A moment in the sun

If you get six people together and make them work together for 30 years and not talk to anybody except each other, they’ll go mad.

Rod Maddock, December 2015

The ‘big bang’ provided a boost of innovation for, and interest in, Australian economic history. The development of quantitative infrastructure provided material to work with, and the ‘new’ orthodox interpretations left plenty to debate and refine. At the same time, the expansion of Australia’s university sector, endorsement of the subject within economics, and the administrative fragmentation of universities led to the establishment of new departments of economic history. Each of these departments was kitted out with a small group of scholars, and their professional lives began to revolve around frequent interactions within their silo. This contributed to distinctive communities of economic history in each place, with collaboration and intellectual trends broadly following geographic lines in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Intellectual communities are rarely thought of in terms of place. Historians of education have analysed the production of knowledge in single universities, though rarely use cities or regions as frames to understand ideas. Existing work on Australia’s economic history field

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1 Maddock interview with author. Unless otherwise specified, interviews cited are those conducted by the author: see Appendix for details.

has aggregated the approach nationwide, examining individual scholars and their texts largely independent of the communities in which they existed.\(^3\) Departments for economic history (in Australia or elsewhere) have rarely been interrogated for their impact.\(^4\) The logic is generally that more money is good, so more departments – and thus more students and funding – must be good. The focus of this chapter is the ‘departmental era’ of Australian economic history, examining the way departments reinforced a spatial placement of ideas and restricted the field’s core function of mediating the interdisciplinary space. This interpretation of departments and place provides guidance for both interdisciplinary practitioners and university managers on the way to encourage integrated cross-disciplinary knowledge.

**Growth**

**The ‘golden era’ of higher education expansion**

Until the 1960s, post–World War II expansion of higher education was the domain of older sandstone universities, and The Australian National University (ANU). Student numbers grew through government returned servicemen schemes, the professionalisation of many occupations and the growing perception that tertiary education was necessary for social

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and economic advancement.\textsuperscript{5} University and teacher’s college enrolments doubled between 1945 and 1950, and this growth rate was sustained throughout the next two decades.\textsuperscript{6} Governments also paid greater attention to research, with opportunities for funding and the introduction of domestic PhD programs. As discussed in Chapter 3, ANU was the centrepiece of the new emphasis on university research. Elsewhere, general growth in student numbers in the 1940s and 1950s increased the pressure on the state-based sandstone universities. Many experienced deteriorating teaching loads, and needed to hire younger and less experienced staff. The New South Wales University of Technology (1949) and the Newcastle University College (1951) were established, in part, to meet this demand. In 1957, the Commonwealth Government’s Murray Report recommended the establishment of several new universities, and a closer relationship between universities, public needs and the government.\textsuperscript{7} Monash University, Wollongong University College, Flinders University and La Trobe University were established in the decade following the Murray Report. ANU was amalgamated with Canberra University College (CUC) in 1960, and New South Wales University of Technology was transformed into the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in 1958. The ‘golden era’ of higher education expansion had begun.

This expansion created enormous opportunities for most disciplines and fields, including economic history. In the university market, students mean money, and money means power. As new universities were established and existing ones expanded their offerings, they hired young scholars to teach in all sorts of areas. Total university staff expanded by an outrageous 19 per cent in the 1960s, dropping back down to about 6 per cent in the 1970s, and 2.5 per cent in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{8} Business and commerce instruction was a particularly fruitful area of expansion. Prior to World War II, university education for business professionals was uncommon,

\begin{thebibliography}{8}
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indeed even for entrenched professions such as accounting, people were trained ‘on-the-job’ by serving articles with their employer. From World War II, university education became the norm for many white-collar business professions, including accounting, banking and economics. The number of students in business and economics degrees grew fivefold in a decade, from about 7,000 in 1964, to over 40,000 in 1974. This number doubled again to about 92,000 students in 1989. Of course, university education grew in general over this time, but business education managed to take an increasingly large slice of this pie, attracting 11.6 per cent of students in 1964, 15.7 per cent of students in 1974 and up to 20.8 per cent of students in 1989.

The expansion of economic history was driven through the expansion of economics and commerce degrees. Economics, at the time, was largely consumed by Keynesianism, which was predisposed towards the long-run, contextual approaches that characterise economic history. The field was thus broadly accepted as a key part of understanding the economy. The premier Australian economics journal, Economic Record, indicates growing acceptance of historical research over the postwar period, with the number of articles published increasing from seven in the 1940s to 26 in the 1970s. While some of this was published by mainstream economic historians such as Noel Butlin, Sinclair, Boehm and McLean, a substantial amount was also produced by members of the broader discipline. For example, historian and political scientist Lloyd G. Churchward examined Australia’s international trade since 1791; Ronald Lawson focused on Brisbane’s economic development during the 1890s depression; and economist Brian L. Bentick the long-run quantitative series on foreign borrowing. These scholars weren’t appointed to economic history.

positions, they didn’t necessarily participate in the main professional structures; instead, a historical approach was considered a key component of mainstream economic analysis.

Most business, commerce and economics degrees required broad introductory courses in the first year, with specialised instruction later. At the same time, the field of play was relatively uncluttered, with disciplines like marketing, management and finance not yet divided into separate areas within commerce education. Faculty deans thus wanted to provide good introductory instruction, as well as ways to ‘fill out’ their new commerce and economics degrees. Economic history’s entrenched position within economics made it seem like a suitable option. Bachelor of Commerce or Economics degrees in the 1960s, 70s and 80s generally included accounting, economics, econometrics, industrial relations (maybe) and economic history. UNSW economic historian Barrie Dyster has recalled that economic history commanded a quarter of the first year commerce instruction. Quite a few of these students flowed on to upper-level courses, partly because there was not ‘a great deal of competition’. Similarly, supported by Professor James Belshaw, who had ‘pioneered both Economics and History’ at the University of New England (UNE), in 1965 the formation of a new Faculty of Economics included two departments: Economics and Economic History. Both had required subjects in the undergraduate economics degree. Even in places where there were no departments in the subject, economic history was a requirement in commerce or economics degrees. At the University of Adelaide, McLean has recalled that economic history instruction was valued within economics, with at least one compulsory course in the first year, and another two or three options at upper levels.

This confluence of intellectual and institutional factors gave economic history a relatively strong position within post–World War II economics and commerce faculties. Separate departments in the subject followed,
assisted by general university expansion and fragmentation of large, complex faculties into smaller autonomous groups.\footnote{Groenewegen, \textit{Educating for Business}; Jordan, \textit{A Spirit of True Learning}; Dingle/Davison interview.} Noel Butlin was the sole example of an individual petitioning for a separate department. Hall has recalled that Noel ‘pestered’ Trevor Swan (then ANU Research School of Social Sciences [RSSS] Head of Economics) to set up a department of economic history, and because of the university’s expansionary mood and Swan’s indulgent attitude towards the subject, Noel’s request was granted. Even he was relatively late to the game: Melbourne had a department since 1947, CUC (which became the ANU Faculties) from 1957, and the rest were established gradually between 1960 and 1975. In all other cases, faculty or university management created the group. For some, the department was built around a new chair, including John McCarty at Monash, Gordon Rimmer at UNSW and Seymour A. Broadbridge at Flinders. In other cases, scholars were gathered in a separate group, with the chair drawn from their ranks a few years later.\footnote{Mac Boot and Ron Neale were initially the members of the economic history group at UNE, with Neale listed as the professor from 1974. At Sydney, Syd Butlin was initially the professor (in 1970), but the following year he went to ANU in quasi-retirement. See Appendix.} La Trobe established a department comparatively late, in the late 1980s. Eric Jones was already a professor of economics, and those who became members of the new department were in the economics group. It was entirely a bureaucratic decision, with a review of La Trobe’s broader ‘schools’ structure recommending the establishment of departments, including economic history.\footnote{Frost interview.} Separate departments were thus a decision made much further up the chain than individual scholars, reflecting the institutional environment rather than the success (or otherwise) of Australia’s economic history field.

Recruitment

Compulsory economic history subjects, and the departments that followed, meant that the number of dedicated economic history staff in Australia grew from 12 in 1960, to 30 in 1970, to a peak of about 50 in 1980s.\footnote{This includes those appointed to separate departments in the subject, not counting the many economic historians based in economics or history groups.} Staff numbers at economic history’s entrenched institutions – ANU and the universities of Sydney and Melbourne – stabilised in the 1970s and 1980s, with expansion of the domain of newer universities.
such as UNSW, Monash, Flinders, UNE and La Trobe. To meet the new demand for economic history staff, the field’s leaders had two options: either train the next generation of Australian economic historians themselves, or recruit from overseas. As such, graduate training expanded, with government policy increasingly directed towards research and training PhD students at home. Most graduate students were trained at ANU in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, with others at the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Monash and Western Australia. Some of these PhD students left the main Australian economic history community, though not for lack of available positions. Those who remained found ongoing positions relatively easily, with the surplus of vacant positions filled by overseas recruits from the UK and the US.

By virtue of the university sector’s rapid expansion, Australian economic historians were, on average, very young. At the same time, the model of the ‘God Professor’ demanded that each new department have a senior scholar as its head. Home-grown leadership had not quite developed to the point where there were enough suitable scholars to fill these new chairs, so universities looked to the metropole. Gordon Rimmer at UNSW, Eric Jones at La Trobe, Derek Aldcroft and Stephen Salsbury at the University of Sydney, and Ron Neale and Malcolm Falkus at UNE were brought to Australia from the UK or the US in the 1960s and 1970s. Other postwar leaders followed the ‘interwar model’, with Syd Butlin, John McCarty, Gus Sinclair and ANU Faculties Professor Graham S. L. Tucker completing their Masters or PhD theses in the UK. Even the staunchly Australianist Noel Butlin spent two years at Harvard in the 1950s, as he believed that ‘was where the real economist-historians were’.

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21 Forsyth, Modern Australian University; Marginson, Monash.
22 Waterman, Peter Macarthy and Neil de Marchi accepted positions overseas, Pursell and Bambrick moved into the economics discipline and Keating left academia for a career in the public service.
24 As in the interwar period, this was generally seen as an ‘interlude’ – as necessary to legitimise the scholar’s pedigree, but with minimal ongoing impact on their collaborations or career. See Sinclair interview.
This created a culture of legitimacy from the metropole that structured hiring and training. Privilege accrued to those trained in the US or UK, with scholars such as McCarty or Tucker offered chairs relatively early in their careers, on the basis of a small amount of published work but perceived exemplary training at Oxbridge. In interviews, scholars similarly noted the ‘quality’ of a colleague’s Oxbridge degree, independent of the work that was produced from it.²⁶ In many cases, senior scholars encouraged mentees to study overseas, reinforcing this model intergenerationally. Melbourne economic historian David Merrett has commented that McCarty encouraged others to study at Cambridge, his alma mater. Similarly, Chris Lloyd has recalled that encouragement from Ron Neale formed part of his decision to study in the UK:

If you were wanting a career as an academic, Britain was the place to go […] and the thinking was, that this gave you an advantage in the Australian job market […] Of course, Ron Neale, my professor [at UNE], was English and he was very pleased for me to be going back.²⁷

God Professors also reinforced colonial structures of privilege through their hiring practices. During the period of recruitment, overseas-trained God Professors hired a greater proportion of scholars from their country of origin, often with an informal hiring process. For example, at UNSW, Head of Economic History Gordon Rimmer was born and educated in the UK, and purposefully recruited from UK universities.²⁸ Peter Shergold studied at Hull and Illinois, and was supervised by Professor Charlotte Erickson at the London School of Economics for his DPhil. Erickson and Rimmer knew each other, and so Shergold was recruited without a completed thesis, an application or an interview.²⁹ Stephen Nicholas studied for his undergraduate degree in North America, and at Hull for his (incomplete) doctorate. John Perkins also attended Hull, and Ian Inkster the University of East Anglia. David Meredith trained at the University of Exeter, and was hired on the basis of a phone call between Rimmer and the head of the Exeter Department of Economic History.³⁰ Wray Vamplew, who was born in Yorkshire and completed his

²⁶ Interviews: Sinclair and Boot for Tucker; Dingle and Dingle for McCarty; Nicholas for Rimmer; Hall for Hartwell; Merrett for Sinclair; Sinclair for Beever.
²⁷ Lloyd interview.
²⁸ Shergold; Hutchinson interviews.
²⁹ Shergold interview.
³⁰ Oxley/Meredith interview.
DPhil at Edinburgh, has similarly recalled the informal hiring process at Flinders. British-trained Graham Tucker had already offered Vamplew a job in the ANU Faculties prior to his PhD, which he turned down. Later he accepted an offer from the Flinders economic history department, which came from a chance meeting with British-born Flinders historian Eric Richards. Much like members of the UNSW department, Vamplew has recalled there was no formal application, simply the submission of a CV. At the ANU RSSS, internationalisation was determined by Noel Butlin’s training at Harvard, favouring those from the US. Glenn Withers completed his PhD at Harvard, Rod Maddock at Duke University and Jonathan Pincus at Stanford. Ian McLean was trained at ANU, though held several visiting positions at Yale and Harvard throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

From 1980, the bottom fell out of the job market: universities and enrolments had expanded to a point of saturation, the underlying rhetoric of governments shifted from Keynesianism to neoliberal austerity, and academic positions had been filled by young scholars likely to kick around for decades. There is a clear distinction between the job market fortunes of students who graduated before and after 1980, with Andrew Wells, who trained at ANU, Lionel Frost from Monash, Martin Shanahan from Flinders, Greg Whitwell and Tim Duncan from Melbourne, and Diane Hutchinson and Deborah Oxley from UNSW, having a much harder time of it. For example, Frost has recalled that when he submitted his thesis in the early 1980s, ‘there were literally no jobs’. He then completed teaching qualifications, and taught high school for several years before being hired by Eric Jones at La Trobe. Oxley and Hutchinson, although separated by a decade, had similar experiences. They were both appointed to several short-term contracts or fellowships at universities interstate, which was more or less ‘all there was going at the time’. Hutchinson was then awarded tenure at the University of Sydney in late 1980s, and Oxley was appointed to the University of Oxford in 2007. Shanahan has recalled the ‘pretty depressing’ job market in the late 1980s, taking a job at the South Australian parliamentary library as ‘there didn’t seem to be any positions available’. A short time later, he was appointed as

32 Frost interview.
33 Hutchinson interview.
34 Oxley/Meredith; Hutchinson interviews.
an economics lecturer at the South Australian Institute of Technology.\textsuperscript{35} Although this was not a uniquely Australian problem, nor one special to economic history, it was a very challenging environment.\textsuperscript{36}

### Departments as silos

The expansion of domestic training, and the scramble for new recruits from overseas meant that from about 1980 there was a ‘full suite’ of departments of economic history. While departments have been seen as the field’s prime marker of success, they came with their own set of problems for interdisciplinary research. The professional architecture of departments is designed to funnel communication and ideas inwards, with appointments, collaboration, teaching, seminars and even the physical space all designed to develop appropriate teams for disciplinary teaching and frontier knowledge (see Chapter 1). In Australian economic history, departments were generally small, with no more than a dozen appointments at any one time. The workforce was also stable – scholars obtained tenure at a young age during the sector’s expansion. After this, there very few new appointments, and very little mobility between groups. Each department had a God Professor, who was able to exert influence over the teaching and research program, and the physical space along a single floor or corridor encouraged close connections among the ‘tribe’. Activities associated with departments – teaching, joint projects, seminars and training of graduate students – helped to reinforce these connections and created a sense of joint endeavour among members of each group.

Small departments can have two main impacts. The first, common to any field or discipline, is that long-term dense connections risk stifling innovation.\textsuperscript{37} Particularly in Australia’s case, where the higher education sector expanded very rapidly, and then almost overnight went into a hiring

\textsuperscript{35} Shanahan interview.

\textsuperscript{36} Ville, for example, has recalled a challenging job market in Thatcher-era Britain. Ville interview.

freeze, the same small group, all of whom were a similar age, worked in departments together for a very long time. As Maddock has argued for ANU, departments had a deeply flawed ‘social psychology’, as he put it:

If you get six people together and make them work together for 30 years and not talk to anybody except each other, they’ll go mad. [laughs] I don’t mean to suggest in that direct sense that my colleagues were mad, but they certainly heard every idea that the others had – in some sense they get bored with each other. So I don’t think there was any meaningful dialogue, really, amongst the older colleagues in those departments.

Departments also represented a fundamental trade-off for interdisciplinary scholars like economic historians. The choice on offer was the chance to develop greater professional identity, institutional space, resources and recognition, at the cost of a restricted ability to develop broader connections. Economic history departments generally held their own seminars, and as a result, members rarely went to seminars in history, economics, politics and so on. Economic historians had their own courses, which meant they rarely (if ever) gave guest lectures in economics or history subjects. Departments also trained their own PhD students, rather than engaging with a mix of complementary supervisors. Some practitioners found departments uncongenial to their style of work. Pincus, for example, has ‘never been a fan’ of separate departments. McLean has similarly recalled the ‘horribly fragmented’ institutional structure at ANU. Division of scholars into small groups, in his words, restricted the flow of people and ideas, and led to poorer grounding in either economics or history. Part of the reason that McLean accepted an appointment at the University of Adelaide was because there was no separate economic history group.

### Enclaves

The departmental era, and the associated professional architecture of these groups, created several professional and intellectual enclaves. The development of research clusters is, of course, inevitable and good. However, the strength of ties in each department created a fragmented institutional and intellectual structure, with economic historians at each

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38 Pincus interview.
39 McLean interview.
university or in each city seeing themselves as their own ‘tribe’. This contributed to a lack of integration, and hostility, between different traditions.

**Antipodean cliometrics**

ANU continued to be a primary centre for Australian economic history research throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The School of General Studies – the ‘Faculties’ – focused on teaching, and with the expansion of student numbers, hired quickly from the UK. By contrast, members of the RSSS more or less maintained a similar staff list from the Butlin boom, hiring new researchers in small numbers over the next two decades. Jonathan Pincus was hired in 1972, and was one of a small number of new RSSS recruits. The RSSS also trained some of the next generation of economic historians, including David Pope, Graeme Snooks and Andrew Wells. Between the two departments, Canberra hosted the largest group of economic historians in the country, and the largest number of those interested in Australian research topics. Although there were newer communities in Melbourne and Sydney, ANU continued to be a major hub. Adelaide can also be considered an outpost of ANU at this time, with economic historians at the University of Adelaide – such as Ian McLean and Tom Sheridan – having been trained at ANU in the 1960s, and McLean particularly maintaining his professional connections to Canberra. McLean commented that:

> My links were with ANU […] and then I forcibly established my links with the US […] If I was going to maintain basic enthusiasm for my field, there wasn’t all that much on offer in Australia.

Flinders had a small but talented group of economic historians in the 1970s and 1980s. Gus Sinclair led the group throughout the 1970s, and Pincus took over in 1985. Sinclair appointed Snooks, Vamplew and Ralph Shlomowitz in the mid-1970s, and this group was stable throughout the next two decades. Sinclair, Snooks and Pincus were all members of Butlin’s circle, maintaining contact and collaborative relationships with other orthodox scholars. Although Vamplew’s research interests lay elsewhere, his main contribution to Australian economic history was to edit the statistical volume for the 1988 bicentennial series on Australian history. He was awarded a summer fellowship to ANU, which enabled him to

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bring on several ANU economic historians as authors.\textsuperscript{41} Although it was ostensibly a national project, Vamplew’s connections within economic history were embedded in the Canberra–Adelaide community.

\textit{ANU developed a shared vision for economic history. Within each group there was potential for friendships, with Jackson recalling a vibrant social community in the Faculties.\textsuperscript{42} Similarly, Butlin had a ‘shack’ at Guerilla Bay on the New South Wales South Coast, and his son Matthew has remembered him often inviting colleagues and visiting scholars.\textsuperscript{43} Seminars involved cooperation between economic historians in the Faculties and the RSSS, with Rod Maddock and John Gage, Kosmas Tsokhas and Colin Forster, and Bob Jackson and David Pope among the pairs who organised the series throughout the 1980s.\textsuperscript{44} Although this encouraged a sense of joint endeavour, it also created tension between the ‘spoilt’ RSSS scholars, and those considered the ‘workers’ in the Faculties.\textsuperscript{45}}

International visitors, particularly from the US, were a distinctive aspect of the ANU community. RSSS economist R. G. ‘Bob’ Gregory has argued that in the 1980s ANU was the centre of economic history in the world ‘as a place to come to’.\textsuperscript{46} Consistent with the global hegemony of knowledge, ‘the world’ in this case meant the US, with the group favouring US cliometricians in the visiting scholars program. Cliometrics became the dominant intellectual trend in US and Canadian economic history from the 1960s, with scholars combining neoclassical economic theory, counterfactual reasoning and econometric techniques to challenge conventional wisdom about long-run economic progress. The ‘revolution’ is generally traced to a gathering of the US Economic History Association in Williamstown in 1957. Here, Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer presented pioneering papers on the use of statistics and economic theory, and slavery in the antebellum south. Although Conrad and Meyer received a polarised reaction from the Williamstown audience, the ‘boldly innovative’ research program appealed to younger scholars, and eventually

\textsuperscript{41} Vamplew correspondence, 19 October 2019.
\textsuperscript{42} Jackson interview. He has recalled playing football with John Gage, and helping Mac Boot build his house.
\textsuperscript{43} Matthew Butlin; Troy interviews.
\textsuperscript{44} Cornish; McLean; Statham interviews. See memos about changes to seminar programs in ANU Archives (hereafter ANUA), ANU Department of Economic History files, teaching materials and publications, AU ANUA 62, item 115.
\textsuperscript{45} Maddock interview.
\textsuperscript{46} Ville has similarly argued that ANU was a bit like Piccadilly Circus – at some point everyone passes through. See Gregory; Ville interviews.
became the dominant intellectual tradition in North American economic history. The approach was also adopted by some in the UK and Europe, though they remained in the minority.\textsuperscript{47} Closer to home, Maddock has argued that his cohort – Pincus, McLean, Withers and himself – brought back the techniques and attitudes of US economic history to work on Australian topics. Pincus has attributed his interest in hypothesis testing to his time at Stanford,\textsuperscript{48} and McLean has commented that the US scene in the 1970s and 1980s was exciting, and that his connections there gave him ‘a completely expanded view of the discipline’.\textsuperscript{49} Pincus and Butlin aimed to inject these new ideas and methods into the ANU community, inviting cliometricians such as Barry Eichengreen, Mark Thomas, Mary McKinnon, Tim Hatton and Dierdre McCloskey throughout the 1980s.\textsuperscript{50} Visitors collaborated on research, and seminars and conferences were arranged to align with US visitors.\textsuperscript{51}

These distinctive professional networks developed the group’s intellectual character. In short, most members of this enclave used economic historical data to contribute to mainstream economics. The orthodox approach, inherited from ANU in the 1950s and 1960s, was already aligned with the dominant Keynesian paradigm of the post–World War II decades. The nature of orthodox research encouraged a transition towards the new frontiers of economics from the 1970s, which incorporated neoclassical theory, hypothesis testing and advanced mathematical techniques.\textsuperscript{52} In the 1960s, Butlin himself foreshadowed the connection between orthodox work and this frontier economics research, noting his intention to write a third analytical essay to sit alongside ‘the words’ and ‘the numbers’.\textsuperscript{53}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[48]{Pincus interview.}
\footnotetext[49]{McLean interview.}
\footnotetext[50]{Pincus; Gregory interviews.}
\footnotetext[51]{Gregory interview. See also acknowledgments in Robert G Gregory and Noel G Butlin, eds, \textit{Recovery from the Depression: Australia and the World Economy in the 1930s} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511597206.}
\footnotetext[52]{Alex Millmow, \textit{A History of Australasian Economic Thought} (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), doi.org/10.4324/9781315716152; Peter Groenewegen and Bruce McFarlane, \textit{A History of Australian Economic Thought} (London: Routledge, 1990).}
\end{footnotes}
Although this volume never appeared, he clearly thought this would be a good thing to do. In the 1980s Butlin was still very active, extending his quantitative estimates back to 1788, and compiling the statistical base for key edited works. Although he did not personally engage in so-called ‘analytical’ or cliometric work, he was supportive of such efforts.

The orthodox tradition of collecting and describing national income data was, as McLean put it, ‘inherently temporary’, before the analytical step. Much like their colleagues in the US, the younger generation of scholars in Canberra and Adelaide spent time augmenting or improving Butlin’s original statistics, and then using these data to test the validity of economic models. For example, with Pincus and Adelaide economist Sue Richardson, McLean adjusted Butlin’s statistics (which demonstrated stagnating living trends between 1900 and 1939) to include a wider variety of social indicators such as income inequality, physical infrastructure, education, life expectancy and length of the working week. Inferring inductively from these various trends, they argued that there was no indication of stagnating living standards over this period, but that there was greater income inequality during the depression. McLean also attempted to improve the standard balance of payments and rural workforce estimates, synthesising work from Butlin and Roland Wilson in the former, and workforce estimates from Butlin and Dowie, and Michael Keating in the latter. McLean’s deductive work used his orthodox statistics on rural production in Victoria to demonstrate the Solow economic growth model of technological change; and with Maddock he used quantitative material to examine the Dutch disease model of economic growth for


55 McLean interview.


Australia's gold discoveries in the 1850s. Research into Australia's labour market also used orthodox school statistics to test whether minimum wage regulations increased unemployment during the Great Depression. Forster adopted the orthodox approach to examine the impact of the minimum wage on unemployment, while also writing a more deductive piece that tested the relationship between various socio-economic factors and the fertility rate.

David Pope was particularly influenced by the intellectual combination of Butlin and Pincus. He completed his DPhil on early twentieth-century British migration under the supervision of Pincus and ANU economic historian Nev Cain, while acknowledging the substantial influence of Butlin (see Chapter 3). He also noted his debt to the economic history joint departmental seminar, and his colleagues in both economics and economic history. As a result, Pope's thesis was a marriage of orthodox and cliometric approaches. Part I was orthodox, sketching the contours of the Australian economy, the labour market, government policy and, ultimately, the quantitative material on British migration to Australia. Part II devised a model of UK immigration, and subjected the quantitative material to various empirical tests. From this thesis, Pope published an article in the *Australian Economic History Review* that used the orthodox approach to outline trends found in Australian immigration.

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data. Additionally, by himself and with colleague Glenn Withers, Pope published cliometric work that deductively tested the motivations and effects of immigration.

The group’s US connections reflected and reinforced their intellectual orientation towards the economics discipline. ANU scholars regularly contributed to Australia’s key economics journal, *Economic Record*, publishing a mix of orthodox research and cliometric approaches. Large collaborative projects also engaged with economics. In the 1980s, Butlin apparently decided that ‘he was going to advise the [RSSS] director to close economic history down unless the department agreed on a joint project’. Staff pitched ideas, and Pincus suggested examining political institutions and twentieth-century Australian capitalism. Butlin agreed, and launched the ‘Government and Capitalism’ project. He established a common statistical series, and hired Rod Maddock to work on taxation. There were a number of subsidiary articles among members, and it culminated in a large co-authored work by Butlin, Barnard and Pincus. Each author essentially tossed a coin to decide which section they were to write, and they circulated drafts prior to publication. The method was largely orthodox, but the analysis of the interaction between the public and private sectors of the macro-economy was done with the explicit aim

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66 Butlin et al., *Government and Capitalism*.

67 Pincus interview.
of providing background to contemporary economists and policymakers. Further, as with Butlin’s earlier work, the statistical database was produced with the aim of ‘testing’ their conclusions down the road.\(^{68}\)

Maddock and McLean’s *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, published in 1987, involved several younger members of the ANU economic history community such as Pincus, Withers, Pope and Matthew Butlin. Other contributors were largely Australian economists such as Tom Valentine, Adrian Pagan, John Freebairn, Kym Anderson and Michael Carter. Most contributors had spent some time working at ANU during the 1970s and 1980s, and many had co-authored with other contributors throughout this period. The group met at ANU on four separate occasions to discuss the book, and for the final meeting they invited a number of discussants (most of whom were also members of economics or economic history at ANU).\(^{69}\) The editors commented that they ‘relied mainly though not exclusively on the methods employed and questions posed by economists’, analysing a standard economics framework over time.\(^{70}\) The volume was divided into chapters on the factors of production, the internal/external sector, and the private/public sector, providing an *analysis* of the components of the economy, rather than a narrative of overall economic change. Gregory and Butlin’s *Recovery from the Depression* (hereafter *Recovery*) was also deeply embedded in the economics discipline. Overseas cliometricians participated through the RSSS visiting scholars program, and contributions used both orthodox and cliometric methods.\(^{71}\) Economist Bob Gregory co-edited the volume, and he argued that ‘we […] believed that it would be useful to bring together economists and economic historians to a conference to discuss the recovery process from the depression’.\(^{72}\)

\[\text{References}\]

68 Butlin et al., *Government and Capitalism*, ix.
Melbourne interdisciplinarity

Those in Melbourne developed an interdisciplinary vision of economic history. Although teaching in the subject was largely based within economics and business degrees, the history discipline's research program from the 1950s to the 1980s welcomed economic matters as a part of their diverse thematic and methodological foci. Key history journals such as *Historical Studies* and *Labour History* frequently published economic history research, and although administratively separate, historian Geoffrey Serle included economic historians in his survey of the discipline in the 1970s.

It was thus largely through research, rather than teaching, that economic historians in Melbourne were able to bridge the interdisciplinary space. Melbourne was home to the field’s oldest economic history department, with the University of Melbourne establishing the group in 1945. The department enjoyed steady growth, from an average of about six staff in the 1950s, to between 10 and 13 members throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Monash University opened its doors in 1961, and had five dedicated economic history appointments by 1970. This increased to an average of about eight staff members throughout the 1970s and 1980s. La Trobe was the smallest community of economic historians in Melbourne, and was home to around three or four dedicated staff from the late 1960s.

Although it will make any Melburnian’s blood boil, the story of economic history in Victoria really begins at the University of Sydney with its pre-eminent postwar economic historian Sydney James Butlin. Noel’s elder brother by 11 years, Syd was already an established scholar at the University of Sydney when his younger brother arrived in the late 1940s. Syd became the head of the Butlin household in 1926, at the age of 16, when his father was killed by a hit and run diver near their home in Singleton. He studied for an economics degree at the University of Sydney, and was then awarded several travelling scholarships to attend Trinity College, Cambridge, in the 1930s. There he was immersed in the Keynesian revolution, as well as gaining an interest in monetary economics. He returned to Sydney...
in 1934, and was appointed lecturer at the University of Sydney in the following year. As was typical at the time, Syd had an interlude in public service during World War II, as director of the economic division of the Department of War Organisation and Industry. From 1946, Butlin was Chair of Economics and, for much of what remained of his career, was dean of the Faculty of Economics. He retired from Sydney in late 1971, and spent his final years in Canberra as an independent professor in his brother’s department in the RSSS.\textsuperscript{75}

Like Noel, Syd was an empiricist, marshalling incredible volumes of data to understand a topic comprehensively. Syd was preoccupied with the Australian monetary system for much of his career, inspired by his contact with British monetary theorist Sir Dennis Robertson during his time in the UK, and by the Australian Royal Commission into monetary and banking systems in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{76} Syd found that contemporary interest in money and banking lacked historical background, and so he set about providing it. The outcome, \textit{Foundations of the Australian Monetary System}, published in 1953, compiled a statistical appendix for data relating to banking operations, and interpreted it in the context of early British-Australian settlement. He argued that at each stage ‘monetary organisation repeated in miniature the larger story’, with the development of a fully-fledged monetary system alongside a fairly modern economy in a short space of time. Syd’s approach was staunchly inductive, refusing to speculate on any issues not explicitly covered by his evidence. He justified this approach as follows:

\begin{quote}
I have elected to give my version in full detail, partly to make it unnecessary for others to rediscover the facts, but mainly because my object has been to display a set of institutions coming into being and in operation, and, on first telling, that story requires detail.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{76} Schedvin, ‘Butlin, Sydney James’.

Figure 3: Professor Syd Butlin, University of Sydney, 1960
Source: University of Sydney Archives, G3_224_2636.
Syd’s *Foundations* quickly became a standard text in Australian economic history, and was reviewed as a ‘definitive’ and ‘enduring’ work in Australian history. Syd’s work also aged well, with Boris Schedvin describing it as ‘rigorous in the use of evidence and theory, comprehensive and imaginative in scope, bold and elegant in structure’. Alan Hall referred to *Foundations* as ‘the best economic history that has yet been produced in terms of scholarship’. David Merrett similarly commented that ‘before Noel’s “two books”, there was Syd’s “book”, and it is the perfect research monograph. It is still probably unrivalled. It is awe-inspiring and terrifying’.

In certain circles, Syd Butlin is remembered with as much reverence as his brother. He has been remembered by his colleague, collaborator and, ultimately, biographer Schedvin, as:

> quiet, shy and deeply private […] a gifted conversationalist and raconteur, and inveterate tea-drinker and chain-smoker, as well as a courteous and kindly man who delighted in the achievements of his family.

The connection between Syd and Noel is obvious, and even when prompted to talk about the former, interviewees couldn’t help but compare them. They have been remembered with contrasting personalities: Noel was ‘loose’, ‘fun’, ‘bohemian’ and ‘affable’, whereas Syd was ‘uptight’, ‘fastidious’, ‘precise’ and a ‘perfectionist’. Although Schedvin has recalled that Noel became critical of Syd’s style of scholarship, Noel’s obituary of Syd was respectful of his brother’s detailed analysis of his subjects.

Leaders of the Melbourne community were mentored by Syd Butlin in the 1950s and 1960s. Boris Schedvin completed his PhD at the University of Sydney in the early 1960s, and returned to a lectureship there after a brief stint in the UK. John McCarty had a Melbourne undergraduate degree, and a DPhil from Cambridge. He then spent a small amount of time lecturing in the economics department at UNSW and working for Syd Butlin as a research assistant, before he was appointed to a lectureship.

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79 Schedvin, ‘Butlin, Sydney James’.
80 Hall; Merrett interviews.
81 Schedvin, ‘Butlin, Sydney James’.
82 Pincus; Gregory; Blainey interviews.
83 Gregory; Hall; Schedvin; Blainey interviews.
84 Butlin, ‘A Fraternal Farewell’; Schedvin interview.
at the University of Sydney. McCarty and Schedvin worked closely together, and with Syd, throughout the 1960s. In particular, Schedvin and McCarty jointly edited the *Australian Economic History Review* in its fledgling era. In 1968, McCarty was appointed to Monash University, and in 1972 became the inaugural chair of the newly created economic history department. McCarty brought Schedvin into the Monash department in the following year. Boris maintained contact with Syd after he left Sydney, collaborating on the second volume of the *War Economy* in the 1970s.

Schedvin adopted elements of Syd Butlin's scholarship, and said that 'Noel [...] might have claimed that I was infected by Syd's empirical descriptivism'. To compare their prominent works of the time – Syd's *Foundations* and Schedvin's *Australia and the Great Depression* – both marshalled large amounts of data to comprehensively understand their topic. They treated each case chronologically, accounting with impressive detail all or most of the relevant factors in a particular event. They took institutions, policymakers and rhetoric seriously, with Syd incorporating profiles of prominent bankers and quotations from contemporary editorials, and Schedvin including lively reconstructions of the political institutions, policies and policymakers, to argue that internal determinants such as poorly designed public investment programs were crucial for the extent, timing and shape of the Great Depression in Australia. This differed markedly from the approach of the ANU enclave. Rather than explaining their primary material using contemporary business cycle or sectoral growth theory, Syd Butlin and Schedvin instead focused on detailed, contextual reconstructions of historical events. Integration between economic analysis and historical narrative was present in

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86 Syd J Butlin and C Boris Schedvin, *The War Economy: 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977). The first volume was published in 1955 and, as Boris recalls, Syd had simply ‘run out of steam’ on the second half. They divided the work down the middle, and Syd apparently gestured to the archive of World War II records, asking Schedvin to ‘go to it’. Schedvin has argued that there was very little intellectual collaboration on this book, that instead he spent a lot of time editing Syd's 'complex', 'parenthetical' writing. See Schedvin interview.
87 Schedvin interview. See also Tony Dingle, who argued that Schedvin was 'an extension of Syd’s historical approach'; and David Merrett who agreed that McCarty and Schedvin 'both had more links to the Syd Butlin work, rather than Noel'. Dingle/Davison; Merrett interviews.
89 Indeed, Kuznets or other business cycle theorists do not emerge at all, explicitly or implicitly, in either Schedvin or Syd's work.
these works, with Heinz Arndt reviewing Schedvin’s contribution as ‘historian’s rather than economist’s economic history’. Reviews of Syd’s work similarly identified that his approach was at home with historical tradition, with economist Colin Simkin arguing that Foundations was a ‘comprehensive, reliable, detailed, and fully documented account’ of the Australian monetary system.

Although McCarty was professionally connected to Syd and Boris, his research deviated from their empirical, contextual reconstructions. In 1964, while they were working at the University of Sydney, McCarty published an article in the Australian Economic History Review that applied staples thesis to the study of Australian economic development in the first half of the nineteenth century. Initially developed in the interwar period to explain Canada’s economic history, staples thesis argues that growth stems from the export of a series of key commodities to industrialised ‘Mother countries’. External demand for primary exports sets the pace of expansion, but local production sets the pattern of growth and the distribution of income. McCarty adopted this framework, concluding that the pace and pattern of Australian economic growth in the early period of British settlement was determined externally through a staple export – in this case the private sector production of food for the colonial government to feed the convict workforce. McCarty’s grounding in economic theory was complemented by engagement with a range of political, social and historical themes. For example, historian Donald Denoon acknowledged that McCarty had contributed to reintegrating Australian history with broader global conversations. Similarly, Tony Dingle remembered McCarty as the ‘quintessential social scientist’, occupying a special place in Australian economic history by bridging the ‘widening gap between the disciplines of economics and history’.

92 For Canada, fur, cod fishing, timber, wheat and minerals were exported firstly to France, then Britain, then the US.
While McCarty’s approach was interdisciplinary, by attempting to fit Australia’s experience within a theory developed for another context he differed fundamentally from his Sydney colleagues. His article was influential, remaining one of the highest-cited pieces in the *Australian Economic History Review*, though criticism centred on its deductive approach. The journal ran a series of follow-up articles from a diverse range of contributors. Noel Butlin criticised McCarty’s approach for being ‘deliberately abstract’; Melbourne historian Geoffrey Blainey, although he reviewed the externalism of the piece largely favourably, commented that a North American approach may not be ‘entirely fit for export’; and UNSW economic historian Graham J. Abbott commented that the application of a ready-made theory to a situation from which it was not derived was to ‘abandon historical methods altogether’. Schedvin has similarly reflected that although an externalist interpretation was appropriate, the staples thesis was not the right vehicle. While McCarty’s interpretation of Australian economic history was not in line with vogue scholarship, staples thesis was a broader, more interdisciplinary version of economic history than the sectoral analysis of national income accounting. It was an alternative way of approaching the subject – one that incorporated a range of economic, social and historical elements.

As elsewhere, the university structures in Melbourne did their best to quash interdisciplinary knowledge. Melbourne was home to three major universities with economic history groups, all within close proximity. Melbourne and Monash both had separate departments within economics throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with La Trobe, curiously, following suit in the early 1990s. As elsewhere, separate departments fostered links among economic historians at the expense of broader connections. Departments were located in economics and commerce faculties, structuring the curriculum around the professional needs of economists. Collaborative ties were dense in each group, with members co-editing and co-authoring papers and books, and frequently offering each other feedback prior to publication. Seminars were held within each group, as well as joint events.

99 Dingle/Davison; Schedvin interviews.
with groups elsewhere in Melbourne. Doctoral supervision similarly created a sense of professional identity, with students integrated into each department’s professional network.

While departments in Melbourne, as elsewhere, encouraged professional silos, the difference in this case was that those leading the group were committed to diverse, interdisciplinary research. Those prominent in the interwar period gave the University of Melbourne department its start, with Herbert Burton the first professor from 1944, and John La Nauze taking over in 1949. As part of the interwar group, both balanced between humanities and social science paradigms in their careers. Schedvin and McCarty, as above, both adopted a broad approach to the subject, influenced by Syd Butlin’s narrative account of systems, institutions and individuals. Geoffrey Blainey also worked in both economics and history. After undergraduate studies in history at the University of Melbourne, history Chair Max Crawford encouraged Blainey to pursue a career in the subject. He worked as a freelance writer throughout the 1950s, and during this time penned *Peaks of Lyell*, a pioneering foray into Australian business history. In 1961 he returned to the University of Melbourne, as a member of the economic history department, leading the group from 1968 to 1976. Blainey’s written work reflected the potential for economic history to engage with interdisciplinary practice, with *The Rush That Never Ended*, the *Tyranny of Distance* and *A Land Half Won* engaging with economists’ questions on the nature of Australia’s sectoral growth and export industries, and historians’ interest in land, labour and colonisation. During the 1960s and 1970s, Blainey was professionally connected to various groups, contributing regularly to the *Australian Economic History Review*, *Historical Studies* and *Economic Record*. However, like La Nauze before him, Blainey gradually left behind his connections to economics from the 1970s, finding the plurality of the history discipline, which welcomed the study of material matters, more amenable to his style of work. Formalising this transition, Blainey was appointed to the University of Melbourne’s Ernest Scott Chair of History in 1978.

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W. A. ‘Gus’ Sinclair skilfully mediated the interdisciplinary space. Born in Scotland but raised in Albury, Sinclair’s interest in economic history was piqued by John La Nauze’s lectures at the University of Melbourne from the late 1940s. La Nauze then supervised Sinclair’s Masters thesis, and put him in touch with Noel Butlin at ANU to work on the orthodox data collection in the 1950s. Moving between professional tribes, Sinclair used this broad experience to unify the post–World War II literature and describe Australia’s ‘continuing process of economic development’ since 1788. This book, in his own words, was an attempt to reconcile Butlin’s orthodox work with McCarty’s staples interpretation. Rather than attributing everything to the development of export industries (as McCarty attempted to do), Sinclair utilised orthodox school statistics to argue that export industries were the starting point from which other, internalist development occurred. Sinclair also used his work to communicate between parent disciplines. Articles by Sinclair were a regular fixture in Economic Record, and he used these to promote both his own orthodox and cliometric work, and the contributions of Melburnians to the economics discipline. As an example, Sinclair used quantitative material to test a theoretical model of female workforce participation in a piece for Economic Record. The following year, in an article for Historical Studies, he used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the reasons for the decline in women’s workforce participation in the decades prior to World War I. Sinclair’s aim with these two articles was specifically interdisciplinary: to demonstrate that ‘the insights of the economist can yield relevant findings’ to historical questions, and that historical data could yield useful theoretical knowledge on the labour market.

102 Sinclair interview.
103 Sinclair worked for Butlin at ANU in the 1950s; at Melbourne, Monash and La Trobe from 1958 to 1973; was the head of the Flinders economic history group from 1973 to 1982; then returned to Monash as dean of their Economics and Politics Faculty from 1983. See Appendix. William Angus Sinclair, The Process of Economic Development in Australia (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1976), foreword.
104 Sinclair interview.
Figure 4: Professors Gus Sinclair (left) and Allan Fels from the Monash Faculty of Economics and Politics
Source: Photograph taken by Richard Crompton, held at Monash University Archives.
As a result of robust professional structures, younger members of the Melbourne group absorbed this interdisciplinary approach to economic history. Members were, for the most part, trained at Melbourne and Monash, by the eclectic group of senior economic historians in those departments. David Merrett, for example, was supervised for his Masters degree by Gus Sinclair, and was the youngest member of the Monash department from the early 1970s. During his postgraduate work, David was sent up to ANU to talk to Noel Butlin. Noel suggested Merrett examine GDP fluctuations for Victoria, which resulted in, in Merrett’s words, a ‘poor imitation of what Snooks did for Western Australia’. Although the thesis was never published, Merrett’s engagement with the orthodox school continued. In the 1970s he and Tony Dingle (who had arrived at Monash from the London School of Economics in 1967) had a ‘dalliance in urban history’, writing two articles on nineteenth-century home ownership in Melbourne. They essentially replicated Bob Jackson’s work on Sydney to contend with Butlin’s conclusion that tenancy levels in Melbourne increased as a result of the 1890s depression. At the same time, Merrett also worked on business history and economic policy. Frost has recalled complementary supervision by McCarty and Merrett at Monash, commenting that McCarty was an excellent sounding board, and that Merrett provided ‘fantastic […] searching’ written critique. Frost’s thesis examined rural development in Victoria, a topic that spoke to Frost’s interest in rural industries, McCarty’s work in exports and comparative development, and Merrett’s abilities in the orthodox school. Schedvin and Whitwell have both recalled ongoing interactions during Whitwell’s DPhil, which began at Monash, but moved to the University of Melbourne when Schedvin accepted the Chair in Economic History in 1979. Whitwell has commented that
Schedvin was his ‘towering intellectual influence’, and that ‘he and I got on very well […] He asked me if I would do a PhD, and I didn’t hesitate for a moment’.\(^\text{115}\) The book from Whitwell’s thesis, *The Treasury Line*, analysed the foundations of Australia’s economic policy, particularly the ideas of Treasury policymakers.\(^\text{116}\)

Alan Beever and Katrina Alford also worked within orthodox and broader interdisciplinary frames. Beever was appointed to the University of Melbourne department in the late 1950s. He engaged with both the economics and history discipline in his work, writing for *Economic Record* an article critiquing Noel Butlin’s ‘numbers’, and contributing to *Historical Studies* on archival sources for business history.\(^\text{117}\) In his work for the *Australian Economic History Review*, Beever integrated different types of sources, drawing on official statistics as well as qualitative material in company reports and magazine articles.\(^\text{118}\) Katrina Alford was supervised by the ‘thoroughly scholarly’ Beever for her DPhil in the late 1970s, recalling the ‘relatively interdisciplinary perspective’ of economic history in Melbourne as motivating her choice of specialty.\(^\text{119}\) Alford’s work on feminist economic history utilised qualitative sources such as correspondence, reports and images, and she illustrated her arguments through case studies of women’s importance for the public and private labour force.\(^\text{120}\) Alford engaged extensively with historians, acknowledging, in particular, assistance from members of the University of Melbourne history department. Alford was also competent in the work of the orthodox school, critiquing biased labour force estimates from colonial statisticians, and using this grounding through work as a research fellow in Butlin’s economic history department in the 1980s (see Chapter 5).

\(^{115}\) Whitwell interview.

\(^{116}\) Greg Whitwell, *The Treasury Line* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986). Whitwell has argued that Boris suggested he study the Australian Treasury, and influenced his approach to understanding the intellectual paradigms of policymakers. See Whitwell interview.


\(^{119}\) Alford interview.

Historian Graeme Davison also connected mainstream economic history to the history discipline. Davison trained as a historian, with a philosophy, politics and economics degree from Oxford, then attended ANU for his doctorate in urban history. When he arrived, La Nauze – who was by that stage the head of the RSSS history department – took him to the tea room to meet Noel Butlin:

What I hadn’t realised was that there had been a discussion beforehand of whether I really belonged under Butlin’s supervision, or with La Nauze – Butlin had a strong claim for saying he was the urban man […] So we went down and Butlin began in his abrupt way by saying ‘now what are you interested in? Are you interested in people or things?’ […] I then probably eventually said something like ‘well I’m sort of interested in both, but when it comes down to it, I am probably interested in people’. And after that he sort of haruffed and said ‘well I guess you’d better stay with La Nauze’.121

Davison retained his engagement in economic history throughout his career, collaborating with economic historians from within the history departments at the universities of Melbourne and Monash. Davison attended the Monash economic history seminars, and several scholars remembered interactions despite him being in a different department.122 His primary foray into economic history was *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* – a book loosely based on his ANU thesis, in which he, like Merrett, Dingle and Jackson, critiqued Butlin’s orthodox work regarding home ownership and urbanisation.123 Davison has since recalled (with Dingle’s agreement) that his thesis was quantitative and statistical, being influenced by the orthodox school environment in which it was completed.124 While the monograph that emerged a decade later toned down the statistics, its place in the Australian history canon demonstrates the importance of economic and social history for the discipline at this time.

John P. Fogarty was hired to the University of Melbourne in the 1960s, and in the 1980s he led a comparative approach to Australian economic history. Fogarty co-supervised Tim Duncan in the early 1980s (alongside

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121 Dingle/Davison interview.
122 Schedvin; Dingle/Davison; Merrett interviews.
124 Dingle/Davison interview.
Argentinian historian Ezequiel Gallo at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires), and in 1984 they published *Australia and Argentina: On Parallel Paths*. The book aimed to represent the 'current state of a scholarly relationship between the two countries', with the authors adopting a broad socio-political interpretation. Rather than applying economic theory to understand comparative development, the authors used secondary and qualitative sources to argue that different political systems – Australia with a stable democratic government and Argentina with an unstable totalitarian government – encouraged a divergence in their progress. Their approach was seen as 'interesting and informative' by McCarty, though was not to the taste of those based within economics, such as Maddock, who dismissed the volume as 'not to be read closely for its economics or economic history'.

Prompted by their connections to Fogarty in Melbourne, the following year Dingle and Merrett (on behalf of the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand) edited a collection of essays comparing economic development in Australia and Argentina. The volume emerged from a 1982 symposium organised in conjunction with British economist Kenneth Boulding’s visit to the University of Melbourne. Boulding outlined a theoretical framework of possible reasons for divergence between the two countries; Fogarty compared Australia and Argentina on the basis of rural export industry productivity; and Duncan argued that differences in the party system in each nation created divergences in performance. Schedvin finally commented that while there were differences in resource endowments and political relationships between the two countries from 1930, it was cultural norms (which may have then manifested as policy) that was


the deciding factor. In each contribution, the approach was broad – authors engaged with orthodox aggregated quantitative material, as well as extensive case studies of political figures, institutions and culture.

The field’s main professional structures were populated with Melbourne scholars, and they used this as an avenue to develop interdisciplinary connections. The *Australian Economic History Review* was established in 1956 as the *Bulletin of the Business Archives Council of Australia*. It was an attempt to ‘form a bridge between business people and the academic researcher interested in the development of Australian business and the economy’. The name changed to *Business Archives and History* in 1962, at which time the scope of the journal widened, and editorship passed from Alan Birch to John McCarty, both then at the University of Sydney. From 1966, the journal was formally transferred to the Department of Economics at the University of Sydney, and the name was changed to the *Review*. Boris Schedvin, also then at the University of Sydney, joined McCarty as editor, and they noted that the name change was, in part, because the journal had developed as ‘the specialist journal of economic history in Australia’. In 1974 ownership and management of the journal was again transferred, this time from the University of Sydney to the newly formed Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand. The EHSANZ now owned the publication: they used its pages to report on meetings, and the editors used the society’s annual conference to solicit articles. The *Review* was thus largely seen as the ‘military arm’ of EHSANZ activities. Scholars in Melbourne – including Schedvin, McCarty, Sinclair, Merrett and Dingle – took charge of the journal throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with other editors spread across Australia.

Those in Melbourne used the *Review* to advance their idea of what economic history should be. McCarty and Schedvin forged the intellectual character of the journal in the 1960s, encouraging a mixture of approaches, from more general historical discussions, to traditional accounts of the development of industries, through to quantitative approaches concerning

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sources of growth.\(^{133}\) Sinclair, for the 1970s, similarly argued that he did not encourage any particular ‘style’ of economic history, and Merrett for the 1980s reflected that the journal was particularly important for ‘experimentation’ in the field as it emerged.\(^{134}\) A number of minor edited collections reflected the group’s research interests and approach, including the socio-political interpretation in Dingle and Merrett’s collection on Australia and Argentina (see above). In the 1970s, McCarty and Schedvin also edited two collections on Australian urban history. The first was a reprint of the September 1970 issue of the journal, at which time McCarty and Schedvin were editors.\(^{135}\) The second, in 1978, reprinted the essays by McCarty, Davison and Sydney-based urban historian Max J. Kelly. They also added several ‘urban biographies’, as well as new essays by Merrett and Meredith Thomas.\(^{136}\) Melbourne economic historians represented most contributors, with essays diverse in approach through the use of orthodox quantitative statistics and qualitative sources such as newspapers and city council reports. Although the diverse remit of the journal and society made for connections across the interdisciplinary divide, it faced criticism with, for example, Schedvin recalling that Adelaide economic historian Ralph Shlomowitz ‘used to get stuck into us, saying “this is a dreadful journal, it should all be like [Robert] Fogel”.’\(^ {137}\)

**Global Sydney**

The tendency to hire from overseas in the 1970s, particularly in New South Wales (University of Sydney, UNSW and UNE), created a separate enclave of expats in the field. Although the shared experience of immigrating to Australia as young men bonded those at UNSW,\(^ {138}\) as with the other enclaves the trade-off was that members had comparatively little interest contributing to the research or professional structures of the Australian

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\(^{134}\) Sinclair; Merrett interviews.

\(^{135}\) C. Boris Schedvin and John W McCarty, eds, *Urbanization in Australia: The Nineteenth Century* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1974). Other authors: Bob Jackson, Sean Glynn and Weston Bate represented ANU; Maurice T Daly and Max Kelly were from Sydney (Macquarie University and UNSW, respectively); and Davison, Schedvin and McCarty were from Monash University.


\(^{137}\) Schedvin interview.

\(^{138}\) Shergold has recalled a lively social scene among the younger members of the department in the 1970s and 1980s. Shergold interview.
group. For example, UNSW hosted the largest single department of economic history in the country, and yet, with the exception of David Pope and Barrie Dyster, members rarely wrote Australian economic history. They contributed book reviews to the *Australian Economic History Review*, but wrote a grand total of three research articles for the field’s flagship journal throughout the 1970s and 1980s.\(^1\) Diane Hutchinson has commented that during her doctorate in the late 1970s, she was the sole representative at a conference held by the society at the University of Sydney only a few suburbs from their home base. At UNE, similarly, research interests were largely elsewhere, with economic historians R. A. Cage, Ron Neale and Graydon R. Henning regularly contributing book reviews, but only one research article each across the two decades.\(^2\) Overseas hires at the University of Sydney similarly had no research articles in the *Review* over these two decades, though they were very productive in international professional communities.

While certainly clustered in Sydney, this phenomenon also occurred elsewhere. For example, Eric Jones at La Trobe had a prominent international reputation and was an encouraging colleague within his department, but rarely contributed to the *Review* or other professional structures such as the EHSANZ.\(^3\) Vamplew, at Flinders, has similarly argued that, beyond editing the bicentennial statistical volume in the 1980s, he had ‘little to do with [the *Review*] as I focussed my teaching and research on Britain and looked towards British and European journals’.\(^4\) Reginald ‘Reg’ Appleyard was well placed to advocate for Perth’s economic historians – he saw economic history as an essential part of economics education, and was both the head of economics and the foundational Chair in Economic History at the University of Western Australia. However, he was, in his own words, a ‘fly in fly out Professor’, often overseas advocating for the internationalisation of the academic

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\(^3\) Nicholas interview.

\(^4\) Vamplew correspondence, 19 October 2019.
and student base, rather than developing research and teaching capacity among economic historians.\textsuperscript{143} These scholars were all productive, but actively pursued professional communities elsewhere.

In Sydney, the UNSW ‘Convict Workers’ project was a turning point. Their attitude changed, with Shergold reflecting:

\begin{quote}
\textit{it wasn’t until you had a group of economic historians who clearly realised they were going to stay in Australia […] that then you start to think ‘well if I’m here, I’m going to start doing some Australian work’}.\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

Nicholas and Shergold led the project, integrating the Australian archive into the very fashionable global slavery literature – particularly US cliometricians Robert Fogel and Stanley Engermann’s \textit{Time on the Cross}.\textsuperscript{145} Their methodological choice was motivated by existing abilities, in addition to its recognition in the metropole if they decided to move on. Nicholas had trained in the ‘new’ economic history from his time at Toronto in the early 1970s, and Shergold had experience in the statistical analysis of wages and labour.\textsuperscript{146} Shergold’s wife was an archivist at the State Library of New South Wales, which held extensive convict indents. When one of the UNSW faculty members went on two years unpaid leave, the dean encouraged the group to spend the money on a project that included as many members as possible.\textsuperscript{147} The result was digitised convict indents for the purposes of statistical economic analysis. \textit{Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia’s Past}, published in 1988, was grounded in the Australian context, though the authors rejected the ‘curious insularity of much Australian history which treats transportation and convictism as peculiarly Australian’.\textsuperscript{148} Nicholas, Shergold and Meredith’s expertise on international slavery, immigration and British empire policy was combined with Dyster and DPhil student Deborah Oxley’s Australian perspective. There were comparisons with both the experience

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{144} Shergold interview.


\textsuperscript{146} Nicholas; Shergold; Dyster; Oxley/Meredith interviews.

\textsuperscript{147} Oxley/Meredith interview.

\end{footnotesize}
of free workers in Britain, and with other forms of coerced labour such as Indian/Melanese bonded workers, American slaves, and other convicts. In particular, the authors argued that the aims of convict transportation, the characteristics of convicts, and the work done when they arrived, was similar across the British Empire, India and a number of other European powers at the time.\textsuperscript{149} Although Shlomowitz – who had engaged with the slavery literature using a similar method – took umbrage with Nicholas’s characterisation of class and the system of labour assignment, \textit{Convict Workers} did much to engage Australian economic history with frontier global research.\textsuperscript{150} In reflection of this, Oxley has remembered that, at the time, the team jokingly suggested they should call the volume \textit{Time on the Southern Cross}.\textsuperscript{151}

**Heterodox perspectives**

In addition to professional and intellectual disagreement between members of economic history departments based in different locations, longstanding interest in the subject from political economists and labour historians contributed to further diversity of members’ efforts. Political economy and labour history have been adjacent interdisciplinary fields, managing their own relationships with parent disciplines. Both have sought to understand the structure of the economy from a heterodox or critical perspective, particularly the way that capitalism naturalises a potentially unhelpful set of ideologies and practices. Both fields grew out of the post–World War II expansion of higher education. Work in labour history had drawn from activism and the organised labour movement since the late nineteenth century, with the field institutionalised within burgeoning departments of Australian history from the 1960s to the


\textsuperscript{151} Oxley/Meredith interview.
1980s. The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History was formed in 1961, with the journal *Bulletin for the Society of Labour History* (later *Labour History*) produced by this society from 1962. Although often drawing on similar archives and data sets as orthodox economic historians, labour historians were aligned with the core of the history discipline, particularly the ‘new social history’ in Australia and overseas, as well as activist-scholarship in political economy, industrial relations, sociology, politics and women’s studies.

Along similar lines, Australian political economy research stemmed from increased interest in radical social science and the New Left from the early 1970s. Like labour historians, political economists were encouraged by the revitalisation of interest in Australian politics and class following the end of the postwar Menzies era and election of the progressive Whitlam government. This field did not experience a ‘departmental era’; instead they found their way through a variety of disciplinary groups. In 1975, Wheelwright and Buckley lamented the lack of alternative economic thought, particularly Marxism, taught within economics degrees, and reflected on the ‘years of struggle’ within the Department of Economics at the University of Sydney to establish ‘alternative’ economics units. The ‘volatile’, hostile dispute between mainstream and radical members of the economics department at Sydney conceded space to the field within the curriculum, but this was largely the exception rather than the rule.

Members of the political economy tradition were drawn from politics, sociology, labour history, international relations and so on, with some – like Kenneth ‘Ken’ Buckley at the University of Sydney, Philip McMichael at UNE, Dave Clark at UNSW and Andrew Wells at ANU – working for a time within economic history departments. The *Journal of Australian Political Economy* was established in 1977 as a meeting place for these conversations.

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Heterodox histories of the economy incorporated political, social and cultural perspectives with an understanding of economic forces. Scholars were explicit about the ideology that shaped economic analyses, incorporated the State as an actor in Australia’s economic system, and had an interest in power relations and class conflict. The key proponents of historical political economy were E. L. ‘Ted’ Wheelwright and Buckley, both of whom were at the University of Sydney throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In their co-edited *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, published between 1975 and 1983, scholars from a range of disciplines examined the nature and progress of Australian capitalism. As with other intellectual movements, contributors sought to reappraise received wisdom from economists and economic historians on orthodox topics such as unemployment, wages, immigration, the role of the State, protectionist trade policies and the convict labour market. Dave Clark, a member of the UNSW economic history department from the early 1970s, worked in the orthodox space thematically by assessing Fitzpatrick and Noel Butlin’s conclusions on the role of British capital and trade for the Australian economy. He argued that, although the ‘Australian experience does not fit a vulgar model of imperialism’, British capital and trade did contribute to some structural disadvantages. These orthodox topics sat alongside labour, political and social history, including the progress of the labour movement, Australian imperialism in the Pacific, nationalism and regionalism, and issues relating to class, gender and ethnicity. Contributors did not seek to establish entirely new data series, but used a variety of intellectual frameworks, including Marxism, to reinterpret existing knowledge on their subject.

Wheelwright and Buckley then drew on these contributions in a more systematic and historical discussion, *No Paradise for Workers*, in which they analysed significant episodes in the history of the State’s role within the economy. They accounted for Australian capitalism chronologically, with the underlying dialectic of class conflict between British capital and Australian labour, squatters and farmers, and trade unions and employees.

Similar to orthodox scholars, Wheelwright and Buckley argued that the State had done more than just provide the legal and institutional framework through which producers and consumers operated, but was an economic actor in its own right.\footnote{157} Philip McMichael, a sociologist and lecturer in economic history at UNE in the late 1970s before a long and successful career in the US, also focused on the distinct way that settler capitalism emerged in Australia, through the lens of resource extraction and dispossession.\footnote{158} Much like Fitzpatrick in the 1940s, McMichael examined the uneven growth of the capitalist economy, particularly Britain’s power over Australia’s economic future. Historian Donald Denoon focused on the uneven balance of economic and political power in the global economy, with his \textit{Settler Capitalism}, published in 1983, examining the development of settler societies – Australia, Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, Uruguay and South Africa – in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Denoon combined quasi-Ricardian international trade theory with Marxist socio-political analysis, examining both the role of staple exports and the ‘relations between social classes as they interacted with political institutions’.\footnote{159} He accounted for differences between the tropical, non-white colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and the largely temperate regions that became sites of mass European settlement.\footnote{160} Andrew Wells, in the book produced from his ANU thesis, examined the relationship between the market and the State. Wells adopted a Marxist frame to understand the formation of Australian capitalism, arguing that it was an uneven and gradual process of ‘commodification’ of societal relations.\footnote{161} Although some of these heterodox scholars were based in departments of economic history, they were disconnected from the mainstream community. For example, although Buckley administered the \textit{Australian Economic History Review} when it was based at Sydney in the 1960s, over

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time he became less involved in mainstream structures.\textsuperscript{162} Dave Clark, similarly, was a long-term member of the economic history department at UNSW, and although he attended the EHSANZ conferences, he never contributed to the \textit{Review}. In \textit{Settlers and the Agrarian Question}, McMichael acknowledged members of the Australian New Left scholarship such as Ken Buckley, Raewyn Connell and Terry Irving, rather than members of mainstream economic history.\textsuperscript{163} Denoon worked at ANU in the 1980s and 1990s, although he was appointed to the Research School of Pacific Studies and did not integrate with the mainstream economic historians. Andrew Wells was trained in the ANU RSSS economic history group, under the supervision of Noel Butlin, Rod Maddock and labour historian Eric Fry. However, his collaboration and integration with the mainstream professional structures was limited.

When heterodox and mainstream economic historians did interact, it was often hostile. In 1975 and 1976, \textit{Labour History} ran a series of articles where Snooks (representing mainstream economic history) went toe-to-toe with political economists Clark, Tim Rowse and Bruce McFarlane on the integration of Noel Butlin’s work with a Marxist or heterodox socio-political frame.\textsuperscript{164} Snooks argued that the New Left presented an inconsistency, as scholars rejected the models of mainstream economics, and yet based their own conclusions on orthodox economic history (which used Keynesian and neoclassical economic theory). Rowse, on the other hand, argued that Butlin’s statistics could be accepted for their merits, while still applying a Marxist frame to interpret the evidence. Clark disagreed with both Snooks and Rowse, arguing that rather than accept or reject Butlin’s conclusions, a radical challenge to Butlin’s authority was necessary to write an authoritative Marxist economic history of Australia.\textsuperscript{165} Clark, a self-confessed radical post-Keynesian, was a source of conflict between the two streams. While Hutchinson has recalled his ‘refreshing’ approach to research and teaching, for the most part he has been remembered as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{162} Buckley supervised Boris Schedvin’s PhD, though Schedvin has recalled that he was only ‘sort of’ involved. He also hardly ever contributed to the journal.
\item \textsuperscript{163} McMichael, \textit{Settlers}, xvi.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Clark, ‘Marx Versus Butlin’.
\end{itemize}
very loud, very critical scholar, as someone who was difficult to get along with, and who ‘impaired’ or ‘spoiled’ the conferences for everyone else. He also criticised the *Australian Economic History Review*, understandably, for not engaging with political economy approaches, and noted the ‘limited utility’ of most economic history research for understanding Australian capitalism.

Ideological battlelines were also drawn around the role of the State. The Canberrans advocated mainstream economic theory in their institutional work. In the image of Schedvin’s *Australia and the Great Depression*, contributors to Noel Butlin and Bob Gregory’s *Recovery* adopted a Keynesian frame, assessing the extent to which government macro-economic management was successful in reducing the timing and extent of the depression, and the speed of recovery. In *Government and Capitalism*, similarly, Butlin and Alan Barnard were both largely in favour of government intervention. Maddock and McLean’s edited work, on the other hand, had a neoclassical, laissez-faire message, arguing that government policies either constrained private activity or made the private sector inefficient. There was some conflict between mainstream institutional scholars based on their advocacy for a Keynesian or neoclassical message, with Pincus recalling that his collaboration with Butlin and Barnard on *Government and Capitalism* was not always a happy one.

While Butlin and Barnard saw government intervention as necessary and progressive, Pincus saw public enterprise as inefficient, monopolistic and semi-exploitative. The latter garnered an apparently ‘hysterical’ reaction from the great sons of postwar reconstruction. Regardless, for those working in mainstream institutional economic history, the efficiency of the market was at the forefront of their analysis, and State action was seen as helping or hindering market operations. This primarily spoke to contemporary economic theory, which reflected the alignment of many economic historians in Canberra with the economics discipline.

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169 Butlin et al., *Government and Capitalism*.
170 Maddock and McLean, *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*.
171 Pincus interview.
Buckley and Wheelwright, on the other hand, advocated for a State that engaged in heavy redistribution of income and a deliberate agenda of improving the lives of common people. They criticised the State for granting monopolies in the economy and for adopting policies that were in neither the long-run economic interest of the nation, nor the interest of common people. Wheelwright outwardly objected to the mainstream institutional approach from the Canberrans, criticising the lack of theory of the capitalist state in *Government and Capitalism*. He commented that ‘the deliberate neglect of Marxist approaches is both unscholarly and incredibly self-limiting’.173 Similarly, Katrina Alford in Melbourne criticised Pincus’s adherence to neoclassical economics and the lack of consideration given to the school’s ‘many substantial criticisms’.174 From the mainstream economic historians, Schedvin has recalled that Wheelwright was ‘trapped’ in the Marxist frame of ‘mocking the class system’, while dismissing Buckley as an ‘old fashioned labour historian’.175

A fragmented community

The expansion of Australia’s higher education sector – and the importance of both business education and compulsory subjects in economic history – created unprecedented institutional space for the field in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Rather than being embedded in larger economics or history groups, members were instead placed in small, separate departments. This encouraged something akin to ‘disciplinary’ growth, with strong collaboration and the development of a similar approach within each enclave. These enclaves demonstrated different disciplinary affiliations, with tension between factions and very little sense of joint enterprise. Professional structures like the *Australian Economic History Review* and the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand provided communicating infrastructures between parent disciplines and the different communities, though commitment to these activities varied. Overall,

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175 Schedvin interview, emphasis mine.
there was uneven integration with parent disciplines, with the place of departments in economics groups encouraging most groups to resemble a subfield of that discipline rather than an interdisciplinary operation.

Rather than the ‘rise’ part of the traditional narrative of Australian economic history, understanding this era in terms of the sociology of university structures highlights the risk of disciplinary growth for interdisciplinary fields. The fragmented community and unbalanced nature of integration was encouraged by small departments and dense hierarchical connections. While these departments did contribute to the field’s stability and command over resources, professional isolation was inappropriate for a connected domain of knowledge like economic history. As such, the field was vulnerable to the institutional, intellectual and leadership challenges that occurred in the 1990s, with Review editors Pincus and Snooks expressing a premonition that ‘the future of economic history […] may well depend upon whether we can present a united front to those who covet the resources we now control’.176

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