one goes in for any amount of sport and gives up the insane idea that colleges are places for work alone.

And then on warm evenings, the rowdy lot:

would wander about seeking the beauties which Nature would disclose in the streets of ...N[ewtown], playing billiards and otherwise amusing ourselves.²⁰

¹⁸ Julia Mant, 'James Whiteside Frazer McManamey', *University of Sydney Record*, 2005, 23-24; R. Fitzherbert, 'Price Conversion Factors for Historians', *Australian Actuarial Journal*, 10 iii, 2004, 620.

¹⁹ Turney, Bygott and Chippendale, *Australia's First*, I 165.

²⁰ *Juvenis*, 'Glimpses of College Life', *Coerwull Magazine*, I ii, June 1892, 5

Neither John Laurence Brown nor Francis Brown took out the University medal. Indeed neither of them graduated at all. Nor did John Mackay, the millionaire grazier of 1876, but when he left in 1878 he or his father (who was also John K. Mackay) did donate a great Lyon and Cottier window to College. That window contains portraits of Milton, Shakespeare and the Scottish poets, Drummond of Hawthornden and Thomas Campbell, surrounded by Australian animals: it is the earliest stained glass depiction of a possum and a koala. The third generation of Browns didn't go in for that sort of thing, which wasn't rowdy enough.

The progress of country students towards the University and their contributions and experiences once at University and College are pleasingly various and, just as today, one should hesitate before making over-confident generalizations. There is plenty of work to be done.