The making of a radical archaeologist: The early years of Vere Gordon Childe

Robin Derricourt
School of Humanities and Languages, University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052, Australia <r.derricourt@unsw.edu.au>

Abstract

Vere Gordon Childe is the most prominent archaeologist produced by Australia to date. His writing influenced two generations of the public’s understanding of the human past, alongside the academic interpretation and teaching of prehistory, while his work has stimulated more professional conferences and critiques than any other in the discipline. This paper explores how close Childe came to taking a different path, outlining the circumstances that led him to abandon archaeology and pursue a potentially high profile political career. This began and ended amid opposition and controversy, when external circumstances forced him out of politics and, at the age of 30, back to archaeology. This account of the details of Childe's early life, motivation, passions and skills draws on unpublished archives held in the State Records of New South Wales, and other early sources, together with the disparate materials that have become available since the biography of Childe published in 1981.

Introduction

...a thoroughly perverted and probably a very dangerous person (Home Office letter 19 June 1917, as cited in Champion 2009:28).

...another university man gone wrong (Australian Government Censor, October 1918, as cited in Mulvaney 1994:63).

Mr Childe is very well informed and apparently harmless (Agent-General of NSW in London, 1922, as cited in SRNSW A22/1447a).

...the greatest prehistorian in Britain, and probably in the world (Piggott 1958:312).

Consider three snapshots that present very different individual life images spanning the younger years of a single individual:

- An 18-year-old school boy, the top scholar in classics at an elite Anglican boys’ private school in North Sydney, where his father is the rector of the local Anglican church. He has just taken his final public exams, in which he will top the state in Latin;

- A 28-year-old radical socialist activist who is at the centre of power in New South Wales (NSW) as the Private Secretary to the Labor Party Premier. While his job involves writing speeches and research briefings for the Premier, he is also writing a book on the failures of the Labor Party to achieve socialism; and,

- A 35-year-old holder of a full professorship in archaeology at a British university. A man of somewhat eccentric scholarly demeanour, but already distinguished for his landmark interpretations of European prehistory.

The impact of Vere Gordon Childe (b. Sydney 1892, d. Blue Mountains 1957) on archaeology and the study of human history cannot be underestimated. Books such as Man Makes Himself (Childe 1936) and especially What Happened in History (Childe 1942) with over 300,000 sales (Childe 1958:73), influenced a vast and diverse public readership, while the interpretative models he advanced formed the basis of teaching and discussion through a formative period of European prehistory and the growth of archaeology as an intellectual discipline.

In his post-humously published ‘Retrospect’ (Childe 1958) he referred to his return to archaeology in his 30s after ‘a sentimental excursion into Australian politics’. Scholars in both archaeology and political science have long argued how much his theoretical positions in studies of the distant human past and of more contemporary political events were linked, and what part Marxist ideas played in both. His 1923 account of How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia has developed the contemporary status of a pioneering analysis.

There might appear to be a broad gap between looking back at the deep prehistory of Europe’s first farmers and metalworkers, and looking forward to the radical social transformation of Australia’s economic, social and political structure. I suggest that considering the background to these intellectual and personal passions of Childe in some detail may help us better to understand the link. In this paper, I present details of his early life which show the influences and events that led him away from the scholarly study of the past into an activist, as well as analytical, role in politics, before further events led him back to forge his career and profile as the greatest prehistorian of his generation.

Childe as archaeologist has been the subject of numerous critiques, both of specific writings and of his whole career (e.g. McNairn 1980; Sherratt 1989; Trigger 1980). The conscientious and very readable (though unfortunately unreferenced) biography of Childe by Green (1981) was published more than 30 years ago. She bemoaned the
absence of a personal archive of Childe's papers, and Childe seems to have excised all personal items from his files at the London Institute of Archaeology (Katja Meheux pers. comm. 2014). Successive research has corrected some details of Childe's early years. Much of a special issue of *Australian Archaeology* in 1990 (volume 30) was devoted to him. The centenary of Childe's birth provided the incentive for two conferences re-evaluating his life and work, with publications derived from these conferences appearing a little later. The 1992 conference in London (Harris 1994) focused largely on his role in archaeology, but included a valuable essay by Mulvaney (1994) on Childe's Australian years to 1922. The conference held two years earlier in Australia (Gathercole et al. 1995) focused more on his Australian years, and his political role and attitudes, including an account by Evans (1995) of his short Queensland (Qld) period. This conference allowed re-evaluation, and supplemented some individual essays on Childe's early life in Australia which had appeared in previous years (Allen 1979, 1981; Irving 1988; Smith 1964). A further conference on Childe held in Durham, England, in 2007 was reported in a special issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology*, volume 12(1–3). The present writer has drawn attention elsewhere to the underlying pattern of Childe entering then abandoning archaeology for politics, and being abandoned by politics before re-entering archaeology (Derricourt 2014).

**A Conventional World to Reject**

Vere Gordon Childe grew up in Sydney as the son of an English Anglican clergyman (Green 1981:3–9). The Rev. Stephen Childe was rector of St Thomas' Church in North Sydney from 1880 (not Green's 1879) to 1913. After the death of his first wife in August 1880, leaving him with the care of five children, Rev. Childe remarried in 1886. Gordon, born on 14 April 1892, was the only surviving child of Stephen and his second wife Harriet (a younger brother died in infancy), and she was already aged 38 at Gordon's birth. In 1900 an impressive new Rectory (now the Ministry Centre) was built for the Childe family to occupy.

Rev. Childe had a strong high church ideology and a commitment to associated rituals which found him at odds with many parishioners (he seemed to have already fallen out with more evangelical Church members in Britain because of his religious views). A parish history recorded 'the emphasis he placed on the mystical and ritualistic approach to worship and teaching' (Dobbyn 1978:14). Gordon thus grew up in a setting in which ideology and ideas were important. Despite the growth of North Sydney to almost 35,000 residents by 1911, Rev. Childe's personality, strong views and absenteeism generated continuing conflicts with his own Sydney parishioners, leading to 'resignation after resignation, row after row, with church attendance and income falling' (Dobbyn 1978:14). While the church's donations were enough to cover Childe's salary and expenses, there was still a heavy mortgage to be serviced for the new rectory and other buildings (St Thomas 1911). But after Rev. Childe's death in 1928 a former parishioner recorded:

Mr Childe's polished courtesy, at all times, and his deeply sympathetic spirit, provided a deep spring of pastoral care that was ever available to his people. Indeed, he was one of the few priests who immediately inspired the feeling that one could go to him in any moment of difficulty, or spiritual need (Anon. 1928:3).

Childe's archaeological ideas, as much as his political ideas, held in common a commitment to ideology and to systems of ideas, in contrast to the empiricism of many archaeological contemporaries and the pragmatism which he criticised in political actors. Childe's own social and political ideas were, however, quite distant from those of his father.

In Gordon's final year at school, 1910, his mother died. Three years later in 1913 his father agreed to resign his living, and departed for the family's house which had been built with Harriet's money in the Blue Mountains (Green 1981:8–9). He then remarried for a second time, sold the Blue Mountains home and built another house nearby, where he lived until his death in May 1928.

When Gordon left school for university in Sydney, he moved out of his father's house to live with his mother's brother (Green 1981:11) and thereafter seemed to have remained distant from his twice-widowed father. While a rebellious attitude to a domineering father need not be taken too directly as a stimulus for Gordon's rebellious attitude to social and political conventions, it does provide some context for it.

Childe's education until the age of 15 was at a small, private preparatory school at 72 Berry Street, just around the corner from Childe's home in North Sydney, run by Miss H.B. Crisford, a University of Sydney (USyd) graduate well qualified to develop the skills of such an able student. He entered Sydney Church of England Boys' School, known as Shore, walking distance from home, in the middle of the school year. Gordon's elder half-brother, Lawrence, had been one of the very first intake to the school when it opened in 1889. In December 1907 Gordon was confirmed at his father's church rather than at the School's more local Christ Church.

Childe's own school career can be traced from references in the school magazine (*The Torch-Bearer* 1907–1918). In his first full year at school, 1908, in Form IVB, he was a winner in a general knowledge competition. In 1909, now in Form IVA, where he won the form prize for academic excellence, he took the Junior Matriculation public examinations, and came second in the state for Latin. He also gained an A grade in French (though only a C in English). In his final school year, 1910, with 21 students in the senior grade (Sixth Form), from a total school of 310 (Sherington 1983:72), Childe was not among the 17 who were prefects or sub-prefects; academic merit was not enough to gain official school status. Missing from his school achievements was any contribution to school sport, or the cadet force. And neither was he an officer of the school's debating society or library committee. His only appearance in the school magazine is the translation from Greek of a passage by Xenophanes (Elegies 2) signed 'G.C.', with the particularly telling lines 'it is the translation from Greek of a passage by Xenophanes (Elegies 2) signed 'G.C.'; with the particularly telling lines 'it is not right, right to prefer brute strength to wisdom good' (Childe 1910:229). A Greek translation thus marks his first protest against his perception of conventional private school values and emphasis on sport. It does reflect a reservation made publicly by Deputy Headmaster Lee Pulling the previous year that in private education there was a trend 'to focus on the good athlete, while the boy poor at games was neglected' (Sherington 1983:73). The passage in Childe's translation noted the respect and prizes visited on athletes, but continued (Childe 1910:229):

---

Childe took his final school examinations just a few months after his mother’s death, and won the school prize for Latin and ancient history. He came equal first in Latin in the state’s Senior Matriculation exams, gaining a B in Greek, French and ancient history.

From School to University

Childe studied at USyd—then the only university in NSW—for the three academic and calendar years 1911, 1912 and 1913. Having demonstrated his ability at classical languages at school, he added the subject of philosophy from his first year. This proved a subject in which he not only excelled and with which he remained ‘fascinated’ (Childe 1958:73), but which importantly, as his biographies noted, brought him into a wider world of ideas under the marked influence of the passionate teacher, Hegelian and Christian idealist, Prof. Francis Anderson. Childe gained a High Distinction in Latin that year and received the University’s Cooper Scholarship, renewed again a year later. In his final examinations he achieved High Distinctions in Latin, Greek and philosophy, a University Medal for Classics and Anderson’s Prize for a philosophy essay. His mastery of philosophical enquiry gave him a breadth of vision which he continued to apply to his interpretations of the past and the present. Childe’s linguistic ability would later enable him to access a wide range of European literature, both for his archaeological surveys and in his political appointment (and also to fill a period of unemployment with book translations from French and German).

Childe received belated honours at his old school. At the end of his first university year, the school was granted a half holiday to celebrate Childe’s Cooper Scholarship and a similar award in law for another old boy. While the ‘university old boys’ section of the school magazine was initially silent on Childe, focusing mainly on others’ sporting achievements, the scholarship did stimulate a mention, with another the following year in the Headmaster’s report. The academic achievements of his final year were reported in the school magazine in 1914, a year of more than academic emphasis, with a list of 103 old boys who had sat for the final examinations in Oxford’s undergraduate course at Oxford with a First Class in the School of Sydney, with a triple first in the Arts School, concluded his it’ (The Torch-Bearer 1913:127). In 1918 the Headmaster could boast: ‘V.G. Childe, formerly Cooper Classical Scholar of Sydney, with a triple first in the Arts School, concluded his University course at Oxford with a First Class in the School of Literae Humanae and the Craven Fellowship [sic]’ (The Torch-Bearer 1918:8).

One year after Childe commenced studies at USyd a new student arrived who would succeed him as winner of Anderson’s philosophy essay prize, and whom he would befriend: Herbert Vere (Bert) Evatt, later Australia’s Foreign Minister and subsequently Leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in opposition. Like Childe, Evatt was a brilliant scholar, but was also a sportsman, student activist and Editor of the student magazine, Hermes, before becoming Student Union President. At this time Evatt’s own ideas were developing: in his first year he was Treasurer of the university’s Christian Union. While neither made philosophy their primary focus, in December 1918 Evatt would suggest to Childe that they collaborate in writing a text renouncing bourgeois philosophy (Mulvaney 1994:57).

Childe’s academic achievements saw him awarded a Cooper Graduate Scholarship for overseas study, and Champion (2009) has explained the reasoning that led him to Oxford and to Queens, the college of his USyd Professor of Greek, W.J. Woodhouse. Between finishing his first degree and sailing for Britain in August 1914 (on a free return sea passage from a charitable allocation), he spent the year away from the intellectual and cultural world of Sydney, teaching in the small NSW community of Glen Innes (Green 1981:12–13).

His undergraduate years seem to have been devoted to scholarly study more than political concerns. How political, how radical, was Childe by the time he travelled overseas? Green (1981:10) stated that he spoke in the university’s debating society in support of ‘socialism is desirable’ but against a motion opposing compulsory military training. The student magazine noted in 1913 that Childe served on the Student Union ‘Committee for Debates’—as well as the Reading Room and Archives Subcommittee (Hermes 19[3]:88)—and in the first issue the following year recorded that ‘V.G. Childe, our somnolent friend of the debating hall, goes to Oxford in search of a Litt.B.’ (Hermes 20[1]:9). However, a debating society is not a political movement; there is no evidence to suggest Childe was a politically active undergraduate at USyd, but Oxford would change all of that.

The Oxford Years

Childe spent three years in Oxford from September 1914–1917 (Champion 2009). His initial focus, inspired by Woodhouse, was on the links between philology and archaeology, with an emphasis on the classical world, and his interests migrated from the language to the archaeological side. Finding the emphasis of Oxford’s Diploma in Archaeology too much on art and architecture for his taste, he concentrated on completing a research degree on the influence of Indo-Europeans in prehistoric Greece. Almost as an ‘extra’ he subsequently sat for the final examinations in Oxford’s undergraduate classics degree (gaining First Class Honours).

It was whilst at Oxford that Childe gradually developed his forceful political identity and passions (Champion 2009), the impetus for which was the Great War, declared just days before he had boarded the ship that would take him to England. Champion (2009:27) cited evidence that soon after arrival Childe volunteered for military service but was rejected on health grounds, so instead joined the ‘Civilians Battalion’ in which he was active until his opinions of the war changed. As the war progressed, opposition by a minority of academics and intellectuals grew, especially with conscription at the start of 1916. Childe was a friend of people jailed for their opposition to the war, and shared accommodation in Oxford during 1916–1917 with another friend, Rajani Palme Dutt, who would become a founder and major figure of the British Communist Party. Childe himself became the President of the Oxford Union of
Democratic Control and Secretary of the Oxford University Socialist Society (Childe’s ‘Personal statement,’ cited in Irving 1995:35–36) as it split from Britain’s Fabian Society. His opposition to the war seems to have been closely and rapidly tied to political analysis, rather than a general pacifism. Indeed, he was reported to have voiced sympathy for German submarine successes in the hope they would bring an early end to the war (Champion 2009:28).

The passion of his politics and ideas did not interfere with his increasing intellectual commitment to archaeology, though it would sabotage his career in both Britain and Australia. He was a visible and active radical opponent to the war, which brought him to the attention of British authorities in 1917, as shown in the documents uncovered by Champion (2009).

At the end of his studies, the patriotic Pro-Provost of his College, Edward Armstrong, describing him as ‘repulsively ugly, probably the ugliest man in the world’, advised Harris at the British Home Office that Childe was ‘priggish and conceited and would rather pride himself on belonging to a minority … He does not conceal his opinions on the war … in view of the ruin of a very promising career, it is a tragic case’ (Champion 2009:27–28). The Home Office appraisal was that he was ‘a thoroughly perverted and probably a very dangerous person’ (Chrystal to Kell, as cited in Champion 2009:28). Having once been turned down for military service Childe was now eligible for conscription, with prison or imprisonment. The Home Office appraisal was that he was a ‘horribly repulsive and unattractive person’ (Chrystal to Kell, as cited in Champion 2009:28). Having once been turned down for military service Childe was now eligible for conscription, with prison or imprisonment of university graduates who had refused military duties and criticised the hypocrisy of those who called themselves Liberals or Socialist but supported the war: ‘Never for a moment let yourself think that there may be two sides to any question like this’ (Childe 1917:70).

On completion of his studies in 1917 the logical and ideal next stage would have been a research fellowship. While the document cited above suggested official hostility, Childe had a more optimistic take on Oxford’s attitude to him. He wrote to Gilbert Murray (as cited in Irving 1995:33):

I now propose returning to Australia but I hope only temporarily. I certainly should not do so if I thought it would involve giving up archaeology permanently. The College however have made me certain very generous offers of financial assistance … They consider, I believe, that my chances of getting the Craven when that fellowship is awarded in the post-war period would be less damaged by the absence of the applicant than if he had recently emerged from an English gaol.

Thus he seems to have believed the College authorities had the best intentions for his future, though the Home Office letters suggest that other reasons for seeing the back of Childe influenced the College administration: Armstrong had stated ‘Our chief aim is to get him back to Australia’ (Champion 2009:28). The next year in a more public statement Childe would claim that the College had actually offered him a Simcox Research Studentship to take up after the war (Irving 1995:36); though, since he never availed himself of this, it remains questionable as to whether this was indeed a formal offer. The war did end, but Childe never received an offer to return to Oxford.

Back to Australia

The naivety with which Childe accepted Oxford’s suggestion that he should go home seems matched by a naivety about the reception he would receive on his return. USyd experienced the war intimately: a university which started the war with 1674 students, male and female, sent 2087 alumni, staff and students to military service, of whom nearly 10% would be killed. The university’s history considers that ‘all sections of the university pledged their support to see the conflict brought to a successful conclusion’ (Turney et al. 1991:412, 413, 428).

Australia did not have conscription, though it appeared imminent: and government proposals were only narrowly defeated by a public plebiscite in October 1916. Childe had announced to the university his opposition to conscription in a sarcastic and rather mannered and obscurely styled letter sent from Oxford to Hermes as a response to an Editorial published in May 1916, which had argued that compulsory conscription should have been introduced from the outbreak of war. In the May 1917 edition he wrote of ‘The true spirit of Hegelianism which has made our great foe able to rise above all silly sentimentality and present a terrible and united front to the world’ (Childe 1917:70). He especially protested about the treatment and imprisonment of university graduates who had refused military duties and criticised the hypocrisy of those who called themselves Liberals or Socialist but supported the war: ‘Never for a moment let yourself think that there may be two sides to any question like this’ (Childe 1917:70).

The same issue of Hermes contained portraits of USyd men who had died in service, along with reports from the conflict, and lists of those who had enrolled. The majority mood was still patriotic and committed to military victory. Childe may not have known of M15’s warning about him to their Australian counterparts, who were already aware of him and who monitored his activities and letters on his return (Champion 2009:28–29; Mulvaney 1994:58–62). He had announced his own public position in Hermes. And, furthermore, he had written in March 1917 to Australia’s High Commission in London to say that, if he returned to Australia, he would be unwilling to undertake military service ‘in a war which I believe to be destructive to civilisation and true liberty instead of working for an immediate peace’ (Irving 1995:28); a copy of this letter found its way to the USyd administration.

In this context we might see as unrealistic his outraged response to his subsequent treatment at USyd. Aspects of the story have been often told in a disappointing tone. Childe sailed for Sydney in August 1917 and, on return, made contact with friends and left wing movements. His old friend Bert Evatt had been a resident member of St Andrew’s College at USyd since 1914, and Chief Editor in 1914 and 1915 of the college magazine, which carried editorials supporting first the war effort and then conscription; Evatt himself lost two brothers killed on active service. By this stage Evatt was a Resident Tutor in the College (as well as President of the USyd Union) and probably at his introduction, Childe, with his distinguished academic résumé, was appointed as the Senior Resident Tutor, with a salary of $200 a year and accommodation (St Andrew’s 1918a). The appointment was confirmed in November 1917 with effect from the start of the academic year in early 1918. Coincidentally, he succeeded another man who would also impact the study of the human past: Raymond Dart, destined to be an important if controversial figure to archaeologists (Derricourt 2009), who was acting as Vice-Principal at the time of Childe’s appointment, and who departed in early 1918 just as Childe arrived.

The War was having an inevitable impact on staff and students at the College. In 1918 St Andrew’s had 64 students in residence, 150 ex-students listed under active service in the war and 21 killed in action (St Andrew’s 1919). Childe’s
public activity included speaking at an anti-war conference of the Australian Union of Democratic Control and, in this context, it is easy to see how his radical attitudes and active opposition to the war made his position untenable.

Papers on Childe in the USyd Archives (File M223) show a complex sequence, apparently dominated by the long-term administrative head of the University, Henry Ebenezer Barff (Registrar from 1882–1924). Barff had received security briefings and papers on Childe, and showed these to the St Andrew’s College Principal, Dr Harper, saying that Childe would therefore be unlikely to progress to a University appointment. Dr Harper responded to this and Childe’s public anti-war activities by suggesting, with regrets, that Childe should resign, which he agreed to do from 1 June with a pay-out from the College. A student contributor to the college magazine noted:

Mr Childe came to us an entire stranger … when he left us at the end of the first term he had won the respect and esteem of all men. He did not seek to become popular; he just became so. … Owing to the fact that in this as yet intolerant world, it is not yet possible at a time of crisis to hold social and political views contrary to those of the majority, it became desirable, in the interests of the College, that Mr. Childe leave us (St Andrew’s 1918b:12).

In March 1918, USyd’s Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes considered a proposal from the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) members of that committee that Childe be appointed as a Tutor in Ancient History for external classes. A decision was deferred pending evidence of his competence as a teacher, and the WEA set up classes for him in political philosophy. Meanwhile, within the University strategies were developing to deal with Childe, an academic, on 1 July, noting:

… the Secretary of the Department of Defence will probably communicate with the Chancellor about C. The form I suggested was: ‘It is not considered desirable that … should be appointed … during the war’ (University of Sydney Archives [USydA], M223, Assoc. Prof. Nicholson letter, ‘Confidential’, 1 July 1918).

Childe then applied formally to the Committee for appointment as a Tutor. A meeting on 9 July, chaired by his old philosophy mentor Anderson, considered whether a candidate’s political opinions should be taken into account. He tabled a letter that Childe had sent to a committee member, which noted ‘That I hold heretical views on certain questions of national and international importance, I have no wish to deny … I was reluctantly convinced in 1915 that, for me, orthodoxy was impossible intellectually’ (USydA, M223, Childe memorandum to Portus, n.d.). With one abstention and one negative vote from Todd (Assoc. Prof. of Latin), the Committee voted to recommend Childe for appointment. Todd wrote on the issue to the Chancellor, noting ‘you probably know already, and if not can learn from Mr Barff, what are Mr Childe’s opinions and conduct in regard to the war’ (USydA, M223, Assoc. Prof. Todd to Chancellor, 15 July 1918). The recommendation for appointment was not approved by the University authorities and it lapsed.

Though this was perhaps unsurprising, given the wartime passions and experience of the USyd community, political opponents of the government or the war were able to use this sequence of events to protest and gain useful propaganda (Green 1981:27–33). State Parliament Labor member William McKell first raised a written question about Childe’s non-appointment as early as 27 June, i.e. a few days before the Committee meeting that recommended him, so Barff could technically still advise the Minister that ‘Mr Childe’s name has not been before the University for employment or for any other purpose since the extension of his scholarship for a third term in 1915’ (USydA, M223, copy of McKell proposed Parliamentary question, 27 June 1918). McKell persisted, and the Minister’s answer, after possibility became reality, was made only on 11 September, saying that the matter rested with the University Senate (NSW Parliamentary Debates 1918:1208).

His British career in archaeology having been interrupted, Childe was clearly annoyed that he faced similar academic difficulties in his native Australia. It is an open question as to whether Childe himself was surprised at the attitude of a university he described in a letter to Gilbert Murray in June 1918, after his forced resignation from St Andew’s, as ‘among the wage workers … daily more suspect as a class and party institution’ (Irving 1995:34–35). He continued, ‘I am delighted with the growing radicalism of the Labor Party and the Trades Union Movement here but I would infinitely prefer reconciliation and compromise to revolution’.

After the University vetoed his tutorial appointment he wrote a bitterly passionate letter to the Chancellor arguing that the University ‘has set its face against old freedoms of the teacher, and ignoring academic merits, enquires into the private views on politics of its professors and teachers’. He continued that he had told others of ‘the systematic account to prevent the most brilliant classical student ever turned out by the University of Sydney from employing his gifts for the benefit of his native State’ (USydA, M223, Childe to Chancellor letter, 18 September 1918).

His academic career apparently foiled at both Oxford and USyd, Childe returned briefly to the standby that had filled the gap between school and university: school teaching, and a move north to Qld where the ALP held office. At this time, while the censors reviewed huge quantities of mail (10,000 letters a week, 5% of all letters, in 1917), they paid particular attention to Childe, along with a small group of potentially influential intellectuals (Cain 1983:109, 129–132; Mulvaney 1994:60), with a reference to him as ‘another university man gone wrong’.

Childe’s year in Qld from September 1918 to August 1919 has been well documented by Evans (correcting earlier errors by Green and Smith, who put him there in 1917 and 1921, respectively). By this stage his political views had been strengthened by the refusal of his academic appointment, and the same pressures may well have come to bear when he unsuccessfully applied for a job at the University of Qld (UQ) (Evans 1995:24–26; Green 1981:26–27,33–34; Mulvaney 1994:63–66; Smith 1964:v).

When his anti-war radicalism soon raised protests at the Maryborough High School where he taught, even though the war had now just ended, he moved to a low career point by taking a clerical job with the state government in Brisbane, the only advantage of which was trade union membership of the Australian Clerical Association. This was perhaps the first time Childe had been involved directly with the collective working class: until then his socialism had been of the mind and spirit. He was not the only skilled twentieth century archaeology graduate to face a period of underemployment. Interestingly, however, for someone who had declared an
intention to remain in archaeology despite challenges, he seems to have abandoned the subject at this stage: he apparently wrote no papers during this time to establish his professional reputation. The comprehensive bibliography of 762 items by Childe compiled by Gathercole and Irving (2009) showed only one article published in 1915, written while he was still an Oxford postgraduate, then nothing archaeological until this focus resumed in Britain in 1922.

At no stage did Childe develop an interest in the archaeology of Indigenous Australia, though he did make occasional reference in his writings to Indigenous Australian culture as a modern era example of hunter-gather societies. When Childe was a student at USyd, ‘archaeology’ meant the Old World—even anthropology only began at USyd in 1925. His archaeological interests were in later prehistory and history, although Childe’s popular books on the human story began with ‘Palaeolithic savagery’.

Childe continued to commit to his political beliefs, developing new political contacts and giving more time to involvement in organisations of the left (Green 1981:31–33). From April 1919 he replaced his clerical job with tutoring (in economics) for the WEA, for which UQ support was required. Perhaps most importantly, he combined his intellectual skills and political passions in a decision to write a ‘history of the Labor movement in Australia ... an interesting if depressing task’, research for which was already well under way by late 1918 (Childe letter to P.R. Stephensen, 29 December 1918, as cited in Irving 1995:9; Childe letter to J. le Gay Brereton, 23 December 1918, as cited in Evans 1995:15). The first and sole completed volume of this, How Labour Governs, would not appear until 1923.

At the Political Centre

NSW had an ALP government from 1910 until 1916, when the Labor Premier, William Holman, joined the pro-conscription Prime Minister Billy Hughes in changing to lead a Nationalist coalition. John Storey became leader of the NSW Labor Party, and thus Leader of the Opposition in the NSW Parliament, in February 1917. Childe was now well-connected on the Australian Left by his activism, and during his politically engaged year in Qld he kept in touch with Sydney affairs, attending the ALP State Conference in Sydney in June 1919. In August 1919 his networks paid off. Possibly through the influence of his friend and tutee William McKell, now the Labor Member of State Parliament for Redfern, and a future Premier and Australian Governor-General (Cunneen 2000:6, 64–65), he was appointed as the Private Secretary to ALP Leader John Storey. When Storey became the Premier of NSW (the first to hold that title officially) on 13 April 1920, Childe followed him into power. The Sydney Morning Herald of 12 April, which reported on Storey’s accession to power, listed his new cabinet, adding:

It is stated that Mr Storey will take him to the Premier’s office his own private secretary in the person of Mr V.G. Childe, who has acted in that capacity throughout the election campaign. Mr Childe is a BA of Sydney University ... He is 28 years of age.

This seems an exceptional decision: only six ministers had a Private Secretary and the five others were appointments from within the public service. Childe’s position as a political appointee was unique, pioneering what would evolve into the twenty-first century private office of a Minister staffed with political appointees. The parliamentary Opposition raised questions about the propriety of such an appointment, but Storey held his ground. His enthusiasm for Childe might have had some element of awe from the man who rose from a 14-year-old apprentice boilermaker to Premier. Three days into his Premiership he asked the Public Service Board to approve Childe’s temporary appointment as Private Secretary (SRNSW A21/1414a). When they replied that preference should be given to returned servicemen, Storey insisted and the Board gave way. The next month Storey twice asked for Childe’s salary to be increased because of responsibilities and overtime, initially stating:

Mr Childe, as my Private Secretary, is called upon to work long hours and I do not foresee any diminution in the work of the department which is at present very heavy. The position of Private Secretary to the Premier is, of course, a highly important one … (SRNSW A21/1414b).

And, in a follow up letter:

Mr Childe is engaged from time to time on special research here for me for which he has special qualifications and which falls outside the normal duty of Private Secretary (SRNSW A21/1414c).

An explanation of the rationale for Childe’s appointment would be made later by the Secretary to the Premier’s Department:

The necessity for the appointment of Mr Childe lay in the fact that he had previously acted as Private Secretary to Mr Storey when the latter was Leader of the Opposition, and he had a knowledge of Mr Storey’s methods of working and of the Balmain electorate which was essential and was not possessed by any other officer then in the Public Service (SRNSW A22/1447a).

Childe’s wider ranging role included writing speeches for the Premier and preparing research briefings on policy matters. The State still dominated many, if not most, aspects of domestic politics and administration: the Australian Federation was itself less than 20 years old. Storey and the ALP had only achieved office with minority support, in the first of a seven year experiment with proportional representation, and were in no position to push forward any radical reform agenda (Clune and Turner 2006:147–149).

By December that year Storey developed a plan for Childe to help with policy development, working from a base at the NSW Agent-General’s office in London, as a source of ideas which could benefit from European and other overseas experiences. The Agent-General’s office was responsible directly to the Premier. In the interim, a position was created for Childe as Research Officer in the Premier’s Department, formally reporting to the Head of Publicity and Research, Mr Harpur. There had been a Publicity and Research Branch in the NSW Premier’s Department since 1917, and the Research Officer role continued through to 1945. The publicity side seemed to have dominated the Branch, however, with responsibilities for distributing information on government legislation.

The Public Service Board again attempted to resist the appointment, and Storey’s memorandum of support, dated 30 December 1920, contains exaggerated claims for Childe, whether of Storey’s or Childe’s own making:

I desire to express the strongest possible conviction that his qualifications for the last mentioned position are
The official announcement from the Premier’s office stated:

As a final hurdle, Childe had to prove to the public service his linguistic ability by passing tests in French, German, Modern Greek and Italian. He passed them all and his appointment as Research Officer in Sydney went through, effective 1 February 1921. Meanwhile, Storey himself had travelled to be in London from January to July 1921 (officially to encourage investment in NSW, but also for medical treatment) and James Dooley became Acting Premier in his absence. The public service Secretary of the Premier’s Department sent Childe a formal brief reflecting perhaps the way in different forms and in different languages into the world’s metropolis. I cannot conceive of any person in or out of the Public Service better fitted for the post than Mr Childe. He has attained eminence not only in the field of literature, but in many other practical directions. I have such an arrangement ultimately in view for Mr Childe...

(SRNSW A21/1441d).

Storey followed this up with a minute which recorded his thinking:

In appointing Mr Childe to the position of Research Officer in the Premier’s Department, it is the intention of Cabinet to transfer Mr Childe to the Agent-General’s Office as Research and Publicity Officer there. The reasons which have made my present journey [to London] a necessity seem likely, in my eyes and in the eyes of Cabinet, to make it desirable that a regular officer should be permanently stationed in London to correct false reports about this country and to give due [sic] publicity to our State’s resources and to supply adequate and authoritative information about them. It was, at the same time, agreed that such an officer could do most valuable work in keeping the State in touch with the most recent development in legislation as to the results of scientific research, and similar movements in progress in Great Britain, the Continent, and in the United States. It is my intention to examine into the possibilities of such a position as soon as I reach London, and I may cable for Mr Childe to come out before I leave (SRNSW A22/1447b).

As a final hurdle, Childe had to prove to the public service his linguistic ability by passing tests in French, German, Modern Greek and Italian. He passed them all and his appointment as Research Officer in Sydney went through, effective 1 February 1921. Meanwhile, Storey himself had travelled to be in London from January to July 1921 (officially to encourage investment in NSW, but also for medical treatment and James Dooley became Acting Premier in his absence. The public service Secretary of the Premier’s Department sent Childe a formal brief reflecting perhaps the political tensions around the appointment:

Your duties will include the preparation of research memoranda… it has been the policy of the branch to submit plain statements of facts. This policy must be strictly adhered to. Expression of opinion, based on a memorandum, however, may be made in the form of a footnote (SRNSW A21/1441e).

The official announcement from the Premier’s office stated:

Mr Childe will prepare Research Memoranda which he will distribute and submit. It is also the wish of the Cabinet that he should go into the whole work of the Research Officer with a view to making that work accord as closely as possible with the needs of members of the present Ministry. To this end he is to be free to submit proposals for the alteration of the work of this Branch (SRNSW B21/366a).

Childe’s role was thus to work on ideas for policy—which might be enshrined in legislation—as well as administrative reforms. Some topics were indeed researched on his own initiative: e.g. a survey of State enterprises in NSW, which he proposed in May 1921 and completed in September on the eve of his departure for London (SRNSW B21/1117), and a tour of regional NSW which led to reports including a detailed ‘Report on the irrigation areas’ (SRNSW A21/1608). The larger part of his job, however, consisted of selecting policy initiatives and development from overseas literature and summarising these for the Premier and other cabinet ministers. In a summary of his work carried out over less than eight months, Childe listed 164 reports he had written (SRNSW A22/1447c). The United States provided the greatest number of sources, alongside Britain, continental Europe and beyond. Topics ranged from issues in welfare and employment policy to agriculture and public works, alongside numerous less central issues that attracted his attention. However, Childe expressed serious doubts about whether Storey’s initiative in creating his role was fully appreciated by his cabinet colleagues:

It is open to query whether the memoranda at present sent out are very much utilised. The Minister for Labor and Industry, also the Attorney General, have on more than one occasion made use of the information supplied to them in this form. I have no evidence that other Ministers have given them much attention, and I have gained the impression that the Memoranda sent out from this Office have never been received very favourably in other Departments.

A handwritten note on the file, perhaps from Childe’s supervisor Harpur, observed that, to the contrary, the files show that departments always appreciated useful material.

Politics from a London Base

While Storey was still in London he had personally prepared a detailed statement on how he saw Childe’s activities fulfilling his role in the Agent-General’s Office. These details were largely operational, on the use of periodicals, libraries and contacts, and ‘It is desired that American, Canadian, New Zealand and German progress be especially noted’. He should also work to place news of the progress of NSW in British journals, using the help and contacts of Australian journalists such as Keith Murdoch (SRNSW A22/1447d).

John Storey died in office on 5 October 1921, just as Childe was sailing for England, and Childe’s work continued for the State Government and its new Labor Premier, James Dooley, and his Cabinet. Childe had proposed sailing with a stop in the United States to do some research there en route; instead he travelled via New Zealand for a brief research tour. He took up duties in London on 7 December 1921, at a salary of £525 per annum, and a single housing allowance of £20.

Childe’s appointment had been agreed by the Agent-General in London, Sir Timothy Coghlan, who was himself a distinguished social researcher and statistician. Childe was now no longer in a position to undertake research projects and write reports on Australian social policy; his role largely involved reviewing international publications and writing reports on policy initiatives that might inform and influence ministers back in Sydney, stimulating a critical question in State Parliament (NSW Parliamentary Debates 1921:2152). He entered energetically upon his task from his base in London, securing access to appropriate magazines by subscription or at the London Library and the national library in the British
Museum (SRNSW A22/688a). He defined his goal as ‘to draw materials that might be useful to the NSW Government in framing Legislation or their Administrative policy’ (SRNSW A22/688a). The secondary role that Storey had expected from Childe, that he could respond to interest and queries from the British and European press on the political affairs of NSW, seems to have remained the smaller part of his duties.

Many of Childe’s reports (despatched to the Premier’s office under Coghlan’s cover notes) still exist, with a numbered sequence up to 30 (though in error some numbers are used twice) (SRNSW A22/688). Most were short summaries, 1–2 pages long, the kind of length that a busy minister or departmental head might be expected to read. A comparative study of unemployment insurance ran to five pages; one on Swedish housing legislation was just two paragraphs. Welfare systems, then being developed in post-war European counties, provided a major theme, as did industrial legislation, but reports spread as broadly as refuse disposal, heavy vehicle motor traffic and town planning, even the public funding of a symphony orchestra. Childe drew on Argentina, Uruguay and Mexico, as well as Europe and North America. All were topics that a more politically stable and more confidently-funded ALP government might well consider. One country, currently engaged in major social reforms, was missing from the reports and memoranda: there was no report headed ‘Russia’.

Back home a state election on 25 March 1922 meant the replacement of the ALP government of James Dooley by the Nationalist Party, who took office on 13 April under the premiership of Sir George Fuller. Childe’s employment had been a very early action of the new Labor administration in 1920; his removal from office seemed just as early an action of the new conservative government, and his new career collapsed just as he turned 30.

The archives show some interesting ambiguities about his removal from his post. Childe’s appointments had met with resistance from the Public Service Board and criticism tabled by the NSW Opposition. Just five days after the election, in the interim between governments but with the defeat of Labor looking likely, the same Secretary to the Premier’s Department who had signed off on recommendations for the interim between governments but with the defeat of Labor looking likely, the same Secretary to the Premier’s Department who had signed off on recommendations for the Agent-General be asked if he has any objection to Childe’s appointment once the Agent-General had advised them, but also noted that the new Government considered that his appointment had been made solely on political grounds. The letter argued that Childe had asked the Premier asking if it were true and if the Government would pay for his son’s repatriation. The Department Secretary replied that Cabinet was still to consider the question of Childe’s appointment once the Agent-General had advised them, but also noted that the new Government considered that his appointment had been made solely on political grounds. The letter argued that Childe had asked for transfer to London, where he would find it easier to gain an academic appointment if the Labor government fell (SRNSW A22/1447h). Three days later the Secretary reported Coghlan’s reply to the Premier, noting that a return fare would probably not be needed as ‘it was understood at the time that the appointment was to be a permanent one, and that Mr Childe—if his services were dispensed with upon the advent of another Government—would secure employment in England, probably at Oxford University, where he was previously a Lecturer’ (SRNSW A22/1447i). It is striking how much priority and attention was given to this exercise in the first days of the new government.

The same news was reported under a heading ‘The Pruning Knife at Work’ in the Singleton Argus of 22 April and in The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate of 21 April. The news of Childe’s dismissal stimulated some response. His friend (and until recently the Labor Minister of Justice) William McKell wrote to the Premier hoping the reports were incorrect:

I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that he is a young man of high attainments and excellent character. Politically he is regarded (wrongfully) by some as being violent, but knowing him as well as I do I can truthfully say he is quite harmless, and knows as a good Public Servant should know that on his appointment to a Govt Dept he is to have no political creed but is bound to do his utmost in the office that he holds (SRNSW A22/1447g).

Despite their personal and political differences Childe’s father also responded to the press reports with a letter to the Premier asking if it were true and if the Government would pay for his son’s repatriation. The Department Secretary replied that Cabinet was still to consider the question of Childe’s appointment once the Agent-General had advised them, but also noted that the new Government considered that his appointment had been made solely on political grounds. The letter argued that Childe had asked for transfer to London, where he would find it easier to gain an academic appointment if the Labor government fell (SRNSW A22/1447h). Three days later the Secretary reported Coghlan’s reply to the Premier, noting that a return fare would probably not be needed as ‘it was understood at the time that the appointment was to be a permanent one, and that Mr Childe—if his services were dispensed with upon the advent of another Government—would secure employment in England, probably at Oxford University, where he was previously a Lecturer’ (SRNSW A22/1447i). It is striking how much priority and attention was given to this exercise in the first days of the new government.

December 2014, Volume 79:54–64 | australian ARCHAEOLOGY 61
Back to Archaeology

After receiving notice of termination Childe explored a range of career trajectories, including continuing his political interests, and seeking employment within Britain or in continental Europe which reflected these interests and his career of recent years. Green (1981:39–43) outlined some of these explorations, and his success in securing part time work as private secretary to three Liberal Members of Parliament, alongside translation work for London publishers.

Initially he had been ambivalent about whether to stay in the country or return to Australia. As he stated in a June 1922 letter to Oxford classicist J.L. Myres (Irving 1995:41):

My position here is practically truncated as a result of the change of the NSW Government. I had been sent out to collect information on new social legislation for a somewhat radical government … So I must look for something else as I don’t want to go back to Sydney.

In June McKell heard from Childe that ‘he proposed applying for a Lectureship at Leeds before making up his mind to return to Australia’ (SRNSW A22/1447f).

By November, however, the Agent-General confirmed that ‘Mr Childe now intimates that he has no present intention of returning to Australia’ (SRNSW A22/1447k).

Did he have potential for political advancement in parliamentary politics in Australia? Childe was perhaps too much of an intellectual and academic in public speaking (Irving and Cahill 2010:130–136), and perhaps too physically unprepossessing and sartorially rebellious to be put forward as a political candidate for election in the model of his close friend Bert Evatt. He would give a slightly different cast some years later to his university friend Rajani Palme Dutt: that ‘he would have chosen revolutionary politics but he found the price too high’ (Dutt 1965:539).

But he was primarily an ideas person: it was ideas which stimulated his passions. As a political activist he had been a speaker rather than an organiser; in political employment a thinker and expositor for policies that others might deliver. When his intellectual passions moved back to archaeology, he would focus on developing and presenting ideas, not field explorations or the laboratory study of artefacts.

Childe continued to make some minor contributions to progressive periodicals at this time, but a priority was securing the publication of How Labour Governs (Childe 1925), the first of the projected two volume study of Australia that he had begun in 1918. Given the demands of his job as the Premier’s Private Secretary, then his busy research roles, it seems unlikely he had much time left for his own writing during his employment by the NSW Government. The experiences in and around government certainly stimulated his thinking, but when the book appeared it deliberately stopped short of the period when Childe served Storey and Dooley (Childe 1923:xi), though Childe suggested his planned second volume would critique the performance of Labour governments. He ended the published volume noting, ‘the Labour Party, starting with a band of inspired Socialists, degenerated into a vast machine for capturing political power, but did not know how to use that power when attained except for the profit of individuals’ (Childe 1923:210). How Labour Governs would eventually gain a reputation as a major landmark in Australian political analysis. Ironically, the place of publication in 1923 was London, not Australia: a proposal for publication had been declined in 1920 or 1921 by the Australian WEA Publications series (Gathercole et al. 1995:67, 70, 83ff).

To keep his career options open between political, publishing and scholarly positions, Childe also returned to writing on archaeology. He did this, not only at an increasing pace, but also ambitiously: not addressing minor issues with cautious hypotheses, but transforming the confidence developed at the centre of political power into a confidence in intellectual argument: few young scholars would be confident enough to call their first major work The Dawn of European Civilization. In 1922, when his employment was terminated, two archaeological articles appeared; he had completed another 13 articles and the text of his book The Aryan, as well as The Dawn of European Civilization by 1925 (Gathercole and Irving 2009). A position as Librarian of the Royal Anthropological Institute marked an end to the uncertainty about which direction his career would take and he was appointed to a Chair of Prehistoric Archaeology at Edinburgh University in 1927, before becoming the Director of the London Institute of Archaeology from 1946–1956.

Archaeology’s gain was a loss to politics—and also to Australia. Childe returned to travel in Australia only in April 1957 after his retirement, when he received an honorary degree from USyd. He despatched a post-dated final letter (published in Daniel 1980) and committed suicide on 19 October 1957. His funeral at St Thomas’ on 23 October 1957 attracted only about 60 mourners (Sydney Morning Herald 21 October 1957:1, 24 October 1957:13) and the burial place of his ashes is remarkably modest, with his name just added to the tiny plaque NT451A of a distant relative who had died 27 years earlier (Barton 2000). His British will, dated 2 February 1953, had appointed the ideologically very different Grahame Clark as his literary executor and left his estate to the London Institute of Archaeology (with its Secretary as sole executor), the only provision being that interest on his modest bank account in Australia should go to his sister there during her lifetime.

Childe’s grand survey volumes on archaeology demonstrated mastery of a vast and diverse spread of information, drawn from multiple areas and languages. It is tempting to see in this the expertise he exercised so energetically and professionally in his research role for the NSW Government. After all, analytical and explanatory skills applied to interpreting the present and potential future for a government could also apply to interpreting a past for a new audience. Both involved surveying and reading a wide range of literature, identifying what appeared important, and interpreting it clearly, concisely and thoughtfully for a reader.

A broader question lies in how much methodological, intellectual and theoretical linkage there is between Childe’s political activism, his political writing and his archaeological writing on the broad sweep of human history and prehistory. This has been the subject of much debate in the contributions noted at the beginning of this paper. There are diverse views on how much of his work can accurately be described as belonging in a Marxist tradition: and if so, how consistently. It is unremarkable that a British-based intellectual with a background in the Labour movement would draw on Marxist ideas in the 1920s and 1930s, and build on them selectively and critically, while continuing to develop new lines of analysis in the 1940s and
1950s. Childe’s (1958) ‘Retrospect’ gave a brief perspective on some of the intellectual influences on his own work.

At the end of his life Childe (1958:69) might have chosen to call his political career ‘a sentimental excursion’ and the obituary by his Edinburgh successor called it ‘a brief episode’ (Piggott 1958:305); I suggest it was far more significant. After Childe was forced to abandon archaeology through historical chance, and became engaged on a successful high profile political path, other historical circumstances set a framework which redirected his intellectual focus from the future to the past, to become one of the century’s most influential contributors to archaeological thought. As his academic career seemed to come to a dead end from discrimination on the basis of his political beliefs, his political passions grew and led to a full-time involvement in political life. The termination of that career was an equal blow, until he began three decades of academic appointments from the age of 35. By then his unique mixture of personal experience, philosophical training, radical spirit and broad international archaeological knowledge stimulated a remarkable mind to investigate, interpret and explain the human past in a radical, ‘Childean’ mode.

Acknowledgements

My thanks for practical assistance are due to the staffs of the State Records Authority of NSW; Mitchell Library Sydney; University of Sydney Archives; Shore School (Kate Rixey) and St Andrew’s College (Ian Jack); and for comments or advice to Jim Allen, Heather Burke, Timothy Champion, Alan Hay, Terry Irving, Katie Meheux, Lynley Wallis and others.

References


NSW Parliamentary Debates 1918 Legislative Assembly, 11 September 1918:1208.

NSW Parliamentary Debates 1921 Legislative Assembly, 29 November 1921:2152.


SRNSW—see Appendix.

St Andrew’s 1918b St Andrew’s College Minute Book, 18 March 1918.

St Andrew’s 1919 St Andrew’s Magazine 1919. Sydney: St Andrew’s College.

St Andrew’s College Magazine 1918a St Andrew’s College Minute Book, 18 March 1918.


University of Sydney Archives [USydA] 1918 File M223, Gordon Childe.
Appendix: Papers in State Records of New South Wales (SRNSW)

Abbreviations used here: AG = Agent-General London; JS = Premier John Storey; PSB = Public Service Board; SPD = Secretary, Premier’s Department; VGC = Vere Gordon Childe

Childe’s work in Sydney and London for the NSW Labor governments is the topic of archives held by State Records NSW. The main sets of papers are within Series NRS 12060 which, although catalogued as ‘Letters received (Premier’s Department)’, also includes some internal documents, memoranda and copies of letters sent from the Department. These are listed in indexed register volumes (Series 12062), but documents with different reference numbers have been bundled together with a lead document (file) reference as given below. These file numbers are retained in references in this paper, where individual documents cited have been distinguished as (a), (b), (c) etc.

Series NRS 50
Box 5/2746: AG Staff salaries and allowances

Series NRS 12060
File A21/1414, Box 9/4868: Papers on VGC appointment as Private Secretary to JS
(a) SPD to PSB, 16 April 1920
(b) JS to PSB, 5 May 1920
(c) JS to PSB, 20 May 1920
(d) JS, Memorandum 30 December 1920
(e) SPD, Memorandum for Mr Childe, 21 January 1921

File A21/1608, Box 9/4870: papers and reports on VGC country NSW trip
File B21/366, Box 9/4875: papers on VGC appointment as Research Officer in Sydney
(a) JS, Rearrangement of Staff, 28 January 1921
File B21/1117, Box 9/4878: VGC report on State Industries
File A22/688, Box 9/4883: VGC Research Reports from London
(a) VGC, Research Officer’s Report [n.d.]
File A22/1447, Box 9/4885: Papers on VGC appointment to AG office in London, and termination of the appointment
(a) SPD, Case of Mr. V.G. Childe, B. Litt
(b) JS, Minute, Research and Publicity Officer, AG’s Department, 20 January 1921
(c) VGC, Report to the Secretary on the work of the Research Branch during 1921, 23 September 1921
(d) JS, Statement of duties which it is proposed shall be discharged by Mr. V. Gordon Childe, 1 May 1921
(e) SPD to Harpur, Research Work, 30 March 1922
(f) SPD to PSB, Position of Mr V.G. Childe, B. Litt., attached to the Agent-General’s Office, 5 May 1922
(g) W.J. McKell to Fuller, Letter, 29 April 1922
(h) SPD letter to Rev. S.H. Childe, Letter, 24 April 1922
(i) SPD, Minute to Premier, Position of Mr V.G. Childe, 27 April 1922
(j) SPD to Rev. S.H. Childe, Letter, 23 June 1922
(k) SPD to PSB, Termination of the services of Mr V.G. Childe, 14 November 1922