The resistance

It is a harrowing experience being in a tiny group whose survival is constantly threatened, and it is depressing when your audience – of students and colleagues – is perpetually small.

Greg Whitwell, 1997

In late 1997, authors for a special issue of the *Australian Economic History Review* mourned the death of Australian economic history. Stephen Nicholas, Greg Whitwell and Chris Lloyd discussed the current state and possible futures for the field. They were acutely aware of their status as the ‘poor cousins’ of business faculties, and that their careers were characterised by a ‘vain quest for students and recognition’. The future of teaching economic history was ‘bleak’, it was ‘impossible’ for economic history to attract students on its own, and it was altogether far too late to convince other disciplines of the subject’s pedagogical relevance. Members of the field have spoken like soldiers at war – they recalled fending off ‘attacks’, they were ‘defeated in battle’ and they felt they were the ‘collateral damage’ of the institutional changes around them. Despite this, many still had fight left in them, acknowledging their role in, as Barrie Dyster put it, ‘the resistance’.

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4 Dyster; Frost; Ville; Keneley interviews with author. Unless otherwise specified, interviews cited are those conducted by the author: see Appendix for details.
It was the end of economic history’s moment in the sun. The field had had around 20 years of stability – between finalising the ‘full suite’ of departments in the early 1970s, to the contraction of appointments from the early 1990s. Within just over a decade there were no departments left: La Trobe added its department in 1990, but lost it again only two years later. Flinders lost their department the same year, Monash followed in 1993, Melbourne in 1995, the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in 1996, The Australian National University (ANU) Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS) and the University of New England (UNE) in 1998, the RSSS Faculties in 2000 and finally Sydney in 2003. The loss of departments meant that vacant chairs and appointments went unfilled, and students were rarely exposed to economic history in the curriculum. This cut off the main pipeline for generational renewal. When elder members of the field moved on to larger governance roles, retired or, sadly, passed on, there were very few scholars coming through at the entry level to replace them. There were small numbers hired from PhD programs, and some recruited from overseas, but the number of dedicated appointments in Australia declined from a peak of 56 in 1982, to seven at the end of the millennium and zero shortly after. As Alford has argued, economic history was ‘declared effectively at the status of the yellow-bellied potoroo by the early 2000s’.

The focus on departments and dedicated appointments as measures of economic history’s progress has resulted in despondent reflections on this time. Whether writing or speaking during the 1990s or later, this period is generally considered ‘the fall’ part of the narrative. Economic history has been seen as largely passive to institutional changes, unable to stem the tide of modern neoliberal universities. There is very little discussion of the challenges that the field, in part, created, and no systematic assessment of the extent of intellectual disconnect between economic history and its parent disciplines. This chapter reimagines this period of the field’s history, seeing members as active participants rather than passive agents.

5  See Appendix, based on Commonwealth University Calendars. I have quoted a year range here, because the departments were closed or merged at some point between the survey for one Calendar and the next.
5  This issue, in part, preceded the loss of departments, with very few domestic postgraduate students, and a general hiring freeze from around 1980. See Chapter 4.
6  Alford interview.
In examining the reasons for the crisis, it attends to the combination of intellectual and leadership factors that compounded the challenging Dawkins-era environment. It also assesses, for the first time, the initiatives taken by members of the field to ensure that, once the crisis had passed, there still was an economic history field in Australia. As with the period prior to the Butlin revolution, this chapter and the next encourages us to consider the success of interdisciplinary fields in broader terms than simply those dictated by disciplines.

The crisis in Australian economic history

Institutional

Economic history was one of many casualties of Australia’s neoliberal higher education reform. John Dawkins was appointed the federal minister for education, employment and training in Bob Hawke’s Labor government from 1987, and he swiftly set about seeking advice from a select group of higher education leaders about policy reform. Dawkins and his team published their green paper in the same year, and the 1988 white paper of proposed reform is ‘memorialised by the higher education sector like a kind of perverted Bastille Day’. The suite of policies was intended to increase capacity and upgrade the skills of the workforce, as the foundation for a flexible, innovative, resourceful knowledge economy. Similar trends were experienced in many other Western countries from the 1980s onwards, built on the principles of the ‘New Public Management’, which argued that academics, like other professionals, require monitoring and incentives to improve their performance. The Dawkins reforms were


The Dawkins reforms introduced deregulation and competition, treating each university like any other trading entity in a free market. Institutions began to compete for student income through a new system of tertiary fees (Higher Education Contribution Scheme [HECS]), with Dawkins hoping that a competitive teaching environment would encourage institutions to diversify courses, respond to signals from the job market, and improve the quality, relevance and usefulness of their instruction. The result was a vastly different higher education sector. Smaller institutions were amalgamated, technical colleges were converted into universities, and student numbers almost doubled in the decade to 1996.\footnote{Hannah Forsyth, \textit{A History of the Modern Australian University} (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2014); Schofer and Meyer, ‘Worldwide Expansion’.} Universities also expanded their competition for federal research funds through the newly formed Australian Research Council (ARC). Formal measurement systems were used to evaluate performance and distribute funding based on alignment with national and market priorities, in the hope that it would encourage higher quality and more ‘useful’ research.\footnote{Woelert and Yates, ‘Too Little and Too Much Trust’.}

These reforms moved universities towards commercial language and corporate techniques designed to make the most of these new ‘markets’ for students and research. Collegial structures gave way to the control of managers and executives, where power lay with those administering the budget rather than those conducting the university’s core business. Students were paying for their education, so they became ‘customers’ or ‘consumers’ of the university ‘product’; a product that now needed to be branded and valued on the market. Research was evaluated in terms of traditional peer review, inter- and intranational rankings, in addition to the new, literal dollar amount it was able to bring to the university’s bottom line. Rather than the guardians of independent knowledge and the public good, universities came to resemble corporations.

Corporatised universities, particularly the competition for students, were hostile terrain for Australia’s economic historians. Throughout the postwar period, scholars’ research in economic history was largely supported by
their teaching activities – by large introductory courses elected or required for economics and business degrees. Some of these first-year students flowed through to upper-level undergraduate and postgraduate education, maintaining the student base, and the steady generational renewal of economic historians (see Chapter 4). The introduction of student fee income meant that departments and faculties now actively competed for students. Previously, electives across faculties were encouraged, and provided a good space for economic historians to operate. They were able to leverage both the compulsory subjects within economics or commerce degrees, and the more casual interest from history or politics students.14 Several economic historians identified the ‘ideological shift’ in university management towards efficiency, competition and market forces.15 Electives across faculties were discouraged to maintain each group’s income. Often these ‘trade barriers’ were subtle – faculties did not necessarily prevent students from taking certain subjects, but they changed the prerequisites or credit points to make it very inconvenient to take courses elsewhere.16

The Scottish model, already dominant within Australian universities, became more robust under Dawkins. The emphasis on vocational education encouraged degrees tied to professional accreditation, with students in accounting, management and finance expanding quickly, while subjects in economics suffered. For example, the number of business students in Australia trebled in the 1990s and 2000s, whereas economics enrolments consistently declined.17 Further, much of the expansion of business enrolments at Australian universities was from international students, who paid higher fees.18 In neoliberal universities, whoever has the students has the money, and whoever has the money has the power. Those in the newer business disciplines found themselves with the power to decide the curriculum of most commerce or business graduates.

14 Dyster interview.
15 Maddock; Lloyd; Dyster; Nicholas; Oxley/Meredith interviews.
16 Oxley/Meredith interview.
Accounting and finance groups had very little interest in economics, and Nicholas rightly commented that ‘economists will not protect us at the expense of their own discipline’. Economic history became, partly, a pawn for economists to send to the front, to take the initial onslaught on budgets and student numbers. Lionel Frost has recalled the ‘bitter divide’ between members of the business faculty and the economists at La Trobe during the 1990s. The accountants apparently insisted that only a minimal amount of economics needed to be in the program. Under threat, and with their own challenges in attracting students, economists often responded first by removing first-year economic history requirements. At UNSW, the economic history group taught a quarter of compulsory first-year subjects in the Bachelor of Commerce throughout the 1970s and 1980s, along with several other second- and third-year courses. By the 1980s, Barrie Dyster has recalled, faculty management stripped away one of the compulsory subjects, and by 2000 students had a single (non-compulsory) economic history course. In an exceptional case, members of the accounting discipline were allies for economic historians. Simon Ville, a British-born economic historian who, in 1991, migrated to Australia as the new head of the ANU Faculties department, has recalled making a deal with the accountants. The head of the Department of Accounting and Finance – accounting historian Russell Craig – was supportive of economic history, and Ville convinced him to support required first-year economics and economic history subjects. This essentially halved the compulsory economics students, and maintained those studying (and teaching) economic history. Apparently, the economists ‘were just totally dumbstruck, they couldn’t believe anybody could do something so wicked’. This was the exception rather than the rule, with most compulsory economic history subjects squeezed out by new business courses and economics groups under threat, and alternative pathways through arts or social sciences degrees discouraged to maintain each group’s budget.

New university structures also contributed to a reduction in the number of graduate students. This was, in part, through a lack of undergraduate subjects, with interest at the undergraduate level the way most entered the profession. Additionally, the territorial and increasingly credentialised nature of disciplines in Dawkins-era universities meant that students faced

20 Dyster interview.
21 Ville interview.
new barriers to enrolling in an economic history doctorate from outside commerce or business faculties. Dyster has recalled that, although students would still find their way to his supervision through ‘very circuitous routes’, by the 1990s, the Commerce Faculty at UNSW would no longer accept them as graduate students, as they ‘didn’t have the prerequisites which the faculty now saw as crucial’.²²

Research funding was a saving grace of Australian economic history at this time. During the Dawkins reforms, the government reduced the discretionary research funding given to universities, and increased funds allocated competitively through the ARC.²³ Although some ARC procedures reinforce disciplinary knowledge (see Chapter 6), funding played a major role in sustaining Australian economic history in the 1990s and 2000s. Ville has recalled that ARC funding allowed him to do most of his major research projects during the resistance.²⁴ ARC funding enabled Merrett and Ville’s work on cartels and wool marketing, Frost’s research on Australia’s Inland Corridor, Andy Seltzer’s research on labour markets, Nicholas’s examination of foreign investment, and social and economic historian Hamish Maxwell-Stewart’s work on convicts and anthropometric history. ARC projects also enabled major endeavours in Indigenous economic history at this time, as well as much of Oxley’s early career work. For example, Oxley was awarded several ARC fellowships throughout the 1990s and 2000s, when there were very few lectureships advertised. Although Oxley identified the challenges of successive ARC positions – namely medium-term precarity and restricted career progression – it ultimately enabled her to develop a research profile through which she was awarded a post at Oxford in 2007.²⁵ The ARC was a lifeline for some, though on the whole the income generated by economic history departments was much less than required for academic salaries and administration costs. University managers – under their own pressure to balance budgets – saw ‘deficit’ departments such as economic history as non-essential and forced their closure.

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²² Dyster interview.
²³ The ARC was established in 1988. University medical research is funded separately through the National Health and Medical Research Council (the NHMRC).
²⁴ Ville interview.
²⁵ Oxley/Meredith interview.
Identity

The closure of departments was the most visible symptom of Dawkins-era change. It thus appeared to those observing that the poor fortunes of Australian economic history were primarily due to declining resources for higher education and the implementation of neoliberal policies. For example, in the 1997 special issue of the *Australian Economic History Review*, Nicholas argued that changes to universities meant there was no teaching future – and subsequently no departmental future – for economic history. Whitwell similarly invoked the funding gap between student income and staff costs as the primary reason for the closure of departments. Lloyd agreed that ‘the crisis seems to be largely an institutional one’, drawn from declining resources in the higher education sector and the politics of disciplinary rivalries.  

Members of the field had a short memory – in the late 1980s the editors of the *Review*, Pincus and Snooks, advocated for broader content and engagement as key to the field’s future. They were right to be concerned. As outlined in the previous chapter, with the exception of those in Melbourne, Australia’s economic historians published work that was increasingly tied to the interests and methods of the economics discipline. Particularly in the 1980s, major joint projects out of ANU and UNSW adopted an economics framework, collaborated with economists and were designed with an economics audience in mind. Fewer key themes were represented, and there was tension with heterodox approaches from political economists and labour historians. The field was also largely isolated from global conversations on economic history, looking, for the most part, to the US for professional and intellectual connections. Pincus and Snooks identified issues with the *Review’s* geographic scope in the late 1980s, with the journal narrowing from a range of international contributors throughout the 1960s and 1970s to, in the 1980s, authors representing only New Zealand, the UK and the US.

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In the late 1990s there was only partial acknowledgment of the intellectual factors responsible for the status of Australian economic history. Whitwell identified that economic history needed to broaden its scope and readership (particularly towards business, management and marketing groups), but argued that this was 'born out of necessity' rather than a contributor to the crisis itself.\(^{28}\) While Nicholas argued that scholars had ‘failed to convince other disciplines that economic history is relevant’, this was in the context of teaching. Regarding research, Nicholas was positive, quoting the external reviewers who had evaluated the University of Melbourne’s economic history research profile as ‘world class’.\(^{29}\) Lloyd came closest to identifying the field’s intellectual challenges, arguing that the crisis was due to the ‘failure of economic history to entrench itself as an essential component of both economics and social science more generally’.\(^{30}\) Even then, Lloyd’s comments betray a social science aspiration for the field. A future for the field in the history discipline was not pursued nor even truly considered. Some were outright dismissive of economic history in the humanities, with Nicholas arguing that it was ‘unlikely that historians can be convinced of the usefulness of economic history’ due to the discipline’s ‘increasingly feminist, postmodern and deconstructionist approaches’.\(^{31}\) Engagement with this parent discipline was also conspicuously absent from recommendations in the 2004 and 2007 reflections on the field’s state of practice, with McLean and Shanahan reporting in 2007 that ‘surprisingly, there was no discussion at the forum or in the essays about the relationship with the history discipline’.\(^{32}\)

Internal disregard for connections with history was met with intellectual challenges from both economists and mainstream historians. By rights, economic history should have remained a core aspect of Australian economics. Economic historians had good relationships and patronage from economists since the interwar period, with postwar Keynesianism then providing methodological and intellectual congruence with Noel Butlin’s orthodox school. Those in Canberra, and the group at UNSW, made the transition to cliometrics and the new neoclassical paradigm, incorporating frontier theories, data and mathematical techniques.

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29 Nicholas, ‘The Future of Economic History’.
30 Lloyd, ‘Core of Social Science?’, 256.
These scholars used similar techniques and frameworks as economists, but with a historical or long-run timescale. The economics discipline seemed supportive during the 1980s, indeed scholars like Bob Gregory co-edited economic history research, and in 1989 the *Economic Record* ran a special issue on new work in economic history. In 1993, the Nobel Prize for economics was won by two US economic historians, Robert Fogel and Douglass C. North, leading to unprecedented interest globally in cliometrics. Engagement between economists and economic historians on institutions, the environment, technological change, demography, path dependence and so on throughout the 1990s and 2000s provided plenty of common ground between the two groups.\(^{33}\)

Despite these factors supporting the place of economic history in Australian economics, it became marginalised in the discipline. This was, in part, the result of a general narrowing of mainstream Australian economics, away from the study of context, business cycles and comparative economic systems, and towards a rigorous, mathematical neoclassical program.\(^{34}\)

Based on a survey of economics curricula at Australian universities between 1980 and 2011, Tim Thornton found 14 per cent growth in subjects classified as neoclassical economics, econometrics and mathematical methods, and a decline of almost 17 per cent in broader ‘economics as a social science’ subjects such as economic history, the history of economic thought, comparative economic systems, heterodox economics and so on.\(^{35}\) Economic history experienced the largest decline of any of the categories, with 14.1 per cent fewer subjects in 2011 compared to 1980.\(^{36}\)

There was also a narrowing of work published in the key Australian economics journal, *Economic Record*. Using a fairly broad brush, there was a decline in the number of historical articles in the *Record*, from 25

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36 Thornton, ‘Economics Curriculum’. To compare, the history of economic thought experienced a 1.4 per cent decline.
in the 1970s, to only 15 and 16 in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively.\textsuperscript{37} Alex Millmow and Jacqueline Tuck found a similar trend, that although economic history featured relatively prominently in the \textit{Record} between 1960 and 2009 (10.1 per cent of articles on average), in their most recent five years, only 2 per cent of articles were coded as economic history.\textsuperscript{38}

It is difficult to pinpoint the reason for this narrowing. It was, in part, due to expectations set in the metropole, with similar trends experienced in US economics departments.\textsuperscript{39} The ‘philosophical overhang’ of logical positivism within economics globally, which became increasingly influential in the latter half of the twentieth century, constructed an identity for economists as ‘scientists’ concerned with evidence-based explanations of observable phenomena, and the continual, linear improvement of practice and theory over time.\textsuperscript{40} Logical positivism, by seeking the ‘best’ theory and method, is fundamentally antithetical to pluralism or interdisciplinarity, perceiving work that adopts different approaches as less ‘scientific’. A positivist paradigm is also specifically antithetical to historical approaches such as economic history, as history looks backwards (rather than forwards) for its insights.\textsuperscript{41}

This was probably a frustrating paradox. Those who did not adhere to the approach and methods of neoclassical economics were dismissed as less scientific or ‘not real economists’.\textsuperscript{42} However, those cliometricians who did meet the expectations of the economics discipline were tolerated, but not advocated for. Pincus, for example, has recalled that at one point during his tenure in Butlin’s department at ANU, he tried to move to economics, only to be told by economist Fred Gruen that ‘you contribute to my department, you write some economics, why would I move you over and have to pay for you?’.\textsuperscript{43} Scholars were also met with the identity

\textsuperscript{37} Historical, in this case, means either a historical time period, or longitudinal work covering more than 20 years.
\textsuperscript{39} Keneley and Hellier, ‘Market Oriented Approach’; Docherty, ‘The Role of Economic History’.
\textsuperscript{41} Thornton, ‘Narrowing’.
\textsuperscript{42} Alford interview.
\textsuperscript{43} A similar conversation apparently also occurred with Keith Hancock, the head of economics at Flinders while Pincus was there in the 1980s. See Pincus interview.
crisis of losing their distinctiveness. This was common in many contexts around the world, with scholars concerned that in their attempt to mimic neoclassical paradigms, cliometricians were perceived as simply a subset of applied economics. For Australia, Nicholas has commented that:

If [economic historians] are nothing more than economists, using bad data, you know, what sort of scope is there going to be for economists to find value?

The Dawkins-era institutional structure compounded these identity issues, with many economic historians looking and sounding like economists, but administratively separate from the department and teaching structure. With the need for departments to be territorial over students and funding, economic history units were easy to jettison: they either closely overlapped with core economics units, or were not considered sufficiently rigorous for professional economics training. This ‘same but separate’ mentality, created by the departmental structure, explains the comparatively worse outcomes experienced by the Australian economic history curriculum, compared to history of economic thought, or economic historians in, say, the US, both of which were integrated into economics groups. Ian McLean identified the risks associated with separate departments, arguing that it was easier for members to ‘fall through the cracks’.

The outlook was frosty from historians as well. Historians had once engaged in genuine dialogue with economic historians, with interwar scholars moving between groups, and the postwar focus on urban, social and labour history providing good space for the inclusion of economic matters. From the late 1980s, the cultural turn opened a major interstice between economic history and history. As with the forces acting on the Australian economics discipline, this too was imported from the metropole, with postmodern transformations of Marxism and the Annales school combining with developments in poststructuralism, linguistics, literary criticism and anthropology. The result was the ‘new cultural history’ that moved many historians away from the large, often ‘faceless’ structures of economic, social and labour history, and towards the

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45 Nicholas interview.
46 McLean interview.
‘investigation of the contextually situated production and transmission of meaning’. For some, the previous Marxist focus on the proletariat subaltern expanded to include contextually contingent approaches to understanding gender, sexuality and ethnicity. For others, microhistories of single neighbourhoods or factories rejected the class metanarratives of labour and social history to examine the specificity of identity and power in that area. Adopting a cultural approach with a postcolonial lens lent itself to comparative studies of empire and colonial encounter, while maintaining a focus on contextual specificity and the use of cultural evidence such as discourse. Although these intellectual trends were common, and influenced economic history in the US and Europe, Hannah Forsyth and Sophie Loy-Wilson have argued they had particular importance in Australian history, so much so that Richard White argued in the late 1990s that ‘the study of culture was the study of Australia’.

As historians lost confidence in materiality, their interest in the economy declined. The usefulness of structures such as work, occupation, industry, money and class was challenged in favour of other aspects of identity such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and place. The poststructuralist approach – highlighting the interpretive and intertextual nature of evidence, and focusing on linguistic and discursive sources – also challenged the positivist and empirical methods favoured by economic historians.

Even though Australian economic history was comparatively less wedded to cliometrics, the orthodox use of quantitative data was seen as limited

50 Curthoys, ‘Labour History’.
in its ability to reveal identities and power.\textsuperscript{51} At the same time, cultural historians’ discourse and linguistic methods were distinct from the functionalist use of primary source language in work on, say, the history of economic policy.\textsuperscript{52} In the US, business history provided an opportunity for common ground between economic and cultural historians at this time, with scholars such as Kenneth Lipartito and others moving away from the ‘structuralist–functionalist’ Chandlerian revolution and towards understanding cultural practices, systems of meaning and entrepreneurial decision-making.\textsuperscript{53} However, in Australia, the small group of business historians were still firmly embedded in Chandlerian work for much of the 1990s and 2000s (see below).

Cultural historians did not deride or dismiss economic history, they simply ignored it. They were not only examining disparate events, actors and processes, but were using different methods to do so. The cultural turn beleaguered social and labour historians as well, with the latter mourning their own ‘death’ in much the same way that economic historians did at the time.\textsuperscript{54} However, social and labour history fared considerably better within the history discipline, as some made inroads with cultural history by converting their work on material matters to interest in communities, identities and language.\textsuperscript{55} As Tom Mackay has found for the 2000s, the Australian history curriculum, contents of key journals and the Australian Historical Association prizes all came to represent cultural history, ‘excepting perhaps the presence of a few social and labour histories’.\textsuperscript{56} There was the occasional piece of economic history published in relevant history journals (see below), but they were far from mainstream. Articles were generally isolated, absent of comment, special issues or further

\textsuperscript{51} Forsyth and Loy-Wilson, ‘New Materialism’.
\textsuperscript{52} For example, Greg Whitwell, \textit{The Treasury Line} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).
\textsuperscript{55} Curthoys, ‘Labour History’.
\textsuperscript{56} Mackay, ‘Cultural Abundance, Economic Scarcity’, 88.
contributions. This compared to work on gender, Indigenous, migration and sexuality histories, which were rightly treated to collective and sustained comment in key history journals.

The disconnect between economic and cultural history thus occurred on multiple fronts: cultural historians actively ignored economic matters and came to favour very different methods and sources. Economic historians, for their part, dismissed cultural approaches and ignored the opportunities they had to develop common ground. The field put lots of its eggs in the economics basket, spending the better part of four decades developing close intellectual and professional relationships with that discipline. They were thus extremely vulnerable to the institutional and intellectual changes in economics, and lacked a basis on which to bargain with other groups. The Dawkins-era reforms were, in part, a catalyst that exposed existing vulnerabilities in the way Australian economic history was organised.

**Leadership**

Compounding the field’s institutional and intellectual challenges was conservatism and a lack of collective action from the field’s leaders. Retirements, or ‘natural attrition’, was a key avenue through which the ranks of Australian economic historians declined. Colin Forster retired from the ANU Faculties in 1991, with other longstanding members of the department retiring gradually over the remainder of the decade. John McCarty retired in 1996, and died two years later in 1998. Stephen Salsbury at the University of Sydney died the same year. Malcolm Falkus was head of the economic history department at UNE until it was folded into economics in 1998. He promptly retired in 2000, on the day he turned 60 and apparently to the surprise of his colleagues. Some of these positions were filled, with Ville hired to the ANU Faculties to replace Forster. On faculty instructions, Ville attempted to hire a God Professor, though the search failed and eventually the money was used to hire two junior scholars instead (Pierre van der Eng and Grant Fleming). Andrew ‘Andy’ Seltzer completed his PhD in North America, and was appointed to the economic history department at the University of Melbourne in

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60 Ville interview.
1994. Most of the chairs were never replaced, as departments were in the process of being absorbed into economics, and new hires were made into that discipline rather than specifically to an economic history position.

Some moved out of traditional academic research roles to different industries or overseas. Boris Schedvin, by all reports a warrior for economic history at faculty meetings, accepted a position as deputy vice chancellor at Melbourne in 1991. Nicholas was brought in as his replacement shortly after. Wray Vamplew took a position as pro-vice chancellor at Flinders in the early 1990s, before moving back to the UK in 1993. From the late 1980s, Shergold, Withers, Pincus, Maddock and Diane Sydenham left the sector for high-profile positions in banking and the government. Oxley had a very ‘troubled career’ in Australia. After several short-term contracts at Melbourne, and fellowships on ARC grants, Oxley and Meredith decided to move to the UK where Oxley took up a post in economic and social history at Oxford in 2007.

Arguably the biggest change was at ANU. In April 1991, Noel Butlin passed away in Canberra from complications associated with long-term melanoma and leukaemia. He worked almost until the day he passed, leaving two posthumous works to be completed by his son Matthew Butlin, an economist and economic historian in his own right. Matthew has recalled the process of publishing his father’s final works as ‘sad but […] rewarding’. For Economics and the Dreamtime, the work was largely completed, with Butlin ordering that ‘no word be changed’, though he allowed Matthew some rope to complete the subsequent volume, Forming a Colonial Economy. Matthew has remembered that in the time before Noel died, they had a number of conversations about the shape of these...
two books. The preface and acknowledgments of *Dreamtime* read as urgent – Noel seemed aware that his time was almost up, and he aimed to finish what he started in the 1950s by providing a complete account of the continent’s economic development. *Dreamtime* extended the analysis of his 1983 work on the Indigenous population, *Our Original Aggression*, on the assumption that with a revised understanding of the pre-invasion population, it followed that ‘we had been the inheritors of enormous Aboriginal effort, most of which was adapted and discarded and their society destroyed’.

Butlin outlined the arrival and settlement of Aboriginal people, the structuring of their economy, the intrusion of Europeans and the ways that Aboriginal resources were absorbed. His approach was ‘speculative and counterfactual’ rather than definitive, proposing avenues for further research rather than the final word. He incorporated demographic and scientific research regarding the migration of Aboriginal people and the decline of the population following European invasion. His analysis of the nature of the Aboriginal economy is based on a simple production function model, with dynamic elements given through the division of labour, intergenerational transfers, structural change and technological change. The nature of the written record for the period of analysis meant Butlin was forced to give up most of his adherence to official sources, instead contributing through the application of orthodox economic ideas to the nature and change of the Aboriginal population.

Butlin’s *Forming a Colonial Economy* was a sparsely populated manuscript, but connected his interest in the Aboriginal economy with his early contribution on Australia’s economic history of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Building on the work he had done throughout the 1980s to expand his national accounting estimates back to 1788, Butlin examined the economic history of the Australian colonies up to 1840, focusing on the interdependence between imperial Britain and colonial Australia, and the procedure through which a rich Western economy had arisen in an unlikely place. His major conclusion was that the national income of the colonial economy only reached the level of the pre-invasion

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68 These conversations were memorialised in a series of recorded tapes, but Matthew has commented that he (understandably enough) never went back to listen to them. See Matthew Butlin interview.  
70 Butlin, *Dreamtime*, 9.  
Indigenous population by 1850. The approach was familiar: he presented aggregate quantitative material with a narrative organised around the factors of production – from Britain came money and people, which set about exploiting Australia’s natural capabilities. His estimates (really, ‘guestimates’) of the size of the Indigenous and early colonial economies were bold, as was his ability to reconstruct detailed economic relationships on the basis of sparse records. It was a fitting coda to an innovative life.

Noel was one of the most creative scholars of his generation. Although known for his very mainstream national income accounting method, his body of work demonstrates remarkable disciplinary breadth. Butlin was also very skilled at accessing and retaining resources for the field, and his ability to secure the Coghlan Chair of economic history is testament to his audacity and resourcefulness. Rod Maddock has recalled that, in the 1970s, Noel convinced ANU to invest the money he earned as a consultant on the Botany Bay Project. The project, sponsored by the Australian Academies of Science, Social Sciences and the Humanities, and in conjunction with both Commonwealth and State governments, aimed to understand Sydney’s large oceanic port, and the resulting concentration of industry and population. Although political conflict and curtailed resources led to disappointing outcomes, the money Butlin earned for leading the project was substantial. At a time of stagflation, where government bonds were earning 15 per cent, Butlin’s initial investment was soon earning a small fortune once inflation fell. The Coghlan Chair was appointed before Noel died, somewhere between 1988 and 1990. Pamela Statham, an economic historian at the University of Western

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74 Maddock interview.
Australia, has recalled that during an 18-month secondment in the RSSS in the late 1980s, she and the other committee member David Pope were encouraged to support the appointment of Graeme Snooks.\textsuperscript{75}

Snooks had a long history of expanding Butlin’s work. His contribution to understanding Western Australia’s long-run economic growth, for example, built regional variation into Butlin’s ‘numbers’ (Chapter 3). Similarly, his discussion with the political economy group in the 1970s defended Butlin’s orthodox contribution against heterodox criticism (Chapter 4). In 1994 came his magnus opus – \textit{Portrait of the Family within the Total Economy}. The work had begun while Snooks was at Flinders in the early 1980s, when Maddock invited him to contribute a conference paper on unpaid work.\textsuperscript{76} Like Butlin before him, the mammoth task of assembling and interpreting the relevant quantitative data was assisted with the resources and funding of the RSSS’s Coghlan Chair.\textsuperscript{77} Snooks included household production in Australia’s national accounts since 1788, proposing a three-sector model comprising the private and public market sectors, and the household sector. He argued that households had outstripped both public and private market sectors in their contribution to national income.

In theme – including the household sector and its interaction with the market economy – Snooks’s work departed quite dramatically from standard economic theory. However, despite his criticism of orthodox economic practice, the work was based on a very orthodox view of human behaviour. In Snooks’s work, the ‘economic man’ seeks to maximise material utility, and the economy is an aggregation of these individual, utility-maximising agents. Snooks’s approach was also mainstream with regards to Australian economic history. The work rested on the reconstruction of national accounts from a range of official government sources, and the use of these new data to reinterpret Australia’s economic past. Snooks advocated for studying one country at a time rather than a comparative approach, and was in favour of understanding ‘real-world processes’ inductively rather than testing economic theory.\textsuperscript{78} Even reviews

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{75} Statham interview.
\bibitem{77} Snooks, \textit{Portrait of the Family}, xv.
\bibitem{78} Snooks, \textit{Portrait of the Family}, 5–10.
\end{thebibliography}
of Snooks’s method were similar to those of Butlin’s ‘numbers’ 30 years prior – colleagues argued that his work was innovative, but drew quite a long bow with regards to the quantitative assumptions.\(^{79}\)

Snooks’s work provided important quantitative infrastructure and continuity of orthodox writings, but squandered opportunities to engage with flourishing work in parent disciplines. Regarding economists, the goalposts had shifted away from orthodox techniques, particularly the focus on business cycles and national income accounting, and towards understanding neoclassical micro-foundations and the use of advanced mathematical techniques. Snooks’s orthodox approach was no longer at the forefront of economics research, as Butlin’s had been in the 1950s. The focus on ‘production’ and flattening the category of ‘households’ across Australia was also disconnected from cultural historians’ work on families and identity, and the use of official quantitative data was at odds with cultural historians’ use of memory, visual and discursive sources to understand the way women and men constructed households and families at different points in time.\(^{80}\) The conservative and binary conception of gender was also distinctive from feminist histories of women and work; indeed Snooks never referred to this literature.\(^{81}\) He advanced a biologically essentialist view of gender roles, assuming primary household workers were female, and that women only had ‘comparative advantage’ in part-time market work combined with household production.\(^{82}\) This was critiqued by feminist economic historians, including Katrina Alford, who argued:


\(^{82}\) Snooks, Portrait of the Family, 81.
Having signalled an intention to embark on a potentially pathbreaking and original journey through economic history, Snooks proceeds to cancel his ticket, as he regresses back to the narrow by-ways of orthodox economics. The considerable potential of this work is not realised as the author resorts to orthodox economic theory on matters to do with the primacy of men, markets and morals in economic history, in Australia and elsewhere.  

Snooks’s intellectual conservatism, with regards to frontier research in both economics and history, was true of other prominent members of the field in the 1990s. The field was dominated by straight, white, men, particularly at leadership levels, contributing to a reluctance to advance women and other minorities not only as practitioners, but also as subjects for study. Women’s work in economic history had been constrained by similar forces to more general employment in academia and the public service, with fewer women qualified at the tertiary level, they were paid unequal salaries and forced to give up work upon marriage until the 1960s. Some worked as long-term research assistants with, for example, Helen Bridge assisting with primary research for economic historians in the ANU Faculties over the course of 30 years, yet only once being half-credited as an author. Similarly, Ruth Inall and Joyce Fisher enabled some of the field’s most celebrated contributions, working with Noel and Syd Butlin, respectively, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in the preparation of their statistical material. Neither were credited as authors.

Women’s increased participation in tertiary education and the paid workforce since the 1970s was slow to change the composition of academia. Men were advantaged by having been qualified for tenured positions in the 1960s and early 1970s, at the time of the sector’s expansion, with women qualifying in greater numbers once the job market had contracted from 1980. In addition to the unequal intake of women at the entry level, due to conscious and unconscious bias, women were also much less likely to be appointed to leadership positions. As such, while there have been several female Australian economic historians since the 1960s, there was rarely more than one woman in a department, and they were never in leadership roles such as department chair or editors of major collaborative work. Helen Hughes, for example, completed her DPhil at the London School of Economics in 1954, with the monograph from this work published in 1964 as *The Australian Iron and Steel Industry* (see Chapter 3). At a time when her male contemporaries, with far less published work, were awarded chairs, Hughes was appointed to several short-term lectureships, including as a research fellow in the ANU Research School of Pacific Studies in the mid-1960s. She left the academy for a successful career at The World Bank, before returning to the ANU Research School of Pacific Studies as a professor in 1983. While Hughes was certainly a fellow traveller of economic history, she experienced greater career mobility as member of the economics discipline, compared to female economic historians. Several of the women interviewed recalled, diplomatically, ‘different’ treatment to their male colleagues, with Alford detailing the ‘misogyny and sexism’ she experienced in Melbourne’s commerce and economics faculty from the mid-1970s to the 1990s.

Intellectual tendrils of the field’s gender bias can be found throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Work in the field rarely addressed gender directly, the exceptions being research on the labour market that was ‘culpable of obscuring and distorting the history of women’s labour in Australia’. In *Convict Workers*, women were seen as administratively separate from

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87 Over and McKenzie, ‘Career Prospects’.
88 Summers, *The Misogyny Factor*.
90 See a discussion of Hughes’s integration with Butlin’s orthodox school in Chapter 3.
91 Hutchinson; Oxley/Meredith interviews.
92 Alford interview.
the rest of the convict labour market, with Oxley examining several thousand female convict indents that were excluded from the rest of the book.\textsuperscript{94} The field’s preoccupation with the orthodox school, particularly the reliance on the statistics of Coghlan and other colonial statisticians, institutionalised gender differences by classifying public, market forms of work as ‘economic’, and domestic work as ‘non-economic’.\textsuperscript{95} Snooks, of course, examined women in his work on households, but did so in the ‘orthodox’ manner that saw them as ‘other’ to market production. Other research on the labour market from the orthodox school adjusted downward Coghlan’s already biased statistics to seriously undervalue the role of female workers.\textsuperscript{96}

This gender binary was redressed, in part, by contributions to Australian feminist economic history. In the 1984 book based on her University of Melbourne DPhil, Alford challenged the implicit assumption, by the majority of (male) economic historians, that Australia’s economic past was entirely occupied by men. She reappraised the field’s ‘infuriating’ discount of the value of women’s work by examining labour usually submerged within the household.\textsuperscript{97} The resulting book, published a decade before Snooks’ work on households, challenged the binary view of women’s economic contribution, and highlighted the importance of understanding women in Australia’s economy.\textsuperscript{98} Oxley also challenged the idea that women were a hinderance to Australia’s economic past, inspired by a stint Alford had on staff at UNSW in the mid-1980s, and the growth of women’s history in general.\textsuperscript{99} For her honours and doctoral projects, Oxley examined the human capital of Australia’s female convicts, arguing

\textsuperscript{94} Oxley/Meredith; Dyster interviews.
\textsuperscript{97} Alford, Production or Reproduction?; Alford interview.
\textsuperscript{98} Alford interview.
\textsuperscript{99} Oxley/Meredith interview.
that, contrary to popular perception, women were not transported for prostitution, but theft – they were young and healthy and possessed useful and transferable skills for the colony.¹⁰⁰

In method, Alford and Oxley were largely congruent with the mainstream economic history field. Both were trained in economic history departments – Alford supervised by Alan Beever at the University of Melbourne, and Oxley by Barrie Dyster at UNSW – and reflected this training in their work. Oxley adopted a cliometric procedure similar to others in the ‘Convict Workers’ project, and Alford demonstrated her familiarity with the Melbourne community by using the sources and techniques of both the orthodox school and the history discipline.¹⁰¹ However, they diverged substantially from the mainstream field in terms of subject. Both were influenced from the growth of women's history at the time, particularly the emphasis on ‘gender as a dynamic in societies’.¹⁰² This aligned with the interest of many contemporary historians in gender and identity. Methodologically, Alford’s criticism of orthodox statistics and her own reconstruction of the value of women’s work also aligned with the post-structural elements of the cultural turn that interrogated the assumptions and bias behind seemingly ‘objective’ quantitative material.¹⁰³ Alford and Oxley’s works were substantial innovations for Australian economic history, and provided concrete links with the history discipline. However, intellectual conservatism from the field’s leaders, and their exclusion of women from leadership structures, meant this approach was unfortunately not carried forward in a substantial way.

The lack of large collaborative work in the 1990s and 2000s was, similarly, the result of conservatism and problems defining the field’s collective vision.¹⁰⁴ There were efforts towards a Cambridge University Press volume on economic history in the 1990s, with leaders agreeing it would

¹⁰¹ Alford, Production or Reproduction? See Chapter 4.
¹⁰² Oxley/Meredith interview.
¹⁰³ See Desley Deacon’s use of a similar frame: Deacon, ‘Political Arithmetic’.
be a fitting festschrift to Noel’s legacy. Bob Jackson and Graeme Snooks worked together, with Jackson editing chapters, and Snooks (through the RSSS economic history program) providing funding. It was not a happy project. Initial drafts of chapters, across two volumes, were presented at the 6th ANU RSSS economic history colloquium in July 1993. Ville has remembered a lack of commitment to the project, with the introduction of the Dawkins reforms reducing the number of scholars and creating anxiety for those who remained.105 Frosts similarly reflected that ‘I thought (and I don’t mind this being quoted), I thought “jeez [sic], we’ve got no hope”’.106

A volume such as the authors were trying to achieve was very vulnerable, simply by being so interconnected. Hutchinson has recalled that one of the main roadblocks, for her, was the lack of distinction between chapters, with her work on twentieth century technological progress dependent on chapters on land, capital and so on. When those authors failed to produce the work, she found it difficult to proceed.107 Ville has similarly argued that edited work such as this can be a house of cards, and that even for the Cambridge volume that did get published (see Chapter 6), even if two or three people didn’t write their chapters, ‘it probably would have stuffed up the whole volume’.108

All but four of the chapters were never completed. At the time, Ville was editor of the Australian Economic History Review, and published the completed chapters for a special issue on the nineteenth century. Bob Jackson wrote an overview, Ville the paper on enterprise, Frost on urbanisation and ANU Faculties economic historian H. M. ‘Mac’ Boot on government.109 Although most of Jackson’s overview was a typically erudite synthesis of the state of knowledge on Australia’s colonial economic history, there were occasional glimpses into his loss at the failed project. In a footnote, he commented that:

105 Ville interview.
106 Frost interview.
107 Hutchinson interview.
108 Ville interview.
I wish to thank those contributors who battled through to deliver revised drafts on time: had more of your fellows done the same the two volumes of the Cambridge economic history would now be in the press.\textsuperscript{110}

The fortunes of the Cambridge volume in the 1990s was a symptom of Australian economic history in the doldrums, rather than the cause. Butlin’s presence was particularly strong, and papers were deliberately situated in the orthodox school. From what survived on the record from this project, the approach was very familiar: the ‘colonial experience’ was centred on a production function that involved resources flowing outwards, people, technology and money flowing in, all of which contributed to a range of subsidiary activities that were often located in cities.\textsuperscript{111} Jackson’s introduction, and Frost and Boot’s contributions, built their narratives around aggregated quantitative material, with supplementary qualitative or archival sources. Frost examined the prominence of the urban centres for Australia’s economic growth, incorporating contemporary contributions from social and urban historians on both the size and density of major cities. Boot’s work on government addressed Noel Butlin’s ‘colonial socialism’ thesis, sticking closely to the orthodox Government and Capitalism interpretation on the benefit of public capital assets, the favourable environment for private decision-makers, but the overall mixed record of government intervention in the economy. Ville’s article was different, and in line with the reappraisal of Australian business history (see below), moving beyond the Keynesian production function to elaborate the micro-foundations necessary to understand the nature of transacting and business organisation. While this work was congruent with the field’s existing character (and the volume’s festschrift intentions), it did not engage with the substantial intellectual changes occurring in either economics or history at the time.

**Adaptation and survival**

The uncertainty of the Dawkins reforms exposed and enhanced anxieties about the future of Australian economic history. Identity and leadership challenges left the field with little basis on which to bargain with parent


\textsuperscript{111} Jackson, ‘Colonial Economies’. 
disciplines, or the collective action needed to defend against the necessities of neoliberal universities. No one could seem to agree if a future for economic history in Australia was possible, let alone what it could look like. However, economic history survived this crisis, in part, by leaning into the reasons for the crisis itself – the transition towards a neoliberal university model forced professional broadening. Just as separate departments and other disciplinary structures encouraged members to look inwards in the post–World War II decades, removing these ‘protections’ forced them to look outwards. The group was smaller, but they were innovative and flexible. They had substantial agency in their professional future, and made concerted efforts to mitigate the field’s vulnerability.

**Living with the neighbours**

Survival required members to expand their professional and intellectual relationships. Post-closure, most scholars were integrated into economics or business groups and, combined with the prevalent logic of economic history as a social science, most worked to secure the field’s future within this paradigm. Economic historians actively established their legitimacy in economics or business schools, by adapting teaching, broadening collaborators, hiring or training new members, and concealing historical work in contemporary teaching and research.

**Economics**

Most members found a home in economics groups. Economic historians at the ANU RSSS, La Trobe, Monash, UNSW and UNE were unilaterally placed in economics, an easy choice considering most economic history departments were already within economics groups, as well as the close intellectual and professional relationships between the two. At Monash, John McCarty was ‘increasingly fretful’ about what to do with the department – whether to *stay* with economics or *go* to history. While Tony Dingle and colleague Geoffrey Spenceley were keen to go to the history group, the historians were under their own budgetary pressures and so the group was eventually folded into economics. In some cases members were given an ultimatum, with Lloyd remembering that at UNE, the options were for economic history to merge with economics,
or for the whole group to be axed.\textsuperscript{114} In other instances, individuals were given a choice, with some members of the ANU Faculties department opting to integrate with economics.\textsuperscript{115} By the time the department at the University of Sydney closed in 2003, the three remaining members went their separate ways, with Hutchinson the only one to move to economics.

These scholars joined many of their colleagues as single members or small clusters of economic historians in large economics groups. For example, at the universities of Western Australia and Queensland, economic historians had been hired within economics groups since the 1950s. Reg Appleyard, Pamela Statham, Melville ‘Mel’ Davies and Ian H. Vanden Driesen formed a cluster of a size to rival the ANU RSSS department. At Queensland, A. G. ‘George’ Kenwood and A. L. ‘Alan’ Lougheed had worked at the interface between economic history and economics since the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{116} La Trobe’s economic history department was remarkably short-lived, and for most of the postwar decades economic historians had worked in economics. Ian McLean actively preferred to work as part of an economics group at the University of Adelaide, and Pincus similarly cultivated a much closer relationship with economics throughout his career. Even before the Flinders department was closed, in 1990 Pincus accepted a position as the professor and head of economics at the University of Adelaide, and throughout the 1990s and 2000s he transitioned to working primarily on contemporary economics research. As of his interview in 2015, Pincus commented that he ‘hadn’t done any economic history for a long time’.\textsuperscript{117} Other members of the same milieu – the Canberran (self-described) economic historians Glenn Withers and Rod Maddock – also moved into the economics discipline from the late 1980s. Both accepted positions at La Trobe’s economics group from the late 1980s, and chose to stay there during the brief window where there was a separate department of economic history. When the time came for economic history at La Trobe to close, Maddock was the Chair of Economics, and was very supportive of the group’s integration back into economics.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{114} Lloyd interview.
\textsuperscript{115} Ville; Cornish interviews.
\textsuperscript{117} Pincus interview.
\textsuperscript{118} Maddock; Withers interviews.
There were several new members hired or trained within economics departments, though this was a coincidence rather than any concerted effort to promote economic history. As Martin Shanahan reflected of the 1990s, ‘if you're applying for the job [...] you just didn't mention history, you were a macro-economist or a micro-economist’. New members were hired as economists, but were able to incorporate some historical work into their teaching and research. Richard Pomfret, for example, arrived as professor of economics at the University of Adelaide in 1992. He maintained his research on contemporary trade and development, as well as collaborating with economic historians on historical research on trade and economics. Also at the University of Adelaide, John K. Wilson completed his DPhil in economics in 2004, before a career in economics at the University of South Australia. At Monash, Gary Magee was hired to the economics group after a brief stint in the ANU RSSS economic history department in the late 1990s. Tim Hatton was appointed directly to the ANU Faculties’ School of Economics in 2004, a comfortable move, as he had ‘always been in economics departments’. Edwyna Harris completed her PhD under the supervision of Merrett and Seltzer in the then Department of Management in the early 2000s, and was hired to the Monash economics group. Several other prominent contributions to economic historical writing at this time were written from the perspective of the economics discipline.

119 Shanahan interview.
121 Hatton interview.
Scholars made concerted efforts to establish their legitimacy in this discipline. As economic history was generally considered marginal or less scientific within economics, members had to make themselves ‘useful’ by teaching contemporary economics courses.\(^\text{124}\) Shanahan, for example, has remembered that those who hired him at the South Australian Institute of Technology were ‘not interested at all in my economic history interests. They were just interested in whether I could teach economics’.\(^\text{125}\) Frost has also recalled the marginal place of economic history teaching at La Trobe, with Head of Department Rod Maddock advising that he would be vulnerable if all he taught was economic history. While Frost was initially ‘horrified’ by Maddock suggesting he teach first-year micro-economics, he was later grateful for the strategic advice.\(^\text{126}\) Maddock has confirmed this, arguing that within La Trobe’s economics department in the 1990s, there was space for economic history research, but scholars had to teach into the so-called ‘core economics curriculum’.\(^\text{127}\) In exceptional cases, economic history units were maintained. For example, after accepting the Chair of Economics at the University of Wollongong in 2000, Ville used his position to leverage a required economic history course within the economics major.\(^\text{128}\) Jeff Borland, a member of the economics department at the University of Melbourne, took responsibility for the required economic history subject when the economic history department rebranded as a business history group (see below). There were thus different fortunes for teaching and research in Australian economic history, with the near-absence of the subject in the curriculum, as Thornton notes, yet the continuation of research in the field.\(^\text{129}\)

Members were also increasingly pressured to adhere to the norms of the economics discipline in their research. This was partly through choice of outlet, with economic historians publishing in key economics journals

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\(^\text{124}\) Statham; Keneley interviews.
\(^\text{125}\) Shanahan interview.
\(^\text{126}\) Frost interview.
\(^\text{127}\) Maddock interview, emphasis mine.
\(^\text{128}\) Ville interview.
\(^\text{129}\) Thornton, ‘Economics Curriculum’.  


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such as *Economic Record*. There were also intellectual changes, with a greater number of contributions to the *Australian Economic History Review* applying contemporary neoclassical theories and advanced mathematical modelling to historical or long-run data. The share of papers in the *Review* containing regressions increased steadily from around 8 per cent in the mid-2000s, to just over 30 per cent a decade later. In particular, orthodox interest in business cycles was brought into core international economics literature through endogenous growth theory. Popular from the 1980s, this framework is neoclassical in its specification, analysing economic growth through micro-foundations such as technology, innovation and human capital. Wilson and Shanahan, both then at the University of South Australia, assessed the role of lobbying and institutions – in their case tariff protection – in colonial Victoria, transforming orthodox-style aggregate data with a regression method to conclude that protection did little to support industrial development in Victoria in the 1870s and 1880s. Economist Jakob Madsen and Edinburgh economic historian David Greasley assessed natural resource extraction and the resource curse hypothesis against frontier research in endogenous growth theory. Harris’s work on property rights for irrigation in northern Victoria also examined resource extraction through micro-foundations such as institutions, game theory and incentive structures. Others, often using regression methods, assessed the role of education and technology...
on Australia’s long-run economic growth. Work on anthropometric history used a cliometric toolkit to address the human capital dimensions of Australia’s long-run growth. This followed earlier interest, particularly from those at UNSW, on slavery (see Chapter 4), with scholars examining historical wellbeing through various heights and weights records.

Collaboration was used to integrate with the core economics discipline. It allowed ‘subcontracting’ for those not trained in the technical skills needed for acceptance by increasingly narrow economics journals, while leveraging economic historians’ abilities in assessing context and sources. Compared to collaboration throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which often occurred within the field, and more specifically within each department (see Chapter 4), partnerships between economic historians and economists were common throughout the 1990s and 2000s. For example, Ville has recalled that he mitigated his ‘sense of vulnerability’ in economics at the University of Wollongong by collaborating with those with complementary quantitative and mathematical skills. Ville’s work with micro-economist Peter Siminski on wellbeing and conscription lotteries was published in *Economic Record*, which was, given the discipline’s narrowing, an unlikely event in the absence of Siminski’s regression expertise.


137 Frost interview.

138 Ville interview.

Once the crisis had settled, most mainstream economic historians saw themselves primarily as members of the economics discipline. In 2007, McLean and Shanahan reported on a forum, held at the annual conference that examined the ‘big questions’ and ‘research challenges’ facing Australasian economic history. Although the discussion was wide-ranging in terms of potential new research themes – including government policy, the environment and the Indigenous economy – in terms of disciplinary identity they remained firmly within economics. In commenting that ‘it is likely that the position of economic history within departments of economics will be the key to its long-term viability’, the authors advocated for economic history coursework to be integrated with other areas of the discipline, and to maintain the same level of ‘rigour’ to other advanced economics subjects.  

Although they acknowledged the growing presence of business history and integration with the management discipline, this did not form part of their recommendations for ‘practical responses to [the field’s] challenges’. They also advocated for disciplinary gatekeeping of the field’s entrants, arguing that future ‘quality’ research required advanced skills in economic theory and statistical techniques, alongside ‘careful attention to the graduate training of applicants to entry-level positions in economic history when they arise’.

**Business history**

Some decided to pivot towards business disciplines. Rather than automatically integrating into economics, this represented a more active way for economic historians to ‘resist’ the institutional changes around them. As a result of the small economic and business history communities in Australia, the boundaries between each specialty were porous, with similar appointment and professional structures, and members happily working in both areas. Business history, in the form of commissioned firm ‘biographies’, had been written in Australia since the turn of the twentieth century. Postwar expansion of universities prompted greater interest from professional historians in business history, and while they were often still commissioned by companies, storytellers such as Geoffrey Blainey made the genre more accessible (see Chapter 4). Mainstream economic historians such as Syd Butlin and Alan Barnard also contributed to the field.

143 In interviews, members often conflated the two fields, with Merrett commenting that he ‘hasn’t given a great deal of thought to the boundaries’. See Merrett interview.
throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The orthodox focus on capital investment required an interest in business archives, with Noel Butlin instrumental in obtaining firm records for his private capital estimates (see Chapter 3). The Business Archives Council began publishing Business Archives and History from 1961, which was transferred to the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand (EHSANZ) and renamed the Australian Economic History Review in the late 1960s. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there were several important contributions to business history, but there was a drop in momentum and work was characterised by a lack of innovation, collaboration and international engagement. The business ‘biography’ – the lone scholar creating a narrative of a single company’s progress – dominated until the 1990s.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Merrett and others initiated a reorientation of Australian business history research. Harvard business historian Alfred D. Chandler, whose work dominated global business history from the 1960s, explored the development of large-scale enterprise through an understanding of organisational capabilities, structure, technology and managerialism. Chandler’s research was enormously influential in a variety of disciplines and fields, and he has been credited with increased theoretical specificity for business historical research, and renewed recognition of the value of historical work for management

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147 The Business Archives Council used these records to form the Labour and Business Archive (now the Noel Butlin Archive Centre) at ANU.
5. THE RESISTANCE

research and practice.149 Chandler’s work, and the ensuing debate, was particularly important in business history internationally throughout the 1970s and 1980s; a revolution that had largely passed Australia by.150

Prior to collective efforts towards the so-called ‘new’ business history research, several scholars individually worked within the Chandlerian revolution. Merrett’s research on the corporate strategy and organisational structure of the Australia and New Zealand Bank was directly influenced by Chandler, through colleagues at Monash who gave him a copy of *Strategy and Structure* to read one day at morning tea.151 Ville’s work on British shipping firm Michael Henley and Sons engaged with macro-economic questions on the history of the maritime trade, as well as exploring the development of business practice within the firm.152 He then turned his attention to Australia’s stock and station agents, applying the Chandlerian concept of the multidivisional corporation to argue that these were complex organisations run by competent, modern, professional businesspeople.153 At ANU, Ville hired Grant Fleming in the early 1990s, and they worked together on ‘new’ business history topics.154 Stephen Nicholas, similarly, had a background in the topic, and supervised Diane Hutchinson’s DPhil in business history in the early 1980s.155 Hutchinson’s work in business history focused on technology, organisational structure and entrepreneurship, primarily in manufacturing firms.156

150 Merrett, 'Business Institutions'; Keneley, ‘Reflections’.
151 Merrett interview; David T Merrett, *ANZ Bank: An Official History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985). Lionel Frost also commented that Merrett had been interested in business history for a good while before he started at Monash in the 1980s. See Frost interview.
155 Hutchinson; Nicholas interviews.
The Dawkins reforms created opportunities to further develop this interest in new business history. The move towards a user-pays system – particularly the deregulation of postgraduate course fees – encouraged the growth of business disciplines like management, finance and human resources. The work of Chandler and others had established the usefulness of business history for contemporary theory and practice, and the forced relocation of Australia’s economic and business historians created opportunities to engage with business disciplines in both teaching and research. For example, throughout the 1990s Ville and Gordon Boyce taught international business at ANU and the Queensland University of Technology, respectively, and included a fair amount of historical material in their textbook, The Development of Modern Business.

Facing possible obscurity within economics, the University of Melbourne economic history department pivoted towards business education. Schedvin left the group in 1991 for the deputy vice chancellor role, and Nicholas was hired as his replacement. Nicholas noticed an opportunity to contribute to business education: the Melbourne Business School provided postgraduate instruction, including an Masters of Business Administration (MBA), and there was a separate economics and business faculty that had student demand for business education yet no dedicated management department. Members of the economic history group – including Merrett, Whitwell and Nicholas – were predisposed towards business history and, as Whitwell argued, ‘a very loose approach to the nature and purpose of the discipline’. As such, they decided to rebrand the department and establish a new Masters of International Business to attract students.

The group established their credibility in international business in a similar way to those who moved to economics: by hiring and training new staff, broadening the research agenda and collaborating with relevant colleagues. PhD students supervised by members of the department worked on contemporary and historical business topics with, for example, Andre

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158 Keneley, ‘Reflections’.
160 Nicholas interview.
161 Whitwell, ‘Future Directions’.
The gamble initially paid off, with Nicholas happily reporting a 20–25 per cent increase in student numbers in 1997. However, a short time later, the group was merged with others to form a Department of Management. The same result (a merger) as economic history departments elsewhere prompts the question as to whether they should have bothered. It was, arguably, good work to do, as it kept the group together. A cohesive team was a much better ‘safeguard against marginalisation’ than individuals, and they were able to maintain their collaborative relationships in both international business and more traditional economic history topics. The relative youth of the management discipline meant it had a broader set of acceptable approaches compared to the narrowing of the economics discipline at the time. The Melbourne group aligned with a more diverse approach to the subject, and the work they had done to establish credibility gave them bargaining power in a new and expanding department. An active, if unorthodox, move was preferable to them than none at all.

As a result of these intellectual and administrative changes, Melbourne became the focus of a ‘new’ Australian business history that actively engaged with contemporary, international theory and practice. In 2000, Merrett edited a special issue of *Business History*, consolidating new work on the subject. In the introduction, he made his manifesto for the field clear – it was to be comparative, and it was to be Chandlerian. He argued that, in the 1970s and 1980s, work on the subject had ‘increasingly diverged from international best practice’, lamenting that Chandler’s work had barely made waves across the Pacific. This became a symbol of what was lacking in Australian business history, that ‘bereft of the conceptual advances that were raising business history to new levels of sophistication abroad, Australian work no longer excited the interest of

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Applying a Chandlerian framework to unexplored Australian topics, Merrett and Ville traced the evolution of large-scale enterprises in Australia from World War I until the mid-1960s. This was later expanded to encompass the twentieth century in their monograph with Grant Fleming, *The Big End of Town*. Other contributions were smaller-scale studies of firms or industries that drew on modern theories of firm behaviour. Chandler and the new institutional economics were front-and-centre, as was the comparative context.

The expansion of business history was evident in the field’s structures. Grants from the ARC provided resources to conduct large-scale projects on the history of big business, profitability and cartels. Business historians — including Whitwell, Fleming, van der Eng and Ville — edited the *Australian Economic History Review* between 1996 and 2003, and the journal published work on insurance firms, the professions, advertising and consumer culture, and multinational expansion. Compared to the friction between economic and labour historians in the 1970s, contact between business and industrial relations history was also fruitful. Many labour historians were absorbed into business schools by the 2000s, and were thus similarly motivated to connect with business disciplines such as human resources. The *Review* provided a platform for some of these conversations, including work by key business historians such as Malcolm Abbott and Andre Sammartino, labour historians Charles Fahey and Erik

Eklund, and business scholars Charles Livingstone and Peter Sheldon. The agenda of this era was also set by several pieces that reflected on trends in business history, including accounting history, the history of management, theoretical work on firms and entrepreneurs, and insights from prominent business history archives. In 2007, McLean and Shanahan reported that members of the conference forum emphasised business history as the ‘the principal “area” towards which a refocus was being advocated’, and Glenn Withers has commented that it was ‘how economic history survive[d]’.179

History

As opposed to members’ directed efforts to secure their future within economics and business schools, economic historians did not deliberately make themselves useful to the history discipline. The 1990s and 2000s was a hostile time to engage with most historians, with the cultural turn making it difficult to find common ground. There was also very little institutional imperative to ‘convince’ cultural historians of the value of economic matters, with most economic historians merging with economics or business schools throughout the 1990s. As such, work with the history discipline was done to improve the vibrancy of the research.

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179 McLean and Shanahan, ‘Australasian Economic History’, 306; Withers interview.

180 Robert Aldrich at the University of Sydney, and Robin Haines and Ralph Shlomowitz at Flinders, are the exceptions.
program, rather than to shield against institutional change or establish legitimacy for teaching. Connections were largely on economic historians’ turf, and terms, with the *Australian Economic History Review* acting as a communicating infrastructure to bring together a range of perspectives servicing existing synergies with urban, social and environmental history.

Urban history continued as a key theme in Australian economic history, incorporating both the existing emphasis on industrialisation and urban planning, and the more recent interest in ‘maintain[ing] living standards while not destroying its environment’.\(^{181}\) In 2009, Frost and urban historian Seamus O’Hanlon co-edited a special issue of the *Australian Economic History Review* on ‘New Essays in Urban History’. Contributors included members of Monash’s former economic history group – including Frost and Dingle – as well as several historians.\(^{182}\) The editors attempted to update the work McCarty and Schedvin had initiated 40 years prior, informing broader environmental and policy discussions by discerning lessons across time and place.\(^{183}\) Dingle’s contribution examined the decline of manufacturing in Melbourne using fairly standard orthodox methods. There were some gestures to recent advances in cultural history,\(^{184}\) however, the focus was on urban planning, the environment (as structure) and regional economies rather than a poststructuralist scope. Methodologically, contributors were largely informed by their background in social sciences, incorporating aggregated quantitative evidence rather than discourse.

Work on resources and pollution in urban history aligned with recent advances in environmental history. The study of interactions between human societies and the extreme Australian environment is, of course,

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183 Frost and Hanlon, ‘Urban History’.
184 Cushing, ‘Australia’s Smoke City’; Spearritt, ‘The 200 km City’.
a major component of any history of the continent. In the 1990s, rising concern with human climatic impacts translated to interest in environmental history. This incorporated the insights of the cultural turn to understand the way the environment shaped identities and lived experiences, and the specificity of living not simply in ‘Australia’, but in her myriad different zones. The synergies between these new environmental histories and the cultural turn meant the field gradually became a core component of the history discipline throughout the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁸⁵

Economic historians, on the other hand, had an interest in the environment drawn from the work of economics on resource extraction and externalities. Work by Harris, Madsen and Greasley (above) was demonstrative of an economics perspective for understanding environmental history. In 2008, the EHSANZ selected ‘Responses to Environmental Change’ as the conference theme, exploring the ‘economic responses that past episodes of climate changes triggered’ in periods of pollution, deforestation, drought, flood and disease.¹⁸⁶ The conference was followed in 2010 by a special issue, co-edited by ANU economic historian Pierre van der Eng, on climate and the economy in several international contexts. The editors of the 2010 issue aimed to inform the ‘economics of environmental change’, and contributions were organised around the principles of resource extraction: rent-seeking by lobbying groups, and the efficiency or otherwise of environmental protections.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Deakin economic and business historian Monica Keneley examined land use, rent-seeking and the success of the closer settlement program in the Western District of Victoria.¹⁸⁸ Also in the Review, research on Queensland’s dugong and turtle fisheries included a range of qualitative and oral history sources, though used them to understand the economic imperative of the trade

rather than addressing identities and lived experiences. While this expanded focus on the environment aligned with growing interest from historians on similar issues, at this time it was in service of an economics-based agenda, rather than the cultural–environmental approach from historians.

Mining history also provided space for engagement with the history discipline, with an emphasis on trade, capital investment and employment integrating with some historians’ interest in labour, industrial relations, geography, technology and the environment. There was some professional alignment with the core of the history discipline on these matters, with the Australian Historical Association (AHA) organising their 2001 conference in Kalgoorlie on the history of mining. The EHSANZ partnered with the AHA, organising their conference to be held at the same time, and encouraging cross-submission of papers and joint membership fees. A special issue on the history of mining in the Asia-Pacific followed in the Review in 2005, with another specifically on gold in 2010. While key members of the field – Boyce, Frost and Dingle – edited these volumes, other contributors were members of the history, geography or sociology disciplines in Australia and elsewhere. In the 2010 issue, the authors aimed to integrate ‘histories of migration, trade, colonisation, and environmental history to identify endogenous factors that […] generated sustained economic growth’. Contributions in both issues focused on industry, firm and capital structure, the creation of markets, and aspects of endogenous growth such as innovation and technology. Scholars used a range of qualitative and quantitative sources familiar to economic, social and labour historians, and although some examined individual experiences it was within the framework of understanding production, class and work, rather than identity. These contributions broadened...


economic history’s collaborators and thematic emphasis, though they did so in a way that aligned with mainstream economic history work while doing little to integrate with the majority of the history discipline.

Looking to the world

In addition to expanding the field’s disciplinary focus, members also connected to global conversations. In the 1980s and 1990s, the field was divided between those who worked on overseas research topics and published in international outlets, and those who published in the Review on Australian economic history (see Chapter 4). In addition to internal advocacy for international engagement, particularly from those in Canberra and Adelaide, the introduction of neoliberal university policy incentivised internationalisation of the research program. University managers, rankings and the ARC encouraged overseas conference presentations, international collaborations and contributions to global or regional journals (see Chapter 6). These incentives enabled international travel, particularly to conferences in the European and North American metropoles. Strikingly, attendance at the World Economic History Congress (WEHC), organised by the International Economic History Association (IEHA), went from a rare occurrence to reasonably ubiquitous, with attendance commented on in the Australian Economic History Review throughout the 2000s, and the society changing the dates and location of their annual conference to suit the WEHC schedule. The EHSANZ also engaged with the IEHA by having a representative on their council, and (unsuccessfully) bidding to hold the WEHC in Australia in 2006.

These institutional incentives reinforced existing connections to the US. Ian McLean was an important conduit to North America, commenting that from the mid-1980s, he embedded himself in the more ‘exciting’ US community of economic historians. During the 1990s and 2000s, McLean spent the equivalent of 10 full academic years on secondments,

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192 Pincus and Snooks, ‘Editorial Reflections‘; McLean; Gregory interviews.
193 A bid that was ultimately won by Helsinki. Shanahan; Lloyd interviews.
194 McLean interview.
visiting fellowships and professorships at Harvard, Yale, the University of California – Berkeley, and Stanford, focusing on comparative economic histories of Australia and the US. In outlining recommendations for the field’s future, McLean and Shanahan advocated for the group to be guided by ‘developments in the US universities over the last four decades or so’. They argued that conducting research at the field’s frontier, at a ‘quality’, ‘international standard’, involved the close relationship with the economics discipline that characterised the field in the US. In 2003 the EHSANZ established the annual Noel Butlin lecture, inviting prominent international scholars to the conference, with their lecture then published in the Australian Economic History Review. Much like the visiting scholars program at ANU in the 1980s, this was a key connection between the field’s professional structures and prominent scholars overseas, while also being particularly directed towards those in the US.

Despite the prominence of North American connections for some, others were able to combine a broader set of local, global and comparative perspectives. The professional response to broader internationalisation started in the 1990s with Review editors Pincus and Snooks pivoting the journal towards an Asia-Pacific focus by welcoming ‘articles on other regions, provided that they are of a more general kind’. They promoted greater international readership, appointing international scholars to the editorial committee, and encouraging others to referee, review books and


196 McLean and Shanahan, ‘Australasian Economic History’, 308. They invoked Douglas Irwin’s Butlin Lecture in the same year, in which he commented on the lessons the antipodes could learn from economic history in North America.


submit articles. At the same time, ANU Economic History of Southeast Asia Project (ECHOSEA) began as a five-year ‘strategic initiative’ within the Research School of Pacific Studies. After an initial workshop in 1989, scoping papers were published in a special issue of the *Australian Economic History Review* in 1991, under the editorship of Pincus and Snooks.  

Full-time academic positions on the project, short-term fellowships, workshops and a visiting scholars program enabled joint work, including a book series edited by Graeme Snooks, A. J. S. ‘Tony’ Reid and Anne Booth at ANU, and Malcolm Falkus at UNE. This was a key collaborative space for those in Australia who worked on Southeast Asian economic history.

The next major changes came in 1997, when Whitwell, as editor of the Review, negotiated to publish the journal through major international publisher Blackwell. This utilised Blackwell’s global marketing service, and provided the infrastructure for electronic distribution. In the 2000s, Pierre van der Eng and Stephen Morgan both served as co-editors, contributing their specialties in Asian economic history. Membership of the editorial board at this time expanded to include colleagues in Japan and Korea alongside those in Europe and North America. In 2005, the annual conference was renamed the Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History (APEBH) conference, which, alongside changing the journal’s subtitle, signalled the society’s desire to orient towards regional connections.

Ville has recalled that this first ‘Asia-Pacific’ conference was successful, attracting scholars from Japan, Taiwan and China. Prominent Japanese economic historian Kaoru Sugihara gave the Butlin Lecture in 2006, and a few years later the EHSANZ worked with Sugihara and colleagues Takeshi Yuzawa and Osama Saito to hold the conference outside of

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201 Pierre van der Eng was initially appointed as a postdoctoral fellow in the ECHOSEA group prior to his position in the Faculties economic history department. See van der Eng correspondence, 3 June 2021.

202 Whitwell, ‘Future Directions’.


204 Ville interview.
Australasia for the first time. As the society executive put it, they hoped it would be a ‘further step towards association of economic historians in the Asia-Pacific region’.

These initiatives were effective in internationalising the journal’s research. The share of the journal’s research with an Australian focus declined from 79 per cent in the 1980s to 48 per cent in the 2000s. At the same time, the share of work on New Zealand almost doubled, while Europe and North America remained stable. Pages on Asian topics increased dramatically, from 1 per cent in the 1980s to almost 20 per cent in the 2000s. Comparative research in the Review increased fourfold across the 1990s and 2000s, and there was a growing diversity of affiliations, including scholars from Singapore, Spain, Japan, Denmark and Canada. In the 2000s, 55 per cent of authors had an Australian university affiliation, with 37 per cent based in the metropole or other former settler colonies like New Zealand and Canada. The remaining 9 per cent were based at institutions in Asia. Many contributors were attracted to the publication through international branding and marketing strategies, as well as special issues on comparative or Asia-Pacific economic history. Frost has argued that ‘strengthening links with Asia’ has been crucial for the journal’s survival; that if it ‘remained an Australian economic history journal, it would have died long ago’.

The field’s outward-looking behaviour, ability to engage with international professional structures and pressure to publish work of global interest led to some collective efforts to understand Australia as part of global varieties of capitalism. Lloyd’s work throughout his career emphasised ‘heterodox’ economic history, particularly the field’s status as the intersection of the social sciences. In 2002, Lloyd edited a special issue of the Australian Economic History Review on institutions, policy and

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205 The 2009 conference was held at Gakushuin University in Tokyo, and the 2013 conference was held at Seoul National University in South Korea. See ‘Announcements’, Australian Economic History Review 48, no. 2 (2008); ‘Announcements’, Australian Economic History Review 52, no. 2 (2012).
207 Morgan and Shanahan, ‘Supply of Economic History’, 227.
208 With thanks to Martin Shanahan and Andy Seltzer for the provision of this data.
209 Frost interview.
economic change. In the same year, at the IEHA meeting in Buenos Aires, Lloyd and others began discussing a major collaborative effort to compare the economic histories of various settler colonies. A workshop in Sydney in 2005 brought the group together, as did papers presented at the WEHC conference in Helsinki in 2006. The resulting monograph included Australian economic historians Lloyd, David Meredith, Martin Shanahan, John Wilson and Bernard Attard, and New Zealand economic historian Jim McAloon. Other contributors represented Uruguay, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Spain, France, the US, Canada, South Africa and Israel.

The settler economy framing allowed comparative research that drew links based on socio-political context, natural resources and location. Chapters by those specialised in Australasia set their analysis within a comparative context with, for example, Meredith outlining the high labour requirements for settler economies in Latin America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and examining the various patterns of labour coercion in these areas. Shanahan and Wilson compared wages, labour hours and occupations, between countries and over time, finding substantial differences in the nature and timing of changes to each labour market. Attard examined Wakefeldian flows of capital in the nineteenth century, particularly its role for facilitating settlement and encouraging rural industries. McAloon compared twentieth-century economic policy in Australia and New Zealand, particularly elements of its convergence encouraged by similar industry structures and settler colonial contexts.

Other chapters on immigration, international trade and economic growth embedded Australian research within the settler economy context. The book’s broad comparative and disciplinary scope nodded to Denoon’s earlier socio-economic and political analysis of settler capitalism, with the editors adopting his ability to ‘transcend the explanatorily distorting

boundaries between branches of the social sciences’. Contributors drew on orthodox and other official quantitative statistics, though interpreted this material with a mix of mainstream and heterodox approaches. For example, Shanahan and Wilson’s work on labour markets drew on a neoclassical specification of factor prices, institutions and productivity, while also incorporating the approach of US social scientist Louis Hartz’s ‘fragments’ thesis. Rather than the ‘isolation’ of Australian economic history, through this project and the work of the journal, the field embedded itself in key global economic history conversations.

Conclusions

This chapter was almost called ‘the wilderness’. Many have seen Australian economic history as largely passive at this time; as unfortunately caught in the crossfire of neoliberal universities and the neglect of parent disciplines. The contribution here is to examine the active role Australia’s economic historians played in shaping their own destiny. While they certainly had to negotiate a very uncertain external situation, in both positive and negative ways scholars had some responsibility for the nature of their teaching and research, the progression of mergers, and the manner in which they engaged with parent disciplines. Whether they were defending their patch, mounting an offensive operation or attempting covert tactics, economic historians were creative and innovative in their attempts to survive the field’s crisis in the 1990s and 2000s. This period was undoubtedly traumatic, but it forced scholars to broaden their professional horizons, and expand the field’s limits to demonstrate its value in a very hostile environment.

Much like the interwar period, the era of ‘resistance’ has generally been underrated. Indeed, if one sees disciplinary growth as the gold standard, it is understandable to see this period as a failure. However, this chapter demonstrates that interdisciplinary fields require different measures of success as compared with disciplines. For any discipline, the loss of departments, dispersal of personnel and decline of students would be catastrophic. For this interdisciplinary field, on the other hand, as hard as

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this period was, it encouraged broad, outward-looking behaviour that was necessary to negotiate interdisciplinary relationships. This chapter also demonstrates the value of different types of communicating infrastructures. While disciplines do best with dense connections, strong collaborations and intellectual consistency, interdisciplinary fields have value when they have porous communicating infrastructures that are able to bring together a range of different scholars. Rather than the death of economic history, the period of resistance created opportunities for members to re-establish the field as a meeting place for broad, cross-disciplinary inquiry.
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