

8

Boys

The previous chapters on educating girls attempted to show the intensity with which parents approached the academic side of their daughters' upbringing at a time when the role of women in society was at the forefront of public debate. To the extent that the family and the home were the critical site of a gradual shift in middle-class attitudes to the education and upbringing of daughters, there were consequential adjustments within the lives of their brothers. The childhoods of middle-class boys have received less attention than those of their sisters, but they were just as much the product of an unsettled age, in which gender relations and definitions of masculinity and femininity were in a state of flux: 'The "New Man" was as likely to be found in the home in his leisure time as the "New Woman" was outside of it.'¹ The childhoods of the five boys discussed in this chapter—Anthony Wilding, Allen and Rex Leeper, Irvine Masson and Mervyn Higgins—occurred at a time that has been characterised by historians as beset by gender wars; in their wake masculinity became firmly lodged in the domestic realm, as 'patriarch' gave way to 'family man' cast in the role of breadwinner, father and husband. The quest for this more domesticated man was nowhere pursued more assiduously than in the homes of colonial middle-class professional families. It was a pursuit that began in the suburbs of colonial cities such as Melbourne and Christchurch, was concluded in British universities and drew upon the resources of the extended family in both the new world and the old.

1 Brookes et al. (eds), *Sites of Gender*, p. 3.

The colonial family environments in which the childhoods of the five boys of this study occurred differ in significant ways from those of the old-world environments that have shaped the historiography. The middle-class suburban homes of the four Melbourne boys were well-connected by inner city transport systems that allowed them to become day-boys rather than boarders throughout their schooling. The location of the Wilding home on the fringe of Christchurch likewise offered no obstacles in the way of parents who wished to have their children grow up in a domestic setting. The early, formative years of all five boys were not unlike those of most upper middle-class English boys; however, they were not dominated by the exclusively masculine environment of public schools, which minimised the feminising influence of the home. Whatever the precise nature of each family environment, it was the home and not a school community that became the most important and enduring influence in the boys' lives. Nowhere was the family's influence more evident than in the definition of gender roles and expectations. The extent of a gender-differentiated approach to educating sons and daughters can be measured more easily within families where brother and sister are close in age. Sisters and mothers will accordingly loom larger in this chapter than boys and fathers did in the section on educating daughters. The separate and collective female influence was particularly, but not exclusively, felt in the years before formal education away from the home began. If the process of expanding opportunities for daughters was sometimes prescriptive, the expectations that defined boy's lives were equally confining and heavily constrained by the demands of family endogamy.

As was customary for this period, the boys in this study were educated at home alongside their sisters until approximately the age of eight, either by their mother or by a governess. Then, unlike their sisters at the same age (with the exception of Gladys Wilding), they were sent to school. The Melbourne boys attended Melbourne Church of England Grammar School in South Yarra. Established in 1849 and described as one of 'six great public schools' in Melbourne, it catered for the sons of Melbourne's wealthiest and most influential citizens.² The school's city location meant that it was regarded as more of a day-school than

2 Bob Bessant, *Schooling in the Colony and State of Victoria*, Centre for Comparative and International Studies in Education, School of Education, La Trobe University, 1983, p. 48.

a boarding establishment, and boarders were always a minority.³ It was as day-boys that Allen and Rex Leeper, Mervyn Higgins and Irvine Masson travelled by tram to South Yarra in a manner that was considered unsafe for their sisters. For Anthony Wilding the journey to the centre of Christchurch was a shorter one, which he undertook with his older sister to attend a privately owned and run non-denominational establishment.

Historians have characterised Melbourne Grammar's attempt to develop the 'trappings of an English public school tradition of leadership and identity' as being thwarted by parental indifference to the authority of headmasters and moderated by a quest for an innovative curriculum and scholastic achievement.⁴ During the 1890s, as the four Melbourne boys of this study entered the school gates, the balance between academic and moral training may have shifted in ways that strengthened the emphasis upon character building. Macintyre and McCalman have suggested that this shift may have its roots in the economic crisis that revealed the hollowness of Melbourne's boom-time excesses and made middle-class parents more receptive to the moral elements of the public school educational program.⁵ Certainly, George Blanch (1899–1914), whose years as headmaster coincided with the school years of all four boys, promoted academic rigour and drill with equal fervour.⁶ By contrast, the small private institution which Wilding attended was resolutely academic in its pursuits. His early exposure to the character-building philosophies of the English public school came from his father, an old boy of Shrewsbury School, and was expressed most persistently in his espousal of athleticism.

Whatever influence their formal schooling exerted in the lives of the five boys, the school took second billing to the home. The greater time spent by boys in the domestic environment offered opportunities for mothers to expand their influence in the lives of their sons. Precisely how this was understood by the five mothers in this study is difficult

3 Weston Bate and Helen Penrose, *Challenging Traditions: A History of Melbourne Grammar*, Arcadia, Melbourne, 2000, pp. 35, 30.

4 Bate and Penrose, *Challenging Traditions*, pp. 3, 32, 34–35, 39.

5 Stuart Macintyre, *History for the Homeless: Kathleen Fitzpatrick's Vocation and Ours*, Department of History, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 2–3; Janet McCalman, *Solid Bluestone Foundations and Rising Damp: The Fortunes of the Melbourne Middle Class, 1890–1990*, Department of History, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1994, p. 3; Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, pp. 47–48.

6 Bate and Penrose, *Challenging Traditions*, pp. 99, 113, 116.

to gauge. The most explicit comment was provided by Julia Wilding. Before her marriage and departure for New Zealand, she expressed her views in the pages of the *Hereford Times*. Her article on 'Early Influences' in children's lives argued that the English practice of sending sons to boarding school from around the age of 12 gave heightened significance to their earlier and formative experiences within the home. The daily example of an egalitarian or at least companionate marriage could, she believed, influence the boys' views about marriage and gender relations. Similarly, the nature of their relationships with their sisters would lay the foundation for their attitudes to and expectations of women. As she saw it, instilling a proper appreciation of male and female potential was to be the work of both parents. It would be best accomplished by teaching sons and daughters together, and in their youngest years, within the home.⁷

No other mother addresses this issue explicitly. Without the reference point of the English public school that framed Julia Wilding's thinking, the colonial girls—Helen Macmillan Brown, Adeline Leeper and Mary Alice Higgins—approached the issue from within the everyday realities of their families. As the mother of two girls, Helen Macmillan Brown's concerns focused on providing a range of playmates for her daughters that included young boys.⁸ Adeline Leeper's tragic death when her eldest son was six prevents us from fully understanding her attitudes. We see a mother who plays a supporting role in her husband's enthusiastic and demanding involvement in the intellectual development of all four children, in ways that cut through gender differences. Mary Alice Higgins saw the socialising of her son and only child primarily in terms of providing suitable companions. She found them at first in the extended Higgins family and later in the network of family friends that included Marnie and Elsie Masson and the Leeper boys.⁹ Mary Masson's involvement in the education of her son was predicated upon the conventional assumptions of her class: a mother's role in the education of a son was to be a dominant one during a boy's early childhood, when he might be taught alongside his sisters, and then defer to school and husband, as the serious business of shaping a career began.

7 Julia Anthony, 'Early Influences', *HT*, 9 December 1876; John Stuart Mill, *Subjection*, in Rossi (ed.), *Essays*, pp. 218–20.

8 Baxter, *Memoirs*, p. 20.

9 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 206–7.

The precise nature of a father's influence within the family during the early years of a boy's life is difficult to disentangle from family life. Nevertheless, the activist roles of Alexander Leeper and Frederick Wilding emerge with unmistakable clarity. The intense religiosity of the Trinity College household over which Alexander Leeper presided dominated his relationship with his sons. The defining event in their childhoods was the death of their mother Adeline in 1893, when they were five and six years old respectively. Adeline's death augmented the role of the extended maternal family, so that the two boys remained at Trinity College in the care of their father and their mother's sister, Ida.¹⁰ The separation from their older sisters, who lived periodically with Adeline's brother Boyce and his family in Sydney and later in Britain, had the effect of increasing the paternal influence in their lives.

Alexander held great expectations of all his children, and there were subtle and gendered differences in his attitudes to them. These differences derived from an idealistic attitude to women, a preoccupation with sin and, above all, a reluctant recognition that sons rather than daughters would live their lives in the public sphere. From the first flowed a tendency to indulge the whims of his daughters and an acceptance that his 'guardian angel[s]', as he dubbed them, would act as the 'moral guardian[s]' of a domestic haven.¹¹ Conversely, his notions of human failure were attached almost exclusively to men and necessitated earnest attention to the spiritual elements of a young boy's education from an early age. Accordingly, from the age of seven or eight, his sons were required to write summaries of Sunday sermons, which Leeper dutifully corrected and assessed by awarding marks out of 10.¹² Through this deliberate and meticulously observed attention to the religious education of his sons, Alexander Leeper was laying a moral foundation that would provide the framework for the Christian and scholarly lives he envisaged for them.

Frederick Wilding's involvement in the early years of his first-born son Anthony was different in form, but was nonetheless grounded in a concern to provide a basis for the inculcation of a set of secular moral values. As we observed when discussing the education

10 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 168–69.

11 Alexander Leeper to Mary Moule Leeper, 31 August 1900, ALP, T6, box 36; Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 324.

12 Allen Wigram Leeper, 'Book of Sermons', 23 October 1898, ALP, T6, box 29.

of his sister Gladys, the idealism that underlay Julia and Frederick Wilding's marriage placed children at the centre of their lives. It is possible to identify a number of broad strands in their thinking: a concern to maintain direct involvement in the upbringing of their children; a determination to minimise gender differences in their children's childhoods; a desire to provide an upbringing that balanced intellectual and physical development; and, above all, the inculcation of a set of secular values that prized social usefulness. Our understanding of the way these threads were woven together in Anthony's childhood depends—as did our understanding of the childhood of his sister—heavily upon the detailed life events diaries, in which Julia recorded with surprising frankness the successes and failures of parenthood.¹³ It is in this context that we can discern distinctive elements of Frederick Wilding's involvement in his son's development.

Anthony Wilding was the second of the Wilding children and two years younger than his sister Gladys. The age difference simplified the organisation of their early joint education at Fownhope by their mother, or by 'Miss Tabart' in a small group of children at the home of a neighbour. Moreover, Gladys's precocious ability to learn quickly and her enthusiastic response to her mother's every encouragement allowed her to transform the role of big sister into something of a 'mothering' one. This relationship was actively encouraged by their parents, as they shaped Anthony's education. It lay behind their decision to ignore the boys' schools expanding in Christchurch to cater for the sons of the growing number of middle-class professionals and enrol brother and sister in a small private school run by a married couple in the centre of the city.¹⁴ Girls and boys were taught separately; the courses of study were broadly similar, academic in emphasis, and provided a secular and family ethos that appealed to the Wildings.

Parental idealism is rarely inexhaustible, and the young Anthony Wilding's temperament stretched that of his parents' to its limits. Less malleable and cooperative than his sister, he was slow to develop an interest in learning to read, barely tolerated efforts to engage him in activities arranged for him and frequently responded with irrational

13 Anthony Wilding's 'Life Events Diary', vol. 1: 31 October 1883 – 26 February 1899, vol. 2: 15 November 1899 – 9 May 1915, WFP, box 20/92-93/1-2.

14 AFWLED, vol. 1, 29 May 1893.

outbursts.¹⁵ Direct confrontation of this kind struck at the very heart of the rational and harmonious childhood that both parents had envisaged and Julia struggled to find a response:

Anthony is such a little pickle, and is always up to some kind of mischief. His spirits are so high sometimes that he does not know how to give them sufficient vent, & all sorts of mischievous tricks are the result. We do not like curbing the little man too much, but he has to be punished sometimes. His will is so strong, & when he has made up his mind to do anything he is quite violent & so resolute, when he is not allowed to have his own way, that I am obliged sometimes to lock him in a little cupboard place we have. I find it brings him to reason more than anything else, & of course I only keep him there a few minutes. He will be a difficult boy to manage, & I am sure that with him, much will depend on the way he is treated and brought up. How earnestly I hope that we may manage him in the right way.¹⁶

In the analysis of the problems of disciplining a fractious son that Julia committed to her diaries, we glimpse an earnest mother in touch with expert opinion on childrearing and struggling to bring theory and practice into harmony:

I am sure that the proper way to manage him is to lead him through his affections, & to lead not force him. But it is much easier to have theories as to how to treat children than it is to carry them out, & lead one's children wisely & well as one ought.¹⁷

This was to become a recurrent refrain. A year later she acknowledged the same dilemma:

he has tremendous animal spirits, & I am afraid we sometimes curb him when we ought really only to direct his energies into a proper channel. I am quite sure that more than half the naughtiness of children is simply through not giving them something to interest & occupy them.¹⁸

15 AFWLED, vol. 1, 26 July 1888, 20 August 1885, 25 December 1885, 26 May 1886, 5 September 1887, 23 December 1887, 1 February 1888.

16 AFWLED, vol. 1, 28 January 1888.

17 AFWLED, vol. 1, 28 April 1888.

18 AFWLED, vol. 1, 12 September 1889.

In April 1891, her patience finally ran out:

Last Sunday I gave Anthony his first beating. He is very disobedient sometimes, & if I scold or slap him, he gets worse & is very rude & even violent to me, so I thought it was really very necessary to take strong measures. I have an old riding whip of mine, & when he was rude & disobedient on Sunday (I had warned him some days before), I got it & gave him a good beating with it on the calves of his legs. He struggled and tried to kick for some time, but finally I mastered him & made him cry & he was quiet afterwards.¹⁹

Believing it 'did him the world of good', she hoped that the whip would be 'very rarely' used in the future. But a month later she acknowledged another beating and observed: 'I have found Anthony much more obedient since I have taken to use the whip with him myself. I have only had to use it twice ... it is not good to curb children too much.'²⁰ Julia's discomfort at administering physical punishment reflected, in part, a shift away from corporal discipline within the home during the nineteenth century.²¹

If Julia bore the brunt of dealing with the young Anthony's behavioural problems, the solution came from Frederick and in ways that illustrate the active role he played in the early childhood years of his son. His involvement was woven into the fabric of family life at Fownhope. At its centre was a thoroughgoing commitment to the realisation of a sporting playground in the spacious ground on the fringe of suburban Christchurch. The opportunities for physical play included a swimming pool, tennis courts, a croquet green and a cricket pitch. There were trees to climb, a pony to ride and nearby hills to roam. Over all this Frederick Wilding presided as an enthusiastic domestic or family sports master. It was in this role that he engaged most directly with his children. It would be wrong to see this as little more than a high-spirited father indulging his love of games with his children. Here he developed an affectionate understanding of their individual temperaments. As someone who had imbibed deeply the central tenets of the English games cult that saw the playground as an uncovered classroom, he subscribed fully to the belief that games could develop

19 AFWLED, vol. 1, 15 April 1891.

20 AFWLED, vol. 1, 20 May 1891.

21 Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 91–92.

important social and behavioural skills.²² Frederick, rather than Julia, first realised that the uncovered classroom had greater appeal for the young Anthony than the covered one.

The discovery that games and physical activity were useful as behavioural tools for an obstreperous child was an unlikely basis upon which to build an enduring and creative relationship between father and son. It ultimately produced an international tennis champion, but its immediate relevance lies in its evolution within a familial context. The experience of games was one shared by all the Wilding children, and it is difficult to discern any gender differentiation. As a social setting for community Sunday tennis afternoons that brought friends and their children to Fownhope, the childhood experience of sport was devoid of the masculinity that characterised its more public form. Moreover, the family nature of the sporting relationship was not disrupted or overlain by the demands of a games master. Rather, as early childhood gave way to adolescence, the nature of the father–son sporting relationship took on a different and more intimate form, in which the terms ‘emulation’ and ‘mentor’ take precedence. As an active and prominent participant in shaping the city’s sporting world—most notably in cricket and tennis—Frederick Wilding effectively shaped his son’s induction into competitive club sport.²³ The transition from domestic to competitive sport proceeded gradually and with an enthusiasm on Frederick’s part that spoke as much of sporting companion as it did of an overzealous father. On cricket field and tennis court they developed a father–son sporting partnership that captured the imagination of the sporting community. While significant in sporting terms, the relationship between Frederick and Anthony Wilding is grounded in a conception of family that embraced an active and engaged fatherhood.

The role fathers played in the early childhood of their sons expanded noticeably throughout their adolescence, as the world of work beckoned. In his study of British middle-class fathers, John Tosh

22 Frederick Wilding, ‘Holidays’, 8 August 1896, WFP, box 41/1; Anthony F. Wilding, *On the Court and Off*, Methuen & Co., London, 1912, p. 89; L. and S. Richardson, *Anthony Wilding*, pp. 195, 199.

23 Hall, ‘Wilding, Frederick’, *DNZB*, vol. 2, pp. 576–77; Appleby, *Canterbury Cricket: 100 Greats*; Daniel Reese, *Was It All Cricket?*, Allen & Unwin, Christchurch, 1948, pp. 25–26; T. W. Reese, *New Zealand Cricket 1841–1914*, p. 326; D. O. and P. W. Neely, *The Summer Game*, p. 31.

argues that ensuring the success of their sons was a critical component in the middle-class father's sense of self-worth and essential to the maintenance of gentlemanly status. As uneasy and insecure members of this section of British society, the five fathers of this study subscribed, implicitly or explicitly, to the view that they stood a better chance of meeting this expectation in the colonies. Their efforts to realise these aims produced a remarkable degree of occupational continuity: the two legal families groomed lawyers, the academic families produced scholars, whose interests reflected the intellectual preoccupations of the father. It would be wrong, however, to see in this process a diminution of the role of the mother in a son's upbringing. Rather, the importance of a son's education was recognised in a shared belief that the full resources of the family should be committed to ensuring a son's professional future. The importance attached to ensuring a son's future career manifested itself in different ways in the lives of mothers and sisters. Moreover, since the road to a professional career led each of the five boys to a British university, it was a process that reached back to their old world extended families in ways that underline the persistence of the family link within the ranks of the first generation professional class.

The education of their sons was thus pursued with the same seriousness of intent that was evident, for the most part, in the education of their daughters. Academic progress was carefully monitored. That less than full commitment could bring firm and decisive intervention by them is clearly evident in the education of Anthony Wilding. The decision to send him to a small private school rather than the city's larger boys' schools was based upon the recognition that his academic talents would require careful and persistent nurturing.²⁴ His failure, in 1900, to pass the matriculation examination required to enter university brought swift action from his parents, who had presumed he would naturally and inevitably take a law degree and join his father in the family practice.²⁵ A private tutor was engaged and required to produce regular written reports. The format was firm and the routine demanded strict adherence:

24 AFWLED, vol. 1, 25 September 1893, 29 May 1895.

25 AFWLED, vol. 2, 30 January 1901.

Anthony began lessons with Mr Smith to-day. He is to go to him every morning from 8.30 to 9.30 & then he goes to his Father's office where he has a room to himself to work in. He works till 12, then comes home to lunch, & then works again from 2 to 4. We hope he will really work well this year.²⁶

Educational attainment was clearly regarded as an inescapable social obligation and the discipline required for success interpreted as an indicator of moral worth and potential usefulness.

It was when schooldays were over, however, that the parental role assumed its most directive form. Unlike their sisters, the boys took degrees at a British university—Oxford, Cambridge, London or Edinburgh—after a period of undergraduate study at Melbourne University or Canterbury College.²⁷ The gender difference was not so much founded in a belief in the educational superiority of the old world institutions, as upon a perception that the experience would stamp a British imprint on their sons that they would carry into the very British public world of professional advancement, in which their careers would inevitably take shape. Within this general perception, it is possible to find a mix of motives at work. There are hints in the observations of Henry Higgins and Alexander Leeper that sending their sons to Oxford was an opportunity to lay unfulfilled ambitions to rest: a university education was beyond the resources of the Higgins family when Henry was a young man, and Alexander Leeper had not completed his degree at Oxford.²⁸ Julia Wilding took the view that immersion in old world culture was desirable and best achieved at Cambridge. It was a view that her husband did not initially share. As he saw it, their son's propensity for putting sport ahead of study might be better monitored if he studied at Canterbury College and continued to live at Fownhope. He surrendered this position, however, after his wife enlisted the support of her brother, a Hereford gentleman scholar.²⁹

26 AFWLED, vol. 2, 4 February 1901.

27 Millicent Macmillan Brown was the only female in this study to attend a British university. After gaining a BA degree from the University of Sydney, she studied at Piele Hall, Cambridge University, between 1909 and 1912, but was not awarded a degree, as was customary for women at the time. See Millicent Baxter, *Memoirs*, pp. 35–42.

28 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 207–8; Autobiography of Henry Bournes Higgins (ms), p. 30, HBHP; Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 44.

29 AFWLED, vol. 2, 11 March 1902.

Whatever the rationale behind the individual family decisions, the phenomenon of the first-generation, colonial-born son at a British university created a peculiarly colonial version of the transnational family. The phenomenon demonstrates how middle-class British/colonial families constructed frameworks that advanced their collective social position and underwrote their Britishness. An education at one of the ancient universities was costly. All the boys of this group remained financially dependent upon their families throughout their university study; only Irvine Masson and Rex Leeper held scholarships. Each depended upon an annual allowance remitted by their parents—£200–250 for Anthony Wilding, £300–350 for Mervyn Higgins.³⁰ The households of extended British family—aunts, uncles and cousins—offered a way of lessening the expense during university holidays and, in varying degrees, represented a source of advice and assistance. It was from within the context of this wider family that Anthony Wilding was introduced during his long summer vacations to the myriad tennis tournaments that made up the English tennis circuit. Here also he experienced the less formal world of Hereford cricket.³¹ In short, for Wilding as for other colonial students, the family eased the transition into English life.

The English family was often to play an important and direct role in determining courses taken, monitoring academic progress and spending habits. Indeed, the watchful eye of the family may have at times seemed ever present in the lives of the colonial boys. In this respect Wilding's experience offers the strongest example. His mother's brothers, Charles and Edwyn Anthony, scholarly proprietors and editors of the *Hereford Times*, took an almost paternal interest in the education of their colonial nephew. Edwyn, an Oxford graduate and qualified, though non-practising barrister, provided sensible and perceptive advice to his sister:

30 AFW to JW, 6 October 1902, WFP, box 20/95/13; Mervyn Higgins's Letters to his Parents: Oxford and War, letterbook (typescript), 18 October 1907, HBHP, series 2, box 6, pp. 77, 105. The Leeper boys were largely dependent upon disbursements from Adeline Allen Leeper's estate. It is unclear how much Irvine Masson received annually or if his parents provided him with an allowance in addition to his scholarship payments.

31 For example, AFW TO JW, 3 January 1903, 12 April 1903, July 1903, 26 December 1903, 30 December 1903, WFP, box 21/97-99/22,29,39,40, box 22/100/57.

I think you are wise not to urge too much about books. 'Tony' has plenty of intelligence—all men with unusual energy and a strong will must almost of necessity have—and he will probably settle down into an excellent lawyer. But he is not what you would call a 'bookish' man. Therefore I should not urge him further in that direction than to let him know that you wish him to keep abreast with his examinations, that is to say, that at every stage of the course he should be about where the majority of men are, who do not seek particular distinction but who take their degrees about the usual time.³²

The complex interweaving of maternal and paternal elements of the Leeper family produced, during their years at Oxford, a tussle for paternal authority over the boys between their father and their mother's brother, Boyce Allen.³³ Following Adeline's death, Boyce became administrator of an allowance from her estate. After taking up more or less permanent residence in Oxford, where he established a legal practice, he gradually assumed the role of mentor in the lives of his nephews. Transnational conflict ensued as Alexander Leeper advised his son, Rex, to read modern languages and Boyce counselled modern history. The rights and wrongs of the exchanges between them aside, the earnestness that pervades Boyce's summary of the issues testifies to the importance each man attached to the educational choices before the family:

The main thing is that the Modern Language School means simply a most minute study of one modern language—oral, written, prescribed authors history of the language including early authors, history of the literature including criticism, style and political and social history to some extent, and further a special subject. All this has reference to one language only. Now which is best for Rex—this or the Modern History School? I incline to the latter as a better education generally, bringing him more into contact with leading men at Oxford and probably, so far as we can see, a better equipment for life and for a profession. If he took Modern Language only, he would be confined to the Taylorian for his teaching and would scarcely come into contact with the distinctive Oxford teaching at all. Further as a preparation for the Student Interpretership Exam he has in mind, it would be useless. For all these reason his New College tutor advises History. Rex also strongly favours it.³⁴

32 Edwyn Anthony to JW, 9 July 1904, Hereford, WFP, box 30/141/575.

33 For examples see correspondence from Boyce Allen to Alexander Leeper 1898–1919, ALP, T1, box 30; Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 167–69.

34 Boyce Allen to Alexander Leeper, 25 October 1909, ALP, box 21d.

Boyce's hand in these discussions was by far the stronger one. Along with his brother, he administered Adeline's estate and controlled the disbursement of funds to the boys throughout their university years. He was a thrifty, censorious and sometimes tactless custodian of the family fortune:

There is no doubt, my dear Alex, that both the boys came to England with utterly mistaken ideas as to their Oxford life—as to what success at Oxford meant in the way of effort—and as to the possibilities of travel open to them as compared with their leisure and their small means ... to be frank, I do think you gave mistaken advice to both the boys. I think a lot of valuable money has been wasted ... both boys came to Oxford with absurd ideas ...³⁵

His presence in Oxford gave him the opportunity to play an active role in the progress of Allen Leeper's studies. In the correspondence between Boyce and Alexander we can see the different sets of values that shaped their advice. Where Alexander encouraged a thoroughgoing immersion in European language and culture, Boyce thought in more narrowly vocational and pragmatic ways:

I only gradually found out what was in Allen's mind, how much he had spent during the time you were in England, how much he was spending during his first year at Oxford, how completely the mania for travelling was filling his mind—and how likely this dissipation of interest was to wreck the hopes you and we all had formed for him. When I did realise this (it was about last May) I came down on Allen with all my might. I must have walked him up and down our garden for an hour one Sunday afternoon, showing him the utter folly of all he had in his mind. I also interviewed his tutor (J. A. Smith) a hardheaded Scotchman and a first rate man and was convinced by my talking with him of the necessity of my pulling up Allen as I had done.³⁶

Of all the boys, Mervyn Higgins benefited least from the comforts of an extended family nearby. His father's Irish family were in no position to offer much in the way of support. Perhaps for this reason, he sailed for England accompanied by his mother and her sister Hilda Morrison.³⁷ Just as they had previously eased Mervyn's transition

35 Boyce Allen to Alexander Leeper, 25 October 1909, ALP, box 21d.

36 Boyce Allen to Alexander Leeper, 25 October 1909, ALP, box 21d.

37 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, 21 August 1906, letterbook, pp. 12–14, HBHP.

from home to the masculine environment of Ormond College, in which he had lived while briefly attending the University of Melbourne, together mother and aunt took over sorting out the details of his domestic arrangements at Oxford. As Mervyn reported to his father in Melbourne, after inspecting the rooms allotted him at Balliol, his mother had a 'sort of overmantle fixed up' and was arranging for some 'very ugly red chairs' to be recovered. She purchased a bicycle so that he could get about Oxford, 'a Humber—three speed gear and freewheel'.³⁸ After a European sojourn she returned to Oxford, spending several weeks attending to the needs of her son as she saw them, before sailing home to Australia.

The dependency on parents and family that came with university training deepened an already strongly rooted sense of obligation. At the most basic level, this required regular correspondence with parents and maintaining regular contact with the extended British family. The letter home to Mother became an important ritual in the life of the colonial student and it is tempting to see it as increasing the maternal influence in a boy's life. Among the letters home also sits what we might call the letter of account. Addressed mostly to a father, although sometimes preceded by an apologetic letter to a mother, it reported expenses incurred and academic progress made. It was, for example, to his mother that Anthony Wilding first reported in 1903 that he had failed his law examinations and was 'really frightfully sorry for you both'. He had 'been very silly foolish etc not to have worked very hard' and admitted to wasting 'very many whole days of work' on the sports field. With an ingenuity common to the genre, he argued that his year could be assessed 'a different way'; he was in 'perfect health', had experienced a 'splendid life', had been 'improved a lot' by it and had not 'learnt any vices smoking etc'. He ended his analysis with the claim that during the course of the year he had 'learnt the value of money & have found out what a very long way a little will go'.³⁹

38 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, 6 September 1906, 8 October 1906, letterbook, pp. 21, 8, HBHP.

39 AFW to JW, 7 December 1903, WFP, box 22/100/55.

There is a similar mixture of contrition and defensiveness in Mervyn Higgins's explanation of his decision to abandon the 'Greats'—so much a part of his father's expectation—and proceed immediately with the more specialist law degree:

have given up Greats, and am now reading Law. It was not a sudden impulse or done because I was anxious to shirk collections or anything of the sort ... I can only say that, though you may not think it, I have got some determination and ambition, and I hope, as much pluck and grit as most people. I think I shall like Law ...⁴⁰

The decision registered Mervyn's realisation that the attractions of the River Isis, where he was by 1908 already making a name for himself as captain of the Balliol boats, far outweighed those of the library.⁴¹ For some time afterwards, there was a pronounced sensitivity to any questioning of his study habits: he had only gone to the Oxford-Cambridge rugby match in London and attended a Colonial Club dinner because it was vacation time, he told his father.⁴²

Such tensions about acceptable progress as developed between fathers and sons reflected the strong sense of family enterprise that underlay the quest for professional qualification. Fundamental to the quest was the understanding that sons would follow in the footsteps of fathers. The expectation is seen at its clearest in the legal families. That Mervyn Higgins and Anthony Wilding would join their father's practice was deeply rooted in the expectation of all parents, and as both begin to immerse themselves in their legal studies, the process of induction begins to show in letters to their fathers. Mervyn Higgins began to take a keen interest in his father's Arbitration Court cases. He eagerly awaited the outcome of the Harvester ruling with the intention of discussing it with his Oxford tutor and integrating the material into his weekly essays.⁴³ Anthony Wilding's engagement with the niceties of the law was less convincing and quickly overtaken by detailed accounts of his cricketing and tennis successes. The process by which he ultimately drifted away from law and embraced a mercantile career is embedded in his emergence as an international tennis player and

40 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, letterbook, 24 January 1908, p. 87, HBHP; Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, p. 208.

41 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 208–9.

42 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Higgins, 21 February 1908, letterbook, p. 92, HBHP.

43 For example, Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, 26 December 1907, letterbook, 5 August 1908 (p. 105), 20 August 1908, pp. 105–6, HBHP.

was the occasion of much family soul-searching. Julia admitted she did not like the idea nearly as much as the thought of Anthony as a barrister.⁴⁴

Within the two academic families of this study—the Massons and the Leepers—the process of inducting sons into the occupational world of the father took place in ways that reflected the centrality of each father's academic preoccupations in their domestic lives. Both Rex and Allen Leeper made their way to Oxford—Allen to Balliol and Rex to New College—as Australasian exemplars of the Christian gentleman-scholar. Mervyn Higgins best captured the widespread expectation which prevailed amongst friends and acquaintances, as Allen was about to arrive at Oxford, that he would win academic prizes there:

I am glad Allen Leeper is coming to Balliol, but I do not think he will be able to do so very much pothunting as you call it. A great many of the boys coming up from the Public Schools know as much Classics as he does, I should think, and there are not many pots to hunt at any rate at Balliol.⁴⁵

The expectation and fervour with which the Leeper boys entered Oxford to pursue the nineteenth-century-scholar ideal was, as we have seen, viewed sceptically by Boyce Allen. His ambitions for the boys were commonly expressed in a more mundane concern about 'small means' and the need to improve the financial prospects of his nephews. Allen Leeper did not live in Balliol College, instead finding less expensive lodgings near his uncle's home.

The secular rationalism in which the relationship of Orme Masson and his son Irvine matured was no less idealistic than the religiosity that was the cornerstone of Alexander Leeper's influence upon his two sons. Of Irvine Masson it could be said that nature and nurture combined to produce in the son an academic clone of the father. From Melbourne Grammar, Irvine had proceeded to Melbourne University, completing a BSc with first-class honours in chemistry in 1907, while his father was still professor there. After briefly studying medicine, he returned to chemistry and won an 1851 Exhibition scholarship that took him first to the University of Edinburgh and then University College, London, in 1911. There he worked alongside

44 AFWLED, vol. 2, 20 May 1909.

45 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, 17 April 1908, letterbook, pp. 96–98, HBHP.

Sir William Ramsay, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry (1904) and, as Len Weickhardt acutely observes, became his 'last personal assistant, a splendid alpha and omega of family chemical genius, as his father at Bristol some thirty years before had been the first of an illustrious line'. Whereas his father had migrated to fulfil his research ambitions, Irvine's academic career flourished in the more science-friendly environment that developed in Britain during the years after World War One. In 1924, some 38 years after his father was appointed to the Chair of Chemistry in Melbourne, Irvine became Professor of Chemistry at the University of Durham, England.⁴⁶

In this university phase of the boys' lives, sibling relationships assumed their mature or adult form. As children who had received the bulk of their early education at home, and as day-boys rather than boarders throughout their school years, their relationships with siblings underwent little of the dilution by peer group pressures held to be characteristic of the English public schoolboy.⁴⁷ Indeed, the pattern of their suburban, middle-class childhoods embraced what historians have identified as a central preoccupation of the middle-class Victorian home—the fostering of 'sibling solidarity'.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, the separation of siblings brought about by a brother's period of study at a British university allows us to see the nature of this relationship more clearly; at times it brought a consolidation rather than a disruption of sibling relationships.

Perhaps the best illustration of this trend is the relationship between Gladys and Anthony Wilding. We can see in their early upbringing the classic pairing that has been identified by historians as growing between children close in age.⁴⁹ Less than two years separated them and much of their education had proceeded in tandem as part of a conscious effort to promote better gender understanding within the family. After graduating MA (Honours) from Canterbury College in June 1904, Gladys had joined her younger brother in England as part of a grand tour of Europe and America. By then, Anthony was in his third year at Trinity College, Cambridge. The reciprocal nature of their relationship is revealed as they negotiated their experience of the old world from within the extended family and network of friends

46 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 57–58, 72, 91, 99, 106, 130–32.

47 Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 117–21; Mintz, *Prison of Expectations*, pp. 147–50.

48 Mintz, *Prison*, p. 148.

49 Caine, *Bombay to Bloomsbury*, p. 204.

and acquaintances of their mother. The terms of sibling solidarity quickly resumed the forms they had exhibited throughout their childhood. Gladys slipped into a role somewhere between mother and helpmeet, cajoling her brother for perceived laxness in behaviour and appearance and performing the functions of secretary or personal assistant, keeping track of social engagements and obligations to family and friends. She dutifully attended most of her brother's tennis tournaments, until doctors' orders confined her to bed rest, and wrote a number of articles that appeared in sporting magazines under his name.⁵⁰

Gladys's regular letters to their parents assumed the tone of a progress report on a joint family venture. Her assessment of her younger brother's approach to his university studies is earnest and objective. He and his friends knew and read nothing that was not concerned with sport; a little more attention to his books was needed, but she remained confident her brother would complete his degree.⁵¹ In a homily that might pass as a paraphrase of the family attitude to learning and the law, she urged her brother not to 'enshroud himself in the intricacies of law, but to let as much light of the literae humaniores as possible fall upon him [and] resolutely aim at obtaining some of the culture that is possessed by the well-educated and well-read Englishman'. By so doing, she reasoned, he would 'be able to take his place confidently among the leaders in any branch of life' and 'carry more weight both in his profession and in any society'.⁵² In short, Gladys's relationship with her brother developed around a desire to ensure that social obligations were met in ways that conformed to middle-class notions of gentlemanly behaviour.

The reciprocity within the relationship was clear and exhibited in customary ways. During September and October 1904 Anthony assumed the role of male travelling companion, partnered Gladys at social functions and arranged an array of introductions to suitable friends. On occasions brotherly concern was expressed in acts of surprising thoughtfulness. Worried that Gladys's colonial clothes

50 AFW to JW, July 1905, WFP, box 23/107/108; GW to JW, 4 September 1904, 7 September 1904, 13 September 1904, 17 September 1904, 14 October 1904, 26 October 1904, 23 June 1905, 27 July 1905, 31 July 1905, WFP, box 17/81/85,86,90,91, box 18/83/117,120; Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 108–32.

51 GW to Frederick Wilding, 26 October 1904, GW to JW: 4 September 1904, 14 October 1904, 9 November 1904, WFP, box 17/80-81/85,90,91.

52 GW to JW, 23 June 1905, WFP, box 18/83/117.

would stand out amongst the more fashionable English styles, he arranged for a female friend to take Gladys on a shopping expedition in the quest for something more suitable. He later organised her medical care in Shoreham and Eastbourne and visited her frequently while she was laid up, confidently expecting her full recovery. The relationship was clearly strengthened and enriched by the extended family context in which it predominantly occurred. We may see it as part of the gradual induction of a young man into the code of gentlemanly expectation that enveloped middle-class family life.

If Anthony Wilding's relationship with his sister revealed reciprocity and a mutual concern for each other that rested upon familial expectations, it also offers a context in which to gauge his attitude to the changing role of women in society. The clearest indication of this can be gleaned from his caricature of women university students, in which he contrasted the posturing of the stereotypical 'Oxford Girl' with his sister's quiet, studious demeanour:

'Trixy' [Marshall] is an Oxford girl, don't you know & quite gets on my nerves at times. Gladys can get a degree & all that sort of thing & be a girl without saying what a fine lot the female students of Canterbury College are. Miss Trixy tries to use varsity language & talk 'exactly' as if she had been a man up there. Talks about brekkers, coffees, freshers, blues etc etc & wears an Oxford Blue hat band ... You would think the St.Hilda, Lady Margaret Halls etc etc were 'Oxford' & the Colleges Christchurch etc sort of afterthoughts. If she knew how little we take notice of Girton & Newnham ... she would be rather surprised. It is really rather a condescension on the part of the University to allow the existence of these Colleges. Why should a pack of uninteresting (noble exceptions of course) females on practically nothing be allowed to come 'up', & enjoy the privileges of all our advantages in the shape of lectures etc when we have to pay about £300 per annum & value our degree as much on the social advantage it has given us as on the knowledge acquired. Don't for a minute misunderstand me. If Oxford & Cambridge were the only places in the world that gave degrees to women, then by all means let them all come. But when there are literally hundreds of other universities giving equally good degrees ... why, I want to know, can't they keep away from just Oxford & Cambridge & let us maintain our old & historical distinction of being 'the' two universities of the world for men ... That girls ought to have

occupations & get degrees there is no doubt whatever & I thoroughly believe in it but I don't like them treading on our grass which we buy so dearly & enjoy so much.⁵³

In their original context—a letter to his mother—these views were undoubtedly intended to provoke a reaction in the Wilding household.

Exaggeration and hyperbole aside, it was a characterisation that sought to protect privileges held as part of 'the world of men' and did so in ways that reflected some of the ambiguity that was present in the attitude of middle-class professional families to the education of their sons and daughters. As a generation that sought change in the education of their daughters, they faced decisions in the education of their sons that reflected the conventions of the past. Sending their sons to ancient universities and daughters to colonial ones (or dismissing a university education as inappropriate, as in the case of the Masson girls) represents a gendered compromise that satisfied a desire for change and met the middle-class expectation that measured a family's worth in the careers of its sons. The desire to round out the colonial adolescence of their sons with an exposure to the cultural richness that history had bestowed upon Britain might in parody be seen as turning the ancient universities into veritable finishing schools that eased a son's passage from adolescence to manhood.

That would be a harsh parody and one that would not do justice to the earnest and optimistic hopes that infused the parents' efforts to provide their sons with an education they valued. Henry Higgins's desire that his son Mervyn should begin his days at Oxford 'working towards the Greats' rested upon a belief that studying the 'literae humaniores' at Oxford was 'the most interesting and valuable course in the world'.⁵⁴ That view was most strongly espoused by Alexander Leeper and prompted, as we have seen, a sometimes vituperative exchange with his brother-in-law, Boyce Allen, about the course of study the Leeper boys should pursue at Oxford. Julia Wilding had despatched Anthony to Cambridge with a list of approved authors and texts and an injunction to immerse himself in the great works of English literature. Frederick Wilding rejected claims that the ancient universities should embrace practical utility and specialisation, in measured and unmistakable terms:

53 AFW to JW, 22 May 1905, WFP, box 23/105/101.

54 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, p. 208; Autobiography of Henry Bournes Higgins (ms), p. 30, HBHP.

The object of University training is to teach men how to learn, to give them a knowledge of mankind and mental gymnastics, so that they shall go out into the world equipped not with an apparatus of special knowledge, but with a catholicity of mind and a texture of character which shall enable them to cope successfully with the difficulties of life, and I think the old system is quite as likely to make men as any reformed system which would always carry with it drawbacks which are well-known to every thinker and obvious to anyone who knows Oxford and Cambridge ...⁵⁵

Only Alexander Leeper harboured any feeling of disappointment with the reality of British university education. His conception of a university embraced Wilding's 'texture of character' but entertained the hope that scholarship might flourish within its cloisters. He was to find little to satisfy his pious hope in the judgment of his son Allen: 'Oxford is certainly a most memorably unique and inspiring system of education, and it would be impossible to devise a better, I think, for turning out a gentleman. If this be the ideal of a university then nothing equals it.' But 'absolutely no research' was carried on there and, while it might be an 'an ideal university for a ruling class', it offered, in Allen Leeper's view, little encouragement to scholars.⁵⁶ It is perhaps pertinent here that Irvine Masson, the only scientist amongst the five boys, took his degree at University College, London, where a stronger research culture had developed.

As idealised by their parents, colonial sons would return to their antipodean surroundings ready to acquire the material means to provide for a wife and family in a manner befitting an educated gentleman. Marriage thus became the final step in a passage to manhood for the sons of the colonial middle class. The most potent influence on the journey was the family.⁵⁷ It began, as John Tosh suggests it did for British middle-class boys, in a situation of 'domestic dependence' and would end in 'domestic authority' within marriage.⁵⁸ Yet for the colonial boys of their generation and class, the step was complicated by the question of where that domestic life might best be lived. The very extended families that had made their university

55 Frederick Wilding, 'Mr. Wilding Interviewed In New Zealand. His Views on English Politics, Society and Sport', *Lyttelton Times, Press*, 27 November 1907, WFP, box 41/1.

56 Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 26 May 1911, ALP, T1, box 30; Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 341.

57 Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 108–9.

58 Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 122.

years possible and eased their passage into British middle-class society now made it possible for them to weigh the relative merits of the two worlds in which they moved.

The obligation to return home was most keenly felt within the legal families. Frederick Wilding, who, before his departure from Hereford in 1879, had railed against the dynastic framework of the English legal community, could by the early years of the twentieth century envisage Anthony assisting him in creating one of his own. For Henry Higgins, the prospect of Mervyn, his only child, joining him within the legal profession, as John Rickard makes clear, reflected the abiding hope of a father that was ultimately fulfilled by a dutiful and responsive son.⁵⁹ The likelihood of a return to Australia by the sons of academic fathers was more unpredictable. The most likely areas of employment—the universities or the public service—offered little scope to dynastic ambition. Alexander Leeper's hopes that Rex and Allen would carve out scholarly futures necessarily embraced the prospect that his sons might find the old world more responsive to their talents than Australia. In Orme and Irvine Masson, talent and disposition were most nearly replicated—the question of returning home was no less fondly desired but more likely to be dictated by the vagaries of university requirements than parental influence or preference.⁶⁰

Whatever the hopes and expectations that were invested in the education of the five boys, only Mervyn Higgins and Anthony Wilding returned home to take up the occupation their parents desired. For Wilding the return was brief. In 1908 he settled back into the Opawa home of his parents and negotiated the qualifying exams that would allow him to join his father's legal practice. In 1910, however, he sailed for Britain determined to win the Wimbledon Championship. He did not return and during the years before the outbreak of World War One, as he established himself as the international tennis star of the age, his attitude to an eventual return to New Zealand was ambiguous. There was nothing ambiguous in Allen Leeper's estimate of the prospects facing both he and his brother, Rex: 'there would be little use in our returning to Australia as there

59 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 207–10.

60 The bunching of 'age cohorts' pointed to by Davison in *Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 2–3, 13 and *passim*, made the problem of finding employment in Melbourne a more general one. A marriage boom among the children of the gold-rush generation in the 1880s led to a spike in the birth rate around the time that the Leepers, Higgins and Masson boys were born.

is incomparably more scope for our particular line of work here'.⁶¹ Moreover, their experience of Oxford, 'so much in the centre of action and thought' and free of 'the prejudiced, unreasoning and petty politics of Melbourne, and eternal talk of sport' had produced a desire to stay in the old world: 'I don't want at all to return to Australia.'⁶² Irvine Masson, as we have seen earlier, quickly found his place in the research friendly environment that developed in Britain during and after World War One.

Nothing better reveals the familial context in which the colonial boys lived their post university lives better than their choice of marriage partner. Rex Leeper and Irvine Masson found wives within the cousinages of their respective families. Davidoff argues that while 'work ... and travel' exposed people to a wider range of acquaintances beyond their family circle, 'for many this only served to enhance the central significance of familial identification'.⁶³ Rex Leeper, after anguished exchanges within the family, married his first cousin, Primrose Allen, daughter of his uncle, Boyce.⁶⁴ At the time of marriage in 1917 Rex was 29 and Primrose 27. For Irvine Masson, courtship unfolded within the framework of the Masson family's Edinburgh circle of friends, drawn from the city's educated elite. His marriage before World War One to Flora, daughter of Helen (Nell) Masson, his father's younger sister, who had married George Lovell Gulland, a notable Scottish haematologist, took place with less anguish within the very family context in which his parents had been married almost 30 years before. The only courtship and marriage to move out of the family circle was that of Allen Leeper. His scholarly talents and linguistic aptitudes had won him a position in the Foreign Office, and it was in this context that he met, courted and married Janet Hamilton, the niece of Sir Ian Hamilton, fresh from the controversy that surrounded his handling of the Gallipoli campaign.⁶⁵

61 Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 30 September 1910, Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 339.

62 Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 23 August 1911, Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 339.

63 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 131, 185–94; Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 109.

64 Rex Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 2 June 1914, 9 June 1914, 20 June 1914, 15 September 1914, 6 October 1914, ALP, T1, box 30.

65 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 416, 430.

Both Anthony Wilding and Mervyn Higgins died in World War One and were denied the chance to complete the final stage of the journey to manhood signified by marriage. At the time of his death Wilding was 31 and Mervyn Higgins 29 years of age. In different ways, each had fulfilled family expectations of them. Wilding's sporting achievements, universally hailed as embodying the athletic ideal of his age, represented to his parents the full development of talent they sought to develop. The completion of a degree at Cambridge spoke of the balanced development of body and mind they had espoused. His quest for a wife had been a fraught one. Sporting fame transformed the range of his social contacts, but did little to enhance his status as a suitor within middle-class society. His abandonment of the law and entry into the commercial world in 1910—a departure from the script envisaged by his parents—was motivated in large part by the desire to accumulate money and improve his standing in the marriage market.⁶⁶

The younger Mervyn Higgins's situation was more straightforward. While at Oxford, he had discussed with his father ways of establishing a legal career and laying the foundation for subsequent marriage. There was an initial hesitancy in his reaction to Henry's suggestion that he become his associate:

do you think yourself that it would be a good thing for me to take? I should like it for filial and financial reasons but would it be of any value to me when I start on my own? I shall be about 24 when I come out perhaps 25, and as I shall in any case have to sit in a chair or wait for a year or two, it seems as if I should be practically wasting a year or two ...⁶⁷

But after his return to Melbourne in February 1912, he gladly accepted the position and his life took very much the shape he had envisaged it might. He served a year as his father's associate and began to lay the foundation for a career at the Bar. Just as he had always done, he took his place at Doona, the family home in Melbourne, and Heronswood, their country residence at Dromana. His final step from childhood to manhood was to be achieved in war, not in marriage.

66 AFWLED, vol. 2, 20 May 1909; L. and S. Richardson, *Anthony Wilding*, pp. 197–98, 269, 274–75; Myers, *Captain Anthony Wilding*, p. 200.

67 Mervyn Higgins to Henry Bournes Higgins, 15 April 1909, letterbook, p. 129, HBHP.

The childhoods of this small cluster of colonial boys and their individual passage towards manhood reveal the dreams and dilemmas of a generation of middle-class professional families. Their collective desire to create dutiful and educated sons who might assume significant and useful roles in colonial society, as part of a reconstructed family that softened the sharp gender differences of a past age, was central to their world view. In attempting to realise their ideal, they were confronted by consequences and wider circumstances they had never seriously contemplated. They had provided their sons with educations that made it possible for them to slot into the British professional community. As a generation their dreams for their sons and hopes for the future were to turn to disillusion as war transformed the world and shattered lives.

This text is taken from *Family Experiments: Middle-class, professional families in Australia and New Zealand c. 1880–1920*, by Shelley Richardson, published 2016 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.