

7.0 1850-1885 Pioneer settlers and the Fledgling Timber Industry

7.1 Demographic Settlement

Prior to 1850 all land in the Swan River Colony was disposed of by grant or freehold purchase. However, in 1850 legislation was passed which made for provision for pastoral leases on land more than two miles from the coast, occupied townships or principal rivers. Leases cost 10 shillings per 1,000 acres for an eight year period with the prospect of renewal at the end of the period. As a result settlers began moving into the timber country of the South-West. Grazing leases adjacent to the south coast were also taken up at this period.

In 1852 the Assistant Surveyor Augustus Charles Gregory explored extensively in the Warren Region.¹ Also in 1852, the Muir Brothers explored the eastern part of the region and settled at Deeside, adjacent to Lake Muir. There is evidence to show they started building slab huts as early as 1856.² They obtained their pastoral leases in 1859. The Muir brothers became the first settlers in the Warren District and built their homestead on Deeside in 1866³ with the help of ticket-of-leave men.⁴ In the following decade there was a steady increase in population in the Warren District. Other early settlers included; Charles Rose at Wilgarrup, 1857; Frank Hall at Manjimup Brook, 1858; Thomas Scott at Donnelly River, 1861; Edward Reveley Brockman on the banks of the Warren, 1861; the Moir family in the Crystal Springs area, 1870; Pemberton Walcott and D Lefroy both of North Pemberton, 1862. (The site of D'Arcy Lefroy's grazing property has now grown over and is noted as the 100 years forest in the Shire of Manjimup's Heritage Inventory. However, as the forest is now 125 years old Department of Environment and Conservation refers to it as Founder Forest.) By the 1870s at least a dozen major homesteads in the region were formed and a local community was established.⁵

7.2 Transport and Communication

Settlers arrived by bullock dray along bush tracks. In the 1860s convicts constructed bridges over the Blackwood River at Bridgetown and over the Warren River near the Brockman Homestead (established by Edward Reveley Brockman 1861). At this time there were few roads in the area and those that existed were rough, poorly made tracks. However, these early passages formed the basis for the road network in the area that exists today.

Once the pastoralists recognized a cycle between grazing on the coast and in the inland areas, following the advice of local Aboriginal people, tracks were created by the graziers from their leasehold lands to the coast⁶. Both Wheatley Coast Road and

¹ Berry Ibid

² Historical notes contributed by Doreen Owens – Manjimup Historical Society July 2004.

³ Ibid

⁴ Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation *St Erney's Homestead* 2001

⁵ Berry Ibid and Morris and Underwood 1992

⁶ *Northcliffe Remembers* A Compilation of memories of Northcliffe Residents Printed Dynamic Press Bunbury 1999? page 11

Deeside Coast Rd were original stock routes used to drive cattle and sheep to the coast for summer feed. Also as a consequence of this, stockmen's huts were constructed in the coastal areas.

In 1864 the Blackwood (later Balbarrup) Post Office became part of the home of John Giblett who had settled in the area in 1861.⁷

7.3 Occupations

During this period most properties were largely self sufficient, growing wheat and vegetables as well as running horses cattle and sheep (though grazing sheep was difficult owing to the many poisonous plants⁸ and attacks by dingoes⁹). The earliest exports from the region included beef cattle, horses, dairy produce and kangaroo skins.

The felling of timber was also proving profitable. The collection of timber came from both the need to clear land as well as the growing timber industry. The timber trade was buoyant with markets for jarrah railway sleepers in Eastern Australia and India as well as for telegraph poles needed in South Australia. Once railways began to be built in Western Australia the timber industry expanded even further. *Some of the earliest evidence of timber export can be found in the sawpits at Rest Point. These sawpits were first dug in the 1860s by timber collectors who took the wood and then pulled it out through the forest and took it away by ship at collection points such as Sandy Bay.*

7.4 Social and Civic Life

During the early years the settler's time and energy were directed to survival, consequently there were few community facilities. Family and neighbours had to rely on each other in times of need and for social interaction. Visits between neighbours, church services (held in private homes) and occasional picnics were the main social activities.

7.5 Outside Influences

The introduction of convict transportation in 1850 had a major impact on the entire struggling Swan River Colony. Their effect on the Warren region was twofold. Firstly convicts provided the much-needed labour source to undertake public works programs. Secondly, the arrival of the convicts boosted the local economy through government supply contracts to provide food and materials to the convict work gangs. When convict transportation ceased in 1868 there was a general slowing down of the economy.

The start of railway construction in both the Eastern States and Perth began to have an effect in the Warren region through the establishment of a reliable demand for timber.

⁷ Berry Ibid

⁸ *Northcliffe Remembers* Op.Cit. page 12

⁹ Historical notes contributed by Doreen Owens – Manjimup Historical Society July 2004.

During this period most properties were largely self sufficient growing wheat and vegetables as well as running horses cattle and sheep. The earliest exports from the region included beef cattle, horses, dairy produce, kangaroo skins and sandalwood.