Janet Lady Clarke (1851-1909) ‘Leader in the Good Work’

by

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Janet Lady Clarke (1851-1909) ‘Leader in the Good Work’

Janet Snodgrass, the daughter of gentrified colonial pioneers, spent her early life in country Victoria and Melbourne. In 1874, a year after her marriage to William Clarke, her husband inherited great wealth and property. The Clarkes used this inheritance to travel overseas and to pursue philanthropic goals. Their hospitality, philanthropy, social position and a powerful circle of friends saw them identified as national and international figures. After her husband’s death, the juxtaposition of wealth and obligation remained a defining factor in Janet Lady Clarke’s life. Her religious faith empowered her commitment to personal activism and leadership within the women’s movement and her involvement in a reformist programme in education, health and politics. Janet Clarke’s core belief, that every girl and woman should cultivate her intellect and learn all that is possible, opened doors for Australian women and provided a basis for positive changes in society. As a professional, intellectual and political Australian woman, her achievements and leadership skills were widely recognised during her lifetime. This thesis presents a new view of Janet Lady Clarke and the conservative women whom she lead and demonstrates the historical importance of her leadership of the Australian Women’s National League which heralded a paradigm shift in women’s politics in Victoria.
Janet Lady Clarke (1851-1909) ‘Leader in the Good Work’

**Introduction**

Janet Lady Clarke was a professional, intellectual and political Australian woman whose achievements and leadership skills were widely recognised during her lifetime. In the history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Victoria she was an eminent national and international figure. Positioning Janet Clarke within this complex historical sphere, this study is able to challenge arguments that suggest her elite position in society negated her achievements, and, in this process, clearly reflect the historical archive. As a progressive and independent thinker, Janet Clarke pursued intellectual ideas and encouraged others to follow her example. Despite this engagement with contemporary public issues, she did not challenge the traditional values of colonial society. Hence, her established social position and her leadership of a conservative lobby group which acted within the established social system to bring about change seemed not in accord with egalitarian claims for Australian society. It is true that many of the women she lead were from elite classes, but through her philanthropic, educational, health and political activities Janet Clarke had a wide association with women of all classes. Clearly, the women who worked on committees under Janet Clarke’s leadership were early modern unpaid professional activists. Their activism played an important part in the emerging feminist women’s movement in colonial times.

Current understanding of women’s movements in this ‘first-wave’ era often excludes women activists who are deemed ‘elitist’.\(^1\) Particularly in the latter part of her life Janet Clarke had the wealth and social status to cut through conventional understandings of women’s role in contemporary society. Yet, recent historiography has not favoured Janet Clarke. Offended by her affluence and social position feminist historians have rejected her professional, political and intellectual activism which has made her such an interesting historical figure. At an international level, elite women were also using their privileged positions to improve the lives of other women.

Jihang Park used biographical information from *The Suffrage Annual and Women’s Who’s Who, 1913* to analyse the class status of seven hundred suffragists in England. His analysis confirmed: ‘that the origins of the activist body [suffrage] are overwhelmingly middle and upper class’. He concluded that the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Society (NUWSS) which campaigned for female suffrage using constitutional means ‘recruited women mainly from the relatively or absolutely privileged’. One of the ‘absolutely privileged’ members of the NUWSS was Sybil de Vere Capell Brassey who, with the assistance of Sulina Sutherland, had founded the Children’s Protection Society in Melbourne when her husband was the Governor of Victoria between 1895 and 1900.

Other elite women activists in Britain - Lady Betty Balfour, Lady Marie Willoughby de Broke and Lady Marie Muir-Mackenzie - joined the Conservative and Unionist Women’s Franchise Association in 1908 when Lady Louise Knightley was elected president of this single-issue party. Edith Lyttelton, Alice Balfour, Alicia Cecil and Lady Jersey - all representatives of Britain’s social and political elite - attended the inaugural meeting of the Victoria League in April in London in 1901. This league was a patriotic and imperialist society which claimed to be non-political. Its agenda was ‘to support and assist’ imperial projects including strengthening the bonds with like-minded women in the colonies to ensure the maintenance of the Empire. The members recognised that while its elite membership strengthened its position the ‘aristocratic element’ needed to be off-set by getting ‘in touch with working-class organisations wherever possible’.

Yet this strand of feminism and their contribution to changing women’s lives in a parallel world are generally unrecognised as their social position has often seen them defined as self-serving. Accordingly, some feminist historians have continued to deny

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3 Ibid., p. 149.
6 Ibid., p. 570.
7 Ibid., p. 578.
these women the right to be named as ‘first-wave feminists’.⁸ In this way, the elitist tag has become the methodological tool which justifies the dismissal of Janet Clarke and her national and international colleagues from the historiography of women’s movements in Australia and elsewhere.

This biographical thesis is an instrument for questioning this conventional historiography and redefining the history of the women’s movement by presenting a new view of conservative activists. These women were progressive in the way they applied their intellectual and administrative skills to bring about change in their own society. Conservatism, as practised by the women of the Australian Women’s National League (AWNL), meant ‘keeping the things which reason and experience tell us are worth keeping, while being willing to change when change is seen to be necessary or desirable’.⁹ Their core activism, which used the power of elitism to improve women’s situations, was shared by other women identified by feminist historians as ‘first-wave feminists’. This thesis acknowledges this historiography and the activism of Australian women and international feminists who sought to gain for women rights of citizenship including the right to vote.¹⁰ While all these women pursued different pathways in the struggle to improve the lot of ‘every woman’, these feminists worked alongside other women’s movements.

The noted first-wave Australian feminist, Annette Bear-Crawford, was a dedicated suffragist admired by both her contemporaries and modern feminist historians. Unfortunately, her death occurred soon after she arrived in London to attend the Women’s Quinquennial International Conference in June 1899. Her place was taken by Janet Lady Clarke. This conference was chaired by Lady Aberdeen, a leading

⁸ See Barbara Harrison and Melanie Nolan, ‘Reflections in Colonial Glass? Women Factory Inspectors in Britain and New Zealand 1893-1921’, in Women’s History Review 13, No. 2, 2004, pp. 278-79. Here, the authors noted that middle-class women factory inspectors in New Zealand, whom they categorised as ‘conservative feminists’, did ‘not fit neatly into a feminist category’. It seemed this was because they discouraged married women with children from participating in the workforce. By contrast, Australian women inspectors like Anne Duncan and Belle Golding have been recognised as ‘early twentieth femocrats’.
⁹ The Woman, 28 April 1909, Journal of the Australian Women’s National League (AWNL), State Library of Victoria, p. 446; and Microform, LTM 59, AWNL is discussed in Chapter 7.
figure on the international stage, who personally requested Janet Clarke to found a National Council of Women (NCW) when she returned to Australia.

Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, friend of William Gladstone and Lord and Lady Roseberry, used her elite position to empower her participation in the international feminist movement.11 Like Janet Clarke, she did not challenge traditional male/female roles in society but she did promote equal opportunities for women.12 In her capacity as the wife of the Governor-General of Canada she sought to lead a movement to right injustices suffered by Canadian women and she helped set up a maternity hospital for unmarried mothers in Ottawa. As president of the International Council of Women (ICW) Lady Aberdeen attended the Triennial meeting of the United States National Council in 1895. By her own admission she found it ‘a bit of tough work’ to establish the National Council of Women in Canada but was able to do so with the help of ‘the really nice and influential women’.13 In the 1900s in Britain, Lady Aberdeen strongly supported women’s suffrage although she disassociated herself from ‘unseemly methods’ of the militant suffragettes.14

Rose Scott’s biographer, Judith Allen, has also questioned latter-day feminist methodology: ‘Did the ‘essentialism’ and ‘elitism’ of which we in the present can so easily (and anachronistically) convict those in the past actually generate forms of politics and resistance that would have been impossible had earlier feminists had their

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11 Doris French, Ishbel and The Empire, A Biography of Lady Aberdeen, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1988, p. 27, p. 85, p. 148, p. 149 and p. 151. Ishbel Aberdeen (1857-1939) was the wife of Lord Aberdeen who was Governor-General of Canada from 1893-1898. Gladstone was three times Prime Minister of Britain, a committed Anglican and politically opposed to the conservative Benjamin Disraeli. The Roseberys maintained a warm correspondence with the Clarkes following a visit to Australia in 1883 when they stayed at Rupertswood. Hannah Rosebery (née de Rothschild) was a political hostess and a wealthy philanthropist. The Clarkes stayed at their country property in 1891. Lord Rosebery, a Liberal in the Gladstone cabinet, was briefly Prime Minister of Britain between 1894 and 1895.

12 Ibid., p. 228.

13 Ibid., p. 158. Lady Aberdeen established the Victorian Order of Nurses which sent visiting nurses into the communities. In this work she was opposed by the Canadian medical profession. See pp. 231-239.

14 Ibid., p. 275. See James Drummond (ed.), Onward and Upward, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1983. In a Forward to this text, the Marchioness of Aberdeen wrote: ‘That she was unpopular, particularly with her own class of society I knew. (…) And how many schemes there were, all of which had to be financed from her own purse and Haddo House was virtually beggared in the process. But all these schemes were for the betterment of mankind and the ordinary people loved her and were grateful’.
successors’ sensitivities to ‘different differences’?15 Within the Australian context, there were differing factors in the policies of the early feminists like Janet Clarke, Rose Scott and Vida Goldstein but there were also similarities. For instance, all these women were founding members of the National Council of Women and all strove to improve opportunities for women. Janet Clarke sought to elevate the lives of women of all classes through active involvement in political, educational, philanthropic and health organisations. Vida Goldstein worked tirelessly for women’s causes including establishing equal rights for women ‘in law, marriage and employment’.16 Rose Scott, in a similar way to Janet Clarke, promoted cultural activities for women and was a foundation member of the Women’s Literary Society in Sydney.17 Both Janet Clarke and Rose Scott believed women should be independent of party politics.18 Conversely, Janet Clarke avoided sexual politics while Rose Scott was a constant critic of women’s servility in their relationships with men.19 However, all these women believed that female suffrage had the potential to change the political landscape and formed associations to educate women in politics.

Academic scholarship has often regarded conservative or religious women in a negative light. This study explores the connection between Janet Clarke’s religious beliefs and her philanthropic activities to respond to some historians who use the philanthropist tag, like the elitist label, in somewhat disapproving terms. In searching for ‘the origins and influences’ of her beliefs and values I am encouraged by the position taken by the historian, Shurlee Swain. She contends that an analytical framework which accepts that religious values can transform the lives of individuals is preferable to ‘marginalising accounts which place God at the centre of motivation and commitment’.20 In their history of the Melbourne Wesley Mission, Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain also consider that there was a connection between the practice of philanthropy and political activism; still, they suggest that feminists are reluctant to

15 Judith Allen, *Rose Scott*, p. 3.
17 Judith Allen, p. 82.
18 Rose Scott was first president of the Women’s Political Educational League which was founded in Sydney in 1902 as a lobbying organisation to educate women in the use of the vote. See *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs
19 Ibid., pp. 118-120.
see philanthropy as an ‘alternative pathway to power’ or as the genesis for political activism.  

This thesis argues that Janet Clarke’s religious faith informed her philanthropic activities which in turn empowered her commitment to personal activism in the public sphere. Other modern conservative women, also motivated by their religious faiths, worked alongside Janet Clarke in charitable, educational and political organisations. While these exemplars of the ‘rising tide of female consciousness’ are remembered mostly as ‘the wives of’ historical figures, these ladies had emerged from their colonial background into the empowering world of gender-based politics. In the process of analysing Janet Clarke’s contribution to the development of conservative political groups representing women, this study describes the accomplishments of these vital, engaged feminists whose activism is recorded in the archives of their associations.

Judith Smart has shown in her case study of the first-wave feminist, Cecilia Downing, that Downing’s religious beliefs, ‘gave her focus’ and that ‘doctrinal certainty guaranteed that she was never diverted or paralysed by self-doubt’. Downing held leadership roles in the Victorian branch of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union from 1912 and later in the Housewives Association of Victoria. During and after World War One she helped construct a ‘network of women activists’ through her membership of the Baptist Church, the National Council of Women and the Australian Women’s National League. Smart concluded that this network was: ‘linked by devotion to home, family and Christian ethics’. Likewise, this thesis contends that Janet Clarke’s religious faith motivated her personal commitment to respond to those in need and the administrative and political skills learnt in this process were used to engage in the public sphere.

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24 Ibid., p. 43
25 Ibid., p. 53.
Like Downing, Mary Livermore (1820-1905), an American conservative activist, was a committed Christian. According to her biographer, Wendy Venet, her life and contributions to the feminist cause had faded from the public memory until ‘a new generation of women’s historians’ revived her contributions to female causes.\(^2^6\) Venet admits that Livermore’s ‘path to feminism may seem maddenly slow to the modern reader’.\(^2^7\) Married to a minister of religion, Livermore was an active member of the Association for the Advancement of Women (AAW), an elite organisation of four hundred educated women from professions and clubs. The AAW ‘represented an effort to unite old ideas about benevolence with new ideas about organisation, science, and medicine – feminist social science’.\(^2^8\) Presiding at a World Congress in Chicago in 1874, Livermore promoted the value of women’s work in the home, and encouraged middle-class women to enter the professions and advocated more industrial training for women. In 1881, she travelled to London to continue her suffrage work, lecturing to the English Woman Suffrage Society on ‘The Duties of Women to The Nation’.\(^2^9\) During the 1880s and 1890s she lectured in the North Eastern States of America including New York, Massachusetts, Michigan and Ohio and the Midwest state of Kansas on women’s issues such as greater educational opportunities, temperance, suffrage, social problems and the need to be womanly while embracing women’s rights.\(^3^0\) Venet considered Mary Livermore’s ‘greatest gifts lay in her ability to communicate and persuade’.\(^3^1\)

In the same way, Janet Clarke’s communication and leadership skills meant she was supported by other first-wave feminists whose faith informed their work on committees connected to charitable, educational and political organisations. The ladies, who nurtured the Trinity Hostel so effectively only to be overwhelmed by the male-dominated Trinity Council, did not take their defeat quietly but in a measured political move ensured that their voices were heard and their position aired in the public arena. In doing so those conservative activists - Edith Morris, Charlotte

\(^2^6\) Wendy Hammond Venet, *A Strong-Minded Woman Mary A Livermore*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2005, p. 3.
\(^2^7\) Other leading American feminists were Francis Willard, Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton, Julia Howe and Lucy Stone.
\(^2^8\) Ibid., p. 213.
\(^2^9\) Ibid., p. 221.
\(^3^0\) Ibid., p. 7
\(^3^1\) Ibid., p. 7.
Macartney, Jessie Grimwade, Isobella A’Beckett, Sissie Collins and Dora Carrington - had ensured the survival of the first university women’s college in Victoria. The fleeting glimpses of the women of the Hospital Committee whom we meet in the case study at the Melbourne Women’s Hospital – Mrs. Nicholson, Mrs. Dobson, Mrs. Templeton or those ‘troublemakers’ and ‘enemies’ of the resident doctors, Mesdames Thornley, Miller, and Shields – reveal women who could make unpopular decisions even when confronted by the disapproval of the powerful medical hierarchy or the Trade Union Council. It is ironic that over ninety years later, Anne Summers, a leading Australian feminist, should identify her engagement with the feminist movement as an empowering force in her life and her career. It seems the line between progressive and conservative women is somewhat blurred.32

Janet Clarke’s extensive involvement in a large number of organizations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrates her personal strength, public profile, organizational skills and effective leadership. This thesis proposes a new reading of Janet Clarke’s activism within the educational field which has made her such an interesting historical figure. Other elite women with whom she associated were involved in some way in the pursuit of education in the new Australian colonies. While Janet Clarke’s own formal education was probably limited to the study of the classics and languages, her reforming approach was expanded beyond her own experience to the whole spectrum of female education - be it secondary, domestic, university or adult education. Janet Clarke’s shaping of women’s education in Victoria was not a ‘here and now’ proposition as evidenced in her efforts to safeguard the establishment of the women’s college at the University of Melbourne in case ‘in fifty years there might be, like Judge Rogers, a warden who also objected to the Hostel’.33

In England, elite women were also active in the educational domain. Lady Amberley (1842-1874), the mother of the eminent philosopher, Bertrand Russell, worked energetically for higher education for girls, women’s suffrage and the right of women

33 See Footnote 37 in Chapter 5 re Judge Rogers.
to enter professions. Responding to critics who have challenged Emily Davies’ status as a conservative feminist, Daphne Bennett argued that modern feminists’ tendency to focus on the body rather than the brain has served no ‘good purpose’. She considered it was Davies’ astute selection of an elite committee including the Ladys Mary Ponsonby, Stanley of Alderly and Louisa Goldsmid which secured her educational goal of the establishment of Girton, a women’s university college. Lady Mary Ponsonby (1832-1916), in her position as Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria, had corresponded with Janet Clarke during the Clarkes’ 1886 visit to England. Lady Louisa Goldsmid (1819-1908) was a philanthropist, feminist, and a supporter of women’s suffrage. Lady Stanley (1807-1895), who in 1872 took on the temporary role of ‘Mistress of Girton’, was a member of the Liberal Unionist Association and promoted and financed the School of Medicine for Women in London. As happened at the Trinity College Women’s Hostel at Melbourne University, it was the donations for buildings and scholarships from this committee, the administrative support of these elite women and Emily Davies’ ‘rational and disciplined approach’ that benefited the future generations of women at this college at Cambridge.

This thesis demonstrates the historical importance of Janet Clarke’s leadership of the conservative Australian Women’s National League (AWNL) and the women who belonged to this organization. The formation of this conservative League heralded a paradigm shift in women’s politics in Victoria. The work of the AWNL remained a powerful force in Australian politics until 1944 when the majority of members merged with the Liberal Party under the leadership of Robert Menzies.

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35 Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women 1830-1921*, André Deutsch, Great Britain, 1990, p. 2. Emily Davies was the founder of Girton College at Cambridge University, the first women’s college in England.
36 Emily Davies worked tirelessly to have graduates from her college admitted to university degrees but this did not happen in her lifetime.
38 Daphne Bennett, p. 2. See also Barbara Stephen, p. 207. In a letter (February 1868) to a friend describing the committee’s decision to look for a college site close to Cambridge University, Emily Davies wrote that she was obliged to tell Lady Goldsmid that: ‘Mrs. Bodichon had an attack of timidity, and she said she thought I had an attack of audacity, but she seemed rather to admire it than otherwise’.
39 Correspondence about this merger is held in Ivy Wedgwood Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5159, Box 25. A minority of women remained loyal to the Australian Women’s National League
This study also traces the transition of Janet and her husband, William Clarke, from local identities to highly-regarded Australians. The mansions that they had built at Sunbury and Melbourne were important sites which underpinned the Clarkes’ philanthropic endeavours. It was these mansions and their philanthropy, overseas travel and leadership roles which established for the Clarkes a powerful circle of friends in Australia and Europe. International travel, the exchange of letters with national and international persons and intellectual pursuits meant that Janet Clarke had a wide grasp of international events and current ideas and was engaged in applying this knowledge within her own country. Within this transitional period this biographical study offers some insights into my subject’s role as a mother and wife drawing on the available papers in the Clarke archive.

In his recent reflections on the life of Janet Clarke, Damian Powell expressed his view that the voice of Janet Clarke has yet to be realised and that as a ‘nation builder’ she had shaped Victorian history and had ‘set standards and established agendas which resonate in the intellectual and philanthropic life of Victoria today’. He even went so far as to claim that Janet Clarke was ‘among the most successful women in Australian history’.40 These conclusions have been investigated in the process of my research.

As a committed historian, my goal is to ensure that the contemporary historical record of my subject is correct and to ensure that judgements framed by hindsight do not negate Janet Lady Clarke’s professional achievements in the unfolding pages of our Australian story. On the 17th April 2009 I, and one hundred descendants of Janet and William Clarke, were present at a Celebratory Dinner at Janet Clarke Hall at the University of Melbourne to mark one hundred years since her death.41 It was an honour to share this occasion with her descendants and to reflect on ‘the quintessential Janet Clarke through my address entitled ‘A Life in Letters’.

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40 Damian Powell’s paper ‘Janet Lady Clarke’ was delivered to the Anglican Historical Society at Bishopscourt, 15 November 2003; and another 2003 paper, ‘Janet Lady Clarke – a remarkable woman or remarkable times?’ was presented at the Lyceum Club.

41 Historian, Barbara Lemon, also presented some reflections on Janet Lady Clarke at the Celebratory Dinner.
Janet Snodgrass was born at Doogallook in 1851 the year terrible fires raged throughout Victoria. Her early life was spent at this property managed by her father, and in Prahran, a fast-growing suburb in Melbourne. In the eighteen sixties many leaseholders, like her father, Peter Snodgrass, struggled to overcome the contingencies associated with the pioneering experience and faced with financial ruin had to surrender their properties. From 1865 the Snodgrass family lived permanently in Prahran. After the death of her father in 1867, his daughter spent time at a property in the Hamilton district and later joined Mary and William Clarke and their four children in Sunbury. Following the death of Mary Clarke she remained at Sunbury to care for the Clarke children. Janet Snodgrass married William Clarke in 1873. The next year William inherited considerable money and property from his father and was now in a position to build a mansion at Sunbury and another residence in Melbourne in 1887. Thus, from an early age Janet Snodgrass/Clarke witnessed the expansion of the city of Melbourne as it metamorphosed from an unsewered, poorly-constructed shanty town, which had greeted her grandfather when he arrived at Port Phillip in 1843, into ‘Marvellous Melbourne’, symbolised by the 1880 and 1888 International Exhibitions held in the newly-constructed Exhibition Buildings. Some years later in 1901, in the same Exhibition Building, the widowed Janet Lady Clarke watched the Duke of Cornwall and York open the first elected Commonwealth of Australia Parliament. The following year the new Parliament passed the Commonwealth

42 5,000,000 hectares of Victoria were burnt and 12 lives were lost,
Franchise Act which enfranchised all Australian women who were British subjects and over twenty-one years of age. In November 1908, just five months before Janet Clarke’s death at the age of fifty-eight, the Victorian Parliament passed the Female Suffrage Bill. In 1913, the Janet Lady Clarke Memorial erected in the Queen Victoria Gardens was handed over to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne so that it could be: ‘permanently associated with work of enduring utility and benefit to the citizens of the city whose development she strove so hard to assist’.

Early pioneer settlers and their families, particularly those who settled on large tracts of land in Victoria in the eighteen forties and fifties, are often portrayed negatively in our literature thus our public memory of colonial families may be distorted. My intention in the first two chapters is not only to narrate the story of the Cotton and Snodgrass families but to enrich this tapestry by including the stories of other colonial women, whose lives were linked with the Snodgrass family through their own colonial experiences. These were women who refused to be crushed by the enormity of the challenges they faced in their new environment. Arbella Cooke, embittered and exhausted as she was by the harsh conditions of her pioneering life in the Western District, still had the personal resilience needed to teach her own children and the children of workers, on their station each morning. Annie Baxter, who like the Snodgasses shared a friendship with the Winter/Cooke families, described in her journal her refusal to occupy her husband’s bed when she found he carried a sexual disease. Nevertheless, she could give a cheerful account of altering her husband’s pantaloons so she could ride astride as she mustered cattle or hunted on her station.

When Lucy Frost edited Annie Baxter’s journal she found that: ‘the world stretching behind Annie came into focus. (…). Characters began to emerge with stories of their own’. In the same way, the stories of other pioneering women emerge in the telling of the Janet Snodgrass narrative.

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43 Programme of the formal handing over of the Janet Lady Clarke Memorial, 24 September 1913, Ivy Wedgwood Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5159, Box 25.
46 Ibid., p. xi.
Pioneering families, like the Cotton, Snodgrass, Cooke and Mitchell families, and governesses seeking employment in Australia, followed the traditional British and Scottish approach to educational practices for their children and students despite the distance from their country of origin and the difficulties associated with providing and receiving a classical education in their new environment. Janet Clarke’s own traditional study of the classics and languages was a starting point for her life-long commitment to women’s education in Victoria. Her words: ‘I think very strongly that every woman should take pride in cultivating her intellect and learning all that is possible’, defined her philosophy in regard to ‘every’ woman’s education.47

At a meeting in February 2006, Damian Powell, the Principal of Janet Clarke Hall, an academic college connected to Melbourne University, shared his ideas and knowledge of the college founder and consequently emailed two interesting papers he had written on Janet Clarke.48 Later I read the correspondence at Janet Clarke Hall between Alexander Leeper, the first Warden of the College, and Janet Clarke and other ladies associated with the founding of this College which had underpinned Lyndsay Gardiner’s 1986 published history of Janet Clarke Hall.49 Damian Powell suggested I contact Louise Morris, Janet’s great-granddaughter, who had resided at the Hall when a student at Melbourne University. Consequently Louise Morris gave me access to the substantial Clarke depository.50 Her father, Michael Clarke, had written two biographies – on his grandfather and his great-grandfather – and had intended to write another on his grandmother but he had died before this occurred. His daughter was now the keeper of the Clarke archive and her sense of the Clarke place in Australian history ensured support for my historical recovery of the life of Janet Clarke.

The choice of a biographical genre for a thesis study demands that historical evidence must be rigorously presented. Unfortunately, this has not always occurred in recent Janet Clarke profiles thus the accuracy of her life-story has suffered as certain material has been recycled and published without proper scrutiny. My intention is to present a more measured account of her early life to preclude the ‘rags to riches’

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47 Letter to My Lord Bishop and Gentlemen of the Council, (circa 1899), [in private hands].
48 Damian Powell, Janet Clarke papers. The establishment of Janet Clarke Hall is discussed in Chapter 5.
50 This archive, acknowledged in my thesis as ‘[in private hands]’, is also available to other researchers.
narrative presented in a number of recent monographs. Through a critical reading of primary and secondary sources my objective is to avoid including and excluding selected information as has previously occurred when historians have examined her life. To ensure this investigation is scholarly, I have employed a large repository of documentary evidence and investigated the influence of a number of factors - education, poverty, wealth, artistic exposure, literature, travel, religion, societal milieu, politics, marriage, parenthood, tragedy and health - to uncover the values that shaped her activism.

In establishing a theoretical framework for my research and writing, the problems and methodologies associated with historical biography needed to be considered. Judith Brett’s ideas on biographical writing have proved useful. In developing her biography of Sir Robert Menzies she used psychoanalytical interpretation of his archive rather than tracing ‘the origins and influences of his various beliefs and values’ to try to understand why her subject was so successful in public life. Brett decided that the paucity of private papers confirmed her belief that his life’s project was the ‘construction of a public self’. Therefore her analysis was centred on examination of his speeches and writings to reveal the public or ‘real’ man rather than looking for ‘what is hidden and secret’. I have followed Brett’s methodology in presenting Janet’s letters and speeches which, consciously or unconsciously, crafted her own public persona; however, to ensure the potency of my new reading, I needed to trace the ‘origins and influences’ that nurtured her ‘values and beliefs’ that underscored her activism. While personal material relating to her early life and education is scant, placing her within her historical context and using appropriate methodology - scrutiny of newspapers, photographs and the journals of her

51 This ‘rags to riches’ view is implied in some published material. See Juliet Flesch & Peter McPhee, 150 Years: 150 Stories and Biographies of 150 Remarkable People Associated with the University of Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, p. 44; Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart McIntyre (eds.), Oxford Companion to Australian History, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 129; and Damian Powell’s paper, ‘Janet Lady Clarke’, pp. 2-7.

52 This includes library and government resources, family archives, past witnesses, photographs, letters, interviews, newspapers, diaries, journals, secondary sources and internet profiles of historic figures.


54 Ibid., p. 25. Robert Menzies was Prime Minister of Australia in 1939-1941 and 1949-1966.

55 See Bibliography for archival depositories.
contemporaries - has helped me elucidate this period in her life. Unlike the Menzies’ archive, I am fortunate that Janet’s marriage to William Clarke resulted in a rich family and public archive which represented both her private and public persona.

John Rickard’s biography, *A Family Romance: the Deakins at Home*, focuses on Alfred Deakin - the man, the husband, the brother and the father - and he uses a variety of literary devices not usually employed in historical biography to explore the fractured relationship between Deakin’s wife, Patti and his sister, Catherine. While my biographical approach differs from that of John Rickard’s account, it also demonstrates that different narrative and imaginative styles of biography can elucidate a life and the subject’s place in history. Rickard made no apology for constructing his biography imaginatively - ‘And why should that imaginative territory be regarded as the sole territory of the novelist?’. His explanation, in his essay in *Tracing Past Lives*, ‘that the more information one acquires, the more ‘complete’ appears to be the biographer’s data base, the more possibilities of interpretation are revealed’, presented another method to facilitate my representation of Janet Clarke’s life. I consider that the failure of past historical accounts to fashion her life-story accurately has occurred because historians have worked from false assumptions. My subject’s historical milieu and related documentary evidence are the tools which source the clues which located Janet Clarke in her role as a modern professional woman within a conservative society.

In his essay, Rickard stressed the importance of examining human experience, relationships, emotions and motivations closely in order to ‘demonstrate both the necessary artifice of any historical narrative and the enrichment to be gained from that engagement which is the joy of history’. Rickard has justified the ‘artifice’ of his

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56 John Rickard, *A Family Romance: The Deakins at Home*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996. Literary devices include dramatic interpretation of events, the intervention of the author as a commentator on the actual biography and historical accounts of other characters presented in a different font.

57 John Rickard, Introduction to *A Family Romance*, p. 3. Also see ‘Writing the Biography of the Family: The Case of Catherine and Pattie Deakin’ in Richard Broome (ed.), *Tracing Past Lives*, History Institute, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 11-21; He considered that Alfred Deakin’s earlier biographer, La Nauze, had dealt with Deakin’s political career in considerable detail, but had limited his comments on Deakin’s marriage to Pattie to just one sentence. Alfred Deakin was Prime Minister of Australia in July 1903-1904, 1905-1908 and 1909-1910.


59 Ibid., p. 20.
biography because it meant that Deakin’s wife, daughters and sister, Catherine, who played such an important role in Deakin’s professional and political career, were not excluded from his narrative as had happened in La Nauze’s earlier biography. At the same time Rickard was circumspect in his use of family letters that Deakin’s sister, Catherine, had chosen to preserve, conscious that she, rather than himself, may be ‘directing the operation’. In Chapters Two and Three I have employed Rickard’s notion of ‘artifice’ to delineate two family photographs which depict important milestones in the lives of the Snodgrass and Clarke families. However, conscious of Rickard’s idea of a ‘directed’ reading of documents, I have included vignettes from Janet Clarke’s private life where there could have been no expectation that this material would ever become public. These ‘hidden camera’ images validate my narrative particularly as they portray Janet Clarke free of ‘artifice’.

This historical study is also expanded by a multi-faceted case study of the 1902 closure of the Women’s Hospital, Melbourne. Janet Lady Clarke was then a fifty-one year old widow who held many high-profile positions in Melbourne including the presidency of the Women’s Hospital Council. This incident played out for only a short historical interlude but public scrutiny of her presidency, and the band of ladies she led, was intense. My tools in presenting this case study are the letters and official documents from the archives of the Women’s Hospital and contemporary newspaper coverage of this event. This reading of these primary sources challenges a recent account of Janet Clarke’s role in this incident which did not include all the relevant evidence. The drama that unfolded was of Shakespearian proportions in which the actors – Janet Lady Clarke, the hospital patients, the medical hierarchy, the Melbourne newspapers, the Trade Union Council, members of the Hospital Board and the public at large - all strutted the stage. Reviewing the president’s role in this highly emotive event offers a new historical perspective on the health issues surrounding this closure and identifies Janet Clarke’s relationship with all the participants. In researching and writing this chapter, I was reminded of John Rickard’s view that ‘the enrichment’ gained from this task of observing human experience is ‘a joy of

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60 Ibid., p. 14.
history’. Personally I also consider that this joy is fundamental to the writing of historical text and in particular this biographical thesis.

Jeremy Popkin, in his paper on Australian historian-autobiographers, described Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s autobiography, *Solid Bluestone Foundations*, published in the nineteen eighties as ‘path-breaking’ even though she did not espouse the feminist rhetoric which marked this period. In this autobiography, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, an eminent Australian historian/biographer, commented on her own studies during the nineteen twenties at Melbourne University:

> The study of history from primary sources, which reveals the thoughts and feelings and ways of life of the people of the past, was a revelation to me, a source of unending delight, and as a teacher I was to observe that it had a similar effect on my students.

As a student at Melbourne University, I was privileged to listen to Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s inspirational history lectures and, despite the years that have passed, her ideas still resonate with me. She saw the academic discipline of History at Melbourne University in the nineteen twenties as:

> … more humane than English, not hostile or defensive in its attitude to other forms of knowledge but seeking, as far as possible to embrace them. Its whole posture was more liberal in that it allowed for differences of interest and opinion, and it seemed in a way, more sure of itself, less prone to demand adherence to the orthodoxy of the moment and cheerfully resigned to the likelihood of having to retreat from positions that no longer proved tenable.

This perceptive definition of the underlying principles of engagement with history speaks for all seasons and all forms of history writing. Like Kathleen Fitzpatrick,

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63 Jeremy Popkin, ‘Ego-histoire Down Under’ in *Australian Historical Studies*, 129, 2007, p. 110 and p. 118. Popkin sees Fitzpatrick as a ‘path-breaker’ because her autobiography, *Solid Bluestone Foundations*, was a model for other historians who continued to offer: ‘a range of perspectives on women’s experience in the historical profession’. This meant ‘that Australian women historians have made a larger contribution to historians’ memoir literature than their colleagues in other countries.
65 Ibid., p. 159.
engaging with a rich and diverse range of primary sources has given me a sense of ‘unending delight’. While I believe a writer/historian must feel comfortable in her/his own mode of expression, I have been influenced by the dignity and clarity of style and tone assumed by Kathleen Fitzpatrick in her texts.66

More recently, the distinguished English biographer, Richard Holmes, commented on the distinct form of Australian biography which has produced ingenious biographies like Brenda Niall’s history of the Boyd family and David Marr’s *Patrick White*.67 Holmes applauded the ‘unique combination of the critical and imaginative spirit’ which marked these texts. Like Kathleen Fitzpatrick and John Rickard he is enthusiastic about the way biographical practice can spirit both the writer and the reader ‘to another place, another time, and another identity’.68

A different way of approaching biography, according to Joy Damousi is by reconstructing the lives of political women and political agitators.69 She believes that feminist biographies aim to recover the lives of outstanding women whose historical place in the Australian story has been submerged by male historians. Ironically, my research suggests that it has been some feminist historians who have submerged the historical importance of Janet Clarke’s leadership of the conservative Australian Women’s National League and the women who belonged to this organization.70 I have included in Chapter Seven Janet Clarke’s ‘political manifesto’ which begins with the significant phrase ‘Willing or unwilling’. This document was the catalyst for the formation of the conservative AWNL which was to influence the Australian political scene for the next forty years.

66 See also Susan Davies (ed.), *Dear Kathleen, Dear Manning*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996. These elegant letters between Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark reveal much about the nature of creative historians and historical writing.
67 Richard Holmes gave the HRC Seymour Lecture in Biography in Australia in September 2008. This was published as ‘Biography: The Past has a great future’ in *Australian Book Review*, No. 306, November 2008, pp. 26-32. He has written a number of biographies including ones on Coleridge, Shelley, and Sir John French.
68 Ibid., p. 32.
Damousi suggests that: ‘Gender as a central dynamic of historical analysis is not included within the writers’ framework’. To illustrate this point, Damousi examined two ‘literary/historical biographies - Druisilla’s Modjeska’s Poppy and Brian Mathew’s Louisa - which took into account the sense of the female self, in order to explain the ‘how and why women become politically active’. This ‘sense of the female self’ is an essential element in the political activism of Janet Clarke and the women whom she lead. Janet Clarke was often described in newspapers and journals as ‘womanly’ suggesting that her gender was unconsciously recognized as being central to her activism and that this ‘womanliness’ countered any suggestion that her advocacy was out of tune with her social milieu. This stands in stark contrast to the way some Victorian suffragists were portrayed in the Victorian Parliament and newspapers as ‘unwomanly’ and thence by implication, not to be taken seriously.

Damousi’s conclusion that conventional female biographies which exclude notions of ‘loss, fantasy and denial’ do not do justice to women in public life is significant. This view is supported by Hazel Rowley, a biographer, who wrote that: ‘each moment of our lives is invisibly shaped by our unpruned tangled past’. In Janet Clarke’s case, the transition from an unknown young woman to a national and international figure was not without personal tragedies which were not aired in the public domain. In this thesis, speculation around the ‘unpruned tangled past’ would serve no purpose given my arguments are underpinned by Janet Clarke’s personal and public archive.

Adopting a chronological structure has always seemed the logical way to address this biographical thesis. Chapters One to Three are presented chronologically in order to set the stage for the thematic chapters (Four to Seven) which propose a new reading of Janet Clarke’s activism within the philanthropic, educational, health and political fields. In the first two chapters, Doogalook, Blairgowrie and Murndal are identified as important landscapes in the life of Janet Snodgrass. In 1875, it was the Clarkes’

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71 Joy Damousi, p. 35.
72 Ibid., pp. 36 -7.
73 Melbourne Punch, 3 December 1891; Age, 29 April 1909.
74 See Patricia Grimshaw, ‘White Men’s Fears and White Women’s Hopes: The 1908 Victorian Adult Suffrage Act’ in Victorian Historical Journal, Vol. 79, No. 2, November 2008, p. 192. Here Grimshaw gives a number of instances of suffragists being maligned including one by a country member of Parliament: ‘I have met he-women - who ought to have been born men, but nature made a mistake’.
75 Ibid., p. 37.
new home, *Rupertswood*, which secured their entry into Melburnian society. This concept of ‘the home as the archive’ is based on Antoinette Burton’s work and provides an important reference point for my discussion.\(^{77}\)

Entitled ‘Transition’, Chapter Three outlines the journey of my subject from an obscure young woman to an eminent national and international figure. At *Rupertswood*, and their newly-established Melbourne home, *Cliveden*, the Clarkes entertained lavishly and arranged balls, garden parties and soirées to support philanthropic causes. In fashionable colonial Melbourne society, Janet Clarke held a privileged position as the wife of an hereditary baron who was one of the wealthiest men in the colony. By 1887, aged thirty-six, this young matron had made three overseas journeys, cared for four step-children, given birth to eight children, overseen the building of two richly-furnished mansions and worked to improve conditions for the poor and the sick in Victoria.

While *Rupertswood* and *Cliveden* were the outward symbols that marked the transition of the Clarkes, it was their philanthropy, overseas travel and leadership roles which established a powerful circle of friends in Australia and Europe. This comment included in one of Janet Clarke’s 1886 letters from England to her son at home in Australia - ‘The Queen was so kind and nice and let us see all her rooms and treasures’ - may seem anachronistic today but it surely encapsulates her changed circumstances.\(^{78}\) International travel, the exchange of letters with national and international persons, intellectual pursuits linked to societies like the *Alliance Française*, *Dante Alighieri Society* and the Austral Salon meant she had a wide grasp of international events and current ideas.\(^{79}\) Members of the newly-formed Australian Women’s National League acknowledged her international reputation when they presented her with a leather-bound passport in 1904 on the eve of her departure overseas ‘to the great centres of the world’. It contained a message from the League

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\(^{78}\) 1886 letter to Russell, [in private hands].

\(^{79}\) Clarke Letters 1877-1907, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, MS 001714, Box 273-4.
expressing its appreciation for all ‘who may furnish the President with information or
documents which she may desire to obtain in the interests of the League’.  

Figure 2 AWNL passport held in Melbourne University
Archives, 1904

Chapters Four to Seven enlarge on the themes that evolve from the life-story chapters. I have chosen to maintain generally a chronological approach within this thematic framework to ensure that the historiography of philanthropy, education, health and political matters is presented lucidly. The connections with the former chapters are important. The Snodgrass family’s dependence on the ‘bounty of friends’ described in Chapter Two was extended from the obligation to support family and friends into Janet Clarke’s personal and professional responses to the needs of the poor and the sick. Her involvement in charitable and philanthropic organizations is investigated in Chapter Four and Six. Chapter Five revisits the issue of women’s education in Victoria discussed in Chapter One and outlines Janet Clarke’s implementation of her ‘whole-of-life’ educational philosophy. Agnes (Charlotte) Snodgrass’s 1868 address to the Victorian Legislative Assembly requesting financial support highlights the impact Peter Snodgrass’s political career had on his family during his lifetime and after his death. It seems hardly surprising that this exposure to political matters from an early age shaped his daughter’s interest in political affairs particularly where the interests of women were of concern. Articles in *The Woman*, the journal of the

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Australian Women’s National League, indicate that Janet Clarke’s political career, outlined in Chapter Seven, continued until her death.

As well, our public archive includes, *Liberty*, the journal published by the Victorian Employers Federation (VEF) which included information on the activities of the AWNL prior to the publication of *The Woman*. References to *The Woman* are in Margaret Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, Marian Quartly’s papers on the Australian Women’s National League, in Farley Kelly’s unpublished thesis, ‘The Woman Question’ and the AWNL internet corporate entry.81 There are some discrepancies between this archive and these contemporary reflections.82 When I was able to turn the pages of this journal I was transposed into our suburbs and rural towns and filled with admiration for the accomplishments of these vital, engaged feminists whose activism is recorded in the pages of this journal. First published in September 1907 four years after AWNL came into existence, by 1908 10,000 copies of *The Woman* were printed and distributed each month to AWNL members. Clearly, these women were no longer content to be defined by their colonial society. They found this world of gender-based politics empowering. They could/can be identified by their membership of one of the thirty suburban and sixty-nine regional and rural branches of AWNL in Victoria. The lists of Branch presidents and secretaries of each branch were printed regularly in the journal. (The following names were among the listed office holders: Sale, Mrs. Bawden and Mrs. Luke, Yea, Mrs. Tyer and Mrs. Ker, Dandenong, Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Keys.) In 2008, the names of all the 30,000 Victorian women ‘from all walks of life’ who signed the 1891 Suffrage Petition were made available online.83 The 50,000 women members and administrators of the AWNL ‘from all walks of life’ are yet to be memorialised in this way. This journal is indeed a useful artefact in shaping ‘Political Matters’, the final chapter of my thesis.


82 Marian Quartly, p. 39.

What was surprising, as with the AWNL’s *The Woman*, was the dichotomy between the historical literature and the current academic literature. Literature concurrent with Janet Clark’s life (and death) – be it newspaper articles, letters, private and public documents – was entirely positive. Even the young doctors caught up in the drama of the 1902 hospital closure noted: ‘Were all the ladies like their courteous president, the present scandal could never have arisen’.  

Substantial collections of primary sources are to be found in a number of institutions. These primary documents have provided the stepping-stones for the arguments that substantiate this biographical thesis and affirm Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s notion of how ‘primary sources bring to life the thoughts and feelings and ways of life of the people of the past’. The State Library of New South Wales holds the personal journals of Annie Baxter Dawbin and Blanche Mitchell and both journals are available online. It was Lucy Frost’s skilful editing and historical explanations in her text, *A Face in the Glass*, which captured the memories of a remarkable nineteenth-century writer, pioneer and feminist, Annie Baxter. This material proved useful in positioning Janet Snodgrass in Western Victoria in the eighteen sixties. Janet Clarke’s skilful prose writing and her educational philosophy indicate a sound classical education but there are no personal diaries to identify the education of the young Janet Snodgrass. However, the close friendship between the Snodgrass and Mitchell families substantiates the ‘imagining’ of Janet Snodgrass’s educational programme through employing Blanche Mitchell’s engaging journal descriptions of her educational curriculum.

An obvious starting point for my research journey was the historic *Rupertswood* mansion in Sunbury built for Janet and William Clarke in 1875. This mansion had been restored to its former glory in the 1990s through the efforts of the *Rupertswood Historical Society* and the manager of the hotel/mansion, Dominic Romeo. At *Rupertswood* there is an archive which was deposited with the Salesian Brothers in

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84 See *Age*, 28 January, 1902.
85 Lucy Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 70.
87 Sunbury is 39 kilometres south-east from Melbourne.
88 Maria and Dominic Romeo had previously restored a similar mansion, *Burnewang*, near Rochester. In 2008 they left *Rupertswood* to pursue another restoration venture.
1990 by Major Robert and Mrs. Rosemary Lindsay. Both the Lindsays are/were descendants of Janet and William Clarke. Of particular interest in the archives at Rupertswood is an Autograph Album in which over one hundred letters written to Lady and Sir William Clarke between 1877 and 1907 were pasted. Many of these letters came from eminent Australian and English persons – Nellie Melba, Arthur Streeton, Baron Von Mueller, Lord Rosebery and Florence Nightingale among others – and had obviously been treasured by the Clarkes and their descendants. These letters took on a life of their own and proved a valuable tool for my research and hopefully for other historians.

It was rewarding to delve into the private manuscript archives of the Clarke family and read, among other correspondence, the cherished letters between Janet Clarke and her ten-year old son, Russell, or the poignant letter of appreciation signed by over four hundred Melbourne women. The Universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, the State Libraries of Victoria, New South Wales, Canberra and Western Australia, Janet Clarke Hall and Trinity College at Melbourne University provided records of early institutions, societies and committees with which the Clarkes were associated.

89 The Salesian Brothers still retain ownership of the Rupertswood property and conduct a large secondary college adjacent to the mansion.
90 Major and Mrs. Lindsay were first cousins and the son and daughter respectively of Mary and Ivy Clarke, the eldest and youngest daughters of Janet and William Clarke. Rosemary Lindsay still resides in Melbourne.
91 These letters, including eight from the Roseberys, have been transcribed and edited by Annette and Charles Lewis and are available at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Lord Rosebery, a British liberal statesman, became Prime Minister (1894-1896) after William Gladstone, resigned.
Records at Melbourne Girls Grammar School, though scant, still positioned Lady Janet Clarke within this educational setting. Official public records of Victoria and the Supreme Court clarified deaths, births, marriages and wills of the Clarke and Snodgrass families. Melbourne and country newspapers published Janet Clarke’s letters and reports of women’s activities in the social, philanthropic and educational domains. The telling photograph of Janet Snodgrass and her mother found in the photographic archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria enabled an imaginative insight into Janet Snodgrass’s early life. The *Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee 1881 to 1901* in the archives of the Royal Women’s Hospital Melbourne offered a window through which to observe the state of women’s healthcare and its associated political issues during that era. In terms of public records the range of documents held in this depository is noteworthy. They permitted an objective analysis of the role Janet Clarke and the Ladies’ Committee played at a defining period in the history of women’s health issues.

Of course there have been disappointments. Michael Clarke had used some entries from Janet Clarke’s diary in his book. Presumably, this had been lent to him by a descendant but at this stage it has not been found. A letter, signed by Janet Clarke on behalf of Trinity Hostel Committee, contained information pertinent to the English women’s colleges - Girton, Newnham, Somerville Hall and Lady Margaret Hall. Unfortunately archives of these colleges contain no reciprocal records. A conversation with Rosemary Lindsay, Janet’s only living granddaughter, about letters between her grandmother and George Fairbairn, the President of the Victorian Employers Federation, suggested these may have been in the possession of Senator Ivy Wedgwood shortly before her death in 1975. Regrettably, they were not found in the large cache of Wedgwood papers in the National Library. This disappointment was off-set by the discovery in this archive of the 1913 Janet Lady Clarke Memorial presentation document and some AWNL documents and correspondence pertinent to the merger between the AWNL and the Liberal party. It is quite possible that in the future other documents will surface both here and abroad given the recent emergence of the correspondence between Janet Clarke and Ivo Bligh, the English cricket captain, in the Medway Archives in Kent, United Kingdom.

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Many recent profiles of Janet Lady Clarke present a mono-dimensional person defined by her wealth as ‘a society hostess and leading patron of good causes’ as in her profile in the *Australian Women’s Register* and Richard Kennedy’s *Charity Organisation Society in Colonial Melbourne*. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry outlines her life history and lists her philanthropic activities, her official leadership roles and the educational, cultural and political organizations in which she was involved. One biographical article covers similar ground while adopting a critical stance on her subject based on the view that Janet Clarke: ‘used her considerable energy and talents to establish and extend the institutional supports for the domestication of women, thus helping to contain feminists’ demands for equality’. Clearly, Janet Clarke offers a substantive target for those historians who are dismissive of the historical contributions of elite women.

By contrast, my thesis argues that Janet Clarke’s achievements and leadership skills were widely recognized during her lifetime. A letter printed in the *Age* in December 1899 pinpoints her public reputation. The writer, an ‘Australian Woman’ begged assistance to fund much-needed supplies for Australian soldiers fighting in South Africa: ‘We want a leader in the good work and if Janet Lady Clarke would only take the matter up, the women of the colony would rally at her side and success would be assured’. Similarly, a 1905 newspaper poll naming Janet Lady Clarke as one of the ‘Ten Best Citizens’ in Victoria demonstrated the esteem in which she was held by her fellow Victorians. I have used this historical archive to challenge arguments which suggest that her achievements were negated by her elite position in society.

The structure of this thesis demanded that themes in Australian and British history be addressed. Thus the perceptive account of connections between the British upper class and the colonial gentry which emerged from the scholarly research of Patricia Jalland and Penny Russell informed my narrative of the transition of the Clarkes from local

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93 See the *Australian Women’s Archive Project* at [www.womenaustralia.info](http://www.womenaustralia.info) and Richard Kennedy, *Charity Warfare: The Charity Organisation Society in Colonial Melbourne*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1885, p. 92.
95 *Age*, 19 December 1899.
96 *Herald*, 31 May 1905. See Chapter 4.
identities to national and international figures. While Jalland interpreted the closely-guarded English class system, their established rituals and ‘rights of passage’, Russell explored the tension between Australia and the motherland as the colonial gentry reinterpreted the restrictive conventions associated with the ‘cult of gentility’. Ralph Biddington generously shared his unpublished biographical material on Dr. William Maloney which helped clarify a number of political issues. Judith Smart’s perceptive portrait of Cecelia Downing which challenges Downing’s ‘historical invisibility’ reveals a woman who trod a similar path to Janet Clarke in regard to her religious convictions and her leadership of mainstream women’s organizations including the AWNL.

Damayanthie Eluwawalage’s thesis examining ‘the narrative of clothing’ proved useful in interpreting the historical photographs of Janet and Charlotte Agnes Snodgrass in 1869 and the 1875 image of the Clarke family in Italy. Roz Otzen’s thesis outlined the changing focus of the charity scene in Melbourne from 1854 to 1915 as governments and practitioners of charity were influenced by emerging scientific-based ideas in regard to social welfare. She included extracts in her Appendix from the 1887 diary of Sarah Swinborn, the matron of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, whose life and charitable works were recovered by Betty Malone in her text, Bonds of Care. Gordon Forth’s informative portraits of Samuel Winter, Arbella Cooke and the Murndal homestead in his thesis/text, The Winters on the Wannon, proved invaluable in locating Janet Snodgrass in the historic Murndal landscape. In Chapter Four I was able to juxtapose Janet Clarke’s essay on the Qasr-al-Aini hospital in Cairo with Hibba Abugideiri’s erudite paper on the scientisation of Egyptian culture.

The path-breaking work of Christine de Bellaigue, Marian Ames, Ailsa Zainu’ddin, and Patricia Clarke depicted the lives of nineteenth-century governesses from both a

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98 Judith Smart, ‘For the Good that we can do’.
99 Damayanthie Eluwawalage, History of Costume.
British and Australian perspective and documented their association with early Victorian schools thus demonstrating the educational links which were maintained in the Australian context. Marjorie Theobald’s scholarly thesis on *Women and Schools in Colonial Victoria 1840-1910* and Jane Chapman’s text, *Across the Slate: Prahran’s Schools 1850s-1985*, provided the framework for ‘imagining’ Janet Clarke’s educational opportunities in the South Yarra and Prahran district. Likewise, J. A. Hone’s Masters thesis, *Higher Education for Women in Victoria and in the Later Nineteenth-Century*, and her masterly use of the Leeper/Clarke correspondence and newspaper accounts of the battle to establish Trinity Women’s Hostel helped to clarify the controversy surrounding the saga of the Trinity Hostel.\(^{103}\)

Janet Clarke’s extensive involvement in a large number of organizations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has meant that historians, in the process of researching and presenting scholarly material about their chosen subjects, have included references to Janet Clarke in their texts. While I have provided an alternative reading to that of Janet McCalman’s in her interpretation of the role Janet Clarke played in the closure of the Women’s Hospital, McCalman’s eponymous text, *Sex and Suffering*, is a stark narrative of the health issues experienced by women in Victoria.\(^{104}\) This remarkable account of women’s ‘suffering’ draws on the records and statistics from the hospital and other depositories. In *Champions of the Impossible*, Ada Norris briefly described her role in the establishment of the National Council of Women in 1902.\(^{105}\) Judith Smart and Marian Quartly’s more recent research updated the history of this organisation and acknowledged the NCW’s progressive policies which resulted in reforms to assist vulnerable women and children.\(^{106}\) Marian Quartly’s paper on the AWNL (2004) is a substantial and informative critique of the history and politics of this organization and the Snodgrass sisters’ role as political power-brokers.\(^{107}\) Her 2006 paper examines Eva Hughes’ leadership of the AWNL from 1909 into the 1920s.\(^{108}\) In her text, *Liberal Women*, Margaret Fitzherbert

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107 Marian Quartly, “Defending the Purity of the Home Life”.
documents the history of the Australian Women’s National League and the role played in the organization by the two Snodgrass sisters. In the chapter, ‘Political Sisters: Janet Lady Clarke and Eva Hughes’, Fitzherbert describes their family background and history using information from Michael Clarke’s *Clarke of Rupertswood*. In examining Janet Clarke’s leadership of the AWNL in some detail, Fitzherbert acknowledges her personal strength, public profile, organizational skills and effective leadership. These references, along with institutional histories and biographies of prominent figures in America, Canada, England and Australia provided challenging resources for the development of my thesis.

Judith Brett in her Introduction to the new edition of *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People* suggested that historians should ‘be wary of getting too close to their subjects’ families’. Alan Martin’s 1993 biography of Robert Menzies was ‘initiated’ by the Menzies family and, while they did not try to influence the writing of the text, Brett believed that Martin’s ‘imagining them reading his words could not but have inhibited Martin’s interpretation’. In my 1998 thesis on the Cotton brothers I had raised this issue of ‘obligation’ in history writing. In 1952, an eminent Australian historian, Margaret Kiddle, collated the Cotton brothers’ letters in England as part of an Australian Joint Copying Project. Grateful for the co-operation of the English Cotton family during this project, she accepted and documented their negative assessment of the pioneering Cotton brothers while acknowledging the significance of their letters for Australian historiography. In the following years, as she researched and re-examined the lives of the early pioneers juxtaposed against the Australian landscape, she realized that the Cotton letters were not a record of failure but rather an account of their attempts to forge a path through the vicissitudes of the pioneering experience. Notably, Michael Clarke in his biography judged his great-grandfather (Big Clarke) to be a ruthless profligate man who had taken an unscrupulous and manipulative path to

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109 Margaret Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*.
111 Ibid., p. 9.
considerable wealth.\textsuperscript{113} This paradigm, established by the Clarke family, has given me unfettered use of their archive. Even so, Brett’s warning to historian/biographers about ‘obligation’ and the need for biographers to adopt an objective analysis of family archives is timely.

In discussing the Clarke family history in a privately published biography, Francis Clarke, Janet’s son, offered some brief but interesting insights into her role as a mother and wife.\textsuperscript{114} Michael Clarke, Janet’s grandson, used family papers to document William Clarke’s life story. In this biography Janet is the lesser figure, but my task of establishing specific events in the Clarkes’ life was made easier by reference to this biography. His great-aunt’s (Blanche) memories of her step-mother provide another representation of the youthful Janet Snodgrass at Sunbury. Likewise, Michael Clarke’s account of his grandmother within the Murndal environment underpinned my historical account of the Western District of Victoria in the eighteen fifties and sixties. As William died in 1897 and his wife lived another twelve years, this significant period in Janet Clarke’s life was not included. Notably, his archive and published books have been inspirational in developing this thesis. Phyllis Power wrote an unpublished hagiographical account of her step-grandmother based on a close relationship with Janet Clarke in Power’s childhood and early adulthood. Her comment: ‘I knew her intimately and consider she was one of the most outstanding Australian women of her time’, was a personal testimony from the daughter of Rupert Clarke, Janet’s eldest step-son. Power also published a biography of her mother and father (Sir Rupert Clarke) which included anecdotal material about Janet Clarke. While some of her information requires careful scrutiny, the fact that she was in personal communication with her grandmother, means her story is a significant archive.\textsuperscript{115}

Some historical biographers have been criticised for their failure to recognize and analyse the complex nature of the whole of society and instead concentrate on individuals, in particular individuals who play elite roles within their society – in

\textsuperscript{113} See Michael Clarke, ‘Big’ Clarke, Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980; and Michael Clarke, Clarke of Rupertswood 1831-1897, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1995, p. 2. William John Turner Clarke’s estate was valued at £2,000,000.

\textsuperscript{114} Francis Clarke (1879 – 1955) was the third son of Janet and William Clarke.

\textsuperscript{115} Phyllis Power’s unpublished biography of Janet Lady Clarke. See also Phyllis Power, From These Descended, Kilmore, 1977.
other words the atypical rather than the stereotypical.\footnote{See Tracing Past Lives, p. viii.} Hopefully this thesis, informed by the life and times of Janet Lady Clarke, indicates that I have taken this criticism seriously. Janet Clarke’s life ran parallel with the ambiguous and fluid period of colonization therefore the stereotypical historical portrait of Janet Clarke – wealthy philanthropist and privileged conservative – needs a broader brush if her response to contemporary struggles is to be understood.
Chapter One

The Colonial Landscape - Doogallook and Blairgowrie

Marianne Janet Snodgrass, the second child of Charlotte Agnes Cotton and Peter Snodgrass, was born on 2 April 1851 at Doogallook, the Cotton family home near Yea, in the Port Phillip District. In 1843 this property of 30,000 acres had been leased by her grandfather, John Cotton, enabling a smooth transition from the gentrified world which the Cotton family had inhabited in England to the Goulburn River landscape in Victoria. In April 1845 the Cotton family had moved from their original four-roomed slab house to their newly-constructed home which was to be the future home of Janet Snodgrass. It consisted of six bedrooms, a large sitting room with a brick fireplace, a covered way which led to the kitchen and a room for passing travellers. From the windows of their house, the Cotton family (and later the Snodgrass family) could look out on their cultivated paddocks and their garden and onwards to the distant hills where native trees flourished abundantly. John Cotton considered this new abode had ‘favourable prospects’ and provided: ‘every comfort that we could enjoy in England and perhaps more there being no rent or taxes to pay’.

In the early colonial period of the 1850s and early 1860s Janet Snodgrass spent her childhood and adolescence in this home at Doogallook. Here she could enjoy the opportunities which this fine property offered her family. An important aspect of Janet Snodgrass’s early education was the access she had to the Doogallook library and in particular to her grandfather’s letter book. These eloquent and evocative letters written to his brother William in England between the years 1843 and 1849 are

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1 Doogallook is an Aboriginal name derived from the sound of the frogs found in lagoons in this area.
2 Charlotte Agnes Cotton (1829-1894); Peter Snodgrass (1817-1867) and Janet Snodgrass (1851-1909).
4 Correspondence of John Cotton, Vol. 1, April 1844, p. 47 and p. 54.
5 Ibid., Vol. 1, October 1843, p. 29. Doogalook was situated on the Goulburn River between King Parrot and Muddy Creeks.
6 Ibid.
a graphic representation of this family’s pioneering experiences as they adapted to their new Australian environment while still maintaining their interest in literature, music, art and education. Her grandfather’s letters radiated his delight in his new Australian environment and in particular the family’s new home and its surrounds. Not only were the daily activities of their ever-increasing family narrated in detail but the countryside - the river, the birds, the crops, the vines, the native flora and fauna and the local Aborigines - was conveyed positively. The sense of ‘Australianism’ that John Cotton conveyed in his letters would have represented a significant cultural perspective for his granddaughter, a native-born Australian. Clearly Janet’s family culture was one of eager responsiveness to their adopted country.

The Mitchell Library in New South Wales holds John Cotton’s pen and ink sketch of the family’s sitting room at Doogalook.\footnote{Local Aborigines belonged to the Nira Balluck clan of the Taungarung tribe.}

In this image are the objects – needlework, books, family portraits and furniture – which connected the Cottons to their past life in England. Now these artefacts inhabited a new space. Two young women, probably the two older Cotton girls, Charlotte (known as Agnes), Janet’s mother, and Marian, are seated on chairs at the table busy with their needlework. Recessed shelves, containing the books which had

\footnote{See Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, SSV2B/2.}
accompanied them from England, are placed on either side of the fireplace. Attached to a wall above the fireplace is a portrait of John’s brother, William Cotton. On the left side of the room hangs a portrait of William’s wife and on the opposite wall there is a large window which John had described in his letter to William as: ‘a French window opening into the verandah which in the course of time I hope to see covered with vines or creepers’.  

It is likely that Janet would have spent many hours in this room, reading the books that her grandfather had hoped ‘would afford a source of amusement and study’ for the family. She could also enjoy John Cotton’s own published works and the coloured plates of English and Australian birds which illustrated his manuscripts. His observation: ‘Books are highly prized in the bush, and I can always find time to read a new book’ would surely have met with his granddaughter’s approval. His library had been further enhanced by additions John Cotton ordered from England:

I have requested the purchase of some useful books. (...). Perhaps a rolling map would be useful and instructive to the children. (...). Do you think McCulloch’s Dictionary would be likely to be useful? (...) any good translation of Chateaubriand’s poetry, … Quarterly Review … or London and Westminster Review or the Edinburgh.  

Later came a facsimile of Roger’s Imitation of the Old Masters, George Bennetts’ Wanderings in New South Wales, Batavia, Pedir Coast, Singapore and China, Richard Howitt’s Impressions of Australian Felix, Lord Brougham’s, Statesmen in the Time of George the Third and a volume from Charles Darwin’s Journal, Ramble by the Rivers. Newspapers also arrived from London and Melbourne.

This sitting room, this homestead, this property and the individuals who had peopled the Doogalook landscape – the Cotton and Snodgrass families, their friends,

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9 Ibid., Vol. 1, May 1844, p. 55.
11 Ibid., Vol. 2, August 1844, p. 6.
12 Ibid., Vol. 1, February 1844, p. 42.
13 Ibid., Vol. 2, April 1845, p. 20.
14 These were the Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser.
neighbours and passers-by - were historicised in John Cotton’s correspondence. This colonial dwelling remained at the core of Janet’s emerging personality.\textsuperscript{15}

The Snodgrass familial lineage too was an important aspect of Janet Snodgrass’s identity. She was the granddaughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass, C.B.K.T.S., the late commander of the forces in New South Wales and her father, Peter Snodgrass, was his third son.\textsuperscript{16} Janet Snodgrass (1790-1845), her grandmother after whom she was named, was a granddaughter of Sir Kenneth Douglas, a Scottish baronet. Lieutenant-Colonel Snodgrass’s father had been a minister in the Presbyterian Church in Scotland for twenty-seven years before his death. Peter Snodgrass and his daughter maintained their connection with this church in Australia. Peter Snodgrass was appointed Trustee for the fund to build the first Presbyterian Church in the precinct of Melbourne and Janet Clarke remained a seat holder and a frequent worshipper at Scots Church in Melbourne until her death.\textsuperscript{17}

Peter Snodgrass was eleven years old when his family departed Paisley in Scotland for Australia after his father had been appointed as Major of Brigade to the Colony of New South Wales in 1828.\textsuperscript{18} In the colony, Governor Darling added the responsibility of command of the Mounted Police to his duties and, when Governor Arthur left Van Diemen’s Land in 1836, he was appointed Acting Governor there during the interregnum between Governors Arthur and Franklin in 1837. The following year he returned to New South Wales and its Executive Council proclaimed Lieutenant-Colonel Snodgrass as the Acting Governor during the interregnum between Governor Bourke’s departure and the arrival of Sir George Gipps.\textsuperscript{19} In 1839, following his resignation from the army, he retired to his holding at Raymond Terrace in New

\textsuperscript{15} In 1886 Russell Clarke aged 10 years, who was attending Mrs. Tripp’s School in Melbourne while his parents were overseas mentioned an intended visit to Doogalook in a letter to his mother.


\textsuperscript{17} The Reverend Dr. Marshall Angus explained this link during the Sunday service in Scots Church Melbourne following her death. This was reported by the \textit{Argus}, 3 May 1909.

\textsuperscript{18} Moira Saunderson, \textit{The Corruna Connection}, p. 9. He had joined the army in 1803 serving as an officer in Spain, Sicily, Sweden and Portugal. On his return to Scotland he was recognized as the hero of the Corunna campaign during the Peninsular War in Spain and given a civic welcome by the noblemen, gentlemen and townsfolk of Paisley.

\textsuperscript{19} The interregnum in Van Diemen’s Land was between Lieutenant-Governors Arthur and Franklin (28.10.1836 to 5.1.1837) and in New South Wales was between Governors Bourke and Gipps (5.12.1837 to 23.2.1838).
South Wales where he acted as police magistrate and later a warden in this district.\textsuperscript{20} He and John Cotton became firm friends after the marriage of Janet’s parents in 1846, exchanging visits to each other’s homes. Her grandfather’s background and service to his adopted country added a significant dimension to Janet’s family history.

From her reading of the Cotton correspondence Janet would have learnt that after her father had overlanded from New South Wales to the Port Phillip district in 1838 he had earned a reputation for unruly behaviour. Later in 1841 and 1842 he was involved in two duels in Melbourne with fellow squatters – Redmond Barry and William Ryrie.\textsuperscript{21} This reputation for ‘larrarkinism’ was tempered by another escapade in May 1842 when Peter Snodgrass, and five other squatters, were involved in a lengthy battle near Diamond Creek with a gang of bushrangers whom they arrested and handed to police authorities. These men had been threatening the folk of the Port Phillip District for some time and their capture, trial and imprisonment were welcomed by the citizens of Melbourne. Peter Snodgrass and the other participants in this venture were honoured with a reception at the Royal Hotel in Collins Street, Melbourne, where over one hundred and twenty men celebrated the heroic actions of these brave squatters.\textsuperscript{22}

It is likely that Janet’s own experiences of the vicissitudes of pioneering life in the 1850s and 1860s meant that she would have agreed with her grandfather’s positive assessment of his future son-in-law.\textsuperscript{23} John Cotton had confirmed Peter Snodgrass’s bankruptcy in April 1842 and knew of his reputation as being one of ‘the wild mob’ of the Goulburn.\textsuperscript{24} However, John Cotton’s regard for her father was not prejudiced

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 18-26.
\textsuperscript{21} Paul de Serville, \textit{Port Phillip Gentlemen}, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980, ‘A question of Honour’, p. 106; and \textit{Pounds and Pedigrees}, Oxford University Press Melbourne 1991, p. 274 and p. 334. This activity, once regarded as a gentleman’s rite of passage to resolve a perceived insult, under English law was now illegal. William Ryrie, like Peter Snodgrass, was a squatter and of Scottish background; Redmond Barry was first a barrister and then a leading judge in the Port Phillip District. Fortunately, restraint on the part of these two gentlemen avoided permanent injuries. See also Garryowen, \textit{Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835 To 1832}, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1888, pp. 775-780 and James Grant & Geoffrey Serle, \textit{The Melbourne Scene 1803-1956}, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1960, pp. 42-3.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Chronicles of Early Melbourne}, p. 355.
\textsuperscript{23} Correspondence of John Cotton, Vol. 2, 6 March 1846, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{24} Melbourne Court of Insolvencies, Index to Insolvencies 1834-1921, VPRS 750.
either by his past conduct or the declaration of his insolvency on the 2 April 1842.\(^\text{25}\)

In fact his letters confirmed that most of their neighbours were faced with the same problems - insecure leases, drought, poor wool returns, high stock prices and stock diseases – which had serious implications for those who had dared to risk their money and standing in the colony by taking up land in Port Phillip District. Conversely, her father’s role in the formation and membership of the Melbourne Cricket Club (1838), the Melbourne Club (1839), the Turf Club (1840) and the Pastoral and Agricultural Society (1840) suggested a man committed to the future of this new colony.\(^\text{26}\)

After Agnes and Peter’s marriage in September 1846, John Cotton’s letters contained only praise for his new son-in-law signifying generational and lineal respect in this relationship. When he journeyed to Melbourne to place his sons or daughters in selected educational establishments or to Sydney where he visited Lieutenant-Colonel Snodgrass John Cotton left Peter in charge at Doogalook. In March 1849, he explained to his brother that Peter Snodgrass was instructing William, his eldest son, in management of a station and added: ‘perhaps no one is better qualified to give instruction than Peter Snodgrass. He has a good head, foresight, and activity sufficient’.\(^\text{27}\) These qualities were to be evident in the future public activism of both Peter Snodgrass and his daughter, Janet Clarke.

Although her grandfather had died some two years before her birth, Doogalook was to be Janet’s home for many years to come. This home was to remain a significant core for the Cotton family and their descendants.\(^\text{28}\) Her father remained as manager at Doogalook and Janet’s uncle, Charles Ryan, the husband of her mother’s sister, was executor of the estate. They had a close relationship with her parents and took on the responsibility for her grandmother and the younger Cotton children. From 1854, William Cotton worked the run in conjunction with Peter Snodgrass. In 1856 when William travelled to England, her father remained in charge. This state of affairs continued until news of William’s death, in London, reached the family at

\(^{25}\) There were 247 insolvencies in the Port Phillip District between 1842 and 1844. See records by Ken Smith for Port Phillip Pioneers Group at [home.vic.net.au/pioneers/pppg](http://home.vic.net.au/pioneers/pppg).


\(^{27}\) Correspondence of John Cotton, Vol. 3, March 1849, p. 40.

Doogallook.29 As William had named Peter Snodgrass as his heir he became sole lessee of the Doogallook station. In 1865, Doogallook was taken over by Goldsborough and Company, an agricultural company which provided short and long-term loans to pastoralists in Victoria. Poor stock prices, drought and new Selection Acts in the sixties meant that conditions did not favour the landholder particularly if he had been forced to borrow to survive the harsh conditions. Once again Peter Snodgrass had over-extended himself and could no longer afford to remain on the property.30

The year the family made their final farewell to Doogallook, Janet Snodgrass was fourteen years of age. Her sense of loss at leaving Doogallook must have been significant. This station had witnessed much activity: the marriage celebrations of her mother, Agnes, and the other Cotton daughters, the evenings the family and their many visitors had spent listening to the piano, the reading of books and poetry on long winter’s nights and the enjoyment of studying her grandfather’s exquisite drawings and paintings of the native fauna and flora indigenous to their district.31 For twenty years the home had echoed with the sound of new-born babies – Nellie Cotton, Ellis Ryan, Janet and the other Snodgrass children.32 Although family records, books, pictures, journals and heirlooms were to be proudly held by the family, other concrete relics which had played a significant role in Janet’s personal and cultural development remained at Doogallook. There were the house and gardens so carefully built and crafted by John Cotton; the cultivated paddocks where crops had been sown and harvested; the well-worn tracks where Janet and her brothers and sisters had ridden their horses and the Goulburn River where the children had learnt to fish, swim and paddle their boats. Still the most lasting memory would be of her grandparents’ resting place. Some distance from the house, encased by an iron railing fence and surrounded by a cluster of native trees, the graves looked towards the Goulburn river.

flats. Over one hundred and fifty years later, this memorial stands firm. The headstone inscription today reads:

IN MEMORY OF THEIR BELOVED FATHER JOHN COTTON DOOGALLOK RIVER GOULBURN DIED DECEMBER 15 1849 AGED 47 YEARS ALSO OF THEIR DEAR MOTHER SUSANNAH DIED DECEMBER 20 1852 AGED 43 YEARS

Figure 5 Cotton graves at Doogallook photographed in 1995 when historical homes in the Yea district were opened to the public

Blairgowrie

Janet’s privileged lifestyle as the daughter of a landed gentleman on the Doogallook property was further expanded by her father’s 1855 purchase of a residence in Prahran/South Yarra, a suburb of Melbourne. For the next ten years her family had access to both their country and town properties but in 1865 Blairgowrie, situated in the heart of suburban Prahran, became Janet’s sole home. Blairgowrie was built on the north-eastern side of a hill overlooking the Yarra-Yarra River and the growing slums of Collingwood and Richmond. This twenty-acre property stretched from the Yarra River to Gardiner’s Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and was part of a larger

33 Doogallook was misspelt on the gravestone.
34 The Snodgrass family apparently inherited the name of this property.
35 E. M. Robb, Early Toorak And District, Robertson and Mullens, Melbourne, 1934, p. 12. The cost was £2,500.
36 Ibid., p. 20.
estate originally purchased by George Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Other early settlers, many claiming to be ‘gentry’, viewed this position as an appropriate location which would identify their privileged position in Melburnian society. As settlers built new homes on five and ten acre allotments, the hill took on a tiered appearance and became known as The Terrace. Living permanently in Prahran from 1865, Janet was at an age when she could appreciate the benefits which came from living in close vicinity to the booming city of Melbourne. Hence, this residence also needs to be considered as an archive for understanding Janet’s life.

Blairgowrie consisted of eight-rooms and was built of wood and iron. Its given address in the Rate Books varies from Yarra Bank in the Electoral District and Division of South Yarra in 1865 to Malcolm Street in 1867 and again as Yarra Bank in 1868. Following the birth of her youngest brother, Frederic Evelyn, in 1866, another room was added to the house enabling their sole home to accommodate Janet’s parents and their nine children. Janet would have found the Blairgowrie environment different from the Doogallook setting; nevertheless there were some common features. The Yarra Yarra River like the Goulburn River at Doogallook was nearby and the surrounds were rural rather than urban. Much of the land beyond the house and garden was bush land not unlike that of the Doogallook countryside. This meant that farm animals and the horses, which had always played an essential part in their daily life, could be kept on their property thus providing food supplies and

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37 Ibid., p. 19 and p. 21. The Surveyor-General of Port Phillip, Robert Hoddle, had laid out the township of Melbourne in 1839. In June 1840, when the first land sales were held in Prahran, Robinson bought Lot 8 in June 1840. He later bought Lot 7 and Lot 6. These allotments stretched from the Yarra River to Gardiner’s Creek Road (now Toorak Road). George Robinson sold Blairgowrie to John Clough who sold it to Peter Snodgrass in 1855.

38 See Penny Russell, A Wish of Distinction, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 5. Commenting on Melbourne’s ‘gentry’ Russell argued that society between 1860s and 1880s was: ‘more likely to be drawn from urban professional than from landed families, and many of their values and social rituals reflected and adapted recent British ideals’.


40 Prahran Rate Books 1856-1868, Prahran City Council 1977, Microfiche at South Yarra Library, No. 229, 238, 245, 248 and 249. Malcolm Street was a cross street from Blairgowrie that gave the Snodgrass family access to Chapel Street.

41 See PROV, Births, Deaths and Marriages Pioneer CD 1838-1888 and Melbourne Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Kenneth (1847), No. 15517; Marian Janet (1851), No. 25558; Charles William (1852) No. 25614; Eliza (1854); Agnes Eva (1856); Sebastian Douglas (1858), No. 13404; Francis Campbell (1861); Gertrude (1864), No. 25003 and Frederic Evelyn (1866). The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act came into law in 1853, but Peter Snodgrass appeared to have overlooked registering the births of Eliza, Agnes, Francis and their last child, Frederic Evelyn.
transport. The Ryan and Snodgrass families had always been close as they had both shared the security and hospitality of the Cotton home at Doogalook. This connection continued as Agnes’s sister, Marian Ryan, and her growing family had moved to Brighton on Port Phillip Bay in 1854 when Charles Ryan had set up a Stock and Station Agency in Melbourne. Therefore, whether at Doogalook or Melbourne the two families remained in close contact.

The Prahran district offered both challenges and diversions for Janet and her siblings which did not exist in the district of Yea. By the 1850s, the population of Prahran had passed eight thousand. This was a diverse population – some rich and some poor. Horses, carts and stock animals abounded, but Prahran had only one surfaced road, Gardiner’s Creek Road, and the inhabitants were desperate for improved roads to ease their difficulties. While a number of the residents, particularly those on the hill, were professional gentlemen with substantial incomes, many of the dwellers in the vicinity of the Snodgrass property were involved in servicing the every day needs of the local households – butchers, bakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, drapers and candlestick makers. Earlier landowners had rented some of their land for clay mining and brick making activities. Gradually large scale quarrying for clay meant that the hill, which had originally descended into the Yarra River, was lowered. The mined clay was taken to the nearby brickworks which were situated near swampland and creeks which drained under Gardiner’s Creek Road. This industry, brick manufacture, was driven by the demands of the growing population of Melburnians as they built their homes in the small streets or on large estates in the Prahran and South Yarra districts.

The public persona of Janet’s family in the Prahran district was strengthened by Peter Snodgrass’s engagement with local politics. The Snodgrass family had been familiar with the demands of the political landscape since 1851, the year Janet was born. That year, her father was embroiled in a hotly-fought election for the Legislative Council in the seat of Kilmore, Kyneton and Seymour and in 1856 he was elected to the first Legislative Assembly. In 1855, Prahran was gazetted as a municipality and her father was immediately involved in serious disagreement with those who did not support his

44 Ibid., p. 43, The Hart and Preston Boyd Brick Works was established around 1850.
progressive view that the local residents should pay rates so that land could be drained and roads constructed. Clearly, he saw himself as a public benefactor, while other local residents might have regarded him as self-serving, eager to ensure that the needs of his family would be met and the value of his property would increase. He believed that tradesmen should have decent streets to ply their trades and deliver their goods to residents like the Snodgrass family.45

Figure 6 Image of Peter Snodgrass reproduced with the permission of Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria, (circa 1860s)

After a bitter and long-drawn out battle, he was unsuccessful in convincing ‘the Obstructionists’, that rates were needed.46 When the hotly-contested Council elections were held in February 1856, Peter was elected to the newly-formed Prahran Council which met once a week at the Mechanics Institute. This Council instigated a policy of improved infrastructure giving priority to the drainage of swampy areas in and around Chapel Street. Historian, Betty Malone, included this sketch of Janet’s father in her text, Early Prahran: ‘Sometime after 4.30 p.m., Peter Snodgrass would mount his horse and ride from his house near Como in Williams Road, along Gardiner’s Creek Road and along Chapel Street to the Mechanics Institute’.47 Although he remained on the Council only for one year, possibly annoyed that the council in his absence from a

46 Ibid., pp. 57-87.
47 Betty Malone, Early Prahran 1850-1863, p. 23.
meeting in January had imposed a fine of £10 on absent councillors, many projects were undertaken in that year initiating a programme of improvements for the residents of Prahran.\footnote{Prahran Newspapers and Journals, No. 7582, \textit{Prahran & St. Kilda Advertiser}, No. 3, 21 January 1857, p. 2.}

In the late 1850s and 1860s, Janet’s family would have witnessed many structural developments in their area. In the Melbourne precinct and its suburbs new houses, businesses, factories and substantial government buildings responded to the needs of an expanding population that followed the Victorian gold rushes. New technology mandated improved infrastructure which transformed the way Melburnians lived and worked in their city. In 1856 an important development was the construction of a new bridge over the Yarra River linking Chapel Street to Church Street in Richmond. This was in close proximity to Blairgowrie as was the toll station for the bridge on Chapel Street, close to the Snodgrass property. The family benefited considerably from this project, both in the provision of improved transport access and the £2,000 which Peter Snodgrass was awarded for selling some of his land to permit the widening of the Chapel Street section adjacent to his property.\footnote{John Cooper, \textit{History of Prahran}, p. 164. Cooper wrote: ‘The small piece of land Snodgrass received £2,000 for was sold at £29 an acre at earlier land sales. It was the most northern part of the section, a hill of schistore rock’.}

Janet’s later childhood ran parallel with this thriving urban society. Nearby Gardiner’s Creek Road and Chapel Street were formed and metalled from the Yarra River to Dandenong Road.\footnote{Ibid., p. 258.} The railway system was expanded with new railway stations being built at South Yarra, Prahran and Windsor.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 180-1.} 1858 saw the extension of the gas pipeline from Church Street to the Prahran Town Hall.\footnote{Ibid., p. 142.} All these changes stimulated the growth and prosperity of the area as shops, schools and churches were established to meet the needs of the growing population. In 1861, the Town Hall, which included a Municipal Reading Room, opened. This well-stocked library complemented the Reading Room already available in the Mechanics’ Institute. Access to libraries at Doogallock and Prahran offered an excellent resource to support Janet’s educational programme.\footnote{Betty Malone, \textit{Chapel Street Prahran}, Part One, 1834-1918, p. 67.}
John Cotton’s letters had frequently referred to his efforts to ensure a good education for all his children. This was also a driving factor within the Snodgrass household as the editorial in the Argus of August 1851 demonstrated:

He has an education as a gentleman; and we have read a late address delivered in Kilmore, which proved him to be a man of enlightened views and moderate opinions. (…). Mr. Snodgrass as a squatter is supposed to hold ultra-squatter tenets, but as far as we can gather from his expressed opinions; his views upon that important question do not differ very widely from our own.54

This ‘address’ was a letter directed to the Electors of Kilmore, Kyneton and Seymour published earlier in the Argus.55 Here Peter Snodgrass outlined the principles which would guide him as a future member of the Council and later, when responsible government was introduced in Victoria, in the Legislative Assembly. The editorial comment appears to present Janet’s father as an enigma - an enlightened politician with conservative views.56 Expressed in his address was his belief that all Christian Creeds were, under the Colonial Constitution, entitled to ‘equal distribution of State support in proportion to the numbers of their respective adherents’. As well he stated his view that education must have the highest priority in the considerations of the Legislature. He was elected to the Legislative Council which met for the first time on 13 November 1851 and was dissolved on 20 March 1856. Of the one hundred and five members on the Council throughout this period, Peter Snodgrass was one of only nine members who had unbroken service.

The Cotton and Snodgrass families, like other British pioneering families, valued education.57 Yet, with one exception, there appears to be no personal letters or diaries that would clarify the structure of Janet Snodgrass’s education. In 1888, Janet Clarke

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54 John Butler Cooper, History of Prahran, p. 2.
55 Argus, 29 July 1851.
56 Kathleen Thompson and Geoffrey Serle, A Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament 1859-1900, Canberra, 1972, p. 196. Peter Snodgrass represented Anglesey in the Legislative Assembly from 1856 to 1859, Dalhousie from 1859 to 1864 and South Gippsland from 1864 to 1867.
57 Paul de Serville, Pounds and Pedigrees, pp. 172-3. Here de Serville discusses the importance of education to Scottish pioneers.
wrote to James Smith asking him for a list of books to assist in her daughter’s education. She reminded him that:

Years ago you gave to my Father a list of works for me to read as a sort of continuation of my education and I thought it so splendid that I in my turn am going to ask you to be so kind, as to guide me in my little daughter's education. She is now 14 and reads with Miss Bateman. She is a clever child and older than her years in many ways. I want her to be gradually educated in the world of books. She has four years before her. I do not know if it is best for her to read the same book steadily through taking an hour each day or if it would be better to take a history one day and on alternate day something quite different, travels or biography (…) of course she has many other things to learn, Italian, drawing and music besides her general English work.58

This letter suggests that Janet’s own programme of study was as demanding and as disciplined as the curriculum she was proposing for her own daughter. The libraries at Doogallook and Prahran would have provided the books required to support her studies. Attendance at an established school, a governess and music and drawing classes were all possibilities for Janet Snodgrass. Also the fluency of her many existing letters, written after her marriage in 1873, indicate a capacity to express her opinions and ideas confidently and fluently. Given the interest of the Cotton and the Snodgrass households in learning, for both their daughters and sons, it is safe to assume that education of their children was given high priority.59 Supporting this claim is a clause in Peter Snodgrass’s 1863 will, whereby he instructed his Trustees to provide funds for the ‘maintenance and education of my present children or any children hereafter to be born’. Just as the sixty miles to reach Melbourne from Doogalook did not dissuade the Cotton parents from ensuring a good education for their daughters and sons, one can only assume the Snodgrass children would have similar opportunities. The 1856 purchase of Blairgowrie meant that the family

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58 1888 letter to James Smith, [in private hands]. He was a dramatic art and literary critic, newspaper editor, journalist and the Victorian Parliamentary librarian until 1869. He, like Janet Clarke, was a foundation member of the Alliance Française and the Dante Societies.

59 John Cotton’s letters show clearly that he was anxious that both his sons and daughters should have access to schools or tutors. For instance, the two unmarried girls, Caroline (aged 15) and Mary (11) were sent to Melbourne to attend a school run by Mrs. Conolly whom he described as a ‘well-informed person’. See Vol. 3, February 1849, p. 39 and August 1849, p. 46. The boys attended school in Melbourne and a tutor was also employed at Doogalook.
possessed homes in both areas so they could make choices and arrangements for their children’s schooling.

Given the number of ladies who did emigrate with the intention of working as governesses, it is likely that the Snodgrass family, conscious of the need for their children to have a proper education, would have employed a governess or tutor following the example set by John Cotton. Governesses in the late 1850s and 1860s were not hard to find and their salaries were around £40 to £50 per annum. Many of the governesses who emigrated from England in search of a better life, found it difficult to obtain positions and suffered financially, often forced to become household servants or, if possible, start their own schools. Patricia Clarke examined the plight of such women.\(^6\)\(^0\) The following extract is from a letter from Isabella McGillivray that Patricia Clarke used to explain the poor conditions which greeted governesses seeking employment on their arrival in Melbourne.

Salaries are not so high now as they were and many of these salaries in the Bush are never realized – there seems to be few situations and those persons wishing to employ, besieged by applicants.

Isabella and her sisters were in a party of eight governesses who arrived in Melbourne in 1862. One sister found employment as a governess in St Kilda, while Isabella, unable to find a suitable position, set up a school in Ballarat. Eventually her other sisters joined her at the Ballarat school.\(^6\)\(^1\) Some governesses found work on distant stations as did Louisa Geoghegan at Apsley, some miles north-west of Hamilton, in 1866. Her letters home give us some understanding of the world of the English governess so far from home and unused to the monotony of ‘bush life’ which she defined as ‘a strange mixture of roughing and refinement’. Her comments concerning the gentry were revealing: ‘In this district there are two distinct sets, one gentry and one would-be gentry – there are more of the latter. In the former I think unfinished, unladylike governesses would be unwelcome’.\(^6\)\(^2\) The Snodgrass family no doubt would have endorsed this view.

\(^6\)\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 65-8.
\(^6\)\(^2\) Ibid., p. 105.
That Janet Clarke had at least one governess was confirmed by the historian, John Cooper when he examined the educational establishments in the Malvern district in his 1935 edition of the History of Malvern. After his book was in the hands of the publisher, he learnt that Frances and Jane Franklin, conducted a school in Malvern from 1878. Consequently Cooper advertised for information about the Misses Franklin. There were a number of replies, some of which suggested that one of the Misses Franklin had lived to a great age and in somewhat reduced circumstances in a small weatherboard cottage in Malvern Road. In his appendix to this history, he noted:

The belief expressed in the letters of reply was general that Miss Franklin came to Australia as a governess to some family, and later she taught Miss Snodgrass, afterwards Janet Lady Clarke. Lady Clarke, when she heard how ill time had used her one-time governess, gave Miss Franklin a small pension.63

Although the information about Jane Franklin is scant, she was the niece of Sir John Franklin, the famous Arctic explorer who was Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen’s Land from 1837 to 1843. His brother lived and worked at Oxford, where it is assumed the Franklin sisters gained their education. Christina De Bellaigue examined the education of governesses in England in the nineteenth-century and contested the commonly held assumption that only women in ‘reduced circumstances’ became governesses.64 Instead, she argued that many schoolmistresses were educated for the role of governesses and supported her stand by examining letters of application for assistance from the Governesses’ Benevolent Institution in London. Many of these women were daughters of professional men, whose own financial difficulties meant they had educated their daughters specifically to become teachers if they did not marry. Others saw the teaching role as a vocation or as a ‘religious mission’.65 The Misses Franklin, obviously ‘self-consciously educated’ and unmarried, had sought to improve their financial standing by emigrating to Australia.66 Their connection with

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65 Ibid., p. 966. The term ‘religious mission’ is used on p. 967 and ‘self-consciously educated’ on p. 970.
66 Patricia Clarke, The Governesses, p. 3.
Janet Clarke is useful as it identifies at least one governess who was employed in the Snodgrass household to assist in the education of their older children.

When Peter Snodgrass purchased the Prahran residence in 1855 there was a variety of schools in their neighbourhood many of them in easy distance of the Snodgrass residence. However, at this stage there is no specific information as to the name of Janet’s school. Marjorie Theobald noted in her thesis on colonial education for girls that: ‘Over seven hundred ladies’ schools advertised in the Melbourne Argus between 1850 and 1870 and that number may be increased by reference to any suburban or provincial newspaper’.67 This plethora of private schools was confirmed by Jane Chatham in her monograph, Across the Slate: Prahran’s Schools 1850s -1985. Here she listed ‘thirty-two private venture schools in Prahran district schools prior to the Education Act of 1872’.68 A possibility was a Ladies’ Seminary in Prahran, which in the early 1860s was run by a Mrs. Elizabeth Tripp. This school, surrounded by gardens and a paddock for horses, was later moved to a home at the corner of Commercial and Williams Road, Prahran. East Leigh, as it was known, was in easy riding distance from Blairgowrie and many of the pupils who attended this school were children of pastoralists and parliamentarians.69

Miss Murphy’s school, where Janet’s cousin, Ellis Ryan, attended was another alternative for Janet. It was also the school where her sister, Eva, received her education. Madame Lautour had set up a girls’ school in Hillington Villa, near the corner of High Street and Chapel Street in 1853. Here she taught, until 1900, ‘a housewifely curriculum based on polite accomplishments’ to her young ladies.70 Charlotte Conolly’s establishment in Collins Street, Melbourne, where the Cotton sisters had boarded in the late 1840s, was moved to South Yarra in 1855 and this school, after it was sold to a Miss Kipling, moved first from Caroline Street, then to

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69 Patricia Clarke, The Governesses, p. 71; John Butler Cooper’s History of Malvern, also gave Mrs. Elizabeth Tripp’s address as Williams Road, Prahran; Marjorie Theobald, Women and Schools in Colonial Victoria, pp. 96-7.
70 Jane Chatham, Across the Slate, p. 7.
Walsh Street and in 1864 was located at the corner of Commercial road and Punt Road.\textsuperscript{71}

Clearly there was no shortage of schools in the Prahran area. On Thursday 5 December 1867, two thousand local school children attended a picnic to celebrate the arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh in Melbourne. After assembling at the Prahran Town Hall at 12 noon, they marched to Fawkner Park where they sang the National Anthem under the leadership of Mr. Bonwick.\textsuperscript{72} Afterwards the children were provided with food and various forms of entertainment.\textsuperscript{73} The Prahran Telegraph’s account of the picnic listed thirty schools in the district which attended these festivities, thus providing an accurate overview of the educational establishments and their student and teacher numbers in the Prahran and South Yarra district in 1867. The overall numbers were estimated to be 2,281.\textsuperscript{74} Whether Janet and her siblings were able to enjoy this picnic was problematic. Peter Snodgrass had died unexpectedly some ten days before this event.

For the purpose of understanding the structure of the curriculum offered to young girls, like Janet Snodgrass, the journal of Blanche Mitchell is a useful model. The connection with the Melbourne Snodgrasses was confirmed by an entry in Blanche Mitchell’s journal which noted that her sister had received letters from Mr. and Mrs. Peter Snodgrass in Melbourne, who had both written to her ‘most kindly, asking her to go, she shewed me the letters, they were very kind’.\textsuperscript{75} A week or so later Blanche noted that Jessie had left to stay with the Snodgrass family in Melbourne.

Blanche was the daughter of Sir Thomas Mitchell (1792-1855), the eminent Australian surveyor, explorer, geologist and botanist. Major Mitchell and Peter Snodgrass’s father both had been born in Scotland and had served in the same British regiment. The families lived in the same neighbourhood in Sydney. Following

\textsuperscript{71} Marjorie Theobald, Women and Schools in Colonial Victoria, pp. 53-4.  
\textsuperscript{72} James Bonwick was a teacher, historian, and Inspector for the Denominational Schools Board.  
\textsuperscript{73} Fawkner Road extends between Toorak, Commercial Punt and St. Kilda Roads.  
\textsuperscript{74} The Prahran Telegraph, December 1867, p. 3, cols. 1-2. Examples of student numbers were: Madame Latour’s (40), Miss J Clarke’s (20), Miss Lowcock’s (25), Miss O’Shea’s (40), Miss Cann’s (30), Miss Miller’s (25), Miss Fox’s (25) and Miss Murphy’s (12). The Telegraph reporter estimated there were also 3000 adults present.  
Mitchell’s exploration of the south-east of Australia and his journey to the Portland district, Peter Snodgrass, probably impressed by Mitchell’s stories of excellent grazing lands, travelled overland to the Port Phillip District in search of a suitable station.

Two years after the death of her father in October 1855, and at the age of fifteen, Blanche Mitchell, the youngest Mitchell daughter, recounted the vicissitudes of her life between the years 1858 and 1861 and her dedication to study:

Determined to study as hard as possible so that I may at least be able to speak some languages. To read the classics, for they elevate the mind; to study the best authors, for they refine the sentiments. ‘Knowledge is Power’ shall be my motto hence forward. It shall be engraved on the banner of my mind, my thoughts shall unfurl the invigorating words. (...). Let me then be up and doing, let me never think study too hard, or too obstruse. 76

That Blanche had serious educational goals, demonstrated that the process of female education within the Australian context was under review. In the introduction to the text, *Gladly would they learn and gladly teach*, Marian Ames and Ailsa Zainu’ddin, suggested that while the English educational curriculum for young women was copied in Australia, here it took on a life of its own:

...it is equally true that the transplanted education, along with transplanted stereotypes, often bloomed differently when planted in different soil. 77

Blanche’s aspirations for self-education – ‘knowledge is power’ - highlight the value placed on women’s education by Australian families like the Mitchells and the Snodgrasses. This was not just the ‘housewifely curriculum based on polite accomplishments’ that Madame Lautour had offered in Prahran, but Blanche Mitchell’s education, and no doubt Janet’s, was seen not as a pathway to marriage or employment as a governess, but as an intellectual empowering instrument and an end in itself.

76 Ibid., 7 September, 1860.
In her journal Blanche included details of her schooling and daily life - reading and musical practice, health, holidays, social activities and her relationship with her mother and sisters. For instance, on 2 February 1858 while her sister, Alice, attended a drawing class and sometimes a singing lesson, Blanche went first to her German lesson then on to a calisthenics session. On other days she attended music and dancing lessons, travelling on an omnibus, which despite the overcrowding on the vehicle, was her usual method of transport around Sydney. Janet Snodgrass’s reading list, as directed by James Smith, the Parliamentary Librarian, would have contained similar texts to that of Blanche Mitchell.\(^{78}\) This reading programme, based on many of the accessible contemporary works, included *The Critic* by Sheridan, Dickens’ *Dombey and Son*, several volumes of Byron’s life, *Louis Arundel* by Frank Fairleigh (described as a first-rate novel), *Song of Hiawatha* by Longfellow and the *London Illustrated News*. Sometimes Blanche’s mother read aloud to her daughters – perhaps the *Life of Baxter* by Charles Fox which described the founding of the Quaker Society or Shakespeare’s *Henry the VIII*. The family regularly attended the Presbyterian, Congregational and Anglican Churches to hear the sermons of their preachers. Blanche taught in Sunday School, but was often overwhelmed by the bad behaviour of the children in her classes. Leisure activities included attending balls and theatre, listening to army bands, picnics, embroidery, writing letters and visits from family friends and relatives. The Mitchell’s family’s attendance at various Protestant churches points to an eclectic form of secular and religious education rather than a conventional one. Blanche and Janet’s love of reading and languages and their diverse theological experiences indicated an education which was underpinned by strong ethical and moral values and a belief that ‘knowledge is power’.

Janet, like Blanche in Sydney, was advantaged by her connection to Melbourne gentrified society. Curtis Candler provided a rare glimpse of the youthful Janet Snodgrass in 1905 when he wrote to Janet Clarke expressing his gratitude for her New Year gift and her reminiscences of ‘your girlhood in connection with the Assembly Balls’ which ‘gladdened his heart’. He recalled the balls which Janet had attended:

\(^{78}\) See Janet Clarke’s 1888 letter to James Smith requesting a suitable book list for her daughter. See also Michael Clarke, p. 217. Here he mentions that in 1884 Janet answered a questionnaire in a Confessions Album. She gave Thackeray, Charles Kingsley and Ruskin as her favourite authors and Tennyson, Longfellow and W. Carleton as her favourite poets.
I was one of the Committee for those select gatherings and when you whom I knew before you entered your teens had just blossomed into the sweet and attractive beauty.79

Figure 7 Janet Snodgrass, aged fifteen, 1866

We know Janet’s privileged girlhood changed dramatically with the sudden death of Peter Snodgrass in 1867 which meant that Janet, as with Blanche, was faced with similar uncertainties. Both families found their financial circumstances considerably changed with the death of their husbands and fathers.

On Saturday 23 November 1867, Janet’s father was returning from Queenscliff where he, along with other members of Parliament, had witnessed the arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh, when he complained ‘of pain in the region of his heart’.80 The next Monday (25 November) he attended Parliament and although he appeared to be in good health, shortly after reaching his home, Blairgowrie, he suffered a heart attack and died.81 He had been an elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.

79 Letter, 6 January 1905, to Janet Lady Clarke from C. Candler, Clarke Letters. Curtis Candler (1827-1911), founder of the Yorrick Club, emigrated to Melbourne from England in 1850. After his appointment as coroner to the County of Bourke, he lived at the Melbourne Club from 1857 until 1911. His diary recorded the intrigues, sexual matters and gossip of the gentrified Melbourne society and was used extensively by Penny Russell, A Wish of Distinction, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994; and www.adb.online.edu.au/biogs.

80 The Prahran Telegraph, 30 November 1867, p. 2, column 4. Prince Albert, the second son of Queen Victoria and recently named the Duke of Edinburgh, visited Melbourne in November 1867. This was the first Royal visit to Melbourne. For an account of this visit see Paul de Serville, Pounds and Pedigrees, pp. 63-8.

81 Bede Nairn (ed.), The Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1851-1890, p. 455.
since its instigation in November 1856. Probably he, as with other committed members, would have found the requirement to be present up to four days a week when Parliament was in session, quite financially and personally taxing.82

In the 1850s and 1860s and before the emergence of organised political parties Victorian governments changed frequently as factional alliances shifted and reformed. Members tended to represent ‘interests’ as in Peter Snodgrass’s case - the squatting fraternity. In politics, Peter Snodgrass had never backed away from a cause he believed in, a stance that meant he had made many enemies in his sixteen years of politics.83 Reflecting on his career, the Age suggested:

His death is as much regretted by his opponents as by his admirers; perhaps more so, for there is an indefinable feeling of sadness in the recollection of many a wordy encounter in which hard things are said, which upon cool reflection, the utterer might wish to recall. There is not one of his antagonists by whom his memory is not cherished for many of his good qualities, both social and moral.84

Parliamentary remuneration did not exist before 1868 and this had obviously contributed to the impecunious position of the Snodgrass family. Therefore the family’s income had to be derived from other sources. In the prosperous years following the gold rushes Doogallook would have had provided a reasonable return. However the sixties brought drought, low prices and debt forcing the Snodgrass family to surrender their station. That the family was experiencing financial difficulties following the death of Peter Snodgrass was evidenced by a paragraph in the Telegraph the week after the obituary was published:

We sincerely trust there is no truth in a paragraph published in the Ballarat Star stating that the late Mr. Peter Snodgrass has left his widow and nine children in

82 As members relied entirely on their earnings from their particular occupations, sittings did not start until 4.30 p.m. and usually concluded between 10.30 p.m. and 12 p.m. with a meal break at 6.30 p.m.
83 Margaret Kiddle, Men of Yesterday, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983, pp. 250-262; and Annette Lewis, The Cottonian Legacies, pp. 57-8. Peter Snodgrass represented Anglesey in the new Legislative Assembly but Anglesey disappeared when the electoral boundaries were redrawn in 1858. In 1859, he won the electorate of Dalhousie and in the 1864 election he stood for South Gippsland which he held until his death in 1867. All these three electorates were in the same geographical region of Victoria where he was well-known as a local hero, magistrate, landholder, and conscientious parliamentary representative.
84 Age, 30 November 1867, p. 2.
absolute poverty. Some old friends of the family are busying themselves in getting a subscription to aid the widow in her distress; and Mr. Fowler, in a few hours, collected about one hundred pounds. Mr. Sturt, M.P., has also taken measures to collect subscriptions, and will receive and acknowledge any amounts sent to him.\textsuperscript{85}

In August 1868, a Parliamentary Committee was presented with a petition from Janet’s mother, Charlotte (Agnes) Snodgrass, which requested a gratuity for herself and nine children. Although such a plea to Parliament was not so unusual at that time, what was noteworthy was that the voice of Charlotte Agnes Snodgrass, usually silent in the narrative of the Cotton and Snodgrass family, was heard.\textsuperscript{86} The indignity, that her mother must have suffered in making the financial woes of the family so public, would not have escaped the attention of her eldest daughter and surely would be a life-changing event for an impressionable young woman.

The petition stated that Charlotte Snodgrass had been left without means and was now depending on the ‘bounty of her friends’. It listed a number of reasons to support her application:

:Her husband had been a member of the Parliament from its formation.
:He had been the unpaid chairman of the local bench of magistrates at Yea all the time he had resided in the district. This position was now conducted by a stipendiary magistrate.
:Her husband had arrested the bushrangers who had shot Mr. Henry Fowler and handed them over to police authorities. Consequently Parliament had awarded the injured Mr. Fowler £1,000 for his part in the arrest. As her husband had not been wounded, he made no similar claim.

The final point of this submission which was read to the Parliamentary Committee was the most revealing:

That your petitioner’s late husband, whilst a member of the first Council and also of the Legislative Assembly, was debarred from receiving the pecuniary advantages

\textsuperscript{85} The Prahran Telegraph, 14 December 1867, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{86} Extracts in Victorian Parliamentary Papers (VPP), Legislative Assembly, August 1868, p. 790, pp. 811-13 and p. 824. Mr. J. T. Smith, a member of the Legislative Assembly stated: ‘… the house had not been slow to recognise the claims of the widows and orphans of its deceased members. The last three cases were those of Mr. Heales, Dr. Macadam and Mr. Ramsay’, p. 811.
enjoyed at the present time by members of your honourable house, inasmuch as he was always obliged to defray his own travelling expenses from the district in which he resided; and further, that from conscientiously attending to his duties as a member of the Legislature, he was not in a position to devote his time to his own private affairs at the station on the Goulburn river, whereby he suffered great pecuniary loss.

Later that month Parliament voted a sum of £1,200 for Charlotte Snodgrass and her nine children.  

Later that month Parliament voted a sum of £1,200 for Charlotte Snodgrass and her nine children. There is no simple method of converting this sum of money into present day monetary value, but by examining the Government statistics for 1868, it is possible to form some opinion as to its worth. In 1868 wages in Melbourne for a housemaid were £20 to £30 per annum; for a married couple without family and full board the sum was £55 to £65 per annum. Artisan labourers were paid per day and this wage did not include provisions. For instance a blacksmith earned from 78s/1d to 10s and a bricklayer from 7s to 10s. Needlewomen in Ballarat, without board and lodgings, earned 3s an hour. In the same year, pensions per annum chargeable upon the revenue of the Colony of Victoria, varied considerably: Sir William a’Beckett the Chief Justice, £1,500, Samuel Lapham, Clerk of the Courts in Kilmore, £83/1s/1d, Andrew McCrae, Police Magistrate, £325 and Sarah McCullagh, a Matron, £32/1s/8d. The latter were yearly pensions whereas the Snodgrass gratuity was a lump sum. Even if this £1,200 was invested the interest could not sustain the ten remaining members of the Snodgrass family.

Major Mitchell’s death in 1855, as with Peter Snodgrass’s death twelve years later, left his wife and children without an annual income to support the gentrified life-style to which they had become accustomed and were reluctant to abandon. Blanche’s anguished journal entries reflect their changed circumstances following the death of her father. Some elements of their claim to gentility – birth, wealth, education and

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87 VLP, Legislative Assembly, August 1868, p. 824 and Thompson and Serle, p. 196.
89 Ibid., pp. 40-1.
90 Ibid., Statistics of Victoria, 1868 - Finance, p. 10.
91 In the August 3 1867 edition of Prahran Telegraph, the St Kilda Branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd. and the National Bank advertised their rates of interest for six months or more at 6 per cent per annum for deposits. The John Levy and Sons Discount Bank and the Land Mortgage Bank of Victoria on the same page of the newspaper offered 8 per cent interest for twelve months on deposits. If the £1,200 was invested with the conservative banks, the Snodgrass income would be £72; at 8 per cent the interest would provide £96.
92 The Blanche Diaries, 16 October 1858 and 21 March 1859.
leisure - were proving transient and the privileges, that once the family had taken for granted, were unravelling. However, in 1861 the New South Wales Parliament had voted the wife of Sir Thomas Mitchell £200 per annum. At that time there were only two daughters at home, Blanche the youngest being eighteen. In the Snodgrass case there were nine children between the ages of nineteen and two; therefore the £1,200 was not going to be sufficient to maintain their previous lifestyle. In 1868 at seventeen years of age and at the centre of the family’s misfortune, Janet could well have echoed Blanche’s distraught journal entry: ‘oh, how fallen stricken are we’.93

In many recent historical observations on Peter Snodgrass his financial mismanagement is highlighted. There is also the accusation that he was the banker for a group of squatters whose aim was to influence members of parliament to safeguard the interests of landowners in danger of losing their stations to selectors. Actually the enquiry into this matter, which Margaret Kiddle discussed at length in *Men of Yesterday*, did not occur until after he died, so he was not able to defend himself.94 The publicity which accompanied this enquiry must have been humiliating for his wife and children, only off-set by the widespread support that they received from the squatting community.

Clearly the Victorian squatters felt embittered by their position and therefore gave financial assistance to those Parliamentarians, like Peter Snodgrass, who had actively worked to improve their situation. Paul de Serville’s view that: ‘the squatters regarded themselves as a besieged class, and their solitariness was coloured by bitterness, as everywhere they detected the hand of the outside world against them’, explains the strength of support that was offered by the squatting fraternity to the Snodgrass family.

93 Ibid., 16 October 1858.
94 See Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, pp. 257-60 and Parliamentary Papers, 1869. Complaints Committee Report, March 1869, p. 1095. In 1869, the Parliamentary Complaints Committee investigated this matter. Hugh Glass, an associate of Peter Snodgrass, was brought before Parliament. He claimed Peter Snodgrass and a Mr. Keyte (both deceased) were in charge of the affair and denied he had bribed other members of Parliament to get them to agree to the passing of the Quieting of Titles Bill, whose purpose was to compensate landowners who would lose money when their land became available for selection. He did acknowledge he had contributed to some members’ election expenses. Although neither Keyte nor Snodgrass were alive to defend their actions, the Claims Committee found they did have large sums of money to use for the purpose of influencing members of Parliament. Glass was sentenced to imprisonment by Parliament, but this sentence was found to be illegal by the Supreme Court.
after his demise.\textsuperscript{95} Given his estate at probate was valued at £200, there was no clear evidence that he had benefited from this so-called ‘banker’ role.\textsuperscript{96} Nevertheless this was to be a yardstick by which he was and is measured by latter day historians.

In her 1998 monograph, Moira Saunderson also repeated the assertion that, at the time of his death, Peter Snodgrass was under investigation on alleged bribery charges. Yet, the Select Committee on Complaint to investigate parliamentary corruption connected to the alleged bribery of Parliamentary members was appointed in March 1869, some fourteen months after he had died.\textsuperscript{97} Saunderson’s comment appears to be based on Paul de Serville’s statement in his text, \textit{Port Phillip Gentlemen}: ‘Fate was even handed and caught up with Snodgrass (…), carrying him off while he was under investigation by a parliamentary committee on a charge of bribing members of Parliament’.\textsuperscript{98}

While the committee members in the 1869 enquiry and interested historians since have sought to uncover any illegal actions used by Peter Snodgrass in his efforts to support the squatting fraternity both inside and outside Parliament, the personal measures he took to protect his family’s financial interests have gone undetected. Ironically, it was the controversial Land Acts which permitted Peter Snodgrass to gain legal possession of \textit{Doogallook}. For Janet and her family this must have been a significant purchase. With his knowledge of the Goulburn district, Peter Snodgrass was able to use the new Selection Acts to become a selector himself. The Grant Land Act of 1865 permitted the selection of 640 acres of Crown land, which included the right to own water frontage of up to one mile.\textsuperscript{99} An examination of the Register of Proprietors List, which identified the purchasers of land and the relevant land titles, reveals that sometime in 1867, the year of his death, Peter Snodgrass and William 61Cotton (deceased) of \textit{Doogallook} purchased 320 acres of Crown land for £320 in

\textsuperscript{95} Paul de Serville, \textit{Pounds and Pedigrees}, pp. 184-185.
\textsuperscript{96} Will and Probate Papers, PROV, Melbourne.
\textsuperscript{97} Margaret Kiddle, \textit{Men of Yesterday}, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{People and Parliament: Quick Tour} at \url{www.prov.gov.au}. The Duffy Act made 10,000,000 acres available for selection in Victoria. Selectors had to buy one half of their selection and were permitted to rent the rest of their land for 2/- and 6 d per acre for 8 years. The Grant Act stopped selectors from purchasing the land outright in the first three years. They had to live on their land for three years and make improvements. Water frontage was reduced to one mile, but was still owned by landholders and could still be damned.
the County of Anglesey in the Parish of Windham. This selection was a section of
the original Doogalook station.

While this purchase of the homestead block represented a fraction of the original run,
this property was now: ‘To hold unto the said Peter Snodgrass and William Edward
Cotton – their heirs and assigns for ever as tenants in common’. Although the
Cotton/Snodgrass family had managed the Doogalook run between 1843 and 1865,
their tenancy had never been secure. The Crown owned the land and the tenancy was
renewable each year and subject to the ever-changing Land Acts.

It is safe to assume that Janet’s father’s intention was not only to ensure financial
security for his family but to reassert the Cotton/Snodgrass historical links to the
Doogalook property and to place himself in an advantageous position of buying more
land in the vicinity sometime in the foreseeable future. Nearly thirty years after the
Cotton and Snodgrass families had settled in the Yea district they were still very much
part of this colonial landscape. Obviously there was considerable pride in their British
heritage, their family connections and their emerging Australian identity which John

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100 Registrar of Proprietors Titles, Folio 48790, Laverton. See Memorials of Instruments,
Memorandum, Vol. 518, Folio 103,459, No. 162, Department of Environment and Sustainability,
Laverton Historical Library, Laverton. The exact date of this 1867 purchase was covered by the Vice-
Regal seal.

101 This area is shown on map of Windham Parish: County of Anglesy Victoria, 1888, National Library
10’ S, Long. 145° 19’E.
Cotton had alluded to in his letters to England. However, their new-found confidence, based on the legal ownership of *Doogallook*, was to prove transient. Of course Peter Snodgrass did not foresee his early demise and the consequent trauma his family would experience.

After Peter Snodgrass died, a conspiracy of silence concerning the Snodgrass ownership of *Doogallook*, was maintained by a powerful group of friends and family. His son, Kenneth John Mackenzie Snodgrass, as a devisee under the Snodgrass will, was registered as the proprietor of this land.\(^{102}\) This was not mentioned in the course of the Parliamentary investigation nor was Peter Snodgrass’s motivation for naming his long-deceased brother-in-law, William Cotton, as part owner of this selection ever revealed. The ‘bounty’ of family and friends was the Snodgrass lifeline in the immediate aftermath of the loss of the father and husband; and it was also to be the paradigm which influenced the future life and times of Janet.

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\(^{102}\) This was confirmed by a 17 March 1870 Memorandum No. 162 of the Memorial of Instruments. This Certificate of Title stated: ‘Kenneth John Mackenzie Snodgrass of the City of Melbourne County of Bourke Gentleman is now the proprietor of the selected land’. Kenneth, nineteen, and his brother Charles, fifteen, endeavoured to manage the *Doogallook* station, but inexperience and financial difficulties meant that by 1873 it was lost to the family. In June 1873 Kenneth Snodgrass sold this property to John Hamilton. See Register Book, Vol. 578, Fol. 103459, Department of Environment and Sustainability, Laverton Historical Library, Laverton. Peter Snodgrass’s estate was settled in 1880 thirteen years after his death. Trustees named in his will were his eldest son, Kenneth; Evelyn Sturt, Superintendent of Melbourne Police from 1843 to 1853, Magistrate for Melbourne (1853-1878), Director of the Bank of Victoria and the Australasian Insurance Company and a member of Parliament; John McHaffie, a wealthy squatter of Phillip Island; Francis Hare, his brother-in-law and Inspector of Police in Victoria and his sister Mary and brother-in-law, Archibald Jacob, a politician and landowner.
Chapter Two

The Bounty of Friends

In 1868, Janet Snodgrass stayed at Murndal in the Western District of Victoria under the supervision of the indomitable Arbella Cooke who managed the Murndal property in the absence of the property owner, her brother, Samuel Pratt Winter. Now seventeen, this young woman, whose familial lineage ensured her status within colonial society, was situated within the fine Murndal setting. Her grandson, Michael Clarke, suggested that Janet and Arbella Cooke ‘had emerged from the same mould, both wild and headstrong, but highly intelligent’.¹ He described Arbella as a dedicated educationalist who encouraged Janet to make use of the Murndal library and to develop her interest in French and Italian.

This historically significant private library gave Janet unrestricted access to a range of texts that reflected the intellectual interests of Samuel Winter. This collection of over one thousand books included works on classical literature, biography, British history (particularly dealing with the British aristocracy), Italian and French languages, social life in England, architecture, art, poetry and Greek and Roman antiquities.² For Janet Snodgrass, living in this Murndal landscape and all that it offered - the homestead buildings, the library, valuable works of art, English trees, the beauty of the ordered gardens, surrounding hills and river plains - the bitter-sweet memories of the Doogallook years must have been recalled. It would also remind her of the Cotton family’s possession of great works of art and literature (later donated by William Cotton to the Plymouth Library), that the brothers had frequently discussed in their letters.³ This act of benevolence would have been much talked about in the family circle particularly after Janet’s aunt, Marian Ryan, had visited William Cotton in Plymouth in 1861. Her knowledge of the pictures, miniatures, prints and drawings that the two sisters had inherited after William Cotton’s death in 1863, must have enhanced Janet’s appreciation of the Murndal setting. As a daughter of colonial

¹ Michael Clarke, Clarke of Rupertswood, p. 50.
² This library, holding over 3000 books, was catalogued by Kevin Hinze in the 1970s. In an on-going project supported by Catharine Winter, Deakin University and librarian, Nicky Lo Bianco, a searchable data base of this library is presently being developed. See also Gordon Forth, The Winter-Cooke Papers in La Trobe Journal, No. 21, April 1980.
gentry, it provided Janet Snodgrass with an affluent cultural environment in which she could expand her horizons and extend her own education.⁴

![Murndal homestead](image)

**Figure 9** *Murndal* homestead, photographed with the permission of Catharine Winter Cooke, 2006

Janet, unlike her male forebears and descendants, apparently did not record her activities in personal letters or diaries which could shed light on her life story between 1868 and 1870. Yet, Francis Clarke, Janet’s son, and Michael Clarke, Janet’s grandson, had strong convictions about the importance of inheritance and lineage, and both have published biographical material relating to the lives of their forebears.⁵ These works placed Janet Snodgrass in the historical and geographical context of the Victorian Western District where the lives of settlers in this district - squatters, selectors, men of the cloth, doctors, tradesmen and their wives and children – are documented in letters, journals, newspapers, photographs and historic buildings. Thus, even when the contours of Janet Snodgrass’s portrait may appear somewhat blurred, through the use of these historical interpretive tools this period in her life can be brought into focus.

⁴ *Historic Homesteads of Australia*, Australian Council of National Trust, Vol. 3, Canberra 1982, p. 132. This contains Weston Bate’s article on the history of the *Murndal* homestead. Photographs of the *Murndal* homestead, cottages, gardens, dining room, drawing room, library and portrait gallery are also included.

⁵ Francis Clarke, *The Clarke Clan in Australia*, privately published in Melbourne 1946; and Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood*. Francis Clarke, Janet and William Clarke’s third son, was born in 1879 and died in 1955. Michael Clarke, son of Russell Clarke, Janet and William’s second son, was born in 1915 and died in 2002.
A photograph of Agnes and Janet Snodgrass, possibly taken in the Western District, attests to the continuing social status of the Snodgrass family. The background of this studio portrait features a landscape painting or print of an Australian bush setting. In the foreground, on the left hand side, a tall gum tree frames the seated Agnes. Her gloved hands rest on her lap. She wears ‘widow’s weeds’ signifying that she is within the customary period of mourning. Attached to the black headwear is a black veil which divides into separate pieces that rest below each shoulder. The black bodice is worn over a grey/black long shirt which is trimmed at the bottom in similar material. She appears distant and her face reflects a great sadness. Her daughter, Janet, stands tall beside her, slightly at an angle so both the front and the back of the elegant full length dress is revealed. In contrast to the blackness of her mother’s outfit, Janet’s robe is light-coloured. The long sleeves are lined and finished with lace trimmings at the wrist. The gown is high-necked and the bodice has two lace panels sewn over each shoulder which meet the belted waist in a v-shaped form. The embroidered bustle is joined to the back waistline thus further extending the fullness of the skirt. Janet’s black drop-earrings are matched by a decorative necklet attached to the rounded collar. Her hands, which rest on the front of her dress, clasp a long crocheted muff. Her hair is arranged in an elaborate style; the severity of its arrangement corresponding with the sober nature of her demeanour. The formality of the occasion may account for the aura of restraint and the gravity of the portrait. Interestingly, Agnes, just over forty years of age, seems much younger while Janet at eighteen looks somewhat older than her actual age.

6 Portrait in the Turnbull Collection held at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Item No. A 6026-0020.
In examining the protocol of mourning in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, Penny Russell sees the period of mourning which was expected of the ‘genteel’ widow, as a time of considerable stress. While this custom frowned on any excessive public display of grief, the ever-present visual symbol of mandated dress code alerted the public to her situation. This contrast between the internal and external expression of grief was a significant emotional burden for women such as Charlotte and Janet Snodgrass. Russell explained this dilemma thus:

The involuntary revelation of grief which did not seem to be genteel – which seemed in fact to be akin to the primitive, animal and much dreaded ‘inner’ feminine which was also revealed in childbirth, breastfeeding and sexual passion – made periods of grief acutely, painfully ambivalent, full of paradoxes and pitfalls. Yet the display of grief was a social necessity, and the sincerity and depth of mourning betokened an ideal, loving, loyal feminine heart.

Damyanthie Eluwawalage, in her thesis on colonial women’s clothing, suggested that: “The narrative of clothing portrays the human affairs of society, such as social

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8 Ibid., p. 125.
divisions, social behaviour and social desires, perhaps more than any other scholarship’. The ‘narrative of clothing’, as revealed in the portrait of Janet and Charlotte Snodgrass, clearly demonstrates that these proud women, descendants of pioneering settlers, although scarred by their changed financial circumstances and forced publicly to accept the ‘bounty of friends’, did not intend to surrender their position in Australian colonial society. Russell, in examining the cult of gentility which was ‘dominated by standards, rituals and language’, concluded that:

Genteel femininity both constrained women and represented the principal means by which some at least could claim status and authority in Melbourne society.10

The photograph authenticates Russell’s stance. Janet and Charlotte’s attire and attitude identified their continued standing in the community and reflected their determination or their ‘social desires’ to maintain their former gentrified status despite their reduced circumstances. In adopting this mode of formal mourning, these members of Australian upper class society were following the traditional British mourning custom that Queen Victoria had adopted in 1860 on the death of her husband, the Prince Consort. Thus, their family ties to their British heritage were also represented.

In Australia, the mourning period deemed appropriate was two years for adults and one year for children. On this basis, it can be assumed, given Peter Snodgrass died in November 1867, that the photograph was taken either in 1868 or 1869 and its place of origin was in the Western District. This photograph is part of the Turnbull collection in the possession of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Dr. Adam Turnbull held pastoral runs in the Port Phillip District including Winninburn in the Western District between 1853 and 1874. This property, north east of Merino, was previously part of the Tahara run held by the Winter connections.11

9 Damayanthie Eluwawalage, History of Costume, p. 33.
10 Penny Russell, p. 3.
11 Billis and Kenyon, Pastoral Pioneers, p. 256. Dr. Turnbull, a medical practitioner and Presbyterian minister, had resided in Van Diemen’s Land where he held many offices during Sir John Franklin’s administration.
It is probable that at the time this photograph was taken both mother and daughter were present in the Western District, perhaps to acknowledge the generosity of the Western District squatters who had supported the fund established to assist the Snodgrass family. Evidence of this support is demonstrated by a letter (dated 8 January 1868) which was published in the *Hamilton Spectator*.\(^\text{12}\) It told of a circular which had been received by the Western District settlers on behalf of the Snodgrass family ‘who had been left in greatly reduced circumstances’. Here, the writer made an impassioned plea for support from the squatting community:

Mr. Snodgrass for many years proved himself an able and consistent champion of squatting interests in the Victorian legislature. It is therefore to be hoped, this earnest appeal to the generosity of the particular class throughout the colony, may not be made in vain, but meet with that general and hearty response to which it is deservedly entitled.

The subsequent monetary response the family received proved this letter had reached a receptive audience. The *Argus* reported in March 1869 that the friends of Peter Snodgrass had donated £1127 of which £1000 had been invested in a trust fund and the remainder ‘applied to their immediate wants of the family’.\(^\text{13}\) No doubt, offers of hospitality were extended and accepted by Agnes and her older daughters, Janet and Lily (Eliza).

The *Murndal* residence had been built by Samuel Winter to reflect his gentleman status as a large landholder in Victoria and to acknowledge his connections with England and Europe. He had emigrated from Ireland to Van Diemen’s Land in 1834 and was later joined by his two brothers, Trevor and George, and his sister, Arbella. Theirs was a well-connected Anglo-Irish family and the brothers had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin University. Like many other Irish Ascendancy educated gentlemen they believed their opportunities in Ireland were limited and that by emigrating to Australia they could become landed proprietors. After some time in Van Diemen’s Land, Samuel Pratt Winter crossed Bass Strait and landed in the Portland area in Victoria where the Henty family and other squatters were already establishing

\(^{12}\) *The Hamilton Spectator*, 8 January 1868, p. 3.

\(^{13}\) *Argus*, 6 March 1869.
large land holdings. In 1838, he selected a run, Spring Valley, some fifty miles from
Portland in the Wannon River Valley. It was well-grassed and the Wannon River
ensured a good water supply for the household and livestock. 14 His brothers and sister
left Tasmania to assist him on his new property. Unfortunately George’s inexperience,
arrogant personality and hostile attitude to the local Aboriginal tribes were to limit his
success as a pioneering squatter. 15 In 1845, when the property was divided into three
stations, George moved to Tahara and Samuel retained Spring Valley, five miles east
of Merino, on which he erected the Murndal homestead in 1856. 16

Winter had little interest in working the land himself, preferring to install managers to
supervise the daily working of the property. Meanwhile, he travelled extensively in
England and Europe, collecting art works and library books which would enhance the
building projects taking place at Murndal. In his absence and under his instructions,
his brother and sister organized the purchase of selectors’ properties that became
available as these selectors, through inexperience and lack of capital, proved
unsuccessful. Samuel Winter’s wealth, cultural interests and handsome appearance
meant he was regarded as a distinguished figure in the Portland District, Melbourne,
 interstate and when he travelled to England and Europe. Paul de Serville described
him thus:

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14 This property later was owned by the Turnbull family and was named Winninburn.
15 Gordon Forth discussed the relationship between the local Aborigines and the Winters and the
actions of local and government officials in prosecuting offences against the Aboriginal population. He
described one incident where George Winter and his men fired on and killed several natives who were
allegedly stealing sheep, (pp. 44-6 and pp. 58-60). By contrast, it seems Samuel Winter was on good
terms with the local Aborigines, many of whom worked on the Murndal property. In recent years much
has been written about the confrontation between the first squatters and the indigenous inhabitants of
the Portland district. Jan Critchett, in A Distant Field of Murder, Melbourne University, Melbourne,
1990, p. 100, wrote: ‘A detailed study reveals that Aboriginal attacks were much more widespread.
James Blair, Police Magistrate at Portland, wrote to La Trobe of a ’… general move among the
Aborigines. Virtually the whole district west of Hopkins was caught up in a wave of Aboriginal
attacks’. Critchett described a number of clashes that took place on the Winter runs (pp. 106-7, 166,
168 and 169) and in her Appendix, ‘Aborigines killed by Europeans’, she listed three Aboriginals
killed on Winter stations. See also Jan Critchett, Untold Stories: Memories and Lives of Victorian
Koories, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998. In oral interviews with Critchett (e.g. Mrs.
Mary Clarke Remembers, pp. 1-11 and An Old Hand, pp. 12-35), local Aborigines in the Western
district detailed stories of the physical and psychological effects of dispossession on their forebears and
themselves.

16 See the history of the Winter Cooke family and settlement in Western Victoria in Gordon Forth’s
The Winters on the Wannon. Extensions to the homestead continue to the present time.
… he possessed the blood, breeding, education, tastes, and appearance of a man of his rank, and he managed to live in a manner befitting a gentleman. Even the respectable could not find fault with his conduct.\(^{17}\)

Unmarried, his attachment to his sister Arbella and her children meant she was frequently at Murndal taking control of the property when her brother was overseas. After her return from England in late 1870, Arbella made Murndal her permanent home.

In 1838, Arbella had married Cecil Cybus Cooke, a fellow passenger on the ship which had brought them to Van Diemen’s Land. After some setbacks in the 1840s, the Cookes established a station at Lake Condah, some forty miles distant from Murndal and west of MacArthur.\(^{18}\) The exigencies associated with the pioneering experience of women in Australia in the forties and fifties - loneliness, deprivation, the harshness of the new Australian environment, lack of medical support and educational opportunities for their children – were also Arbella’s fate. To ensure her sons would not be disadvantaged by the lack of educational opportunities available in the Portland district, Arbella taught her own children, and the children of workers, on their station each morning in a small schoolroom erected close to the Cooke residence at Lake Condah. In the 1850s, while still struggling financially, the Cookes had accompanied their sons to England to find suitable educational institutions which would augment their status as colonial gentry.

In Gordon Forth’s history of the Winter and Cooke families, he examined the driving force behind Arbella’s resolution to endure these years of frustration and came to the following conclusion:

Steeped as she was in the Anglo-Irish tradition of land ownership, Arbella saw in squatting the prospect of achieving financial security and eventually membership of the colony’s landed gentry. (…). In her letters to her sons at school in England Arbella often referred to the years of self-denial and isolation she and Cecil had

\(^{17}\) Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p. 7.

\(^{18}\) Lake Condah became an Aboriginal Station in 1867. See Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field of Murder*. Critchett documented the historically conflicting information regarding the ‘country’ belonging to the different Aboriginal clans in the south-west. She also examined their tragic circumstances after the establishment of the Lake Condah Aboriginal Station.
endured in the Australian bush. Arbella, embittered by the hardships of pioneering, sought to justify the sacrifices she and Cecil had made by explaining to her sons that squatting represented the only means available at the time through which the Cookes could satisfactorily establish themselves in the colony.19

Gordon Forth did not document the presence of Janet at Murndal, but he too emphasized an aspect of Arbella’s personality which could have been significant for this young woman:

Arbella’s experiences of pioneering life left her with a strong inclination to condemn those who lacked the moral or physical strength she had been compelled to call upon during those hard and lonely years.20

Emerging into womanhood, Jane Snodgrass could easily have been overwhelmed by the precarious and public position that was the lot of her family at this time. At this particular point in her life, the potency of Arbella’s disposition and her counsel would have been opportune. Arbella’s steely personality had emerged in response to the pioneering experience and the early financial difficulties which she and her husband had experienced. By 1868, Lake Condah had proved reasonably successful and Arbella was able to enjoy the status associated with the transformation of her brother’s property into a large, profitable freehold property. Having established himself as a member of the colonial landed gentry, and having overseen the building of a substantial residence, Samuel Winter had indeed become the ‘leisured gentlemen’, leaving the management of his station in the hands of his capable sister.21

The worst of the pioneering experience behind her, it is not unreasonable to suggest, as did Michael Clarke, that Arbella decided to assist the Snodgrass family by ‘mentoring’ the daughter of Peter Snodgrass who had been assiduous in protecting the rights of the squatting community.22

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20 Ibid., p. 110; and the Descriptive List of the Winter Cooke Collection in the La Trobe Library.
22 Gordon Forth’s inventory of the Winter-Cooke papers is in the Victorian State Library. The family placed the Winter-Cooke collection containing business records, notebooks, wage books, legal documents, family correspondence and correspondence from colonial and overseas friends, sketches, photographs and maps in the Victorian State Library. Catharine Winter Cooke, in August 2006, confirmed the absence of any mention of Janet Snodgrass at Murndal and Lake Condah in these personal letters.
There is other photographic evidence of the Janet’s presence in the district in an album given to Janet on the 11 May 1866 by her cousin, Abigail Cheyne. It was labelled ‘Janet Snodgrass Sunbury’. Inside is a photograph of Janet’s sister, Lily, (Eliza) who was three years younger than Janet. A description on the back of the photograph reads: ‘Lily Snodgrass Coleraine June’. As it was taken in the Western District, it seems likely Lily was visiting Janet at Murndal at the time the photograph was taken. Samuel Pratt Winter’s leather bound photo album is held at the Murndal Library. In the album there is an empty mounted space labelled Lily Snodgrass. Other photographs in this album - Sir George Bowen and the Duke of Edinburgh - were carefully named. The photograph of Samuel’s great friend, the Reverend Francis Cusack Russell, the minister of the Church of England at Coleraine and a frequent visitor to Murndal was not. Given that Samuel Pratt Winter died in 1878 and the photograph of the Duke of Edinburgh was probably one provided during his visit to Australia in 1867, it can be assumed that the album was assembled in the 1860s and 1870s around the time of Janet’s stay at Murndal.

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23 Charlotte’s younger sister, Eliza, married Dr. Cheyne at Doogalook before John Cotton died.
24 The date on photograph is illegible.
25 See Australian Dictionary of Biography at www.alb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs. Francis Russell was the Anglican minister known as the ‘Apostle of the Western District’. His parish covered many towns in this district between 1850 and 1875. Samuel Winter valued his friendship and, despite being an affirmed agnostic, built a parsonage for him on the Tahara estate. See also Gordon Forth, pp. 159-61.
Michael Clarke recalled that when Janet arrived at Murndal in 1868 she signed the visitor’s book. He does not reveal whether he had actually sighted the guest book or learnt of this information through ‘family lore’, but the present generation of Winter Cookes has not been able to locate this album. In the absence of documented evidence, Janet’s grandson’s account of her stay at Murndal has to be acknowledged:

When I worked on Murndal in 1946, some eighty years later, Mr. Bill Winter Cooke told me how she used to chase cattle down the steepest slopes at full gallop, how she repeatedly swam her horses across the flooded Wannon River and how she jumped post and rail fences and fallen tree trunks. Some of the huge trunks were still there to give credence to his anecdotes.

Rain for the Hamilton district was not officially recorded during 1868 and 1869 but records were kept in the Ararat and Stawell area proximate to Hamilton. During 1868 there was probably insufficient rain to cause flooding to the Wannon River; however on 29 March 1869, three to four inches of rain fell which would have caused extensive flooding on the river flats at Murndal. Perhaps Janet’s visit to the Western District was an extended one. Her horse riding skills had been developed in the Doogalook environment and maintained on their property in Prahran. The Murndal run with its undulating slopes, open tracts of grassed land and its access to the Wannon River would have provided many opportunities for this accomplished rider to indulge her passion for horse riding and at the same time participate in the stock round-up.

The Winter Cooke family also suggested that she rode astride her horse rather than the customary side-saddle which was deemed the appropriate practice for women. This was not unusual for pioneer women, particularly those who took part in the daily chores of a cattle station. Annie Baxter, an early pioneer in the Portland District, spent much of her time with her horses, sometimes riding some forty miles to Portland to visit friends or catch the steamer to Belfast (now known as Port Fairy), Warrnambool or Melbourne. In her journal, she recorded how she adjusted her riding costume to suit

26 Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood*, p. 50.
27 Information given to me on 28 August 2006.
28 Ibid., p. 50. ‘Mr. Bill Winter Cooke’ was the father of Mr. Samuel Winter Cooke who, until his death in 2008, was the owner of Murndal.
29 Statistics from the Bureau of Meteorology, Victorian Climate Service Centre, Melbourne.
riding astride as she participated in cattle mustering or hunting alongside the gentlemen. To make their tasks easier, Annie and her friend, Mrs. Connolly, decided to ride in gentlemen’s pantaloons to muster cattle on the Baxter station at Yambuck: ‘so I altered a pair of Baxters for the purpose - they only require taking in at the waist - otherwise they fit well’.  

The bounty of friends did not disqualify the Snodgrass family from retaining their genteel status. In fact, in opening their homes to Janet, her mother and sister, the Western Victorian squatters were maintaining the culture of support which had been a feature of pioneering life in Australia. John Sadleir recollected the hospitality which he had been shown in the Hamilton district as he carried out his policing duties:

Here the squatters, to use the generic title of the large landholders of the period, felt hurt if one passed through the neighbourhood without putting up with them for the day, or indeed as many days as one pleased.  

John Cotton’s letters had also documented the hospitality that he had received when he first left Melbourne in search of a suitable property to lease. In building his new home he had included ‘a spare room for passing travellers’.  

The importance of the ‘bounty of friends’ was also revealed by Annie Baxter Dawbin, a squatter in the Western District during the 1840s, 1850s and the 1860s. Her journals, elucidated by the scholarly editing of Lucy Frost, augment our understanding of the role women played in early colonial settlement and demonstrate that even when women were empowered by their determination and strength of personality, the uncertainties of life in the bush meant support from neighbours and friends was an essential factor in surviving both physically and emotionally. These insightful journals offer a lively representation of rural and urban society in Victoria in the latter part of the nineteenth-century.

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30 Lucy Frost, *A Face in the Glass*, p. 70.
32 *Annie Baxter’s Memories* was originally published by Annie Baxter in 1873 and edited and reprinted in Adelaide by J. P. in 1980.
Annie and her first husband, an ex-soldier, took up land in Belfast in 1844 around the same time the Cotton family were establishing themselves in the Yea district. Almost immediately, they were involved in the social life of the district including hunting, dancing, balls, and card playing. Her spirited narrative offers another dimension to the unfolding events of this period.\(^{33}\)

… up rode Baxter – out of breath with the pace he had ridden at! And this was to announce his Honour the Superintendent’s approach! Such a rush as he made to get the luncheon ready – whilst I, of course took it quietly.

Presently, up rode the Squadron – composed of Messrs La Trobe, Henty, Blair, Dana and Ritchie. They took luncheon – and after remaining a short time, rode on to Belfast. Mr. Learmonth accompanied them, as they intended proceeding to Lady Bay tomorrow. Mr. La Trobe has an intelligent eye & is gentlemanly in his manner – I’m told he is an amusing companion; but he is cruel to his horses, I think, in riding so terribly fast.\(^{34}\)

Annie, young and attractive, when she discovered that her husband was unfaithful to her and carried a sexually transmitted disease, refused to share a bed with him. In a short time much of the physical work on their run – mustering, challenging Aborigines who had stolen cattle and of course providing hospitality for passing travellers - was left to her as Baxter would disappear for months at a time. Nevertheless Annie, with the help of others, and a small allowance which came from England, dealt with the exigencies of her daily life, detailing news of her visitors and her neighbours. Although Annie had left the Western District in 1862 some six years before Janet Snodgrass’s visit, connections she had made identified their common links.\(^{35}\) These included Evelyn Sturt, who was named as one of the trustees in the will of Peter Snodgrass, and Samuel Winter, who was later to be her neighbour on the Wannon River.

\(^{33}\) Lucy Frost, p. 72.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe visited the Western District in 1841 to investigate reports of unrest and violence between the squatters and the indigenous inhabitants as a result of traditional tribal lands being taken up by settlers. See Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field of Murder*, pp. 10-11. James Ritchie, an early squatter, recorded in November and December 1841 an account of his journey between Portland and Melbourne, (ibid., pp. 62-5). Edward Henty was one of the first squatters in the Portland District. James Blair was the Police Magistrate stationed at Portland, (ibid., pp. 25-6). Henry Dana was Commander of the Native Police. See Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen*, p. 75.

\(^{35}\) The original thirty-two volumes are held in the Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales. They are also available online and in microform.
Mr. Sturt is remarkably nice looking, and gentlemanly in his manner, & has been evidently in good society. I believe too, he is clever – and has travelled considerably. Mr. Winter is 6 feet 5 inches – thin in accordance – with a swell-mobbish air; his clothes all pitched on – and his coat in several holes! And with all this he is amusing, & talks of his hounds, billiards etc. with ease. I don’t think I should like him at all.36

In late 1849, Annie, after reaching a financial agreement with her husband, left him, travelling first to Hobart and later back to England. Annie’s financial position improved considerably following Baxter’s death. In 1857, she once again sailed for Australia in the company of Robert Dawbin, whom she later married. In Melbourne, Dawbin paid £7,500, sight unseen, to Henty and Company for a run on the Wannon River. This property, Bongmire, bordered the Winter run and was to prove as unsuccessful as Annie’s previous holdings and her new husband as unreliable and untrustworthy as the first. Again it was the ‘bounty of friends’ that sustained her.

Saturday 31st July – I must note down how kind, very kind my friends in Portland were, soliciting me not to come up and have to undergo so many privations in the winter: asking me to stay with them at least until this season was over, and to let Robert come up here and put things to rights and then to join him.37

Annie actually stayed at Murndal for several days whilst her husband was arranging the shift from Bongmire in June 1858. When she wrote next in her journal on July 11, her reaction to the formidable Arbella Cooke makes interesting reading:

… As soon as you are seen with pen, ink, and paper – that is the signal for people to talk to you! It seems to me so thoroughly unthoughtful, to say the least of it, that I cannot understand it. Whilst at Murndal the only time in which I could write my English letters was when M... Cooke left home; for her tongue is in perpetual motion. I used to manage to get some letters written, but not as many as I should.38

Despite undergoing similar life experiences and confronting their challenges resolutely, their judgemental dispositions meant there was little rapport between Arbella and Annie.

36 Lucy Frost, p. 73.
37 Ibid., p. 216.
38 Ibid.
When Arbella departed for England in 1869, Janet, now eighteen, needed to find a situation which would replicate the opportunities she had experienced at Murndal. Despite the Snodgrass family’s financial problems there would have been no expectation that Janet, the eldest daughter, should undertake any position that would have undermined her status as a gentlewoman. Consequently, her employment choices were limited to that of a governess or a companion to a married lady of a similar background. Christina De Bellaigue challenged the assumption of the newly impoverished gentlewomen who had suddenly been forced into teaching ‘by a sudden loss of fortune, a failure in business or death’, as the only reason women became teachers.39 She believed that ‘this fiction, that all governesses were lady amateurs, had to be maintained in order to support an ideal of femininity centring on marriage and motherhood’.40 De Bellaigue’s argument, that some young women had ‘self-consciously’ been educated for the role of governess, did not apply to Janet.41 So once again it was the network of friends who supported the Snodgrass family.

From Frank Clarke’s memoirs we learn that this assistance came through the auspices of William John Turner Clarke, also known as ‘Big Clarke’.42 He had emigrated in 1829 to Van Diemen’s Land where he bought and rented huge tracts of land. In 1843, he had followed in the footsteps of his neighbours, the Hentys, and brought sheep over to Victoria, gradually taking up huge tracts of land in the Port Phillip District at the Werribee Plains, Ballaarat (Dowling Forest), Wimmera (Woodlands) and the Bolinda Vale country extending from Romsey to Sunbury.43 His wife, Eliza (née Dowling) and three sons, William, Thomas and Joseph, remained in Hobart district while he chose to conduct his business from Melbourne. Eventually his eldest son, William, joined him and took over the management of the Sunbury property.

39 Christina De Bellaigue, ‘The Development of Teaching’, p. 970; and see Footnote 64 in Chapter 1.
40 Ibid., p. 967.
41 Ibid., p. 970.
42 See Michael Clarke, Big Clarke; and biographical entry on William John Turner Clarke (1805-1874) at www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs.
43 Tony Menhennitt, Rupertwood & the Clarke Family at home.vicnet.net.au/pioneers. Menhennitt believes that ‘Big Clarke’ was ruthless in the means he used to secure his land: ‘In fact he bought every available piece of land between Mount Macedon and Williamstown and owned basically everything from Whittlesea to the Calder Highway’. In Melbourne After the Gold Rush, p. 322, Michael Cannon described an incident in 1853 at an Old Colonists festival where ‘Big Clarke’: ‘climbed on the table to make a speech, was jeered by his neighbours, and engaged them in fisticuffs before being arrested’. Jan Critchett in A Distant Field of Murder discussed Aboriginal attacks on ‘Big Clarke’s Woodlands station in the early 1840s (p. 107), the killing of an Aboriginal by his superintendent (p. 128) and Clarke’s need to pay for extra shepherds because of Aboriginal attacks, (p. 188).
Frank Clarke, his grandson, was circumspect in his depiction of ‘Big Clarke’ but Michael Clarke judged him ‘an able and ruthless master, employing some forty assigned convicts, and had no hesitation in thrashing an insolent servant with his heavy club-stick’. He described his great-grandfather as ‘notorious and profligate’ and, in his ‘warts and all’ biographies of the Clarke family, documented ‘Big Clarke’s unscrupulous and manipulative path to considerable wealth. His wife, Eliza, a daughter of a Rector of a Somerset parish, was considered ‘a well-bred lady’ by Hobart society, her husband, despite his acquired wealth, was labelled uncouth, both in appearance and manner. Because William was frequently absent from their home in Glenorchy near Hobart, Eliza sent for her younger sister, Jane, to keep her company. Jane was sent back to England in 1839 when Eliza discovered that an affair with her husband had resulted in a pregnancy. In 1853, Jane returned to Melbourne with her daughter Oceana and William and Jane resumed their relationship resulting in the birth of two more children.

In their biographical excerpts, both Frank, his grandson, and Michael Clarke, his great-grandson, highlighted the fact that both Peter Snodgrass and ‘Big Clarke’ were elected members of the Victorian Parliament and that they had worked tenaciously to preserve the land rights of the early settlers. Michael Clarke believed that because of this link ‘Big Clarke’ was willing to assist Peter Snodgrass’s attractive young daughter. William and Mary, his son and daughter-in-law, needed a girl to replace Ellen Connell, Mary’s companion and Janet, aged nineteen, appeared to be a ‘suitably responsible’ person.

This move, organised through the family’s network of influential friends, was to prove a seminal event in the life history of Janet Snodgrass. A gentlewoman by birth, [44] Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood*, p. 2. [45] William John Turner Clarke’s estate was valued at £2,000,000. [46] Ibid., p. 6. [47] Dr. William Maloney was the son of Jane Dowling (his wife’s sister) and ‘Big Clarke’. Some four years before Janet came to Sunbury, ‘Big Clarke’ had moved permanently into Jane’s residence in West Melbourne. William Clarke was on good terms with his de facto brother, Dr. Maloney, as was his eldest son, Rupert, who supported Dr. Maloney in his political campaigns. [48] Ibid., pp. 25-7. Here Michael Clarke described W. J. T. Clarke’s successful campaign for the Legislative Assembly seat of Brighton in 1862. [49] Michael Clarke, p. 51. The close connection with ‘Big Clarke’ was further evidenced in January 1874 when Peter Snodgrass’s trustees, Inspector Hare (married to Snodgrass’s sister) and Evelyn Sturt, were principal mourners in the funeral procession which followed the hearse of ‘Big Clarke’. See Michael Clarke’s *Big Clarke*, for details on the life of his great-grandfather.
and heritage and independently educated, circumstances had forced Janet to reinvent herself as a ‘governess and companion’. Janet’s only personal explanation was in a letter she wrote to Canon Ford in 1898 in which she noted that she went to Sunbury to be ‘with the two tiny children there’.\(^{50}\)

![Figure 12 Janet's letter to Canon Ford, 1898](image)

While here she gave no formal title to this move, the need for Janet Snodgrass to reinvent herself as Mary Clarke’s companion and governess to the two older Clarke children, would not have proved too difficult. Her responsibilities as the eldest daughter in the large Snodgrass family and the time spent at Murndal would have prepared her for this new role. Mary Clarke was in her thirties therefore not much younger than Janet’s mother and the age range of the children was similar to that of Janet’s own sisters and brothers.\(^{51}\) The Clarke cottage at Sunbury was not luxurious but nevertheless was a comfortable family residence. It had been upgraded and extended and a new kitchen, servants’ quarters, coach house and stables added to accommodate the growing family and their needs. The estate itself covered 100,000 acres extending from Sunbury to Footscray and there were working and riding horses and a coach on the property. Like the establishments of Doogallook, Blairgowrie and Murndal, Sunbury would not have presented unreasonable demands for the intelligent and energetic Janet Snodgrass.

\(^{50}\) Handwritten letter contained in Scrapbook 6, [in private hands]. Canon Ford was in charge of the Sunbury Anglican Church.

\(^{51}\) Mary Walker (30.11.1836 - 14.4.1871) married William Clarke on 23.11.1860.
The role of ‘companion’ usually involved keeping the lady of the house company and carrying out any tasks she required. Sometimes this included acting as governess to the children, particularly when the children were too young to be sent away to school or when parents were reluctant to part with their offspring. Louise Geoghegan described such a situation when she was employed in Apsley in Western Victoria:

You are a constant companion & associate of the Lady – considered, I might say indulged, in every way - & your only difficulty is to civilize the children, which you are supposed to do by example as they are uncontrolled to a degree, & the parents object to anything else.52

Michael Clarke remembered his Aunt Blanche, eight when Janet arrived at Sunbury, telling him that: ‘Janet’s schoolroom instruction was limited to reading, writing and arithmetic’. This retrospective information may reflect the age of her two charges rather than Janet’s teaching ability; nevertheless Blanche did emphasize the fact that Janet’s love of reading had a significant influence on the Clarke children.53 However, her role as ‘companion’ to Mary Clarke was probably of more consequence as William Clarke travelled to his office in Melbourne regularly so Mary Clarke, again pregnant in 1871, would have required her support.

Accounts of the tragic accident which took the life of Mary, William Clarke’s first wife, were published in a number of newspapers including the Kyneton Guardian, the Age and Argus.54 According to these reports, on Thursday 13 April 1831, Mary Clarke was being driven in her pair-horse buggy by her coachman, Andrew Thompson, between the Sunbury station and her residence, when the horses were frightened by a man riding past. After the horses were quieted, Mrs. Clarke stepped awkwardly out of the buggy with one of her children in her arms. A Mrs. J. K. Francis was passing and offered to drive her home in her carriage, but she refused the offer.55 As she was returning in her buggy she became ill and the family doctor, Dr. Pugh, was sent for

52 Lucy Frost, No place for a Nervous Lady, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1985, p. 194. This letter was written in August 1868.
53 Michael Clarke, Clarke of Rupertswood, p. 51.
54 Age and Argus, 17 April 1871 and Kyneton Guardian, 15 April 1871.
55 Mrs. J. Francis was the wife of James Francis (1819-1894), a member of the Legislative Assembly and a premier of Victoria, who had established a large vineyard in Sunbury. See www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs.
from Melbourne. Drs. Motherwell and Shields were also summoned. Her condition worsened and a miscarriage occurred resulting in her death early on Friday the 14 April 1871.

The *Argus* report differed from the other accounts in that it noted Mrs. Clarke was in the buggy ‘with another young woman’, presumably Janet Snodgrass. Michael Clarke believed that it was Janet who jumped out of the buggy and ‘ran to the horses’ heads to quieten them’; while the *Argus*’s version recorded that the coachman had ‘soon got the horses quiet’. Michael Clarke also noted that it was Janet who took charge of the situation summoning the doctors and telegramming William Clarke who was attending the races in Ballaarat. On receiving this telegraph, he ordered a special train to take him back to Sunbury.

On 19 April, the cortege that followed the hearse to the station included two hundred Sunday school children. The body of Mary Clarke was taken by train to Melbourne where a service, attended by nearly one thousand people, was held at St. James’ Church. Inspector Frank Hare, Janet’s uncle, was one of the pall-bearers.

Now twenty and unmarried, Janet Snodgrass remained at Sunbury caring for the Clarke children for the next eighteen months. According to the conventions of the time, this was an unusual position for a twenty-year old young woman to remain in the household of the recently bereaved William Clarke. These conventions were stretched even further when, in 1872 aged twenty-one, she became engaged to William, then twice her age, and already the father of four children. Unusual as this was no public comment was recorded. After her engagement, protocol restored, she moved to the home of her father’s sister, Mrs. Frank Hare, where she remained until

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56 The name Ballarat was derived from the local Wathaurong Aboriginal words ‘balla arat’ meaning resting place. Since 1994 it has officially been spelt ‘Ballarat’.

57 See Michael Cannon, *Melbourne After the Goldrush*, p. 178. W. J. T. Clarke received £17,000 for 267 acres used to build the Footscray to Sunbury railway despite having paid only £747 for the same land a short time earlier. This line opened on 6 July 1861. Michael Clarke (p. 24) recalled that the station was at Bolinda, close to the Clarke residence and it was rumoured that: ‘Big Clarke had paid the Chief Railways Engineer £20,000 to ‘deviate’ the line from the direct route from Sunbury to Gisborne’.

58 *The Age*, 20 April 1871.

59 William was born 28.3.1831.
her marriage to William Clarke in January 1873. The notice, published in the *Age*
read:


This notice highlighted the importance and reputation of the Snodgrass familial lineage and their Australian connections which permitted Janet Snodgrass to claim ‘status and authority’ within Melbourne society. In other words, this was not a ‘rags to riches’ story implied in some published material – the governess marrying the son of one of the richest men in Australia – rather it was Janet’s forebears that balanced and strengthened the social standing of the Clarke family.

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60 The Hares had cared for the youngest Snodgrass child, Evelyn, since Peter Snodgrass’s death.

61 *Age*, 23 January 1873.

62 See Footnote 10 in this chapter.

63 This ‘rags to riches’ idea is included in a number of published articles. See Juliet Flesch & Peter McPhee, *150 Years*, p. 44. See also Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart McIntyre (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 129. Damian Powell, in discussing this idea in his paper on Janet Lady Clarke (pp. 2-7), suggests that: ‘there are subterranean similarities’ in the Snodgrass and Clarke family backgrounds.
Chapter Three

Transition

As a married woman, Janet Clarke would have taken for granted that childbirth was her destiny as it was for all married women in the 1870s regardless of their class or position in Victorian society. What she could not have foreseen in 1873 was the transition of herself and her husband from private citizens to public identities as they moved outside the confines of country Victoria and colonial Australia onto the world stage. This transformation would set the stage for Janet Clarke’s future leadership roles in Victoria and would see her recognised as an eminent national and international figure in the late colonial period and in the first decade of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia.

After their marriage in 1873, Janet and William lived quietly at their Sunbury property. Their first child, Clive, was born there in October 1873.1 In January 1874, ‘Big Clarke’ died. His properties in Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and New Zealand were left to Big Clarke’s three sons with William Clarke inheriting the Victorian properties as well as a considerable sum of money. While his father had been obsessed by acquiring land and money and was most reluctant to spend his wealth, his son, now a millionaire, was just as determined to enjoy his new situation. With over a million and a half pounds at their disposal, the Clarkes set in motion plans to build a suitable mansion at Sunbury and to undertake a tour of England and Europe.2 Like the idea of the grand tour, the English tradition of building a grand mansion had already become a status symbol for successful pastoralists, politicians and professional men in Victoria during the sixties and seventies. This was both in the rural and urban areas as evidenced by the mansions built in and around Melbourne and the Western District. When the foundation stone for the building was laid by Janet on 29 August 1874, over twelve hundred locals witnessed the event. As he

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1 Clive born 20.10.1873 died 9.2.1894.
2 Michael Clarke, _Clarke of Rupertswood_, pp. 77-9. Mr. George Browne was appointed architect, J. Sumner and Company, building contractors and Mr. William Sangster, the landscape designer. The estimated cost of the building was £20,000. George Browne was the architect for Her Majesty’s Theatre and the Academy of Music (1875) in Ballarat. Both were paid for by William Clarke. J. Sumner, an early pioneer, had properties in Brunswick and on the Mornington Peninsula.
broke a bottle of champagne over the stone, nine-year old Rupert named the mansion *Rupertswood*.³

In October, some weeks after this event, the Clarkes departed Australia on an eighteen months grand tour of the Continent and England. This included Naples, Florence (and the Uffizi art galleries), Rome, Genoa, Nice and finally London where they interacted with artists, musicians, and persons of noble rank. This tour was a seminal milestone for Janet and William Clarke securing for them a powerful circle of friends in England thus establishing their place in English society.⁴

In Naples, their first destination, the family took over a whole floor of the *Hotel de La Grande* where they remained for some time while Janet recuperated following the birth of their first daughter, Mary.⁵ A photograph, of the Clarke family taken in Italy, recalls Damayanthie Eluwawalage’s discussion of the importance of clothing in understanding the ‘human affairs of society such as social divisions, social attitudes, social behaviour and social desires’, thus enabling the historian to assign meaning to this photographic representation of this unique and historical family moment.⁶ This image supports Eluwawalage’s argument that: ‘clothing reflects the wearer’s social standing both individually and collectively’.⁷

On the left stands Dominique Patrizzi, the courier, employed by William to oversee their arrangements for their entire stay in Italy. Distinguished by his neatly clipped beard, Patrizzi is dressed immaculately – the white cravat at his neck setting off the elegance of his knee-length black frockcoat and giving him an air of authority suitable for his privileged position as assistant to the wealthy Clarke family. His hand rests on the back of the chair on which the family nurse, Jane McDonald, is seated. Her long-sleeved black dress is made less severe by a white collar held in place by a brooch. Fourteen-month old Clive is seated on her knee. Standing behind her is the governess, Miss Service, her hands on the shoulder of her charge, Janet’s youngest step-daughter. Ethel is dressed in a light-coloured chequered frock with brocaded sleeves. Her

³ ‘Big Clarke’ entailed the Sunbury estate to the eldest child of William Clarke.
⁴ Michael Clarke, pp. 83-93. In this chapter, Michael Clarke used William Clarke’s letter book to provide details of this tour.
⁵ Mary was born 25.12.1874 and died 20.4.1960.
⁷ Ibid., p. 37.
elaborate dress is pulled in tightly at the waist and a ribbon is tied in a neat bow around her hair. The focal point of this photograph is the seated Janet who is nursing the new baby, Mary. Janet is dressed in a fine silken frock brocaded at the hem line. Long pearl earrings and fashionable headwear lighten her serious expression as she stares into the camera. Next to Janet is her sister, Lily, now living permanently at Sunbury as her sister’s companion. Lily’s gown is similar to Janet’s but not quite as intricate. William, standing tall and protectively behind the two Snodgrass sisters, clasps the corner of his wife’s chair. Dressed in a formal smoking jacket, he appears slightly uneasy. Next to her father, Blanche, his eldest daughter, seems uncomfortable in her formal clothing. A large cross is attached to the white collar of her buttoned dress. Her brother Ernest, smart in a dark jacket and pantaloons, is in front of his sister leaning on Aunt Lily’s chair. Standing beside Ernest, attired in a fine gown reflecting her status in the Clarke household, is Lizzie Looney, Janet’s attendant. Only Rupert is absent. He has remained in Melbourne with William’s brother, Joseph, to attend Wesley College.

While an aura of restraint recalls the gravity of the 1868 portrait taken in the Western District seven years earlier, the contrast between that photograph and this image is

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8 Photograph [in private hands]; and published in Michael Clarke's *Clarke of Rupertswood*.
9 Perhaps this was the genesis of Rupert Clarke’s future resentment. Frank Clarke hinted at this in his biographical material: ‘My father with his justness and consideration for others realised there might be some jealousy between his two families, but over the years this only eventuated in the case of Rupert’.
palpable. These seven adults and five children, although not quite at ease with the formality required for this occasion, portray a successful family unit – their clothing, their location and their entourage reflecting affluence. And the converging point in this photograph is Janet Clarke. No longer a young woman relying on the ‘bounty of friends’, she is now the mother of two children, the stepmother of four, the wife of one of the richest men in Australia and in charge of a large household.

In April 1875, the family began a month’s stay at the Alexander Hotel on Hyde Park Corner in London. A letter of introduction from the Victorian Governor, Sir George Bowen, opened many doors. Their background - William Clarke’s wealth and business experience and Janet and Lily Snodgrass’s impeccable lineage as the granddaughters of Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass - ensured that the Clarkes were welcomed by ‘good society’ both in London and later that year when they travelled to Scarborough, Edinburgh and finally to Paisley where they met their Snodgrass connections. By October they were back in London from where they set out for home via Rome, Egypt, Ceylon, arriving in Melbourne on 11 January 1876. Here they settled at their Melbourne home in St. Kilda Road where their third child, Russell, was born in March. In August, their new mansion Rupertswood was ready for occupation.10

The towered mansion consisted of fifty rooms, including a foyer, smoking, drawing and dining room, a billiard room, an office, an elegant stairway leading to the upper floor which contained the guest, master, children and servant bedrooms and a nursery. A large ballroom was to be added in 1882. Purchased in England and Europe, the furnishings – panelling, curtains, carpets and art decorations - added richness and grandeur to the inside of their home and served as icons which linked the Clarke’s family residence to the grandeur and culture of the mansions of England and Europe. The second floor rooms were surrounded by a wide verandah with cast-iron balustrades which overlooked spacious landscaped gardens, an ornamental lake, cultivated farming land and the township of Sunbury.11

10 Michael Clarke, p. 95. William Lionel Russell (31.3.1887- 4.5.1954) was known as Russell. He was Michael Clarke’s father.
11 For detailed descriptions of this property and its history to the present time see Joy Munns, Rupertswood A Living History, Globe Press, Melbourne, 1987; and ‘The Clarkes of Rupertswood’ in
The genesis of the Janet Clarke narrative, which had begun at Doogalook and expanded within the Murndal landscape, was now historicised by this new Sunbury residence. Antoinette Burton argued that: ‘the home can and should be seen not simply as a dwelling place for women’s memories but as one of the foundations of history’.  

In Janet’s case, her letters and autograph albums personify ‘dear Rupertswood’ as her ideal family residence. Burton suggested that the homes of colonial and post-colonial Indian women were rich archival sources because they allowed them: ‘to claim a place in history at the intersection of the private and the public, the personal and the political, the national and the post-colonial’. Like these dwellings, Rupertswood was a defining symbol in the life of Janet Clarke. This substantial edifice and property was to become the hub of social and philanthropic activities in Melbourne and a venue for interstate and overseas visitors for many years to come.

Three more children were born in the next four years at Rupertswood - Petrea (Josie), Francis, and Reginald. The services of nurses for mother and baby, proper diet and previous successful childbearing meant that Janet Clarke’s frequent pregnancies were

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12 Burton, Antoinette, Dwelling in the Archive, p. 4.

13 Phrase included in letter re St. Mary’s church. See Footnote 11, Chapter 4.

14 Ibid., p. 5.

15 Petrea (3.9.1877-20.3.1879); Francis (14.3.1879-13.2.1955) and Reginald (26.10.1880-17.3.1914).
uncomplicated. In Janet Clarke’s case, home birth with a doctor of one’s own choice meant she did not come into contact with infections that plagued hospitals at that time. Nevertheless, the death of Petrea, frail since her birth, just six days after Francis was born, must have reminded the Clarke family that despite their prosperity they were not immune from child mortality that raged in Melbourne and Britain, particularly among the poorer inhabitants.16

Margaret McInnes, in her history of the Melbourne Children’s Hospital, described the mortality rate for children in Victoria: ‘By the 1880s of every 100 children born, 90 might survive to the age of one year, 82 to five years and only 78 to adulthood’.17 For the poor, particularly the single mother, childbirth was a hazardous process. Without access to proper diet, housing and personal and monetary support, the health of both mother and child was at risk. McInnes endorsed this overview when she quoted from the 1876 Annual Report of the Hospital for Sick Children: ‘… the mortality of children in this colony is altogether the consequence of causes of a social nature’.18

In this period, regardless of class status, the risks associated with pregnancies were common to all females. Writing about upper-class women in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, Patricia Jalland, in her chapter ‘Tragedies of Childbirth’, highlighted the traumas faced by pregnant women in England. Even the most privileged women were at risk particularly from haemorrhages, infections and puerperal fever following childbirth or miscarriage. Jalland used the personal testimonies and correspondence of high-ranking women in England – Lady Cowell-Stepney, Lady Stanley, Lady Richmond, Lady Edward Cavendish, Edith Lyttelton – to record their fears of miscarriage and ‘the painful and traumatic experience so many women endured’ in the process of childbirth.19 She noted that in England and Wales between 1865 and 1914, ‘the probability was that three women in every hundred who

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16 In a letter [in private hands] to Canon Ford Janet Clarke emphasised the importance of the Sunbury Anglican Church to their family. She wrote: ‘Within those dear walls too, is our memorial to our baby girl Josie when Sir William extended the Church by building the Chancel with the Communion Table, and the window to her memory’.


18 Ibid.

bore six children would die in childbirth’. In Australia, poverty and distance from appropriate medical services increased the risk factors associated with pregnancies. Janet McCalman’s research identified young Australian-born single women and older immigrant women as the most vulnerable in the Lying-in Hospital (later the Women’s Hospital): ‘Between 1869 and 1872 about a quarter of all deliveries registered some form of complication ranging from the death of the mother to the stillbirth of the child’.  

Despite the existence of poverty among inhabitants of Melbourne, the eighties proved a time of great prosperity and advancement for Melbourne town. This historic period in Melbourne’s history was commensurate with the transition of the Clarkes from private to public citizens as their wealth and emerging social position secured them centre stage at the International Exhibition held in the newly-constructed Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne. Graeme Davison eloquently described this event as ‘a prism which refracted Melbourne’s history in bands of bold emotional colour’. On display in the buildings were national and international agricultural, scientific and artistic exhibits. The opening day of the Exhibition on 1 October 1880, just three weeks before the birth of the Clarkes’ sixth child, was declared a public holiday. Huge crowds gathered to watch the parade of carriages that wended their way along St Kilda Road, up Collins Street and left towards Victoria Parade and hence into the Great Hall within the Exhibition buildings. Once seated, those present in the Hall listened to a speech made by the President and Chief Commissioner of the Exhibition, William Clarke:

> Your Commissioners desire to draw attention of Your Excellency to the contrast presented by the scene here displayed and that which existed less than 45 years ago where Melbourne now stands. (…). Today you are opening an International Exhibition in a large city, where you are surrounded by accredited representatives of the great nations of Europe, Asia and America, and articles illustrating the growth, produce, manufactures, arts, sciences of the whole world, while this assemblage

20 Ibid., p. 171.
21 Janet McCalman, *Sex and Suffering*, p. 34.
testifies not only to the wealth and culture but to the energy and enterprise of the colonists. In fact, this speech could have been interpreted as a metaphor for the lives of Janet and William Clarke and their forebears, whose energy and enterprise in the areas of agriculture, self-government, education, religious and sporting institutions had benefited the ‘wealth and culture’ of Melbourne. The Exhibition did not close until May 1881 and was visited by thousands of Australians and overseas visitors. The *Argus* reported that the aggregate attendance of the paying public up to closure was 984,866. International recognition came from English royalty. The Prince of Wales sent a telegram to William in October: ‘Very glad to hear Opening of Exhibition went off so well and everything was such a success’. In a telegram from Balmoral the Queen also wished ‘all possible success to the Exhibition’. Prior to the eighties, the Clarkes’ charitable works were recognised locally but by juxtaposing public responsibility with great wealth the Clarkes’ reputation had now stretched far beyond the shores of Australia.

The President organised a Grand Ball at the Exhibition building to celebrate the success of the Exhibition in June 1881. Over two thousand invited guests attended this event including the Governors of Victoria and Queensland, the Earl of Clanwilliam (Rear Admiral of the detached squadron), Prince Louis of Battenberg, the Foreign Commissioners, and the French, Italian and British naval officers from the warships in the Bay and the Mayors of Melbourne and Ballarat. However, this final celebration was not all smooth sailing. The *Australasian* complained that despite special arrangements made to promote the sale of tickets in inland towns with concessions granted for rail travel, very few country residents took up this offer. The *Australasian* was also critical of an experiment to run early morning trains to take the ball attendees home: ‘It should have been obvious that very few gentlemen were likely to ask the ladies of their party to walk from the Exhibition to the Railway station at 2 a.m. in dancing shoes and afterward walk from the suburban station to their homes’. Perhaps the fact that the Clarkes had a private railway platform in close proximity to their

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23 Ibid.
24 *Argus*, 1 June 1881.
25 Album, [in private hands].
26 *Australasian*, 4 June 1881.
mansion had clouded their judgement in this respect. This miscalculation meant that the cabmen, who had threatened to strike unless this plan was cancelled, were able to ply their trade successfully.27

A few months later in September 1881, the Clarke party of nineteen which departed Melbourne for England included nurses, servants and a new governess. Through the auspices of the Earl and Countess of Kimberley, Janet and her stepdaughter, Blanche, were to be presented to Queen Victoria at a Drawing Room in the following May.28 The outfits for this occasion were purchased at considerable expense in Paris.29 Janet recalled this event in a letter to her son four years later when Ethel Clarke was also being presented to the Queen:

We shall go to the Drawing room on May 5th I think. I wish it was over and we had all safely made our bows. Ethel is the only one who will have to kiss the Queen’s hand, as Blanche and I did it last time.30

Described by Barbara Caine as ‘the climax of much lengthy preparation’, Janet’s apprehension about the actual presentation was matched by the mothers and daughters of elite British society.31 This yearly ritual, ‘the coming out season’, took place in the Drawing Room of St. James’s Palace. The debutantes, dressed in white ball gowns trailed by white veils and ostrich feathers, queued in the Queen’s anti-chamber waiting for their names to be called. The long wait finally over, they were announced and entered the Queen’s chamber where the debutante gave a deep curtsey before kissing the Queen’s hand. Pat Jalland used Cynthia Asquith’s diverting account of this ritual in her text:

The metamorphosis called Coming Out was supposed to be effected when you were presented at Court, where the wand was officially waved over your head. The picturesque rites of this social baptism were preceded by weeks of trepidation –

27 Ibid.
28 At this time Lord Kimberley was Colonial Secretary in Gladstone’s Cabinet.
29 Their elaborate costumes were described by Michael Clarke, p. 173.
30 Letter from Lady Janet Clarke to ten-year old Russell, 4 April 1886, [in private hands].
weeks busied with long lessons in deportment (…) and panic-stricken rehearsals of my curtsey. (…) then there were endless wearsome hours of trying-on.

For the Clarkes, the remaining months in England were taken up with numerous social events, many of which were associated with William’s interests in racing, coursing, banking, cricket and agriculture. Their social interaction with nobility and royalty on this overseas tour confirmed their transition from colonial identities to internationally recognised Australian citizens.

The Clarkes left London on board the RMS Peshawur on 14 September 1882. Travelling with the family were members of an English cricket team, hastily put together in England at the prompting of William Clarke in his role as President of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Ivo Bligh, the second son of the Earl of Darnley, was appointed captain of the team which was made up of four professionals and eight amateurs.

The history of cricket in nineteenth-century England reflected the entrenched class system of the times. Originally the game of cricket was played only by amateurs but significant gambling associated with the outcomes of cricket matches and the need to improve the standard of the teams led to the employment of professional cricketers. Gradually the term ‘Gentlemen and Players’ was used to identify those who retained their amateur status and those who received payment. Being captain of the team did not always mean that the appointee was the best player, but rather it indicated his class status as an unpaid member of the team. This division, resulted in the separation of the players in the dressing rooms, the practice of the amateurs and professionals entering the ground through different gates, and the expectation that the amateur players would be addressed as ‘sir’. The cricket historian, Scyld Berry, did not consider that Bligh endorsed these conventions. On board the Peshawur all Bligh’s players had first-class cabins and ate at the same dining table. While the amateurs

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32 Pat Jalland, p. 23.
33 William was President of the Melbourne Cricket Club between 1880 and 1886.
only had their expenses met; the professional players for this tour received their expenses and £200 each.  

After reloading her coal supplies at Colombo, on the evening of the 16 October the ship sailed for Melbourne. Dan Looney, the son of the head groomsman at Rupertswood, had joined the family in London with his charge, Ernest Clarke. His journal recounted the drama, later reported in national and international newspapers, which unfolded around nine o’clock that night:

![Figure 15 Excerpt from Dan Looney's journal, 1882](image)

[We] had a collision with a sailing ship. Her lights were seen about 5 minutes before. She is a three-masted vessel and struck her amid ships and just happened to hit the gangway close by the bar on the starboard side coming about five feet into our ship. I was standing looking at her forward and the cook said for God’s sake get astern. I ran with him to the stern of the ship we just passed her as he was shrieking. I kept going and it was lucky for me I did as she swept the whole bulwarks along with her as she drifted aft.

There was nothing to be heard but the crashing of timber and our vessel leaned over on its side. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke were before one of the decks and Mrs. Clarke made an attempt to run towards the companionway. Mr. Clarke caught hold of her arm and pulled her back. She called My God my children they are killed – she broke away and ran down the companionway towards the cabin. I went also. There were broken bottles and timber under our feet. I followed her to the cabin and carried Master Clive  

onto the deck. Mrs Clarke will forever command my sincere though humble respect for her behaviour on this occasion. Her children were the only thing she thought of when there was danger – God bless her.36

This insightful narrative of a mother’s response to an emergency involving her children demonstrates that for Janet, regardless of her new-found status in ‘good society’, her mothering role took precedence. One child had died and her other children were at risk so both resourcefulness and personal courage - qualities inculcated and assimilated from her childhood to her adulthood – were called into play. Looney noted also: ‘On arriving on deck I asked Master Clive if he was afraid. He said no – I asked him why. He said God would take care of him he knew’. Clearly, the religious dimension of the children’s mothering had not been neglected. Despite the severity of the collision, the ship did not sink and was able to return safely to Colombo after the crew went to the assistance of the other ship, towing it to Colombo.

Soon after their return to Melbourne, the Clarkes’ leadership of Melbourne society was given royal approval. In November 1882, William received the news from the Victorian Governor that he was to be the first Australian-born gentleman to be awarded an hereditary baronetcy. Research conducted by Sir Ronald Lindsay in the British Archives in 1996 revealed the 1880-1882 correspondence from Lord Normandy, the Governor of Victoria, to Lord Kimberley (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1889-1882) concerning this award for William Clarke. In 1997, Lindsay published this research and a letter which Normandy wrote to Kimberley after he had received his telegram confirming the baronetcy.

He commands the respect and regard of almost everybody here and I do not believe that you ever advised the conferring an honour upon anyone, which was deserved better. He is one of the few colonists who, having great wealth, endeavour to use it for the benefit of his country, and his poorer neighbours, instead of for his own glorification and advancement.37

36 Excerpt from the journal of Dan Looney, [in private hands]. This drama was also reported in the Age, Monday 6 November 1882, p. 5. William’s actions, other than trying to restrain his wife, were not described.
The shared experience of the collision involving the Peshawur enhanced the relationship between the English cricketers and the Clarkes. At a welcoming dinner given to the team in November 1882 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Ivo Bligh referred to the collision and the Clarkes’ kindness to the team. During the tour in Melbourne, Bligh, and the eight amateurs of the touring English team, often visited Rupertswood and enjoyed the Clarkes’ hospitality. Ivo Bligh wrote to his parents from Melbourne:

I have told you of Mr. and Mrs. (now Sir William and Lady Clarke). Well we have seen a great deal of them out here and their country house Rupertswood Sunbury has been quite a home to us. I have been there 4 times.\(^{38}\)

Berry focussed on Bligh’s efforts to encourage the integration of the two classes suggesting that: ‘Bligh, even at 23, had the sensitivity to create an air of harmony and avert confrontation’.\(^{39}\) Despite this ‘air of harmony’, the professionals stayed at the Oriental Hotel in Melbourne and did not share the hospitality at Rupertswood with the other eight amateur players.

Janet’s interest in cricket started many years before her marriage and it is likely that the Snodgrass family spent many Saturday afternoons from October to February each year watching the games at nearby grounds – South Yarra, Fawkner Park and East Melbourne. Her father, Peter Snodgrass, had joined the first Melbourne Cricket Club when it was formed in November 1838.\(^{40}\) His interest in cricket continued when the family resided in Prahran as evidenced by his role as the vice-president of the South Yarra Cricket Club in 1866.\(^{41}\)

Joy Munns, in her history of Rupertswood, acknowledges that there are a number of versions as to the origin of the Ashes urn.\(^{42}\) However, she believes that on 24 December 1882 a social match was played between members of the touring English team and Rupertswood staff and Sunbury locals. After the match, Janet had a staff

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\(^{38}\) Letter, 3 January 1883, from Ivo Bligh to the Earl of Darnley, Medway Archives, Kent, Rochester.

\(^{39}\) Scyld Berry and Rupert Peploe, Cricket’s Burning Passion.

\(^{40}\) Keith Dunstan, The Paddock That Grew, pp. 3-4.

\(^{41}\) Prahran Telegraph, No. 245, 13 October 1866.

\(^{42}\) Joy Munns, Rupertswood, pp. 28-9. The urn was on loan to the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum in 2006.
member burn a bail used in the game, then she placed these ashes in a small urn in her room. Louise Morris, Janet’s great-granddaughter, supports this account. According to Michael Clarke, it was after this presentation that she handed the urn to Bligh. Janet’s enjoyment of the social match and the interaction with the English cricketers was recorded in her diary the next day:

Christmas. The happiest I ever remember. Mr. Bligh and cricketers all here, dined in large ballroom, danced, gave them all iron, gold and steel mementoes of collision of Peshawur.

Janet’s words represented her contentment – with her marriage, motherhood and their established social position. Six years had elapsed since the photograph in Italy had signalled the augmented status of the Clarke family. Now their standing was enhanced by the award of the baronetcy and illustrated by the lavish celebration of Christmas Day in their Rupertswood mansion, surrounded by their own family, friends and the English cricketers.

A few days later this contentment was replaced by ‘astonishment’ after Janet received a letter from Mr Bligh informing her of his intention to propose to Florence Morphy, a young friend who was residing at Rupertswood at that time. Her remarkable reply throws light on Janet’s maturation and honesty and demonstrates her understanding of the issues of marriage, class, money and beauty in late nineteenth-century Australia and England. Above all, it highlights her views on the role of ‘duty’.

My dear Mr. Bligh

I was certainly very much astonished when I read your letter and if you think of this matter (as I am quite sure you would from what I know of your Character) as the very greatest step in your life you will not think me foolish in saying that I pray to be guided aright in advising you. You know that Miss Morphy is a very great friend of mine, I admire her for her unselfish devotion to her duty, as much as for her beauty.

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43 Interview with Louise Morris in *Age, Melbourne Magazine*, December 2006, pp. 35-7.
44 After the death of her husband in 1927, Florence (née Morphy) gave the urn to the Marylebone Cricket Club.
45 Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood*, p. 183. At this stage this diary has not been located.
46 Janet Clarke gave birth to their seventh child, Vera, on 21.9.83 exactly nine months after this happy celebration.
and therefore you will know that in saying what I may, I can only be actuated by one motive – your own good. First, have you considered your father and mother. They have never seen her and when they hear that their son – in whom so many hopes are centred – is about to marry a young lady whose family though good, is very poor and who has herself to work as a governess they may not be pleased. Miss Morphy’s father was a police magistrate and died many years ago. Since then her mother has had a hard struggle to bring up her family. She has some gentlemen to live with her first and then, as one by one her three daughters married, the first a barrister, the second, a gentleman in the Foreign Service and the third the same, she was able to give this up. Unfortunately the eldest sister’s husband turned out badly and she died leaving six children all babies nearly. Then Mrs. Morphy had again to set to and Florrie too. The former is in charge of an establishment to aid governesses coming to this colony. The latter teaches some children in Melbourne, so, between them they support six children – there are I think two brothers on stations – Now dear Mr. Bligh think of all this. Miss Morphy will stay with me for six weeks and I give you free leave to come up here every day you are in Melbourne. Come by all means on Sunday if you wish after what I have said, but be advised by me in this. Do not ask Miss Morphy on Sunday. She is not engaged to anyone, and be sure that in her you have found the one woman whom God intended to be your helpmeet and solace through life. – If you are quite sure that you will be mutually amicable and raise one another’s characters then no one will more sincerely wish you all and every happiness, if on the other hand, you have been attracted by a pretty face and bright brave girl, she knows nothing of the deeper feeling you think you have, and you need never remember having written to me on the subject, as the matter will thoroughly rest between us.

May I say that in any case it would be much wiser and truer to write home by the outgoing mail. You will have three months, in which time you can have an answer, and you will have an opportunity even in the short visits you pay to Melbourne of seeing more of her. In such a case do not be hurried, and think of it as you did in the collision. Remembering that in all things in this world we may not act on our own feelings but our judgement. Please do not think I have spoken too seriously it is as I feel. I need not tell you the great interest and friendship we feel for you and in that light take my advice and very best wishes for your happiness in every sense – As I shall probably not have an opportunity of speaking more than a passing word on Saturday, will you write me a line to say if you will come up on Sunday, perhaps one of the others would join you, if all care to come they are welcome and believe always your true and sincere friend.
Embodied in this letter is Janet’s own personal story. The Morphy disclosures mirror Janet’s situation ten years earlier – the death of the father, the struggle to bring up a large family, serious financial troubles, employment as a lady’s companion, the hospitality of generous friends and the offer of marriage from a man with prospects. Now she advised Florence Morphy and Ivo Bligh to ‘not act on our own feelings but our judgement’. Circumstances had changed the direction of Janet’s life and she had been blessed. Marriage and motherhood had delivered her fame and fortune, but realistically the chance of such good fortune repeating itself in Florence Morphy’s case seemed improbable. \(^{48}\)

Janet spoke frankly: ‘First, have you considered your father and mother. They have never seen her and when they hear that their son – in whom so many hopes are centred – is about to marry a young lady whose family though good, is very poor and who has herself to work as a governess they may not be pleased’. This was sensible advice but was her disquietude partly linked to William Clarke’s recently bestowed baronetcy? If the Earl and Countess of Darnley were not ‘pleased’ with their son’s decision would the Clarkes’ role in this affair or the ‘governess’ question be scrutinised and her own past be called into question?

While there may be an element of subjective judgement in this letter, Janet, now thirty-one years of age, is representing herself and her moral values concerning filial duty, obligation, judgement and marriage. Her tone is measured and assured; she is forthright but conditionally sympathetic: ‘If you are quite sure that you will be mutually amicable and raise one another’s characters then no one will more sincerely wish you all and every happiness’. However, if the basis of his attraction was Florence’s beauty then this was, according to Janet’s sense of right and wrong, unacceptable. In her judgement, ‘raising one another’s character’ within marriage was

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\(^{47}\) Letter, 28 December 1882, from Janet Clarke to Ivo Bligh, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Kent, Rochester, U565, F274. Florence Morphy is often described in historical commentaries as the music teacher at Rupertswood. Janet Clarke’s letter referred to her as a friend and a teacher in Melbourne.

\(^{48}\) See Footnote 54 which details Florence Morphy’s good fortune.
a sacred commitment. There is no evidence that William was consulted on the content of this letter.

A more likely interpretation is that Janet saw herself in the role of *in locus parentis* to both Florence and Ivo. Janet’s knowledge of the British conventions of courtship and marriage had been gleaned from her interaction with members of the English aristocracy. She knew that within English society class differences were taken seriously, particularly where economic as well as social factors were involved. In an analysis of marriage in the upper-class British society, Jalland argued that although marriages by the late nineteenth-century were no longer subject to strict parental control, they still exercised the right ‘to warn and to be consulted’.\(^\text{49}\) Among some upper class families in Australian society, similar behavioural mores were the rule. While Bligh’s financial prospects as the second son of an Earl were limited, his noble lineage was undeniable; thus it was unconventional for someone of his rank to marry a governess. Still the rules of society according to Jalland were: ‘sufficiently flexible to allow social mobility to deserving new wealth and occasionally to outstanding female beauty’.\(^\text{50}\) Janet’s allusion to both Florence’s beauty as well as her poverty was revealing.

Ivo Bligh’s response on January 3 1883 suggests that ‘feelings’ had won out and he had ignored most of Janet’s concerns and intended to follow his own inclinations. Florence had agreed to his proposal although she had requested that his parents be informed before making a final commitment. In Bligh’s letter to his parents, he assured them of his desire to comply with their wishes but believed that in marriage ‘a certain amount of independent judgement’ was needed: ‘You see now what my wish is to marry this girl and the sooner the better. I am willing to do anything in the world to bring about this object and my choice is irrevocably firmed’. He admitted that Florence was poor but believed this was compensated by her friendship with the Clarkes: ‘she is in the best society in Melbourne (...) which speaks volumes for her

\(^{49}\) Pat Jalland, pp. 48-9.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 52.
true worth, Lady’s Clarke’s dearest friend, the friend of one of the kindest and truest-hearted women that ever stepped this earth’.51

Janet’s fears proved correct as the Earl and Countess of Darnley were reluctant to agree to an immediate marriage. When the cricket series ended Bligh acquiesced in his parents’ request to return to England to discuss the proposed marriage. It was not until some six weeks after his return to Cobham Hall, Kent, that his father, the Sixth Earl of Darnley, sent a rather lukewarm response to Florence:

I can assure you that you and Ivo have the best wishes of Lady Darnley and myself, for although we have never had the pleasure of seeing you, we have otherwise had ample means of satisfying ourselves that we should be able cordially to welcome you as a relation.52

The Earl also explained that they could do very little financially for their son: ‘You will have no doubt learned from Ivo that it is not exactly an easy matter to give him a start in life’.53 To secure financial independence Ivo, as the second son, needed to find himself a wealthy wife. Janet had not been mistaken in her understanding of the marriage conventions that governed the English aristocracy.

Ivo Bligh returned to Australia to wed Florence Morphy. The Clarkes organised the wedding on 9 February 1884. Two hundred guests, who had arrived by train, were present in St. Mary’s Church Sunbury. Lily Snodgrass, Blanche and Mary Clarke and five other bridesmaids carried baskets of cerise and yellow flowers to match the colours of the Bligh cricket team. The eight groomsmen included Lord William Neville, George Vernon, who had played in the 1882/83 series with Bligh, and Clive and Russell Clarke. The reception was held in the newly-completed ball room at Rupertswood finishing at 10 p.m. when the guests departed from the Sunbury platform on the special train to Melbourne.54 It would have been hard for the Earl and Countess of Darnley to match this lavish celebration of their son’s marriage.55

51 Scyld Berry and Rupert Peploe, p. 96. The Bligh and Earl of Darnley letters quoted by Berry are in the Medway Archives, Kent.
52 Ibid., pp. 152-3.
53 Ibid., p. 153.
54 Argus, 11 February 1884; Scyld Berry and Rupert Peploe, pp. 153-187. After their marriage they returned to England where Bligh endeavoured to find suitable employment. Because of his ill-health,
In December the following year, the Clarke family embarked on their third overseas tour as William Clarke had been appointed an Honorary Commissioner to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition to be held in London in 1886. Russell, then ten years old, remained in Melbourne, with their old friends Dr. and Mrs. Shields and attended Miss Agnes Templeton’s school in Domain Road South Yarra. On board ship and later in London, Janet’s letters to Russell highlight the devotion between mother and son and her need to reassure him that he was ever in their thoughts. Janet’s letters, addressed to ‘My darling Russell’ were signed variously ‘Your loving mother’, ‘believe me my darling your own loving mother’, ‘Goodbye darling’ or ‘Goodbye my darling. I send you a birthday card and a little Easter card for a book marker for your Bible’.

Her letters included details of the ship’s cabins, a day spent at Government House in Adelaide, the ‘not very lively’ passengers and instructions to Russell to give his mother’s love to Lady Loch, (the Victorian Governor’s wife) when he was holidaying at Mount Macedon. She explained that Reggie had been deserted by his brother in favour of a new friend so she was spending time with him and had taught him to play draughts and ‘fox and geese’. The nurse’s fear of rats was also relayed as well as a description of a hurricane that had tossed the ship about in the ocean when they were two days off from Malta. She reminded Russell that the doctor on board was the same one who had been on board the *Peshawur* and told him that she had bought a Fez cap for him. She promised to send Russell a book which she had read, *Jackanapes*: ‘which made me quite cry, but it is not really sad as I know you don’t like sad books’. 56

In one of the letters, Janet described the animals travelling with them to England – the poor kangaroos and white possums unhappy in the cold and rough weather and the Tasmanian tigers that seemed to enjoy it: ‘They are very small tigers, more like depression and financial problems, they returned to Australia in 1885. *Rupertswood* once more became their second home. His personal problems persisted and again they returned to England. His father died in 1896. Ivo and Florence’s position improved after his brother’s sudden death in 1900 when he became the Earl of Darnley. The Earl of Darnley died in 1927. Florence, the Countess of Darnley, a Dame of the British Empire, died in 1944. See also Michael Clarke, pp. 186-7.

55 Other weddings at *Rupertswood* were: Ada Ryan, Janet’s cousin, and Lord Charles Scott, the son of Duke of Buccleuch in 1882; Janet’s sister, Eva Snodgrass and Major Frederick Hughes in October 1885; Blanche, Janet’s step-daughter, and Falconer Macdonald in December 1887 and Ethel, Janet’s step-daughter, and George Cruickshank in 1895.

cats’. Robert Paddle, the author of a text on the extinction of the thylacine, referred to a comment made in 1863 by A. A. Le Soeuf, the Director of the Melbourne Zoological Society. Le Soeuf (Janet’s uncle) explained that: ‘the species was daily becoming rarer and more difficult to obtain’. This situation did not prevent Tasmanian politicians and sheep farmers grossly exaggerating the numbers of sheep killed by thylacines. Although there was no tested scientific proof that the thylacine was a sheep killer, they supported a Parliamentary Bill (1886) which permitted bounty payment for each animal killed. Paddle maintained that this meant that the Tasmanian Parliament had legalised: ‘the deliberate destruction of a native carnivore’.

While the ‘tigers’ and the other animals for Janet were noteworthy, despite her close relationship with her uncle, she seemed unaware that this species was facing extinction. On the other hand, in 1903 Lady Audrey Tennyson, the wife the South Australian governor who had stayed at Cliveden when official business brought them to Melbourne, expressed a lively interest in threatened native species:

> Hallam has given me the most lovely platypus rug of 20 guineas, so expensive because the poor little creatures have been so killed they will soon become extinct, but I am going to send it back. It is too much to give me & I am working now at Premiers and Governors to get them to arrange a universal closed season in Australia for all native animals, opossums, wallabies, platypus, kangaroos, which otherwise will soon become extinct. The premier, Mr Irvine, agrees with the proposition but writes that not many skins are exported from Victoria, only 243,000!" 

57 Possibly their destination was the London Zoo. Robert Paddle noted: ‘… thylacines at London Zoo in the 80s were mainly fed on rabbits’. Robert Paddle, The Last Tasmanian Tiger, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 96.
58 Ibid., p. 136. Albert Le Soeuf was the uncle of Janet by his marriage to Caroline Cotton, the sister of Janet’s mother, Agnes (Charlotte) Snodgrass.
60 Janet and her uncle were very close as evidenced in this letter: ‘You have ever been dear to us and we have admired the way in which for these many years past you have as a loving wife of a very wealthy and good man fulfilled your duties. See the Clarke Letters, p. 65.
61 Alexandra Hasluck (ed.), Audrey Tennyson’s Vice-Regal Days, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1978, p. 312. Audrey’s husband, Lord Tennyson, was the Governor of South Australia (1899-1902) and Lord Hopetoun’s replacement as Acting Governor-General of Australia (1902-1904). He was the eldest son of Alfred Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate.
In 1905 the platypus became a protected species. While Janet’s interest was somewhat perfunctory, Lady Tennyson and Albert Le Soeuf were both early pioneers in the battle to prevent the extinction of our native species.

Once settled at the Royal Duke Hotel in London, the Clarkes were immediately involved with an influential circle of friends. Clearly their Australian social and family networks helped them gain entry into royal circles and their documented lifestyle presents an excellent window through which to observe the nineteenth-century English social scene. Letters, both to and from Janet Clarke, reflect the ease with which the family fitted into English society. Sutton Palmer, the landscape artist, wrote recommending Dorking and its neighbourhood as a pleasant part in which to relax: ‘I must thank you dear Lady Clarke for the kind way in which you and your circle have received me’. The Marquis of Normanby, who had served as Governor of Victoria from 1877 to 1884 and had strongly supported William’s claims to the baronetcy, claimed he was getting old ‘but would be glad to see you all again’. Mary Ponsonby, the wife of Queen Victoria’s Private Secretary wrote to Janet:

I must thank you very much for your kind note which I have sent on to my husband that he may if he has the opportunity to show it to the Queen as she will I am sure be pleased to think the entertainment at Windsor was liked by her visitor.

Dion Boucicault, an Irish playwright and actor, penned a brief note promising ‘to sup with them’; while Francis Knollys, the Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales wrote from Marlborough House in April 1886: ‘I am glad that you are able to make use of the enclosed tickets’. In June, Lord Vernon, President of the Cheshire Agricultural Show, begged William to join a party of gentlemen interested in agriculture at a three day dairy conference. From Fulham Palace, the home of the Bishops of London, came an invitation to witness an ordination at St. Paul’s Cathedral on Trinity Sunday. In

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64 Clarke Letters, p. 18. The original letters are held in the archives at Rupertswood.
65 Ibid., p. 20.
July, the Duke and Duchess of Manchester invited Lady Clarke and Sir William to dine with them.

Her letters to Russell from England describing their social engagements told a similar story of acceptance into English society. In May, they were to attend the Queen’s Drawing Room the venue for Ethel’s debut. Every night they were invited to some dinner party and ‘generally a ball’. In June, they were at Princess Louise’s garden party. William dined one night with the Archbishop of York and the next with the Prince of Wales. Blanche, Reggie and Janet were shown the State Coaches and the Queen’s stables by Lord Cork, the Master of the House to the Queen. Subsequently the Clarkes decided to buy a carriage for use in Australia. While many of their engagements were at large public occasions there were many dinners with close friends and relations:

We have been out every night nearly, and on the day too dining with all sorts of grand people. Father and I had such a happy time. We spent two days with Mr. Wilson at Reigate. He has a lovely place, and a wood full of pheasants and wild flowers and nightingales. It was lovely and we felt quite sorry to leave.

In July, they dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury and his wife, Mrs. Benson, at Lambeth Palace. In the same month they attended the Henley Regatta on the Thames and Sir William was awarded an honorary Doctorate at Cambridge. On the 5 July, Janet described their lunch with the Queen:

The Queen was so kind and nice and let us see all her rooms and treasures. All kinds of things from Egypt and India and other far off lands. The silver and gold plate were beautiful and so were the pictures and conservatories and gardens.

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66 Princess Louise was the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria. She married the Maquis of Lorne, later the Governor-General of Canada (1878-1883). She was an active supporter of good causes through her speeches and letters. She was particularly interested in the Ladies’ Work Society and improved Higher Education for women. See www.britannia.com/history/biographies/louise.

67 She wrote to Russell: ‘We think we shall get a landau though father rather likes a barouche’. A landau was a four-wheel carriage with a top on two parts, so that it could be closed or thrown half or entirely open. A barouche was a four-wheel carriage with a half head behind which can be raised or let down. It had a seat in front for the driver and seats inside for two couples to sit facing each other.

68 Reigate was/is a small market town in Surrey, adjacent to London.

69 10 May 1886 letter to Russell, [in private hands].

70 Ibid., July 1886. Before they returned to Australia, a letter (21 October 1886) came from the Viscountess Strangford: ‘I must write a line to say how sorry I was not to see you again as I hear you
As well as the social chronicles, Janet’s mothering role and her children’s activities were recorded in the letters. William Clarke had attended an English school for three years from the age of sixteen and in May 1886 the Clarkes, following the practice of the colonial elite, had accompanied Clive to his boarding school, Cheam. Perhaps because Janet found it ‘a great trial leaving him with strangers’, their other sons only attended Melbourne schools. Despite Janet’s concerns, she told Russell that he had settled in easily and there were plans for him to spend his holidays on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Ethel was having painting lessons from an artist, Mr. Sheldon. Mary and Miss Bateman were going to stay in the country. Frank, despite a serious operation to improve his lame leg, was ‘still as cheery as a cricket’ and loved his hospital nurse who ‘is sweet and good’. Janet felt the procedure was necessary but it made her feel very anxious. Vera was getting ‘quite grown up’ and Reggie was dying to see Russell again and get back to Sunbury. 71 Although thousands of miles separated Russell from his family, his mother and her detailed and loving responses, positioned him at the centre of the family’s activities. The fact that both Janet’s and Russell’s letters have been carefully preserved demonstrates the value both mother and son placed on their relationship.

leave England tomorrow. I trust you will soon return here and will let me know when you come. I shall look forward to seeing more of you with great pleasure. (...). I will not tell you of the pretty things HRH said of you less it would make you vain for Princess Mary is a very good judge.’, Clarke Letters, p. 37.

71 Ibid.
By October 1886 the Clarkes were back in Victoria in time to attend the marriage of their eldest son, Rupert, with Amy Cumming at Scots Church, the reception at the bride’s family home Waratah and to organise further celebrations of the marriage at Rupertswood. A year later the Clarkes’ eighth and last child, Ivy, was born.\(^{72}\) In 1887 Cliveden, their town house in East Melbourne on the corner of Clarendon Street and Wellington Parade, was completed.\(^{73}\) As with Clarke’s country mansion, the entire three-storey residence was furnished richly. In fact, as was reported by Queen Bee in *Melbourne Punch*:

> it has all the latest and best ideas in the way of building, decorating and furnishing. (…). Suspended on the walls are some very fine specimens of tapestry, copied from original designs by the late Prince Leopald. (…). Sir William became the fortunate possessor of these tapestries through the good auspices of Her Majesty the Queen, who hearing that he was building a town house, thought he might wish to have them for his decoration.\(^{74}\)

Cliveden was a persuasive image that reflected the potency of Janet and William Clarke’s position in society. It became the cultural, social and charitable focus of Melbourne society until Janet’s death in April 1909. The thousands of signatures, inscribed in the five hundred and fifty pages of the two Cliveden Visitor’s Books represent the social history of the late colonial era in Victoria.\(^{75}\) The story of the signatories, their residences and their relationship to the Clarke family is still waiting to be told. They represented as well as family, every rank and profession in Australia and overseas – Governors and State Governors, Chief Justices, Prime Ministers, Premiers, parliamentarians, doctors, lawyers, artists and artistes, naval and military officers, consuls, pastoralists, senior public servants, bankers and stockbrokers, teachers, merchants, sports administrators, church officials, charity workers, university professors and students. The building of this Melbourne residence was the

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\(^{72}\) Ivy Clarke (2.10.1887-26.8.1962).

\(^{73}\) Michael Clarke, *Clarke of Rupertswood*, p. 249: ‘The cost of the building was given out at £68,751 with fixtures, excluding the furniture, coming to an extra £15,666’. In 1969, Cliveden, by then divided into separate apartments, was demolished and replaced by the Hilton Hotel.


\(^{75}\) Each of the 550 pages contains 27 lines. Most pages are filled with signatures and many Mr., Mrs. and Miss, family names are written on the same line – possibly more than 34,000 signatures! Albums are in private hands.
decisive factor which signalled the transition of Janet and William Clarke from local identities to renowned Australians.
Chapter Four

A Righteous Life and Thoughtful Philanthropy

At the present time, despite her documented philanthropic work, the majority of the Victorian public do not immediately recognise Janet Lady Clarke’s name. Yet, just over one hundred years ago, in May 1905, the Melbourne Herald newspaper conducted a poll that required its readers to nominate the ten best citizens of Victoria. The final voting figures for the ‘Ten Best Citizens’ were published on the 31 May 1905.¹

Sir John Madden 3342
Janet Lady Clarke 3221
Mr. T. Bent M.L.A. 2842
Sir George Turner, M.P. 2658
Miss Sutherland 2508
Rev. A. R. Edgar 2280
Mr. W. H. Irvine, M.L.A. 2239
Sir Samuel Gillott, M.L.A. 2195
Mr. A. Deakin, M.P. 2040
Mr. George Coppin 1167

The Herald had allowed its readers to decide what meaning should be attached to the word ‘best’ but suggested that ‘good citizenship was that which had been of service to the State, and the best service is not necessarily political’. The result was discussed by the editor who thought ‘that the vote has been marked by thought and judgement’.² In drawing attention to the fact that only twenty-one votes separated Janet Lady Clarke from Sir John Madden, he added: ‘Lady Clarke is famed for her public spirit and

¹ List printed as published in Herald, Wednesday Evening, 31 May 1905. Sir John Madden, Lieutenant-Governor and formerly the Chief Justice; Mr. T. Bent, Premier of Victoria; Sir George Turner, Federal Treasurer; Miss Sutherland, friend of poor women and children; Reverend A. R. Edgar, head of Wesley Mission; Mr. W. H. Irvine, an ex-premier of Victoria; Sir Samuel Gillott, M.L.A. and Chief Secretary; Mr. Alfred Deakin, M.L.A and Prime Minister of the Commonwealth and Mr. George Coppin, actor, playwright and ex-politician.
² Ibid.
generous work in a sphere apart from politics’. What then was the genesis of this ‘good citizen award’ for this distinguished Victorian, Janet Lady Clarke?

To identify clues which explain the nature of Janet Clarke’s philanthropic disposition, it is important to consider the influences exerted in the crucial years of her childhood and adolescence including the values, moral guidance and religious education existing within the Snodgrass family environment. In an earlier chapter, the education of Blanche Mitchell, whose family had a long-standing friendship with the Snodgrass family, was used as a model to suggest the nature of Janet Snodgrass’s secular and religious education. This was confirmed by Phyllis Power, Janet Clarke’s step-granddaughter. She explained how Janet and her sisters received their first lessons from their mother: ‘who amongst other things imparted to them, and especially to Janet, her own deep religious beliefs’.

Further, in a published biography of her mother, Aimee Cumming, Rupert Clarke’s first wife, Power recalled how she saw Janet kneeling at the rail of the verandah outside her bedroom at Rupertswood, to say her morning prayers before going downstairs. Her grandmother’s explanation to Phyllis, that through this personal act ‘she felt no barrier between her and God’, indicated that her faith was an integral part of her daily life.

Just as Agnes Snodgrass had been responsible for Janet’s early religious education, the indomitable Arbella Cooke, her mentor at Murndal, was a woman of strong religious convictions. Arbella was a descendant of a Protestant Irish family and a devout Anglican, a commitment which she maintained in her years spent in the Western District where she and her family were involved in the religious community in the Condah District. Arbella encouraged both her husband and sons to become lay preachers and she taught Sunday School classes using hymn books and bibles she kept in a box. The Cookes, both devout Anglicans, donated land at Condah Hills on

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3 Ibid.
4 Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 32, [in private hands].
5 Phyllis Power, From These Descended, Homestead Books, Kilmore, 1977. Born in November 1886, Phyllis Power was the daughter of Janet’s eldest step-son, Rupert, and his first wife, Aimee Cumming. Phyllis spent much time in her childhood and adolescence at Rupertswood in the company of the Clarke family and in this biography she expressed her admiration for ‘Aunt Janet’, her step-grandmother, believing her to be one of the most outstanding Australian women of her day: ‘who was wonderfully good to me, as I was an awkwardly shy child’.
6 Ibid., p. 142.
which a fine stone church was constructed and later donated £2,000 to the church. At *Murndal*, one section of the library was devoted to religious books (sermons for country churches and Bible commentaries) whose purpose was to provide support for lay preaching. Arbella, described by Gordon Forth as an ‘ardent evangelical’ who held that ‘people ought to believe in Christianity’, would have expected Janet to maintain the religious conventions practised by the Snodgrass family.

Mary Clarke was known for her charitable works in the Sunbury district and her involvement with the Sunday school associated with the Sunbury Church of England. Mary Clarke’s influence on her young companion was evidenced in a letter which Janet wrote in 1898, some years after the death of her eldest son, Clive, and following the recent death of her husband. It was addressed to the Rector of the Sunbury Church, Canon Ford, and discussed the intended memorial for her son which was to be erected in the church. This letter confirmed that at a very vulnerable period in her life, Mary Clarke played a decisive role in the affirmation of Janet’s Christian faith:

> Years ago, Sir William contributed largely to build the Church of England at Sunbury - long before the thought of building dear Rupertswood, and before I myself first went to Sunbury to be with the two tiny children there, then. It was very natural that the church should be called “St. Mary’s”, as the dear and noble woman, who was then the lady of Sunbury was called “Mary”, and she was so deeply interested in it and worked the carpet and cushions for the church herself. Later on, when she met with the accident, which caused her death – the people of the whole district - with no reference to creed or religious views, united as one body of sorrowing friends, to put in the church the most beautiful marble font, as a monument for all time, of her goodness and sweet character. It has been my privilege at all the celebrations of the church, for many years, to decorate the font with the flowers, which ever seemed to

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8 Information supplied by Catharine Winter Cooke in 2007 based on her knowledge of family history. According to her, when the Reverend Cusack Russell visited *Murndal*, Arbella rounded up the local Aboriginal babies to be christened by him. Samuel Winter, a religious sceptic and a friend of Cusack Russell, paid for the Wannon Anglican parsonage and contributed to his friend’s stipend. See Gordon Forth, p. 160.

9 Ibid., Arbella Cooke to Samuel Winter Cooke, 25 February 1895, p. 190.

10 Sir William died on 15.5.1897 and Clive died on 3.2.1894.
me a sort of consecration and renewed pledge, that I would be as true a mother to her children as she could wish.

Later on, when I was married – we took Clive there to be baptised – and there he so many times knelt side by side with his Father and Mother, sisters and brothers, and received the Holy Communion. – There he knelt to pray that he might be a faithful soldier – for the last time before he left Australia. – Alas! Forever. There is the monument of his brief life and there it was he was ever present I feel sure when we knelt ourselves before God’s Throne.

At the font, all my children (Excepting the one born in Italy) have been christened and received as members of Christ’s Church. (…) who can say how much of my dear boy’s character was formed by his nineteen years close communion with St. Mary’s Church, and the lessons he learnt there as I know my own life has been so largely influenced.11

This statement concerning religious faith - ‘as I know my own life has been so largely influenced’ - revealed a commitment to the doctrines of the Christian faith and a clear understanding that she should uphold the Biblical teachings. To love one’s neighbour, the individual must take the same path as the biblical character, the Good Samaritan, and her/his deeds must take the form of thoughtful and practical actions in giving comfort to the poor and the needy in society. The Snodgrass family had accepted the bounty of friends following the death of Peter Snodgrass. This support included financial assistance from the squatting fraternity and, in Janet’s case, the protracted and generous hospitality of the Cooke, Winter and Clarke families. The Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan signified that through charitable acts, public spiritedness and appropriate use of intellectual strengths and financial resources, the lives of those less fortunate could be improved.

Recently, Shurlee Swain, while analysing the way academic historians ‘have struggled to find an analytical framework’ for welfare originating in religion, concluded: ‘We need to be open to the transformative potential of religion in individual lives, accepting rather than marginalising accounts which place God at the centre of motivation and commitment’.12 As a young woman Janet had personally benefited from these ‘Good Samaritan’ acts. Thus, her Christian faith and personal

11 Handwritten letter contained in Scrapbook 6, [in private hands].
12 Shurlee Swain, ‘Do You want Religion with That?’ p. 79.6.
experience directed her towards love of her neighbours and love and service to those less fortunate than herself.

While contributing to the building of any church was a traditional form of Christian giving, Janet’s letter also highlighted the personal paradigm, established by William Clarke, of ‘giving’ prior to Janet’s arrival in Sunbury and before William Clarke had inherited his father’s great wealth. Unlike his father, defined by Michael Clarke as ‘disreputable and close-fisted’, his own faith meant he was committed to the philosophy of using his wealth to elevate other lives.

After William’s death in May 1897, newspapers listed a number of institutions which had benefited from his generosity – the Masonic Lodge, Melbourne University, Trinity College, St. John’s Ambulance Society, the Old Colonists’ Association, the Rupertswood Battery, the National Gallery and the Anglican Church (particularly the £10,000 he donated towards the building of St. Paul’s Cathedral). The arts, music and higher education had all received generous support.

Quoting the words of Andrew Carnegie - “There is only one source of blessedness in wealth and that comes from giving it away for ends that tend to elevate our brothers, and enable them to share it with us.” - an Argus writer asserted that having accepted this creed, Sir William, ‘entered at once upon a career of enlightened beneficence, in which every interest and section of the community benefited at one time or another’.

In similar vein the Age journalist stated that Sir William:

[William] set a good example to the wealthy members of the community that a large fortune was a trust to be administered to the general advantage. (...) We have found

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13 William inherited £1,000,000 (the equivalent of £100,000,000 in 2007). See Michael Clarke’s preface in Clarke of Rupertswood, p. xii.
14 Ibid., p. xi. The Bible taught that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. The New English Bible, Bible Societies, Mark, Chapter 10, verse 23-25.
15 Letter, 16 July 1885, from Bishop of Melbourne to Sir William thanking him for the £1,000 donation for the building of the Chemical Laboratory at Trinity College, Clarke Letters.
16 William donated £10,000 to a fund for the relief of the Indian Famine. Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 9.
17 Argus, 17 May 1897. Andrew Carnegie used his enormous wealth to pursue philanthropic causes, particularly providing money to establish libraries in many countries including Australia. See www.carnegie.org/aboutus/foundation.
in the case of the late Sir William J. Clarke an instance of large-heartiness and benevolence which will go a long way towards reconciling mankind to the inequality of fortune and the acquisition of wealth which is wisely and generously used.\textsuperscript{18}

Other newspapers supported this view that Sir William had been an invaluable influence on the community and that his liberal philanthropy, both public and private, had gained him universal respect.\textsuperscript{19} Sir William’s international and national reputation was historicised by Lord Roseberry in his letter to Janet Clarke:

Sir William in his great kindness, in his public spirit, in his hearty Australian as well as British patriotism, in his simple and unintrusive though magnificent charity and generosity was a model for us all.\textsuperscript{20}

At the time of her marriage Janet had already proved herself to be a strong and independent young woman. Marriage and motherhood had seen her develop into a mature individual responding to her new position of wealth and influence with confidence and assurance. While she had been influenced by those who had nurtured her, Janet’s inherent qualities - a positive spirit, enthusiasm, initiative and a sense of her own ‘good luck’ - made her a natural leader. Therefore, her emergence as a society leader and philanthropist was as a person in her own right. The Clarke’s residences, Rupertswood and Cliveden, facilitated their mutual desire and ability to balance celebrity status with altruism. Janet enjoyed this life, but recognised that personal wealth mandated both private and public actions to improve the lives of her fellow Australians.

This chapter challenges common historical criticisms of nineteenth-century charitable practices which downplayed the altruistic element of their services. Prochaska concluded that nineteenth-century English society women practised charity to ‘serve’, to be ‘useful’, to be ‘virtuous’ and ‘more pragmatically’, as ‘an escape from

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Age}, 17 May 1897.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Clarke Letters}, p. 62.
boredom’. Roz Ozten in her thesis, *Charity and Evangelisation*, contended that charity, as practised by colonial women, had emerged in the nineteenth-century because: ‘Charity work was the one sphere outside the home in which ladies not burdened with heavy family responsibilities could work and for which they were seen as being fitted through management of their homes’. Interestingly, Shurlee Swain’s research suggests that philanthropy did offer an ‘alternative pathway to power’ in the absence of individual and political rights, despite feminists being reluctant to see philanthropy as the genesis for political activism. This view supports my argument that one aspect of Janet Clarke’s achievements as a professional activist and a public figure was her thoughtful philanthropic work.

In England, as in Australia, charity workers insisted that charity was not just the rich giving money to the poor. Speaking of welfare in England around this period Jane Lewis explained that at a local level:

… it was in some ways easier for a measure of welfare pluralism to exist, and for the voluntary section, staffed predominately by women and closely allied to their role of informal providers of welfare to the family, to play a large part.

In fact, some leading members of the English Charity Organisation Society (COS), like Helen and Bernard Bosanquet, were hostile to government intervention believing this would undermine family responsibilities. They argued that the key to social change was ‘character’ which could be strengthened by voluntary assistance and visiting but undermined by state intervention. Yet, as Lewis points out, social change in England did emerge slowly through interventions like pensions, school lunches and national insurance.

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24 Jane Lewis, ‘Family Provision of Health and Welfare in the Mixed Economy of Care in the Late 19th and 20th Centuries’ in a paper delivered to The Society for the Social History of Medicine, London 2001, p. 3.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 10.
No matter how critical modern historians are of the rich and charitable colonials, Janet Clarke’s strategy of ‘thoughtful philanthropy’ did encourage the sharing of responsibility for the sick and poor. Her popularity, proven leadership qualities and ability to use the powerful tool of persuasive letter writing to individuals and newspapers (or in contemporary society ‘personal marketing’) meant that she was able to carry ‘her fellow colonists’ with her. Yet, Otzen has shown that the 1890s saw a change in Australia as a rethinking of ideas on the best ways to provide for the poor emerged. Increasingly, there was public debate that focussed on the need to reorganise charity on scientific principles to ensure that the government took responsibility for social welfare and that trained staff should be used rather than charity being dispersed by a network of charitable ladies and organisations.

Dr. William Maloney, the son of ‘Big Clarke’ and his wife’s sister, Jane Dowling, and therefore half-brother to Sir William Clarke, was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1889 on a socialist platform as a Labor politician. According to him, charity was the ‘makeshift of the rich to still remorse’ and he advocated the replacement of charity with scientifically-based government age and invalid pensions. Dr. Maloney worked with both the socialist groups and church members who, like Reverend Edgar, the head of the Wesley Mission, supported the unemployed and the ‘sweated classes’, and believed that pensions, systematically based, should replace random acts of charity. He was opposed to the hierarchical churches like the Anglican and Catholic churches as he disagreed with charity being linked to religion.

Dr. Maloney was not alone in believing charity work was a platform by which the privileged could ease their consciences as evidenced by the negative portrait of Janet Clarke’s philanthropy painted by Richard Kennedy in his critical discussion of the

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28 See Richard Kennedy, Charity Warfare, p. 118 and Argus, 7 July 1890. Graeme Davison noted in his text, Marvellous Melbourne, that in an article in the Age (1892) on suicide, Dr. Maloney: ‘asserted, perhaps with more political conviction than medical authority, that about half the suicides of the previous year had been caused by want and starvation’.
29 Michael Clarke explained that Maloney was on ‘good terms’ with both Will and Janet and ‘he involved Janet in the relief of the poor’, p. 193. Ralph Biddington is in the process of writing a biography on Dr. William Maloney and has been of assistance in providing information on his subject. A letter, 31 March 1886, from John Ruskin to W. Maloney is in an Album at Rupertswood. Sir Rupert Clarke, Janet’s step-son, assisted Dr Maloney’s bid to win the Federal seat of Melbourne in 1904. Dr. Maloney’s support of a position taken by Janet Clarke in 1902 is discussed in Chapter 6. See also Robert Birrell, A Nation of Our Own, Longman, Melbourne, 1995, p. 232.
Melbourne Charity Organisation Society. He awarded no accolades to one member of the Committee:

In 1888 the Clarkes opened Cliveden (...) and there Janet, the former governess, queened it over her guests at dances, dinners and garden parties. Melbourne society fawned over the Clarkes in their lifetime and the tone of slavish admiration continued after their death with the erection of public memorials ranging from garden statues to entries in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, where her profession is listed as ‘philanthropist’.30

While Kennedy’s caricature chose to ignore the positive aspects of the Clarkes’ philanthropy, the ‘Ten Best Citizens’ award and perusal of articles in contemporary newspapers, reveal approval, rather than resentment, of Janet Clarke’s philanthropy.

Independently wealthy after Sir William’s death, the juxtaposition of wealth and obligation was to remain a defining factor in Janet Clarke’s life. She had been a committed participant in their joint philanthropic activities during the course of her marriage. Her step-granddaughter wrote: ‘Though Janet was the stronger personality, she had a gift of making people think that ideas emanated from him, when they were really hers’.31 The Australasian declared: ‘It was an immense and incalculable advantage to him to have a wife of such superb tact, such refined taste, and such native kindliness of disposition as Lady Clarke has ever shown herself to be’.32 Frank Clarke observed in his private biography: ‘The goodness which was the keynote of my father’s character came three parts from himself and one part from my mother, while any greatness that gathered around his position came three parts from my mother and one part from himself’.33 Reflecting on meaningful aspects of her husband’s life, Janet addressed a letter to My Lord Bishop thus: ‘I think to have lived

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30 Richard Kennedy, Charity Warfare, p. 92. Kennedy offered a damning assessment of this organisation, its history and its charity policies from 1887 to 1899. According to Howe and Swain in The Challenge of the City, the COS was a local version of the London Society which restricted its aid to the ‘deserving’, while the Wesley Mission offered: “…charity with a more accepting face. Because evangelism remained the primary goal, workers in the missions were far less concerned with separating the deserving from the undeserving’.
31 Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 10.
32 Australasian, 22 May 1897.
33 Frank Clarke, The Clarke Clan in Australia, p. 17.
one’s life with anyone so noble and unselfish and desirous of the good of others – in
its widest sense – is in itself the greatest privilege’.34

Her active involvement in charitable works eventuated through their friendship with
Sir George Bowen, the Governor of Victoria, and his wife.35 Lady Bowen, an
accomplished musician and linguist, became a popular hostess in Melbourne society
and was committed to charity work: ‘I take the warmest interest in all work of charity
and especially of the benefit of my own sex’.36 The newly-wed Clarkes received
invitations to events at Government House and Janet and Lady Bowen became
personal friends. A letter of introduction from Lady Bowen and the goodwill of Sir
George Bowen meant that the Clarkes were welcomed into English society in their
first overseas tour in 1874. Michael Clarke described Lady Bowen’s mentoring and
patronage as follows:

She soon commended herself to her patroness by requesting a list of books to read
and then taking the trouble to read them thoroughly and intelligently. She was also
extremely quick to learn social deportment, appreciative of any hints which her
Ladyship might give her. She had found an excellent tutor and she was an apt pupil.37

After Rupertswood was completed in 1876, the Bowens accepted invitations to a
number of their social functions. In keeping with her commitment to the needy, Lady
Bowen accepted the role of patroness for a number of charitable organisations
including the Victorian Infant Asylum which cared for unwanted babies and Janet
Clarke became one of the Committee members. Before departing Melbourne for his
new posting in Mauritius, Sir George Bowen wrote personally to Janet Clarke
thanking both the Clarkes:

34 Undated letter addressed to My Lord Bishop, probably Field Flowers Goe (1887-1901), [in private
hands].
35 Bowen was appointed Governor of Victoria in 1873 after his stint as Governor of the colony of New
Zealand concluded. See Marguerite Hancock, Colonial Consorts, pp. 138-140. In January 1878, the
Berry Government dismissed a large number of civil servants after the failure of the Legislative
Council to pass the Appropriation Bill which included a provision for the payment of Parliamentary
members. Sir George Bowen was seen as supporting the Berry Government and consequently lost
popularity. Soon after, he was appointed as Governor of Mauritius. Lady Bowen retained her reputation
and popularity in Melbourne.
36 Ibid., p. 134.
37 Michael Clarke, p. 64.
For all your courtesy, kindness and sympathy for me and mine. I congratulate you on the noble position which Mr. Clarke has already taken up in the colony – indeed in all Australia.38

By 1879, the Clarkes’ position in Victorian society was in part due to their philanthropic commitments. The Church of England had always been generously supported by the Clarkes and when the Bishop of Ballarat wrote to Sir William in 1879 asking for a promise of financial support to extend the church to ‘such places as the Edenhope and Otway districts and the northern plains and the depressed goldfields’, he ended his letter by expressing his gratitude ‘for his noble help in the past’.39 A year earlier, William had donated £1,000 towards the extension of Trinity Hall and given the Anglican College another £1,000 to set up a Theological scholarship. In 1880, to further assist this institution, the Ladies’ committee, of which Janet was principal organiser, ran a Fancy Fair to help Trinity pay the interest payments on its buildings.40

In London on their second overseas visit in 1882, the Clarkes had received a brief note from Florence Nightingale requesting their address.41 Although Florence Nightingale’s family was both rich and well-connected, she chose to be involved with the nursing of the poor and sick, a career that at that time was not considered to be suitable for gentrified young ladies. Her nursing of sick and wounded soldiers during the Crimean War meant she was feted as an international heroine on her return to England in 1856. By 1860, her involvement in nursing had resulted in £45,000 being raised throughout the Empire, including Australia, to found the Nightingale School and Home for Nurses at St. Thomas’s Hospital in London.42 Nightingale’s promotion of nursing as a profession was so successful that in 1869 she was able to set up the Women’s Medical College in London. In the sixties, a number of English nurses came to Sydney and introduced the Nightingale system of nursing, which included both

39 Ibid., Letter, 6 September 1879, from Bishopcourt, Ballarat.
40 Michael Clarke, pp. 119-20.
41 Card from Florence Nightingale in Writing Album at Ruperswood.
hospital planning and a disciplined method of nurse training.\textsuperscript{43} When the Clarkes received her note in 1882, Florence Nightingale was ill with brucellosis and lived a reclusive life; however through her correspondence she maintained considerable power over the Nightingale nurses, who had the responsibility of introducing her methods of hospital management into the hospitals where they were employed.\textsuperscript{44} Although there is no other record of correspondence from Florence Nightingale, Janet Clarke’s admiration of her work was evidenced by a biographical article that she retained in her personal scrapbook and her lifetime commitment to the improvement of the nursing profession and hospitals in Victoria.

![Figure 17 Note from Florence Nightingale, 1882](image)

Even after the introduction of the Nightingale system, training of both public and private nurses in Victoria continued to be controversial as in many hospitals the amount of training was minimal and the role, working conditions and qualifications of nurses variable. In the last decade of the nineteenth-century nursing standards improved, particularly after the 1890 Royal Commission recommended the establishment of a Board of Examiners, improved accommodation and the separation of nursing duties from menial work in the hospital. Better working relationships with

\textsuperscript{43} Judith Godden, \textit{Lucy Osburn, a lady displaced}, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 2006, Chapters 1-4.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 211. Lucy Osburn was the nurse in charge of the six Nightingale nurses at the Sydney Infirmary. Florence Nightingale continued through her letters to mentor Lucy but she became critical of Osburn’s methods of nursing in Australia, believing the time and letters she had written: ‘was so uselessly bestowed on her’. Lucy had a loyal and protective supporter in Henry Parkes, who was a supporter of federation.
doctors and improved hygienic methods practised in the hospitals also helped. The practice of ‘hiring-out’ of nurses as trained hospital nurses to those who could afford this service meant the status of nursing improved.\textsuperscript{45}

On 11 December 1885, just before the Clarkes left for their third overseas trip, Lady Clarke was given a Testimonial Dinner to show appreciation for the work she had undertaken through her connection with the Melbourne District Nursing Society.\textsuperscript{46} There she was presented with a letter in which the ‘undersigned’ expressed their thanks and referred to: ‘her kindness and benevolence shown towards our sick and poor’ and ‘kind visits, such sympathy and love cannot be forgotten’. With the letter came five much-handled foolscap pages on which were penned four hundred and twenty-nine individual signatures.\textsuperscript{47} This was a heart-felt response from people who had obviously benefited from Janet Clarke’s attention and did not feel personally diminished by her generous response to their situation.

Figure 18 Letters of appreciation to Janet for her good work, 1885


\textsuperscript{46} This association was started in 1885 by Dr. Charles Strong, a Presbyterian minister, and Sulina (Selina) Sutherland. See Charles Strong @ www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs Dr. Strong resigned from the Presbyterian Church and founded the Australian Church after being accused of being a heretic. He was committed to easing the lot of the poor working classes and was, like Dr. Maloney, a member of the anti-sweat League. In 1881 Sulina Sutherland (1839-1909) founded the Scot’s Church Neglected Children’s Aid Society which evolved into the Victorian Neglected Children’s Aid Society and Sutherland was No. 5 on the 1905 Herald Poll of the ten best citizens.

\textsuperscript{47} Letter and signed pages, [in private hands].
The Clarkes had also given their support to the Elizabeth Fry Retreat which was set up in 1883 by Sarah Swinborn, a Quaker, who was concerned about the prospects of women after they were released from the Melbourne gaol.48 The Retreat provided not only accommodation but the opportunity for the women to have paid employment by using the washhouse at the residence for laundering of clothes. This venture was financially supported by the Society of Friends and a number of philanthropists including Sir William Clarke. When the building proved inadequate a new Retreat was established in Argot Street South Yarra in 1885. Here, the facilities for the laundering business required extensive renovations. To assist, the Retreat’s helpers organised a Sale of Work to raise funds. Lady Janet Clarke opened this event and its success permitted the rebuilding of the laundry including the installation of a hot water boiler and tank. The financial position of the Retreat improved significantly when Sir William donated money he had originally loaned the Retreat and persuaded other donors to do the same. 49

In his investigations of the methods and motives of nineteenth-century English philanthropy, Prochaska noted that in England among the charity ladies - be they Lady Mayoresses, titled ladies or members of charitable organisations - fund-raising for good causes was often linked with lavish entertainments.50 The Clarkes, in their three visits to England, would have observed this convention and willingly participated in and initiated similar activities in Melbourne society. Janet’s intention of using the English practice of organising the ‘Flower Show’ to raise money was signalled in a letter from Canon James Fleming, the Canon of York Minster: ‘I wish you every success and blessing in your efforts for the cabmen of Melbourne and for the poor. In your climate your ‘Flower Show’ might be a success’.51 Penny Russell also discussed this link between charity and performance or display and suggested that where women undertook philanthropic work there was ‘ambiguity and uneasiness in the genteel performance’.52 Yet, the contemporary public and private responses to

48 Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845) was a Quaker and a humanitarian who worked to alleviate the terrible conditions in women’s prisons in England and other countries.
51 Letter, 27 September 1886, to Lady Janet Clarke from James Fleming, the Canon of York Minster, *Clarke Letters*.
Janet Clarke’s philanthropic work, do not suggest that ‘ambiguity’ was a feature of her public acts of philanthropy.

Following the completion of Cliveden in 1887, Janet hosted its first charitable function - a cake fair to raise funds for the Melbourne District Nursing Society. In the following years, the social columns of newspapers, like the Melbourne Punch and the Age, were filled with accounts of balls, ‘At Homes’, dances, musical afternoons, dramatic entertainments and garden parties organised as fund raisers at Cliveden. The Time and Talents Society founded originally in England in 1887 met regularly at Cliveden to make clothing for the needy and Janet Clarke was an active participant in these sessions.

In the next decade, both the Clarkes were to open numerous bazaars organised to support a variety of charities. In his chapter on ‘Bazaars’, Prochaska traced the history of the ‘charity bazaar’ in England from the early 1820s onwards when they became popular in England. He explained how the expansion of the ‘bazaar’ paralleled the industrial revolution which resulted in a vast influx of people into the towns. These demographic changes in England meant that finance was required urgently to meet the needs of local orphanages, hospitals and other charitable organisations. Often the items for sale on the stalls were made by the ladies who were responsible for the organisation of the events. The ‘bazaar’ convention was exported to other parts of the British Empire and became a popular activity in Melbourne. Cliveden became the venue for sewing circles that produced items for sale at bazaars that supported worthy causes.

These events also allowed Janet to be a leader of fashion and there were weekly newspaper descriptions of social and charity events she attended and the particular outfit she wore for the occasion. These were exciting years for Lady Janet Clarke. Her

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53 Michael Clarke, p. 249.
54 See Time and Talents at www.infed.org/socialaction/time. Phyllis Power wrote: ‘She organized a large sewing bee to make clothes for destitute children’, p. 22. Punch reported on 7 May 1903 that Time and Talents had made 1056 garments in 1902: ‘which is greatly in excess of last year’.
56 Age, Thursday 7 December, 1882: ‘The bazaar was formally opened yesterday by William Clarke, Bart., who in a few words calculated to congratulate those present on the manner in which bazaars are conducted in this city, assured them that they were far better treated in that respect than were the inhabitants of London’, p. 6.
marriage and Sir William’s baronetcy, the ability to offer hospitality at Rupertswood and Cliveden, their family, their wealth, the experience gained in travelling abroad and meeting with acknowledged leaders in Australian and English society and the ever-growing private and public applause for their philanthropy pointed to growing confidence in her ability to be a leader in society and to actively engage in issues which were relevant to women’s role in society. The following note to Dr. Leeper highlights her practical commitment to improve the position of a disadvantaged neighbour: ‘I thought I had something to do on Monday and I just find I have. I cannot put it off as it concerns a poor woman getting a living. (…). I have asked Lady Hopetoun for Wednesday instead, and hope that date will do for you. If not we must just alter it’.

![Letter from Janet to Dr. Leeper, 1890, Janet Clarke Hall Archives](image)

The ‘poor woman getting a living’ took precedence over the interests of Lady Hopetoun, the wife of Victorian Governor (known for her haughty manner) and Dr. Leeper, the Warden of Trinity College.57

The paradoxical nature of balancing wealth with good works no doubt was ever present in Janet Clarke’s mind. The preserved letters and newspaper cuttings illuminate her quest to live a righteous life and reflect her endorsement of her own

57 Letter, 15 June 1890, Janet Clarke Hall Archives. For information on Lady Hopetoun see Marguerite Hancock, Colonial Consorts.
public identity as depicted in this vignette published in Punch before the Clarkes left for their fourth overseas tour in December 1891:

Surely no one ever left our shores more generously supported by genuine good wishes, and certainly no one ever better deserved them. Her tender solicitude for the suffering poor, practical help to all in distress, splendid work on behalf of advanced education for women, her charming discharge of all social duties, but above all, her perfect womanliness, have so endeared her to everyone that wherever true worth is appreciated her ladyship’s name is one to conjure with.  

Soon after their departure, financial disaster struck ‘Marvellous Melbourne’. Highly inflated land prices collapsed and many major financial institutions and established companies foundered, affecting both the rich and poor alike. While imprudent and speculative investments in the share market resulted in insolvency for many prominent citizens, those without resources like the poor and the sick suffered most. Significantly, when the Clarkes returned to Melbourne a year later their wealth and reputation remained intact because of Sir William’s careful financial management. As a director, large shareholder and depositor of substantial funds, his support ensured the survival and reconstruction of the Colonial Bank of Australia. During the five days closure of the bank which the Government endorsed to enable the reconstruction to occur, Sir William: ‘personally paid out deposits to small customers who were in urgent need. These included the Sisters of the Convent of the Good Shepherd at Abbotsford. The Provincial Superior wrote to Janet that the sisters ‘will ever remember Sir William’s Princely and Fatherly Act’.  

As the depression worsened many Victorians found themselves in a desperate position, and because of unemployment, unable to feed and clothe their families. The Clarkes, anxious to alleviate the distress of people in the Cliveden neighbourhood, organised for food to be prepared in the Cliveden kitchens and distributed from there and also from the schoolroom at the intersection of Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade,

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58 Melbourne Punch, 3 December 1891.
60 Letter quoted by Michael Clarke, pp. 302-3. He outlined William Clarke’s actions to save the Colonial Bank in May 1883, pp. 300-5.
East Melbourne. Phyllis Power recalled this crisis: ‘Every morning literally hundreds of the very poorest came with billy cans or jugs, and were given thick soup and a loaf of bread’. Later, when the crisis was over, a number of women who had joined these soup kitchen queues came to Cliveden and presented Janet Clarke with a Morrocan-bound Bible from ‘all of us poor people of Melbourne for all your doing for us my lady’. Much moved, she promised to treasure the Bible all her life.

‘All your doing for us’ indicates Janet Clarke’s immediate focus at that time was on practical solutions to women’s needs. This was not new as she had always taken a personal interest in women’s health problems through her membership of hospital committees and as president of the nurses’ association. In 1893, in a letter to the Argus, she acted as a public lobbyist on behalf of the Women’s Hospital and its needy clients. Her intimate portrayal of women’s health issues concluded with this apology: ‘the urgency of this case and my own strong belief in the generosity of my fellow Victorians must plead my excuse for writing so long a letter’.

There are throughout Victoria many good and noble hospitals and other institutions of all kinds, but the Women’s Hospital stands alone in its work. (...) So many diseases men and women are alike victims, but to some (the most terrible and agonising) women alone are liable. I have seen wives on whom so much depends - mothers of large families at death’s door, and after being fortunate enough to gain admission to the Women’s Hospital, go out cured, to take renewed health and happiness to their homes. At this moment there are more than a 100 waiting – delay means death – and yet there is no money to take them in and I am so sure in this colony we are not yet so poor that to this urgent appeal we must show a deaf ear.

Many have suffered severe losses yet I believe that if we all according to our means make a combined effort and for one week deny ourselves some little thing each – the few shillings from each man, woman and child will swell into a fund sufficiently large to carry on the most necessary and noble work.

This letter reveals Janet Clarke as the quintessential feminist who grasped what it meant to be a woman suffering from untreated sexual diseases and infections - those ‘terrible and agonising’ diseases which ‘women alone are liable’. In other words, the

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61 Argus, 29 April 1909.
62 Phyllis Power’s Biography, p. 22.
eponymous title ‘Sex and Suffering’, historicised by Janet McCalman, was the unstated focus in Janet Clarke’s own text. McCalman explained the *raison d’être* for this letter which emerged from a meeting held at the Melbourne Town Hall on April 6 1893 to devise means to avoid the insolvency of the Women’s Hospital. She contended that philanthropy practised by the ‘elite’ seemed incongruous with the proposal of Janet Clarke’s ‘week of denial’:

The women (doctor’s wives) led by the Lady Mayoress, convened their own meeting in the Town Hall on 6 April. They invited ‘influential ladies’ from all over the colony including all mayoresses. The floor was taken by a relatively new player in the colony charity scene Lady Janet Clarke. (...). At an end of an era where the elite had played at being lords and ladies in Melbourne with liveried servants and great carriages sporting newly discovered or invented coats of arms, the Clarkes continued to live aristocratically and entertain lavishly. Janet Lady Clarke proposed a week of denial all over Victoria, when everybody ‘according to their means should deny themselves something for the week’. It was to prove a stunning success, raising £6064/17/1, removing urgent debts and paying for some expansion in the Infirmary wards. Salaries, except resident Surgeons, were restored. 63

The paradox of the rich and the wealthy leading their fellow Victorians in a ‘week of denial’, highlighted here by Janet McCalman, offends contemporary sensibilities in regard to social justice and class equality. Undeniably, the Christian ideology of *noblesse oblige*, practised by nineteenth-century church workers and philanthropists like the Clarkes, did embody inequality, but generally there was genuine concern, leadership and often personal intervention as Janet’s letter revealed: ‘I have seen wives on whom so much depends’. McCalman acknowledged that Janet Clarke’s appeal was a ‘stunning success’.

When interested citizens attended a follow-up meeting chaired by the Chief Justice, Sir John Madden, he insisted that they were all greatly indebted to:

that admirable woman and excellent citizen, Lady Clarke, who conceived the idea, and who never failed to insist upon its being the true method of appealing to the

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public, and who always believed in its success. The result showed that Lady Clarke knew her countrymen well indeed.64

This episode clearly indicates that she could work across the class and gender divide to improve the welfare of ‘suffering’ women and inspire others to follow her lead.

The *Melbourne Punch* also acknowledged that the Self-Denial Week was: ‘most satisfactory, and the instigator of the scheme may congratulate herself’. Ironically, its criticism of Lady Clarke was not directed towards her privileged lifestyle but towards her religious and racial tolerance: ‘Lady Clarke has evidently been recruiting among the Hebrews on behalf of the Women’s Hospital’. Named were seven contributors, ‘and other Semitic identities’. This comment was followed by another racialised observation: ‘possibly no one else could have “fallen among the Jews” with such happy results’.65 Janet’s inclusive actions were in stark contrast to the exclusive notions of some Australians in the 1890s who sought to define who should or should not be ‘insiders’ in the emerging nation of Australia.66

In 1893, after the *Argus* again printed another letter from Lady Clarke asking for donations to help those disadvantaged by the severity of the winter, the high cost of food and firewood and increasing unemployment, the Reverend Alexander Edgar wrote to the *Argus* expressing his support for Lady Clarke’s request.67 Edgar had responded to the severity of the depression and ‘the challenge of the city’ by founding the Wesley Central Mission in Lonsdale Street.68 He wrote that with good management and a little extra money and help from the Government in the future, more accommodation at the Wesley hospice could be provided and no family would be refused help. Their combined appeal, including Edgar’s request to the Premier, Mr.

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64 *Age*, 8 June 1893, p. 7.
65 *Melbourne Punch*, 4 May 1893.
67 Alexander Edgar (1850-1914) was a Methodist Minister whose concern for the poor and the sweated working classes involved him in giving evidence at the inquiry into the Factories Act. Dr. Maloney was an inquiry member and he spoke at Sunday meetings (PSA) at Wesley Church organised by Edgar where these issues were addressed. See W. J. Palamountain, *A. R. Edgar, A Methodist Greatheart*, Spectator Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1933; and at [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs).
68 Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain, *The Challenge of the City*, pp. 10-11. Under Edgar’s guidance, Pleasant Sunday Afternoons (PSA) and social welfare policies were established which: ‘… provided a platform for Melbourne’s progressive clergy to develop a program of social reform and to relate theology to social issues’. See also Chapters 1 and 2.
Peacock, to provide trains to carry free wood to Melbourne from farming areas, proved effective.

On 2 November 1893, Janet was invited to stand in for the Governor, the Earl of Hopetoun, who was unable to keep a commitment to open St. Vincent’s Hospital because of the unexpected prorogation of Parliament. Her speech, probably hastily composed with a number of corrections, confirmed her interest in hospital care and set out to clarify some misapprehensions (word crossed out and replaced by misgivings) that had been in the public arena. She explained that the care in the hospital was solely given by the Sisters of Charity and the hospital was open to all ‘the sick poor’ regardless of their religious affiliations and that patients had access to clergymen of all denominations. Accident cases were to be received at all hours and there were also a few private rooms set aside for those who could afford to pay for their accommodation. Her prepared speech – ‘Having been much interested in hospital work at all times I feel I cannot do more than the ... prayer of our Father in Heaven.’ In declaring this Hospital open I pray that the blessing of God who is the father of us all may rest upon St. Vincent’s Hospital now and always and I declare it to be open’ – was changed. The reference to herself was replaced by: ‘I minutely pray that the blessing of our God who is the great father of us all, may rest on St. Vincent’s Hospital now and always and I declare it to be open’.

Figure 20 Lady Janet Clarke’s notes for her speech at the opening of St. Vincent’s Hospital, 1893

69 *Melbourne Punch*, 2 November 1893.
70 The original papers contained (...). Speech notes, [in private hands].
Janet Clarke was president of the Melbourne District Nursing Society from 1889 until her death in 1909 and a member of the Melbourne Women’s Hospital Committee and the Children’s Hospital Committee. A significant connection to this latter hospital was through her father’s sister, Mrs. Frances Hare (née Snodgrass) with whom she lived prior to her marriage. Mrs. Hare was a dedicated member of this committee for nearly twenty years.  

When the Children’s Hospital undertook a new building project in 1898, Ivy Clarke, the youngest Clarke daughter aged 11, and two other little girls, laid the foundation stone of the new wing on April 20. Margaret McInnes observed in her history of the Children’s Hospital that: ‘Lady Janet Clarke joined the Committee three times but attended meetings infrequently due to regular overseas visits and other charity obligations’. Yet a letter Janet Clarke received from David Syme suggested that despite her absences she was actively involved in raising funds for this hospital:

I have today forwarded to Mr. Colin Templeton a cheque for £50 towards the Children’s Hospital fund in accordance with my promise to you.

Obviously, she was not averse to using her persuasive powers to extract donations from influential people for causes she believed important.

The Clarkes’ emergence as leaders in Melbourne society was complemented by their ability to link their social activities with good causes. No doubt Janet was delighted to receive a letter from the St. John’s Ambulance Service in June 5 1895 to Lady Clarke informing her that Her Majesty, the Queen, had sanctioned the award of an Honorary Associate of the Order of St. John’s Ambulance ‘in consideration of the very valuable aid to and interest in the work of this Association’. It was obvious she enjoyed both serving the community interests and the appreciation that followed.

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71 Frances Hare, the Inspector of Police wounded during the Ned Kelly siege, recuperated at Rupertswood and consequently gave Kelly’s armour to the Clarkes. The Hares shared the upbringing of Evelyn, the youngest son of Peter Snodgrass and Agnes Snodgrass. Janet lived with them shortly before her marriage. Grace Jennings Carmichael, who nursed at the Children’s Hospital, dedicated her published account of her nursing experiences to Janet Hare. Carmichael was a published poet and short story writer in the nineties.

72 Phyllis Power’s Biography, p. 32. The Archives at the Children’s Hospital contain two of the three trowels used on this occasion.

73 Letter, 25 September 1900, from David Syme the owner of the Age, Clarke Letters. See David Syme, a supporter of charity at www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs.

74 Letter from the St. John’s Ambulance Association, Victorian Centre, [in private hands].
Janet Clarke’s standing as a business woman, society leader, communicator, philanthropist and activist - grew after the death of her husband in May 1897. Instead of insisting that it was her husband who was the ‘ideas person’, such deference was no longer required. Her step-son Rupert inherited the baronetcy and the entailed Rupertswood and the greater share of Sir William Clarke’s money; nevertheless, under the terms of her husband’s will Janet was now independently wealthy and empowered to pursue her own goals, be they philanthropic, educational or political. Janet’s official residence was Cliveden and her letters of concern to the editors of newspapers were written using the letterhead of the Clarke’s office address, 125 William Street Melbourne. She did not use her new title, Janet Lady Clarke, but continued to sign her letters ‘Janet Clarke’.

She and Sir Rupert were named as executors of Sir William Clarke’s huge estate, and in this capacity she attended the office each morning to pursue her official duties. That Janet Clarke took this new career very seriously is demonstrated when she replied to a request, in May 1901, from the Honorary Secretary of the Women’s Hospital Committee, to take on the position of president.76 She explained that her first duty was as trustee of her husband’s estate and in Sir Rupert’s absence overseas she had to be in the office every morning as her signature was required on all business documents. The letter concluded:

It is that which makes me hesitate. (...). I should not like to feel I took up a duty I could not perform. So I write today instead of coming to thank the whole Committee and to give them the opportunity of choosing someone else if they think I ought to be in the chair by 10.30. If so I shall devote my whole interest in the well-being of the Women’s Hospital. It has ever had my heart in it, and I should be proud indeed to be its President.77

76 The President, Mrs. Goe, wife of the Archbishop of Melbourne, retired due to ill-health in May 1901.
77 Letter, May 1901, [in private hands].
Her explanation was accepted and she was duly appointed to the position of president of the Women’s Hospital.

In February 1899, most of the Clarke family travelled to Egypt where they made the Shepherds Hotel in Cairo (Al Qahirah) their headquarters. While this was a family holiday, Janet used the opportunity to visit the Cairo Hospital (Qasr-al-Aini) and to write a compassionate account of the hospital in which she described: the hospital buildings, the treatment of babies who had been abandoned by their parents and nursed back to life by the English nurses, wards full of patients suffering a multitude of eye diseases but unable to be properly treated because of the great shortage of ‘occulists’, the surgical ward in the charge of an Australian doctor, Dr. Madden, the bathing habits of the Egyptians, and a school of research which: ‘is very perfect and wonderful here and is vastly supported by those whose likely aim is the lessening of

78 Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 32. Janet and her family had always enjoyed luxurious travel and their plans in Egypt included hiring a houseboat to journey up the Nile as far as Luxor. Here the family enjoyed seeing the ancient sites and ‘the sweeping desert by moonlight’. Like many other affluent tourists they hired donkeys and camels to visit the pyramids. While at their hotel in Cairo, Janet received a note from Lieutenant- General Sir Edward Newdigate: ‘Unless prevented by urgent business I hope to be on the croquet lawn at 10 o’clock tomorrow morning.’, Clarke Letters. This letter suggests that the Clarkes were known and welcomed in the Anglo Cairo society. By 1899, Egypt was an international gathering place for tourists and a highly-prized protectorate within the British Empire. Phyllis Power claimed that the Clarkes had to shelter in their hotel because of the riots in the streets of Cairo. In January 1899, the British Government had come to a joint agreement with the Egyptian Government to establish a joint British and Egyptian Co-dominium in the Sudan to be directed from Khartoum. Egyptian Nationalists objected strongly to this arrangement.
Man’s suffering’. She had nothing but praise for the nurses and added: ‘the example set for the natives is untold. That an English nurse toils night and day to save the life of a small unknown black childie as for the highest in the land’.  79

Janet Clarke’s response to the (Qasr-al-Aini) hospital was based on her personal appreciation of the policies of the Colonial British Government in Egypt, their efforts to impose English medical standards in the Cairo hospital and her admiration for the dedication of the English nurses. But Hibba Abugideiri has shown recently the limitations of her views.  80 Her paper, ‘The Scientisation of Culture: Colonial Medicine’s Construction of Egyptian Womanhood’, critiqued the colonial basis for Janet Clarke’s reflections. She asserted that during the 1890s, Egyptian culture and medical practice had been undermined by the determination of the British Government under Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General, to anglicise education and medical schools, thus producing the ‘modern Egyptian doctor’.  81 By limiting numbers at medical schools and raising standards the number of doctors decreased rapidly and the needs of the large Egyptian population, particularly in rural areas, were not met. At the same time, the ‘masculisation’ of medicine occurred as the ‘hakimahs’ or midwives, who had performed the majority of medical services for women, often without payment, were disempowered by the newly trained male doctors, relegated to menial tasks in hospitals and replaced by the Nightingale nurses, although this did not prevent them from delivering babies in homes and state-run clinics. In this instance, Janet Clarke’s understanding of the ‘scientisation’ of Egyptian medicine was flawed. Her written observations of the hospital reflected the colonial basis for her knowledge and at the same time her continuing determination to secure funds to support the nurses and hospitals in Australia.

79 Janet Lady Clarke paper on Egypt, 1899, [in private hands].
81 In 1883, Evelyn Baring was appointed by the British Governor to the position of consul-general to Egypt with a brief to organise an early withdrawal of British troops. This did not occur. Under the authoritarian control of Baring (Lord Cromer), many Western-style reforms in administration, agriculture, industry, education, medicine and engineering occurred and Egypt remained part of the British Empire. In recent critical articles, Lord Cromer’s imperialistic policies have been scrutinized, particularly his misunderstanding of Egyptian nationalism and his belief in the superiority of the British over their Egyptian counterparts.
Back in Melbourne in December 1899, in her role as president of Melbourne District Nursing Society, she wrote to the Editor of the *Argus*. She asked readers to donate Christmas gifts ‘for their less fortunate neighbours’ so that the nurses could take these gifts to homes where there was ‘nothing to remind them that it is the season of good will towards men.’ She explained that:

The influenza epidemic has robbed many a poor home of its mainstay, and there are families of little children, motherless as a result of this scourge. It was very severe amongst poor women, who, ill-fed and worn out by hard work and poverty, were unable to withstand its attack. Think of the reality of seven small children left alone, the father away all day toiling for the hard-earned daily bread, and remember, that a very small amount of either money or other gifts can bring an amount of pleasure unknown to those who have their daily needs supplied.82

Janet McCalman echoed these sentiments when she explained the importance of ‘keeping respectable’ for those living in the working class suburb of Richmond in the 1900s where people moved between two social worlds: ‘elevated by good luck and regular work into respectability, reduced by unemployment, illness and ranks of the casual poor’. She documented the ease with which ‘the casual poor’ could be drawn into ‘drink, compulsive gambling, crime and prostitution’.83 Janet Clarke clearly recognised the possibility of the ‘respectable’ being reduced by circumstance to the ‘unrespectable’ when she charged her readers to ‘think of the reality’, or in other words, the consequences of not offering help to needy families. During a particularly severe winter in Melbourne in 1901, she again appealed to privileged Melburnians to assist those, ‘quite as worthy’ citizens who were in need: ‘I know so many families without food, fire, blankets, and uncertain even of shelter that every well-supplied meal seems a selfish luxury’.84

The Honorary Secretary of the Melbourne and Suburban City Mission wrote to the *Argus* with a letter commending Janet for her personal knowledge of suffering women and children for ‘these deserving cases are known by those who actually see them’. In what could be interpreted as a reference to Janet’s ‘missionary work’, he added:

82 *Argus*, 12 December, 1899; and original letter, [in private hands].
84 *Argus*, 9 July 1901.
‘Seldom are our missionaries deceived, for they only assist where through long
experience, insight, and tact they know the circumstances of each case’. On 24 July
1901, as a result of both letters and the formation of a committee to manage the
subscriptions, Janet was able to acknowledge that sufficient money had been received
to meet the immediate needs.

The use of the term ‘deserving cases’, or in Janet Clarke’s phrase ‘quite as worthy
citizens’ recalls Lynette Finch’s critique of the ‘classing gaze’ of some nineteenth-
century charity workers in England who used ‘a distinction concept’ to divide the
working class into ‘respectable’ and ‘unrespectable’ categories. While the
‘respectable’ could be saved by ‘macro solutions’ like education, better public
housing and sanitation, the ‘unrespectable’ needed to be eradicated by removing
temptations such as public houses and brothels from the streets:

They were, the social theorists agreed, dirty, loud, unmotherly and intemperate
through choice, and it was this choice, the exercise of will, which determined that
they were truly non-respectable and, as historians of charity have noted, undeserving
of Christian pity or help.

According to Finch, these labels were ‘a discursive articulation’ which ignored
psychological and sexual factors and frequently forced the non-respectable into
controlled spaces like industrial schools, charitable institutions and prisons.

The horrors of some of the enclosed institutions, like Pentridge Gaol, the Benevolent
Asylum, Industrial schools and some female refuges, established to house the
‘unrespectables’ - prostitutes, ‘fallen women’, criminals and the insane - were
revealed by ‘The Vagabond’ (Julian Thomas) in articles published in Australian
newspapers. The historian, Michael Cannon, considered Thomas gave us ‘one of the
very few first-hand accounts of the nature of low life in Australian cities’ over the last

85 Ibid., 10 July 1901.
86 Argus, 24 July 1901.
and the witnesses to 1860 Henry Parkes’ Select Committee into Poverty in Sydney as ‘theorists’ who
analysed the working class poor with a ‘classing gaze’.
88 Ibid., p. 146.
three decades of the nineteenth-century. Thomas’s outcasts could be found: ‘in the scrub lining the banks of the Yarra, in the Government reserves, in the public gardens and in the bush around Melbourne’. They begged for food and in summer were without accommodation and in winter flocked ‘to the Immigrants Home and Benevolent Asylum; others commit offences to be sent to gaol’. Brought low by their addiction to alcohol: ‘the men appear mostly to have drifted into their present state through indolence and want of sufficient mental stamina to fight the battle of life. The women are chiefly outcasts whose age and attractions prevent them from plying their trade’. Janet may not have been personally involved in working with these institutions, but her approval of the Vagabond’s revelations of the plight of the underprivileged was evidenced by her message - ‘a last tribute of respect to one whose able pen has helped make many lives more cheerful’ - attached to a wreath which she sent to his funeral in September 1896.

The term ‘deserving’ used by the Honorary Secretary, appears to substantiate the view that those who dispensed charity, like Janet Clarke, ‘chose’ to assist only the respectable poor. Yet Sulina Sutherland, whose work in assisting neglected children was supported by Janet, stated in 1909 that: ‘Even those who knew her best could not know her all for besides her public works she had many private charities’.

In the last decade of her life, Janet’s continuing interest in the welfare of children was shown by her role as president of the City Newsboys organisation. At a meeting at Cliveden in 1904, it was decided to raise funds to purchase a meeting place for them in the city. This was successful and a new hall was built in Coromandel Place in the city proving her ability to improve vulnerable lives. Janet’s next letter, relating to the organisation of a ball to support this new hall, pointed out that four hundred and thirty boys were making use of this hall to attend classes and utilise the ‘comforts’ that the Committee were able to provide:

89 Michael Cannon (ed.), The Vagabond Papers, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, p. 7. Also see Graeme Davidson, pp. 264-274.
90 Ibid., p. 34.
91 Ibid., Introduction by Michael Cannon, p. 15.
92 Della Hilton, Selina’s Legacy, Oz Child, Victoria, 1993. See Chapter 1 re Janet Clarke’s support of the governess, Jane Franklin.
93 Coromandel Place is off Little Collins Street between Russell Street and Exhibition Street, Melbourne. This organisation was founded by William Forster in 1895 and Edith Onians was its honorary organiser and secretary. See www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs
There has been a good deal of illness since winter began and many of them have such wretched homes that any brightness life may hold for them they gather through the kindness and sympathy shown them at the Newsboys Hall. In order to ensure the success of the Ball, will you be so kind to attend a meeting on Monday 19th – Time at 4 o’clock, at Cliveden, to make the necessary arrangements.

She retained a staunch interest in the boys despite increasing poor health. In January 1907, the newsboys gathered at their hall to participate in a concert which was given to welcome home their President, Janet Clarke, on her return from England. The Age reported that she was given a great welcome by the boys and presented with a bouquet by ‘a shy looking street runner’:

Janet Lady Clarke said she had received many gifts of flowers on her travels but she prized the newsboys’ gifts more than any of them, and would keep a few of the blooms as long as she lived. The boys, an effervescent, highly strung mass of small manhood, shouted their applause, and the kindly reception to their gift kept them in bubbling excitement throughout the evening.

Janet Clarke’s philanthropic endeavours were best summed up by Miss Sutherland, a committed worker for the care of neglected children, who was in charge of the Parkville Children’s Receiving Centre and also named in the Herald’s poll as one of

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94 Age, 22 February 1907.
95 Ibid.
the ten best citizens. Speaking at a meeting of the Victorian Neglected Children’s Society after Janet’s death in 1909, Sulina Sutherland described Janet Clarke as ‘a true friend of all those who needed her help’. She had been closely associated with Janet in many endeavours and she explained that one of Lady Clarke’s last acts was clearing the debts of the Parkville Home. Even during her last illness, she continued to be an inspiration to Miss Sutherland maintaining through letters and messages a continuing interest in her work. She concluded: ‘she was one of those who believed in the text, “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth,” and acted up to her belief’.96

Janet Clarke’s *modus operandi* did not preclude her enjoyment of her role in society and the spontaneous public popularity which followed her public and private charitable activities. The important influences in her childhood, adolescence, young womanhood, her marriage and consequent wealth, and her own personal activism contributed and made possible her practice of thoughtful philanthropy. In fact, this practice, informed by religious faith, was not simply a public demonstration of the *noblesse oblige* idea, but represented a genuine commitment to improve living standards for the underprivileged in society. Janet Clarke’s philanthropy confirmed a real and informed participation that sought to bring permanent changes into the lives of the poor, the sick and the needy by encouraging public involvement in the improvement of the infrastructure of hospitals and other related institutions. In participating in this philanthropic work, she used and developed business, professional and organisational skills which were to form the foundation for her political activism. The letters of Janet Clarke, presented in this chapter, mirror her life and the lives of those she touched; thus the potency of Janet Clarke’s voice contributes to our historical understanding of thoughtful philanthropy in the colonial years.

96 Extract, [in private hands]. J. C. Jessop, *Selina Sutherland: Her Life and Work*, Elsternwick Press, Melbourne, 1958, p. 59. Parkville Home at No. 249 Royal Parade, Parkville was opened on 13 September 1901. Dr. Maloney, M.L.A, Mr. Edgar, M.L.C. and Dr. Strong were all present at the funerals of Sulina’s (Selina) Sutherland (1839-1909) and Janet Lady Clarke, p. 87. See Sulina Sutherland at [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs).
Chapter Five

Activism in Education and the Arts

Janet Clarke’s educational philosophy was clearly defined in a letter that she addressed to the gentlemen of the Trinity College Council:

‘I think very strongly that every woman should take pride in cultivating her intellect and learning all that is possible’.1

The phrase ‘every woman’ implies a panoptic educational ideology for women’s education in Victoria. And they were not idle words. Embodied in this statement was Janet Clarke’s commitment to a ‘whole-of-life’ education for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marriage, children, family educational needs and William Clarke’s involvement in educational matters set the stage for Janet Clarke’s leadership of a reformist educational programme. Her voice within the colonial male-dominated educational system cannot be denied.

Figure 23 Section of letter to My Lord Bishop and Gentlemen of the Council, 1899

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1 Letter from Janet Lady Clarke to ‘My Lord Bishop and Gentlemen of the Council’, 1899, [in private hands].
Janet Clarke’s formative experiences were in a colonial household which traditionally was committed to education. Georgiana McCrae’s journal entries in August 1844 described John Cotton’s unsuccessful attempts to persuade her children’s tutor, Mr. McClure, to relocate to Doogalook to teach his children. When this proved unsuccessful, he sent his sons to Mr. Brickwood’s academy in Melbourne, but unhappy with their educational progress, built his own schoolroom and employed a tutor, Mr. Gilbert. The older girls were placed in Mrs. Connolly’s school in Melbourne. Janet’s father, Peter Snodgrass, in seeking election to the new Legislative Council in 1851, had declared that education must have the highest priority in the considerations of the Legislature. Plainly, both the Cotton and Snodgrass families valued education.

Janet Clarke accomplished foundational educational reforms in Victoria in the decades before and after Federation. In these campaigns, her role was neither a titular leader nor an elitist figure-head. Janet Clarke was a professional woman endeavouring to empower women through education. As an astute organiser and committee woman, she was involved in meetings, fund-raising, letter writing and was the spokesperson for the organisations she represented. Her intention was not to prop up an out-dated educational system; rather Janet Clarke sought to create new opportunities for girls and women so they could learn ‘more than the orthodox routine’. She did not identify herself as a radical ‘new woman’, but adopted a liberal feminist approach to educational equity for girls and women. Nevertheless, publicly and privately she followed the established colonial protocols of acknowledging that power resided within the male domain.

Majorie Theobald described Janet Clarke as a millionaire benefactor ‘deeply concerned with the plight of women’, but believed her interest in the Trinity Hostel did not extend to advocating ‘radical change in relationships between men and women’. In other words, Janet Clarke’s modus operandis was to avoid challenging male authority and to work within the established social system to achieve her aims.

Writing about the Clarke’s marriage, Phyllis Power had noted that Janet: ‘had a gift of

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3 Letter from Lady Janet Clarke to Dr. Leeper (undated), Janet Clarke Hall Archives.
making people think that ideas emanated from him (William) when they were really hers’. Janet Clarke’s methodology showed that women, using their own home-grown political skills, could push the boundaries and improve educational opportunities for girls and women regardless of age, class or creed.

And yet paradoxically, Janet Clarke has been unacknowledged by educational historians. Affronted by her privileged position in society, perplexed by her activism which was not stereo-typical and possibly annoyed by her self-placement in relation to her husband as ‘the other’, her achievements have been ignored, unexplained or dismissed by modern scholars. This analysis contributes for the first time to a re-examination of Janet Clarke’s activism within the field of women’s education. With her husband’s financial backing she embarked on an educational reform programme for women that included the establishment of the first university college in Australia, the first Anglican girl’s high school in Victoria and the first Australian Institute of Domestic Economy. She also worked with Premier Thomas Bent, to ensure the survival of Melbourne University. Janet Clarke’s ‘whole-of-life’ educational programme extended to the founding of cultural societies like the Alliance Française, the Austral Salon, Dante Alighieri Society and the Melbourne orchestra.

Janet Clarke’s interest in promoting the right of women to receive an equal education with men was demonstrated by her role in the founding of first Australian university women’s college (now called Janet Clarke Hall). The genesis for this college began in 1869, when ten acres in University Reserve were granted to the Church of England by the Government of Victoria to establish a College (Trinity) affiliated with the University of Melbourne. In 1876, Alexander Leeper, a distinguished graduate of Trinity College Dublin, became its first permanent principal, a position he held for forty-two years. He established a tutorial system for both resident and non-resident male students, a practice copied by other Melbourne University colleges, which Geoffrey Blainey considered was responsible for elevating the academic standards of the university:

5 Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 10.
6 ‘Janet Clarke (...) promoted domesticity as the ordinary woman’s natural duty’. This quotation from biographical entry at www.womenaustralia.info/biogs.
For years the college students headed the university class lists, and this superiority was most marked between 1897 and 1902 when fifty-four of the seventy-six scholarships awarded in the University went to colleges.8

Situated in Royal Parade and in the grounds of Melbourne University, Trinity College and Janet Clarke Hall are architecturally-impressive living testimonies to the Clarkes’ investment in higher education and Janet Lady Clarke’s prediction: ‘It is a pleasure to us all to know that specially at Trinity College our name will be remembered with gratitude to Sir William Clarke long after we have passed away’.9 William Clarke’s generosity to Trinity College began in 1872. His first donation of £1,100 was for Trinity’s first building, the Provost’s Lodge. In 1878, after Janet and he were married, he gave £1,000 to the Bishop’s Building fund and founded the Rupertswood Studentship (£1,000) in 1879 and the Clarke Scholarship (£1,000) in 1881. In 1883, Alexander Leeper signalled his interest in women’s education when he enrolled a number of non-resident women attending Melbourne University to attend the lectures at Trinity.10 That year, William and his brother, Joseph Clarke, gave a further £6,000 each towards the building of the Clarke Lodge at Trinity. Two years later, William provided £1,000 to construct the College Laboratory.11

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9 Letter to Trinity Council, [in private hands]. It was written after William Clarke’s death in 1897 outside the period that Ann Hone was researching. All four Clarke sons, Clive, Russell, Francis and Reginald attended Melbourne University and Trinity College.
10 *Age*, Monday 19 March 1890; and the *Argus*, 26 March 1890.
11 Trinity College Centenary Exhibition Publication, 1972, p. 5. The Commemoration of Benefactors Publication listed the principal benefactors of the College.
In 1886, Alexander Leeper, pursuing his policy of higher education for women, established hostel accommodation in a terrace house opposite Trinity College for female students enrolled in lectures at Trinity.\textsuperscript{12} Except for a donation from Sir Mathew Davies, the hostel received no support from the church or the public.\textsuperscript{13} In 1890, in response to Leeper’s public request for a benefactor, Janet Clarke donated £6,000 to enable the establishment of the Hostel adjacent to Trinity College.\textsuperscript{14}

Ann Hone believed that: ‘without Lady Clarke’s gift the hostel would have died an early death’.\textsuperscript{15} In her thesis on higher education for women in Victoria in the late nineteenth-century, she investigated the establishment of the Trinity Hostel and the role that Janet Clarke had played in this educational initiative. Hone admitted that she was puzzled about Janet Clarke’s support for the Hostel and the fact that she ‘embraced the movement for higher education for women’ but surmised that ‘it would be a mistake to see her [Janet Clarke] as an innovator’ because she had ‘left behind few statements of her feelings on the subject’.\textsuperscript{16} As Hone’s research had revealed no clues to her educational philosophy, it can be assumed that Hone had not seen the minutes of the Conference held in 1891 or sighted the letter sent to the Trinity Council in which Janet Clarke explained her motivation for supporting the hostel: ‘It was my very earnest desire to assist in providing the most liberal and advanced education for women that could be procured in this Colony and when I asked Sir William’s consent he gladly helped me in this good cause. It was a labour of love’.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Lyndsay Gardiner, pp. 4-7. Here she lists a number of highly successful graduates who had resided at the Trinity Hostel.
\item[14] See \textit{Age}, Monday 19 March 1890. The building was to be known as the Janet Clarke-Buildings.
\item[16] Ibid., p. 107.
\item[17] Letter to Trinity Council written after her husband’s death, [in private hands]. The minutes of this conference held at Trinity Archives, Box 48 B. Even her son, Francis Clarke, challenged her self-representation as ‘the other’ because he considered that most of his father’s public activities were initiated by his mother: ‘I know that when he agreed to my mother’s suggestion that they should build the first women’s college in an Australian University, it occurred to him that he might also build for the men a large portion of what is now Trinity College’.
\end{footnotes}
While not questioning the sincerity of her interest in the Hostel, Hone believed her efforts emanated from the British tradition of philanthropists performing traditional charitable acts. Yet, Janet Clarke’s stipulation in regard to her donation, that the first principal of the Hostel should be a graduate from either Girton or Newnham Colleges at Cambridge University, indicated that her interest was not merely ‘charitable’ but was based on her pre-knowledge of advances in women’s education in England. In a letter to the students of the Trinity Hostel from the Ladies’ Council signed by Janet Clarke on 14 April 1891, the students were advised that as college life: ‘is a new departure in this University, and, as the Women’s Colleges attached to the older Universities have proved such a marked success no better lines can be followed than those on which they are conducted’. The Ladies of the Council knew they were innovators and used the British colleges as models to justify this radical change.

In March 1890, when the foundation stone was laid, it was clear from Dr. Leeper’s remarks that controversy surrounded the establishment of the Hostel: ‘The idea was new in Melbourne, and the difficulties encountered by the promoters were formidable, and amongst them was that strange prejudice against female culture which still existed in this liberal-minded Melbourne’. Perhaps here he was referring to Dr. Goe, the powerful Bishop of Melbourne, who admitted that he did not have any special affection for the hostel for: ‘It never appeared to me that such an institution is needed’. In her letter to Dr. Leeper in 1890, Janet Clarke drew his attention to this lack of community interest:

I will give another £1000 at the end of the year if the public will show an interest by subscribing the £700 which remains. I think you will understand what I feel about it – that it should be an undertaking having the sympathy and interest of the whole

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18 Ann Hone, pp. 107-8.
20 1891 letter from Ladies’ Council, Janet Clarke Hall Archives. Girton, Newnham, Somerville Hall and Lady Margaret Hall colleges and their principals were all named in the letter.
21 See Lyndsay Gardiner, pp. 11-12. Gardiner listed the ladies on the Council. All were women of means and members of the Church of England.
22 Age, Monday 19 March 1890.
23 Age, 27 September 1892.
community, independent of class and creed. If I were to take the whole responsibility this feeling of interest would be in a measure wanting. As all *always* feel more interest in anything they have helped. (...) Speaking for myself I have been able and glad to give the money to start it, but I would like Victorians to feel that the hostel being built, it is their interest in it *alone* which will make it what we visualised - a help, a comfort to all girls who may wish to learn more than the orthodox routine. I think if the public thoroughly understands this in a nice way it would be a great help to us. This letter is private.

The idea, that girls could reach out beyond the ‘orthodox’, suggests that the concept of a structured liberal and advanced education for women (which had not been available to her), was an important intellectual goal for Janet Clarke. Although this was 1890, some ten years after the battle to admit women to Melbourne University had been won, women attending University remained a controversial issue. Undoubtedly, this was so at Cambridge and Oxford Universities. While the Ladies’ Council used the British model of Girton and Newnham women’s residential colleges at Cambridge and Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College at Oxford to guide them in administering Trinity Hostel, these English students were not entitled to receive degrees until 1920 and 1948 at Oxford and Cambridge respectively.

The request, that the letter should remain ‘private’, indicates that in 1890, Janet Clarke was not confident about initiating a socially progressive project without the support of the Victorian community. Consequently, she held back the last £1000 in order that the public could have the opportunity to be involved. Finally, given that she had specified that the Anglican Hostel should admit girls from all religious

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24 Marjorie Theobald, pp. 56-75. In 1881 a recommendation to allow women to enter Melbourne University was passed by Legislative Council and confirmed when the University Extension Bill received royal assent in May 1884. See also Richard Selleck, The Shop, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, pp. 119-24, pp. 162-5 and p. 517. He explained that until 1914 women students ‘still faced condescension, prejudice and neglect’. While women’s colleges in America – Vassar, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and Mt. Holyoke were all established prior to the 1890s and by 1904 employed 249 professors, they were regarded with some suspicion in Europe where women’s colleges were only established in the 20th Century. See James Albisetti, ‘American Colleges through European Eyes’, in History of Education Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1992, pp. 438-439.

25 In England Lady Margaret Hall, an Anglican women’s college, started in 1878 and the non-denominational women’s college, Somerville College, followed in 1879. At Melbourne University, Ormond College (Presbyterian) and Queens College (Methodist) started in 1881 and 1887 respectively and both became co-educational in 1973. University Women’s College opened in 1937 and became co-educational in 1973. St. Hilda’s, a Catholic women’s college, opened in 1964.

26 See Geoffrey Blainey, p. 90. Bella Guérin was the first woman to graduate in 1883. From 1887 women were allowed to study medicine.
backgrounds, she believed this undertaking would gain support from the community regardless of ‘class or creed’. Despite her generosity and support from the newspapers, the public were slow to accept responsibility for a university women’s college, forcing Janet to release the final payment before £700 was raised. In January 1891, she informed Dr. Leeper that Sir William was prepared to lend ‘me the £400 at 6 per cent on my personal security, and promise for one year’. She was confident that the Committee would assist her to meet this debt and so had paid the outstanding bills for over £700.

![Figure 25 Janet Clarke Hall (circa 1920s) from Picture Collection at the State Library of Victoria](image)

An editorial, in the *Age* three months later, acknowledged that Lady Janet Clarke’s (and others’) generosity had opened doors for women directing their own ‘destinies’ by participating in higher education.

The opening of Trinity Hostel is an event of some significance. It does not mark a new departure, as Melbourne University already has some young lady graduates, but it emphasises the fact that the battle for women’s higher education had been fought and won. Society has decided that marriage should not be woman’s one profession,

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27 This request/stipulation was to cause conflict with the powerful hierarchy of the Church of England. Although her father had been a founder of the Presbyterian Church and the Clarkes held a seat at Scots Presbyterian Church, the Cotton family and the Clarke family were members of the Anglican Church. Janet Snodgrass was married at St. Peter’s Anglican Church, worshipped at Sunbury Church of England and St. Paul’s Cathedral and was buried in the Church of England section of Melbourne Cemetery.
that she should devote herself to letters, science or art if they charm her as domestic life does not, and the liberality of Lady Clarke and others will place the destiny of many Victorian girls in their own hands.\textsuperscript{28}

The history of the establishment of the hostel and the homeric struggle for its control between the Ladies’ Committee and the Principal, Miss Hensley, and Dr. Leeper and the gentlemen of the Trinity Council, have already been examined by four historians – Ann Hone in 1965, Lyndsay Gardiner in 1986, Majorie Theobald in 1996 and Richard Selleck in 2003. The equivocal nature of the tag ‘philanthropist’ proved comforting for these historians as they attempted to understand what drove Janet Clarke to participate in this struggle.\textsuperscript{29} Gardiner did acknowledge Lady Clarke’s benefaction and prescience in regard to future attacks on the Hostel by unsympathetic authorities. However, Gardiner’s tone, in quoting from Janet Clarke’s discourse at a Conference to discuss the future of the Ladies’ Committee - ‘Lady Clarke recovered sufficiently’, ‘it upset Lady Clarke who plaintively asserted’, ‘Lady Clarke seems to have great trouble assimilating Vance’s argument’ - represented her as a woman out of her depth within this theological and academic arena.\textsuperscript{30} Marjorie Theobald saw Leeper’s appointment of an apparently conservative Ladies’ Council as a means to counter ‘the rising tide of feminist consciousness’. Janet Clarke, she suggested, typified women whose interest in the Hostel coincided with their involvement in philanthropy.\textsuperscript{31} In Richard Selleck’s acerbic summary of this dispute, Leeper was described as a ‘fierce controversialist’ committed to both higher education for women and a determination that he, rather than the ‘ladies’, should control the Hostel. Janet Clarke’s role was relegated to a society hostess, who funded the hostel on condition that the college should remain under the control of the Church of England and be open to girls regardless of their religious backgrounds.\textsuperscript{32}

The \textit{Argus} and \textit{Age} covered the vicissitudes that accompanied the Hostel’s fortunes and a large volume of relevant Clarke/Leeper correspondence exists today in the Hall’s archives. Initially, the Council had worked closely with the Warden as they

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Age}, Wednesday 16 April 1891, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{29} J. Ann Hone, p. 107
\textsuperscript{31} Marjorie Theobald, \textit{Knowing Women}, pp. 75-9.
\textsuperscript{32} Richard Selleck, pp. 280-83.
took on the responsibility of administering, furnishing and financing the Hostel. This
spirit of co-operation deteriorated and a conference in November 1891 was called to
examine proposals by the Ladies’ Council to institute a constitution to formalise their
Council.

Translated shorthand notes taken at this conference reveal that early in the meeting
the ladies were shocked to learn, that because of an earlier agreement between Dr.
Leeper and Trinity Council, they had no legal rights in regard to the administration of
the Hostel. Lady Clarke, obviously disturbed by this information, responded:

None of them were aware of the agreement and they did not want to do anything that
was illegal or disagreeable to the Warden. They were only anxious to know what their
powers were. They administered the Hostel and paid all the bills and if they had no
power to do so, it was no use their going on.33

She was supported by Mrs. Morris who adopted at first a self-deprecating tone: ‘Some
little acknowledgement was due to them, not for working, for it had been a matter of
love’.34 Later, Mrs. Morris reminded the Council that an examination of the
constitutions of English Colleges would show that once a college was established the
gentlemen handed authority to a joint committee of ladies and gentlemen. Lady
Clarke, holding to her policy of not challenging male authority, reminded the
gentlemen that the Council had ‘always tried to meet you in every thing’ and that her
only condition was that ‘the Hostel should be open to girls of all denominations and
the Council wrote accepting that’. Her next comment, that she would propose that the
affairs of the Hostel be managed by a Council of Women, was less conciliatory.35

Perhaps the clearest evidence that the Hostel was seen as a radical educational step
came from the conventional Bishop Goe, who saw the demand for a constitution for
the Ladies’ Council as a ‘radical change and it seemed to him they had gone far
enough’.36 This may have been prompted by Lady Clarke’s shrewd remark that while

33 Notes of Conference transcribed from shorthand, Trinity Archives, Box 48 B, p. 2.
34 Mrs. Morris was the daughter of Judge Higginbotham and wife of the former headmaster of
Melbourne Grammar. Mr. Morris was then Professor of English at Melbourne University. She was also
a frequent visitor to Cliveden.
35 Lyndsay Gardiner, pp. 25-29; and Trinity Archives Box 48 B, p. 5.
36 Conference Notes, p. 8.
she understood the present Warden was sympathetic towards the hostel, she thought: ‘perhaps in fifty years there might be, like Judge Rogers, a warden who also objected to the Hostel’. Rogers was a Melbourne judge who was appointed chairman of the Royal Commission in Education in 1881-1884. He was present at the conference as a legal advisor to the Anglican Church and had declared his aversion to the Hostel’s connection with Trinity College.

What she wanted was to ensure this could never happen. Clearly the gentlemen were afraid that if the ladies of the Council gained the power to elect the governing body of the Hostel, they might eventually extend this power to gain control of the Trinity College Council. Lady Clarke made one last attempt to resolve the condition that the Hostel should be open to students of all denominations. This caused much discussion as the gentlemen realised, that in accepting her gift with this condition attached, the Council had acted illegally. Before the meeting concluded, Lady Clarke politely thanked the Council for listening to their proposals assuring the gentlemen that she had not intended to work against Dr. Leeper. Despite this polite response, it was clear neither the president nor the Ladies’ Council was satisfied with the conference proceedings.

Having already been granted absence of leave, Janet Clarke departed for England two weeks later. Unable to clarify their position, a number of the ladies, described by Gardiner as ‘a group of Melbourne intelligentsia’, left the Council, leaving only ‘six militants’ to carry on the struggle.38 The remaining members announced their intention in the Argus, 3 September 1892, of resigning en masse. Marjorie Theobald’s criticism of Janet Clarke’s non-commitment to radical change and her belief that the ladies of the Council were appointed ‘as a bulwark against the rising tide of feminist consciousness’ seems harsh given the determination of the Ladies’ Council to air their dispute publicly and to acknowledge the strong leadership role taken by Janet Clarke.40

37 Rogers was a Melbourne judge who was appointed chairman of the Royal Commission in Education in 1881-1884. He was present at the conference as a legal advisor to the Anglican Church and had declared his aversion to the Hostel’s connection with Trinity College.

38 Lyndsay Gardiner, p. 31. Here Gardiner applied the term ‘militants’ to the ‘proxy-schoolmaster element’ on this committee which included Mrs. Edith Pearson (wife of the first principal of PLC) who was a staunch supporter of women’s entrance to university, Mrs. Morris (wife of principal of Ruyton) and Mrs. Thomas (member of the a’Beckett family). She wrote: ‘Indeed, the Melbourne intelligentsia was a close-knit group, and very formidable’.

39 Ibid., pp. 25-45, Age, 9 November 1889; Argus, 14 September 1888, 4 December 1888 and 17 December 1889.

40 Marjorie Theobald, Knowing Women, p. 79.
In a powerfully-worded letter, signed by Edith Morris, Charlotte Macartney, Jessie Grimwade, Isobella A’Beckett, Sissie Collins and Dora Carrington, demonstrated the Ladies’ Council efforts to promote collegiate education for the women of Victoria:

We publish the correspondence and papers connected with this episode with deep regret, but we feel it right that the public, whose money we have spent, should know why more than half our beautifully furnished rooms are unoccupied, why the efforts of our admirable principal are confined to only five students, why we have been thus unsuccessful, and now we resign our position in connection with a work in which we feel the deepest interest. We know from letters received from members of our ladies’ council who are now absent from the colony that their sympathies are entirely with us.41

What followed was nearly six thousand words defining the Hostel Council’s two year struggle with the gentlemen of the Trinity Council and their belief that ‘great injustice has been done’. Even in her absence, Janet Clarke was a formidable presence, her name and actions peppered throughout the documents. In one lengthy letter, which was written to Trinity Council on February 18 1892, the ladies expressed concern at the delay in solving the constitution issue, ‘as a matter of abstract justice and proper organisation’. They noted: ‘Our president has on more than one occasion clearly expressed her own earnest desire that we should keep constantly before our eyes the importance and dignity of this question as affecting the whole future of collegiate education for women of Victoria’. These ladies and their President were not acting as ‘philanthropists’; rather they were reformers, whose aim was to secure the ‘whole future’ of higher education for women in Victoria. Indeed, they had lost the battle for control of the Hostel, but the ladies had proven impressive opponents. Their activism had ensured the establishment and survival of the first university women’s college in Victoria.

Despite continuing correspondence between Janet Clarke and Dr. Leeper, after her return in late 1892, she could not be persuaded to renew her interest because of the ‘ill-feeling’ that had occurred. Gardiner considered the situation was worsened by Dr. Leeper’s appointment of a man, J. T. Collins, a Trinity tutor, to replace Miss Hensley as principal and the Trinity Council’s decision that the Hostel was for Trinity women.

41 Argus, Wednesday 3 September 1892.
only. Janet Clarke’s radical stipulations – a woman principal from a women’s college in England and Hostel entry for girls regardless of ‘class or creed’ – were ignored. It was to be a number of years before Janet Clarke renewed her interest in the Hostel.

In those years, Janet Clarke’s life was shadowed by death as six members of her close-knit family died – her uncle, Francis Hare, and Frederic, her cousin Ellis Rowan’s husband, in 1892, her mother, Agnes Charlotte Snodgrass, and her eldest son, Clive, in 1894, her husband in 1897 and her eldest brother, Kenneth, in 1898. All were burdensome; but the sudden deaths of son and husband were life-changing tragedies for Janet Clarke. The Clarkes had travelled to England in 1892 to be with their eighteen-year-old son when he joined the 8th Hussar regiment, after graduating from Melbourne University. In February 1894, a fortnight after the death of Janet’s mother at Rupertswood, the Clarkes received two telegrams, one to say their son had taken ill and the second to say he had died. Phyllis Power described the awful scene when Clive’s embalmed body arrived back in Melbourne: ‘It was badly done and Janet insisted on being present when the coffin was opened, she fainted for one of the few times in her life’. Power also described Janet’s shocked reaction when told of her husband’s death shortly after he left for his office on 15 May 1897.

Coping with personal tragedies and her other programmes to ameliorate the suffering of the needy in Melbourne took precedence over the affairs of the Trinity Hostel. However, in 1897, Janet Clarke requested that the library at the Hostel be named after Sir George Verdon, a benefactor of Trinity and a close personal friend. By that time, graduates of the Hostel had emerged as doctors, teachers and musicians. In 1904, the Age reported that a meeting was held at Cliveden to organise fund-raising for the Hostel. Miss Lucy Bateman had been the principal of the Hostel since 1902. She had been private secretary to Janet Lady Clarke prior to this appointment. 

42 Gardiner used this quotation from the 3 December 1892 letter in Janet Clarke Hall Archives, pp. 44-5. J. T. Collins, a Trinity tutor, was appointed by Dr. Leeper in November 1892.
43 Phyllis Power’s biography, pp. 23-28.
44 See Gardiner, Chapter 3, ‘Years of Hard Work and Good Results’, pp. 47-66.
45 Her appointment concluded in 1906.
46 Miss Bateman was the governess who travelled to England with the family in 1886 and was mentioned in Janet Clarke’s letters to Russell. The Age, 28 January 1902, noted that Dr. Leeper informed a meeting of the Trinity Council and its president, Dr. Goe, had appointed Miss Bateman, late
meeting Miss Bateman read a report: ‘embodying the objects and needs of the institution’. The hostel, according to the *Age*, now accepted students from all colleges, and was freed from many of the restrictions it has hitherto suffered under*. Future plans for fund-raising were made and those present, including Janet Clarke, donated money to assist the Hostel. Time had healed the rift and she could express satisfaction at what she and the Ladies’ Council had achieved: ‘I feel so glad that the hostel has justified its initial existence, and earnestly trust that another wing may soon be added to the Janet Clarke buildings’. In March 1907, Janet Clarke received a letter from the Trinity Women’s Literary Society, which noted ‘the deep interest you take in all educational institutions’. She agreed to the request to become president of the Society.

![Figure 26 Letter to Janet Lady Clarke from Hon. Secretary of Trinity Women’s Literary Society, 1907](image)

By 1904, women attending Melbourne University was no longer an issue but the institution itself was struggling to survive. On August 28, the Melbourne University private secretary to Janet Lady Clarke, as lady principal of Trinity College Women’s Hostel for the year 1902.

*Age*, Thursday 14 September 1904.

Letter to Trinity Council, [in private hands].

Letter, [in private hands].

The entrance of women had been proposed in 1872 but met with stern resistance from members of the male council. By the 1880s, many members of the Council had been involved in the education of girls at private schools and by 1880 a majority of council members supported this change. Women gained entry to Adelaide University when it was established in 1874. Sydney Women’s College started in 1892. See Marjorie Theobald, ‘Boundaries, Bridges and the History of Education’ in *History of Educational Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No.4, 1993, pp. 497-510.
Council was informed that their trusted accountant, Frederick Dickson, had stolen University funds over a long period of time, undetected by their Registrar, Edward á Beckett, the Chancellor, Sir John Madden, the Finance Committee or the auditors. A subsequent Royal Commission Report in 1904 found that the University Council had erred in its financial management and therefore recommended changes to all aspects of University administration, staffing and Government funding. The University, on the verge of bankruptcy, turned to Premier Thomas Bent for assistance. Bent through a Surplus Revenue Bill provided £10,000 to reduce the University’s debts with an additional £2,000 for mining and agricultural equipment. A further sum of £12,000 for mining and agricultural buildings would be provided if the community could match this amount. On 31 August, Thomas Bent wrote to accept Lady Clarke’s invitation to go to Cliveden: ‘next Sunday and have a talk with you about the University’. Together, these two activists, made plans to save Melbourne University from bankruptcy.

Figure 27 Letter from Janet Lady Clarke to the Argus, 1904

On September 26 1904, she wrote to the newspapers, confidently adopting strategies which had ensued past successful projects - recognising the work of the Victorian Government, promising financial reform at the University, asking for public support, declaring her personal interest in its welfare, providing Cliveden as a meeting place

51 Letter from Thomas Bent, p. 88, Clarke Letters.
for the appeal and noting that Sir John Madden, the highly respected Chancellor of the University, would preside at the meeting.

You are possibly aware of the serious financial position with which the University has contended for the last few years as seen by the enclosed circular. The Honourable the Premier has recently devoted a large amount of time and trouble to the investigation of the matter, and, thanks to the generosity of the Government it seems likely that the University will shortly be placed on a sounder footing than it has been for many years past.

The Premier, however, is anxious, that not only the Government, but the public should do its share – and with this object in view, he has offered to give £1 for £1- for any money given. Scholarships or particular help to any portion of the University will be counted.

I have been asked by the Special Committee of the University - as one, though not personally connected to it, is deeply interested in its welfare, to call a meeting at Cliveden on Wednesday October 5th at 4.30 to take the first steps with complying with the condition imposed by the Premier - I hope you will come and assist with your counsel.

If you cannot be present any suggestions or offers of help will be welcomed gladly.

Under her efficient management, £13,326 was raised and, with the support of the Premier, the future of the University was secured. At the 1905 Commencement ceremony, Sir John Madden, the Chancellor, acknowledged the work of Thomas Bent and Janet Lady Clarke:

We have nothing but good to think of him, nothing but long and enduring gratitude and honour to remember him. (...). We knew that we had not become favourites of the public and it looked a forlorn hope. However we found one excellent lady to take up the position of leader of that forlorn hope, and we offer to Janet Lady Clarke our heartfelt thanks.52

The formalities completed, Thomas Bent led the students in the following ditty:

To Janet Lady Clarke

52 Argus, 10 April 1905.
Our heartiest thanks we tend, sir;
For our perils she sees and lowers our fees,
But we mustn’t forget Mr. Bent, sir. 53

In 1897, when Janet Clarke had documented her belief that ‘every woman should take pride in cultivating her intellect and learning all that is possible’, secondary education was only available to those parents who could afford to pay school fees or to employ tutors or governesses. The Victorian government had provided free secular primary education for girls and boys since 1872 but there was no provision for secondary and matriculation studies in government schools until 1905 when the Continuation College was opened in Melbourne. 54 If students wished to attain the matriculation certificate which permitted entry to the University, they had to attend one of the exclusive private schools. Most female university students in Melbourne emerged from the well-established Presbyterian and Methodist Colleges. The educational activists, who had formed the nucleus of the Ladies’ Hostel committee, realised that if the number of young women attending Trinity Hostel was to increase, the Church of England needed to follow the example of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches and establish a girls’ academic high school.

On this issue at least, Miss Hensley, the former principal of Janet Clarke Hostel, and Bishop Goe, the Bishop of Melbourne, agreed. 55 In September 1892, Miss Hensley and the Hostel vice-principal, Miss Taylor, had resigned at the same time as the Ladies’ Council. As a member of the Ladies’ Council, Miss Hensley had been critical of Dr. Leeper’s controlling role in the administration of the Hostel and supported the

53 R. Selleck, pp. 440-441. See also Weston Bate, A History of Brighton, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963; and Sir Thomas Bent at www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/. Bate described Bent as a controversial figure but he noted: ‘He must be given credit for supporting the University of Melbourne and the Public Library and Museum when others whose support might have been expected seemed indifferent to their fate’.

54 Scholarships to private schools were given for further studies by the Education Department to students at State schools who showed particular ability. In 1905, the Continuation School was set up in Melbourne as the first Government secondary college to train students for the teaching profession. See Ch. 7, ‘The Pursuit of a Dream’ in R. J. W. Selleck’s, Frank Tate, A Biography, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

55 Bishop Goe had opposed the Hostel Council’s attempts to draw up a constitution but supported the need for a Church of England Girls’ School. Also see Ann Hone, pp. 158-9. Hone listed the following referees for Misses Hensley and Taylor: Bishop of Melbourne and Mrs. Goe, Sir William and Lady Clarke, the Hon. F. and Mrs Grimwade, Professor and Mrs. Morris, Dean of Melbourne and Mrs. Macartney, Lady Wrixon, Hon. Justice a’Beckett and Mrs. a’Beckett. This information printed in Argus, 4 January 1893.
Ladies’ Council’s attempts to formalise their position. It was Gardiner’s view that Miss Hensley, a graduate of Newnham College Cambridge: ‘was too capable and too intelligent for the subordinate, semi-domestic role which was all the Hostel in 1892 could offer her’.56 The following year Sir William Clarke and Mr. and Mrs. F. Grimwade lent money to Miss Hensley to start a Church of England day and boarding school which she named *Merton Hall*.57

It would be safe to assume that Janet Clarke had prompted her husband to approach Misses Hensley and Taylor.58 She had a close working relationship with Jessie Grimwade, one of the six women activists who had signed the letter in the *Argus* in September 1892. Both women would have understood that to ensure the future success of Trinity Hostel the Church of England needed to establish a feeder school similar to the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School established for boys in 1859.59 In her history of *Merton Hall*, Theobald quoted from a 1928 letter written by Miss Taylor, who was the co-owner and vice-principal of this school. Miss Taylor recalled her displeasure when Miss Hensley decided to cease enrolling girls as their numbers had reached fifty:

…. I argued that we were not fulfilling the pledges given and implied on which we accepted the generous loans of the two gentlemen who approached us with the proposal that it should be the Church of England High School for Girls.60

In 1898, this school was sold to the Morris family who moved the school to its present site opposite the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. In 1900, a decision was taken by the Church authorities to name the school the Church of England Girls’ High School on condition that it worked under the supervision of a Provisional Council. Through the efforts of Janet Clarke, Jessie Grimwade, Misses Hensley and Taylor, the Church of

56 Lyndsay Gardiner, p. 39. In Chapter 1 and 2 Gardiner explained the history of Miss Hensley’s appointment and her uneasy relationship with Dr. Leeper.
59 Dr. John Bromby was the first Principal.
60 Marjorie Theobald, p. 14.
England had set up a girls’ academic high school that corresponded to the Presbyterian and Methodist girls’ schools founded in 1875 and 1882 respectively.61

Invited onto the Council, Janet Clarke became actively engaged in the nuts and bolts of the school’s administration.62 Minutes of the meeting of the Provisional Council held in June 1900 saw Janet Clarke part of a sub-committee appointed to draw up draft rules for the school.63 These provisional rules included the statement that:

The system of education shall provide for pupils a sound and general education, including instructions in modern languages, classics, maths, science and such regular instruction in Holy Scripture, in conformity with the principles of Church of England.64

With the exception of the religious education proviso, these educational guidelines would not be out of place in contemporary girls’ secondary colleges or co-educational high schools. This curriculum, challenges the charge that Janet Clarke, promoted ‘domesticity as the ordinary woman’s natural duty’.65 Rather, as Stuart Blacker pointed out in his Centenary Essays, the Council in drawing up these rules clearly intended: ‘that the education of boys and girls provided under the aegis of the Church of England would be comparable’.66 In fact, Janet Clarke’s notion of a comprehensive educational curriculum for girls also recognized that physical as well as academic

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62 Marjorie Theobald, pp. 31-7.
63 Ibid., pp. 38-9. The Committee consisted of five women and five men, including Bishop Goe, the Dean of Melbourne, Dr. Leeper, Mrs. Goe, the wives of Archbishops Clarke, Head and Booth, Margaret Blanch, wife of the headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School and Mrs. William Cain, wife of the lay canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral.
64 These minutes held at the MCEGS Archives. Other rules included: The management of the School by Principal under the control of Council, the right of Principal to select teachers, 40 weeks school a year with 4 terms of 10 weeks, a Principal report for each student and a progress report submitted to Council.
65 Biographical entry at *www.womenaustralia.info/biogs*.
66 *Melbourne Girls Grammar School Centenary Essays 1893-1993*, p. 39. Charles Pearson, the first headmaster of the Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC), had introduced a similar curriculum in 1878 to ensure women would not be deprived of a sound academic education. See Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *PLC Melbourne*, pp. 59-61. Ailsa Thomson Zainu’ddin points out in her history of MLC that MLC ‘placed a more vocational emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, not education for its own sake but for service for others’, pp. 59-61. The MLC curriculum in the 1900s catered for both the academic stream and the ‘womanly arts’ stream by including needlework and a ‘more convent-style education’, pp. 95-99.
training was important. Anne Hone noted in her thesis that Lady Clarke had insisted the girls should receive physical education and requested that the building plans for the Trinity Hostel should include ‘a gymnasium even though this reduced the accommodation available to students’. Likewise, the Provisional Council also decided that a gymnasium should be built at the school. The Council approved the provisional regulations in October 1900, and by the following year the attendance had gone from seventy-eight girls to one hundred and five, twenty-one of whom were boarders.

In August 1904, a public demonstration of a cooking lesson by students from the South Yarra College took place in the Athenaeum Hall. It was organised by the newly-formed Australian Institute of Domestic Economy (AIDE). The president was Lady Talbot, the vice-president Janet Clarke and the treasurer was Miss Vaile or ‘Rita’, the pseudonym that she used for her column in The Herald and Weekly Times. James Docherty outlined the AIDE platform:

… it saw itself as having a mission to raise national standards in the domestic arts. It proposed to issue certificates of competency through periodical examinations open to all women and conducted by approved experts. These examinations were to cover theory and practice ...

‘Rita’ promoted this domestic arts issue in the women’s section of her newspaper, The Herald and Weekly Times. In one of her articles, ‘Rita’ reported that it was through the efforts of the AIDE organisation that the Government had agreed to establish a Domestic College in 1906. The first principal of the Melbourne College of Domestic Economy was Mabel Sandes. In the 1947 21\textsuperscript{st} Anniversary Edition of the college

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67 Argus, 16 April 1890.
68 Anne Hone, p. 125; see also Age, 19 March 1890 and minutes held at the MCEGS Archives.
69 This admiration for physical fitness was evident in a letter she wrote to the Age on the 29 August 1908: ‘Sir – I am proud to belong to a country which produces a race whose character is exemplified in the splendid spirit of the lads of Ballarat, who being unable to proceed by rail to Melbourne, are now walking to the metropolis that they may join with others in welcoming the American fleet on their arrival in the city’. After the arrival of this ship over 200 sailors ‘jumped ship’ and stayed in Melbourne.
70 Janet Clarke’s ward/niece, Agnes Snodgrass, and daughter, Ivy, attended this school. According to Ivy’s daughter, Rosemary Lindsay, her mother was not interested in academic studies. Janet Clarke had written in 1899 that the eleven year old Ivy hated her French governess.
magazine, *Palate and Petticoat*, she recalled: ‘It was through the interest and efforts of Janet Lady Clarke and a group of interested women that the Government of Victoria was prevailed on to establish a college for the training of women in domestic economy’. At that time there were no qualified teachers so her first task was to establish a course of training for teachers.

In 1907, when the Premier, Mr. Bent, officially opened the Melbourne College of Domestic Economy in a re-modelled building in Lonsdale Street Melbourne, there was already a long waiting list of prospective students. Mr. Bent explained that it was the ladies who were interested in the school that had ‘induced him to place £1000 on the Supplementary Estimates’ and that the institution was not to be a ‘select affair. (...) It was for all sections and all classes’. Janet Clarke also spoke on that occasion acknowledging the support of the Government but ‘hoping the institution would not be a purely Government one’.

Janet Clarke’s continued advocacy of the college was recorded in *The Herald and Weekly Times*:

“Now that the College has been established”, she [Janet Clarke] went on to say, “I think that it would be a mistake to set up another institution such as Miss Fourdrinier proposed at the meeting. It is true that the College has as many students as it can accommodate, but it might be extended. Country girls who come down to town for training are charged a very small rate for board and lodging. There are certified teachers employed, and consequently the college’s certificates and diplomas are of great value to the holders”.

Janet Clarke’s emphasis here was on the status of this college and the value of the diplomas to their holders. In this interview, she refused to be drawn into the contentious issue of education as a preparation for employment as domestic servants because of her connection with a political association. She admitted to her good

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72 PROV, MS 12820, archives of the Emily Mc Pherson College of Domestic Economy.
73 *Argus*, 18 March 1907, p. 9.
74 Ibid.
75 Cutting from *The Herald and Weekly Times*, 1906, in Clarke scrapbook.
76 Here, Janet Clarke was probably referring to her role as the first president of the National Women’s Council of Victoria.
fortune at having good servants all her life who only left to get married or to set up businesses of their own. Surely, if Janet Clarke’s sole motive was the provision of servants for herself and her wealthy friends, then she would have welcomed Miss Fourdrinier’s proposal.

The need for some form of domestic science education in Victoria had been recognised in 1890 when the Minister of Public Instruction had authorised the employment of two ladies to give group lessons in cookery. Female students at Melbourne Teachers’ College also received some tuition in cookery. In primary schools needlework was taught by untrained assistant teachers and the School Paper contained lessons in domestic economy for the fifth and sixth classes. Clearly, without properly trained teachers for the 115,292 children attending primary schools in Victoria in 1897, studies in domestic economy were largely non-existent or introduced on an ad hoc basis.

It was left to Alexander Peacock, the Minister of Public Instruction, to organise the establishment of a cookery centre in 1899 at the Queensberry Street State School. Here, lessons were available to groups of students from local primary schools and lectures for interested teachers were given in order to staff other cookery centres being set up in the metropolitan and country centres. After the Fink Commission visited the school and was impressed by the work of this centre and its teacher, Mrs. Story, the Government finally committed to establishing a college of domestic economy. Unfortunately, the instability of the Victorian Government meant that when Mrs Story left Australia in 1904, the planned college had failed to materialise although a cookery centre was to be included in the new Continuation School to open in 1905.

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77 The School Paper was introduced in 1898.
78 See R. J. Selleck, Frank Tate: A Biography, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982. In 1902 Theodore Fink was appointed to chair a Royal Commission into technical education in Victoria. His findings resulted in two educational reform bills initiating the extension of the age for compulsory schooling, the Teacher and School Registration Act, the introduction of technical and secondary schools and the establishment of a Director of Education. Frank Tate became the first Director of Education in Victoria in 1902.
79 Ibid., p. 5. Frank Tate was determined that Victoria, like the United States and Europe, would move into the field of public education to counter national danger that could emerge from ‘fierce political or commercial strife’. He (like Lord Rosebery in England) believed that national progress and national education were inextricably linked. In Victoria, Alfred Deakin, in Parliament, and David Syme through his Age newspaper supported this view and both promoted the development of technical education.
Historian, James Docherty, has shown that there was considerable support for the establishment of a domestic arts college within the political, educational and public community.\textsuperscript{80} He considered that this support in Australia was part of an historic movement originating in Europe and spreading to England in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{81} Kereen Reiger claimed that in Victoria: ‘The thrust of domestic economy was accepted by Labour as well as non-Labour political groups’.\textsuperscript{82} Influenced by their observations of the domestic economy movement in Europe and England, the principals of a private college in South Yarra and the Loreto Convent School in Ballarat offered domestic economy subjects to their students in the 1890s. Ailsa Thomson Zainu’ddin also noted that by the 1900s ‘womanly arts’ subjects, as well as academic subjects, were being taught at the Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne. This domestic arts stream included ‘St. John’s Ambulance Sick-nursing course, Cookery, Household Management and Accounts, Gymnastics, Swimming or courses on the Laws of Health’.\textsuperscript{83}

Today the place of domestic science education in schools and institutions, while continually changing focus, is taken for granted. Yet, the teaching of domestic economy in the 1900s was, and is, sometimes judged negatively because of its perceived connection with the training of domestic servants and preparation for motherhood. Majorie Theobald argued that this ‘insistent discourse’ to educate women of all classes for vocational needs worked against the academic secondary schools being established in Victorian cities and country centres. She blamed its powerful proponents - Janet Clarke and Eliza Fewings - for encouraging domestic science education convinced that their support for this movement emerged because of the need to provide domestic servants for wealthy families.\textsuperscript{84}

This criticism was not new. In 1900, Mrs. Story had written in the \textit{Education Gazette} about the importance of domestic instruction for the individual, home, family and country while decrying those who thought it was the ‘work of the state to train

\textsuperscript{80} See Chapters 1 and 2 in James Docherty’s ‘\textit{The Emily Mac}’.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ailsa Thomson Zainu’ddin, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{84} Marjorie Theobald, \textit{Knowing Women}, pp. 128-9. On p. 125 Theobald explained that Fewings was dismissed from Brisbane Grammar School because she ‘diluted the academic program’.
servants’. She wrote that ‘people who imagine that cookery schools are established for the convenience of mistresses requiring servants are very much mistaken’. 85 In his essay linking the history of education in Australia with ‘notions of social control and socialisation’, Bob Bessant saw the movement for domestic economy not in terms of a class conspiracy, but as evidence of an interchange of ideas/solutions, where some ideas ‘emerged momentarily, or for long or short periods, to meet certain situations’. 86

This popular demand for this type of education refutes the idea that this reform movement was a class conspiracy led by Janet Clarke. Clearly, domestic science was occupying a new space in the educational domain as the momentum for change in educational institutions saw the convergence of classes within Australian society. The popularity of the Melbourne College of Domestic Economy and its historical journey to become the Emily McPherson College and then the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology parallels the founding of Janet Clarke Hall at Melbourne University. Regardless of class, these key institutions were set up to reflect Janet Clarke’s philosophy that young women should learn all that was possible. 87

While the name and academic status of this college has changed over the last hundred years, remarkably another of Janet Clarke’s favoured educational institutions, the Alliance Française, has retained its original charter of connecting its members to French culture and language. According to Michael Clarke, his grandmother became interested in languages when she stayed at Murndal in 1868 where she was encouraged by Arbella Cooke to use the excellent Murndal library to improve her language skills. 88 Her interest in French and Italian culture and language was furthered on her visits to Italy and France. Not surprisingly, on 10 June 1890, when a meeting was held at Oberwyl, the home of Madame Bertha Mouchette, to establish the first Alliance Française in Australia, Janet Clarke was elected Présidente

85 Kereen Reiger, ‘All but the kitchen sink’, p. 511.
86 Bob Bessant (ed.), Mother State and Her Little Ones, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1987, pp. 8-9.
87 By 1920 there was growing demand for domestic science and economy education in Victoria and with the generosity of another philanthropist, Sir William McPherson, the College of Domestic Economy evolved into the Emily McPherson College. See James Docherty, ‘The Emily Mac’. Sir William McPherson donated £25,000 for the building, now on the Government Buildings Register of the National Trust.
88 Michael Clarke, Clarke of Rupertswood, p. 50.
d’honneur. This meeting took place only seven years after the formation of the original society in Paris.  

There are now 33 Alliances in Australia and 1,400 in 138 countries. Today, the Victorian society is thriving and still promotes the learning of French culture and language as set out in the constitution approved at the first meeting, chaired by the Présidente d’honneur. This constitution required the publication of regular bulletins, lectures, lessons, musical and poetry sessions, exhibitions, competitions and prize-giving. The establishment of a library was seen as essential. The meetings were formal and conducted in French. The minutes (written in French) reveal that Janet Clarke’s involvement included holding soirées, fêtes, and concerts at Cliveden and donating library books and prizes for examinations which were held in December each year. As well, she volunteered to purchase prizes in Paris when she travelled overseas.

On the 28 June 1894, following the assassination of the Président of the Republic of France, Monsieur Carnot, by an Italian Anarchist, Janet Clarke requested the members of the Alliance Française to attend an extraordinary meeting at Cliveden:

I apprehend that the Alliance Française has, as its raison d’être, brotherly love and admiration for that great country to which many of our members belong. Holding the high position of Présidente d’honneur de Alliance Française in Victoria, I have asked you to meet today, in order that we may express our deep sympathy with Madame Carnot in the terrible and sudden grief which has befallen her and France in the loss of one, who will not only be remembered in history as the respected leader of a great nation but as a gentleman.’

The members agreed to send a telegram of sympathy and condolence letters to Madame Carnot and to place copies of this letter and Lady Clarke’s speech in the

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89 Minute Books of the Committee of the Alliance Française de Victoria, Book 1, 1890-1897; Book 2, 1897-1904; Book 3 1904-1911, State Library of Victoria, MS 3554. Oberwyl’s address was Burnett Street, St. Kilda.
90 Over 3000 students each year attend French language classes at 51 Grey Street, St. Kilda. The society holds annual competitions for school students. Over 16,000 school students take part in this competition each year. See www.afmelbourne.asn.au.
91 From the minutes of meeting June 1890: ‘La création immediate d’bibliotheque semble être la conséquence nécessaire de l’existence de notre société’.
Alliance Française’s archives. Regrettably, they cannot be found in the archives today.  

Figure 28 President’s letter to Madame Carnot on behalf of the Victorian Alliance Française, 1894

Contemporary accounts of the Alliance Française, name Madame Berthe Mouchette as the founder of this society. While her home was recorded as the meeting-place for the inaugural meeting and she was elected as ‘La Delegué’, the influential positions - Présidente d’honneur, Le Secretaur and La Présidente – were held by other women. Her name did not occur again after she sold her home, Oberwyl, and left for Adelaide in 1892. The minutes confirm that Lady Clarke remained the Présidente d’honneur of the society until her death.

Janet Clarke’s connection with the Dante Alighieri Society in Melbourne is described in Alan Mayne’s history of this society. He explained that Pasque Corte, Consul-General of Italy for Australia, founded the Societá Dante branch in Melbourne in August 1895, but he believed that its success was due to Lady Janet Clarke and the editor of the Argus, James Smith, whom he called ‘convinced Italopis’:  

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92 Il est aussi décidé que deux lettres seront écrites l’une à Madame Carnot et l’autre à l’Alliance; que la copie de les lettres et le discours de Lady Clarke seront conserves aux archives de l’Alliance. Pour finir Mrs. Holroyd propose une votée de remerciement à Lady Clarke pour avoir convié le comité proposition qu’est avec impression. (La Présidenté, Annie Holroyd, La Secrétaire, Alice Grimwade).

93 See the Alliance Française website. She was also a well-known artist and teacher. At present the main competition held each year is called the Berthe Mouchette Competition.

94 J. Clibert and Anne Holyroyd were Secretary and President respectively.

Without these two significant citizens and the help of the new Governor of Victoria, Lord Brassey, it is unlikely that the society would have got going as soon as it did.  

In the beginning, as with the Alliance Française, the promotion of Italian language and culture underpinned the society’s platform; however, public entertainment in the form of operatic, orchestral and ensembles performances soon took preference. With Janet Clarke holding the office of vice-president, Alan Mayne considered that: ‘Smith and Clarke personified the closely–meshed networks of voluntary organisational activity and cultural interaction in Melbourne’. This interaction included the Austral Salon of Music, Literature and the Arts, a club founded in 1890 for women interested in the creative arts, artistic and intellectual endeavours. Janet Clarke was one of its founding members and was elected vice-president.

Her personal interest in musical education was shown in 1886 when she visited the first holder of the Trinity/Clarke music scholarship (Ada Bloxham) at the Royal College of Music in London. On her return home, she continued to correspond with the Director, Sir George Grove, about the student’s welfare and progress. She corresponded with, and entertained, renowned opera singers Genevieve Ward, Nellie Melba, and Madame Emma Albani when they performed in Melbourne raising funds for the Women’s Hospital. Mathilde Marchetti, who coached Nellie Melba in Paris, wrote to Janet Clarke in 1898 informing her that: ‘… votre protégée (Mademoiselle Nugel) est arrivée saine et saune à Paris. Elle a commencé ses études’.

96 Ibid., p. 12. James Smith had directed Janet Snodgrass’s reading regime as requested by her father, Peter Snodgrass.
97 Ibid., pp. 30-40.
98 Ibid., p. 12.
99 Austral Salon Register and Journals, Membership Register 1890-1920, State Library of Victoria, MS 12379, Box 3187/4. See www.womenaustralia.info/biogs.
100 Clarke Letters, p. 33.
101 Ibid., p. 63.
This newspaper excerpt aptly summarised Janet Clarke’s personal commitment, her courtesy and public reputation:

Lady Clarke is the only lady who unfailingly appears at every entertainment which she promises her presence. (...). She attended the Feuillade concert and sat out the entire entertainment although she must have felt very tired before the conclusion of the very long programme. Signor de Beaupuis has not been very successful here and on Friday evening, Lady Clarke took a very large party to his recital, so that it is not alone in unexampled acts of private charity that she holds a premier place, but it is in the little kindnesses and considerations that distinguish gentle womanhood.\textsuperscript{102}

Failing health did not mean the end to her vision for building the institutions which remain today the focus of cultural life of Melbourne. In 1908, Janet Clarke gave her financial support to the Lady Northcote Trust Fund. She was one of twelve subscribers who formed the Board of Management which subscribed £1,891 to establish and maintain a permanent orchestra in Melbourne under the direction of Professor Marshall Hall.\textsuperscript{103} Its charter was to ‘promote the study, practice, knowledge

\textsuperscript{102} Newspaper cutting in family album.
and appreciation of music in Melbourne and elsewhere’. Today, the annual income from the Lady Northcote Trust Fund continues to uphold its original charter.

Australia in the 1890s followed Europe and England in accepting that if a country was to thrive it must provide educational opportunities for all its citizens. Janet Clarke grasped the significance of this educational ideology for her generation and future generations and laboured to ensure that every woman, regardless of class or creed, should have the opportunity to develop her intellectual skills through appropriate education. Following the establishment of the Hostel, educational reformers like the Clarkes and Dr. Leeper donated scholarships enabling academic women from poorer backgrounds to reside at the Hostel and attend Trinity College. They emerged as doctors, teachers, leading educationists and international musicians. While Janet Clarke was the most visible activist in founding educational and cultural institutions, she did not labour in isolation. Instead, she led a confederation of women nation builders who were committed to progressive change. These were empowered women who shaped the emerging institutions of girls’ and women’s education and culture and dared to defy the male hierarchy – the Hostel Ladies’ Council, the young women who attended Melbourne University, ‘Rita’ in her weekly newspaper column, the women who taught at girls’ high schools and the Continuation and Domestic Arts colleges and those women who fostered the arts, music and languages in those remarkable decades. Janet Clarke’s whole-of-life educational vision for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries goes beyond the world of philanthropy. This was a labour of love emanating from a fundamental belief in the value of providing educational opportunities for women.

104 Lady Northcote Trust Fund, L 25/8, R7.237, at University of Melbourne Archives. An indenture named Janet Lady Clarke, Mary Miller, James Barrett, Edward Fitzgerald, Michael Fox, Richard Larky, Archibald Lee, William Morr, Carl Pinschof, Samuel Pirani, William Orr and Robert Russell as the subscribers. In 2005 the accumulated capital of this fund was $170,205.

105 Letter to My Lord Bishop and Gentlemen of the Council, [in private hands].

106 In 1892 Sir William Clarke donated 3000 guineas to fund scholarships for Victorian men and women to the Royal College of Music, London. The first scholarship holders were: Ada Bloxham (1884-1887), Isabella Webster (1887-1891), Jessie Mitchell (1891-1895) and Arthur Nixon (1895-1899). Trinity College students are still receiving Clarke Scholarships today.

107 Lyndsay Gardiner lists the names of successful graduates on pp. 47-53.
Chapter Six

The Role of the President at the Women’s Hospital

In 1902, Janet Lady Clarke was approaching fifty and was a powerful and popular figure in Melbourne society. For twenty years or more she had laboured to promote the interests of women from all classes in Melburnian society. Empowered by her personal independence, business experiences and the voluntary administrative positions held within a large number of organisations, my contention is that she had reached a remarkable point in her career. The two weeks in January 1902 - an historical prism - provide a unique opportunity to measure her professional skills and performance in the public domain. This prism also highlights a broad range of social issues – class, gender and professionalism - which were battled out in the daily press and in public meetings. It shows Australian society at the cross roads – pointing to the end of elite volunteerism and the emergence of professionalism in the administration of health and other institutions. It also reveals Janet Lady Clarke at a defining point in her life as she became embroiled in the political machinations of the hospital system in her role as president of the Women’s Hospital.

Janet Snodgrass was only five years old when the Women’s Hospital was first established in Melbourne. In August 1856, Dr. Tracy and Dr. Maund rented a residence at 41 Albert Street Eastern Hill to be used as a Lying-in Hospital. A Ladies’ Committee was formed to support the hospital and accept subscriptions and donations. Two years later, this rented house was replaced by a hospital erected on reserved land between Madeline Street (now Swanston Street) and Grattan Street, Melbourne. In 1862, nursing pupils were admitted to a formal training course in midwifery and three years later training at the hospital for medical students was initiated. In the latter part of the

1 This is contested in some recent historical commentary. Her presence in the public domain has been labelled as ‘aristocratic’, ‘queenly’ and entries in the Australian Dictionary of Biography have been criticised for their ‘slavish admiration’. See Janet McCalman, Sex and Suffering; and Richard Kennedy, Charity Warfare.

2 When I accessed the Women’s Hospital Archive in 2008, I found a treasure trove of documents which included the Committee Minutes, the Annual Reports, the Ladies’ Visiting Committee Reports, official correspondence and the eight-page statement written by Janet Lady Clarke. It is unlikely that this letter was located and read by other researchers and this probably explains why it was not referred to by Janet McCalman in Sex and Suffering, the exceptional text on the Women’s Hospital. This letter made it possible to examine Janet Clarke’s modus operandis at close quarters.
nineteenth-century, the Committee oversaw many improvements. The original building was extended to include a morgue, an out-patient clinic, new wards, a dining room, new kitchen and laundry facilities, a disinfecting room, an isolation room, an operating room and accommodation for a porter, nurses, students and the resident officer. By 1887, nearly 12,000 confinements had taken place at the hospital.³ In 1888, the first salaried Superintendent-Secretary was appointed and the hospital was renamed *The Women’s Hospital and Infirmary for Diseases of Women and Children.*⁴

The hospital, incorporated under an Act of Parliament, was managed at first by a Board made up of two Committees – a Committee of twenty-one women who met every week and a Committee of ten men who met once a month.⁵ By 1902, these two Committees had amalgamated, although the number of men who attended the weekly committee meetings was usually sparse. The actual management of the hospital was in the hands of the Committee members. They made decisions on all aspects of the hospital including the hiring and firing of staff, complaints, food catering, the right of admission, building works and purchase of supplies. They negotiated with the government and attempted to oversee the work of the honorary and resident doctors who did not always appreciate their work practices being supervised in this way.

Each week two ladies were appointed as visitors to the hospital. Under the rules of the constitution, any prospective patient wanting admission had to attend the Committee’s weekly meeting for the ladies to examine the needs of the applicant according to her medical and financial situation and to answer the set questions required by the government. No doubt, for some of the hospital’s clients this would have been a daunting and possibly a humiliating experience although the hospital records reveal that this process was based on medical and financial needs and did not appear to sort these women into ‘respectable and non-respectable’ categories. However, it is possible that the process might have involved the ‘distinction concept’ as Finch has suggested.⁶

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³ Janet McCalman, appendixes (pp. 369-374). Here McCalman listed the confinements, maternal deaths and child mortality statistics from 1857-1887 at the hospital.

⁴ Ibid. Dr. Margaret Whyte was the first woman doctor to be appointed to the hospital in 1892.

⁵ While the term ‘Board’ was used intermittently, ‘Committee’ was used consistently by members, newspapers and medical staff.

⁶ Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze.* She used the phrase ‘distinction concept’ to describe this process. For a comprehensive outline of similar English hospitals see Gwendoline Ayers, *England’s First State Hospitals and the Metropolitan Asylums Board 1867-1930*, University of California Press Berkeley 1971.
McCalman has pointed out that up to 1894 the hospital was ‘the refuge of the destitute and the degenerate’, but after 1894 it was used by ‘all poor women of the colony’, most of whom were married women.⁷ If an application was approved, the woman was allocated a ticket and told to come to the hospital when the birth of her child was imminent. Nevertheless, if a woman in labour arrived at the hospital without a ticket she was still to be admitted.

The formal agenda for the weekly meetings began with a prayer. Applicants for admission were interviewed; the diary, admission books, weekly visiting reports and the minutes of the previous meeting were read. A report of the treasurer followed and the hospital visitors for the next week were appointed and their names recorded. Correspondence and General Business followed and the proceedings of their weekly meetings noted. Each year, a detailed annual report was issued to all subscribers and life members.

Subscribers of the hospital were similar to shareholders in a company. They had voting rights at Annual General Meetings according to the amount they donated as subscribers. Payment of £1 to £20 earned one vote; £3 to £30 two votes; £5 to £40 five votes. A donor giving £20 became a Life Governor (Member) and each contributor of a larger sum could nominate one Life Member for each £20 donated, but only five Life Members could be nominated. A meeting of subscribers could occur when twelve subscribers petitioned for a meeting.

The Committee ladies were empowered by their commitment to their work as professional unpaid hospital managers. Obviously, a degree of affluence was required which enabled them to leave their domestic duties and children and to assume roles as volunteer managerial workers. Janet Clarke was a member of the Committee for twenty years from 1883 to 1903 and between 1894 and 1899 she held the position of vice-president. In 1901, following the death of the President, Mrs. Goe, Janet Clarke was offered and accepted this position. She promised to devote herself to the well-being of the hospital as she had ‘ever had my heart in it, and I should be proud indeed to be its

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⁷ Janet McCalman, p. 82.
President’. At the time of her election, the Committee expressed the view that they felt assured that she would ‘worthily sustain the reputation of the chair for wise, patient and just ruling’.

Each week, two ladies of the Committee inspected the hospital wards and wrote a report in the Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee. Janet Clarke later described the work of the ladies who faithfully inspected and reported on the management of the patients as ‘exceptionally conscientious, painstaking, sympathetic, and humane’. The Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee retains a comprehensive narrative of this hospital and those who walked its corridors. These reports vary in length and tone, perhaps reflecting the confidence of the individuals conducting the inspection. Even the doctors’ work practices did not escape the keen eyes of the ladies.

Quite frequently, the appointed visitors highlighted improvements and deficiencies in the system. On 22 April 1883, Mrs. G. Smith and Mrs. L. Nicholson wrote: ‘Great improvement in Dispensary and Hospital clean and in good order’. A week later, Janet Clarke and Agnes Shields noted: ‘Went over hospital and found every thing satisfactory’. Henrietta Dobson and Mrs. Nicholson commented on July 17 1884: ‘We have this day visited the hospital and found that there was not sufficient earth in the closets’. Mrs. E. Maloney and C. Miller complained that the babies had not been washed as directed by the Committee. Mrs Templeton, whose inspections often resulted in detailed and damning reports, complained that rubbish had been left in the yard adding: ‘We also found the straw which had been emptied from a mattress which had been used by a patient who had just died of peritonitis thrown out, close to the fresh straw which had been used to fill the mattresses of other patients and there was a closet close by in a very bad condition’. The following July, she found everything in good order except the operating rooms where the floor required sweeping and the basins ‘were not in the order they ought to have been’. Other faults reported by the visitors

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8 May 1901 letter accepting this position, [in private hands].
9 Minutes of Committee Meetings, A1991/6/21, Women’s Hospital Archives.
11 Soil was used in closets (primitive toilets) after use by patients.
12 Ibid., 25 August 1884.
13 Ibid., 10 May 1885.
14 Ibid., May 26 1896.
included - unclean windows, blinds out of order, the floor of the ironing room not scrubbed, married women housed in the same ward as single girls which was against the rules, a faulty new mangle in the laundry, the door of the upper labour ward needing repair, leaking sinks and incomplete information on the cards at the head of patients’ beds. On 15 January 1901, Arabelle Syme and L. Colson wrote at length of leakage in the hot water cistern, gas in the patient’s bathroom which had burnt through wood, missing thermometers in the wards and dusty ventilators in the operating theatre. These concerns apparently were dealt with swiftly as a month later Janet Clarke’s inspection found the hospital to be ‘well-managed and clean’.

One frequent criticism was that the nurses’ rooms were untidy and in one report the ladies found the nurses eating their lunch ‘near a very nasty pail’.15 On the other hand, the visitors recognised that the nurses and the general servants were overworked and needed additional help.16 Ellis Rowan noted: ‘that the work in the Midwifery Department just now is very heavy’.17 Janet Clarke and Augustus Gurner visited the hospital in July 1893 and commented on the cleanliness of the Midwifery section. At the same time Janet Clarke expressed her concern for the servants and nurses:

In my opinion the work of cleaning the hospital cannot be done without another general servant. The outpatient department has never been scrubbed since the dismissal of the servants, as the girl who does that work is taking a different corridor each day and cannot make the time for that having to do a ward each day as well. We particularly noticed the nurses’ food and think it would be easy to make a little change in the meals without extra expense. For seven nurses who also take their meals together we think two dishes might be provided – one nurse had measles and another isolated – a third nurse (Davy) who requires rest herself was obliged to do full work and the Doctor obliged to engage another nurse.

Doubtless, the visitors carried out these inspections genuinely believing that they were protecting vulnerable women and their babies. These patients were poor, unempowered, and generally without the resources to act on their own behalf, perhaps

15 Ibid., 15 January 1888 and December 1892.
16 Ibid., Mrs Gavin Duffy and Lillian Strachan, 11 December 1888.
17 Ibid., 20 June 1894.
explaining this frequent comment in the visitor’s book: ‘We went over the hospital and find (...) patients all very satisfied’.18

In 1901, the forty-fourth annual report of the Women’s Hospital listed twenty-one ladies on the Committee.19 Although these women were elected to this powerful committee, their positions were predicated on their marital status. These ladies, who met weekly, were the wives of influential members of colonial society - public servants, doctors, politicians, solicitors, merchants, newspaper proprietors and university officials. Attendance was somewhat flexible as individuals took leave for personal reasons.

The eight gentlemen who were members of the Committee in 1902 apparently found it difficult to attend the regular weekly meetings of the Committee held at 10.30 a.m. Father O’Connell, pastor of St. George’s Catholic Church Carlton and nephew of the Irish national hero Daniel O’Connell, and Colonel Goldstein, founding member of the Charity Organisation Society, anti-suffragist and father of leading suffragist Vida Goldstein, attended most frequently.

Until 1905, the subscribers elected the honorary doctors. These positions were much sought-after as they gave the doctors access to a large patient body and enhanced their reputation among their peers and in Melburnian society.20 Dr. George Cuscaden was first appointed to the Women’s Hospital as an out-patient surgeon in 1896 and later became senior surgeon in the Infirmary Department.21 In January 1902, as Chairman of the Midwifery staff, he was the spokesperson for the staff of the Infirmary and Obstetric Departments. Dr. J. B. Lewis, M. B. and Dr. J. S. Yule, M. A., M. B. had both recently graduated from Melbourne University. They were chosen as resident surgeons in the Infirmary ward after four applications had been received for these

18 Ibid., Ellis Rowan and Maude Maudsley, 27 March 1888.
19 1901 Annual Report of the Women’s Hospital, A 1996/10/10, Box 296, 14 August 1902.
21 Dr. George Cuscaden (1858-1933) received his medical degree from Mercer’s Hospital, Dublin. He worked as a ship’s surgeon for many years before settling in Melbourne in the early nineties. His interest in health issues saw him appointed as Chairman of the Heatherton Sanatorium and the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital. Cuscaden was one of the founders of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.
advertised positions and a ballot was held by the Committee at their meeting on 26 July 1901. Richard Selleck explained the importance of these positions:

The coveted residencies brought recognition of distinction as a student, and, through the experience and contacts gained at the hospital, increased the chances of a distinguished medical career.

Before the meeting of 17 January 1902, the Committee was informed of the presence of sepsis in the wards by Dr. Cuscaden, the honorary midwifery surgeon, and Dr. Lewis, the resident surgeon. The Committee heard evidence from Dr. Lewis that Wards 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 had patients with suspicious symptoms. Aware that sepsis was a highly infectious medical condition where pus-forming organisms are in the blood and tissues, a sub-committee of four was appointed immediately to investigate the matter. The president was not on this committee. It was made up of three ladies and one gentleman – Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Thornley, Mrs. Templeton and the Reverend J. H. O’Connell. Following their report to the General Committee, the motion, to close the wards of the Infirmary Department to new patients for a month while the wards were disinfected, was passed unanimously. This instruction was ignored by the resident doctors and the Secretary of the hospital and urgent cases were admitted.

On the same day, a meeting of the honorary midwifery doctors decided that this closure was unnecessary, although the Committee were not told that this meeting had taken place. Consequently, Dr. Cuscaden wrote to Mrs. Shields, the Secretary of the Committee, explaining that the staff wanted the Committee to reconsider the decision to close the hospital for a month. If this was not possible then they requested that the closure be only a week. This, they argued, would allow sufficient time to thoroughly disinfect the wards. Dr. Cuscaden’s letter indicated that the staff members were concerned for: ‘the claims of the many poor patients who are waiting to make use of the institution and on whom closure for a month would impose a serious hardship’.

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22 J. Lewis had completed his fifth year in 1900 and J. Yule in 1899, thus gaining their M.B. (Bachelor of Medicine) from the University of Melbourne.
23 R. J. Selleck, p. 280.
24 In Chapter 2 of *Sex and Suffering*, McCalman outlines the history of sepsis and antisepsis in the Women’s Hospital between 1875 and 1902. Her appendixes, pp. 369-374, also detail death rates of women and babies.
25 Minutes, A 1991/6/21, at Women’s Hospital.
26 Letter, Women’s Hospital, A1992/17, Series 374/375.
While this letter exists today, it was either not sent or was not seen by most of the Committee members. The president and Reverend O’Connell both denied any knowledge of the letter. In the following weeks, all parties affected by the hospital closure felt obliged to defend their actions at public meetings and in newspapers.

Following the escalation of this dispute and the refusal of the midwifery staff to obey the instruction to close the Obstetric section, the Hospital Committee organised an open meeting to be held at the Town Hall on 24 January 1902. Janet Lady Clarke presided at the open meeting. Three honorary members of the midwifery staff – Drs. Cuscaden, Downie and Oliver - were there by invitation. The original sub-committee’s report relevant to the closure of the hospital was re-submitted.

The received correspondence included a letter addressed to the President and Committee of the Women’s Hospital. It was signed by the Chairman of the infirmary staff, D. M. Sullivan, and G. W. Cuscaden, Chairman of midwifery staff.27 This letter had been published in the Age the day before, on 23 January. A written legal opinion given by Mr. H. Templeton, the Committee’s honorary solicitor, stated that the Committee had absolute discretion in the matter of the closure and any employed staff member who had defied the Committee was liable to instant dismissal. In addition, if septicaemia developed in any patients admitted post-closure, the medical officers could be subject to civil and criminal proceedings.

Dr. Cuscaden, as spokesperson for the honorary staff, expressed the hope that the Midwifery Department would be reopened as there was not ‘the slightest danger’. When asked by Mrs. Shields if he would have any objection to patients being admitted to tents, he said he would not.28 The President said she had no idea that the staff had expressed an opinion that the Department should not be closed. The Committee thought it was their duty and the expectation of the doctors that they act to close the department after Dr. Cuscaden had told them that there was septicaemia present. Reverend O’Connell, a member of the sub-committee, explained that when

27 Ibid.
28 The first of the tents erected in the grounds were flooded when it rained; but by 28 January more suitable tents were provided and inspected by health officers. This allowed the isolation wards to be disinfected while patients were cared for in the tents.
Dr. Cuscaden was asked if he could say if there would be any further outbreak of septicaemia he replied, ‘No’. After further discussion the doctors left and Dr. Cuscaden’s letter, dated 23 January, was read:

At a meeting of the united staff of the Infirmary and Obstetric Departments held at the hospital on the 20\textsuperscript{th} inst. it was unanimously resolved that the action of the Committee in closing the Obstetric Department contrary to the expressed wish and advice of the Honorary Obstetric staff, was – under existing conditions – unnecessary and uncalled for; inflicted a severe and needless hardship on the suffering – women of this city; and was calculated to place many of them in a desperate position at a most critical time. We therefore strongly urge that the obstetric department be reopened for the reception of cases without further delay.\textsuperscript{29}

A letter was also received from the resident doctors, Dr. J. Lewis and Dr. J. Yule, who had ignored the ruling and admitted urgent cases.\textsuperscript{30} They declared their defiance of the Committee was not for the ‘mere sake of bravado’ but because of their consciences as medical men. The lady superintendent wrote she was unable to insist that the doctors carry out the orders of the Committee as she had no authority over them.

The President then asked the Superintendent, Mr. Gibson, if he had locked the keys in the safe. He admitted he had done so because he considered the order to lock the gates to be an unlawful act. When he had left the meeting Father O’Connell commented: ‘Mr. Gibson practically said that the by-laws gave him control of the place. (…). It was ridiculous to say what he did. Evidently he thought he could lock or unlock the gates just as he pleased’. The President added that Mr. Gibson had twice told the Committee that he would not obey their instructions. Mr. Panton said under Rule 16 he should be dismissed and moved a motion to this effect. The motion was carried with only Mrs. Templeton and Mrs. Munce voting against it.

Mr. Bernhard Smith sympathised with the awkward position of the resident doctors but felt that their disobedience justified their dismissal and moved that they be given one month’s notice of their dismissal. Some discussion of the motion occurred with

\textsuperscript{29} Women’s Hospital Archives, A 1992/17, 374/375.
\textsuperscript{30} Argus, 28 January 1902.
the President remarking that the doctors had made out that the Committee was not considering the lives of the poor people whereas the Committee was really trying to save lives. The motion, seconded by Reverend O’Connell, was carried unanimously.

What was at issue here was the long-standing tensions between the professional medical staff and the members of the Committee who exercised considerable control over the daily activities at the hospital and even dared to question the medical expertise of the residents and the honorary doctors. An instance of this scrutiny was noted in the Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee some four years earlier. Mrs. Thornley, a member of the sub-committee which made the recommendation to close the hospital, had complained about the Delivery ward being used as an after-treatment ward because of a special case operated on at the Midwifery ward. A month later she questioned the midwifery sister about the number of minor operations performed in her wards and the rules applying to the cleaning of used instruments.  

This supervision of medical practices by lay volunteers would have been offensive to professional medical staff.

This dispute was not confined to the hospital domain, but was played out in the wider community. At a Trades Hall Council meeting on 24 January, a resolution was moved by Delegate Hannah deploiring the position of the management of the Women’s Hospital and requiring a deputation to wait upon the Premier to urge the immediate necessity of all hospitals in the State being brought under the management of the Government. There was some debate but an amendment to strike out ‘urging the Government’ was defeated and the motion carried. A resolution approving the actions of the Hospital Secretary in disobeying the Committee was moved, but it was agreed that this matter should be left for one week.  

Mr. Hannah’s complaint, which was aired in the Age next day, alleged that some female members of the Committee had used their positions inappropriately in their contacts with vulnerable patients. He objected to the ‘aristocratic’ element on the Committee who humiliated the wives of working men who had no chance of being on the Committee. He felt that the

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31 Ibid., 15 June 1896.
32 Trades Hall Council Minutes, Melbourne University Archives, Melbourne, 1/1/1/6, 24 January 1902, p. 150.
treatment which was meted out to them was ‘scandalous’.\footnote{Age, Saturday 25 January 1902.} Implied here was resentment over the practice of middle-class ladies vetting and supervising working-class patients at the hospital.

The Premier received the appointed delegation on the 28 January and on the 21 February its report was submitted at a Council meeting.\footnote{This report could not able be found in Melbourne University Archives or Public Records.} The minutes reveal no further discussion on this report, the dismissal of the Hospital Secretary or any aspect of the hospital closure. While the actions taken by this Council on this dispute demonstrated the impact of class consciousness in Victorian society at this time, this intervention was in the context of a broad platform of social reforms the Council was pursuing. However, its initial interest did not result in a sustained campaign. In the following weeks ‘bigger’ issues took precedence - the sale of the Benevolent Asylum, the building of an Inebriate Asylum, the establishment of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, the eight-hour working day, the nationalising of the drink traffic and the Factory Acts.\footnote{Trades Hall Council Minutes, January 1902, pp. 150-185.}

In the past, Janet Clarke’s method of appealing to the public by writing to newspapers had proved successful. Using a similar approach, she addressed a letter to the editor of the Age explaining how she wished to lay before the public the reasons for the closure of the Midwifery Department while fumigation and disinfection took place. The health situation in the Infirmary wards had given cause for anxiety for some weeks. On the 17 January, Dr. Cuscaden had asked to see the members of the committee and told them a case of septicaemia had occurred and the patient had since died. During the week other suspicious cases had occurred and these patients had been placed in isolation cottages. Unfortunately, these cases came from different wards. The Committee, aware that there had been fatal consequences following an earlier outbreak, had to decide whether they should close the hospital.

Having carefully outlined the order of events, the President drew a dramatic picture of the choices facing the Committee:
Should they take the risk? They felt it impossible to do so. Knowing there was the least chance of infection they considered they would be morally responsible if any woman coming into the hospital should contract that illness and die.\textsuperscript{36}

After the difficult decision was taken to close the section, the Committee immediately took steps to arrange places for patients in nursing homes, or if the women preferred, to be nursed at home. This would have occurred if the Committee’s instructions had been carried out, but unfortunately this did not happen.

Maintaining a measured tone, the President apologised for any misunderstanding that had occurred and praised the honorary staff for their ‘untiring work’ and the advice they had always given to assist the Committee to carry out its ‘difficult duty’. Finally, she did not resile from the problems facing the hospital admitting that the hospital was often overtaxed and its accommodation insufficient.\textsuperscript{37}

A fiery letter signed by both resident doctors appeared in the \textit{Age} on the same day. They attacked the Committee for invading the medical domain, its ‘folly and incompetency’, for its ignorance of medical matters - ‘What have a Lay committee to do with case books and temperature charts?’ - and for its ‘prying’ investigations of patients. Mesdames Thornley and Miller were named as the main offenders. In response to the comments made by Bernhard Smith and Mr. Panton at the meeting in the town hall - ‘Either the residents must be dismissed or the committee resign’. - the doctors responded - ‘Well, Sir, we see no justification for adopting the former alternative - the latter would meet with our enthusiastic approval’.\textsuperscript{38}

There is no doubt that these doctors sincerely believed that in carrying out their professional role the interests of the patients were paramount, so for them the closure of wards was insupportable even if it meant risking their employment. However, their continued immature rhetoric in support of their principled stance diminished their position. In their next published letter, they exonerated most of the members of the Committee, but named ‘Mesdames Miller, Thornley, Nicolson and – ‘we regretfully

\textsuperscript{36} This outbreak had occurred twenty years earlier.
\textsuperscript{37} Letters from Janet Lady Clarke in the \textit{Age} and \textit{Argus}, 27 January 1902.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Age}, 27 January 1902. Bernhard Smith was a lecturer at Melbourne University. Mr. Panton was a Police Magistrate.
add’ – Shields as their ‘enemies’. They expressed amazement that two of these ladies were appointed to the sub-committee which had caused things to go ‘astray’. They accused the Reverend O’Connell of a ‘foolish and baseless libel’ and in response to the charge of ‘youthfulness’ they replied: ‘But of course an older man would at once recognise the committee’s medical learning so cruelly flouted by the infants at present in office’. Only Janet Clarke received a glowing report:

Were all the ladies like their courteous president, the present scandal could never have arisen, but we are confident that there will be no peace or prosperity for the hospital until at least the four above-mentioned ladies resign.39

Another meeting followed at the Town Hall on Tuesday the 28 January, the President suggested they should seek the advice of the honorary staff to decide if it was safe to open the disinfected wards. When Mr. Goldstein suggested that this would mean not upholding their authority, she responded: ‘We are not trying to uphold authority in that spirit, but we are endeavouring to conserve the interests of the public’.40 This response suggests that she considered that the Committee’s role in monitoring hospital practices and patients existed only to ensure that patients had the best possible care and protection and not to perpetuate the authority of the Committee. When asked if the resident doctors were still admitting patients, the President replied that none had been admitted in the last few days, except to the tents.41 She wished to contradict a frequently-made statement that patients had been subject to prying and irrelevant questions as the only questions asked were those the government ordered ‘to be put’. Copies of these questions were handed to representatives of the press.

The President affirmed that the Committee was anxious to reopen the wards and asked Dr. Cuscaden for his opinion. He replied that the wards could be opened immediately, and this was the unanimous opinion of the honorary staff as there were no symptoms of septicaemia. Mrs. Shields said that the Committee would notify him when disinfecion was completed and Dr. Cuscaden agreed that this would be more than satisfactory. This completed their conference.

39 Age, Thursday 28 January, 1902.
40 Ibid.
41 See Footnote 28.
It should be noted that the wives of the proprietors of the *Age* and the *Argus* were both members of the Committee. Despite this connection, or because of it, the two newspapers covered this closure in considerable depth reporting in detail the meetings of the Committee and publishing the letters from the protagonists and the public.

On Monday 27 January, the *Age* included letters from the President, a dissatisfied ex-patient and the resident doctors. As well, they presented an overview of the situation. In this report, it was suggested that the Committee had acted firmly with regard to the resident doctors, but these officers had continued to defy the Committee and admit patients. While the honorary medical officers had objected to the closing of the Midwifery Department, they had not supported the resident medical staff. In fact, Dr. Cuscaden had informed a representative of the *Age*: ‘that the resident medical officers had acted without the authority of the honoraries, and that they took the responsibility on themselves’.

The *Age*, recognising that this incident was underpinned by the on-going power struggle between the medical forces and the voluntary workers, felt that the important point was whether the medical profession with their feelings of *esprit de corps* would in future be prejudiced against the hospital. It understood a meeting of subscribers would be called after the required twelve subscribers had signed the requisition.

The next day, the *Age* again commented on the ‘studiously correct’ stance taken by the honoraries, who were holding to their safe middle course. It quoted one doctor (unnamed) who had connections with the hospital for many years:

> The committee as a body is all right, and no one can complain of them, but one or two – whose conduct causes a great deal of trouble. (...). But it would be wrong to accuse the committee as a whole, as they have generally behaved very nicely indeed and done valuable work.

42 The repercussions continued into 1903 as the Medical School at the University of Melbourne boycotted the Women’s Hospital. On 14 August 1903 at the Annual General Meeting, the subscribers re-elected Janet Clarke as president and Mrs. Gunner and Mrs. Munce as vice-presidents, but a number of the members were not re-elected. On September 5, all members of the Committee, including the president and vice-presidents, resigned because they felt they did not have the support of the majority of subscribers.
On 29 January 1902, the *Argus* hoped that the strife was all over and considered the entire episode was caused by a misunderstanding between the Committee and the honorary midwifery staff. The members had believed that the honorary staff was seriously alarmed at the condition of the wards and considered the wards unsafe. The fact that the staff was only warning the Committee was not understood because the members did not have regular communication with the honorary staff but rather relied on the resident surgeons. In the opinion of the *Argus*, these men were temporary juniors who were gaining experience before they entered their careers and who had been: ‘too much on the scene, just as the responsible honoraries have been far too little’ which meant ‘the enthusiastic juniors of the institution became on this occasion audacious mutineers who had to be dealt with because they had no directions from their seniors’:

> It so happens that this particular institution seems to invite attack - and this though no charity has stronger claims on our common humanity. There are always people ready to defame it and its management, and this is the more reason why all within its walls are called on to act in loyal co-operation for the public good.43

Henceforth, it was suggested the honoraries should be represented on the Committee so they would be available to consult on medical matters. The *Argus* claimed it was an open secret that the Committee have long realised that the medical staff believed that they have the right of control and consequently have displayed hostility. What was needed was respect for each other’s rights to avoid strife and disastrous differences.44

The *Age* also published a letter signed by ‘an honest working man’ claiming his wife had been subjected to personal questioning by haughty and overbearing women who had humiliated her so much he had removed her from the hospital.45 Mrs. Shields, in her letter to the editor, said if the correspondent sent the name of his wife and the date of this episode a full inquiry would occur.46 In his next letter ‘the honest working man’ tempered his earlier attack by acknowledging that his wife had also been approached by two ladies who were courteous, ladylike and kind. He refused to give

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43 *Argus*, 29 January 1902.
44 Ibid., 28 January 1902.
45 *Age*, 27 January 1902.
46 Ibid.
his name because he did not want his name dragged before the public. Christina Reay’s letter on the same page disputed the claims of this man. As an ex-patient of three weeks, she could not complain of one unkind act. ‘Another honest working man’ in a letter to the Age described how his wife had been restored to health in the Infirmary Department. He had nothing but praise for the Committee ladies and the medical and nursing staff who were at all times careful and courteous. Referring to the comments of Mr. Hannah of the Trades Hall Council (24 January), he assured ‘the working classes that their wives would be in good hands in the infirmary ward’.

The Committee meeting on 31 January was told fumigation had been finished so the Secretary was directed to inform medical staff that the hospital would be open to receive patients from Saturday 1 February as there was now no danger from septicaemia. Suggested reforms were mooted including the appointment of qualified inspectors to determine if the hospital was free from infection. Both the honorary and resident staff favoured this move provided this was made by an unprejudiced authority.

On 11 February 1902, a public meeting of subscribers was held to consider the resolution – ‘that this meeting disapproves of the action of the committee in closing the Midwifery Department against the unanimous advice of the Honorary Staff’. Admission was by ticket with two hundred members attending. Janet Lady Clarke, who ascended the platform escorted by Sir Malcolm McEacharn, said that although the by-laws provided for the President to take the chair she felt that the meeting had been called because of lack of confidence in the Committee and therefore those present should elect their own president.

The Mayor, Sir Samuel Gillott, was elected and he read the resolution and stated that any gentleman was at liberty to propose this motion. Several minutes of silence was

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47 *Age*, Wednesday 29 January 1902.
49 This statement was incorrectly termed a ‘resolution’.
broken by Dr. Gresswell who asked if there was business before the meeting. The next speaker was Dr. W. Maloney, Janet Lady Clarke’s de facto brother-in-law.

I feel that, as there is nothing before the meeting, those who brought forward such an outrageous charge should withdraw it, and there is nothing else to do but to move a vote of thanks to the Mayor for taking the chair.

Dr. Maloney, as a representative of the workers of the State, called the Committee’s critics ‘cowardly, unmanly and unfair’. He also added he felt the disturbers had ‘less brains than heavy feet’, had not admitted their names and he would never allow the Government to hand control of the hospital to the doctors. The sense of outrage articulated by Dr. Maloney was significant. As a member of the Victorian Parliament he stood up for the factory workers and was genuinely concerned about the poor in the inner city. Through his links with the Wesley Mission he supported the unemployed and the poor women who used the services of the hospital. Despite his socialist leanings or because of them, he was suspicious of those who opposed the Committee’s actions. Although a doctor himself, he believed that doctors should not view themselves as members of an elite profession because they, like all workers, sold their services for money.50

After some argument the original censure motion was put and seconded followed by another objection from Dr Maloney. Janet Clarke requested that a statement written by her on behalf of the Committee be read.51 This eight page statement was read by Mr. W. Madden.52

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50 This information given to me by R. Biddington, Dr. Maloney's biographer.
51 Board of Management Correspondence, Series 0575, A 1990_06_056.
52 Mr. W. Madden was a Member of the Legislative Assembly and a conservative who promoted the interests of his Mallee electorate. His brother was Sir John Madden, a Chief Justice and Chancellor of the University of Melbourne.
Janet Clarke contended that the charge of closing the Midwifery Department despite the unanimous advice of staff was incorrect as the only letter received from the staff came a week after the closure on 24 January 1902. As well, the principal charge, that the Committee did not consult the staff before closing the Department, was inaccurate. She highlighted some important facts. Five deaths in quick succession, suspicious cases of high temperatures and weekly reports from the resident surgeons describing the health of the patients to be only fairly satisfactory had made the Committee anxious. Likewise, the ward visitors expressed dissatisfaction with patients’ progress. Prior to the weekly committee meeting on the 17 January, the chairman of the Honorary Midwifery surgeons, Dr. Cuscaden, requested a private meeting with the Committee. Janet Clarke described this meeting:

Upon his entering the Committee room all the members of the Committee present noticed at once that he was agitated and upset, and they felt before he spoke that something unusual and very serious had happened. He then told the Committee that he was very sorry to have to inform them that the health of the inmates of the Midwifery Department was not satisfactory. That there had been two deaths, one from septicaemia and the other from sapraemia – that suspicious cases had been placed in isolation cottages – all five cases had exceptionally high temperatures and that Dr. Lewis was isolated with the patients in the isolation cottages.
Dr. Cuscaden was then asked if he recommended that the Midwifery branch be closed which he was not prepared to do. Instead he hoped that by disinfecting and fumigating wards this would not be necessary. However, his hesitation in answering and his general demeanour and deep anxiety gave the impression to the Committee that he wished the Committee to order the closure rather than his colleagues or himself bearing the responsibility of this decision. Before he left he was asked whether the serious cases came from the same ward and after much hesitation he said he was not sure but thought this correct.

Dissatisfied with this interview the Committee sent for Dr. Lewis, the resident doctor, and asked him to explain his actions when the original septicaemia case was admitted. It appeared the patient had been moved to various wards before being sent to the isolation cottage where she died. Janet Clarke, perhaps indicating the extent of the Committee’s medical expertise learnt from their years of visiting the hospital, stated:

> All this, it appeared to us, and showing great want of discretion and caution, and spreading the infection in a large upstairs-ward, the verandah ward and the isolation Cottage. Had the case been sent to the Isolation Cottage in the first instance this spreading would have been avoided.

Consequently, a sub-committee was formed to investigate the necessity to immediately close the midwifery branch. After taking evidence, they made the decision to close the Midwifery wards for a month from 17 January. Immediate steps were taken to accommodate new patients outside the hospital in a nursing home within half a mile of the hospital. Women who could be attended in their own home would do so at the expense of the hospital. The next day another nursing home closer to the hospital was secured. Tents were later erected in the grounds.

Janet Clarke explained that the Committee, in their interview with Dr. Cuscaden, had assumed he was acting as the representative of the midwifery surgeons and felt that much of the misunderstanding could have been avoided if Dr. Cuscaden had assured them at that time ‘in a clear and decided manner whether there was or was not any risk or danger in keeping the Midwifery Department open’. In taking the responsibility to close this department, the Committee thought it was in the interests
of all the patients because it was impossible ‘for any unprejudiced and disinterested person to have totally affirmed that the wards were free of infection’, particularly as the resident doctors and nurses, who had attended the women with septicaemia, could have spread this deadly infection to other patients.

To suggestions in the press and elsewhere that the Constitution of the hospital should be altered, the President responded firmly, counselling against hasty and foolish decisions. The past forty years of dual control had on the whole worked well. She asserted that the duties of the Committee - providing funds and managing the Institution and controlling the servants – were both onerous and thankless. The fundamental principle guiding the Committee was to provide a hospital for the sick poor rather than the rich or well-to-do and often in doing this ‘they are assailed as being heartless or worse’. On the other hand, the public view the medical staff ‘in the character of ministering angels’, consequently the ‘sympathy of the unthinking’ was with the medical staff rather than the Committee:

It is, I understand, proposed that the Honorary surgeons should be given more control than is given under the present hospital constitution, but experience teaches me, and nearly all those who have a similar experience, that such a change would be a mistake.

Warming to her attack, she reminded her audience that the doctors were eligible to stand for election to the General Committee but had not done so. If they chose to and were elected she was sure they would be welcome as ‘brother committee men’ but the President warned that while their medical opinions would be respected, giving the doctors power to defy the committee and to spend money freely would she feared be disastrous.

If an error was made, which we deny, then it was made on the side of caution and humanity. The only object of the Committee (which I can, with confidence, say is an exceptionally conscientious, painstaking, sympathetic, and humane one) was to save poor women, at a time that they most require and deserve human sympathy and assistance, from what we thought, and still think, was a grave danger.
In conclusion she argued that if the resolution was carried and the doctors were given the power to flout the rulings of the Committee neither she nor the Committee could accept this and would give: ‘our immediate resignation in a body, and we will then only hold office until our successors are appointed if requested to do so’.

This concluded the reading of the President’s statement. The meeting then heard from a number of interested participants. Dr. Cuscaden restated his version of events expressing his regret that the conflict could damage ‘one of the most valuable and deserving institutions in the State’; Reverend O’Connell corrected inaccuracies in Dr. Cuscaden’s statement and referred to the missing letter of 17 January which O’Connell had not heard of until this meeting; Dr. Maloney repeated his earlier request for ‘the offenders’ to identify themselves; Dr. Springthorpe, a leading Melbourne physician, acted as a peacemaker and asked for the motion to be withdrawn; Mr. Gavin Duffy felt the Committee was justified in ordering the closure.53 After some further discussion the vote was taken and the motion was lost.54

This was not the end of the matter. On the 14 February, the Committee meeting received two applications for the vacant residencies from Dr. Lewis and Dr. Yule. The secretary was instructed to write to the gentlemen to inform them they would not be reappointed. Their former positions were to be advertised in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. A week later the Committee was told that another letter was received from Dr. Lewis and Dr. Yule. A vote was taken to see if the letter could be regarded as an ‘ample apology’ and this was ‘unanimously negatived’.55 As the two doctors were to leave at noon, the offer by Dr. Shields to act as locus tenens was accepted. On March 18, the President requested six months leave as she was travelling to England. On 4 April the Committee received a letter from her indicating her intention to visit the chief hospitals in London and Paris. Lastly, Janet Clarke suggested that when a vacancy occurred on the Committee, the president of the Trades Council could be invited to stand for election to the Board.56

53 There were three Duffy brothers who were prominent Victorian Citizens. This was probably John Gavan Duffy M.L.A. who had a reputation as an able debater. See www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs.
54 Age, 28 February 1902.
55 Minutes of Board Meeting, 21 February 1902.
56 While the Committee’s official title was the ‘Board’, the term ‘Committee’ was used by its members and newspapers.
In discussing this issue, Janet McCalman accepted Dr. Cuscaden’s account of the closure including the letter he had sent to the Committee opposing this move.\textsuperscript{57} In this explanation there was no mention of his interview with the Committee, the five wards with suspicious cases or the fact that the septic patient had been moved from ward to ward. McCalman noted that the two resident doctors who refused to obey the Committee’s decision and the Hospital Secretary who hid the hospital key were dismissed. Based on this evidence, McCalman argued that the responsibility for the ‘scandal’ lay with the Committee who had meddled in medical matters including patrolling wards weekly and not respecting the privacy of patients, resident doctors or students. Although no details of the president’s involvement in the process were given, McCalman claimed Janet Clarke was left: ‘fighting for public credibility for putting words into Dr. Cuscaden’s mouth which he denied having uttered, and the Minutes report nothing of the alleged exchanges’. She asserted that Lady Clarke resolved her public embarrassment by going overseas for six months, leaving her deputy ‘to brave out the Board’s public humiliation’\textsuperscript{58} McCalman seemed unaware of the newspaper coverage, the President’s letters of explanation, the defeat of the subscribers’ motion, the decision to reopen the hospital after twelve days when fumigation had finished or the failed attempt by the resident doctors to apologise to the Committee.

The focus for all parties involved in this incident was the presence of septicaemia in the wards and the welfare of patients. But, underpinning this situation was the ongoing power struggle between the Committee and the powerful body of elected honorary doctors who objected to their work practices being scrutinised and controlled by non-professionals. Many of the members of the Committee had experienced the dangers associated with childbirth and understood the dangers of infection to both mother and child. Janet Clarke’s daughter, Petrea, aged eighteen months had died from an infection in 1879, following the birth of her son six days earlier.\textsuperscript{59} This danger was known by all the medical and administration staff.

\textsuperscript{57} Janet McCalman, \textit{Sex and Suffering}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{58} According to Phyllis Power’s memoirs, Janet and her daughters journeyed to London to be present at the Coronation of King Edward V11 on 6 June 1902. Her daughters, Mary and Vera, were presented at court to the new King and Queen (Alexandra). Thus this visit to England would have been pre-organised. She returned in January 1903.
\textsuperscript{59} Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne 1879, Scheldule B, No. 226.
associated with the Women’s Hospital. Confused by Dr. Cuscaden’s indecisive approach to septicaemia in the wards and the movement of doctors and infected patients between wards, the Committee’s decision was taken to protect patients and possibly their own reputation and legal position. Aware of repercussions resulting from this closure, a contingency plan to provide for prospective patients was put in place. These arrangements were clearly explained by the President in her public letters.

The prediction that ‘poor woman’ would be adversely affected by the closure of certain wards proved erroneous. Within twelve days the wards had been disinfected and the hospital was functioning normally. Not so for the three staff members, Mr. Gibson, Dr. Lewis and Dr. Yule. Mr. Gibson, despite fifteen years of service, was dismissed because he chose to act according to his conscience rather than obeying the Committee’s instruction. This service was later recognised by the honorary doctors but they did not contest the Committee’s right of dismissal.

Reverend O’Connell, popular priest to the Catholic poor of Carlton, maintained his support for the Committee’s decision. As a member of the sub-committee which recommended the closure of the wards, he was very critical of the inaccuracies in Doctor Cuscaden’s statements and ‘the missing letter’ and unforgiving of the refusal of Mr. Gibson and the doctors to obey the Committee.

Janet Clarke’s letters do not suggest that her decisions were influenced by her close friendships with Committee members or the honorary doctors.60 While the ‘interventionist’ ladies were publicly criticised for their actions, neither the honorary doctors nor the Melbourne newspapers censured the way the President handled this dispute. She represented the Committee in a dignified and professional manner exercising her personal authority without fear or favour. At the 28 January meeting, when Mr. Goldstein took exception to the reopening of the wards because he thought this move undermined the Board’s authority, the President responded: ‘We are not trying to uphold authority in that spirit, but we are endeavouring to conserve the interests of the public’. Clearly, this comment refutes the notion that the President had

60 See Cliveden Visitors’ Book. These people were frequent visitors to Cliveden. Russell Clarke had stayed with the Shields in 1886.
adopted an aristocratic approach towards the sick patients and staff; rather it suggests that she was intent on finding a reasonable solution. Her agenda was directed at sustaining the reputation of the chair for wise, patient and just ruling.61

The closure of the wards of the Infirmary Department of the Women’s Hospital from the 17 January 1902 to the 1 February 1902 enables my study to measure Janet Clarke’s professional skills and performance in the public domain. She appraised the situation intelligently, presented her arguments in a measured and logical manner and did not shirk from her responsibilities. Janet Clarke’s acceptance letter and her lengthy experience on the Committee show her understanding of the responsibilities involved in assuming this position. This was not a titular appointment as demonstrated by her lively engagement with the doctors, public and the press. She did not delegate the responsibilities which underpinned this appointment and therefore handled the consequences of the closure personally. While the doctors and the Trade Union Council attempted to portray this event as part of a class struggle, Janet Clarke did not respond to this situation in terms of her wealth or class, but focussed on the immediate issue of preventing the spread of infection in the hospital. Aware of the interaction of other agendas, she cautioned the subscribers against giving the doctors sole control of the management of the hospital and advised the Committee to invite the president of the Trades Hall Council to stand for election to the Hospital Committee.

From the outset, Janet Clarke was intent on conserving ‘the interests of the public’ and upholding the administrative structure of the hospital as mandated by the Government. This included requiring all potential patients to answer a set list of questions prior to their admittance. Left with finding a solution to a serious problem which was not of her making and caught in the cross-fire of the power struggle between the Committee and the honorary staff, she showed considerable courage in facing the subscribers and engaging in public debate. The years spent working within large business and volunteer organisations had consolidated her administrative and personal skills and empowered her to move effortlessly outside the usual restrictive gender constraints of colonial and early colonial society that hindered women from

61 *Age*, Wednesday 29 January 1902. This was confirmed in 1903 when she was re-elected by subscribers as president of the Hospital Committee.
entering the public domain. Here we see her as a skilled mediator whose accomplished management of a difficult situation could suggest an early prototype of a modern professional administrator. This incident was a precursor to Janet Lady Clarke’s future political career which emerged in response to social and political changes following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia.
Chapter Seven

Political Matters

‘We all know how freely her assistance was given, and how hard she worked in the
endeavour to educate the minds of our women electors, so that they might be able to
cast intelligent votes at election-time’.\(^1\)

The conceptual framework of unchanging conservatism within the rapidly changing
Australian nation in the 1900s is open to challenge given the efforts of the members
of the Australian Women’s National League (AWNL) to modernise conservatism
within a gender-based, rather than a class-based framework. Janet Clarke’s broader
reach of conservative thinking which included the redesigning of conservative
political values through a female perspective, her inclusive appeal to ‘every woman’,
and the evolving notion of women’s identity developing through active participation
in AWNL’s political activities, is ignored. An article in *The Woman* outlined this
position claiming that conservatism as practised by the AWNL: ‘means keeping the
things which reason and experience tell us are worth keeping, while being willing to
change when change is seen to be necessary or desirable’.\(^2\)

Janet Clarke was a professional woman in an age when genuine professional women
rarely existed. Janet Clarke did not fit into a stereotypical colonial mould and this
perhaps explains why feminist historians, confronted by her conservatism, have not
unravelled the multi-layers of her career. In this chapter my intention is to examine
the final years of Janet Clarke’s life as she shaped the political culture of Victoria
which emerged when the Commonwealth Parliament passed the female
Enfranchisement Act in 1902.

Politics was a familiar world to Janet Clarke given that her father had been elected to
the first Legislative Council in 1851 and to the first Victorian Legislative Assembly in
1856. The petition that her mother submitted to Parliament in 1868 suggested that the
lives of the Snodgrass family had been dominated by the demands of Peter
Snodgrass’s parliamentary commitments. Probably it was with Janet’s encouragement

\(^1\) *Melbourne Punch*, 18 June 1908, Ladies’ Letter, Holmby House, Toorak.
\(^2\) *The Woman*, 28 April 1909, p. 446.
that William Clarke stood for the Southern Province of Victoria and was elected to the Legislative Council in 1878.\(^3\) Michael Clarke suggested that he had a positive influence on other politicians:

‘… his influence with his fellow members was considerable. In particular he had worked for a more amicable relationship with the Assembly, helping to end the years of bitter conflict between the two houses.’\(^4\)

In his wife’s case, her family background and the experience of confronting the Anglican hierarchy and the medical professionals had prepared and skilled Janet Clarke for her foray into the public political domain.

Even before William Clarke’s death there is evidence of his wife’s involvement in political matters. In 1895, a community-backed campaign for improved factory working conditions, organised by the newly-formed Anti-Sweating League and the *Age* newspaper, resulted in a new Factory Act Bill being introduced into Parliament.\(^5\) Shortly afterwards James Service, then the Chief Justice, received a letter from Janet Clarke objecting to amendments proposed by Dr. Maloney, which had been included in the Bill.\(^6\)

The earlier Factory Acts of 1873 and 1885 had been a response to public concern for women and children working under ‘sweating’ conditions in factories.\(^7\) Dr. Maloney’s amendments referred to the ‘sweated’ working conditions of Victorian nurses.\(^8\) He demanded shorter working days and meals and rest breaks for the nurses and mooted

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\(^3\) He remained in Parliament until his death in 1897 but attended infrequently.

\(^4\) Michael Clarke, p. 263.

\(^5\) John Rickard, *Class and Politics*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp. 92-103. Rickard contended that the League ‘aimed to arouse middle-class consciences’ and was not organised by the unions. Dr. Charles Strong and Dr. Alexander Edgar, founders of Wesley Mission, Rev. Professor A. Gorman, a Congregational minister, and Alfred Deakin were all members of this League.

\(^6\) Michael Clarke, p. 193. William Clarke had supported his half-brother’s education and consequent five-year medical studies in London after the death of ’Big Clarke’.

\(^7\) ‘Sweating’ was seen as a social problem, but the Trade Unions leaders, while supporting these Acts, were more intent on pursuing issues of conciliation and arbitration. Dr. Maloney, a member of this League and the Legislative Assembly, had been an active participant in the Factories Act Inquiry Board which preceded the introduction of the Bill in 1895.

\(^8\) See Richard Trembath and Donna Hellier, *All Care and Responsibility*, p. 36 and pp. 33-38. ‘No person under 16 years of age or woman or girl shall work for hire or reward or as a nurse in any charitable institution (...) for a longer time than 52 hours (excluding meal times) in any week; or for longer than nine hours, excluding meal times, in any one day, except one day a week, when eleven hours work may be done’.
penalties against employers who failed to implement these conditions. It was widely recognized that nurses’ working conditions in Melbourne and country hospitals were unacceptable and after some changes the Assembly agreed to Dr. Maloney’s amendments.

According to Trembath and Hellier, immediately after these amendments were passed pressure was exerted by hospital boards who feared that hospitals and other charity institutions would be unworkable if nurses stopped caring for patients when their eight or nine hour shifts officially ended.9 As president of the Melbourne District Nurses’ Association and a long-serving member of the Women’s Hospital Board, Janet Clarke would have been well aware of the injustices associated with nurses’ work regimes. Her appreciation of the demands of the nursing profession was shown in her June 1894 entry in the Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee where she suggested practical measures to improve the nurses’ working conditions.10 One year later, Janet Clarke chose to maintain the status quo and intervene on the side of the hospital management presumably because of concerns that the hospital system, including the ones she was connected with - the Women’s, St. Vincent’s and the Children’s - would be unworkable if this new legislation was introduced.

She had known James Service, now a member of the Legislative Council, over a number of years. The tone of Service’s response in December 1895 and his assurances that the Bill would: ‘be considerably altered in the direction you wish’ and ‘the rights and interests of others’ maintained - were unquestionably respectful of both Janet Clarke’s experience in hospital administration and her political influence.11

I received your letter this morning and may say at once I sympathise with the views you express in regard to certain clauses in the Factories Bill, and I think before the Bill leaves the Council it will be considerably altered in the direction you wish. There is no doubt the promoters of themselves in another place were in some respects one-

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9 Ibid., p. 37.
10 Book, June 1894.
11 Letter, 4 December 1895, Clarke letters. James Service (1823-1899) was born in Scotland. A wealthy business man and banker, he believed in the Empire’s civilising mission and in Australia’s imminent destiny as a great nation. Twice Premier of Victoria, he became a Member of the Legislative Council in 1888.
eyed people and in trying to do good to certain classes, they entirely overlooked the rights and interests of others. Their mistakes we shall try to rectify.

Yours

James Service

Two weeks later, another member of the Legislative Council also responded to Janet Clarke’s concerns: ‘and you may depend on it that the Bill will not be allowed to contain any clauses that will leave a sense of injustice to any section of the public or to any charitable institution’. Obviously, the pressure from the Hospital Boards and their representatives was effective. When this Bill returned to the House on 28 February 1896, the clauses concerning the nurses were omitted – a decision facilitated by Dr. Maloney’s absence overseas.

The Clarkes interacted regularly with political figures as their signatures in the Visitors’ Book identifying their visits to Cliveden indicate. Correspondence also exists with politicians like Thomas Bent, the Premier of Victoria, their friend John Forrest, the Premier of Western Australia and Prime Ministers Deakin and Reid. In an astute political move, it seems that Janet Clarke was swift to congratulate political leaders who assumed high office. Six days after becoming Prime Minister in 1904, George Reid wrote: ‘Your kind letter only reached me this moment. I hasten to thank you for your confidence and good wishes, indeed pleased if I am to reach your high expectations’. A week later Reid wrote that he was delighted with her note that: ‘will not make me conceited only more anxious to do that which is right’.

Janet Clarke’s leadership in shaping the ‘woman movement’ is evident in the steps she took to set up the National Council of Women (NCW). At the initial meeting at Cliveden on 22 November 1901, Janet Clarke explained how she had attended the

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12 Letter, 18 December 1895, on Legislative Council Letterhead at Rupertswood but inadvertently overlooked in the Clarke Letters publication. It was possibly from Arthur Sachse, but the signature is illegible.
13 Dr Biddington, in his unpublished biography of Dr. Maloney, noted: ‘the Government did not want their primary reform, that of the Factories and Shops Act, to be hampered or delayed in any way by what was an extraneous agenda to them. They saw the nurses’ work load as another issue’. This Bill was delayed for many months by the introduction of other controversial amendments and it was not until September 1896 that it was finally passed. It also included a minimum wage clause for factory workers.
14 John Forrest was Minister for Defence (1901-1903), Home Affairs (1904) and Treasurer from 1905 in the Commonwealth Government.
Quinquennial meeting of the International Council of Women in London in 1899 in place of Mrs. Bear-Crawford, the vice-president from Victoria, who had unexpectedly died. At that time, the president of this Council, Lady Aberdeen, had asked Janet Clarke to form a NCW in Victoria. She had also been asked by the vice-presidents of the Tasmanian National Council to do so. Tasmanian associations had been formed in Tasmania in 1899 and in New South Wales in 1896. Consequently, the Victorian branch consisting of four women’s associations - the Austral Salon, Jewish Women’s Guild, Young Women’s Christian Association, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union – was formalised at Cliveden on 19 March 1902 when Janet Clarke was elected president, an office which she held until her death. This occurred soon after the Hospital dispute and just before she travelled overseas.

By the year’s end there were thirty-five affiliated organisations in Victoria. Ada Norris explained the genesis of the NCW in her text, *Champions of the Impossible*:

… it was not to be an institution but primarily a forum from which ideas would be put forward and from which concerted action could be taken on matters of concern. It could make a combined approach to the government in support of proposals of one of its member bodies; it could initiate and develop action in fields not already included in the work of an existing association.

The NCW acted as an ‘umbrella’ organisation linking existing women’s societies in order to advance the interests of women, children, the family, the State and the Commonwealth. Immediately after its inauguration, the NCW initiated a campaign to have police matrons replace male prison officers in women’s prisons. It took seven years before their efforts to improve the plight of women prisoners were successful. Other projects were undertaken, including the establishment of the Talbot Colony for Epileptics at Clayton in 1907 to provide places for rehabilitation, care and education.

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16 This was reported in the *Woman’s Sphere*, Vol. 1, December 1901, p. 130, State Library of Victoria.
17 NCW associations were formed in South Australia 1902, Queensland 1905 and Western Australia in 1925.
18 See [www.womenaustralia.info/biogs](http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs). NCW participated in a number of deputations supporting women’s suffrage.
19 These are listed in Ada Norris’s, *Champions of the Impossible*, pp. 9-10.
20 Ibid., pp. 8-13. In 1903 Janet Clarke resigned as president because she considered her membership of a number of affiliated organisations conflicted with the role of an independent president. Consequently, the practice of the wives of State Governors assuming the presidency was instituted and Janet Clarke was elected vice-president.
for those who suffered special health problems. Previously these patients would have
been assigned to asylums and reformatories. Judith Smart and Marian Quartly
considered that the success in these areas was due to the NCW feminist perspective
prevailing in “the professions of medicine, public health and education – and the
emerging one of social work.”

An important element of Janet Clarke’s political conservatism was her attitude to the
British Empire. Her loyalty was clearly expressed in a letter she wrote to Melbourne
newspapers calling for a meeting at Cliveden to set up ‘A Patriotic Fund’ to help the
families of Australian soldiers who had been sent to fight with the British in South
Africa:

Figure 31 Letter from Lady Janet Clarke to the Argus, 1903

Our brave men give their lives with courage and daring conspicuous to the whole
world. Under a merciless fire, from an enemy entrenched, they never falter, but die
fighting, and amongst them are our country men, whose baptism by fire is of no
common kind. We know that they will gallantly sustain our honour; but I feel, in
common with “An Australian Woman” that it is our bounden and solemn duty to
provide a national fund for them, and their life, in the great uncertainty of battle, they
should be killed or wounded.

21 Ibid., pp. 20-32.
22 Smart and Quartly, ‘The National Council of Women’, p. 231. Currently the NCW still represents
Australian women’s organisations both nationally and internationally.
23 Handwritten letter, [in private hands]. The “Australian Woman” mentioned here had written to the Age on 19 December 1899 about the situation in South Africa asking for money to finance supplies for
The following week she took up the cudgels for the ten Australian nurses who were leaving a week later to join the English nurses in Africa. She explained that they needed money to pay for their ‘incidental’ expenses because, unlike the soldiers, they did not receive Government financial support. As an Empire loyalist, Janet Clarke’s heroes were great Empire-makers like Lord Wellington, Admiral Lord Nelson, Lord Wolseley and General Gordon. Given that her political platform was underpinned by patriotism, it meant that the best political candidates were ones who would sacrifice themselves for their country with the same dedication as had the brave soldiers and nurses in the Sudan and South Africa. A lifelong exposure to the dynamics of the political arena meant Janet Clarke understood the need for discipline, education, co-operative efforts and dedication if the League’s ideals were to be achieved.

Judith Allen has shown that feminism in this historical period was an international force and those involved in this cause shared ideas and methods:

Its leaders and members travelled, conferred, lectured, emigrated (…), wrote, read emulated, boasted, exchanged crucial materials, and sought and received advice, solace, criticism and support across national lines.

An 1883 alliance between Lady Henry Somerset, the president of the British Women’s Temperance Association, and its American counterpart gave the latter organisation access to British territories across the world. In her paper examining the international activities of the World Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) Patricia Grimshaw described the work of the American, Jessie Ackermann, a ‘paid missionary’ for the WCTU. In the 1890s Ackermann travelled to Asia, South Africa, the frontline: “We want a leader in the good work and if Janet Lady Clarke would only take the matter up, the women of the colony would rally at her side and success would be assured”.

24 *Age*, 19 February 1900. A group of ten nurses left on the S.S. Euryalus with the 3rd Victorian Bushman Contingent on 10 March 1900. Among them were J. Lempriere and E. Langlands. See www.users.westconnect.com.au/.
25 Michael Clarke, pp. 217.
26 Judith Allen, pp. 4-5.
New Zealand and Australia in order to extend the WCTU’s influence and to promote a women’s rights agenda. Other international first-wave feminists - Lady Aberdeen, Mary Livermore, Annette Bear-Crawford and Vida Goldstein – all journeyed abroad to attend international conferences. Lady Aberdeen presided over the Women’s International Quinquennial Conferences in Berlin in 1904 and Toronto in 1909. Goldstein attended an International Women Suffrage Conference in Washington DC in 1902 and in the same year represented the NCW at the International Council of Women Conference in Washington, chaired by Lady Aberdeen. Goldstein believed that the NCW was an organisation ‘practical and broadminded in its aims’ that gave ‘impetus to women’s work’. Similarly, Janet Clarke used her frequent visits abroad to make contact with other like-minded women and to use this information to assist the organisations she supported or founded in Australia.

Janet Clarke’s establishment of the Alliance Française and Dante Alighieri Society in Melbourne demonstrated her interest in European and British politics. Events, such as the assassination of both the presidents of France and Italy by anarchists, and her knowledge of national and international affairs, meant that her opposition to the socialist movement in Australia became more focussed.

Janet Clarke had been overseas when the Commonwealth Franchise Act was passed on 12 June 1902. She returned to Melbourne in January 1903. The Commonwealth General Election to be held on 16 December 1903 would be the first time all eligible Australian women could vote. Women had gained the right to vote in State elections in South Australia in 1894, Western Australia in 1899, New South Wales in 1902, Tasmania in 1903 but women in Queensland and Victoria had to wait until 1905 and

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28 Doris French, pp. 286-270.
29 Bomford, p. 32. Goldstein’s lecture itinerary in America is outlined on pp. 32-44.
30 See pp. 158-161.
31 Monsieur Carnot was assassinated in 1894 and President William McKinley in September 1901. In February 1908, the King of Portugal, Carlos 1 and his son, the Prince Royal, were assassinated by two republican anarchists in Lisbon. Revolutionary socialism called for the abolition of capitalism, parliamentary democracy and private property. It was inspired by Marxist theories. Democratic socialism requires the redistribution of wealth through the constitutional use of Parliament. See Research Note by Glen Worthington, No.28, 2001 at www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs.
32 In the 1901 Commonwealth election only South Australian and Western Australian women voted as they were already enfranchised. The new Commonwealth Parliament passed a Bill in 1902 to extend this right to all Australian women who were over 21 and a British subject. See Audrey Oldfield, Australian Women and the Vote, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1993, p. 1994. Also see Patricia Grimshaw, Settler Anxieties, p. 572: ‘The new Australian Commonwealth legislature proceeded effectively to exclude all Aborigines in the same electoral act that enfranchised white women (…)’.
1908 respectively. A number of well-known feminists – Henrietta Dugdale, Annie Lowe, Louise Lawson, Bretenna Smyth, Rose Scott, Annette Bear-Crawford and Vida Goldstein – were actively involved in the suffragist movement during the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s. Other than her role in the foundation of the NCW, some of whose members were allied to the suffrage movement, there is no evidence of Janet Clarke’s participation in any political organisation before 1903. This changed in September 1903 when she wrote to the newly-elected Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. Deakin was a political liberal, a proud Australian, a loyal subject of the British Empire and he supported state franchise for Victorian women. The decisive political message underpinning this missive suggests, at the very least, indirect support for women’s suffrage and a desire to involve her networks in this issue.

Dear Mr. Deakin,

I want to see you very much in reference to a gathering together in an Educational sense of all the women I know best. Will you tell me anytime tomorrow – between 12-2, - 5-6, at which I could see you either in town or at your home?

May I tell you what an immense pleasure it is to me to see you reach the fulfilment of your cause and to say that dear Lady Loch predicted it always. Lord Loch always thought you were our statesman and I hold in reverence everyone, whom my husband admired and esteemed – so I am glad that you should be where you are – I am so glad I was in the House.

Figure 32 Janet Clarke’s letter to Prime Minister Alfred Deakin

Courtesy of National Library of Australia

33 See Audrey Oldfield’s Women’s Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle, pp. 131-169.
35 Letter, 24 September 1803, held in National Library of Australia Archives, 1540/15/20. Lady Loch was the wife of Governor of Victoria (1884-1889), Sir Henry Loch. They became close friends of the Clarkes during their time in Victoria. See Marguerite Hancock, Colonial Consorts, pp. 155-186.
This letter and her presence in the House indicated that Janet Clarke was well aware of the political implications and responsibilities that came with female enfranchisement. Apparently, Deakin approved her agenda as four days later Janet Clarke drafted her own political manifesto. This document was sent to chosen acquaintances and to newspapers.

Willing or unwilling the women of Australia have had the Franchise conferred on them by Federal Parliament, and as we out-number the male voters, the importance of recognising the responsibility thrown upon us cannot be overestimated. Personally I have not sought or even desired it as I have felt that a woman’s side in life is quite as strenuous as that of a man in his own work. Now all is changed, having a voice in the affairs of our country we would be selfish, and wanting in patriotism indeed, if we did not do our very best to inform ourselves as to the work which lies before us. It would be the aim of every woman to act wisely, and well, while she feels that her intelligence may help to make, or mar, Australia and preserve it a free unfettered country. She would, I feel sure, leave no stone unturned to use her vote with judgement and knowledge.

For this end I would ask you to come to a meeting at Cliveden on Monday 28 September when some of these gentlemen who understand the wants of our country, will give us the benefit of their counsel and advice in forming ourselves into an Australian Women’s League.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) Copies of Janet Clarke’s handwritten and typed letters are in private hands. The letter and a report of the meeting were published in the *Argus*, 29 September 1903.
‘Willing or unwilling’ was one of the earliest political slogans used in an Australian political campaign. This catchphrase linked all Australian women, regardless of class, religion or education and demanded that ‘she’ (and not the other) accept the responsibility of delivering an informed vote. Janet Clarke’s stated intention was to establish an Australian Women’s League to assist women to vote with ‘judgement and knowledge’. This document heralded a paradigm shift in women’s politics in Victoria.

On 29 September 1903, an account of this meeting was reported in the Argus entitled ‘Women in Politics’. Between 300 and 400 invited ladies had assembled the day

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37 In the last and present century - 'It's Time', 'We Shall Overcome', 'Keep the Bastards Honest', 'Yes We Can', Moving forward, - have been used in political campaigns in Australia and USA.

38 Argus, 29 September 1903; and Punch’s Illustrated Interviews – Social Items for Month of September 1903.
before in the *Cliveden* ballroom to hear ‘an instructive address on the use of the franchise’. The speakers were John Forrest, Senator Robert Best, Mr Murray Smith and Professor Harrison Moore. John Forrest was the Commonwealth Minister of Home Affairs and a close friend of the Clarkes. Senator Robert Best, was a Liberal protectionist politician of the Anglican faith. Mr. Murray Smith was a member of the Victorian Assembly, Presbyterian, anti-protectionist and Director of the Bank of Victoria. He had a close friendship with Dr. Charles Strong and Lord Rosebery. Professor Moore, whose wife was a suffragist, was an expert in constitutional law at Melbourne University. These were men of wide-ranging views chosen for their political expertise. Frank Clarke, Janet Clarke’s son, presided at the meeting. His advice was: ‘that it was not the object of the meeting to dictate to those present, or to ask them to pledge themselves to any particular platform, but merely to let them have the advantage of the counsel of experienced men’.

The speakers, as reported in the *Age*, urged eligible women to ensure their names were on the rolls, to exercise their own judgements, to form an association to ensure the power of their franchise and to be aware that the press often represented the views of one party. John Forrest, in pointing out that female franchise was a responsibility as well as a privilege, explained that Janet Lady Clarke wanted to set up suburban centres to promote political education and encourage women to share in the work of these organisations.

Unfortunately, a profile of Janet Clarke, published in the 1980s, disregarded the substance of her manifesto, instead extracting this sentence as the significant message and ignoring the main thrust of the document: ‘Personally I have not sought or even desired it [the vote] as I have felt that a woman’s side in life is quite as strenuous as that of a man in his own work’. This statement was then used to present Janet Clarke as a ‘wealthy proselytiser of domesticity’ rather than a political activist.

As a woman for whom marriage had conferred a title, enormous wealth, power and influence, Janet was a proselytiser of a domesticity she herself never practised. Her conservative appeal to the ontological bond of motherhood was in direct opposition to a class view of society then being propagated by intellectuals and the male-dominated Labour parties. She used her considerable energy and talents to establish and extend
the institutional supports for the domestication of women, thus helping to contain feminist demands for equality while providing a public role for women as ‘social housekeepers’ and educators of working class women in their domestic duty’.  

Consequently, the significance of the ‘willing or unwilling’ message was lost. My own research has failed to uncover any further references to this letter in other academic dissertations. This is surprising as the original letter was not confined to a private archive, but was published in two newspapers.

Two days before the 1903 December election, the newspaper, *Vanity Fair*, invited two ‘political’ ladies, Janet Clarke and Vida Goldstein, to write on the subject of ‘Voting in the Federal elections’. Vida Goldstein was a leading suffragist and president of the Women’s Federal Political Association but was not allied to any political party. In August 1903, this association had approved her candidacy for the Commonwealth Senate election. Both of these women were founding members of the National Council of Women and both emphasised the importance of educating themselves about the candidates and voting independently. Informed women, Janet Clarke considered, would not vote for candidates who promoted anarchy and socialism and she advised women to eschew parties such as Protectionist, Free Trade or Labour. Instead, she counselled women to examine the ‘early records’ of the candidate to ensure he was a man of experience, honesty, fortitude who would sacrifice himself for his country. Vida Goldstein expected that many enfranchised women would give their vote to the well-organised Labour Party; however, she believed ‘labouring women’ would cast an independent vote because they took a far

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39 Lesley Scholes, *200 Australian women*, pp. 56-7. Scholes also claimed incorrectly that Janet Clarke had resigned from the Committee of the Women’s Hospital when the resident doctors asserted their right to determine eligibility of patients on medical rather than moral grounds.

40 A different letter, using the slogan ‘willing or unwilling’, was sent to a Western Australian women’s political organisation by the Victorian branch of the AWNL. This was quoted in Margaret Fitzherbert’s *Liberal Women*, Federation Press New South Wales 2004, p. 44.

41 *Vanity Fair*, 1 December 1903, Modern Chambers, Collins Street, Melbourne.

42 Janette Bomford, *Vida Goldstein*, p. 53. Women’s Federal Political Association (WPEA) was formed in June 1903. Rose Scott was president of Women’s Political and Educational League (WPEL) formed in 1902.

43 Ibid., pp. 54-5. Nellie Martel, Mary Moore and Selina Anderson were also candidates. Membership of WPEA increased to 700 during her campaign (pp. 54-72). Bomford described Goldstein’s political campaign and her defeat: ‘She ‘was beaten but not disgraced gaining 51,497 votes, half the votes of the top-polling candidate’, p. 69.

44 Rose Scott also advised women to avoid party politics. See *Our Centenary of Women’s Suffrage* published by the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, 2003.
more intelligent interest in public questions than women of the leisure classes. Janet Clarke suggested that the vast majority ‘of toiling womanhood’ would vote for the ‘humane man’. Shortly before her death, she again reiterated her belief that when exercising their vote, Australian women would avoid ‘anything which savours of self or party’.

Vida Goldstein’s representation, as ‘the greatest of the Victorian, and perhaps of the Australian suffragists’, in the 2008 centenary celebrations acknowledged her rightful place in our Australian story. On the other hand, politicised historiography has supported the misconception that Janet Clarke worked actively against women suffrage. While she did not sign the 1891 Women’s Suffrage Petition, there is no record of her being a member of the Women’s Anti-Suffrage League founded in 1900 by Miss Carrie Reid and Miss Freda Derham. In my personal scrutiny of the Anti-Suffrage petition submitted to the Legislative Council in September 1900, I did not find Janet Clarke’s signature or familiar signatures from her circle of friends. Usually, her method of publicising causes she supported was through letters to newspapers. Other than the interview in *Vanity Fair*, I have found no document that connected Janet Clarke with either the suffrage or anti-suffragist movement.

Yet, her election as President of the National Council of Women in 1902 did link her to an organisation which supported women’s suffrage. Ada Norris claimed the NCW strongly supported the affiliated organisations that had been working for female enfranchisement in Victoria. Judith Smart and Marian Quartly are more circumspect arguing the executive of the NCW before 1906 understood that female suffrage had to be ‘delicately handled’ because of the disparate views of its NCW constituency. This view is also reflected in Janet Clarke’s compelling phrase ‘willing or unwilling’ which recommended the bonding of the two opposing suffrage forces in the interests

45 At this time there was some confusion about the correct spelling of the Labor/Labour Party.
46 Letter in *The Woman*, May 1908. This was just before the annual AWNL Empire Day celebration.
48 The Australian Women Biographical entry at www.womenaustralia.info/biogs and Lesley Scholes’ article claimed that Janet Clarke opposed giving women the vote.
50 PROV, VPRS 2599/PO, Unit 194. Grace Watson, a member of the AWNL, signed the petition.
of the greater good. Smart and Quartly considered the NCW’s belated support was critical to the passing of the 1908 Adult Suffrage Bill in Victoria:

The NCW’s entry into the last stages of the struggle for the vote was, then, gradual and tentative; and its involvement was generally low key, though possibly more influential than the role played by more committed organisations and their advocates.52

A challenge to the anti-suffrage tag comes from Janet Clarke’s step-granddaughter, Phyllis Power. She wrote: ‘One event which pleased Janet was when the Victorian Parliament finally passed the necessary legislation giving the women the right to vote, as she had always worked towards it’.53 Further confirmation comes from Elizabeth Couchman’s statement in her typescript history of the AWNL: ‘It (the Victorian Franchise Bill of 1908) had been strongly advocated by the League’.54 Janet Clarke’s observation in Vanity Fair that: ‘Of course the Federal franchise will carry on its wings the State franchise’, suggests that in her opinion, by 1903, female franchise was fait accompli and explains the sense of urgency which underpinned her political activism from this time.55

Clearly, Janet Clarke had accepted that the Commonwealth legislation had changed the political and social scene dramatically and her leadership skills were needed to actively confront the growing influence of socialist organisations in Australia. Her fear was that women, ignorant of the background of candidates, might vote for candidates ‘who promoted anarchy and socialism’ which could weaken the future of Australia and the British Empire. Janet Clarke, and the membership of the Australian Women’s League, believed socialism, with its rejection of religious values and loyalty to Great Britain, undermined the security of Australia, the family and the home.56 As a liberal political activist she accepted that women’s education must now extend to

53 Phyllis Power’s biography, p. 41.
54 Elizabeth Couchman, The AWNL 1904-1945, National Library Archives, MS 2752, p. 1. This is supported by Margaret Fitzherbert in Liberal Women, p. 50.
55 Quotation from Vanity Fair, 1 December 1903.
56 The Woman, August 1909. In this edition, women were advised: ‘to combat State Socialism because they do not believe State Socialism is the true remedy for the sin, suffering, and inequality which exists in the world’. See also Liberty and Progress, 25 September 1905, p. 135; and The Woman, 22 February 1908.
political matters given the potential power of the female vote and the need to protect Australia and the British Empire from political and territorial threats both nationally and internationally.

Figure 34 Two cartoons drawn by Mary Clarke in her writing album, 1894, Rupertswood Archives

(‘Rubbish!’ is in Janet Clarke’s handwriting.)

In August 1904, Janet Clarke wrote her first congratulatory letter to Prime Minister Reid. A week later, the Prime Minister and John Forrest addressed a crowded meeting of the AWNL in Melbourne. The Prime Minister thanked the women voters for delivering his party victory and criticised the Labor party for appropriating the name ‘Labor’ and their attempts to ‘create an industrial aristocracy of labor’. By contrast, he suggested that: ‘The moment a woman was enrolled as a member of the league, no matter what her husband was, she should become the equal of the highest in the land’.57 His point, that their efforts to modernise the conservative side of politics was based on gender not class, at least met with Janet Clarke’s approval as her second letter of congratulations to Reid followed this meeting.

While the object of the September 1903 Women in Politics meeting at Cliveden was to encourage women’s political education prior to the establishment of a women’s association, in recent literature Janet Clarke’s role has been relegated to that of

57 Age, 30 August 1904, p. 31.
‘sponsor’ rather than the ‘initiator’. Thus the online entry for the Australian National Women’s League, based on John Rickard’s often-repeated contention that the genesis of the AWNL originated with the Victorian Employers Federation (VEF), reads:

The initial impetus for the formation of the Australian Women’s National League came from moves by the Victorian Employers Federation in 1903 to form a conservative women’s political organisation. Janet Clarke was approached to sponsor this new group and held a meeting of three hundred women at her home in August 1903 to discuss forming an organisation.58

Marian Quartly also used John Rickard’s claim to represent F. T. Derham, the president of the VEF in 1902, as the father figure of the AWNL.59 According to her, it was Derham who invited Janet Clarke to found the League. In placing her narrative within the parameters of the VEF, Quartly classifies the founding women not as activists but as elite women responding ‘to the Snodgrass sisters’ call to support their husband’s business interests and to confirm existing social ties.60

Another interpretation was suggested by Shirley Thomas in her history of the Victorian Employers Federation. She included a quotation from the VEF’s Parliamentary Council Minutes of August 1903 which noted that ‘Mr. Fairbairn see Lady Janet Clarke re setting up Women’s Drawing Room Meetings’.61 Whether this occurred is unproven, but the Fairbairn family did have a similar pastoral and business background to the Clarkes and there is evidence of a long-standing family friendship. George Fairbairn had written his name in the Cliveden Visitors’ Book in 1890 and

58 The date of the Cliveden meeting is incorrect. The Australian Women’s National League entry was updated in 2004 but the changes were minimal. Sources used in compiling this entry included texts by Doug Scobie and Mary Crottie, See www.womenaustralia.info/biogs.
59 Marian Quartly, “Defending the Purity of the Home Life”, p. 178. F. T. Derham was a successful business and factory owner. A conservative politician, he was Post-Master in the Deakin ministry and introduced the penny-post, parcel-post, and country telephone services. Derham was a personal friend of Alfred Deakin. See www.adb.online.edu.au/biogs. My own research has failed to find the Derham’s invitation. His daughter, Freda Derham, signed the Cliveden Visitors’ Book on 15 May 1907 along with other members of the AWNL. She was one of a group of women who met in early 1904 to organise the structure of the AWNL. See Marian Quartly, ‘The Australian Women’s National League, p. 35.
60 Marian Quartly, “Defending the Purity of the Home Life”, p. 184. In 2008, Quartly and Smart still located the founding of the AWNL at the council meeting of the Victorian Employers Federation in their article celebrating the centenary of women’s suffrage in Victoria. See Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, ‘The National Council of Women’.
61 See Shirley Thomas, p. 40. Her information came from Liberty and Progress, the VEF’s journal.
their friendship may explain why he was asked to carry this suggestion to Janet Clarke.

Interestingly, Doug Scobie, in his essay on the AWNL in *Raiding Clio’s Closet*, questioned whether John Rickard’s statement, that the genesis for AWNL ‘originated in the masculine atmosphere of the Victorian Employers Federation’s council room’, could be ‘so narrowly and assuredly fixed’. ⁶² He suggested that conventional historiography used by feminist historians to recover women’s place in history, conveniently overlooked the political impetus of conservative women’s organisations. ⁶³ While the role of the Victorian Employers Federation in the formation of the AWNL remains problematic, I suggest that the online entry for the Australian National Women’s League, overlooks the ‘willing or unwilling’ manifesto, the eclectic views of the ‘gentlemen educators’, the absence of VEF nominated speakers at the *Cliveden* meeting and Janet Clarke’s stated intention to set up women’s organisations. ⁶⁴

My reading recognises that there was a continuing acquaintance between the Clarke and Fairbairn family. For example, when George Fairbairn was given a ‘Welcome Home’ on his return from England by the VEF in June 1905, Janet Lady Clarke was present at this event. ⁶⁵ On this occasion, George Fairbairn made the pertinent remark that: ‘the leaders of the Primrose League in England interested themselves in the progress of the AWNL and hoped it would achieve the same success in Australia as the Primrose League in England’. ⁶⁶

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⁶⁵ *Liberty and Progress*, 26 June 1905, p. 64, State Library of Victoria, SLTf 331.05 IN 2T. Charles Fairbairn, George’s brother, was at *Cliveden* on 15 March 1904 and George Fairbairn in November 1905. The latter was president of the VEF from 1904 to 1909.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 64.
The VEF journal had earlier reported that a Mrs. O’Brien would give ‘the compliments of the league to the Primrose League in London’ and convey ‘the hope that a cordial feeling will be established between the two bodies’. The men’s Grand-Council of the Primrose League was founded in 1887 by Randolph Churchill as a memorial to Benjamin Disraeli to rally support for the Tory Party. This League set about organising women within their political and social constituency into a Ladies’ Grand Council. Beatrix Campbell, in her history of the Primrose League, explained that thousands of English conservative women joined the Grand Council as empire loyalists. These voluntary activists (unfranchised until 1918), used the financial resources of the Tory organisation to become ‘for the first time the key to electioneering’ and were able to draw ‘all classes into its orbit’. Australian historians have noted similarities between the Primrose League and the AWNL, but the significant difference was summed up in The Woman on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of AWNL:

The League passed through times of great difficulty, but it always insisted upon maintaining its independent existence - a body of women governed entirely by women.

Jane Rendall, introducing Equal or Different: Women’s Politics 1800-1914, a text in which a number of writers examined women’s involvement in English political organisations, drew attention to an essay by Linda Walker. Walker noted that both the Primrose League and the women who belonged to the Women’s Liberal Federation used their organising skills to awaken women to their political responsibilities while still adhering to the ‘womanly’ ideal. The women of the Liberal Federation, including Lady Aberdeen, believed that they could shape policy and at the same time ‘draw in others to serve a party cause while preserving their own separate moral and political voice’. The Liberal Federation’s form of feminist activism differed from the Primrose League in that women were encouraged to stand for local Councils and

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67 Liberty and Progress, 26 September 1904. Mrs O’Brien was a foundation member of AWNL.
69 The Woman, 29 March 1929.
Boards and to work towards Parliamentary suffrage and other social reforms.\textsuperscript{71} Both organisations recognised the importance of political education. While the Primrose League, in particular, worked tirelessly to distribute political propaganda in their constituencies to support male conservative politicians, the Women’s Liberal Associations were intent on educating its members on political matters.\textsuperscript{72} This difference meant that the members of the AWNL had more in common with the Liberal Federation; however, their established electoral power gave them the authority to vote for individual politicians whose policies best reflected their views. Also the membership of the AWNL was open to all Australian women and therefore not defined by its exclusion of working class women as were the membership of the other two British associations.

The initial relationship of the AWNL with the Victorian Employers League was a positive one particularly in their mutual adoption of anti-socialist policies. Before the AWNL published its own journal, the VEF’s monthly publication, \textit{Liberty and Progress}, included lengthy reports of the policies and activities of the AWNL.\textsuperscript{73} However, the AWNL, unlike the ladies of the Primrose League, was an independent organisation administered by enfranchised women. According to Shirley Thomas, by 1908 the friendship between the two organisations had cooled and after 1909 there were no reports on the AWNL in the VEF’s journal.

Officially launched at \textit{Cliveden} on 10 May 1904, the AWNL elected Janet Clarke as its first president.\textsuperscript{74} Its annual subscription was initially 2/-, but was soon reduced to a 1/- to make membership affordable for women of most classes. Two University Arts graduates were appointed – Miss L Ellis as Organising Secretary and Miss Barrington as Lecturer.\textsuperscript{75} In July 1904, the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer issued another letter. Their membership was then 1,500. The four objects of the league:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 182.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 168.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} See Shirley Thomas, p. 86.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Couchman, Fitzherbert and Quartly all outline the role of Eva Hughes (Janet’s sister) and the two meetings which preceded the official start of AWNL. This information was probably based on information published in \textit{The Woman}, 1 March 1929, p. 1. Eva Hughes presided at this meeting attended by 40 women on 4 March 1904 when the first committee of the AWNL was elected. George Fairbairn was one of the speakers.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} Miss Barrington was a BA graduate from Sydney University. Miss Grace Watson, a member of the Women’s National Union of Queensland, replaced Miss Ellis when she found she could not find sufficient time for the work. See Shirley Thomas, p. 41.
\end{itemize}
loyalty to the Throne, combating State Socialism, educating women in politics and protecting the purity of home life, were outlined. Donations were requested to cover the expansion of the AWNL in country districts and to help forward a movement whose influence for good in the community ‘must necessarily be great and enduring’. Its main thrust was to encourage AWNL members to use their new political power to overcome the threat of socialism as shown by their July 1904 letter to the National Political League of Western Australia:

Willing or unwilling, the Women of Australia have had the Parliamentary franchise conferred upon them by the Federal Parliament, and how the future legislation of the Commonwealth will depend largely on how they use the political power given them. The women of the socialistic party are being energetically organised, and unless the women opposed to Socialism are also systematically organised, the near future may be full of dangers to our present social system.76

The League’s Annual Report, signed by Janet Clarke on 4 September 1905 and published in Liberty and Progress, indicated the professional nature of this new women’s organisation. The League’s accounts had been audited by Mr. Colin Templeton and confirmed by the manager of the Commercial Bank. There had been fifty-nine executive and ten council meetings plus meetings of the organising, leaflet, syllabus and finance committees. The Committee expressed gratification at its large membership and linked this to their short platform of aims. In regard to their anti-socialist object they highlighted a number of clauses included in recent Bills and Acts in both State and Federal Parliaments which reflected a ‘socialistic tendency’. 77 Responding to criticism that their anti-socialist literature often emerged from European, English and American texts they noted the absence of Australian socialist publications. The Committee believed the AWNL activity in every part of Victoria had resulted in Labour delegates at their recent Conference adopting a ‘weaker

76 Letter, July 1904, in Western Australian archives, PR2275/5, signed by Janet M. Clarke, President, L. M. Staughton, Vice-President, S. Hoadley, Vice-President, Hettiele Kidgell, Hon. Treasurer. Possibly the origin of these documents is explained by a newspaper cutting in the Clarke archives, ‘It came through the courtesy of Janet Lady Clarke (...) a large quantity of literature dealing with the League’s business was placed before the members (National Political League)’. 77 Liberty and Progress, 25 Sept 1905, p. 135. The legislation mentioned was the State Bricks Work proposal, the Victorian Motor Car Bill, the Commonwealth Alien Immigration Act, the Black Labour clause of the Commonwealth Postal Act and the Commonwealth Arbitration Act (Federal).
platform’. An alliance had been formed with the Farmers’ League which meant that the two associations could combat State socialism more effectively.\textsuperscript{78}

By 1907, Janet Clarke’s three or four hundred ‘acquaintances’ had grown to 15,000 in 100 branches.\textsuperscript{79} In 1905 Janet Clarke, while speaking to members of the AWNL had explained that the League, together with other like-minded organisations, had formed the Anti-Socialist Alliance, which had 27,000 voting members.\textsuperscript{80} On 24 October 1907 the League organised a Commonwealth conference of all anti-socialistic women societies in Australia at Cliveden. This marked a significant milestone in its history. The conference was seen as an opportunity to establish formal agreements on matters of joint importance as Commonwealth citizens and not just of their own State. Branches included the Women’s Branch of the People’s Reform League (Sydney), the Women’s Liberal League (Sydney), the Women’s Branch of the Australasian National League, (Adelaide), the Queensland Women’s Electoral League and the Women’s Progressive League (Tasmania). Each of these affiliated associations had the right to delegate two voting members. The AWNL’s journal, \textit{The Woman}, described its deliberations:

It meant the bringing together from all parts of Australia women who should represent no less than 32,000 of their sex; it meant uniting them in one harmonious body; (…). To conduct their deliberations on the most businesslike terms; (…). The manner with which the conference grappled with its problems, and its prompt and workmanlike attitude, were a revelation to many who were wont to question the administrative ability of women.\textsuperscript{81}

This conference was not just about contemporary issues but about the ability of Australian women to work as professional administrators. They felt that the deliberations ‘of an earnest and intelligent body of women intent upon great public questions of the moment cannot fail of their influence’.\textsuperscript{82} Under Janet Clarke’s leadership the women of AWNL had learnt to use traditional political means -

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{The Woman}, 22 February 1908, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Argus}, 20 December, 1905. The membership of the AWNL was then 10,000 according to \textit{Liberty and Progress}, 24 December 1905.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{The Woman}, 23 November 1907, No. 3.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. The second Women’s Anti-Socialist Conference was held in Sydney on 12 October 1908 with representatives from all Australian States. See \textit{The Woman}, 28 July 1908, p. 258.
organised gatherings and conventions, distribution of political material, educators and speakers in both urban and suburban areas – in order to expand their political influence and increase the membership of the AWNL.83 Acknowledged was Janet Clarke’s devotion to the League in using ‘her means, influence, time and talents in its early time of struggle and stress’. It was felt that the League’s esteemed position in Australia ‘was in great part due to the exertions of that little band of ladies whom she so capably led’.84

![Figure 35 Punch photograph of AWNL Conference, 1907](image)

Figure 35 *Punch* photograph of AWNL Conference, 1907

Janet Lady Clarke (president) and Mrs. S. T. Stlaughton (vice-president) are in foreground. Gentlemen are Mr. Agur Wynne (M.P.) and Mr. Frank Clarke (vice-president of Farmer’s League).85

At the public meeting to discuss the closure of the Women’s Hospital in 1902, Janet Clarke had not delivered her own eight-page statement, maintaining the established

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83 The November edition of *Liberty and Progress* listed the meetings Mrs Barrington BA (AWNL’s paid lecturer) had attended in Horsham, Stawell, Murtoa, Maldon, Kyneton. Speakers had also visited other country towns. In the next month (January 1905, p. 236) Mrs. Barrington visited Mornington, Queenscliff, Sorrento, Portarlington and Williamstown.

84 Ibid., 28 April 1909.

85 See *Punch*, May 30 1907 and *Age*, May 27 1907. The *Age* reported that a resolution was passed unanimously at this conference: ‘That this league supports the proposal that boarded out infants (in registered homes) should be under the control of qualified women inspectors’.
convention of ladies not speaking in the public arena. However, her increased confidence associated with the rapid expansion of the AWNL, saw her, as with other members, emerging as a public speaker. The *Ballarat Courier* reported that Janet Clarke had told the new branch of the League at Ballarat that while many people had placed their trust in wise men, now women were enfranchised they should use it for the general good.\(^86\) The *Argus* reported in December 1905 that she addressed several hundred ladies at the annual meeting of the Australian Women’s National Club at *Cliveden* telling them that the club was an essential part of the League, and each of its members should induce another member to join the Club.

It is, in fact, a direct outcome of the insistence of the socialists that women should dabble in politics, and its object is to show the socialists that they have called into existence a power which they, of all people, are least likely to control.\(^87\)

The Club, established in Collins Street as a meeting place for members of the AWNL in December 1904, was virtually a political club for women. For the first time in Victoria political women had a place of their own. It was here that members could socialise and familiarise themselves with world affairs as the club provided ‘the latest newspapers and magazines, Australian, English, and American’. On the first Monday of each month club members met to listen to musical programmes and ‘short addresses on political questions of the moment’ and share afternoon tea.\(^88\) The AWNL acknowledged that an American club, ‘Women’s Century’, which had been established in America in 1895, had inspired the organisation of their own club.\(^89\) The Secretary of this Ohio-based club wrote to the AWNL expressing their pleasure that their magazine, *Women’s Welfare*, had been read in Melbourne:

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\(^86\) *Ballarat Courier*, 12 April 1905, *Punch*, May 30 1907; and *Age*, May 27 1907. The *Age* reported that a resolution was passed unanimously at this conference: ‘That this league supports the proposal that boarded out infants (in registered homes) should be under the control of qualified women inspectors’.

\(^87\) Ibid. In March 1905 its membership was 238 and by December had increased to 440. Bessie Davies was the first secretary of the club situated at 162-165 Collins Street Melbourne. This club is sometimes confused with the Lycceum Club which was formed in 1910 and was aimed at professional women. The Alexandra Club (then called the Wattle Blossom Club) began in 1903 for ‘establishment women’. See [www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs](http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs)


\(^89\) See *Liberty and Progress*, 24 December 1904, 24 January 1905, 25 April 1905 and 24 December 1905, p. 217. The 500 members were employees of a manufacturing firm. Its educational activities included literature, home, music and travel.
Although the magazine is not very old, yet we have a good reason to believe that it has done some good for working women of the world. (…). Through our Library Committee we subscribe for the best magazines for the club, which are kept in our reading room at the factory here. (…). We notice the four objects of your league, and in reading the literature which you sent we could not help but think what the working women of Australia could do in connection with your work if they were given the right help and incentive.90

Marian Quartly noted the similarities of the National Club with the Ladies Grand Council of the Primrose League in England.91 However, the interest in the Ohio Club, described in the AWNL’s monthly report in *Liberty and Progress*, suggests that it was this club (consisting of women employees of a manufacturing company) that the National Club used as its model. While ‘cordial feeling’ might have existed between the English Primrose League and the AWNL, the Primrose League was not independent of the conservative Tory Party organisation. From its inception the AWNL was ‘a body of women governed entirely by women’.92 Likewise, American women linked to conservative political organisations appeared to be working from a different platform. While the conservative policies that the AWNL members adopted were shaped by their responsibilities as enfranchised women, the historian, Ronnie Schreiber, has pointed out that their conservative counterparts in America worked actively against woman suffrage and were successful in delaying this process until 1922.93 Schreiber presented a bleak picture of American conservative women’s politics, signalling out the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) founded in 2011 by Josephine Dodge, which had adopted extreme right-wing policies that included a racist platform.94 While the AWNL had adopted a national strategy to include all Australian women regardless of their class, most of the 350,000 members of NAOWS came from the privileged Eastern states.95

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90 Ibid., 25 April 1905, p. 20.
91 Marian Quartly, AWNL, p. 38.
92 *The Woman*, 29 March 1929.
94 Ibid., p. 18.
95 Ibid., p. 19. Eastern States included Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey and New Hampshire.
The goal, set by Janet Clarke of ‘steady working together’, was made easier with the publication of the first edition of *The Woman*. This journal, owned, managed and edited by women of the AWNL, was published on 21 September 1907 when the Victorian membership had reached 15,000. By January 1908 10,000 copies were printed each month. It was free to members and 2s/6d for non-members. Its objects were: ‘to encourage the work of Australian women, to promote unity of thought on subjects of national moment, and to form a factor in interesting and amusing women in wholesome and common-sense directions’. It also aimed at uniting the home ‘to the wider field of responsibility and citizenship’.96

Recent criticism of *The Woman* as a ‘self-consciously womanly publication’ that failed to support gender reform issues seems harsh.97 There were the occasional short stories, poetry, reviews of books written by women, advertisements for costumes, corsets and jewellery and the occasional knitting or crochet pattern, recipes or an article on the origin of lace. Markedly, the substance of the journal was aimed at keeping its members informed.98 Each month the annual reports, the activities of branches in Melbourne and country districts and the extension of the League to other states were described. Detailed accounts were given of the meetings the AWNL’s paid organizer, Miss Watson, held in Victoria and other states particularly in Western Australia where she travelled to Perth, Fremantle, the Goldfields and the towns on the South-western and Southern railway lines. There was information on the proposed agendas and topics for the Anti-socialistic and Commonwealth conferences organised by the League at Cliveden, Sydney and Brisbane.99 Articles on socialism, Commonwealth politics, other women’s political organisations, the assassination of the King of Portugal and his son and of course, a lengthy tribute to their founder on her death in April 1909, were included. Late in 1909 appeared a report from the Woman’s Savings Bank established in Toronto, Canada, where all staff, investors and the president were women.100 As a mouthpiece for the AWNL, *The Woman* informed its members on all the policies of the League insisting that the AWNL recognised no

96 *The Woman*, Vol. 1, 21 September 1907, No. 1, p. 1. It was published monthly until the 1930s.
97 Marian Quarty, p. 39.
99 Ibid., 24 October 1907. Topics included training of State school children in New South Wales and the Commonwealth, White Australia, Individualism versus Socialism, Compulsory Military training and a Uniform Constitution. Also see October 1908, p. 313.
100 Ibid., 27 November 1909.
class ‘believing in the independence of the individual, and in none being for party and all being for the State’. The professional skills, required to finance, write, and edit this journal which had acquired a circulation of 10,000 copies in its first three months, should not be overlooked.

Unquestionably, Janet Clarke’s commitment to actively confront socialism has won her no friends among some feminist historians. The history of the AWNL (and the role played by Eva Hughes, Janet Clarke’s sister) has been narrated by a number of historians from different ideological positions. They include Elizabeth Couchman, Doug Scobie, Marian Quartly, Judith Smart and Margaret Fitzherbert. In some histories she is an enigmatic figure, difficult to position; her wealth, social circle and leadership of a conservative women’s organisation does not fit easily into their historiography of women activists.

A 1954 unsigned document, which celebrated the bi-centenary of the establishment of the League, outlined the early office-holders, structure and activities of the League. The original four objects of the League were written on the first page, but on page two the anti-socialist statement was redrafted to read: ‘To counteract the Socialist tendencies which then - as now - threatened the community’. It also referred to Janet Clarke, noting her ‘wise and tactful guidance’ which caused the League to gain a firm foothold ‘amongst all classes throughout the State’. This comment was again repeated in an historical account of the AWNL written in 1969 by Elizabeth Couchman, the fourth and last president of the AWNL. Her insights reflect her loyalty and personal pride in the achievements of the AWNL. There was no mention of the Victorian Employers Federation in either document.

Doug Scobie’s suggestion that gaps in the historical discourse on conservative women’s involvement in politics needed readdressing is reassuring even though he still retained the conventional Snodgrass/Clarke/Hughes narrative - ‘Lady Janet

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101 The Woman, 22 February 1908.
102 History of Australian Women’s National League 1904-1954, Melbourne University Archives, Collection 89/90; 97/129/95/129, Series No.16.
103 The Australian Women’s National League: 1904-1945, Historical notes with an Addendum written by Elizabeth Couchman in 1969, National Library of Australia, MS 2752. Couchman does not acknowledge her source for the early history, but probably it was based on articles in The Woman. She stated that The Woman was first published in 1910 (p. 4) which is incorrect.
Clarke was approached to lend her social imprimatur to the organisation’ - to explain the meeting at Cliveden.\textsuperscript{104} He believed that ‘academic proclivities since the early 1970s accounted for the obscurity of an organisation which was ‘as large, politically influential and ideologically distinctive as the AWNL’.\textsuperscript{105} Further, he argued that the second-wave feminists of the 1970s ignored, or were in ignorance of, the conservative women’s organisations seeing themselves as the initiators of women’s liberation.\textsuperscript{106}

In her terms, Marian Quartly presented a ‘bleak view of the women who founded the AWNL’.\textsuperscript{107} She argued that the AWNL was founded by women who defined civic duty ‘as the defence of the private sphere and autonomy could only be won within these limits’.\textsuperscript{108} This comment in Liberty and Progress directly opposes this notion: ‘If the league had no other effect than that of broadening women’s ideas, opening their minds, and showing where they were one-sided, it will accomplish good work’.\textsuperscript{109} Quartly divided the 1900s women’s organisations into ‘the ‘serving’ and the ‘self-serving’. Included in the first category were the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the wives of ‘shopkeepers, farmers, skilled artisans’, the Women’s Franchise Leagues - women trained for ‘political action’ - and the Australian Women’s Association whose members were ‘mostly unmarried and employed - clerks, teachers, nurses and factory workers’. The ‘self-serving’ were defined by their husbands’ positions and the different spheres they defended – ‘in size, comfort, value, function social status’.\textsuperscript{110} Janet Clarke was placed within the second model because of her ‘upper-class social life’ and her interest in ‘class politics’.\textsuperscript{111}

Janet Clarke did invite all the women she knew best to the initial meeting. While most of them probably were part of her network, to class all 15,000 members who paid their one shilling subscription to AWNL in 1908 as ‘elite’ does not reflect information

\textsuperscript{104} Doug Scobie, p. 159 in Raiding Clio’s Closet, pp. 157-172.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p. 157.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp. 157-58.
\textsuperscript{107} Marian Quartly, p. 178. Here, ‘bleak’ is quoted directly from her text.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 179.
\textsuperscript{109} Liberty and Progress, 25 October 1905. The next month the executive Council passed the following resolution: ‘This League, representing 10,000 women, expresses its abhorrence of the late massacre of Jews in Russia and deeply sympathises with those of the Jewish race in Australia’, 25 November 1905 p. 105.
\textsuperscript{110} Marian Quartly, “Defending the Purity of the Home Life”, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., pp. 179-193.
published in *The Woman*. By 1916, when the membership had reached 54,000, Quartly’s analysis of the membership’s anti-socialistic platform has them ‘motivated by ignorance and fear’ describing their lives within home and family as running ‘too narrowly’. This proposition disregards the political, business and administration skills required to maintain the thirty suburban and sixty-nine regional and rural branches of AWNL in Victoria listed in *The Woman* on August 1909. Nor does it acknowledge the commitment of the eighty-eight presidents and ninety-eight secretaries whose names and addresses appeared on that same page.

Margaret Fitzherbert in her text, *Liberal Women*, based her historical account of the official formation of AWNL on the March 1929 publication of *The Woman*. She did not question the VEF’s promotion of a right-wing women’s organisation by women who had signed the anti-suffrage petition and she acknowledged that Miss Sarah Derham, daughter of Frederick Derham, was one of the founding members of AWNL. Importantly, Fitzherbert’s opinion that: ‘The new league was activating a group within society: middle class women.’ supports my view that this conservative organisation, shaped by an elitist woman and ‘the women she knew best’, expanded to become a powerful inclusive women’s organisation. Fitzherbert believed that the popularity of the AWNL and the rapid expansion in membership was due to: ‘a visible and able leader, Janet Clarke’, ‘experienced volunteer activists’, and ‘paid political organisers’.

In May 1908, Janet Clarke was too ill to attend the Empire Day celebrations which the AWNL had organised every year from 1905. As an Empire loyalist she wrote her last letter to the members just three months after the King of Portugal and his eldest son had been assassinated by two republican anarchists:

> It is impossible for me to say what a disappointment and grief it is not to be with the members of the AWNL on our great anniversary of Empire Day. It always seems to me to embrace so much. (...). It may be considered the greatest trust that in Australia

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112 Ibid., p. 193.
113 See Chapter 5. Following Martin Hannah’s public criticism of the Hospital Board, Janet Lady Clarke had suggested that Martin Hannah be invited onto the Board. Quartly uses Hannah to explain Labor’s (and the socialists) hostility to the AWNL.
114 Margaret Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, p. 43. This was also a source for Elizabeth Couchman.
115 Ibid., p. 44. Membership figures were: 1905: 9000; 1907: 15,000 and 1914: 50,000.
women have been given a voice in the selection for the governing body in Parliament, and I know how much women hate anything which savours of self or party. For ourselves, it gives us lessons in self-control, ability to see the best in all, and certainly that God will bless our work. (…). I end with our motto, ‘For God and Country,’ and may God bless our Emperor, King Edward V11.116

In the following months, Janet Clarke’s failing health prevented her from participating in public life. Her death occurred on the 28 April 1909.117

116 Letter to the AWNL on the eve of their Empire Day celebrations published in The Woman, May 1908. In this edition of The Woman there was also an article concerning the assassination of King Carlos and his son.

117 Medical conditions as listed on the death certificate were: ‘Enteritis Pleurisy, chronic Peritonitis, Ascites Maloma, and terminal stomatitis and Necrosis of jaw (2 months)’. These conditions indicate the presence of tumors within the stomach and bowel area and in modern terms would suggest the possibility of ovarian cancer. In the last three months of her life she suffered painful mouth infections resulting in an ulcerative condition which caused the disintegration of her jaw bone.
Conclusion

This thesis narrates the life of a remarkable woman, Janet Lady Clarke. It reconceptualises the historiography of first-wave feminism in Australia by offering a broader vision of Janet Lady Clarke’s activism. It identifies the unique power of elite women to promote liberal and progressive ideas within conservative women’s organisations in the historical colonial period in Australia. This study describes the ‘tough work’ of national and international elite women as they used their privileged positions to improve the lives of other women.¹ It challenges the myths that have flourished in feminist historiography that sanction the easy dismissal of ‘politically influential and ideologically distinctive’ conservative women and their connected organisations from the narratives of the women’s movement.²

This dissertation contributes to the existing field of Australian feminist biography by commemorating women who were linked in some way to Janet Lady Clarke. Some were ordinary women, some were extra-ordinary; but all were nation-builders and deserve to be portrayed in ‘bands of bold emotional colour’.³ They were women from all classes and occupations – married or unmarried - squatters, governesses, teachers, nurses and servants. Many of these women had relinquished their familiar English landscape and emigrated to Australia to live in Melbourne or the bush where they were confronted with a new landscape with its mixture ‘of roughing and refinement’ and the consequent challenges of adapting and finding their place in this new society.⁴ Others, like Janet Clarke, were native-born Australians.

In my study, all these independent women are celebrated as first-wave feminists committed to social change and the rights of women - be they pioneers, governesses, educational reformers, nurses, unpaid hospital supervisors, university students or early professional business women. Some, like the Cotton, Cooke, Dawbin and Clarke women were pioneers who settled in the Western and Port Phillip Districts of Victoria. One was that passionate young Sydney woman,

¹ Doris French, p. 158.
² Doug Scobie, Raiding Clio’s Closet, p. 159.
⁴ Patricia Clarke, The Governesses, p. 105.
Blanche Mitchell, whose understanding of the value of education was forever memorialised by her declaration that ‘Knowledge is Power’. Others were English governesses like Miss Franklin in Malvern and Louisa Geoghegan at Apsley or Miss Service and Miss Lucy Bateman who found employment with the Clarke family. There were the ladies who established new educational institutions and schools or found work as lady attendants, nurses and servants. Some like Edith Morris, Charlotte Macartney and Jessie Grimwade - are recalled as progressive educationalists whose prescience underpinned the achievements of the young women who graduated from the Trinity Women’s Hostel as doctors, teachers and musicians. ‘Rita’ (Miss Vaile) helped pioneer domestic science education for girls and women in her weekly column in *The Herald and Weekly Time*. The *Book for the Ladies of the Visiting Committee* still bears witness to those determined women who, as committed hospital visitors, dared to stand up to the powerful male fraternities in medical circles and unions. Miss Barrington, a University graduate, and Miss Watson travelled hundreds of miles into the urban and rural areas of Australia to lecture on the potential power of the female vote. Secured safely within the pages of *The Woman* are the names of those who held office in the urban and rural branches of the Australian Women’s National League. All of these women faced the challenges of their new society with courage and determination.

Adopting a traditional biographical approach in the early chapters, the familial, geographical, cultural, educational and political world in which Janet Snodgrass/Clarke spent her childhood, adolescence and womanhood is revealed. In the absence of Janet Snodgrass’s personal reminiscences, the diaries and journals of other women of similar background and social class are employed to outline her life experiences. The bounty of friends, which sustained the Snodgrass family after the death of Peter Snodgrass, is presented as a paradigm which influenced my subject’s future life and times. Despite the family’s straightened financial circumstances, her credentials, as a privileged upper-class colonial woman, enhanced the social standing of the Clarke family after her marriage to William Clarke. In this regard, I refute some publications which present the Janet Snodgrass/Clarke narrative as ‘a rags to riches’ tale. The rapid expansion of ‘Marvellous Melbourne’ paralleled Janet

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5 The Blanche Mitchell Diaries, 7 September 1860, Mitchell Library, MSS 1611.
and William Clarke’s transition as their profile shifted from modest colonial identities into a broader aristocratic and imperial one. The Janet Clarke letters, presented in this study, opened a window through which to view their family life and her private and public persona in Australia and overseas. These biographical chapters permit the study of social history through a focus on colonial issues - class, social mores, colonial mansions, travel, cricket, education, childbirth and philanthropy – all of which were pertinent to the life of the expanding Clarke family.

I argue that Janet Clarke’s practice of thoughtful philanthropy, underpinned by the structure and purpose of her religious faith, activated business, administrative and professional skills which were used in the educational, health and political arena. The problematic nature of philanthropy – the rich giving to the poor - is often presented negatively by historians as they link this practice in Australia and England to lavish entertainments which raised money to assist the plight of the poor. To counter this view, this study examines the Clarkes’ custom of using their societal position and their homes to raise money for charity and support institutions like the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, the Parkville Children’s Receiving Centre, the City Newsboys, the Melbourne District Nursing Society and the St. Vincent’s, Children’s and Women’s Hospital. I conclude that the Clarkes’ philanthropic activities were not simply a public demonstration of the _noblesse oblige_ concept but represented a true commitment to improve and change the living standards of the underprivileged in society. Janet Clarke’s involvement in hospitals and other related institutions, her letters to newspapers and the professional skills she utilised to engage the community in a positive way to alleviate poverty contribute to the historical understanding of thoughtful philanthropy in the colonial years.

The philanthropist ‘tag’ has been used to counter or explain her interest in higher education for women. Rather, I contend that it was her religious faith which underpinned her philanthropic activities which in turn empowered her commitment to personal activism in the educational sphere. In this work, she was supported by other modern conservative women who were also motivated by their religious faith. Janet Clarke’s educational reform agenda included the establishment of a women’s college at the University of Melbourne, a Church of England academic girls’ high
school, the Melbourne College of Domestic Economy and the foundation of two language societies - *Alliance Française*, and *Dante Alighieri* Society. As well, she supported musical education for young students and the establishment of the Melbourne Orchestra. Her letters reveal her commitment to progressive education which allowed women to learn outside the orthodox educational curriculum. Janet Clarke’s whole-of life educational vision for women was based on a fundamental belief in the value of providing educational opportunities for ‘every woman’.

I use the case study of the closure of the Infirmary Department wards at the Women’s Hospital to measure Janet Lady Clarke’s professional skills and performance. The hospital closure expedited the power struggle between the Committee, the powerful body of elected honorary doctors and medical residents who objected to their work being scrutinised and controlled by non-professionals. As president, Janet Clarke acted as a mediator between the medical forces, the voluntary workers on the Committee, the patients, the subscribers, the public, the powerful Trades Hall Council and the newspapers. While others tried to portray this event as a class struggle, she focused on the immediate issue of preventing the spread of infection in the hospital and conserving ‘the interests of the public’. Yet, recently her careful management of this dispute has been summarily dismissed based on an incorrect perception that this dispute was initiated by the elite women of the Committee. This interpretation is not supported by a forensic examination of hospital records; nor is the suggestion that she disappeared overseas to avoid public humiliation correct. (Her invitation to be present at the Coronation of the new King and Queen of England and to see her daughters presented at court would have needed much pre-planning.) I use this case study to demonstrate that the years spent working within large business and volunteer organisations had consolidated her administrative skills and her ability to perform professionally and justly in the public domain.

To meet the challenge which confronted Australian women after they gained the right to vote in Commonwealth elections in 1902, Janet Clarke encouraged Australian women to educate themselves politically and vote intelligently at

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6 Janet Lady Clarke’s Statement, Board of Management Correspondence, Series 0575.
election-time. Current historiography incorrectly interprets her participation in politics as class-based rather than gender-based by placing her in conflict with the activism practised by recognized feminists like Vida Goldstein and Annette Bear-Crawford. Clearly, under Janet Clarke’s leadership, the Australian Women’s National League became a powerful and inclusive women’s political body. Its platform - women’s political education, attendance at Commonwealth conferences, establishment of a women’s political club, the publication of an informative journal and administration roles in the thirty suburban and sixty-nine regional and rural branches of Australian Women’s National League - heralded a paradigm shift in women’s politics in Australia.

Damian Powell has suggested that Janet Clarke was ‘among the most successful women in Australian history’. An examination of the Victorian landscape today confirms this proposition. Modern educational institutions which have historic connections to my subject – the University of Melbourne, Janet Clarke Hall and Trinity College at the University of Melbourne, Melbourne Girls Grammar School, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Alliance Française – still serve communities today. The Royal Women’s Hospital Melbourne, the Children’s Hospital and St. Vincent’s Hospital remain flourishing institutions which are used daily by Victorians, albeit in either refurnished or new buildings. The National Council of Women of Victoria remains committed to the interests of women and children particularly in relation to the ‘legal and social position of women’. These archives and this thesis substantiate Damian Powell’s view that as a ‘nation builder’ Janet Lady Clarke ‘set standards and established agendas which resonate in the intellectual and philanthropic life of Victoria today’. 

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7 [www.womenaustralia.info/biogs](http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs), Australian Women’s Registrar, National Council of Women of Victoria (1902- ).

Afterword

A number of newspaper reports in 1908 suggested that Janet Clarke was seriously ill and that she was not expected to recover. This prognosis was reflected in an article published in *Punch* that year which highlighted her achievements:

Besides the purely social phase of her influence, she was a power in literary circles, in politics, and the greatest of all, charity. The big effort which pulled the University together after it had been left stunned by the financial blow dealt it through the speculations of an accountant, was started by a meeting convened by Janet Lady Clarke at “Cliveden”. It was that meeting which enlisted the sympathy of thousands for the tottering Varsity, and drew attention of Mr. Bent to the urgent need it was in of help from the State. Politically, Janet Lady Clarke has always used her influence on the side of Liberal anti-Socialism. We all know how freely her assistance was given, and how hard she worked in the endeavour to educate the minds of our women electors, so that they might be able to cast intelligent votes at election-time.¹

The *Herald* was the first to announce her death on the morning of the 28 April 1909. Next day, all the Melbourne newspapers published long obituaries covering the lives of her family, her honoured place in society, her popularity and her charitable, artistic, religious and educational achievements.

The funeral, on 29 April 1909, was described in considerable detail by the press. Thousands of people lined Wellington Parade and Flinders Street and traffic was halted around St. Paul’s Cathedral.² As the coffin left *Cliveden*, it was followed by a huge funeral procession which included a long line of mourning coaches, two vehicles heaped with flower tributes and an empty carriage which both the Clarkes had used on formal occasions. A report, in the *Argus*, described how ‘hundreds of people stood with bowed heads and lowered eyes, their respect for the dead made deeper by the human sympathy with which their knowledge of Janet Lady Clarke had inspired them’, while the writer in *Punch* described the ‘sad-faced, serious

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¹ *Punch*, 18 June 1908, Ladies’ Letter, Holmby House, Toorak.
² *Age*, 30 April 1909.
women (…) who wept silently (…) because they knew who she was and what she was, and many of them had directly benefited from her goodness'.

The service was conducted by The Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Andrew Clarke at St. Paul’s Cathedral. In attendance were family (including Dr. Maloney), representatives of the King, the Government and the many organisations with which she had been associated. At the end of the service, the cortege made its way to the Melbourne General Cemetery. Archbishop Clarke’s carriage was followed by fifty of the city newsboys. Flags on near-by buildings were lowered at half-mast. At the corner of Madeline-street and Elgin-street the whole of the resident members of Trinity College and other University students in academic dress stood silently paying their last respects to the benefactress of their Alma Mater. Janet Lady Clarke’s final resting place was in the Church of England section of the Melbourne Cemetery in the same grave as her husband, Sir William Clarke.

Shortly after Janet Clarke’s death, a committee was formed to consider a suitable memorial which would recognise her contribution to the nation. Dr. J. Barrett

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3 *Punch*, 4 May 1909.
4 Copy of this service is in private hands. Bible reading, Psalm 90, Verse 12 was used: ‘Teach us to order our days rightly that we may enter the gate of wisdom’. St. Paul’s letter was also read. It concludes: ‘Therefore my brothers, stand firm and immovable, and work for the Lord always, work without limit, since you know that in the Lord your labour cannot be lost’.
5 *Argus*, 30 April, 1909.
chaired a committee of forty persons who represented the many organisations which Janet Clarke had supported. After consultations with artists and trustees of the Public Library it was decided that the memorial should take the form of a pagoda to be erected on land vested in the City Corporation on St Kilda Road in the Queen Victoria Gardens. The Janet Clarke Memorial Committee believed that this structure should serve the public and be spacious enough to permit musical performances and military bands who ‘could give concerts for the benefit of the citizens of Melbourne’. The town clerk, in expressing appreciation for the gift, said that the Council considered that the building ‘will give pleasure and gratification to the citizens and beautify the reserve’. On 24 September 1913, a large crowd witnessed the formal presentation of the memorial to the City Corporation. One of the speakers, Archdeacon Hindley, suggested that: ‘The memorial would speak to all generations of a lady who was (...) proud of the city of Melbourne and did much to promote the well-being of her fellow citizens’.

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6 Programme re Memorial in Ivy Wedgwood Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5159, Box 25. Sir James Barrett was a doctor and a member of Melbourne University Council from 1901. The forty committee members included Dr. Leeper, Lucy Bateman, Miss M. Sandes, Lady Forrest, Dr. Maudsley, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Thornley, Miss Grace Watson and Janet’s step-granddaughter Mrs. Herbert Power.

7 Ibid. £1,400 would now be valued at around $120,000.

8 Newspaper cutting marked 3 May 1909 in Clarke album.

9 Ibid.
Today, this architectural heritage still speaks to ‘all generations’. Despite its proximity to the noise and activity of St. Kilda Road, it offers a quiet retreat where Melburnians and visitors to our city can sit, ponder the beauty and dignity of this space and admire the wider landscape of the Queen Victoria gardens. Passers-by may even pause a moment to read the dedication on the memorial plaque which acknowledges the ‘high example of beneficence and public spirit’ of Janet Lady Clarke.

This structure, along with the other significant architectural buildings - Janet Clarke Hall and Trinity College in the University of Melbourne precinct, Merton Hall at Melbourne Church of England Girls’ Grammar School and Rupertswood in Sunbury - are concrete reminders of a remarkable woman. There are other memorials. The Chapel of the Ascension, in the north-east section of St. Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne, was gifted to the Cathedral by Janet Clarke’s family in 1912. In 1910, members of the Australian Women’s National League commissioned a specially-designed chair by the wood carver, Robert Prenzell, to be used by all future presidents at the meetings of the League. This Victorian blackwood chair, which stands seven feet in height, is a fine example of early Australian sculpture. Elaborately-designed eucalyptus branches ornament the back of the chair and the arms of the chair are supported by a sculptured waratah. The plaque carved across the head of the chair reads: ‘In memory of Janet Lady Clarke First President AWNL 1904’.

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10 Robert Prenzell was a German-born woodcarver who lived in South Yarra.
11 *Argus*, 19 March 1910; and Clarke album. An article, from the *Argus* a month later, described the chair and explained that a Mrs. Ricketson had suggested this memorial. The presentation was made by the President of the National Club, Mrs. Alexander Landale, and Miss Sarah Derham.  
12 After the AWNL merged with the Liberal Party in 1944 it came into the possession of this organisation. In 2003, it was sold to finance the Dame Elizabeth Couchman (the last president of AWNL) Memorial scholarship. The chair was on permanent loan to the Geelong Art Gallery up to October 2009 but was auctioned by Sotheby’s on the 24 October 2009 for $160,000.
Today, numerous memorials commemorate the contributions which Australian women have made to our country’s heritage. Heritage homes, museums, plaques, busts, statues, foundation stones, fountains, sculptures, scholarships and gardens celebrate the lives of women who have served their country in the fields of public service, the arts, politics and war.  

However, it is the Janet Clarke Memorial Rotunda which stands as the most significant women’s memorial constructed before Australia’s involvement in World War One changed forever the Australian memorial landscape.

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13 See www.melbourne.net.au. For instance, the McCrae Homestead and Museum recalls the life of Georgina McCrae who emigrated to Australia in 1841; the Dame Enid Lyons Home in Tasmania commemorates the first women to be elected to the House of Representatives in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1943 and the first woman to sit in Cabinet in 1949. The Vida Goldstein Memorial Plaque in the Victorian Parliamentary Gardens celebrates the life of our most famous suffragist and in the Kings Domain, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne are three memorials - the bronze sculpture representing the first blind woman to attend University, Tilley Aston, the Pioneer Women’s Memorial Gardens and a marble bust which commemorates Edith Cavell, a World War 1 British heroine. The Mary Janet Lindsay of Yanchep Memorial Scholarship at the University of Western Australia honours Mary Lindsay, the Clarkes’ eldest daughter. Her home at Yanchep in Western Australia is intended to be preserved as a museum.

14 See Damian Powell’s papers for further discussion on Janet Lady Clarke memorials and Ken S. Inglis’s tome, Sacred Places, War Memorials in the Australian Landscape, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998. Inglis discusses colonial monuments in his first chapter but significantly, with the exception of Queen Victoria, all memorials mentioned are to commemorate male Australians.
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