John Augustus Hux (1826–1864):
A colonial goldfields reporter

PETER CRABB

Affairs are in such a state at the Flat that it is dangerous for any one to give their opinions with respect to the proceedings that have taken place: but I will state my opinions, without fear or favour, let the result be what it may.

So wrote John Augustus Hux in response to death threats he received as a consequence of his reporting of the anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat on 30 June 1861. The statement provides an indication of the character of a man who came to Australia in the early 1850s and then spent most of the rest of his short life on the colonial goldfields in the 1850s and 1860s.

Gold, newspapers and reporters

The discovery of gold in the mid nineteenth century changed the face of colonial society in Australia dramatically and in countless ways, not least through the massive migration and population growth it spurred. Covering the goldrushes and the many changes that occurred were major tasks for contemporary newspapers, as the public's appetite for information about gold was insatiable. The main sources for this information were the newspapers and, for them, gold was ‘gold’, not least for the capital city dailies, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Empire* (Sydney) and *The Argus* (Melbourne). Gold took up a significant proportion of their pages, with just about everything imaginable associated with the precious metal: editorials, specific reports, short reports in the ‘Domestic Intelligence’ columns, the ‘Gold Circulars’, reports from other colonies and overseas (for example, California, New Zealand), ‘Original Correspondence’ (letters to the editor), personal messages and countless advertisements for everything connected with gold and its mining, such as the necessary clothing and equipment, and even ‘how-to’ books. Much of the

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1 Much appreciation is extended to Dr Alexis Antonia, Centre for Literary and Linguistic Computing, University of Newcastle, for textual analysis in helping to confirm the attribution of some of Hux’s articles, and for confirming the presence of another so-far anonymous ‘Special Commissioner’ reporting for the *Sydney Morning Herald* from Lambing Flat. Her comments on an earlier version of this article are also appreciated. Thanks are also due to Malcolm Allbrook and Brendan Dalton for numerous discussions, to Clive Hilliker for his cartography and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

2 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1861, 4.
'gold news' was day-to-day factual reporting from ‘local correspondents’ and material taken from country newspapers, such as the Braidwood Dispatch, the Temora Herald and the Bathurst Free Press.\textsuperscript{3}

However, as the number of gold finds grew and production increased, the city newspapers recognised the need and responsibility to do more for their readers, to provide not only accurate but also, as far as possible, unbiased information and informed commentary, especially when widely different and conflicting information was circulating among the colonial population. In July 1857, the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald set out how the paper would endeavour to improve the situation:

It has been our constant effort to furnish our readers with information respecting our Gold-fields; to create no unnatural stimulus to mining pursuits, and yet to give fair play to our mineral resources. It was in keeping with this policy that we despatched a special commissioner to collect, at the different gold-fields, the more important facts, to ascertain the feelings and wishes of the miners, and thus to assist the merchant and the legislator, as well as the labourer. A Commissioner—such was the distinction first claimed by the Times for its agents—has functions different from that of ordinary reporting. His duties are more remote, less liable to oversight, and therefore peculiarly confidential. He is bound to see with his own eyes, to collate and estimate the facts he may gather, and penetrate through the illusions of selfishness, slander, and timidity, in search of the substantial and permanent.\textsuperscript{4}

A similar undertaking had been made by the editor of The Argus five years earlier.\textsuperscript{5} The results were extended series of articles in both papers. In both cases, the ‘Special Commissioner’ was Charles de Boos.\textsuperscript{6}

While there is little doubt he was the most prolific, Charles de Boos was just one of a number of reporters who worked on the colonial goldfields of New South Wales and Victoria. As with most of the others, his name did not appear on the articles he wrote. It has taken much research to identify his work, and that of Frederick Dalton\textsuperscript{7} and R.J. Howard.\textsuperscript{8} In most cases, reporters were referred to as ‘A Correspondent’, ‘Our Local Correspondent’ or ‘Our Own Correspondent’; a small number were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3} For extracts from many of these reports, together with very brief comments, see the Gold Trails website: www.goldtrails.com.au/gold-heritage/.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Sydney Morning Herald, 23 July 1857, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{5} The Argus, [Melbourne], 16 March 1852, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Peter Crabb, ‘“His life history may be told in a few words”: Charles Edward Augustus de Boos, 1819–1900’, in A New Tapestry: Australian Huguenot Families, ed. Robert Nash (Sydney: The Huguenot Society of Australia, 2015), 109–20.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Research continues on Howard, who wrote extensively on the Mount Alexander diggings for The Argus in 1851–52.
\end{itemize}
given the title ‘Our Special Commissioner’. Some reporters were identified by name, including Daniel Bunce, Angus Mackay, Alfred Clarke and John Hux. Some had worked as gold ‘diggers’; all had significant knowledge of goldmining. Their reports provided reliable information for contemporary readers. Today, they are significant primary documents from a critical period in Australia’s history. Of as much interest as the stories they wrote are the personal stories of these goldfields reporters. Most have yet to be told. This is the story of one of them, John Augustus Hux.

John Hux: Family heritage

John Hux came from what appears to have been an established London family of craftsmen. The oldest known ancestor, his grandfather William Hux (1730–1780), was a ‘pewterer’. Pewter, a tin alloy, was long used to make plates, dishes and drinking vessels. One of the older livery companies in the City of London, the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, dates from 1348—its charter granted in 1474. The industry reached its peak in the late seventeenth century and then declined, largely as a consequence of the new materials and products of the Industrial Revolution. By the late eighteenth century, the company’s numbers were small. This may explain why at least one of William’s children turned to another craft; Thomas Hux (1760–1825) became a watchmaker. He married Elizabeth Hudson (1761–1843) in 1782 and they had 11 children, including John, who also became a watchmaker.

John Hux (1792–1876) was born at Finsbury, London, and baptised at St Luke’s, Old Street, on 5 February 1792. He married Jane Rodwell (1798–1835) on 17 November 1819 at Blandford Forum, Dorset. They had at least six children, including John Augustus. In 1828, John was recorded as being a watchmaker in Brunswick Place. Jane died about 1835, aged 37, and John married Mary Martha de Boos (1801–1885) at St James Clerkenwell on 26 May 1838. Mary was the daughter of Abraham and Marthe de Boos and an aunt of Charles Edward de Boos, who, in 1839, moved to Australia, where he became a journalist and writer. John was described on the marriage record as a ‘Watch Manufacturer’ and a ‘Widower’, living at 41 Percival Street. By 1843, he was listed as ‘John Hux & Sons Watch Manufacturers’; eight years later, he employed three men. He had moved to 10 Spencer Street, Goswell Road, where he remained for more than 10 years. The

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10 The marriage record stated that John Hux was of the Parish of Blandford Forum and Jane Rodwell was of the Parish of Hampreston.
11 She was baptised Marie Marthe de Boos.
12 There was also a more direct family relationship with Charles de Boos. See Crabb, "His life history may be told in a few words".
13 Post Office Commercial Directory (London, 1843, 1848, 1851 and 1856).
censuses of 1841 through to 1861 described him as a watchmaker; in 1871, he was listed as a ‘Jeweller’, living at 10 Milton Street. He died in 1876. In the 1881 census, Mary was described as a ‘Boarding Housekeeper’ and ‘Widow’, living with Louisa (1840–1920), her daughter by Hux, at ‘the abode of a secretary accountant and his family’. Mary Martha died in October 1885, aged 83.

John Augustus was born on 7 August 1826, and was baptised at St James Clerkenwell on 4 August 1828, on the same occasion as two of his brothers. At the 1841 census, he was living with his parents and four siblings at Clerkenwell and was described as a watchmaker. But he was soon to leave the family business of watch and clockmaking to his brothers. Two of John Augustus’s younger siblings have a small part in this story. They were twins Mary and Harry Rodwell, born in March 1830 at Hampreston, Dorset, a small village east of Wimborne Minster, where they were baptised on 13 April 1830. Jane and her husband travelled from their home at Clerkenwell for the baptisms; Jane may well have been at her family home in Hampreston for the births. Harry was living with his parents at Clerkenwell at the 1851 census and working as a watchmaker.

His early years in Australia

John Augustus Hux arrived in Melbourne on 21 January 1853, on the Catherine Mitchell, having sailed from Liverpool. In August the following year, advertisements appeared in The Argus in Melbourne indicating that his sister, Mary, wanted to contact him and their brother Harry:

HUX.—If this should meet the eye of John Augustus or Harry Hux, send a line to your sister Mrs. Connolly, No. 129 Toy Warehouse, Old South Head-road, Sydney.

Just when Mary and Harry arrived in Australia and where they landed are not known, but the lack of a similar advertisement in any Sydney paper suggests Mary knew both her brothers were somewhere in Victoria. Mary was living in Sydney and married to Matthew Connolly, who had a retail business on South Head Road.

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14 The previous year, they had another daughter, Florence (1839–1843), but she lived for only four years.
16 Some sources give his name as John Augustus Rodwell Hux. The brothers were Richard Rodwell (1824–1869) and Thomas Hudson (1828–1847).
19 The Argus, [Melbourne], 10 August 1854, 1; 11 August 1854, 2.
20 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 April 1864, 1. He also ran a ‘Circulation Library’ (The Empire, [Sydney], 12 August 1852, 2). Apart from this inquiry, nothing further has been found about Harry in Australia, nor is anything further known about Mary following the death of John Augustus in 1864.
Just over three months after Mary Connolly’s advertisements appeared, on 29 November 1855, a Mr Hux arrived in Sydney from Melbourne, having sailed on the City of Sydney.\(^{21}\) And in February 1858, an unusual notice appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald:

I BEG to acknowledge the RECEIPT of Twenty-one pounds ten shillings and sixpence (£21 12s. 6d.) handed me by Mr. HUX and to return him and all parties subscribing to the same my sincere and grateful thanks for their kind assistance, after the fatal accident by which my husband was killed. EMMA LAWRENCE, February 1\(^{st}\), 1858.\(^{22}\)

In both cases, we might ask was the ‘Mr Hux’ John or Harry? And who was Emma Lawrence; what was her connection with ‘Mr Hux’; and what caused him to undertake this charitable task? Emma’s husband may have been the Joseph Lawrence whose accidental death while at work at the Western Islands wharf was the subject of a coroner’s inquest about the same time as Emma’s notice appeared.\(^{23}\)

Hux, the digger and writer

What little is known of Hux’s time in Victoria comes from his later writings. In the winter of 1854, he ‘was working on one of the principal [gold]fields in Victoria’,\(^{24}\) and in late 1858, he stated that he ‘had four years’ experience as a gold-digger on the Melbourne side’.\(^{25}\) In early 1860, two letters Hux wrote from Back Creek in Victoria\(^{26}\) to a friend in Sydney were reproduced in the Sydney Morning Herald. The first was titled ‘The Victoria Gold-Fields’ (it did not present a very positive picture); the second, ‘The Gold Fields of New South Wales Compared with Those of Victoria’.\(^{27}\) Also from Back Creek, he wrote a letter to The Age (in Melbourne), entitled ‘The Decrease in the Yield of Gold’.\(^{28}\) In a further letter written later in 1860, he stated that he had ‘just returned from the Victoria gold-fields’, suggesting he had more than one extended period there.\(^{29}\)

\(^{21}\) The Empire, [Sydney], 30 November 1855, 4.
\(^{22}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1858, 1.
\(^{23}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 1858, 5.
\(^{24}\) J.A.H., ‘Reminiscences of a Gold-Digger’, Sydney Morning Herald, 20 April 1861, 2. Given comments he made some years later when writing about the Lachlan diggings, this Victorian goldfield could have been Ballarat: Sydney Morning Herald, 29 November 1861, 4.
\(^{25}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 12 October 1858, 5.
\(^{26}\) Back Creek was near what is now the small town of Talbot, south of Maryborough, in Victoria. See ‘Talbot, Victoria’ (Wikipedia, 2019), en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talbot, Victoria; www.talbottourism.org/home/history.htm [site discontinued].
\(^{27}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 9 February 1860, 9; 13 March 1860, 13.
\(^{28}\) The Age, [Melbourne], 26 April 1860, 4.
\(^{29}\) The Sydney Mail, 1 September 1860, 3.
In October 1858, two letters on the ‘Fitzroy Diggings’ by John A. Hux, written from the home of his sister in Sydney, were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.\(^{30}\) Having been resident in the city for several months and fearing the prospect of ‘becoming a respectable or settled man’, he could not resist another dig.\(^{31}\) He wrote that, on his arrival in Rockhampton (in what is now Queensland), the initial reports were positive; upstream on the Fitzroy River, gold had been found at Canoona, and hardly anyone had returned from there to Rockhampton. However, once at Canoona, he quickly realised it was a very different story:

> In the morning I commenced a survey of the diggings. The great rush had not yet taken place for we were only the second vessel that had arrived;—but I saw and heard quite sufficient to convince me that Canoona was no place for me.\(^{32}\)

Along with hundreds of others, Hux and his party found extremely little or no gold at all.

In the two letters and a long article on ‘The Rockhampton Rush’, he wrote in some detail about the Fitzroy and the failure of the Canoona rush, the dreadful conditions, food shortages and the impacts on the many men who had made the fruitless journey north (Figure 1).\(^{33}\) He also wrote of the costs to the shipping companies, which were unable to land their cargoes.\(^{34}\) His letters were reprinted, in whole or in part, in a number of other newspapers.\(^{35}\)

After his trip to the Fitzroy, Hux returned to Sydney, ‘if not richer perhaps a wiser man’, yet he had to acknowledge that ‘[t]he roving disposition once commenced, it is difficult to say when it will stop’. So, when the ‘opportunity’ arose, he was soon visiting the Maitland and Singleton district in the Hunter Valley, although he ‘saw nothing there worthy of notice except the roads’.\(^{36}\) He spent Christmas Day 1858 in Sydney, but on New Year’s Day he was once again on the move, this time sailing to Melbourne.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{30}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 October 1858, 5; 13 October 1858, 5.

\(^{31}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.

\(^{32}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.


\(^{34}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.

\(^{35}\) *Maitland Mercury*, 14 October 1858, 2; *Goulburn Herald*, 16 October 1858, 2; *Hobart Town Daily Mercury*, 21 October 1858, 3; *Darling Downs Gazette*, [Toowoomba], 28 October 1858, 3; and *Perth Gazette*, 5 November 1858, 3.

\(^{36}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.

\(^{37}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.
John Augustus Hux (1826–1864)

Later in 1860, when again back at his sister’s Sydney residence, Hux wrote three more letters, mostly about the NSW goldfields. Two were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*—the first about the goldfields in Victoria, New South Wales and the Fitzroy River. The second, a long letter headed ‘The Gold-Fields of New South Wales’, included comments on the lack of government support for goldmining and on the Reverend W.B. Clarke’s 1851–52 reports to the colonial government on the southern goldfields. The third letter was published in *The Sydney Mail*, headed ‘Gold Digging at the Snowy River’. Early in 1861, he wrote another letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, entitled ‘The Chinese Question’. While concerned about ‘the evils attending so large an increase in the Chinese population’, he questioned many of the reasons for the opposition to the Chinese. And though too many may have been arriving, he stated that ‘we are clearly bound to protect those already amongst us so long as they respect and conform to our laws’.

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Figure 1 ‘Distress that would astonish the Sydney public’

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 October 1858, 5.

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38 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1860, 3.
39 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1860, 3; Rev. W.B. Clarke, *Researches in the Southern Gold-Fields of New South Wales* (Sydney: Reading & Wellbank, 1860). This was based on 18 official reports to the NSW Government made in 1851–52. Reviews appeared in *The Sydney Mail* (8 October 1860, 6–7) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (20 October 1860, 4).
40 *The Sydney Mail*, 1 September 1860, 3.
41 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1861, 8; *The Sydney Mail*, 9 March 1861, 3.
Identified as the author by the use of his initials, ‘J.A.H.’, Hux wrote a number of articles under the general title ‘Reminiscences of a Gold-Digger’. They were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Sydney Mail* from April 1860 to June 1861. Some were fictional, though he was at pains to point out all were based on fact.42 One was very definitely factual: ‘The Rockhampton Rush’ described some of his experiences on his trip to the Canoona goldfield.43 Some were republished in other newspapers;44 in the case of the Melbourne *Weekly Age*, there was no acknowledgement of the source, much to the disgust of a correspondent only known as ‘M.C.’, who called it ‘piracy’.45 In early 1861, two issues of *The Sydney Mail* contained a column entitled ‘Extracts from My Note-Book’ by ‘J.A.H.’.46 Late in 1860, a serialised story by ‘J.A.H.’ appeared in *The Sydney Mail*, entitled ‘Emma Westan: A Tale of Australia, Founded on Fact’.47 Two sisters with a very unhappy childhood in England are separated and independently move to Victoria, not knowing what has become of the other. The older sister, Emma, has a difficult life, leading to the death of her husband and destitution; the younger, Lucy, has wealth beyond her needs. By chance, they meet in Melbourne, are reunited and, with much happiness, Lucy restores Emma’s wellbeing.

### A reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald*

Hux’s letters and the knowledge of goldmining he had demonstrated may have contributed to him being employed by the *Sydney Morning Herald* and given the title ‘Our Special Commissioner’. It may also have had something to do with the family connection with his stepmother’s nephew, the journalist Charles de Boos, who was at that time also employed by the *Herald*; they could have met in Melbourne, Sydney and/or the Fitzroy diggings, as they were both in these places about the same time.

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42 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1860, 2.
43 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1860, 2.
45 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1860, 5.
46 *The Sydney Mail*, 9 March 1861, 2 (Parts I and II); 16 March 1861, 2 (Parts III, IV and V). All five parts were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1861, 2.
47 *The Sydney Mail*, 27 October 1860, 3 (Chapters 1–3); 3 November 1860, 3 (Chapter 4); 10 November 1860, 2 (Chapters 5–7).
Hux’s first destination as the *Herald*’s ‘Special Commissioner’ was Kiandra, in the NSW Snowy Mountains at an elevation of some 1,400 metres. The cold-climate periglacial landscapes are isolated, exposed, stark and almost treeless (Figure 2). Even in summer, it can be very cold. After European settlement, farmers used the country for summer sheep and cattle grazing. Two graziers, David and James Pollock, discovered gold in payable quantities in November 1859 at Pollock’s Gully.

People came from all over Australia and what had once been isolated grazing country suddenly became a boom town. By March 1860 there were more than 10,000 people on the goldfields.

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48 The journey was by coastal steamer from Sydney to Eden and then overland, but Hux does not say how he travelled or exactly how long it took him to get from Eden to Kiandra. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 September 1860, 5; 11 October 1860, 10.

The numbers included many Chinese. It was a real ‘rush’ and, at its peak, the town of Kiandra ‘comprised a bank, post office, 25 stores, 13 bakers, 16 butchers, 14 hotels, 4 blacksmiths, a courthouse, gaol, school and local newspaper [The Alpine Pioneer and Kiandra Advertiser].

The Kiandra goldrush that began in March–April 1860 was the subject of a number of reports, editorials and letters in the Sydney Morning Herald during the first half of that year, with frequent reports by ‘Our Correspondent’, both before and after Hux arrived there. Hux, however, provided commentary as well as factual reporting. His reports appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald from 28 September 1860 to 14 January 1861. There were also two separate reports by ‘J.A.H.’. Over the same period in which Hux’s reports were published, other articles appeared under the general heading ‘Alpine Sketches’ by an unknown writer (two attributed to ‘Our Correspondent’) in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Sydney Mail; these complemented Hux’s writings.

Hux wrote about the difficulties of getting to Kiandra; the township, which by mid October was already beginning ‘to assume a very respectable appearance’; and the harsh living conditions, especially for those living in tents. He also described the mining methods—essentially sluicing the alluvial deposits—and the various locations at which mining was taking place, such as Rocky Plains, Pollock’s Gully, Nine Mile, Four Mile, Surface Hill, New Chum Hill, Tantangara and the Tumut River (Figure 3). He wrote at some length about various management issues and the problems the gold commissioners had as a consequence of them, as well as those
he thought they created for themselves; the fact that the nearest sittings of the District Court were about 90 kilometres away in Cooma; and issues of ‘sly grog’ among the Europeans and opium among the Chinese miners.

The two articles under Hux’s initials presented a somewhat different view of Kiandra. A visit to the cemetery with its unmarked graves was a time for reflection on who might be buried there, as well as recounting the story of one of those buried that was told to him by another visitor to the cemetery. A somewhat tongue-in-cheek account of Kiandra, where Hux was still trudging through snow, slush and mud at the end of November, gave a picture of many buildings in a very poor state, unable to keep out the rain and snow. He concluded the account of his ‘ramble’ with the comment: ‘I think you will agree with a friend of mine, who said that one thing alone was wanted to make Kiandra perfect, and that was an earthquake.’

Figure 3 Kiandra and district

56 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 October 1860, 4.
57 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 October 1860, 5; 22 October 1860, 4; 27 October 1860, 8.
58 ‘Graves at Kiandra’, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 1860, 2; The Sydney Mail, 17 November 1860, 6; Launceston Examiner, 10 November 1860, 2; Cornwall Chronicle, [Launceston, Tas.], 15 December 1860, 2.
59 ‘A Summer-Day’s Ramble through Kiandra’, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 December 1860, 2; The Sydney Mail, 8 December 1860, 2.
There was one topic that appeared in almost all of Hux’s reports: the weather. Many people had endured the cold and heavy snowfalls of the 1860 winter, many of them ill-prepared and living in canvas tents. It was a harsh environment in which to live and work; even the daffodils planted by some of the original miners found it difficult (Figure 4). Perhaps the hardest aspect of the weather to cope with was its variability from one day to the next, regardless of the season:

It would seem that this place is never to be favoured with a continuation of fine weather … Last Saturday was quite a summer’s day, and the next morning, to the astonishment of all, the ground was covered with snow … This continued until noon on Monday, when it cleared up, and we were favoured with summer weather again.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{60} *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1860, 5; 27 November 1860, 3. Lightning strikes on the telegraph wires often caused cuts to the telegraph services.
While it lasted, Kiandra was a very productive goldfield; many miners did well, including the Chinese. For example, in one 10-day period, a group of miners found a single 12-pound (5.4 kg) nugget plus 70 ounces (almost 2 kg) of gold. The largely alluvial workings produced over 67,600 ounces (1,900 kg) in 1860 and 16,500 ounces (468 kg) in 1861. This field’s decline seems to have been rapid, as significant quantities of gold were being sent to Sydney through to late November and a 24–25-pound (about 11 kg) nugget was found in early December. By November, however, Hux wrote that people were leaving for Crackenback (initially called ‘Crack-em-back’), the location of short-lived mining activity, and more particularly, many were heading for Lambing Flat. In mid December, he reported that Kiandra was ‘getting quite deserted’. It had been one of the biggest and shortest goldrushes in Australia. Nonetheless, there were plenty of celebrations for Christmas and New Year, the latter including horseracing (Figure 5).

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61 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 October 1860, 7.
62 Moye, Historic Kiandra. There was at least one find of ‘auriferous gold’: Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November 1860, 7.
63 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November 1860, 7; 5 December 1860, 4; 15 December 1860, 6; 18 December 1860, 9.
64 The Sydney Mail, 8 September 1860, 6; The Golden Age, [Queanbeyan, NSW], 1 December 1860, 2–3.
65 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 December 1860, 6; 16 December 1860, 5.
66 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 January 1861, 5; 8 January 1861, 5.
Hux did not experience the massive snowstorm of late July 1860, which no doubt provided the impetus for an activity that gave Kiandra a world-first. In that winter, skiing, or snowshoeing, was introduced by three Norwegian miners, Elias Gottraas, Soren Tor and Carl Bjerknes. Skis, or snowshoes, were essential to move about. Soon, however, they provided a source of pleasure and, in 1861, Kiandra became the first place in the world to have an alpine ski club and to hold ski races.

On 8 January 1861, Hux joined those leaving Kiandra. Before doing so, he expressed his appreciation to those with whom he had worked, both government officials and miners, and was the recipient of an unusual expression of appreciation, some nuggets of gold. By the time he left, the Kiandra rush was over and, by early March, there were 'not more than 200 diggers left'. Hux's destination was the same as most of the diggers leaving Kiandra—namely, Lambing Flat (now known as Young).

**Lambing Flat**

Gold was discovered at Lambing Flat in March 1860 and, over the next few months, numerous other finds were made in the district, extending up to 32 kilometres from the centre of the Lambing Flat field (Figure 6). Large numbers of diggers—European and Chinese—were attracted to the district; by late November, the population was at least 3,000. From very early in the goldfield's history, it seems to have been a lawless place, with antisocial behaviour and robberies (not least of horses) common. In November 1860, the first anti-Chinese actions occurred, with some 500 Chinese driven off their diggings:

> John Chinaman was obliged to make himself scarce, and as soon as he was driven off the ground, all the tents were demolished in an instant. We believe that no violence to the person was committed in getting rid of the pests.

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67 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1860, 5.
69 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 January 1861, 5.
70 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 1861, 4; *The Sydney Mail*, 26 January 1861, 1.
71 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1861, 5.
72 ‘A Trip from the Snowy to the Lambing Flat, from Our Correspondent’, *The Empire*, [Sydney], 7 February 1861, 2.
74 *The Empire*, [Sydney], 22 November 1860, 8.
Anti-Chinese sentiment and actions continued into 1861, and there were a number of large public meetings. In late January 1861, some 1,500 Chinese were driven off the land they were working, in defiance of the gold commissioner and the police; there were so few police they were unable to do anything. A petition against the ‘invasion of the Chinese’ and calling for their removal attracted 3,394 signatures. The Miners’ Protective League made its anti-Chinese position very clear (Figure 7). The *Sydney Morning Herald* also made its position clear—in demanding the fair and lawful treatment of all miners, regardless of race. Even before the worst riots, the paper’s editor, Reverend John West, a Congregational minister, unreservedly condemned the persecution of the Chinese and the inaction of the government.

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75 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 January 1861, 5; 2 February 1861, 4.
76 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1861, 6.
The long silence of the Government respecting the proceedings at Lambing Flat will be there interpreted one way—assent. The spirit which shrinks from any unpopular duty is one of the characteristic results of democratic ascendency. It is in vain to appeal to the principles of justice—to the rights of humanity—the claims of law—the sanctity of public faith. These are powerless before that cowardly spirit which cringes to the lowest of the people. Could any civilised Government be found that would not vindicate itself by declaring at the outset, and in decided terms, its determination to protect to the utmost of its means defenceless strangers, who have on their side right, humanity, and law.

The history of the Lambing Flat is an illustration of the brutal temper which prevails among the migratory bands of diggers. We gladly distinguish them from a very respectable class, who have given to gold mining the aspect of a settled industry, and whose conduct has been honest and fair. The Lambing Flat was discovered as a gold-field by the Chinese themselves. They were entitled by law to settle there; they obtained and paid for the miner’s right; they were put in possession by the Government. No one pretends they have forfeited that protection which any man who lives under the English flag has the right to expect. The intruders, if any deserve the name where all have a defined and equal right, are the white men, for we will not disgrace our country by calling them Englishmen. The Chinese have been ejected, and robbed of their legal rights—driven off the ground, and exposed to want and starvation. And all this has been done in an ‘orderly manner’ forsooth! We are told there is no violence—no one has been attacked—they have only been driven off?

A visit by NSW premier Charles Cowper to Lambing Flat in early 1861 did not help. He made statements supporting the miners and the Chinese, including in an address to a large public meeting, but when he returned to Sydney, his statements in the legislative assembly were totally different. Not surprisingly, ‘Slippery Charlie’ was attacked by locals and by Hux for his ‘misrepresentation’.

**Figure 7** Excerpt from the Miners’ Protective League prospectus.
The full prospectus was published in *The Miner and General Advertiser*, [Lambing Flat, NSW], 6 March 1861, 1
Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1861, 4.

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79 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 February 1861, 4; *Notes of the Week*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1861, 7.
80 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1861, 5; 2 April 1861, 6; 9 April 1861, 3.
Petitions by the Chinese for compensation for losses from the riots provided them with little satisfaction.81 James McCulloch Henley, a Chinese-language interpreter,82 arrived at Lambing Flat from Victoria in late March 1861 at the request of the Chinese miners, who sought his help in their negotiations with the government and its officials.83 A government inquiry conducted by William Campbell (from nearby Burrowa; now Boorowa) into the claims could be described as a whitewash; he found that

the destruction of property on the occasion of the removal of the Chinese from Lambing Flat on 27th January and 17th February 1861, was very trifling, and that the claims hereinbefore referred to are altogether fraudulent.

Further, Henley’s support of one claim was dismissed, with Campbell stating that Henley ‘must have been labouring under an excited imagination’.84

Due to ‘circumstances’ he did not explain, two months elapsed between Hux leaving Kiandra and arriving at Lambing Flat.85 Over that period, from the beginning of February to the beginning of April 1861, another ‘Special Commissioner’ reported from Lambing Flat for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.86 With the exception of reports in late February87 and again in late March and the beginning of April,88 they were short, factual and provided little comment, but they offered an eyewitness account of the events that took place during the conflicts between the European and Chinese miners, in contrast to much misreporting, even from government officials.89 Thus far, the identity of the reporter has not been determined.90

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81 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1861, 8. The Chinese petition with respect to the riots on 19 February 1861 was rejected by the NSW Legislative Assembly ‘because its prayer was for pecuniary compensation’.
83 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1861, 4.
85 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1861, 3.
86 Textual analysis confirms that the reports were not the work of Hux. See Peter Crabb, Alexis Antonia and Hugh Craig, ‘Who Wrote “A Visit to the Western Goldfields”? Using Computers to Analyse Language in Historical Research’, *History Australia* 11, No. 3 (2014): 177–93, doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2014.11668539.
87 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1861, 8; 26 February 1861, 4.
88 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1861, 4; 23 March 1861, 7; 2 April 1861, 4.
89 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1861, 8; *Goulburn Herald*, 9 January 1861, 2.
90 It was not James McCulloch Henley, as stated by Souter (*Company of Heralds*, 58). Further, the passage quoted by Souter was not from a letter written by Henley, but from the report by Hux in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (9 July 1861, 5), which did include a long letter from Henley to the governor on behalf of the Chinese.
From 9 April 1861 through to March 1862, Hux wrote more than 75 reports from Lambing Flat as the Sydney Morning Herald's ‘Special Commissioner’. Following on from his predecessor, he reported on the goldmining activities and the protest meetings, riots and acts of violence against the Chinese—some large, some small. In one report, he wrote:

I noticed in town yesterday more Chinese than I had seen for a long time. I also noticed one crowd of intelligent men amusing themselves by throwing rubbish at them.\(^{91}\)

In another report, he wrote:

One day last week a few Chinese made their appearance at this place, and were shamefully ill-treated—not by diggers, but by a mob of stockmen and shepherds who, to amuse themselves, gave poor John an unmerciful thrashing, one poor fellow having his face cut to all pieces.\(^{92}\)

Far more serious trouble erupted on Sunday, 30 June 1861, involving thousands of people; among other events, the Court House and commissioner's camp were burned down.\(^{93}\) These riots were particularly bad for the Chinese, and no doubt would have been worse but for the interventions of James Henley. One example of the brutality reported by Hux was

of a woman, the wife of a Chinaman, she had a poor little baby in a cradle; they burnt the tent and even set fire to the cradle in which the poor little thing was asleep, and if it had not been for the Chinese interpreter (a Mr. Henley), they would have even committed the same atrocities on her.\(^{94}\)

The petition to the government signed by 51 Chinese residents seeking an inquiry into the riot and a request for compensation for their losses almost certainly had the assistance of Henley (Figure 8).\(^{95}\)

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\(^{91}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 31 May 1861, 5.
\(^{92}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June 1861, 3.
\(^{93}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 2 July 1861, 4; 18 July 1861, 4.
\(^{94}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 13 July 1861, 5.
\(^{95}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 13 July 1861, 5. Holsworth, James McCulloch Henley, 48.
Hux was forced to move to Yass for a short time because of death threats from people who, not for the first time, did not like what he wrote, but, as noted in the epigraph, he was fearless in his reporting and in his desire to do so accurately. With far too few police and government officials to maintain law and order, many disturbances could not be dealt with. The same observation applied to problems of management, though these were often the fault of the government and its regulations, rather than the local officials (Figure 9).

Figure 9 ‘Let them send commissioners enough to attend to these disputes’
Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 20 July 1861, 4.
The riots on 30 June were the last major disturbances in Lambing Flat. Although tensions continued, over the following months, the situation gradually improved, due in no small measure to some diligent officials who worked in the district, such as the highly regarded Captain J.L. Wilkie of the 12th Regiment. When he died suddenly, the town closed for his funeral, during which more than 3,000 diggers marched and large numbers lined the streets. The improving situation in Lambing Flat may also have been helped by some miners moving to the newly opened Lachlan diggings (some 145 kilometres away) and to New Zealand, along with a greater number of miners from Victoria, ‘who, as a rule, look upon Commissioners’ decisions as final’. And, it must be remembered, not all of the residents of Lambing Flat shared the views of what may or may not have been the anti-Chinese majority.

Among Hux’s accounts of continuing troubles, there was information on the goldmining areas and gold production, but European–Chinese relations and the persecution of the Chinese dominated his reports from Lambing Flat. He deplored the lawless treatment of the Chinese, and in this he was supported by the editorial position of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was not that the anti-Chinese activities were unique to the Lambing Flat goldfields, but, culminating in the 30 June riots, they were perhaps the worst experienced in Australia.

The reports of Hux and the other ‘Special Commissioner’ provide valuable eyewitness accounts of one of the darkest chapters in Australia’s history—a chapter that has had a lasting impact. But their views were not shared by other eyewitnesses—namely, the editor of and others who worked for *The Miner and General Advertiser*, which was published in Lambing Flat from 2 February to 13 November 1861, and then in Forbes from 4 December 1861. In his book *Country Conscience: A History of the New South Wales Provincial Press, 1841–1995*, Kirkpatrick provides a summary of the events, headed ‘The Black Mark of Disgrace: The Press and the Lambing

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99 For example: ‘Sticking Up Appears to be Still Carried On with Impunity, on the Various Roads Leading to this Place’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 1861, 5.
100 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1862, 5.
101 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1862, 3.
103 For example: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 1861, 4.
105 There is an incomplete run of issues from 2 February 1861 to 25 December 1861.
Flat Riots’. Yet in this account, ‘the press’ is almost entirely limited to The Miner. Apart from denials by The Miner of statements in the Sydney Morning Herald, there are no references to any of Hux’s reports. The summary by Kirkpatrick and the reports in The Miner present a different ‘eyewitness’ picture from the one provided by Hux. The Miner and its editor openly supported the European miners and the Miners’ Protective League and were anti-Chinese and even more strongly opposed to continuing Chinese migration. They were extremely critical of the colonial government, the Fairfax company and the Herald’s ‘Special Commissioner’. The Herald was accused of inaccurate and misleading reporting. The Miner’s reports of the ‘monster meetings’ that took place are certainly different to those published in the Sydney Morning Herald. For a fuller story of Lambing Flat in 1860–61, the accounts in both papers should perhaps be read. But which are the more reliable?

The Lachlan diggings

From November 1861 to May 1862, before his work in Lambing Flat had finished, Hux was also reporting on the new goldmining locations in the Lachlan Valley—usually referred to as the ‘Lachlan diggings’ or ‘the Lachlan’. He wrote 21 articles about them. The first gold find was in June 1861, but the rush was over just two years later. The diggings were centred on Forbes, almost 130 kilometres from Lambing Flat. The distance and journey by way of Cowra did not give rise to any comment from Hux. On his first visit, he reported the population as ‘quiet and orderly’—a marked contrast with Lambing Flat. Hux was nonetheless concerned about the limited number of police in Forbes and the Lachlan diggings—which had a population of some 10,000—as he was sure management problems were going to cause ‘great trouble’, especially the frontage system of claims, which was quickly abandoned. There were ‘almost universal complaints’ over the mismanagement of the fields, as the regulations in the Gold Fields Act were not being applied. When one miner mentioned a regulation in that Act, the worthy official to whom he appealed laughed at the idea, and replied in a most grandiloquent way, tapping himself on the breast at the same time: ‘I am the law.’

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108 For example, The Miner and General Advertiser, [Lambing Flat, NSW], 3 March 1861, 3; 3 April 1861, 3; 6 July 1861, 3.
109 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 November 1861, 2.
110 Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November 1861, 6; 6 December 1861, 8; 14 December 1861, 6.
111 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 April 1862, 5.
But in the absence of the kind of problems that had affected Lambing Flat (there are no references to Chinese miners in his reports), Hux was able to concentrate on the goldmining and production. From late 1861 until early 1862, the Lachlan was ‘an established and permanent gold-field’, but just how productive it proved was open to question. Hux reported that there were robberies, and the highway robbers Frank Gardner and Ben Hall were active in the area. A brief visit from NSW premier Charles Cowper left Hux and most local people wondering why he had come. Still, there was much mining activity, some large gold finds had been made and the town of Forbes was booming. And, being the reporter he was, it is not surprising that ‘Mr. Hux of the Herald’ received a very complimentary mention in a letter by ‘Cosmopolite’ to The Empire on the Lachlan diggings.

A resident of Lambing Flat

Hux’s reporting for the Sydney Morning Herald came to an end in May 1862. A column in the Herald in late June referred to:

Mr. John A. Hux, for many months our Special Commissioner on the Gold Fields, a gentleman who has been residing on the Lachlan or Lambing Flat Gold Fields as Correspondent for this journal ever since the latter was opened.

After this, Hux wrote two ‘Letters to the editor’ of the Sydney Morning Herald, which, though on specific topics, also provide some details of his work as a reporter. Both were written from Lambing Flat, indicating he had returned to the town.

In late 1862, he had a change of career, taking over ‘The Albion Commercial and Family Hotel’ in Lambing Flat. More than 30 advertisements for his business appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Sydney Mail between October 1862 and May 1863 (Figure 10). An advertisement for the 1863 ‘Burrangong Annual Races’ included ‘Mr. J.A. Hux’ in the list of stewards. How long he stayed at Lambing Flat is not clear, but a letter by Hux headed ‘Sir Frederick Pottinger’ appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald in July 1863.

112 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 February 1862, 5.
113 Sydney Morning Herald, 16 May 1862, 5.
114 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April 1862, 5.
115 The Empire, [Sydney], 4 December 1861, 8.
116 Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June 1862, 7.
118 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 October 1862, 3; The Sydney Mail, 16 May 1863, 1.
119 Bell’s Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle, [Sydney], 25 April 1863, 3.
120 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 July 1863, 7; The Sydney Mail, 1 August 1863, 10; Armidale Express, 1 August 1863, 4. Hux wrote in support of Pottinger, a senior police officer, who had been the subject of statements in the legislative council that were incorrect and without foundation; they related to events that had taken place in the Lachlan district, of which Hux had personal knowledge and experience.
Prior to settling at Lambing Flat, Hux—like so many of his time and especially those associated with goldmining—was almost constantly on the move, travelling widely in eastern Australia, from Melbourne in the south to the Fitzroy River in the north. Yet even his ‘settled’ time at Lambing Flat was not long, as at some time in the later part of 1863, he moved to Surry Hills in Sydney. What he did on moving to Sydney is not known, but it is unlikely to have been a move he would have wanted, and as it happened, it was his last move. After a ‘long and severe illness’ that lasted about 12 months, he died of heart disease on 21 April 1864, aged 38, at the home of his sister Mary on South Head Road. He was buried on 23 April in the Randwick Cemetery. His death certificate stated his occupation was ‘Publican’.

Conclusion

This account of the life and work of John Augustus Hux came about as a consequence of research for a biography of Charles Edward de Boos, and was triggered by the family connections between de Boos and Hux. Until the research was undertaken, the contribution of John Augustus Hux to writings on the Australian goldfields of the mid nineteenth century were unknown. Despite their wealth of information, little or no use has been made of Hux’s writings as a primary source of historical material. This is true even for local studies of Kiandra and Young (Lambing Flat).

Like Charles de Boos, Frederick Dalton and other reporters mentioned in the introduction, Hux travelled widely within Australia. Some, like Hux and Dalton, had worked as ‘diggers’. All had significant knowledge of goldmining. As the prime contemporary source of information, the newspapers could not claim to be always

121 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April 1864, 1; 21 May 1864, 7; Death Certificate, Registration No. 1864/000508. See also records of ‘Burials in the Parish of Randwick in the County of Cumberland, New South Wales, in the Year 1864’, for the Church of St Jude, Randwick.
accurate, but the reports of this group of reporters were recognised by their editors and contemporary readers as providing reliable information and comment. And the extended nature of their work provided a consistency not present in one-off reports.

Today, these writings are significant primary documents from a critical period in Australia’s history. While not as prolific a contributor as de Boos or even Dalton, Hux’s writings are of equal value. Like them, he was a keen observer and an accurate and fearless reporter. From Kiandra, he provided firsthand accounts of living and mining in such an isolated location, with its frequent hazardous weather. His reports from Lambing Flat (along with those of the unknown ‘Special Commissioner’ who preceded him) are of particular value as a firsthand record of the disturbances and anti-Chinese riots that made such a mark on race relations in colonial Australia and the country’s subsequent history.