

8.0 1885-1914 Railways and Gold

8.1 Demographic Settlement

The period 1885 to 1914 was a period of considerable increase in settlement in the region. Factors effecting settlement in the Warren District included the development of the transport system in Western Australia, particularly railways. The general growth and prosperity of the state related to the gold rush that occurred with the discovery of gold in the Yilgarn and then Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. The development of the railway system led to an increased demand for hardwood and for jarrah in particular for railway sleepers. There was a general movement of labour to the area to work in the timber industry.

Further settlement and expansion was encouraged, for those wishing to settle on the land, with grants created by the Land Act of 1898. In the early 1900s a number of people arrived in the Warren District (part of the Nelson Roads Board) to take up their allotted 160 acres under the Land Act. One of the families to arrive was the Parsons. Thomas and Edith Parsons built a house, St Erney's, on their selection in 1908 – this property is on the Shire of Manjimup's Municipal heritage Inventory. Other families such as the Wheatleys, Dousts, Clarkes and Youngs were part of the community that contributed to the school and church at Dingup.

By 1900 the earliest timber cutters were moving into the area. Sleepers were cut by hand and then transported by bullock wagon to Bridgetown rail head.¹ However, settlement of the dense timber country to the south did not commence until 1912. The major catalyst was the need for railway sleepers for the Trans Australian railway line and the extension of the railway line to a mill at Jarnadup in 1911 (renamed Jardee in 1924).² The Manjimup Trading Company was first established in 1910.

The area between Pemberton and the coast was occupied by some of the early grazing families who settled and began to establish farms for cattle and horses but was otherwise substantially undeveloped and inaccessible in this period.

Settlement in some of the outlying areas included Frank Skinner Thompson and his family who established a property on Deep River in 1911. They went on to develop a guest house in 1930.

Balbarrup townsite was surveyed and gazetted in 1903³. Migrants from Victoria and from Europe were attracted to the area and a number constructed homesteads and established orchards. Also after the decline of the tin fields at Greenbushes a number of migrants from that area moved into the Warren District. Archimede Fontanini arrived from Greenbushes in 1907.

¹ Historical Notes contributed by John Steward– Manjimup Historical Society July 2004

² Historical Notes contributed by John Steward– Manjimup Historical Society July 2004

³ *Northcliffe Remembers* Op.Cit. page 12

Also in 1907, a tree ringbarking scheme commenced to the west of the area, which later became the townsite of Manjimup. This scheme was conceived by the Minister of Lands James Mitchell as a means of providing work for the unemployed.

With an increasing sense of community the people of the Warren petitioned to administer their own Road Board as early as 1900. However this was not granted until 1908 when the Warren district parted from the Nelson Roads Board.⁴ The first meeting was held in the Warren (later Dingup) Hall. The new Roads Board had no main town centre at this point as Manjimup was not gazetted as a town until 1910, when it began to develop as a service centre for the surrounding region. The first building, also 1910, was the Manjimup Trading Co on the corner of Giblett and Brockman Streets. Other early buildings included the Manjimup Hotel in 1912 and the Workers Hall in 1913.

Pemberton was settled in 1912 after the establishment of the State Saw Mill. Three State Saw Mills were constructed in 1912, No.1 at Deanmill near Manjimup, and No's 2 and 3 at Big Brook (Pemberton).⁵

8.2 Transport and Communication

The development of the railways was the most significant factor effecting transport in this region between 1885 and 1914. The South-West Railway was gradually extended into the region reaching Manjimup in 1911. Railways developed around the timber industry for hauling logs to mills and then the finished timber to ports for export or use. The trains also provided extra chances at social interaction, transport for sporting fixtures and general communication.

Road transport improved in this period with the construction of roads between the various small towns and settlements and the introduction of motor vehicles. Postal services improved in the region with the construction of post offices in many centres. Postal services were transferred to the town of Manjimup from Balbarrup in 1912.⁶

One Tree bridge is an example of the ingenuity needed by the early settlers to transport materials through country side with many gullies, streams and rivers to traverse. Built in 1904, it was used for getting graphite ore across the river to the Bridgetown rail head.⁷ The bridge was later important for the group settlers of the area. It has been preserved by the river and is part of the Shire of Manjimup's Municipal Heritage Inventory.

8.3 Occupations

During this period the settlers in the region were occupied in a diverse range of occupations including various types of farming from cattle and sheep to mixed farming and fruit growing. There was also extensive employment in the timber industry both in the new State Saw Mills, established in 1912, and the forestry section.

⁴ Historical Notes contributed by John Steward Op.Cit.

⁵ Morris, John and Underwood, Roger, *Tall Trees and Tall Tales: Stories of Old Pemberton*, Hesperian Press, WA, 1992.

⁶ Historical notes contributed by John Steward – Manjimup Historical Society July 2004.

⁷ Historical notes contributed by Doreen Owens Op.Cit.

Fruit became an important export crop in the area with developing markets both in Western Australia and overseas. The earliest orchards were located further north in the Bridgetown area. However, by 1903 commercial orchards were in production at Balbarrup.⁸

In 1902-3 exploratory oil drilling was carried out near the mouth of the Warren River by Westralian Mining and Oil Corporation, but this venture met with little success though it did inspire a search for coal as well⁹. In the same period the mining of graphite near Donnelly River took place. Although one load of graphite was shipped to the United Kingdom it was of an inferior quality and mining was abandoned.¹⁰

8.4 Social and Civic Life

During this period Balbarrup was the focus of social interaction with balls and picnics recorded in the area in the 1880s.¹¹ Sports were always popular in the region and these included football, cricket, tennis and rifle shooting.

Church attendance was also important. In 1896, Dingup Church was built by Thomas Giblett. He ensured the church had a fireplace so it could also be used as a school. Dingup Hall was built in 1901.¹² (The Dingup Hall that now stands is a replacement hall built in the 1930s¹³) In the Upper Warren district the community built St Mark's Anglican Church in 1891. This also had the dual purpose of education and religious worship.¹⁴

Visionary planning resulted in the recognition of the Walpole-Nornalup National park in 1910. In this year 920 acres were gazetted as A Class Reserve.

8.5 Outside Influences

In 1886 gold was discovered in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Although these finds proved to be disappointing they were the catalyst for increased migration particularly from the Eastern States which were experiencing a period of economic depression following the end of their gold boom period. In 1892 major finds of gold were recorded at Coolgardie, 500kms east of Perth, and the following decade saw a rapid expansion of the eastern goldfields centred on Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.

Between 1885 and 1895 the population of Western Australia increased from 35,000 to 82,000.¹⁵ At the broader state level, increased prosperity and population led to development including the construction of numerous public buildings and public facilities including the railways.

⁸ Berry Op.Cit

⁹ Historical notes contributed by John Steward Op.Cit.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ *Shire of Manjimup Municipal Heritage Inventory* Heritage and Conservation Professionals 1995.The List

¹⁴ Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation *St Mark's Anglican Church* 2001

¹⁵ Ibid

After the gold boom numerous fortune seekers stayed on settling in various parts of the state and seeking employment in numerous developing industries. In 1898 the Land Act was passed which offered many miners the opportunity to settle on the land. Settlers were offered 160 acres of surveyed land or more in unsurveyed areas as an incentive to settle the rural areas. The government issued *The Settlers Guide* and local committees were set up to advise and assist newcomers.¹⁶

In 1911 the decision was made to construct the trans-Australia railway line. Karri was chosen as the most suitable hardwood for railway sleepers and the State Timber Mills were opened in Deanmill and Big Brook, Pemberton to supply the railways.

¹⁶ Ibid