Preface and Acknowledgments

It is now some 30 years since I joined the Historical Documents Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to find that my first major task would be to edit a volume of letters written throughout the 1920s by Frank Lidgett McDougall to Australian Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce.¹ I knew a little of Bruce, having read some of his papers concerning his wartime work as High Commissioner in London. The name McDougall had cropped up occasionally in those papers, attached to cables about wheat, but I knew nothing more of him.

W. J. (Bill) Hudson, Editor of Historical Documents in the Department of Foreign Affairs, had begun a series of volumes on early Australian foreign policy by publishing R. G. Casey’s letters reporting to Bruce on political events in London.² Having discovered that the Bruce papers included a similar file of letters from McDougall on trade and economic matters, he thought they would make a valuable complementary volume. He wrote to McDougall’s daughter Elisabeth, then working in the British Foreign Office, that ‘the Bruce papers now make it clear that much of Bruce’s most interesting and constructive ideas in fact were your father’s or were stimulated by him’. Elisabeth welcomed the proposal for publication and offered to have what papers she possessed copied at Australia House; a set was made for our use and another for the National Library of Australia.³

As we worked on the letters, my colleagues and I were awed by the energy and devotion McDougall brought to his work, and saddened to think that he remained so little known in Australia. In 1984 Bill Hudson suggested I write a full biography of McDougall for publication. Work on that progressed slowly in my spare time, but biennial conferences of editors of foreign policy documents, inaugurated by our British counterparts in 1989, provided brief but essential opportunities for research in overseas archives.

Continuing a project over so many years involves difficulties and inefficiencies, but there are compensations. As I worked through a mass of collected material, notes in familiar handwriting reminded me of the help of past colleagues and friends. I particularly want to acknowledge the hard work and enthusiasm of those who worked with me on Letters from ‘A Secret Service Agent’: Kate Birrell, Rhonda Piggott and Ken Power. The many able scholars who worked

³ NLA, MS6890. Letters from Hudson to E. McDougall, 1 August, and reply, 30 August 1979, are now in my possession.
in the Department of Foreign Affairs/Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA/DFAT) Historical Documents Section over the years noted useful material as they trawled through the archives, discussed the project and generally encouraged me. For this support, I thank Pamela Andre, Frank Bongiorno, Damien Browne, Barbara Cooper, Kathleen Dermody, Philip Dorling, Jeffrey Grey, John Hoffmann, David Hood, Ashton Robinson and Martin Sharp, former DFAT archivists Leith Douglas, Elizabeth Nathan and the late Chris Taylor, and diplomatic consultant Jeremy Hearder. I am grateful for the interest and assistance of distinguished scholars and public servants associated with the DFAT Editorial Advisory Board, particularly Geoffrey Bolton, Peter Edwards and Roger Holdich. I owe a considerable debt to David Lee, the present Director of DFAT Historical Publications and Information Section, for his interest over many years, and in particular for his superb biography of S. M. Bruce, which has been of great assistance in my most recent work.

After my retirement from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, a chance meeting with Pat Jalland led her to suggest a doctorate at The Australian National University based on the biography. The suggestion was timely: it had become clear to me that the task was too big to be undertaken without the help and advice of others. I am most grateful to Pat for persuading me to a course that has proved of immeasurable value. The friendship of scholars engaged in various studies has been both enjoyable and stimulating and I thank all members of the History Program for the enlargement of experience and ideas to which they contributed. I am particularly grateful for helpful discussions with Barry Smith and Margaret Steven, and for the assistance of Barbara Dawson, Janet Doust, Karen Smith, John Thompson, Susan Mary Withycombe and Malcolm Wood. Members of my advisory panel, Anthony Low and James Gillespie, provided helpful suggestions and encouragement. Barry Higman was most generous with his time—both as advisor and as supervisor in 2004; he questioned and prodded, impelling me to greater efforts in the scope of the study and in clarity of writing and thinking, and gave frequent assistance with books and suggestions for further reading. I remain very grateful for his important contribution. My supervisor, Tim Rowse, was unfailingly patient, diplomatic, enthusiastic and ready with ideas. He helped me maintain excitement about the undertaking; his own work and thinking were inspiring, and he spared no effort to ensure that my efforts measured up to the standards he set.

Primary historical research relies on the dedication of archivists and librarians in many places. My work has been undertaken in locations ranging from the grandeur of the Palais des Nations library by Lake Geneva in a glorious autumn, to the warehouse then housing the archives of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), its roller doors open to the warmth of

the sun on a Canberra winter morning. It was a privilege to work in the archives of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), close to the heart of Rome, in the building in which McDougall spent the final years of his life. From there one can look to the Colosseum in the northern distance; just across the road is the site of the Circus Maximus, and a short distance to the south, sheltered by the ancient city wall, is the tranquil Protestant Cemetery where McDougall lies, his tombstone commemorating one who ‘nobly served his generation’.

On my journey there have been many moments of discovery and the occasional piece of luck. In 1984, Kate Birrell and I visited the offices of the Australian Dried Fruits Corporation in Melbourne, seeking records of McDougall’s work for its predecessor, the Dried Fruits Export Control Board. The staff had been clearing out cupboards: ranged along the floor were files going back to their earliest days in the 1920s. ‘What should we do with them?’, they asked, and happily accepted our suggestion that they contact the Victorian Branch of what was then Australian Archives, where the records are now preserved. I have thus to thank Kevin Walker and Margaret Terrill of the corporation. I also want to record my thanks to former CSIRO archivist Michael Moran, and to his successor, Rob Birtles, who guided me through the difficulties of translating old Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) file numbers to their new identities in the National Archives of Australia. I thank Graeme Powell, former Manuscripts Librarian at the National Library of Australia, who was responsible for acquiring the McDougall papers for the library. I am grateful for the assistance of other librarians in Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide, in Edinburgh and in Washington. I owe even more to the expert assistance of staff in national archives in Canberra, London, Ottawa and Washington, in the archives of the League of Nations, and of FAO. I have been helped by residents of Appleton-le-Moors, North Yorkshire, and of the Renmark district, particularly Douglas and Merridy Howie and David Ruston, who have shared memories of the McDougall family, and I thank Heather Everingham, Chair of the Renmark Branch of the National Trust, for assistance with photographs.

There are few scholars working in the field of ‘McDougall studies’, but I am grateful for the assistance and encouragement of those who know and write of his work: Michael Roe, Bernard Attard and the late John O’Brien. Sean Turnell has been extraordinarily generous in sharing the results of his own research and writing; sections of this work depend to a considerable extent on that generosity and on Sean’s fine writing about McDougall’s economics. His infectious enthusiasm for McDougall’s work has been a constant inspiration.

I can no longer thank in person the two people who really made this study possible. Bill Hudson introduced me to McDougall and encouraged me to undertake his biography. Bill set a high example in his own biography of R. G.
Casey, and in his other work. During the years we worked together at DFAT, he gave me much practical assistance and wise advice; he remained a mentor and friend until his untimely death in 2002.

Elisabeth McDougall died in 2005. She was, I imagine, very much like her father in her energy, enthusiasm and determination. She too became a friend. In retirement, she devoted herself to the history of her remarkable family, and made all relevant findings available to me. When I visited London, she took me around Greenwich and Blackheath to many sites connected with her family, and provided lunch, which we ate with impressive McDougall family cutlery. We had a considerable correspondence, and many long phone calls after she moved back to Adelaide in her final years. I am saddened that Elisabeth did not live to see my study completed, and grateful for the generous assistance of her nephew, Ian McDougall, since her death.

I want to acknowledge the assistance of staff of The Australian National University and of ANU E Press for their patience and assistance in the process of publication, in particular Duncan Beard, Lorena Kanellopoulos, Karen May, Nic Petersen and Liz Walters, and Nausica Pinar for a splendid cover design.

Finally, I thank my longsuffering family. My daughters and their families have borne without complaint my neglect and distraction from their interests and have assisted with helpful advice, particularly on computing problems. My husband, John, has given me much domestic help and constant encouragement; he has scanned pictures, printed documents and listened patiently and helpfully to chapter after chapter. This book is dedicated to him with gratitude and love.

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