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# Lairds of suburbia: Scottish migrant settlement and housing in Australian cities, 1880-1930<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Drawing on decennial population statistics from 1881 to 1933, this article evaluates the settlement patterns of Scottish migrants in Australian cities. It considers the urban nature of Scottish settlement, and argues that settlement patterns were associated with employment opportunities for working-class Scots, along with various housing, lifestyle, and religious preferences, often grounded in pre-migration experiences of city living. Furthermore, this article demonstrates that Scottish migrants in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century largely belonged to an urban industrial working class, and provides a useful correction to the traditional images of Scots in Australia as mostly rural, well-off, and conservative migrants.

## Keywords

Australia, diaspora, employment, housing, migration, settlement

## Introduction

In Scotland and Australia, most Scots lived in cities, which were an essential component of the Scottish migrant experience in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In 1889, Robert Miller travelled through Edinburgh on his way to London, seeking to find a passage to Melbourne. He described his experience of cities in letters to family members who lived on the island of Stronsay, Orkney. Robert wrote, “London is a very Large Town. Edinburgh is not to be compared it could stand in one corner of London unnoticed.”<sup>2</sup> After arrival in Australia, Robert told his uncle and aunt that “[t]he City of Melbourne is not big but taking in all its Suburban towns which in a way of speaking all belongs to Melbourne I believe it covers the most ground of any City in the world & fifty years ago it was not any larger than the Station or what we used to call ‘Down By’ in Stronsay.”<sup>3</sup>

The experience of cities in both Britain and Australia clearly imprinted themselves on Robert’s memory. The component suburbs of cities like Melbourne were also important in the

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<sup>2</sup> R. Miller, letter to James and Eliza Miller, London, 10 July 1889, Orkney Archive and Library (hereafter OLA), Kirkwall, D1/975/2.

<sup>3</sup> R. Miller, letter to James and Eliza Miller, Essendon, n.d., OLA, D1/975/2.

migrant journey. As one of the main ports for ships arriving in Melbourne and Victoria, for instance, many Scottish migrants took up their first residence in Williamstown before moving on to other suburbs or other towns and cities. Haydee Witt settled there with her parents in 1900. Her grandparents had emigrated from Scotland to Australia in 1855:

Grandpa Munro was a carpenter, and rented a small house on the seafront opposite the hulks in the bay where the convicts employed on shore were quartered ... After a short stay of two or three years in Williamstown, my grandparents moved to Richmond. Shortly afterwards, Grandpa got the gold fever, but having no success, went to northern Victoria and became a successful farmer until about 1897 when he retired to Williamstown. This was the reason my father and mother settled here in 1900.<sup>45</sup>

Haydee Witt was born in Rochester, near Shepparton in Victoria's northern pastoral district, and with her mother and father relocated to Williamstown at the turn of the century, where her grandparents (Grandpa Munro) had moved previously. After "moving around the countryside" in the early years of her marriage to Walter Witt in 1917, Haydee returned first to the Melbourne suburb of Northcote in 1919 and then to Williamstown in 1920 where she lived the rest of her life at 36 Perry Street. Family and marital influences also had an impact on the movements of James Reid, who emigrated from Glasgow in the 1880s and settled at Williamstown. After marrying his English wife in 1886, they relocated to the greener suburb of Glenferrie (in Melbourne's east) to raise children, before later moving to the provincial city of Geelong to retire.<sup>6</sup> The return to Melbourne perhaps had to do with sentimentality or comfort among new and old Scots alike. Port suburbs such as Williamstown were places where many migrants would first arrive in Australia or where they would meet friends and relatives. In 1872, one Scottish arrival remembered:

As we neared Williamstown in our boat, we found a group of gentlemen, mostly Scotch, who were standing on the shore: and who, impatient to find old acquaintances among the new arrivals, did not wait even till the boat was moored, but loudly called for the names of passengers, and for a description of their

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<sup>5</sup> H. J. Witt, *My Williamstown: reminiscences of growing up - 1900-1914* (Melbourne, 1986), pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> H. J. Witt, *My Williamstown: reminiscences of growing up - 1900-1914* (Melbourne, 1986), pp. 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> *Argus*, 17 February 1936.

persons ... They gathered round us as we sprang on shore, most of them finding among us some one they knew at least by name. And all eagerly asking us questions about home.<sup>7</sup>

While Haydee Witt “moved around the countryside”, other Scottish migrants remained in Melbourne’s port suburbs for the rest of their lives. James Hay was born at Peterhead in Scotland and immigrated to Australia in the 1880s, where he landed at Williamstown like hundreds of other Scots. James lived in nearby North Footscray for the rest of his life – despite moving home at least four times – and worked as a tinsmith at various workshops in the area, and later at the G.P.O in Melbourne, before passing away at his son-in-law’s home in West Footscray.<sup>8</sup> Although a port suburb like Williamstown had a larger Scottish population than other suburbs, the life stories of Scots seem to suggest that some were willing to stay where the work was in the inner suburbs, while others relocated into other areas for family, employment, or retirement. The fact that Scottish migrants were a predominantly urban migrant group, and their experience in this regard, deserves an extended examination.

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Any study of Scottish migrants in Australia must take into consideration the urban and suburban nature of Australian society, for the majority of people and migrants in Australia have lived in cities. The development of housing, employment and cultural opportunities in Australian cities has influenced the patterns of settlement exhibited by migrants and ethnic groups. In turn, migrants have influenced the opportunities available and the social, physical and cultural form of our cities. Migrants and ethnic groups distinguish their place in cities in their homes, in their neighbourhoods and across a network of contiguous social and cultural institutions across the city.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, the settlement patterns of Scottish immigrants in cities provide the chance to study a concentrated microcosm of the Scottish community abroad, the relationship of Scots to each other, and their relationship to the host society. Surprisingly, no dedicated or comprehensive examination of Scottish urban settlement in Australia exists. This article evaluates the settlement patterns of Scottish migrants primarily by drawing on decennial

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<sup>7</sup> J. H. Kerr, *Glimpses of life in Australia by a resident*, Edinburgh, Edmonston & Douglas, 1872, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Argus*, 10 July, 1939; Ancestry.com.au, ‘Australian Electoral Rolls, 1903-1954’; ‘Australian Death Index, 1787 – 1985’, <http://www.ancestry.com.au>, accessed 23 May, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> M. Bounds, *Urban social theory: city, self and society* (Melbourne, 2004), p. 177.

Australian population census statistics from 1881 to 1933, with a particular focus on the more detailed records from 1901. It considers the urban nature of Scottish settlement and argues these findings are associated with employment opportunities for working-class Scots, along with various housing and lifestyle preferences grounded in pre-migration experiences of city living. It also demonstrates the relationships between Scots, religion, churches, and their settlement patterns.

Ultimately, this article argues that Scottish migrants in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century belonged to an urban industrial working class, and provides a useful correction to the traditional images of Scots as mostly rural, well-off, and conservative migrants, with a proclivity for Burns Nights and Caledonian societies, contributing mostly in the realms of business and politics. Indeed, the profile of Scottish migrants established here may provide impetus to further research that complicates the accepted view of the Scots in Australia as a “stereotypically successful” oppositional force to the “Irish, convicts, bush workers, unionists and Laborites” in Australian history.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, while a preoccupation of historians of the Scots in Australia and elsewhere has recently been culture and identity, little has been said about the focal points for Scottish urban working class identity, such as labour organisations or even weekend sports; this article offers a foundation from which these sorts of investigations of ‘ordinary’, urban Scottish migrants might build upon.

The point here is not to highlight how much Scots have assimilated into Australian cities, but to add nuance to understandings of the nature of the Scottish migrant population in Australia. After arrival in Australia Scottish migrants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries tended to settle in urban metropolitan or provincial cities. Within these cities, the Scots dispersed evenly, although they did slightly favour living in the inner-city port suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. The reasons for this trend were to do with employment opportunities and environmental and lifestyle preferences. Of relevance to this particular discussion, Scottish cities and housing styles were very different from those in Australia, and this influenced Scottish lifestyle and environmental preferences in their new countries. Additionally, the industrial nature of Scotland’s economy at the time of emigration directly influenced the settlement patterns of working-class Scots. Before examining these features of the settlement experience, however, a brief survey of Scottish immigration to Australia in the late-nineteenth

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<sup>10</sup> M. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney, 2008), p. 1)

and early-twentieth centuries will provide helpful context.

### **Working-class migration to Australia**

Between 1860 and 1914, about 175,000 Scots immigrated to Australia and they favoured the state of Victoria in the earlier decades.<sup>11</sup> An economic boom between 1860 and 1890 attracted Scots to Victoria in both agricultural and industrial occupations, with the heavily industrialised Lowland areas of the Clyde, the Lothians and West Fife accounted for the majority of Scottish immigration to Australia by the late 1870s.<sup>12</sup> Melbourne and Victoria's late-nineteenth century economic prosperity provided employment opportunities for skilled Scottish workers in agricultural and industrial sectors alike. Here they received better pay, and better conditions – by the time the eight-hour day and a Saturday afternoon break was beginning to take hold as a Victorian working institution, the British working classes had only just begun switching from 12-hour to 10-hour shifts.<sup>13</sup>

The years between 1875 and 1884 were particularly remarkable in terms of Scottish immigration, with an average of five-thousand Scots arriving in Australia each year.<sup>14</sup> The recession in the British building industry provided Melbourne with its migrant labourers in the prosperous 1880s and in Victoria's growing capital city over one-third of the 'boom builders' were carpenters and tradesmen who had arrived in that decade. Overall, some 165,938 British migrants came to Victoria in the years between 1880 and 1890.<sup>15</sup>

In the depression of the 1890s, however, more people left Victoria than arrived in each year.<sup>16</sup> Most of them went to Western Australia, for the newly discovered goldfields at Kalgoorlie, and indeed, by 1914 the number of Presbyterians in that half of Australia rose to equal the national average. Between 1901 and 1911, Queensland became a popular destination for Scots, while New South Wales overtook Victoria as the leading state for Scottish settlement.<sup>17</sup> In the decade from 1891, 15,000 Scots either died or left Victoria for a better life

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<sup>11</sup> F. Crowley, 'The British contribution to the Australian population, 1860-1919', *University Studies in History and Economics*, 11, 2, (1954), p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> D. Lucas, 'Scottish immigration 1861-1945', in J. Jupp (ed.), *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins* (Melbourne, 2011), pp. 665-68.

<sup>13</sup> G. Blainey, *A history of Victoria* (Melbourne, 2006), p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> Lucas, 'Scottish immigration 1861-1945', p. 666.

<sup>15</sup> G. Sherrington, 'Settlement, 1881-1920', in Jupp (ed.), *The Australian people*, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> *The Victorian Yearbook*, 1903.

<sup>17</sup> M. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney, 2008), pp. 66-69.

elsewhere and their numbers still had not recovered by 1933. Across Australia, a sharp decline in new arrivals – net emigration was not reversed until 1907 – caused the number of Scots-born to decrease from 124,000 in 1891 to 93,000 by 1911.<sup>18</sup> The cause for decline in immigration in the latter decades of the nineteenth century should also be placed in the context of assisted passages; subsidies for migrants ceased in Victoria in 1873, in South Australia in 1886, New South Wales in 1887 and Tasmania in 1891. Queensland and Western Australia continued their assistance schemes into the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1910 and 1914, however, around nine-thousand Scots arrived in Australia each year, bringing the total population in Australia to 109,000 by 1921. After Federation in 1901, Australian government campaigns to revitalise immigration – white, skilled workers and families from Britain – had largely succeeded. In the years from 1902 until 1935, the British continued to account for the vast majority of the total intake until the period between 1936 and 1940, when they dropped to 79.3 per cent of new arrivals and continued to decrease throughout the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> Subsidised passages were reintroduced in 1907, and these helped to bring net migration to new highs between 1910 and 1913.<sup>21</sup> Between 1906 and 1914 net migration was a 393,048 with 184,605 of these being assisted passengers.

In the first decades of the new century, British migrants became increasingly focused upon the Empire. There was a dramatic surge in immigration to Canada between 1905 and 1910, with a similar growth in the number of British migrants heading for Australia. Both destinations had surpassed the United States by 1911.<sup>22</sup> In 1912, net migration to Australia reached a new record of 91,892, and aside from large movements in and out of the country by soldiers between 1914 and 1919, this level would not be surpassed until 1949.<sup>23</sup>

After the First World War, Scotland entered a period of economic and social decline as its industrial boom began to rapidly slow and even reverse, primarily due to the over-commitment to industries (coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding and engineering) that were gradually going into decline.<sup>24</sup> The flow of people out of the nation became so vast as a result

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<sup>18</sup> *Census of Victoria, 1881-1901; Census of Australia, 1911-1933*; E. Richards, *Destination Australia* (Sydney, 2009), p. 386.

<sup>19</sup> T. J. Hatton, 'Emigration from the UK, 1870-1913 and 1950-1998', *European Review of Economic History*, 8, (2004), p. 156.

<sup>20</sup> Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 390.

<sup>21</sup> Hatton, 'Emigration from the UK', p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> Hatton, 'Emigration from the UK', p. 152.

<sup>23</sup> Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 386.

<sup>24</sup> P. L. Payne, 'The economy', in T. M. Devine and R. Finlay (eds) *Scotland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 17-18.

of industrial decline that, by 1931, around a quarter of all Scots were not living in Scotland.<sup>25</sup> While imperial migration was once celebrated as a “testament to the dynamic and entrepreneurial qualities of the Scottish race”, in the interwar years migration was increasingly seen as a repudiation of conditions in Scotland.<sup>26</sup> One Scot living in America in the interwar years, Arthur Donaldson, illustrated the factors that characterised much of Scottish migration well into the twentieth century:

It would not seem that the stay at home Scot even begins to realize how low are his living standards compared with those of his kin abroad... From a standard of living point of view Scotland is a backward project, and the Scot abroad is increasingly aware of it and ashamed that others must also see it.<sup>27</sup>

In the decade between 1919 and 1929, large numbers of Scots continued to immigrate to Australia. About half-a-million Scots emigrated abroad in the 1920s, and around 100,000 of these came to Australia – between 1919 and 1938, 197,325 Scots went to Canada and 178,378 to the United States.<sup>28</sup> The vast majority of Scottish migrants were skilled, reflecting the contraction of various areas of the Scottish economy at this time. In this period, many Scots came in families, and this is indicated by the fact that just over a quarter of émigrés in these years were children under the age of eighteen.<sup>29</sup> About three-fifths of British arrivals paid their own way to Australia.<sup>30</sup> Australia’s Scottish-born population peaked in 1933 at 132,000, and during the interwar period about one in every six British migrant listed their last place of residence as Scotland. Overall, this period was distinguished by a level of Scottish immigration to Australia that was almost twice the amount of English immigration in proportion to each country’s population.<sup>31</sup>

The Great Depression put a halt to immigration to Australia, although Scots were still eager to seek opportunities abroad. By the end of the 1940s, there were almost twenty-thousand less Scots in Australia than there had been in the 1930s. In 1930, Australia lost 8,530 people

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<sup>25</sup> R. Finlay, *Modern Scotland: 1914-2000* (London, 2005), p 102.

<sup>26</sup> R. Finlay, ‘The rise and fall of popular imperialism in Scotland, 1850-1950’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113, 1 (1997), p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Donaldson, *Scots Independent*, October 1931, cited in Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> M. Harper, *Emigration from Scotland between the wars: opportunity or exile?* (Manchester, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Harper, *Emigration from Scotland*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> E. Richards, *Britannia’s children: emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London, 2004), p. 246.

<sup>31</sup> Lucas, ‘Scottish immigration 1861 – 1945’, p. 666.

through net emigration, in 1931 10,094, and in 1932 the country lost another 2997. This trend reversed in 1933, with a modest figure of 758 in net immigration for that year.<sup>32</sup>

### **The urbanisation of the Scots in Australia**

While settlement in the middle of the nineteenth century favoured regional and rural areas due to the availability of work in both gold mining and pastoralism, by the early twentieth century the Scots in Australia were a predominantly urban migrant group. In 1921, there were 108,756 people living in Australia who were born in Scotland – about 56 per cent were males and 44 per cent were females. The census for that year aggregated the number of people of different birthplaces living in urban and rural areas, as well as those classified as migratory persons (located on ships or at a railway stations on the night of the census). The results showed high levels of urbanisation nationwide for those people born in Scotland: 52 per cent were living in an urban metropolitan district, 17.5 per cent were living in an urban provincial area, 28.9 per cent were living in a rural location and 1.6 per cent of Scots were on ships or at railway stations at the time the census was taken.<sup>33</sup>

These proportions are far more insightful when compared with the same statistics for Australian-born persons: 41.1 per cent of Australians were in a metropolitan area, 19.5 per cent provincial, 38.9 per cent rural and 0.2 per cent migratory.<sup>34</sup> The figures indicate a significant difference between Scots and locals. Scots were 1.3 times more likely to live in a metropolitan area, and their likelihood of living in a rural location was 0.7 less than that of Australian-born persons. In 1921, 43.8 per cent of Australian-born persons and 69.5 per cent of Scots lived in an urban area (the sum of metropolitan and provincial populations), meaning that the Scots were 1.6 times more likely to live in the city. These statistics disguise some variations between

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<sup>32</sup> Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 386.

<sup>33</sup> *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1921.

<sup>34</sup> *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1921.

states, as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Urban and rural Scottish populations in each state, 1921**  
(Source: *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921*)

	Urban		Rural	Migratory	Total
	Metropolitan	Provincial			
N.S.W.	22,897 (54.1%)	9,142 (21.6%)	9,499 (22.4%)	806 (1.9%)	42,345
Victoria	14,771 (58.4%)	2,949 (9.9%)	7,624 (30.1%)	408 (1.6%)	25,297
Queensland	9,697 (40.5%)	5,553 (23.2%)	8,511 (35.5%)	189 (0.8%)	23,950
S.A.	3,952 (66.3%)	384 (6.4%)	1,455 (24.4%)	173 (2.9%)	5,964
W.A.	4,690 (50.4%)	914 (9.8%)	3,599 (38.7%)	99 (1.1%)	9,304
Tasmania	540 (30.0%)	525 (29.2%)	686 (38.1%)	297 (0.2%)	1,799

Table 1 demonstrates the urbanisation of Scottish migrants in Australia. At the highest levels of urban settlement was New South Wales, where 75.7 per cent of the Scottish population lived in metropolitan or provincial urban centres – the comparable figure for Australian-born is 66.1 per cent, or 67.8 per cent for the total population of New South Wales. Dividing the percentage of Australians by the percentage of Scots living in urban or rural locations produces a ratio, or a location coefficient, which is a useful device for measuring differences in settlement patterns between groups. For example, if the ratio produced between Australians and Scots living in rural areas of South Australia is 0.6 then the finding would be that there were approximately only two-thirds as many Scots living in South Australian rural areas as would be expected if their distribution conformed with that of the Australian-born population. Providing location coefficients gives us meaningful insights into the significance of the census statistics presented so far. (The massive overrepresentation of Scots among those classified as migratory in Table 2 is likely due to the responses given by foreign-born crews of British ships docked in Australian ports on the census night in 1921.)

In all Australian states, Scots were slightly overrepresented in metropolitan cities – more so in Queensland – and, except in Tasmania, slightly underrepresented in provincial towns and cities (see Table 2). Scottish-born migrants were also underrepresented in rural areas across all states bar Western Australia, where their numbers were almost exactly as should be expected. In this way, total state and national population distributions accounted for at least some of the statistics for Scottish settlement across Australia. More importantly, there were notable leans toward metropolitan settlement, slight trends away from provincial areas, and a

significant underrepresentation in rural locations.

**Table 2: Location coefficients for urban and rural Scottish populations in each state, 1921**

(Source: *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921*)

	Urban		Rural	Migratory
	<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>Provincial</i>		
N.S.W.	1.3	0.8	0.7	7.6
Victoria	1.2	0.8	0.8	13.6
Queensland	1.5	0.9	0.7	4.2
S.A.	1.3	0.7	0.6	14.7
W.A.	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.1
Tasmania	1.3	1.1	0.8	17.6
Australia	1.3	0.9	0.7	6.8

Scottish settlement patterns in 1921 pointed towards a predominance or preference among Scottish migrants for urban – and especially metropolitan – areas around Australia. The data from censuses from 1881 to 1933 reveals the same trend. High levels of urbanisation were evident in 1911: 14,923 Scots lived in Sydney (or 47.7 per cent of all the Scots in New South Wales); 13,303 lived in Melbourne (50.1 per cent of Victoria’s Scots); 6,495 lived in Brisbane (31.6 per cent of Queensland’s Scots); 3,147 in Adelaide (55.7 per cent of South Australian Scots); 2778 in Perth (40.1 per cent of Western Australia’s Scots); and, 501 lived in Hobart, representing 24.2 per cent of Tasmania’s Scottish population. By 1933, the census information shows that 56.4 per cent of the Scots were in metropolitan locations, compared to 45.4 per cent of Australian-born. The Scottish-born in New South Wales continued to be highly urbanised, and nearly 78 per cent were living in an urban area by 1933 compared to 67.9 per cent of Australians.

The data available for 1901 is more detailed than in later years because officials aggregated the census data individually for each state, providing more detail at the state level than later censuses allow for.<sup>35</sup> In Sydney and suburbs in 1901, there were 13,716 people born in Scotland, accounting for 44.7 per cent of the Scots in New South Wales at that time. In Melbourne there were slightly more than in Sydney, 14,764 individuals or 41.3 per cent of Victoria’s Scottish population. Where the state censuses are most helpful, however, is in enabling better insights into the settlement patterns of Scots within those cities.

Within metropolitan centres, settlement patterns broadly indicate a dispersed and assimilated population of migrants, but there are important subtleties. Overall, the average

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<sup>35</sup> Individual Australian census returns are generally not available to historians, who are limited in their access to the statistics by whatever information contemporary statisticians chose to present in the final official census reports.

proportion of Scots in any Melbourne suburb was around a mere 3%, and the standard deviation from the mean score was just 0.55 per cent. Such low variability confirms a generally high rate of dispersal across Melbourne, and most areas of both Melbourne and Sydney were less than 4 per cent Scottish-born. This reflects settlement patterns discovered in other parts of the world; Highlanders tended to emigrate in large family or community groups, and Lowlanders – who made up the majority of Scottish migrants to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States in this period – were more likely to emigrate as individuals or with their nuclear family. The fact that many Scottish migrants did not come as part of a large contingent or extended family group makes it more likely that they would disperse across the city, in search of suitable employment and housing opportunities.<sup>36</sup>

Levels of segregation and dispersion in Melbourne and Sydney are measurable with precision using an index of dissimilarity. This calculation shows the proportion of a birthplace group that would have to redistribute itself to have the same per cent distribution as the host society (in this case, Australian born). Using this calculation, the dissimilarity index for Melbourne is 25.68, while the index for Sydney is 37.33. A higher index indicates that a greater percentage of Scots would have to redistribute across the city in order to match the population distribution of the host society. Thus, the Scots in Sydney were more segregated than the Scots in Melbourne in 1901 – more would have had to relocate in order for their distribution to conform with that of the total population – and further analysis can show where these slight overrepresentations occurred. Table 3 presents the proportions of each suburb of Melbourne and Sydney that are born in Scotland, and the table below shows only the top three and bottom three for Melbourne and Sydney.

These percentages are not simply a result of the overall population settlement patterns in Melbourne and Sydney, and the location coefficients for each suburb confirm various levels of overrepresentation and underrepresentation compared to the total population distributions. In Balmain, one of Sydney's largest suburbs in 1901, there were nearly twice as many Scots as would be expected, while in Waterloo there were just over half as many as expected. As the dissimilarity index suggested, there is less variation in the suburbs of Melbourne – although

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<sup>36</sup> M. Gray, 'The course of Scottish emigration, 1750-1914: enduring influences and changing circumstances,' in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish emigration and Scottish society: proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1990-91* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 19.

Williamstown, South Melbourne and Footscray were clearly more Scottish suburbs than others.

**Table 3: Scottish populations in Melbourne and Sydney suburbs, 1901**  
(Source: *Censuses of Victoria and New South Wales, 1901*)

Melbourne			Sydney		
	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Location Coefficient</i>		<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Location Coefficient</i>
Williamstown	4.28%	1.3	Balmain	5.12%	1.8
South Melbourne	3.96%	1.2	Leichhardt	3.86%	1.4
Footscray	3.81%	1.2	Mosman	3.74%	1.3
...	...	...	...	...	...
Fitzroy	2.59%	0.8	Alexandria	1.79%	0.6
Northcote	2.36%	0.7	Waterloo	1.65%	0.6
Collingwood	2.11%	0.7	Marsfield	1.12%	0.4

### Settlement and industry in Sydney and New South Wales

The most popular suburbs for Scots in the early twentieth century were home to large numbers of people who were employed in industrial occupations, especially in construction. The two proportionally largest Scottish areas in Sydney – Balmain and Leichhardt – were both inner, working class port suburbs, much like Williamstown, Footscray and South Melbourne.<sup>37</sup> In the 1921 census, the occupational structure of each municipality and shire of each state is tabulated. In Balmain and Leichhardt, there was a larger industrial working class than in both of the Melbourne suburbs. The industrial workers of these suburbs were mostly employed in manufacturing, and about 60 per cent of those in transport and communication in Balmain were working in shipping (‘on the seas’). In turn, Williamstown and South Melbourne had much larger proportions of men working in transport and communications; primarily they were employed on railways and roads, and in shipping in some capacity (see Table 4).<sup>38</sup> South Melbourne also had an appreciable proportion employed in commercial occupations, which is not surprising given the well-documented Scottish overrepresentation in Australian business.<sup>39</sup> The industrial ‘skew’ of Scottish settlement is plausibly accounted for by their occupations and

<sup>37</sup> On these these suburbs, see M. Solling and P. Reynolds, *Leichardt: on the margins of the city* (Sydney, 1997), pp. 121-29; J. Lawrence, *A pictorial history of Balmain to Glebe* (Sydney, 1995); J. Lack, *A history of Footscray* (Melbourne, 1991); S. Priestley, *South Melbourne: a history* (Melbourne, 1995); L. Strahan, *At the edge of the center: a history of Williamstown* (Melbourne, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921.*

<sup>39</sup> See Prentis, *Scots in Australia*, ‘Chapter 6: Doing business’.

skills as migrants.

**Table 4: Occupations of males in Melbourne and Sydney suburbs, 1921**  
(Source: *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921*)

	Professional (%)	Domestic (%)	Commercial (%)	Transport & Comm. (%)	Industrial (%)	Primary Producers (%)
Balmain	4.5	2.1	15.4	14.6	61.2	1.7
Leichhardt	5.8	2.2	18.7	14.9	54.9	3.1
...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Williamstown	8.6	1.6	12.6	20.8	52.3	2.2
South Melbourne	8.4	3.5	20.8	17.3	46.8	2.2

Migrants from Scotland brought with them to Australia various occupational skills. Scotland's cotton, textile and iron industries helped the nation to achieve eminence as an industrial nation, and its male workforce was predominately employed in these sorts of industries. The 1881 Scotland census indicates something of the occupational backgrounds from which many Scottish migrants to Australia came from. Industrial occupations were the majority, accounting for 61 per cent of male employment in Scotland, and up to 79 per cent in cities such as Dundee, or 73.2 per cent in Glasgow. Agricultural work accounted for 19.4 per cent of the entire male Scottish workforce. While just 5.9 per cent of Scots were professionals, in cities such as Edinburgh 14.9 per cent of the male workforce was professional. Commercial enterprise accounted for 11.4 per cent nationally, but in Glasgow the figure was 19.7 per cent.<sup>40</sup> Overall, industry was the largest employer of Scottish men in the late-nineteenth century, and the occupational profile of Scottish migrants in Australia reflects the various industrial skills that migrants brought with them.

As noted, in Australian urban areas Scots were most likely found living in inner city, portside suburbs in which occupations such as engineering, shipbuilding, and construction were predominant. The statistics related to Scottish employment reinforce these findings. The results also shine light on rural and regional employment for these migrants, including work on farms and in mines. In New South Wales in 1901, Scots could be found in a range of occupations, but the primary sector was the biggest employer of Scottish men at this time. Approximately 9.2 per cent were employed in agriculture, 7.7 per cent were employed in pastoral industries, and 11.2 per cent were working in mines and quarries. Indeed, Scottish men were overrepresented in mining, and were over two times more likely to be employed in this

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<sup>40</sup> *Census of Scotland, 1881.*

occupation than the total population.<sup>41</sup> Scots were underrepresented in agriculture (but not pastoralism), fisheries, and forestry.<sup>42</sup>

Around 10.7 per cent of Scottish men were employed in transport and communications, making it the next biggest employer of Scots. The regulation of sea and river traffic accounted for 6.6 per cent of the total proportion of employed Scots, and they were over three times more likely than the total population to be employed in this particular occupation.<sup>43</sup> Closely following transport and communications was construction, accounting for 10.5 per cent of working Scottish men. The majority of Scots in the construction industry were employed building houses and other buildings – 8.1 per cent of Scottish men in New South Wales were builders, and they were two-and-a-half times more likely to be employed as such than the total population.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, manufacturing accounted for 7.5 per cent of employment for Scottish men. Scots were engaged in manufacturing and producing books, sports equipment, watches and clocks, vehicles, saddlery and leatherware, furniture, and numerous other items. Although shipbuilding only accounted for 1.2 per cent of male Scottish employment (and 0.2 per cent of total male employment), Scots were highly overrepresented in the manufacture of ships, boats, and maritime equipment. Almost 14 per cent of shipbuilders were of Scottish birth, meaning that Scots were over five times more likely than the total population to be working in this occupation. Scots were around three-and-a-half times more likely to be employed in the manufacture of engines, machines, and tools, thus accounting for 9.3 per cent of all employees in this occupation.<sup>45</sup>

The notable contribution Scottish workers made to shipbuilding in New South Wales and Sydney is to be expected, and echoes a similar contribution Scots made to shipbuilding in New Zealand.<sup>46</sup> The Scottish iron industry was revolutionised in 1828 by the invention of the hot blast for smelting iron. Scotland subsequently became a centre for British engineering, shipbuilding, and for the production of trains and locomotives; steel replaced iron at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> After 1860, Clydeside shipyards specialised in steamships made of

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<sup>41</sup> Balmain, where many Scots lived in Sydney, was also home to a colliery. The census data does not, unfortunately, provide enough detail to demonstrate conclusively that Balmain Scots were miners.

<sup>42</sup> *Census of New South Wales*, 1901.

<sup>43</sup> *Census of New South Wales*, 1901.

<sup>44</sup> *Census of New South Wales*, 1901.

<sup>45</sup> *Census of New South Wales*, 1901.

<sup>46</sup> J. Wilson, 'Scots - Scots and the economy', in *Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/scots/11>, accessed 18 July 2012.

<sup>47</sup> C. Whatley, *The Industrial Revolution in Scotland* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 51.

iron and steel. 'Clydebuilt' became the industry standard for high quality military and commercial vessels, and Glasgow took primacy as the world's shipbuilding centre. Production on the River Clyde reached its peak in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and Glasgow firms completed 370 ships in 1913 alone – even more were produced during the First World War.<sup>48</sup>

While the biggest shipowners in Australia tended to have their best vessels constructed in Scottish yards, a shipbuilding industry also grew up around Australia's ports, with Sydney taking its place as the largest and most important of the Australian shipyards. Apart from having one of the best natural harbours in the country, Sydney was Australia's first port and was the first to develop industry, and generally had better equipment and facilities as a result. It was also situated in close proximity to some of the world's finest shipbuilding timbers, as well as nearby iron foundries and marine engineering works.<sup>49</sup> It is no surprise that Scottish migrants carried their expertise in shipbuilding to the Australian ports and shipyards.

The propensity of Scottish men to work in Australian mines is also accountable by reference to their backgrounds in Scotland. In 1891, there were 87,406 mineworkers in Scotland, and by 1901 there were 115,994 people working in mines. By 1921, there was a total of 155,252 mineworkers in Scotland; mining was a large employer of industrial workers.<sup>50</sup> In Scotland, stereotypes emerged of Scottish miners as wild, irreligious, and socially isolated "serfs".<sup>51</sup> Alan Campbell notes that the life of Scottish colliers was similar to that of most coal miners; there was an emphasis on masculinity, egalitarianism, group solidarity, and a notable support for radical labour movements.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Scottish workers in the mining regions of Australia contributed greatly to the national labour cause during the early twentieth century, including the Ayrshire coal miner, Andrew Fisher, who became Prime Minister, and numerous leaders in the trade union and socialist movements.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to note that the state electoral divisions of both Williamstown in Victoria and Balmain in New South Wales have generally been very safe Australian Labor Party seats since the late 1880s; the latter suburb was, indeed, where the party itself was founded in 1891. Scots were at the forefront of the

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<sup>48</sup> J. Shields, *Clyde built: a history of ship-building on the river Clyde* (Glasgow, 1949).

<sup>49</sup> V. Evans, 'Ship building and repair' in D. Fraser (ed.), *Sydney from settlement to city, an engineering history of Sydney* (Sydney, 1989), pp. 126-27.

<sup>50</sup> *Census of Scotland, 1891; 1901; 1921*.

<sup>51</sup> C. A. Whatley, "Scottish 'collier serfs', British coal workers? Aspects of Scottish collier society in the eighteenth century", *Labour History Review*, 60, 2 (1995), pp. 66-79.

<sup>52</sup> A. Campbell, *The Scottish Miners 1874-1939* (Aldershot, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> B. Wilkie, 'Scottish workers and radicals in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Australia', *Scottish Labour History*, 48, (2013); Wilkie, 'Scottish communists in 1930s Australia', *History Scotland*, 13, 1 (2013), pp. 26-32.

Labor in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>

The apparent skew towards mining, manufacturing, and construction reflects the preponderance of industrial employment in Scotland at the time of migration and the dominance of mining and manufacturing in the Scottish economy. Shipping was a major part of Scotland's urban economies, and the overrepresentation of Scots among shipbuilders reflects both this and the urban origins of Scottish migrants to Australia.

The data available for Scottish women in New South Wales tells a different story, and helps to round out our picture of Scottish employment. In 1901, 8957 of the 12,151 Scottish women in New South Wales, or 73.7 per cent of them, were recorded as being "dependents on natural guardians". Another 165 women were "dependents upon the state". Nevertheless, 3,024 Scottish women took home an income. The largest occupations for Scottish women were in the supply of board and lodging (3.4 per cent) and domestic service (6.5 per cent). There was also a considerable number of women (3.2 per cent) employed in the textile industry. Most of these women were employed producing clothing, although a handful were involved in the manufacture of textiles.<sup>55</sup>

Since these statistics refer to only a small number of women, care must be taken in interpreting the significance of their overrepresentation in certain occupations, but some figures do emerge that are substantial enough to consider seriously. There were roughly three times as many Scottish women living from their own means than would be expected, and around two-and-a-half times as many working in healthcare than expected. Furthermore, Scots made up around 7.4 per cent of the total number of women working in property and finance – about four times more than would be expected.<sup>56</sup>

**Table 5: Top five occupations for Scottish women in NSW, 1901**  
(Source: *Census of New South Wales, 1901*)

	<b>% of Total women</b>	<b>% of Scottish-born women</b>
<b>Domestic Service</b>	5.75	6.52
<b>Supply of Board and Lodging</b>	2.42	3.36
<b>Dressmaking</b>	3.33	3.10
<b>Independent Means</b>	0.92	2.84
<b>Healthcare</b>	0.62	1.60

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<sup>54</sup> P. Kelly, *Scotland's radical exports* (Glasgow, 2011), pp. 232-293; Wilkie, 'Scottish workers and radicals', pp. 86-91.

<sup>55</sup> *Census of New South Wales, 1901*.

<sup>56</sup> *Census of New South Wales, 1901*.

The most important point here is that many Scottish migrants lived in the industrial working class areas of the two cities because they were often industrial workers themselves – and this confirms general understandings of the ways in which Australian cities have developed. The social and economic features of Australian cities have been determined in large part by the progress of transport. Until the introduction of the tram and railways in the 1870s and 1880s, the only way to move around Melbourne and Sydney was by foot, or on horseback and horse-drawn carts.<sup>57</sup> Because of this, the wealthy resided close to the centre, as did factory and office workers, who lived close to the central business district or the ports where employment opportunities were available. As suburbs developed close to the CBD, either they took on a working class character with industrial and residential areas developing in close proximity, or they were middle class areas primarily dominated by housing. The middle class suburbs remained close to the CBD but away from developing industry and the homes of workers.

The coming of the trams and railways at the end of the nineteenth century opened up housing opportunities far away from the growing population and industrial activity adjacent to the CBD.<sup>58</sup> In 1861, for example, about three-quarters of Melbourne's population lived within the central business district and the inner ring of suburbs, within easy walking distance to central markets and shops. By 1891, the proportion was 54 per cent, and so Melbourne had become one of the most suburbanised cities in the world.<sup>59</sup> Thus, an outer ring of both middle class and workers suburbs were created, with the inner ring of suburbs remaining largely a mix of industry and working class housing. In Melbourne, the major middle class suburbs established in the late-nineteenth century were Carlton and Fitzroy, while Brunswick and Footscray in the inner west were new working class suburbs.<sup>60</sup> In Sydney, Paddington and North Sydney were early middle class areas and Leichhardt in particular became the new home of workers after the building of railways.<sup>61</sup> In this way, those who could afford it lived away from the industry and growing populations at the centre of Sydney and Melbourne, in areas with larger houses and block of land. As Susan Priestley writes, “families... especially the well-to-do, were drawn

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<sup>57</sup> For more on ‘walking cities’ see J. McCarty, ‘Australian capital cities in the nineteenth century’, in J. McCarty and C. B. Schedvin (eds), *Australian capital cities: historical essays* (Sydney, 1974), pp. 9-39.

<sup>58</sup> S. Priestley, *The Victorians: making their mark* (Melbourne, 1984), p. 129-132; p. 152.

<sup>59</sup> McCarty, ‘Australian capital cities’, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Bounds, *Urban social theory*, p. 98.

<sup>61</sup> Bounds, *Urban social theory*, p. 98.

out of the central city by the suburban ideal of air, light and garden space.”<sup>62</sup>

The workers, on the other hand, often remained in the inner regions of each city despite the aggressive promotion of home ownership for the working classes by building societies.<sup>63</sup> If the data was available, older, established Scots could be expected to live in the wealthier outer suburbs, while newer migrants with industrial skills would have found housing and employment in the inner regions, although workingmen’s fares introduced on some morning and evening trains in Melbourne may have helped to persuade workers to move further out from the centre of the city.<sup>64</sup> In any case, by 1901 it was the inner suburbs that were the most likely home for Scots, and this had much to do with the industrial backgrounds of many Scottish migrants. This was especially the case for Scots in the inner portside suburbs of Sydney. Additionally, it is arguable that the nature of the suburbs and of housing had a unique impact upon the settlement choices of Scottish migrants.

### **Housing and residential patterns in Melbourne**

An important but mostly overlooked observation is that housing also had an important role in the lives of Scottish migrants. From the late eighteenth century until the Second World War, Scottish cities were some of the most densely populated and poorly housed in Britain, but emigration presented a path to better conditions. As urban sociologist Michael Bounds observes: “The skilled industrial labouring classes whose progress was daunted by the crowding and costs of the [British] cities came to Australia in search of independence and their own castle in the suburbs.”<sup>65</sup>

The influence of building societies and other suburban ideologues in developing the Australian appetite for suburban home-ownership in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is also notable. One building society periodical from 1888 reads: “To have a home which he himself reared or purchased – a home which he has improved or beautified – a home indeed, which, with honest pride or natural love, he calls *his own*, will make any man a better citizen.”<sup>66</sup> Urban historian Graeme Davison writes that this was “an ideal with obvious

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<sup>62</sup> Priestley, *Making their mark*, p. 127.

<sup>63</sup> Priestley, *Making their mark*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>64</sup> Priestley, *Making their mark*, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Bounds, *Urban social theory*, p. 98.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in G. Davison, *The rise and fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne, 1978), p. 174.

attraction to citizens of a vigorous and self-conscious metropolis.” He notes that the idea of home ownership “simultaneously confirmed the city’s promise of economic and social mobility and offered sanctuary from its oppressive demands; it overlaid the primitive sense of territory with aspirations to petty landownership and rural peace.”<sup>67</sup>

In Scotland, most people lived in rented three or four storey tenements in which families slept up to four or five to a room; owner occupied housing was almost unheard of in Scotland until after the Second World War. In the first decade of the twentieth century, about half the people in Scotland lived in houses of one or two rooms, and 56 per cent of one-roomed dwellings were occupied by more than two persons.<sup>68</sup> The report of a royal commission on Scottish housing released in 1918 indicated the extent to which the condition of Scottish housing affected its working citizens:

The chief root of industrial unrest is the desire of the workers to establish better conditions of life for themselves and their families ... bad housing may fairly be regarded as a legitimate cause of social unrest ...so far as housing is concerned, we cannot but record our satisfactions that, after generations of apathy, the workers all over Scotland give abundant evidence of discontent with conditions that no modern community should be expected to tolerate. Industrial unrest, whatever to be its ultimate causes, undoubtedly is stimulated, directly and indirectly, by defective housing.<sup>69</sup>

Most Scottish migrant families were from working class backgrounds.<sup>70</sup> The powerlessness of many Scottish workers to improve their living conditions stemmed mainly from the fact that their wages were not high enough to pay the rents for better accommodation.<sup>71</sup> Both living conditions and the state of the Scottish urban working classes in this time would have combined to influence the choice made by migrant Scots regarding their future living arrangements and, ultimately, their decision to migrate – though the fact of their migration indicates that these Scots must have had some resources. One migrant, Hugh Robertson, remembers deciding to leave his family home in Glasgow in 1921 simply because, as he and his sibling grew older,

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<sup>67</sup> Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, p. 174.

<sup>68</sup> *Census of Scotland*, 1901 and 1911.

<sup>69</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Housing, 1917–1918*, cited in J. Butt, ‘Working class housing in the Scottish cities, 1900–1950’, in G. Gordon and B. Dicks (eds), *Scottish urban history* (Aberdeen, 1985), pp. 241–42.

<sup>70</sup> R. A. Cage, *The working class in Glasgow, 1750–1914* (London, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Butt, ‘Working class housing in the Scottish cities’, p. 235.

room in the house was at a premium. He said: “We were all growing up very rapidly to be women and men. I should perhaps say here that we were all very large men; none of us were under six feet tall. And so when my brother came back, I decided that I ought to make room for the other members of the family and I came to Australia.”<sup>72</sup>

The most basic housing wish for most Scots was to live in a building that was unlike any tenement. In 1850, one Scottish migrant, Maggie Brown, articulated the delight of, in Davison’s words, having the “opportunity for individual self-expression and identification created by a front door and a front gate of one’s own.” Describing her house in Fitzroy, Maggie expressed a sense that her new home in Fitzroy was, in all respects, better than those in she had encountered in Scotland:

We have a front door with a knocker on it, and about two yards of a wooden walk in front covered with a verandah to keep off the rain or heat and between that and the street a plot of grass grows, so that we can have wallflowers or any other flowers, and around that a nice white railing and a neat little gate to ourselves. I can tell you it looks very nobby.<sup>73</sup>

Maggie Brown’s sense of achievement in coming to occupy a private home (with its own front door and gate) stemmed directly from housing conditions in Scotland, where cramped and unpleasant conditions were prevalent up until after the Second World War. Australia, however, afforded opportunities in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries for Scots to achieve their housing aspirations.<sup>74</sup> They tended towards suburbs where there was suitable work, and where houses were not so tightly packed together. In addition to their own search for betterment, the push for suburban home-ownership by groups such as building societies provided a further impetus for Scots to pursue improved housing conditions. In any case, with an average of four persons per dwelling in all Melbourne suburbs in 1901, wherever the Scots lived was likely to be far from the slum conditions of Scottish urban centres such as Glasgow.<sup>75</sup>

The census data seem to support an overall trend among Scots in Melbourne to settle in

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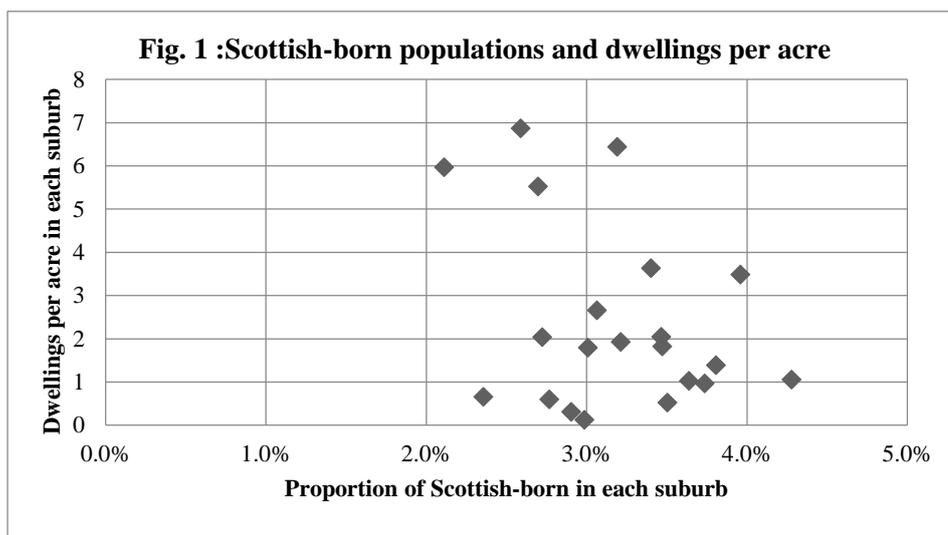
<sup>72</sup> Interview with H. S. Robertson by M. Pratt, recorded 8 July 1974. National Library of Australia (NLA), Oral History and Folklore Collection, Mel Pratt Collection, Oral TRC 121/53.

<sup>73</sup> M. B. Hoey, ‘A Newtown cottage’, 1854, cited in G. Davison, ‘Colonial origins of the Australian home’, in P. Toy (ed.), *A history of European housing in Australia* (Cambridge, 2000), p.17.

<sup>74</sup> Davison, ‘Colonial origins of the Australian home’, p. 16

<sup>75</sup> *Census of Victoria*, 1901

sparsely settled suburbs, which would contrast greatly with the pre-migration experience for many. On the one hand, the 1901 census data shows that the Scots lived in higher concentrations in Melbourne suburbs that had an overall high population density, a correlation that reflects their high dispersal rate. Unsurprisingly though, the largest differences between ‘Scots per acre’ and persons per acre in Melbourne were in Williamstown, South Melbourne, Footscray, and Essendon – the top four Scottish suburbs in Melbourne. At the highest levels of density in the inner city areas, Scots chose North Melbourne over the more thickly populated Fitzroy. On the other hand, Scots showed a clustering tendency towards suburbs in which there were fewer dwellings per acre. These results are shown in Figure 1. With the exception of South Melbourne at around 3.5 dwellings per acre, the highest percentages of Scots were in suburbs situated in the lowest range in terms of housing density; Williamstown is at the far bottom-right.



The formation of a Scottish ethnic enclave would have involved a critical mass that was somehow seen to be outside of the normative host society in social, economic, ethnic or religious terms. Such a segregated migrant group would have taken housing and employment in an urban area where ethnically specialised services like shops, schools and churches served its population.<sup>76</sup> The majority of Scots did not fit this profile, and having a mostly British and Protestant background meant they were more readily able to integrate into Melbourne’s society, leading to a more widespread dispersal across numerous urban and suburban areas of the city. Nonetheless, more insights into the residential patterns of Scots can be gained by using another

<sup>76</sup> J. E. Zucchi, *A history of ethnic enclaves in Canada* (Ottawa, 2007), p. 3.

potential indicator of ‘Scottishness’ – Presbyterianism – and from this some further nuances in way the Scots came to choose where to live can be observed.

### **Religion, churches, and settlement**

An analysis of Presbyterianism in Melbourne’s suburbs broadly reflects the Scottish-born populations (but not Irish Presbyterians, for example), and on average there were about four times as many Presbyterians in any suburb than there were Scots-born. The correlation both confirms a link between Scots and Presbyterians and suggests that a large proportion of Presbyterian children born in Australia to Scottish parents lived in these areas. The 1901 census of Victoria indicates that the greatest proportion of Presbyterians within the suburban Melbourne population were in Williamstown (2727 people or 19.41 per cent of the total population), Essendon (3059 – 17.55 per cent) and Footscray (3116 – 17.01 per cent) – while a larger proportion of Oakleigh’s residents were also Presbyterian, the total population was so small (1273) as to render the result negligible.

Hidden within these figures are two denominations – the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and the Free Presbyterian Church. The former accounted for over 99 per cent of the Presbyterian population, but there were just 54 Free Presbyterians in Melbourne in 1901 and very little is known of these people. Concentrations of ‘Free Kirkers’ appear to have been linked to the proximity of appropriate churches. Not surprisingly, 27 of these individuals lived in Hawthorn, Prahran, and St Kilda, relatively close to Melbourne’s major Free Presbyterian church in East St Kilda, near the corner of Alma Road and Chapel Street. Five more lived in North Melbourne, Brunswick, Fitzroy, and central Melbourne, while fourteen lived in Northcote and Flemington and Kensington. These relatively close suburbs were short distances away from both St Andrew’s Presbyterian in Carlton (the ‘Gaelic Church’) and the John Knox Free Presbyterian Church in central Melbourne.<sup>77</sup>

This contrasts with mainstream Presbyterians, for whom housing choices do not seem to have been influenced strongly by the location of churches. For instance, the Dorcas Street Presbyterian Church and Sunday School in South Melbourne was one of the biggest Presbyterian institutions in the area. Arthur and Florence Gilchrist took their daughter Alice

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<sup>77</sup> *Census of Victoria*, 1901. See also R. Ward, *The bush still burns: the Presbyterian and Reformed faith in Australia, 1788-1988* (Wantirna, 1989).

Marion to the church to be baptised in 1904, and they lived in Herbert Place, South Melbourne – little more than a twenty-minute stroll from the church.<sup>78</sup> In the same year, William Potter took his daughter to be baptised at the church, but he had travelled from Wheatland Street in Malvern, which was over an hour's walk away. In another example, Mary Jane Reid, a young teacher at the Presbyterian Sunday school, lived a comfortable distance away in the neighbouring suburb of Albert Park and did not have to travel a great distance to attend work.<sup>79</sup>

While convenience might have played some role in the decision to live close to a Presbyterian church, it is just as likely that economic means and work were as important factors in the decision to attend a church. Indeed, in 1883, the *Argus* reported that no more than twelve tradesmen attended Presbyterian Church in Toorak and just six in East St Kilda; workers either did not live in these generally wealthier eastern suburbs or, as in some Geelong parishes, were liable to receive a fine from their employers for leaving work early to attend services.<sup>80</sup> In this way, economic considerations might have influenced both the settlement choices of migrants as well as the decision to attend a particular Presbyterian church. On the other hand, religion and access to ministers and churches was likely to be a larger component in the decision process for some other Scottish migrants, particularly those of the Free Kirk.

## Conclusion

The simple lure of a clean and quiet home of one's own may have been reason enough for many to seek a detached family residence. This much is evident from the testimony of Jim Comerford. Jim came with his family to Australia from Scotland in the 1920s. The first house his family moved into was a two bedroom miner's bach in worse condition than his home in Scotland, and he remembers his mother telling his father, "If I could get back on the boat now I'd go straight home." They soon found another house, with four bedrooms. "It was a marked improvement," said Jim, "and had a marked affect on my mother's outlook. Because after the better than normal standards we had had in Scotland we were at the bottom of the heap in that horrible bach and to move from that house into a house that was even better than the one we

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<sup>78</sup> M. McGillvray, *Dorcas Street Presbyterian Church, South Melbourne: jubilee historical sketch 1854–1904* (Melbourne, 1904); 'Australian Electoral Roles, 1903-1954'.

<sup>79</sup> McGillvray, *Dorcas Street Presbyterian Church*; 'Australian Electoral Rolls, 1903 – 1954'.

<sup>80</sup> M. Wood, *Presbyterians in colonial Victoria* (Melbourne, 2008), pp. 152-53.

lived in Scotland quite clearly had its beneficial effect on her outlook.”<sup>81</sup> The wide availability of detached family houses in suburbia allowed Scots to own their own homes and it was perhaps the case that they believed, in Davison’s words, a “suburban residence with a small portion of land attached will contain all that is essential to happiness.”<sup>82</sup>

Scots in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were a predominantly urban settler group and Australian cities offered respite for migrants weary of the living conditions of Scotland’s urban centres by enabling them to live in relatively low-density suburbs serviced by newly developed railways and tramlines. Their settlement patterns in two of the major Australian cities also hinted at their working class background, and many Scots lived in suburbs that were near ports and offered employment in traditionally Scottish occupations such as manufacturing and shipping. Their experiences of cities were shaped by conditions in both Scotland and Australia, and despite the prominence of rural histories in the literature, urban Scots were arguably more representative of both countries.

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with J. Comerford by M. Biggins, recorded 15 May 1987. State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW), Oral History Collection, NSW Bicentennial Oral History Project, Oral TRC 2301/54.

<sup>82</sup> G. Davison, ‘Australia: the first suburban nation?’, *Journal of Urban History*, 22, 1, (1995), p. 44.