

9.0 1914-1945 The Timber Industry Dominates

9.1 Demographic Settlement

The period 1914-1945 was characterized by various attempts at group settlements, their failures and their successes. The most significant of these was the Group Settlement Scheme of the 1920s. This scheme was devised by Premier James Mitchell as a means of settling the vast regions of the south-west. The scheme was also a means of assisting Britain by providing a livelihood for migrants in the years following the devastating Great War, World War One. The Group Settlement Scheme was finalized in Bridgetown with an agreement between Premier James Mitchell and Prime Minister WM Hughes in 1921.

In 1921 the first group settlers began to arrive in the area between Bridgetown and Manjimup. The first group to arrive in the Manjimup area settled at Mitchelldean.¹ In the following few years, groups arrived in the region and settled in the areas around Manjimup, Pemberton, Walpole, Northcliffe and Quinninup. Quinninup Group 119 consisting of 17 families arrived in 1924. At its peak of group settlement Quinninup was home to 40 families. Northcliffe, settled in 1924, was the only town ever established purely for the benefit of Group Settlers.² The Group Settlement General Store on Wheatley Coast Rd in Northcliffe has been recognized on the State Register of Heritage Places.

¹ Historical notes contributed by John Steward Op.Cit.

² Ibid.



Group Settler No. 2 company 1922.
Courtesy of George South



**Group settlers clearing Pemberton bush c1922.
Courtesy of George South**

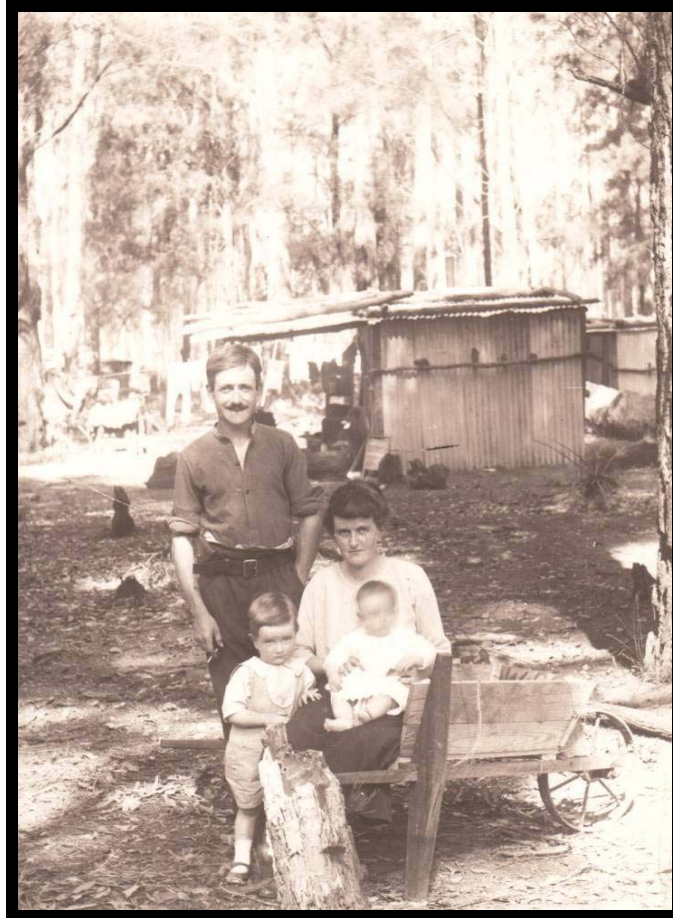


**A typical group settler's cottage in Pemberton c1923
Courtesy of George South**



Settlers from Group No.2 at a Christmas celebration c1923
Courtesy of George South

Despite the large numbers of settlers involved the Group Settlement Scheme was largely a failure. The settlers were inexperienced in agriculture and ill equipped for the hardships of first clearing and then cultivating the forest region. By the 1930s large numbers of them had abandoned their bush blocks and returned to the city.



**George South and his family in front of their shack
just after arriving from England in 1922.
Courtesy of George South**

Another settlement scheme that related to the development of the area was the Special Settlements Scheme designed to provide opportunities for unemployed married men in the 1930s. Under this scheme the Nornalup-Walpole area was established. Walpole was gazetted in 1930. By the 1940s this scheme had also proved largely unsuccessful with numerous original settlers abandoning the area.



**Pioneer Park has been constructed to mark the original settlement in Walpole in 1930.
Heritage TODAY July 2004**



Prior to the Great Depression, there was an increased demand for timber which resulted from accumulated demand from the war years which had gone largely unmet. The resulting surge led to a period of prosperity in Manjimup.

During the 1930s the whole of the state felt the effects of the Depression when world prices for primary produce collapsed. Timber prices also plummeted and demand for timber declined rapidly as a result a number of mills were forced to close. Sadly many struggling settlers were forced off their land. Those that survived this period did so by diversifying their farms or businesses.

Another significant event in this period was the considerable migration from Italy and southern Europe. These migrants tended to be more successful and introduced new industries including tobacco growing to the area. They often took up land abandoned by the group settlers and established successful farms.

9.2 Transport and Communication

Railways remained the main means of transport throughout this period. The railways extended from Bridgetown to Jardee in 1911. In 1914 a rail line operated between Jardee and Big Brook (Pemberton) but it was a State Saw Mill line. Though it took passengers there was no timetable and ran at the discretion of the State Saw Mills management. The line was taken over by Western Australian Government Railways in 1926 and extended to Northcliffe in 1930.³ Further south the railway was extended from Denmark through to Nornalup in 1929, however, was not put all the way through to Walpole. Though Walpole appeared stranded without this vital network the close proximity of Nornalup still increased accessibility to the Walpole area.

³ Ibid.

The period 1910 to 1920 saw the continuation of development of the State Saw Mills and the extension of railway lines throughout not just WA but Australia, thus increasing the demand for WA hardwoods for sleepers. The timber industry became firmly established and the population of the Manjimup district increased further. The timber in one karri tree was estimated to equal the cost of a return trip to Europe at that time. Sleepers from one tree could provide over 1.6 kms of railway line. Karri logs would be hauled into position with steam winch and tractors and locomotives would haul the log rakes to the mill site.⁴ These rail lines were a vital part of timber milling enabling it to be conducted at a large scale over a period of two decades. Today remnant rail lines and often quite majestic bridges (or their ruins) can be seen throughout the Shire of Manjimup.

⁴ Quinninup Eco Centre Information Boards



**Transport used by group settlers c1922.
Courtesy of George South**

One of the most revolutionary introductions to transport in this period was the motor vehicle with the first cars in the south-west arriving just before World War One. However, owing to the cost and the road quality the uptake on personal cars was quite slow. Though many people could not afford a car, farmers who had the money purchased tractors and trucks for efficiency and increased productivity. In the 1920s the Roads Board had to take a new look at the construction of roads for the motor vehicular traffic. When no official road building was supplied often people would form road building teams and do it themselves. This happened in the 1930s with the building of a track from Northcliffe through to Windy Harbour - where people used to go for swimming, picnics and fishing.⁵

9.3 Occupations

There were a wide variety of occupations in the region during this period. These included mill work, forestry, road and railway construction, grazing, mixed farming including pig and poultry farming, and fruit growing. Trapping possums became illegal in 1920 but had previously been a lucrative fur trade. There was also a thriving dairying industry including both butter and cheese factories in Manjimup.

Despite the lingering effects of the depression a number of new industries were introduced into the Manjimup region in the 1930s and 40s. Hop and tobacco growing were attempted over a number of years. The tobacco farming left a legacy of interesting out buildings for the drying and curing of tobacco. An experimental trout hatchery was also established for trial in 1930.

⁵ *Northcliffe Remembers Op.Cit page 52*

The State Saw Mills continued to be a major employer of mill and railway workers. The private enterprise mill in Northcliffe opened in 1924. In Quininup a mill also developed under private ownership – Millars Timber and Trading Co. The steam-powered mill's construction got under way in 1944 and the first log was pulled out in 1946. In its timber milling hey day the Quininup settlement boasted a population of 250 people. A mill was also set up in the Tone and Shannon River areas in the late 1940s with increased demand created by the post World War Two building supply shortage. The Shannon mill briefly held the record for the State's biggest timber mill before closing in 1968. Shannon Town was situated on the area now used as a camping ground in The Shannon National Park.⁶ The Jardee mill, under private ownership, also produced large quantities of timber in this period. The significance of Jardee as a population centre is reflected in the hospital, which was built in 1917. (It only closed when Manjimup's hospital was opened in 1935.)⁷

A significant place for visitors in the Walpole district is the Rest Point Guest House. Established in 1930 by the Swarbrick family, the guest house still operates today.

9.4 Social and Civic Life

The period 1914 to 1945 was characterized by an increase in community awareness reflected in the establishment of service organizations and clubs. This was partly a response to the major world issues of the period including two world wars and the great Depression of the 1930s. It was also a response to the increases in local population and in community life in the area. Examples include the Red Cross branches which developed during the World War One period, the Returned Services Leagues which developed after the First World War and the Country Women's Association. During World War Two the Volunteer Defence Corps was also set up, with groups meeting and training all around the Shire of Manjimup.

New buildings in Manjimup sprang up as the population grew. These included the Manjimup Town Hall, the Anglican and Methodist Churches and several small halls such as, the Masonic Lodge, and the CWA and RSL Halls.

Education for the children of the settlers scattered around the district was formalized during this period. With the arrival of the Group Settlers, single teacher schools sprang up around the country side. A former Group Settler School can still be seen at Northcliffe where it was transported to be used as a museum. At the rear of the old school is a former teacher's residence which is set up to show the typical way of life for a teacher in the 1920s and 1930s. With the introduction of the school bus system throughout WA in 1944 many of these schools and residences were closed. The Manjimup Historical Society has erected plaques at the majority of the old one teacher school sites in the district. The history of each of these is held at the Manjimup Library.

⁶ Shannon National Park DEC Visitor Guide No date

⁷ Historical notes contributed by Doreen Owens Op.Cit.



Springfield School (near Pemberton) c1927
Courtesy of George South

Sports continued to play an important part in people's lives. Popular activities in the area, as in most rural districts of the time, included tennis, golf, hockey, cricket, football, rifle shooting, log chopping and fishing. In Pemberton swimming was popular from the 1930s in the newly built river fed Pemberton Swimming Pool. There were also increasing opportunities for non-sporting recreational activities with the development of amateur drama groups and dances. Owing to the 360 group settler families who had settled in Northcliffe after 1924 a social life was possible. Though hardworking and tired after a long week, dances were held on Saturday night with the music being supplied by an accordionist and a drummer.⁸ During this period moving pictures also became popular. Most country towns were on a circuit with movie operators moving from town to town to show the films. In Pemberton the films were on show at the Pemberton Picture Theatre which is still standing but in 2005 operated as holiday apartments.

⁸ *Northcliffe Remembers* Op.Cit page 25



**The Pemberton Swimming Pool when first constructed c1930.
Courtesy of George South**

The 1920s was a period of growth in both Manjimup and Pemberton. The Pemberton Hospital was established in 1927 and the state's only hydro-electricity scheme at this time was established on the Lefroy Brook in 1932. (The scheme operated until 1954.)⁹

9.5 Outside Influences

The major outside events impacting on the development of the Manjimup Shire district were the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s. The end of World War One brought the introduction of new ideas and technology. There was significant post war immigration from the United Kingdom and later from southern Europe. Many southern European migrants came in the 1930s and worked in groups as sleeper cutters. Some of these people went on to become tobacco growers.¹⁰

The period was characterized by the arrival of the motor vehicle and the increased provision of services including electricity, telephone and radio. The arrival of electricity saw a number of labour saving devices being introduced such as refrigerators and washing machines, technology seen to ultimately improve the every day lives of women.

The depression years of the early 1930s saw diversification of farms as farmers struggled to survive the collapse of world prices. However, this did not save them all and many, especially those who had started as group settlers, were forced to abandon their properties. Another experience in the district owing to the Depression was the introduction of unemployed people, often from the city, for sustenance work. The men (mostly married) would work on public works, live in camps and be paid sustenance payments by the government to try and combat the devastating effects of unemployment. Up to 400 men lived in camps in the Northcliffe area in the 1930s.¹¹

⁹ Shire of Manjimup Heritage Inventory op.cit.

¹⁰ Op.Cit. Historical notes contributed by Doreen Owens

¹¹ *Northcliffe Remembers* Op.Cit page 50

During World War II the rural sector experienced considerable prosperity with markets requiring products for the war and the government instituting schemes to provide for these requirements. The role of women became prominent in the economy as they replaced the men required for the war effort.