# A Cultural History of Australian Rules Football in Rural South West Victoria during the Interwar Years

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## Abstract

Australian Rules football has been played for over 160 years. Originating in Melbourne, the state capital of Victoria, the code is the most popular winter sport in the state and much of the nation. The game's popularity has led to burgeoning historical literature of its origins, development, and expansion. Yet, the majority of these investigations have focused on metro-centric narratives of the code, overlooking the game's prominence in many of those areas outside of major Australian cities.

This thesis moves away from narratives of the game's elite metropolitan history to explore the role Australian Rules football played in communicating, reproducing, and promulgating cultural values in a particular rural Australian context. More specifically, I analyse local newspapers from the south west of Victoria during the interwar period to begin the process of ascertaining what the game meant to rural Australian communities and to the nation more generally.

While this thesis examines the general status and popularity of this code of football in a rural context, it focusses on the role that the local press and community played in promoting the game as a space that fostered the development of exemplary men and citizens. Australia's late colonial and early twentieth century history is replete with narratives that connect Australia's national identity with rural male figures that were revered for the idyllic manliness they embodied. Less, however, is known about the ideals of manliness in the country during the interwar period. Henceforth, this thesis analyses the multivalent perceptions of how men moulded their masculinity according to celebrated, admired, and revered characteristics of the predominantly male-oriented interwar setting of rural football competitions.

Football in this rural setting was presented as a wholesome entity that nurtured attributes of congeniality, fairness, and sportsmanship. However, the memories extracted from historical sources of the period such as newspapers and monuments also illuminate some troubling aspects of football's culture that were socially condoned and accepted as 'a part of the game'. In particular, elements of violence, the accepted decline of Indigenous Australians, concerns about the impact of professionalisation, and the relevance of sport during periods of global crisis complicate the simplistic celebration of country football as a wholesome manly sport.

## Declaration

I, Nicholas T.S. Marshall, declare that this PhD thesis entitled ‘A Cultural History of Australian Rules Football in Rural South West Victoria during the Interwar Years’ is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: 

Date: 16 September 2019

## Acknowledgments

As anyone who has completed a PhD thesis can attest, such a project is only made possible with the unwavering support and encouragement of many valued colleagues, family members, friends, and organisations. Although I cannot list every person individually in this space, I will endeavour to personally thank those of you who have shared in this journey with me in due course.

Firstly, I would like to thank my excellent supervisory team who have guided me over the course of this adventure: Matthew Klugman, Dianne Hall, and Rob Hess. Matthew has instilled me with confidence to explore my research interests; Dianne has proved invaluable in guiding the refinement of my writing, editing, and proofreading skills, while Rob has been an inspiring reminder of the value of history in academia.

I am also extraordinarily thankful to my parents, Pepita and John, for the sacrifices they have made which have allowed me to pursue my passions. I would also like to thank my sisters, Clare and Alanna, as well as other family members for their steadfast and enthusiastic support of my studies.

I am indebted to my friends and fellow members of the Fitzroy Football Club and Kolora-Noorat Football Netball Club who have provided an essential social and physical outlet away from my studies over the past four years. The interest they have shown in my project and the study-life balance they have helped me maintain has been uplifting and energising.

In regard to my fellow postgraduate students and other academic staff whom I have shared an office, worked with, and engaged with in reading and writing groups, I am grateful to have worked alongside so many gifted, bright, and self-motivated individuals. The value of their company and advice during this experience has been immeasurable.

Finally, I would like to praise the knowledgeable and friendly staff and volunteers of the Corangamite Regional Library Services, the State Library of Victoria, the Melbourne Cricket Club Library, the historical societies of Terang, Camperdown, Mortlake, and Warrnambool, and AFL Western District for access and permission to explore their archival holdings, newspapers collections, and other ephemera. A final special mention should go to Marg McIntosh for providing me a quiet space to study in the Terang Library every Friday during the football season.

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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| CDFL | Camperdown and District Football League |
| HHJFL | Hampden and Heytesbury Junior Football League |
| HFL | Hampden Football League |
| MNFL | Mount Noorat Football League |
| VCFL | Victorian Country Football League |
| VFA | Victorian Football Association |
| VFL | Victorian Football League |
| WDFL | Western District Football League |

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# Chapter One

## Literature, Methodology, and Objectives

### Introduction

In 2004, Graeme Allen, Area Manager (East) for the Victorian Country Football League, proclaimed that '[w]e must never underestimate the role a football club plays in the local community. The football club is the most important local identity in most country towns …'.[1] Allen's passionate statement was foregrounded in the *Inquiry into Country Football* report produced by the Victorian Parliament's Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee. This report upheld the widespread belief that Australian Rules football has played a vital role within rural communities across Victoria. As such, the Committee recommended among other things that efforts should be made to preserve and reconstruct histories of the game from regional Victoria.[2] But the vision for this recommended historical reconstruction extended only as far as statistical information and honour board material.

Having played football in country leagues for the majority of my life, experiencing firsthand the social and cultural prominence of the game, I have always been curious to explore the code's historical development in a rural Australian setting. But to simplify country football's history down to numbers and lists of names does not reckon with the purported cultural importance and meaning the game has offered regional communities. Australian Rules football has been played for well over 100 years in rural Victoria, however historians are yet to examine in detail what the game has meant to local towns and districts.[3] There are no

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1 Parliament of Victoria Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, *Inquiry into Country Football: Final Report*, Melbourne: Parliament of Victoria, 2004, p. 26.

2 Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Country Football*, p. 152. The full recommendation pertaining to rural football histories in Victoria reads as follows: 'Recommendation 6: The government provide funding for research to capture historical information about leagues, clubs and competitions (including competitions and premierships, best and fairest, leading goal kickers, life members, captains, coaches etc.) and that this information be offered as a free, public online resource'.

3 Only a small selection of scholarly work broaches the topic of rural football history. See for example: Paul Daffey, *Behind the Goals: The History of the Victorian Country Football League*, Ballarat East: Ten Bags

histories that deeply analyse the cultural role that the game has played in rural Victoria, nor of why it was so celebrated, or the values that the sport transmitted. Rather, histories of football tend to focus on the social history of the game's development and growth, emphasising the key

Press, 2017; Ashley Humphrey, "'Like Flemington Road on Cup Day": A Socio-Cultural History of the Early Development of Football in the Loddon Valley District, 1876-1903', Honours Thesis, School of Sport and Exercise Science, Victoria University, 2012; R.A. Gillett, 'Where the Big Men Fly: An Early History of Australian Football in the Riverina Region of New South Wales', Bachelor of Letters Thesis, Department of History, University of New England, 1983; and Dave Nadel, 'Aborigines and Australian Football: The Rise and Fall of the Purnim Bears', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1993, pp. 47-63. Histories of the game that track the game's existence within a rural Victorian locale such as Fred Bond and Don Grossman, *Evergreen Hampden: History of the Hampden Football – Its People and Their Progress*, Warrnambool: PAP Book Company, 1979; and Robert McLaren, *Playing Footy and Milking Cows: The Mt Noorat Football League*, Leopold: R. McLaren, 2006 are among a collection of works that while providing descriptions of events, matches, and people important to the game's development in regional areas of Victoria do not explore the cultural importance or meaning that football offered communities that played, supported, and facilitated its growth. For a bibliographic list that includes historical works on football competitions and teams across rural Victoria see Lionel Frost and Tim Hogan, 'Clubs: Minor Leagues', in Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading Australian Rules Football: The Definitive Guide to the Game*, Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2017, pp. 43-54. Even the most comprehensive histories of Australian Rules football do not address in any substantive manner the meaning of the game. Although valuable works to the game's history, for much of the literature that pertains to the history of the game the predominant focus is that of the elite metropolitan competitions which provide little detailed insight into country football competitions. See, for example, Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson, Bob Stewart and Gregory de Moore, *A National Game: The History of Australian Rules Football*, Camberwell: Penguin/Viking, 2008. While social history has predominated in the field of Australian Rules football heritage the vast collection of works provides a rich tapestry of narratives that outline a multitude of stories which include, but is not limited to, its origins, evolution, and expansion. Pioneering academic titles that inspect the general history of Australian Rules football include Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner, *Up Where, Cazaly? The Great Australian Game*, Sydney: Granada, 1981; Geoffrey Blainey, *A Game of Our Own: The Origins of Australian Football*, Melbourne: Information Australia, 1990; Robert Pascoe, *The Winter Game: The Complete History of Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 1995; and Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998. Additionally, political, economic, and developmental aspects of the game's heritage have also been well established through a dramatic increase in the historical interest of the code. See, for example, Garry Linnell, *Football Ltd: The Inside Story of the AFL*, Sydney: Ironbark, 1995; D.R. Booth, 'Labor Market Intervention, Revenue Sharing, and Competitive Balance in the Australian Football League, 1897-2002', in R. Fort and J. Fizel (eds), *International Sports Economics Comparisons* (First Edition), Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004, pp. 319-336; and James Coventry, *Time and Space: The Tactics that Shaped Australian Rules – and the Players and Coaches Who Mastered Them*, Sydney: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015. The greatest strength of these essential works of history was that they hinted at a number of important sub-histories and narratives that could be explored as they both explicate and illuminate aspects of Australian culture. In particular they have opened up lines of enquiry into marginalised aspects of the game such as the evolving roles of women in the game, the culture and passions of spectatorship or 'barracking' and the sense that the game has deeply entrenched meaning within a multitude of Australian communities. For insight into the historical and contemporary cultures of barracking in the game see: Matthew Klugman, *Passion Play: Love, Hope and Heartbreak at the Footy*, Melbourne: Hunter Publishers, 2009; June Senyard, 'The Barracker and the Spectator: Constructing Class and Gender Identities through the Football Crowd at the Turn of the Century', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 62, 1999, pp. 45-55; Matthew Klugman, '"*Genus* Barracker": Sport, Anger, Partisanship, Pleasure, Science, Masculinity, and Race in Colonial Melbourne', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2019, pp. 171-187; Matthew Klugman, 'Loves, Suffering and Identification: The Passions of Australian Football League Fans', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2009, pp. 21-44; and Matthew Nicholson (ed.), *Fanfare: Spectator Culture and Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne: Australian Society for Sport History, 2005. For comprehensive bibliography of football related literature see Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading Australian Rules Football: The Definitive Guide to the Game*, Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2017.

characters who influenced this progress. More often than not these prominent historical figures are men; a gendered imbalance which is rarely brought into question or has been a taken for granted fact of football history.[4]

This thesis focusses on the depiction of men who played in and coordinated Australian Rules football competitions in rural south west Victoria during the interwar years.[5] Specifically, it asks the following questions: What meaning did the game and the men involved foster locally? What memories of the game permeated the community? How did football competitions of the bush relate to their city based counterparts? What elements of this rural football landscape were celebrated and what elements were scrutinised?

In asking these questions I follow in the footsteps of Marilyn Lake who, in 1986, drew attention to the need for Australian historians to explore the masculinity of historical figures that have been cast as central to narratives associated with the nation's identity. In her germinal position paper navigating the historiography of Australian masculinity and manhood, Lake outlined how historically men have often been portrayed as 'sex-less' entities rather than as agents who are 'pursuing their "masculinist" interests as men'.[6] Extending this sentiment Gail Bederman states that 'Many historians have simply assumed that manhood is an unproblematic

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4 In recent years there has been growing attention devoted to the historical role of women in football, but this is overshadowed by the majority of historical works that prioritise the influence of male figures. See, for example, Brunette Lenkić and Rob Hess, *Play On!: The Hidden History of Women's Australian Rules Football*, Richmond: Echo Publishing, 2016; Rob Hess, '"Ladies are Specially Invited": Women in the Culture of Australian Rules Football', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 17, nos 2-3, 2000, pp. 111-141; Matthew Klugman, 'Gendered Pleasures, Power Limits, and Suspicions: Exploring the Subjectivities of Female Supporters of Australian Rules Football', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2012, pp. 415-429; and Rob Hess, 'Missing in Action?: New Perspectives on the Origins and Diffusion of Women's Football in Australia During the Great War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 31, no. 18, 2014, pp. 2326-2344.

5 The parameters of how south west Victoria is defined for the purpose of this thesis are outlined in the methodology section of this chapter.

6 Marilyn Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86, 1986, pp. 116-131. Lake's article stimulated discussion in academic circles at the time and encouraged historians to examine the way men pursued contextually exalted and relevant forms of masculinity throughout history. For further discussion and debate of the issue see Chris McConville, 'Rough Women, Respectable Men and Social Reform: A Response to Lake's Masculinism', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 88, 1987, pp. 432-440; and Judith Allen, '"Mundane Men": Historians, Masculinity and Masculinism', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 89, 1987, pp. 617-628.

identity – an unchanging essence – inherent in all male-bodied humans'.[7] Concealed throughout history is the fact that what constitutes masculinity is always changing and reflective of the social and cultural context in which it is viewed. This concealment has allowed 'men [to] claim certain kinds of authority, based upon their particular type of bodies'.[8] The perceived authority of men in society has led to male figures dominating the annals of history, without any analysis of their gendered socialisation.

Within the context of the historiography of Australian Rules football, the achievements of men are yet to be analysed in terms of their pursuit of the masculinist ideologies that encapsulated the game. Rather, the gender of these people who figure are generally ignored, taken for granted, or assumed to be male. As such the elision of any examination of footballing masculinity provides limited understanding of the socialisation of men and the game's resultant role in shaping and embodying cultural values of any specified historic Australian context. This thesis explores the contested and complex nature of masculinity that existed within an historic ruralised Australian football context to determine what cultural meanings and memories pervaded not only the game, but the community more broadly. As the rest of this chapter will illustrate, football becomes a lens through which to examine the culturally significant values that were relevant and celebrated by the communities of the historical rural context in question.[9]

**Masculinity, Australian History, and Sport**

Masculinity is a fluid concept, moulded according to the context and society within which it is performed and viewed. The symbols of Australian manliness – and the masculinity associated

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7 Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United State, 1880-1917*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995, p. 6.

8 Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 7.

9 Based on Benedict Anderson's classic work *Imagined Communities*, the term community is used to refer to a collective of people whose connection is based on an ideology of shared communion. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition), London: Verso, 1991, pp. 5-7.

with them – have changed over time. In the late nineteenth century, Bohemian writers such as Henry Lawson, A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson, and Joseph Furphy cast rural men 'of the bush' as exemplars of the nation's burgeoning establishment. The image created by these writers of the rough bush landscape and the strong, virile, determined men that worked it became celebrated and promoted symbols of the nation.[10] Shortly after Federation, as war approached, another prominent figure with which the nation re-imagined its identity was the white male Anzac soldier that fought bravely and selflessly sacrificed themself for the British Empire during World War I.[11] The bushmen and the soldier alike were lionised for their embodiment of perceived iconic Australian traits such as independence, resourcefulness, resilience, and loyalty: such attributes which in themselves tended to harbour obvious masculinised connotations.[12] As a result of their exemplary masculine presence, the bushmen and then the soldier were symbolic heroes of the nation across two separate historical contexts.[13] As Graeme Davison has stated, '[Charles] Bean's image of the bushmen-soldier lives strongly in the national imagination to this day'.[14] Yet, recent research has shown that these are only two of an innumerable quantity of contexts throughout Australian history where a certain icon of idyllic masculinity was revered.[15]

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10 Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Second Edition), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966; J.B. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 71, 1978, pp. 316-337; and Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia*, Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005, pp. 163-193.

11 K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, Sydney: New South Books, 2010; and Jo Hawkins, *Consuming Anzac: The History of Australia's Most Powerful Brand*, Perth: UWA Publishing, 2018.

12 Australian women for example were not described with such masculinised terms. The iconic Australian girl was celebrated for 'her freshness, beauty, good sense and lack of affection'. See Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin Publishing, 1981, p. 77.

13 See, for example, Ward, *The Australian Legend*; Lake and Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?*; Alistair Thomson, 'The Anzac Legend: Exploring National Myths and Meaning in Australia', in Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds), *The Myths We Live By*, London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 73-82; and Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

14 Graeme Davison, *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016, p. 74.

15 See, for example, Bethany Phillips-Peddlesden, '"A Stronger Man and a More Virile Character": Australian Prime Ministers, Embodied Manhood and Political Authority in the Early Twentieth Century', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2017, pp. 502-518. Tracking the political careers of former Australian Prime

R.W. Connell's work, *Masculinities*, has been responsible for expanding analysis and interest in the complex and contested notion of masculinity. Amongst Connell's core arguments is the idea that there is no singular form of masculinity which men can strive towards, but rather an ideal and privileged form of masculinity that is ever-changing and shaped by both time and place – a concept Connell termed 'hegemonic masculinity'.[16]

Connell is among a group of influential sociologists who have observed that sport is a primary social context where the masculine identities of a nation can be observed.[17] There are also important historical works that address the connection between masculinity and sport. A primary example from outside an Australian context is Michael Oriard's work on American football during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[18] Oriard provides insight into the multiple constructions and types of masculinity that existed during the early years of American football.[19] Although he does not explicitly acknowledge the concept of hegemonic masculinity the manner in which he describes the multiplicities of masculinity within the origin story of American football, and the contested notions of manliness at play, illuminate the complex cultures of manhood that existed within this historical sporting context.[20] Manliness in American football was read in a variety of ways, as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, as a defining practice which explicated ideals of class and race, and along lines of

Ministers Alfred Deakin, George Reid, and Andrew Fisher, Phillips-Peddlesden highlights that through the management of their masculine identities their manhood in the political field was tested daily in a very public way. Measures of masculinity in politics included performances of authority through demonstration of strong oratory skills, reason, independence, and physicality.

16 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Second Edition), Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005. See also R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2005, pp. 829-859; and for insights into hegemonic masculinity within a sporting context see R.W. Connell, 'An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of Hegemonic Masculinity', in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sago (eds), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1990, pp. 83-95.

17 Connell, 'An Iron Man'. See, for example, the collection of works in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (eds), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1990.

18 Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

19 Oriard, *Reading Football*, pp. 189-276.

20 Oriard, *Reading Football*, pp. 189-276.

gender distinction as football was seen to cultivate attributes of masculinity to counter the embodiment of effeminacy or feminine traits.[21]

Like American sport, histories that track the evolution of sport in Britain have also been found to touch on similar elements of masculinity and the education of men. Published in 1857, and arguably the most influential publication of the time, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* has provided a critical site of exploration for sport historians to evaluate sport's early status as a site of masculine development.[22] The majority of historical discussion pertaining to this literary work and sports of this period often revolved around the concept of 'Muscular Christianity', that is the notion that sport could develop good and courageous men.[23] Yet historians of sport in the twentieth century have frequently privileged other frameworks of analysis such as class, which in sport history is often intertwined with discussion of the conflicts between amateur and professional sport.[24]

Nevertheless, W.F. Mandle's classic article on the relationship between cricket and Australian nationalism showed that sport played a vital role in bolstering confidence in (white) Australian masculinity.[25] Martin Crotty built on this work (and in the process utilised the

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21 Oriard, *Reading Football*, pp. 189-276.

22 Rob Hess, 'Sport and the Literature of Muscular Christianity: Tom Brown's Schooldays', in Rob Hess and Matthew Klugman (eds), *A History of Sport and Physical Education: Ancient and Modern Perspectives*, North Ryde: McGraw-Hill, 2011, pp. 207-213.

23 For further reading that navigates the intersections between Muscular Christianity, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and their social influence in Australia during the nineteenth century see D.W. Brown, 'The Legacy of British Victorian Social Thought: Some Prominent Views on Sport, Physical Exercise and Society in Colonial Australia', *Sport & Colonialism in 19th Century Australasia: ASSH Studies in Sports History*, vol. 1, 1986, pp. 19-41; and D.W. Brown, 'Muscular Christianity in the Antipodes: Some Observations on the Diffusion and Emergence of a Victorian Ideal in Australian Social Theory', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1987, pp. 173-187.

24 Richard Holt, 'Historians and the History of Sport', *Sport in History*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-33.

25 W.F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 59, 1973, pp. 225-246. This article is considered a germinal piece which promoted interest in the field of sport history in Australia. Since then the formation of the Australian Society for Sport History and their bi-annual 'Sporting Traditions' conference have emphasised that the social and cultural history of sport in Australia requires in-depth and considered academic attention. Iconic titles which encouraged the growth of the academic field of Australian sport history include Brian Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever: Sport in Australian Culture*, North Ryde: Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1986; Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995; and Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman and Ian F. Jobling (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994.

concept of hegemonic masculinity) in his book *Making the Australian Male* to explore the changing ideals of Australian manliness through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[26] Focussing on the way urban middle-class boys adopted and developed socialised ideals of masculinity, Crotty emphasised a number of cultural preserves that were central to the promulgation of urban ideologies of masculinity including: religion, militarism, and sporting athleticism fostered in the public school system.[27]

Darryl Adair, John Nauright, and Murray Phillips have also drawn on the work of Connell – and other sport sociologists such as Michael Messner and Donald Sabo – to examine the intersections between sport and masculinity in Australia before and during World War I.[28] More specifically, they have highlighted the way sport was at once a place where heroes were created, and a testing ground of masculinity.[29] The rugby codes were one key site where notions of masculinity were promulgated and tested.[30] Indeed as John Nauright and Timothy Chandler note, rugby provided a sense of 'what it has meant … "to be a man"' throughout the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[31]

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[26] Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001. See also Martin Crotty, 'Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 17, nos 2-3, 2000, pp. 10-30.

[27] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*. Masculinity was also constituted through its antithesis to attributes of femininity, and a distain for effeminacy.

[28] Daryl Adair, Murray Phillips, and John Nauright, 'Sporting Manhood in Australia: Test Cricket, Rugby Football, and the Imperial Connection, 1878-1918', *Sport History Review*, vol. 28, 1997, pp. 46-60; and Daryl Adair, John Nauright and Murray Phillips, 'Playing Fields Through to Battle Fields: The Development of Australian Sporting Manhood in its Imperial context, c.1850-1918', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 56, 1998, pp. 51-67. For an early overview on the sociology of sport and masculinity see Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, 'Introduction: Toward a Critical Feminist Reappraisal of Sport, Men, and the Gender Order', in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (eds), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1990, pp. 1-15.

[29] Adair, Nauright, and Phillips, 'Playing Fields through to Battle Fields'.

[30] Murray Phillips, 'Football, Class and War: The Rugby Codes in New South Wales, 1907-1918', in John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (eds), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London: Frank Cass & Co, 1996, pp. 158-180.

[31] Timothy Chandler and John Nauright, 'Introduction: Rugby, Manhood and Identity', in John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (eds), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London: Frank Cass & Co, 1996, pp. 2-3. The scope of the narratives within this edited collection prioritised nationalised representations of how sport, in this case rugby – a sport which demanded physicality, strength, and determination – provided a domain for global recognition of masculine identities. See, John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (eds), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London: Frank Cass & Co, 1996.

There are hints that the considerable social and cultural power of Australian Rules football in Victoria was also closely linked to ideals of masculinity. Robert Pascoe has suggested that following World War I football was presented as a sport which highlighted 'the quiet strength idealised as Australian manhood' and the 'underlying discipline' which the game fostered in those men who played it.[32] Moreover, W.F. Mandle observed in his brief foray into the advent of Australian Rules football in Victoria during the nineteenth century, that the inventors of the code 'wanted a "manly" game'.[33] Yet the histories of Australian Rules football are otherwise largely silent around the forms of masculinity promoted, tested, and contested through the game.[34]

Despite this silence, it is possible that Australian Rules football played a key role in the creation and maintenance of forms of hegemonic masculinity in rural Victoria in the interwar period. During this time, alternative visions of masculinity began to displace the independent bushmen and valorous soldiers as the emblematic Australian male heroes. One prominent hegemonic masculine type which permeated Australian culture following the war was the surf life saver. A sport-based figure, the masculine image of the surf life saver was lionised and portrayed to global audiences as an icon of Australianness, a strong, virile, responsible, and most obviously masculine figure.[35] Yet although the surf life saver image was familiar to broad audiences, this ideal man was most applicable to coastal cities of the nation where the pleasures

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32 Pascoe, *The Winter Game*, pp. 91 and 105.

33 W.F. Mandle, 'Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies*, vol. 15, no. 60, 1973, p. 520.

34 In contrast, contemporary sociological research into elements of the embodiment of masculinity in present day Australian Rules football is also a growing field of inquiry. See, for example, Deborah Agnew, 'Life After Football: The Construction of Masculinity Following a Career in Elite Australian Rules Football', PhD Thesis, School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia, 2011; Deborah Agnew, 'Unless You Have a Broken Bone or You are Unconscious, You Get Up: Sport, Pain and Social Construction of Masculinity', Honours Thesis, School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia, 2007; and Deborah Agnew and Murray Drummond, 'Always a Footballer?: The Reconstruction of Masculine Identity Following Retirement from Elite Australian Football', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2015, pp. 68-87.

35 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 154-157.

and threats posed by the sea were a focus.[36] In rural Australia different forms of masculinity were privileged in the interwar years, with (white) men celebrated for their domesticity as providers for families, along with their independence, resourcefulness, and resilience.[37]

This thesis seeks to begin the process of redressing both the lack of detailed scholarship concerning masculinity and Australian Rules football, and the rural and regional history of the game in Victoria by asking the following question. What kinds of heroes – and forms of masculinity more broadly – did Australian Rules football foster and reproduce in rural Victoria where it was the most popular sport in this time? Men and the masculine identities they pursue are central to narratives of Australia's cultural heritage. Discourses of rurality, war, and sport are deeply connected with Australian identity and equally shape historical constructions of masculinity. While many social and cultural connections have been made regarding the overlapping masculinity inherent within Australian rurality and soldiering like that of the 'bushmen-soldier', there is yet to be any similar substantive analysis of the 'rural-footballer'. It is in exploring how ideas of rurality in Australia have been represented throughout historical literature and how the masculine rural identity of Australia shifted from its once iconic status of the colonial period to a somewhat underrepresented entity during the interwar years, that this chapter now turns.

**Rurality and Australian History**

Despite the dominant narratives of the idyllic bushmen that permeate the nation's cultural imagination, the extensive historiography of rurality in Australia is increasingly showing that there is no singular rural identity or experience.[38] Richard Waterhouse's work *The Vision*

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36 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 154-157.

37 See, for example, Kate Murphy, 'The "Most Dependable Element of any Country's Manhood": Masculinity and Rurality in the Great War and Its Aftermath', *History Australia*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2008, pp. 72.1-72.20.

38 Rachel Woodward, '"It's a Man's Life!": Soldiers, Masculinity and the Countryside', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1998, pp. 277-300. Multiple conceptions of rurality pervade the field of rural studies. Academics have thus tended to explore how the discourses pertaining to

*Splendid* is one recent historical work that provides a key insight into the fluctuating social and cultural dimensions of life on the land in rural Australia.[39] In his work the word 'rural' is simply defined as regions of the nation that exist outside of the capital cities.[40] For the purpose of this thesis the terms 'rural' and 'rurality' are utilised in a similar manner in that they encapsulate the small country towns and agricultural communities, distinctly separated from major regional and capital cities. Thus, the cities are considered 'urban' or 'metropolitan'. Likewise, the terms 'local', 'country', and 'bush' are used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to the region in question, and rural Australian areas more generally as a reflection of the fluid nature of the concepts and their general use throughout the Australian vernacular.

Waterhouse's book draws attention to several important themes such as the cultures of community, work, and leisure as well as how the rural lifestyle was imagined and depicted throughout the nation's burgeoning colonial years.[41] Waterhouse then succinctly navigates a discussion on the impacts of technological advancements and modernity on rural settings of the nation following World War I. One of these impacts is automobilism which increased across the nation during the interwar years.[42] It had obvious benefits for the economy, but also the social and cultural dimensions of rural communities.[43] In some of the brief snippets dedicated to leisure and social activities of rural Australia, Waterhouse hints at the cultural role of sport in such rural environs, a discourse which this thesis will further expand on through an exploration of the ideologies and values that influenced a rural football setting.

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rurality may be marginalised in favour of discourses associated with other conceptual domains of society such as the urban or metropolitan. Although it is not within the scope of thesis to expand upon this conversation it is important to be aware of the literary and discursive narratives that circulate these terms and the implications of the variety of ways they may be read. See also Andy Pratt, 'Discourses of Rurality: Loose Talk or Social Struggle?', *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1996, pp. 69-78.

39 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*.

40 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, pp. 11-12.

41 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*.

42 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, pp. 224-225.

43 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, pp. 239-246.

Australia's well-established colonial history often features the work and role of pastoralists, pioneers, squatters, and agriculturalists within the rural landscape.[44] Russel Ward's classic book *The Australian Legend* cemented the bushman and frontier pioneer as the iconic personification of late colonial Australia.[45] Entwined with the narratives of these supposed heroes of the land was the gendered nature of their esteem – white men that were exemplars of a masculine national ideal. Through art and literary works of the late nineteenth century, the masculine image of rural Australia was conceived as the life blood of the nation's colonial progress prior to Federation.[46] In particular, bohemian writers and artists portrayed colonial bushmen, pastoralists, and frontier pioneers as gloriously independent in stark contrast to the degraded men of the cities.[47]

Academic studies of rural Australia during the early twentieth century have been noticeably overshadowed by the more popular historical narratives of rural pioneers and settlers of the nineteenth century.[48] Occasionally these narratives of the bush extend through until the conflict of World War I as men of the land were expected to be among the first to respond to the call of the British Empire for they were considered primary masculine candidates to take on such a responsibility.[49] Historical attention to rural sectors in the aftermath of war often continued to focus on these soldiers, prioritising narratives surrounding governmental

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44 See, for example, White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 63-84; and John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, 1988, pp. 43-73.

45 Ward, *The Australian Legend*.

46 The works of Paterson, Lawson, McCubbin, and Roberts are central to the idyllic narratives of Australia's colonial and pastoral heritage. See White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 85-109.

47 Linzi Murrie, 'The Australian Legend: Writing Australian Masculinity/Writing "Australian" Masculinity', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 56, 1998, pp. 68-77. While art and poetry perpetuated a mythologised image of rural pioneers, thorough historical inspection of rural settlers has revealed some of the grim realities of their existence. Pioneers have been noted for playing a significant role in the dispossession of Indigenous Australians from their land. The inherent violence committed by settlers and colonisers against Indigenous Australian's has been noted as an aspect of a pioneer's manhood that was 'understood but not articulated' by Australian societies of the period. See Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 177.

48 Tom Griffiths, *Beechworth: An Australian Country Town and Its Past*, Melbourne: Greenhouse, 1987, p. 2.

49 Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie, 'Introduction', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2005, pp. ix-x. For a classic work that tracks the social history of a rural region, see Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1961.

initiatives such as the nationwide soldier settlement scheme of the 1920s.[50] In general though, studies of Australia that provide extensive history of the nation's development between the two World Wars have favoured urban landscapes of inquiry leaving the post-pioneering narratives of rural Australia relatively overlooked.[51] The image that has been propagated by the few tangible examples of historical work that do look into the rural landscape after World War I is one of hardship and decline as the nation's economic reliance on primary producers during this period suffered due to the Great Depression of the 1930s.[52]

These divisions between city and country during the interwar years stimulated the foundation of the Australian Country Party – now known as the National Party. Facilitated by an ideology Don Aitkin called 'countrymindedness', the formation of the party reflected a perception that people who lived in rural parts of the nation needed better representation in predominantly metropolitan-minded governments.[53] Gaining political traction during the interwar years in Australia, the basic beliefs that activated and then sustained countrymindedness were as follows:

> (i) Australia depends on its primary producers for its high standard of living, for only those who produce a physical good add to a country's wealth.

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50 Marilyn Lake, *Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria1915-38*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; Bruce Scates and Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle: Soldier Settlement in Australia*, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016; William Scates Frances, 'Managing Men, Managing Failure: Deviant Diggers in the Soldier Settlement Program in New South Wales', *History Australia*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2019, pp. 153-168; and James Kirby, 'Beyond Failure and Success: The Soldier Settlement on Ercildoune Road', *Provenance*, vol. 14, 2015, pp. 17-33.

51 Kate Darian-Smith, 'Up the Country: Histories and Communities', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 118, 2002, p. 92.

52 Davison and Brodie, 'Introduction', pp. x-xi. See also Lake, *Limits of Hope*.

53 Don Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness": The Spread of an Idea', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 4, 1985, pp. 34-41. For the extended history of the Country Party see Don Aitkin, *The Country Party in New South Wales: A Study of Organisation and Survival*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1972. See also Andrew Moore, 'The Old Guard and "Countrymindedness" during the Great Depression', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 27, 1990, pp. 52-64. There are also historical positions that suggest there was a split in the political dynamics between farmers and country townspeople. In this argument it is suggested that ideologies of 'countrymindedness' were not fundamentally absorbed by townspeople of rural areas as smoothly as their farming counterparts. See: Marc Brodie, '"A Valuable, but Minority, Section": The Country Townspeople's League and Responses to Farmer Politics in 1920s Victoria', *History Australia*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2003, pp. 58-72.

> (ii) Therefore all Australians, from city and country alike, should in their own interest support policies aimed at improving the position of the primary industries.[54]

Although general in its search for support from both urban and rural environments, countrymindedness was clearly based on reservations about city living while lifestyles of rurality were placed on a social pedestal, as the following aspects of the ideology revealed:

> (iii) Farming and grazing, and rural pursuits generally, are virtuous, ennobling and co-operative; they bring out the best in people.
>
> (iv) In contrast, city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical.[55]

Bound within this ideology were the celebrated ideas of rural pioneers from the colonial period that still circulated at this moment of the present. Hence, as an idea countrymindedness fed off these mythologised constructions of Australia's formative national type and attempted to reaffirm rurality as a central image of national identity:

> (v) The characteristic Australian is a countryman and the core elements of national character come from the struggles of country people to tame their environment and make it productive. City people are much the same the world over.
>
> (vi) For all these reasons, and others like defence, people should be encouraged to settle in the country, not the city.[56]

While these elements of countrymindedness hinted at parallels between country and city people, the core differential between the two came down to issues of control and power. Aitkin pinpoints the power struggle as the final element of the countrymindedness ideology which informed the foundation of the Australian Country Party:

> (vii) But power resides in the city, where politics is trapped in a sterile debate about classes. There has to be a separate political party for country people to articulate the true voice of the nation.[57]

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54 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', p. 35.
55 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', p. 35.
56 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', p. 35.
57 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', p. 35.

The interwar years were an important time for the development of this perception from country people that their influence, role, and status as a key stakeholder in the nation's identity was under threat. This thesis will examine how this attitude of countrymindedness was not exclusive to the realm of politics at the time as tensions between the country and the city were apparent within this rural football setting. Navigating these tensions in turn provides a broader appreciation of Australia's cultural values during the interwar years.

**Australia and the Interwar Years**

As John Rickard states in his book *Australia: A Cultural History*, 'it is only when one has grasped the relationships between the different parts within the whole – between, say, city and bush … – that one can gain any sense of something called Australian culture'.[58] The colonial and pre-war history of Australia was heavily invested in narratives of the bush and frequently produced an image of Australian identity popularised in this rural landscape.[59] However, the stories of Australia's development following World War I were, like a large percentage of Australia's population, drawn to the metropolitan and urban environments, especially the growing capital cities based on the nation's coast.[60] Before stepping into the contextual milieu of this rural football landscape during the interwar years, it is important to provide a broader sense of Australian life, taking into consideration the urban, as well as rural, environments during this period.

Despite the focus on the 'bush', Australia was 'one of the most urbanised societies on earth' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[61] The Bohemian writers of this period saw very little good in the large coastal cities of Australia and hence their gaze fell inland to where epic narratives of life on the land captured the imagination of the nation and saw the

58 Rickard, *Australia*, pp. xi-xii.
59 See, for example, Ward, *The Australian Legend*.
60 Graeme Davison, 'The Exodists', *History Australia*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2005, pp. 35.1-35.11.
61 Davison, *City Dreamers*, p. 64.

bushman as the iconic national type.[62] This image making of Australia tended to overlook the social and cultural development of urban environments which reflected predominant patterns of Australian life. As this thesis sets out to navigate a social context of Australia during the interwar periods it is crucial that both the urban and rural environments are accounted for in order to navigate consistencies or any conflicts that are present.

Janet McCalman's classic work, *Struggletown* for example, details the periods of adaptation and recovery during and following both World Wars, as well as some of the grim realities associated with the Great Depression of the early 1930s.[63] Focussing on the working-class suburb of Richmond in Melbourne's inner east, McCalman examines how members within this community interacted across a number of prominent social hubs such as work, school, religion, and leisure activities.[64] Most importantly for this thesis, she observes that the local football club was 'Richmond's most enduring social cement', with victory bringing moments of 'triumph over feelings of social inferiority'.[65]

Football's spectator culture in suburban Melbourne during the 1930s has been studied in great detail by Rob Kingston who suggests that support of local football teams was charged in part as a source of local identity.[66] *A History of Footscray* by John Lack similarly features the central role of the Footscray Football Club in acting as a representative body of the suburb,

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62 Davison, *City Dreamers*, p. 64.

63 Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Portrait of an Australian Working-Class Community 1900-1965* (Revised Edition), Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988. For other examples of social histories that provide similar insights into suburban Melbourne life during the interwar years, see Suzanne Dance, 'Backyard and Beyond: Seven Households Between the Wars', in Cutten History Committee (ed.), *Fitzroy: Melbourne's First Suburb*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991, pp. 275-283; Sally Wilde, *The History of Prahan. Volume II. 1925-1990*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993; and Collingwood Historical Committee, *In Those Days: Collingwood Remembered*, Melbourne: Carringbush Regional Library, 1994.

64 McCalman, *Struggletown*.

65 McCalman, *Struggletown*, pp. 139-141.

66 Rob Kingston, 'Football, Community and Identity in Melbourne in the 1930s', in Matthew Nicholson (ed.), *Fanfare: Spectator Culture and Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne: Australian Society for Sport History, 2005, pp. 41-52. Kingston has also explored the central role of women in this culture of spectatorship in suburban Melbourne during the 1930s. See Rob Kingston, 'Football and Women in Melbourne in the 1930s', in Matthew Nicholson (ed.), *Fanfare: Spectator Culture and Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne: Australian Society for Sport History, 2005, pp. 53-61.

reflecting both the positives of a 'growing and prosperous district' and at times the externally supposed 'disreputable' nature of the area.[67]

McCalman's second classic book *Journeyings*, constructed a chronological image of Melbourne through one of its more affluent areas just south of Richmond, separated geographically from it by the Yarra River.[68] Examining the lifestyles of this middle-class area of Melbourne throughout the twentieth century, McCalman provided a different perspective of urban Australia that was within a literal stone's throw of its working-class neighbour featured in *Struggletown*. Although, *Journeyings* does not speak to the importance of football (or lack thereof), it highlights the considerable differences between two neighbouring urban environments. If such variety can exist between contexts that share such geographic proximity, then surely narratives that emanate from a rural region 220 kilometres south west of Melbourne are also likely to generate stories of value which will contribute to a broader appreciation of Australia's interwar history.

The works of McCalman and Davison provide a foundation to historical understanding of life in Australia during the interwar years, but they are limited by their focus on urban environments. Ken Inglis' *Sacred Places* therefore is a work of great importance to the interwar history of Australia as it transcends an urban-rural divide to provide a broad image of Australian culture, in particular the socially heightened status of Australian soldiers following World War I.[69] An immense piece of research that covers the rural and urban regions of every state and territory, Inglis' exploration of the war memorial movement provides unparalleled insight into some of the interconnected and shared Australian ideologies that were spread

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67 John Lack, *A History of Footscray*, North Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 243-246. See also Russell Holmesby, 'In a New League, 1925-1945', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 139-164.

68 Janet McCalman, *Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920-1990*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1993.

69 Inglis, *Sacred Places*.

throughout the nation. The interwar period in Australia is cast primarily within narratives of recovery and resilience as the nation as a whole emerged from World War I determined to firmly position itself on the global scene. War had seen many young Australian soldiers prove their worth to the British Empire in a global conflict and in response the nation celebrated their returning heroes as symbols of Australia's youthful promise. Monuments dedicated to the memory of soldiers – returned and fallen – were built across the nation. The war memorial movement of the 1920s aimed to ensure that the sacrifices made by these soldiers were to be remembered by the nation for as long as they stood.[70]

During the interwar years there was expectation that Australia would begin to flourish in international spheres of economics, politics, and sport. The reality however was very different. Modernity, the interwar depression, and a steady 'drift' of the population from the country to the cities were providing concern for the national development and the national image that prior to the war was built primarily on ideals of rural pastoralists, squatters, and pioneers.[71] The most obvious response to this drift in post-war Australia was an inducement provided by the government for returned soldiers to take up plots of land in rural areas of the nation as part of a soldier settlement scheme.[72] These men of war, the newly crowned exemplars of Australian masculinity, were expected to take to the land with effortless success, taking on small plots of land to promote the development of closer settlement in rural regions.[73] But the reality never lived up to expectation. As Monica Keneley has noted, prior to World War I the premise of closer settlement was to facilitate social, population, and economic growth in rural regions of Victoria. But following the war, technological advancements that aided the management of large acreage meant that there was a decrease in the number of people required

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70 Inglis, *Sacred Places*.

71 See, for example, Murphy, 'The "Most Dependable Element of any Country's Manhood"'; and Davison, 'The Exodists'.

72 Lake, *Limits of Hope*.

73 Lake, *Limits of Hope*; See also Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 118-142.

to work the land productively.[74] The innovation of motor vehicle transport also reduced the viability of small local manufacturers as large primary producers could more quickly transport their goods to major metropolitan centres.[75] Although designed with positive intentions for rural communities, soldier settlement was a prime example of schemes developed by those in the metropole that had negligible, or even adverse impacts, for small country towns and communities.

The interwar years also placed great strain on the nation and a primary site of Australia's burgeoning identity: the bush and its idolised pioneers.[76] The ideals of the Australian rural identity came under threat as the number of people that could be sustained by the country was significantly reduced by the global economic collapse of 1929. The period was constituted by an overall sense that everyone was struggling, including both rural and metropolitan centres, and as prices of agricultural products such as wool and wheat dropped considerably, the bush's status as the backbone of the nation was significantly threatened. The steady migration of people from the country to the city, which had been occurring since the early twentieth century, was accelerated during this global crisis.[77] Those who did remain in the country – farmers and the small town communities which facilitated them – were like their metropolitan counterparts, 'doing it tough', but they were often better off, as those that had access to productive land could produce enough goods for themselves. If landholders and farmers 'could pull their belts in' at the peak of the Great Depression they were at least able to

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74 Monica Keneley, 'The Dying Town Syndrome: A Survey of Urban Development in the Western District of Victoria, 1890-1930', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2005, pp. 10.1-10.16. See also David Cameron, 'Closer Settlement in Queensland: The Rise and Decline of the Agrarian Dream, 1860s-1960s', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2005, pp. 6.1-6.21.

75 Keneley, 'The Dying Town Syndrome'.

76 David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion: A Search for Australian Cultural Identity*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976, pp. 151-152.

77 Davison, 'Exodist'

cope and see it out by living off their own land.[78] Hence, for those who were in a position to remain in the country rather than join the drift to the city or larger regional centres of Australia, there was a sense that rural areas maintained ideals for which they had previously been celebrated, such as resilience, independence, and resourcefulness.

Maintaining, or perhaps inheriting, a masculinised culture of resilience, and resourcefulness from rural pioneers and bushmen of the past – a belief that they could fend for themselves – country communities began feeling that they were being neglected by the metropolitan-based governance of the nation. While the entire nation was struggling, it seemed that the national gaze had turned to the poverty and hardship in cities rather than outside of them. Associated concerns deepened that the Anglo-Saxon race was degenerating in Australia's metropole with the men in particular becoming weak during the Great Depression of the early 1930s.[79] For this reason the metropolitan population was perceived as less Australian – and manly – than their rural counterparts.[80]

Much like the attention given to the city during this time of social and economic turmoil, historical exploration of Australia during this period has also been metro-centrically focussed. By navigating relationships between country and the city in the interwar period, this thesis asks what happened to notions of masculinity in a corner of rural Australia as national attention turned towards cities. It also explores what ideals of masculinity remained dominant, how these ideals were characterised, and what did they mean within a specifically rural Australian setting. In such historical contexts, an examination of prominent aspects of rural life such as leisure and recreation are even more relevant during these supposed times of 'decline',

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78 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace: A Tapestry of Mortlake Shire*, Mortlake: Shire of Mortlake, 1985, p. 79.

79 See Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 165-188.

80 Davison, *City Dreamers*, pp. 73-82. At the heart of much of this concern were ongoing misconstrued interpretations of eugenics which became prominent and popularised in Australia towards the end of the nineteenth century.

as community driven activities such as those that facilitated rural sport were likely to have been a haven for shaping the cultural values of region.

To 'gain any sense of something called Australian culture', this thesis will utilise a case study-based approach like that of McCalman to expand the rural history of Australia during the interwar period which has been left under-interrogated in comparison to its urban counterpart. The focal context of this thesis is rural south west Victoria, a region which shares much of its early development with that of the nation's colonial past, and a region which developed a prominent football following during the interwar years.[81]

**The History of South West Victoria**

The social history of south west Victoria has received attention from locally interested parties such as historical societies of the region and local historians. One of the most influential academic histories written on this area is Margaret Kiddle's *Men of Yesterday*.[82] Kiddle's predominant focus was to explore the social history of early white settlement of western Victoria drawing on stories of pioneering families and, in particular, the men who took up land from the early 1830s through until the 1890s. A strength of Kiddle's work is her analysis of how decisions being made by metropolitan-based governments were impacting this rural region, emphasising elements of the relationships between urban and rural environments. Although not covering Federation and the early twentieth century, Kiddle's work provided a foundation upon which the intersecting stories and stories of the next generation could be examined.

A major feature of the region's history which Kiddle did not examine in detail was that of the Indigenous Australians who first inhabited the land. Jan Critchett was critical of this fact

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81 As previously mentioned, the parameters of how south west Victoria is defined for the purpose of this thesis are outlined in the methodology section of this chapter.

82 Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*.

and in response has published a collection of works that have begun to address this gap.[83] This collection draws attention to the period of early colonisation and devastating impacts of white settlement in this region. Another gap in Kiddle's work is the role of women in the region during the early colonial settlement. Florence Charles and Craig Proctor have begun the process of addressing this gap through their book *Women of the Mount*, which as the title suggests, chronicles the life of some of the earliest white female settlers to a district which now surrounds the small rural township of Mortlake in the state's south west.[84] The works of Kiddle, Critchett, and Charles and Proctor, and others like them, are essential to establishing an appreciation of the geographical landscape, its agricultural strengths, its communal development, and the attitudes that established the region.[85]

Following on from these primarily social histories of colonial south west Victoria, there is also a collection of literature that addresses local histories of particular townships in the early twentieth century. Again, primarily social in their format, these local histories provide contextual appreciation of the region and highlight key events, be those global, national, or local, and community responses to them. Jack Fletcher's *And We Who Followed*, a sequel to his previous work *The Infiltrators*, is a typical example of the style of historical work that focusses on a variety of social settings during the interwar and post-World War II era. Drawing predominantly from local press clippings, the book describes, rather than analyses, themes such as local governance, urban and agricultural development, industrial growth, religion,

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83 See, for example, Jan Critchett, *Untold Stories: Memories and Loves of Victorian Kooris*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998; Jan Critchett, *A 'Distant Field of Murder': Western District Frontiers 1834-1848*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1990; and Jan Critchett, *Our Land Till We Die: A History of Framlingham Aborigines* (Revised Edition), Warrnambool: Deakin University Press, 1992.

84 Florence Charles and Craig Proctor, *Women of the Mount: The Lives of the Earliest Immigrant Women to Settle in the Mount Shadwell District, 1839-1864*, Mortlake: Mortlake and District Historical Society Inc., 2009.

85 See also Mary Turner Shaw, *On Mount Emu Creek: The Story of a Nineteenth-Century Victorian Sheep Station*, Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1969; Jack Fletcher, *The Infiltrators: A History of the Heytesbury 1840-1920*, Cobden: The Shire of Heytesbury, 1985; Craige Proctor and Florence Charles, *Families of the Mount: The Pioneers of Mortlake and District, 1839-1880*, Mortlake: Mortlake and District Historical Society Inc., 2010.

education, and sport throughout the shire of Heytesbury.[86] Fletcher's works are a treasure trove of interesting stories and reports, and provide a glimpse of the social environment of the region. But without any analytical depth, readers are left wondering what these events or activities might have meant to this local community during the interwar years in particular.

Another prime example of a local history based on a shire council in the region, *Pastures of Peace: A Tapestry of the Mortlake Shire*, provides broad insight into the social landscape of the region.[87] The work takes a chronological rather than thematic approach to its observations which, in turn, promotes glimpses of how major global events were experienced, particularly those that occurred during the interwar years. A prominent example in the case of Mortlake was the influx of soldier settlers to the district following both World Wars and the associated troubles and successes of these endeavours. The work is notable for providing a taste of these events and the local response to them, but there is space to provide deeper analysis of what these events meant to the people and localised values that were evoked from them.

This thesis focusses on football's role and meaning during the interwar period within and around the major towns of south west Victoria which include Camperdown, Cobden, Mortlake, Terang, and Warrnambool. While the literature that explores the history of this region and its major townships generally lack analytical depth, they provide a sense of the broad historical context. Using the town and surrounding district of Mortlake as an exemplar town of the region it is possible to get a sense of the demographic and social structure of the

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86 Jack Fletcher, *And We Who Followed: A History of the Heytesbury, 1921-1987*, Cobden: The Shire of Heytesbury, 1988; and Fletcher, *The Infiltrators*. The central major township of the shire of Heytesbury was Cobden who fielded a team in the Hampden Football League during the interwar years. The Shire of Heytesbury neighboured the then Shire of Hampden which encapsulated two other major townships from the Hampden Football League, Camperdown and Terang. In 1994 the Shire of Hampden which had existed since 1863 amalgamated with the Shire of Heytesbury to form the current Corangamite Shire. See Bill Anderson, *On Western Lands: A History of the Shire of Hampden (1964-1994)*, Camperdown: Corangamite Shire Council, 1996; and R.A. McAlpine, *The Shire of Hampden, 1863-1963*, Terang: Hampden Shire Council, 1963.

87 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*. The Shire of Mortlake existed from 1864-1994. It bordered with the northern portion of the previously mentioned Shire of Hampden and now exists as part of the Moyne Shire.

south west Victoria during the interwar period. In 1933 the population of Mortlake, specifically the Shire of Mortlake, which encompassed the township and the surrounding agricultural district, was 3,535.[88] Historically, Mortlake, and the region more generally, was settled for its agrarian potential. Prior to and during the interwar period the predominant modes of agriculture were dairy farming, wool production, and grazing.[89] Associated dairy produce factories, milk, cream, and butter, were also prominent with in Mortlake and across the south west of the state.

With a large proportion of the population involved in agricultural pursuits, dispersed across the large rural district, the town and activities within the town were central to social interaction. The local press was thus an important medium for the dissemination of local news and information. The *Mortlake Dispatch* promoted conservative views associated with imperialist loyalty. This loyalty was explicitly demonstrated during times of war, with many men from the region celebrated for quickly volunteering for the war effort.[90] On the home front, a fundamental setting for social engagement was church. The region was almost exclusively Christian in their religious practises, the most prominent denominations being Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, and Catholicism.[91] Sport was another common social attraction and while Australian Rules football was one the most popular recreational activities in Mortlake, other pursuits such as cricket, horse racing, coursing, shooting, tennis, and polo were also in vogue within this rural context.[92]

While the town sizes and populations differed between the major towns of south west Victoria, the demographic patterns were consistent across the region during the interwar period.

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88 Australian Commonwealth, *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June, 1933*, pp. 154-165. The population of the other relevant shires of the district in 1933 were as follows: Hampden Shire (includes the townships and surrounding districts of Camperdown and Terang) 11,804, Heytesbury Shire (includes the township of Cobden) 5,726, and Warrnambool Shire (which includes the largest town of the region Warrnambool) 8,603. As way of comparison, Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, had a population of 92,112 in 1933 (this number is exclusive of surrounding suburbs).

89 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 49-56. See also Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*.

90 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 71-76.

91 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 170-182. There is little evidence in the local press of any sectarian conflicts between the members of the difference churches.

92 Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 166-169.

The stable nature of this rural setting means that the football landscape can provide insight into the cultural meaning that the game held during this time. While the prominent status of football is acknowledged throughout local history literature, these works tend to offer only brief accounts of the game's existence, rather than a detailed investigation of its role and cultural significance within the region.

Although local histories do not extensively detail football's social currency in this rural pocket of south west Victoria, there are works dedicated to football's longevity in the region which highlight it as a socially significant pastime.[93] The game's origins in the region date back as far as 1868.[94] With the sport still in its infancy, challenge matches were organised infrequently between representative teams from various towns from across the region. The first formalised competition in the region, the Greening Trophy played in 1885, was a seven-team league which featured clubs from across the district: Warrnambool, Tower Hill, The Lake (Koroit), The Rovers (another Warrnambool team), Mortlake, Nirranda, and the Framlingham Blacks. Prior to the onset of World War I most major townships had at least one football club participating in an organised competition with neighbouring towns.

War took an enormous toll on the community and recreational activities in the rural landscape such as football were abandoned as local men were encouraged to serve their nation and empire in battle. While the Victorian Football League (VFL), the state's elite metropolitan competition, continued play during the war, most country competitions of the period preferred to halt all proceedings. Following the end of the war, as peace returned to the region, football regained its local popularity in south west Victoria with clubs and leagues brought out of recess. Ideals of amateurism were considered the norm throughout the game's foundation in the region,

93 See, for example, Bond and Grossman, *Evergreen Hampden*; and McLaren, *Playing Footy and Milking Cows*.
94 Bond and Grossman, *Evergreen Hampden*, pp. 15-16.

clubs were organised and coordinated by internally elected committees who perceived the game as a wholesome pursuit for men within the community.

During the interwar period, as competitions began to emulate the more formally coordinated semi-professional metropolitan leagues, aspects of the amateur ideal were complicated. Training became a regular part of a local team's weekly schedule and to promote a higher standard of play some local competitions permitted the payment of coaches.[95] Such costs and the cost of running the clubs more generally were balanced with the introduction of admission charges to local games. Prior to war, playing football was often a costly endeavour for participants, with players required to pay their own way to cover the costs of equipment and travel expenses. The interwar period, however, saw some of this financial burden ameliorated as in addition to admission charges to matches, ladies' committees formed within the clubs took it upon themselves to raise funds to support the team through various means such as foods stalls at matches and social events. Football in this rural setting thus became a communal space which derived much social attention and cultural exchanges during and prior to the interwar period. Football clubs during the interwar period became a symbolic reflection of the town they represented and hence the local newspapers of the respective townships paid much attention to the success of their local team throughout the period. In 1930 the Hampden Football League was formed; this competition would later become the major country football league of south west Victoria. While all football competitions which existed in the region during the interwar period were explored for the purpose of this thesis, activities surrounding the clubs involved in the Hampden Football League provided the richest source of historical insight into the game's role in these rural communities.

While many of the local history books provide evidence of intense interest in the game's heritage, they do little to explain how this feeling has developed and where or why this support

95 'Western District Football League', *Terang Express*, 26 March 1929, p. 3

has been generated. Veritable minnows in the broad cultural landscape of Australian Rules football, histories of rural football competitions and the environs that encompass them have been overlooked in academic histories.[96] The local football histories that do exist tend to construct and perpetuate positive memories of matches, or champion players while never fully developing a sense of football's role within these rural communities. This thesis uses various constructions of memory pertaining to the game from this rural interwar setting as a point of entry to explore the various meanings and values which the game reproduced.

**Memory and Australian History**

Scrutinising various forms and objects of social memory provides historians access to the ways the past circulates in the present.[97] How and what people choose to remember speaks volumes of not only the period they recall, but their contemporary existence. Australia's rural landscape and Australia's sporting image are prime examples of social spaces where material produced in these spaces perpetuate and encourage idyllic memories of the past. Exploring what these memories say of the present, as well as the time period in which they were recalled, aids historical appreciation of the collective values and cultural tendencies that permeated their specific historical context.

There is therefore conflict between the constraints of history and the apparent boundlessness of memory. Pierre Nora characterises the split in discourses by noting that 'memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative'.[98] In a sense, history can only ever interpret depictions of memory that have been installed within various sources, 'spaces, gestures, images, and objects' such as books, various forms of media, or physical

96 For a list of football histories that focus on the history of football in rural areas of Australia see Frost and Hogan, 'Minor Leagues'.

97 Murray G. Phillips, 'Remembering Sport History: Narrative, Social Memory and the Origins of the Rugby League in Australia', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2004, pp. 50-66.

98 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, p. 9.

structures.[99] Navigating memories and looking at what parts of the memories have been captured or preserved, and indeed which parts may have been elided, provides historical insight into the values heralded by those that constructed the memory. In an Australian historical context Chris Healy has demonstrated how social memory is conveyed through a 'network of performances' made visible through historical artefacts such as images, books, and monuments.[100] Studying these performances reveals how memory can be reinterpreted to develop historical appreciation of the past in the present. As Kerwin Lee Klein put it, 'Memory is not a property of individual minds, but a diverse and shifting collection of material artefacts and social practices'.[101] Key to such analysis though, is the understanding that social memory produces a multitude of narratives for historical interpretation.[102]

Reading various forms of memory offers historians access to reflections of the past that provide evidence of the dominant cultural values of a specific social context. Tanja Luckins demonstrated this as she explored the links between memory, loss, and World War I.[103] Sifting through various objects of memory, both textual and physical monuments alike, Luckins was able to examine how social memories associated with loss, mourning, and grief following the 'Great War' were culturally captured, solidified, and perpetuated throughout Australian society.[104] In a similar vein this thesis turns to various material artefacts of the past such as local newspaper articles and physical monuments to analyse the perpetuated social memories and meanings entrenched within the past of rural Australian football competitions to better appreciate the communities that engaged with it.

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99 Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 9.
100 Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 5.
101 Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', *Representations*, vol. 69, 2000, p. 130.
102 Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, p. 5.
103 Tanja Luckins, *The Gates of Memory: Australian People's Experiences and Memories of Loss and the Great War*, Fremantle: Curtin University Press, 2004, p. 17.
104 Luckins, *The Gates of Memory*.

Further to the idea of memory construction, monuments perpetuate 'memory in *external* deposits, located not within the people but within shared public space'.[105] Although this quotation from Kirk Savage refers specifically to physical monuments and memorials, they share similar attributes with the written word and texts constructed within a specific social time and context. The written word particularly that which was produced for public consumption such as newspapers, becomes a site of memory and the preservation of such texts in archives, libraries, or other like repositories, identifies their significance to society, specifically to the community that contributed to or were the subject of the constructed material.[106] It is from such materials that shared social memories of a community are formed and perpetuated.

In the field of sport history Murray Phillips has been influential in disseminating the idea that history and the narratives created throughout history play an important part in the construction of social memory. Phillips suggests, through his navigation of the various historical interpretations of the origins of rugby league, that historians construct narratives of the past that contribute to the perpetuated social memory of the sport in question.[107] A similar construction occurs in the dissemination of popular press and media. Newspapers, for example, construct a memory of events that privilege certain ideas while eliding other aspects of events from the public consciousness. It is in these elements that this thesis seeks to draw out how some memories are preserved and perpetuated, while other memories, left to their own devices, are often forgotten.

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105 Kirk Savage, 'The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 130.

106 Marilyn Lake, 'Introduction: The Past in the Present', in Marilyn Lake (ed.), *Memory, Monuments and Museums: The Past in the Present*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp. 1-11.

107 Phillips, 'Remembering Sport History', pp. 50-66. There is growing academic debate surrounding the use of narrative in sport history. For highlights of this debate and further reading see Murray G. Phillips, 'A Critical Appraisal of Narrative in Sport History: Reading the Surf Lifesaving Debate', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2002, pp. 25-40; Nancy L. Struna, 'In "Glorious Disarray": The Literature of American Sport History', *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, vol. 5, 1985, pp. 151-160; and Roberta J. Park, 'Research and Scholarship in the History of Physical Education and Sport: The Current State of Affairs', *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, vol. 54, 1983, pp. 93-103.

At present the history of Australian Rules football in rural Australia is one of anecdotes recalled through stories and tales of lived experience which have constructed an image of the game that is 'wholesome' and 'pure'. As mentioned previously, the local histories of football often paint a one-dimensional image that highlights the game's prominence, but does little to look at how actual audiences of the past read and interpreted what the game meant and what values it was communicating. These works promote the basic stories of scores, wins, and players, while leaving out why such events or people were important to the rural setting. In this sense, memories of rural football are also attached to the concept of nostalgia in that what is remembered and recalled of the past are memories of the game that were uncomplicated and simple.[108] This simple reading of the past in turn conceals and represses some of the troubled or grim elements that the game and by association the rural communities were facing more generally. It is through exploring objects and materials of the past which are in many ways responsible for influencing which memories were preserved for perpetuity that this thesis will analyse with critical rigour to avoid simple superficial narratives of 'winners and losers'. This thesis looks to sites of memory within a rural football setting 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself' to examine and explore the foundational grounds upon which country football's cultural identity was formed.[109] The belief that 'the football club is the most important local identity in most country towns' has roots in memories of the past.[110] Through examination of historical artefacts and texts which have contributed to and constructed social memories of the game in south west Victoria, this thesis explores how football communicated cultural values of the local community during the interwar years.

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[108] For insight in the workings of nostalgia see Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, New York: Free Press, 1979; and Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001.
[109] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 7.
[110] Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Country Football*, p. 27.

**Methodology**

In the early stages of this project's development this thesis aimed to add to the growing field of Australian Rules football history by addressing a substantial dearth in academic research that considered rural developments in the game. To address this gap, I planned to undertake a detailed historical analysis of the game in a rural region of Victoria, and take a considered approach to the contexts and social surrounds that encompassed the game's development in the chosen region. The initial analysis of relevant historical data revealed a multitude of significant themes that permeated the game in this rural landscape. Thus, it was evident that this thesis had potential to explore and examine important cultural narratives of football's history. Furthermore, it would extend cultural histories of rural Australia during the interwar years, and the nation more generally. Football in this sense was read as a socialised context within rural life which projected broader cultural narratives of Australian history during the interwar years.

With academic scholarship in football history focussed primarily on the elite metropolitan development of the game, it would make sense to pursue a history of the game within the same well-defined historical context. Focussing the analysis on a rural setting where football flourished allows this project to not only begin moving towards a relatively unchartered cultural history of football, but also provide a more in-depth construction of the game's history in a country region of Victoria: in this case rural south west Victoria.

For the purpose of this research 'south west Victoria' is defined as the region which encompassed the towns and surrounding districts connected with the Hampden District Council of the Victorian Country Football League during the late 1930s.[111] In terms of geography, this regional body was associated with rural football operations from as far west as Warrnambool

[111] Victorian Country Football League, 'Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Victorian Country Football League', *Victorian Country Football League Minutes 26th July 1927 to 9th February 1958*, Harrison House: Melbourne, 25 September 1935. The Hampden District was officially recognised as the major regional branch of the Victorian Country Football League in south west Victoria in 1935 when it replaced the outgoing Corangamite District which covered a similar geographic constituency.

through to Colac in the east of the region, as far north as Caramut and as far south as Port Campbell on Victoria's south west coast. The major league of the district was the Hampden Football League which during its first twelve years of competition had a total of six teams.[112] In the regions surrounding these major league clubs, there existed a number of minor leagues – also known as 'junior' leagues or in current terms as district leagues – whose prominence tended to fluctuate during the interwar period.[113] The central point of this region is approximately 220 kilometres south west of Victoria's state capital city of Melbourne (see Figure 1).

In an effort to explore the meanings attached to football in rural Victorian communities, a contextually driven approach underpinned by examining prominent thematic streams observed in the data was the most appropriate way in which to move towards a cultural history of the game.[114] The explanatory paradigm of context, as explained by Douglas Booth, has been

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[112] These teams and the towns that they represented were: Mortlake, Terang, Camperdown, Cobden, South Warrnambool, and Warrnambool. Prior to the Hampden Football League's formation in 1930 all six of these teams played in the Western District Football League which was one of the inaugural regional bodies of the Victorian Country Football League when it was formed in 1927. The Western District Football League stretched from the far western border of Victoria to Warrnambool and as far north as Casterton and east across to Hamilton.

[113] Leagues that were analysed through this thesis due to their geographic proximity to the Hampden Football League include: Purnim District Football League, Mt Noorat Football League, Caramut District Football Association, Camperdown District Football League, Port Campbell District Football Association, Polwarth Football Association, Colac Football League. These leagues were affiliated with the VCFL through one of the major regional football bodies – either the Hampden Football League or Western District Football League. There were often paradoxes in the affiliation of these minor leagues, for example the Mt Noorat Football League formed in 1932, which geographically was closer to the central hub of the Hampden Football League, was affiliated with the Western District Football League during this interwar period. For the purpose of this research I have utilised the Hampden Football League clubs as the primary clubs of analysis however, minor leagues that existed in proximity to the Hampden Football League were also included as newspaper reports regarding these competitions often featured in the same newspapers as those that featured the six major clubs mentioned above. It should be noted that these minor leagues occasionally changed their name throughout their existence. The names listed above may be only one of the titles relevant to the competitions.

[114] Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sport History*, London: Routledge, 2005. As Booth demonstrates in his detailed examination of the field of sport history there are a multitude of approaches employed by historians. The diversity in approaches has created contestation about the best practice for sports history, but it is generally understood that the questions being asked by any given historian will tend to dictate the mode of historical creation employed. Booth, amongst other recent historians, has encouraged members of the sport history field to reflect upon their approaches to knowing, telling, and exploring the past in the present. As the field continues to grow the approaches, modes, and paradigms of research can be utilised in a plurality of combinations, catered to the specific needs and questions asked by the researcher. For further reading about the expanding epistemologies of sport history, see Murray G. Phillips (ed.), *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006; and Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Sports History: Critical Concepts in Sport Studies*, London: Routledge, 2014.

an essential analytical structure of sport history. Through exploring sports' impact on the broader social surrounds that encompass it, sport can 'demonstrate the intellectual and scholarly credentials of the field'.[115] The strength of a contextually driven exposition of sport history resides in the researcher's ability to identify the values and moral considerations at play within sport and its relationship with the surrounding environments and communities.[116] Investigating the cultural values at play in a sporting context provides a useful point of entry into the values of the surrounding society. This cultural approach to sport history has been underutilised in the growing collection of academic work that pertains to general histories of Australian Rules football.


Figure 1: Map of the state of Victoria marked with the key townships of south west Victoria

115 Booth, *The Field*, pp. 178-179.

116 Booth, *The Field*, pp. 190-192. The exemplars that Booth examined were Elliot Gorn, '"Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch": The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry', *American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 1, 1985, pp. 18-43; and Greg Ryan, *The Making of New Zealand Cricket 1832-1914*, London: Frank Cass, 2004.

While there is value in depicting and constructing elements of football's social history, a deeper appreciation of the game and of sport more generally draws broader cultural understandings of society to the surface. The number of academic studies that utilise sport as a contextual vehicle to investigate cultural histories of a specific context has risen in the past few decades. This has stemmed in part from the anthropological work of Clifford Geertz and his ground-breaking publication which examined Balinese cockfighting.[117] Geertz, utilising contemporary methods of ethnography and observation, interpreted Balinese cockfighting as a cultural text which was understood and read every day by the Balinese peoples who engaged with it. Through his interpretation of the practices and activities associated with the sport of cockfighting, Geertz generated one of a multitude of possible readings of Balinese cultures.[118]

In a sport history context, one of the best adaptations of Geertz's method of study is the widely cited work by Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*.[119] In negotiating between the allegorical and reader-oriented methods of cultural study, Oriard explored the origins of American football by positioning the game and the events and activities that surrounded it as a cultural text which was read by a multitude of people who produced multivalent interpretations of the game's meaning.[120] Oriard's point of entry into the cultural text of American football in the late nineteenth century was newspaper and sporting journals of the period that provided coverage of matches and activities pertaining to the game. In his analysis of sporting journalism from the 1890s, Oriard 'read over the shoulders' of the contemporary sportswriters of the time who were 'reading' and interpreting the game for their public. Although, it is impossible to compile every independent reader's interpretation of the primary text of the actual games, Oriard identified that the 'sportswriter

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117 For further reading on the historiography of cultural history in practice see Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Second Edition), Malden: Polity, 2008.
118 Clifford Geertz, 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight', *Daedalus*, vol. 101, no. 1, 1972, pp. 1-37.
119 Oriard, *Reading Football*.
120 Oriard, *Reading Football*, pp. 10-17.

mediates between the athletic contest and its audience; sportswriting is the text of that mediation'.[121] In tracing a variety of newspapers and journals that reported on the early development of American football, Oriard was able to get close to the multivalent meanings that the game offered to the millions of people that read and interpreted it firsthand.

Advocating newspapers as a primary source for investigation of rural south west Victoria, Kiddle stated that 'those who glance through the old newspapers find reflected in them the whole life of the country town'.[122] Kiddle's words here are important for the methodology of this project, for in general local newspaper outlets were the primary and dominant source of material for this project. In the field of sport history it has been recognised that very little relevant archival material is ever collected or preserved by sporting organisations.[123] In common with many other sporting organisations, while some archival material was sourced from historical societies, football clubs, and football leagues from across this south west region there was not enough found to form the basis of a major research project.[124] The result of such paucity in primary material has encouraged sport historians, and historians more generally, to develop and appropriate other artefacts and historical materials to conceptualise the social and cultural elements of the past.

A reliance on newspapers has been a prominent method throughout the field and, as Oriard demonstrates, if used reflectively it has the potential to illuminate not only the dominant social narratives, but deeper cultural meanings attached to sport within a specific social setting. In utilising newspaper and sports journal coverage of the game's formative years as his primary source of information, Oriard identified that the multi-vocal narratives and interpretations

121 Oriard, *Reading Football*, p. 17.
122 Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 459.
123 Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, p. 9.
124 Examples of archival material found included the *Hampden Football League Minute Book 1930 to 1946*, Mortlake Football Club end-of-season dinner pamphlets from various seasons during the 1930s, and a number of team photographs. While these artefacts were not the primary focus of the research they helped the visualisation of data derived from the newspaper articles collected.

detailed in sport reports 'bring us close to the varied and changing readings of actual audiences'.[125] Although press coverage does not provide a definitive answer of how the audience directly responded to the 'cultural text' of American football, the sports journalists of the time at least provided an insight into the potential multitude of reactions to the game that they considered were important to and reflective of broader community ideals. From this platform Oriard was able to analyse the code's development and growth as well as consider its influence and role in society. Oriard's approach has been widely adopted in the field of sports history in recent years, with academics identifying that the press and media provide an ideal source of various narratives that often reflect the social and cultural elements that surround and influence sport.[126]

In rural Victoria during the interwar years – from the conclusion of World War I through until the commencement of World War II – print media was the main source of news, advertisements, and reports on local issues and acted as a voice for their respective rural communities. With multiple newspapers circulating throughout rural Victoria – many rural towns across the state having their own locally produced newspapers – they are a rich source of information from which to identify the many varied interpretations of how Australian Rules football was viewed, and read in rural settings. Newspapers therefore allowed me to get close to the actual readings of the many people engaged with the local form of the game.

Jeffrey Hill has identified that in the early twentieth century local newspaper reporting was the major source of information for the rural population prior to the establishment of radio.[127] Hill's research of small towns and Association Football (soccer) in Northern England

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125 Oriard, *Reading Football*, p. 17.

126 Rob Hess, 'Case Studies in the Development of Australian Rules Football, 1896-1908', Doctoral Thesis, School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance, Victoria University, 2000, pp. 25-28; Stacy L. Lorenz, 'Constructing a Cultural History of Canadian Hockey', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 17, 2015, pp. 2110-2111; and Jeffrey Hill, 'Anecdotal Evidence: Sport, The Newspaper Press, and History', in Murray G. Phillips (ed.), *Deconstructing Sport History a Postmodern Analysis*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, pp. 121-127, all identify the value of Oriard's methods of utilising newspapers and sports journals as a primary source for sports history research.

127 Hill, 'Anecdotal Evidence', pp. 120-121

recognised that small town newspapers, similar to those utilised for my research, were ideal for the creation of historical narrative. Reportage frequently took on the tone of a collective 'us' and was generally a representative voice of the local public's opinion.[128] As a source, newspapers, although somewhat anecdotal in their presentation, are valuable artefacts which identify what features of sport were important to their designated and targeted audience.[129]

Following this understanding of the importance of local press, the primary selection of newspapers read for this thesis were those that were most representative of the major country townships and districts within the designated region (as defined earlier). During the interwar years, newspapers from across the state were produced at varying frequencies: daily, weekly, bi-weekly, and tri-weekly.[130] The four primary newspapers of this region, the *Camperdown Chronicle*, *Cobden Times*, *Mortlake Dispatch*, and *Terang Express*, were read for any material pertaining to football activities in the region. As the Hampden Football League was the major competition of this region, the first twelve years of that competition's existence was selected as the initial date range for first phase of data collection.[131] During this initial phase, approximately 3,500 separate issues of the four primary newspapers were reviewed from cover to cover.

Articles, advertisements, and reports disseminating any football related activity in the south west of Victoria throughout this time period were explored to form the primary point of exploration for this study. From the initial 3,500 issues, approximately 3,000 relevant articles

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128 Hill, 'Anecdotal Evidence', p. 121.

129 Hill, 'Anecdotal Evidence', p. 127.

130 Primary titles that were included in data collection were: *Camperdown Chronicle* (tri-weekly); *Cobden Times* (bi-weekly); *Mortlake Dispatch* (bi-weekly); and *Terang Express* (bi-weekly). The newspapers were read in microfilm form at the State Library of Victoria as well as various libraries of the Corangamite Regional Library Corporation.

131 The primary dates of concern for the first phase of data collection was from the start of 1929 – a year prior to the formation of the Hampden Football League – through until the end of 1941 – the year the league went into recess due to World War II. During this period every issue of each of the four primary newspapers was inspected cover to cover for material related to football activities. Following this first phase of data collection select issues of the four primary newspapers were inspected from as early as 1885 through until the end of 1928.

were collected and catalogued for close reading. Following the close reading of these articles, further select issues of the primary newspapers from both before and after World War I were sought out, as well as other select issues of local and metropolitan newspapers, to provide further context to prominent themes of discussion that had emerged from the first phase of data collection and cataloguing.[132] Also utilised were the National Library of Australia's online digital database of newspapers, *Trove*, to search relevant events and approximate the timing for certain themes of discussion to guide further manual microfilm reading of both primary and secondary newspaper titles.[133] From this secondary phase of data collection approximately 500 additional articles were read closely for analysis.

While the press coverage provided by the four primary newspapers overlapped in their discussion of similar events, it was clear from the close readings that each paper prioritised events and activities that directly impacted their own specific town and surrounding district.[134] This was most overt in press coverage of football activities, as for example the *Terang Express* provided a full match report of any match played by Terang teams while generally only providing brief accounts of other matches in the district. Another primary example of favouring the 'local team' was found in reports regarding the premiership results. The newspaper whose

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[132] Secondary titles that were read as required included: *Port Fairy Gazette* (tri-weekly); *Koroit Sentinel* (weekly); *Hamilton Spectator* (tri-weekly); *Colac Herald* (tri-weekly); *Warrnambool Standard* (daily – except Sunday); *Weekly Times* (weekly), *Age* (daily – except Sunday), and *Argus* (daily – except Sunday)

[133] Of the four primary newspapers only the *Camperdown Chronicle* had been digitised for the time period in question. Searching the *Camperdown Chronicle* on Trove provided approximated dates and timings for events of interest which was then complemented with further manual microfilm reading of both primary and secondary newspapers which had not been digitised. For further reading on the use of digital databases such as Trove and examples of how it has been utilised by sport historians, see Gary Osmond and Murray Phillips (eds), *Sport History in the Digital Age*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015; Matthew Klugman, 'The Passionate, Pathologized Bodies of Sports Fans: How the Digital Turn Might Facilitate a New Cultural History of Modern Spectator Sports', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2017, pp. 306-321; Ian Syson, 'An "Absence of Option": Investigating the Historical Limits to Indigenous Australian Soccer Participation', *Soccer & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2019, pp. 86-102; and Murray G. Phillips, Gary Osmond and Stephen Townsend, 'A Bird's-Eye View of the Past: Digital History, Distant Reading, and Sport History', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 15, 2015, pp. 1725-1740.

[134] It was rare for articles in these local newspapers to be accompanied by an author's name. It was therefore difficult to identify who the author was and any individual inclinations they may have held. It is thus the overarching perspectives presented by the various newspapers, rather than the perspectives of individuals, that was the focal point of exploration for this thesis.

local team won the final match of the season often dedicated far more primary newspaper space to the victory while newspapers from neighbouring towns tended to provide a relatively standard report of the match.[135] These overlapping and contrasting depictions of the game in newspapers of rural south west Victoria during the interwar period provided insightful access to the varied readings of the multitude of people who watched, played, and coordinated Australian Rules football locally at the time.

**Thesis Outline**

Australian Rules football has been a feature of Australian life for over 160 years. Histories of the game have clearly established its heightened social status across the nation, with specific attention being drawn to its metropolitan roots. Yet, as this chapter has highlighted, very little insight is accorded the game's cultural influence and meaning, especially with regards to the role it has played in establishing, promulgating, and contesting particular forms of masculinity. This thesis addresses not only the paucity in academic inspection of rural football history, but more importantly it begins the process of analysing the game's role in validating, consolidating, and communicating localised cultural values. Like much of Australian history from the late colonial period and early twentieth century men, are the predominant figures. But rather than treating these men as simply figures influencing the rural context they inhabit, this thesis will focus on how gendered ideals of masculinity were pursued, promoted, remembered, celebrated, and contested within this rural environment, and how these processes shaped both the game and the broader community generally throughout the interwar years.

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135 For example, when Cobden won the 1930 Hampden Football League Premiership the *Cobden Times* gave the whole front page to the event. On the other hand, corresponding articles in the *Camperdown Chronicle*, *Mortlake Dispatch*, and *Terang Express* provided standard reports on the regular sports page of their issues. See 'Cobden the Champions', *Cobden Times*, 25 September 1930, p. 1, as opposed to 'Two Premierships Decided' *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 September 1930, p. 5.

In the following chapter, analysis of the game in this rural pocket of Victoria commences with an examination of the emergent narrative that country football created more wholesome – and thus manly men – than the semi-professional leagues in the city of Melbourne, and analyses the efforts made by the local press to project this image to a broader audience beyond their own regional boundaries. Through the inspection of newspaper reports, this chapter asks how people involved in football in the south west of Victoria wanted to be seen and the tensions that undermined this image. Issues related to burgeoning levels of professionalism which threatened a localised construction of amateur values and local relations and perceptions of the metro-centric governance of the game at the elite level are prominent themes throughout the chapter.

Chapter Three follows with an exploration of a set of nostalgic reflections of football in the district written by a long time local football follower 'Old Eaglehawk'. Published in two local newspapers during the 1930s, the articles provide a unique insight into how the game's burgeoning years in this rural context prior to World War I were remembered during the interwar years. Aside from tracking the code's establishment in the region during the late colonial period, the examination of these reminiscent articles provides insight into a number of broader cultural issues which influenced the game's early local history including masculinity, race, rural pioneers, and colonial violence.

Chapter Four follows the prominent underlying theme of masculinity that tended to permeate the game's foundational years to address football's cultural importance following World War I in this rural setting. At the core of the chapter is the question of who became the architypes of masculinity in the interwar years. The soldiers that were upheld during war as exemplars of Australian manliness, were no longer viewed as 'typical specimens of manhood' upon their return. At a time in Australian history when the nation was seeking nationalised figures with which to promote itself to the globe, this chapter highlights the way football at a

regional level presented a model of masculinity which resonated with local communities in this rural interwar setting.

Chapter Five returns to the transitional narratives that connected football and war through the examination of two sets of memorial gates that were positioned at the entrance of local football grounds during the 1930s. The chapter explores how the Australian war memorial movement shaped the construction of these early rural examples of sporting memorials. Dedicated to the memory of two men whose lives were cut short prematurely in motor vehicle accidents in 1933 and 1939 respectively, these gates highlight how items of material culture can perpetuate a multitude of memories that pointed to both the great meaning the game evoked in these rural communities, and the disturbing threat that automobilism seemed to pose.

The final substantive chapter of the thesis, Chapter Six, complicates the preceding accounts celebrating masculinity within the local form of the game by exploring some of the violence that was committed by players during the interwar period. An inspection of reports that detailed acts of physical aggression both on and off the field disturb the social image of the game in this rural setting. Responses from both spectators and the press to these incidents contested notions of what constituted manly behaviour in this particular football setting and how such behaviour was navigated by the broader community.

A brief concluding chapter returns to questions of masculinity, rurality, and memory that are conspicuous throughout the thesis.

These select lines of enquiry into a rural football context begin the process of examining the cultural history of Australian Rules football more generally. In capturing a rural history of the game, this thesis also shifts away from the metro-centric narratives that have dominated the field of Australian Rules football history, and brings insight into how the game developed and maintained its prominent status in at least one part of rural Victoria.

# Chapter Two

## 'Clean Football Meant the Promotion of Good Citizenship': Tracking the Emergence of Country Football's Wholesome Identity

> Up betimes an to the street where I do meet a man who looketh both ways, and I know it for an ill omen, an I do greatly fear lest Cobden lose the match [*sic*].[136]
>
> *Cobden Times*, 8 July 1931, p. 2.

### Introduction

During the 1931 season of the Hampden Football League a character by the name of 'Mr Tibbles' provided a semi-regular newspaper article for the *Cobden Times* that detailed events of his day at various local football matches. A flâneurial figure, Mr Tibbles' adventures around various local football matches in south west Victoria were designed with humour and satire at their core.[137] Each article was accompanied by a small drawn caricature of Mr Tibbles, depicting him as a skinny-legged man adorned with top hat and walking stick, his stance and appearance resembling that of a proud rooster (see Figure 6): head held high, elbows behind like resting wings and what looked like a wattle hanging from his neck.[138] Mr Tibbles represented an upstanding, albeit daft middle-class urban gentleman who looked out of place in this rural Victorian football landscape. Although comical, exaggerated, embellished, and possibly fictional, the tales of Mr Tibbles are interesting as they focus on varying aspects of

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136 'Mr. Tibbles at the Football', *Cobden Times*, 8 July 1931, p. 2.

137 A flâneur was a type of gentleman once commonly associated with nineteenth century urban environments, who, in a seemingly well-to-do, sophisticated, but lazy manner, provided observations of various social activities. For more on the term flâneur in an Australian context see, Glenn Morrison, 'A Flaneur in the Outback: Walking and Writing Frontier in Central Australia', *New Scholar: An International Journal of the Humanities, Creative Arts and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 51-72. See also James E. Brunson III, *The Early Image of Black Baseball: Race Representation in the Popular Press, 1871-1890*, Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2009, pp. 72-75; and Kerry Mallan, 'Strolling Through the (Post)Modern City: Modes of Being a Flâneur in Picture Books', *Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 56-74.

138 A wattle is the term given to the piece of skin that hangs from a chicken or rooster's neck and face.

local football culture that were relatively repressed in the generic football reporting of the local newspapers. Among the activities described and/or engaged in by Mr Tibbles were gambling, barracking, arguing, and drinking. At first glance these would appear common enough practices at a football game of the period, but the local press from across south west Victoria tended to suppress any reports of such behaviour. On the few occasions when such behaviour was acknowledged it was in general strongly condemned or at the very least considered an unusual intricacy of the local football scene.

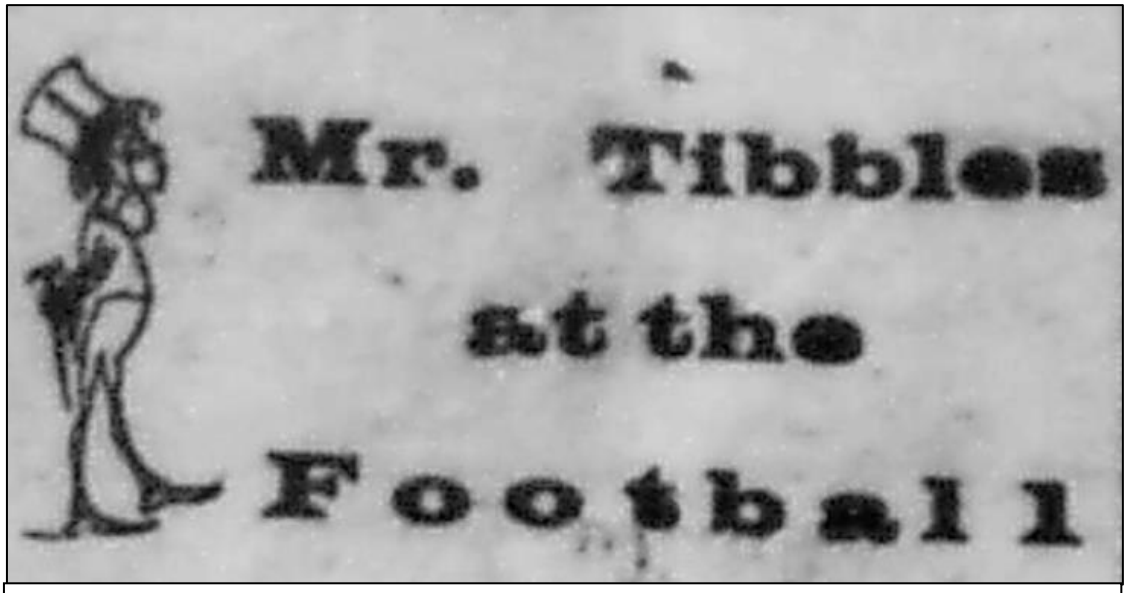


Figure 2: Newspaper headline of articles attributed to 'Mr Tibbles' (*Cobden Times*, 1931)

Mr Tibbles, a character likely created by writers at the *Cobden Times*, was described in a manner that mimicked dandy-like metropolitan elite. The nature of the text makes this character out to be a superstitious, unmeasured, and undesirable individual for this rural landscape. Indeed, from a rural perspective, the characteristics Mr Tibbles embodied were likely perceived as representing a stereotypical and stigmatised city dweller. These articles provide an interesting glimpse into a troubled side of football which was permeating the game at a rural level. Literature pertaining to metropolitan football history has illuminated much of the troubling elements that were entrenched within the influential elite city competitions during

this period.[139] For those who read the adventures of Mr Tibbles the satire at play was obvious. Hence, there was a sense that such adventures were not common in a rural setting such as Cobden, but that such exaggerated antics might take place in the metropoles was not unfathomable from a rural perspective. This was a perspective which the local press was influential in circulating.

The *Cobden Times*, through the medium of Mr Tibbles, provided a comical sense of how out of place such lurid behaviour was in the self-perceived wholesomeness of their rural football competition. This chapter seeks to inspect exactly how 'wholesome' the game was in rural south west Victoria during the interwar years and embarks on examining the relationship that footballing people of south west Victoria had with the main metropolitan based organisation which controlled the game – the Victorian Football League (VFL). More generally this chapter analyses ruralised perceptions of the city and further investigates the urban-rural cultural divide that developed during the early twentieth century. Central to this navigation is the exploration of the manner in which elite Melbourne competitions were depicted in the local press and how the rural perceptions of metropolitan football practices may have influenced the construction of football's wholesome cultural identity in rural south west Victoria.

The elite city competitions of the period (primarily the VFL) had a distinct role in determining how the game was played across the state during the interwar years.[140] But as will

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[139] For examples of issues that were prevailing in the elite metropolitan competitions during this period see Chris McConville, 'Football, Liquor and Gambling in the 1920s', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 1, no.1, 1984, pp. 38-55; Rob Hess, 'The Victorian Football League Takes Over, 1897-1914' in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than A Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 86-89, 93-95, 99-102, and 110-113; Russell Holmesby, 'In a New League, 1925-1945', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than A Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 139-146; and Tony Joel, Mathew Turner and Col Hutchinson, '"Playing Dead" and Killing Off Amateurism: Bribery, Scandals, Illegal Player Payments, Rule Expunging, and the Victorian Football League's Authorization of Professionalism in 1911', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 35, nos 2-3, 2018, pp. 173-195.

[140] During this period another prominent Melbourne-based competition was the Victorian Football Association (VFA). While the VFA was also semi-professional, country leagues were not formally affiliated with them. There were issues that tested the relationship between country leagues and the VFA, but these tensions were not as conspicuous as they were with the VFL. Hence, the VFL will be the main semi-professional Melbourne-based football league of interest in this chapter.

be revealed in this chapter there was a sense of resistance to following all the trends of the professionally oriented city leagues as country leagues attempted to maintain and preserve masculine aspects of a self-constructed amateur ideal that morally elevated the rural form of the game. Examining the manner in which the local press advocated, promoted, and disseminated this idyllic image illuminates the complex social and cultural contestation at play throughout the interwar years from the perspective of rural communities.

**Imagined Communities, Imaginary Grandstand, and Countrymindedness**

When athletes compete at an international level they 'are said to "represent" their fellow countrymen' in front of both local and global audiences who view the contests through various forms of worldwide media.[141] This global audience forms what Graeme Davison has termed an 'imaginary grandstand', which on the basis of the performance offered by representative individuals or teams allows the nation to be measured and compared with its global counterparts. International contests allow the nation to reflect on its status by 'looking through the eyes' of the imaginary grandstand, thereby developing a sense of its national identity in a global context.[142] The 'imaginary grandstand' highlights the complex act of a nation (or any community more generally) reflecting on how it is perceived by others, and then seeking to shape these perceptions. Thus, sport becomes an invaluable cultural setting by which to interpret the construction and projection of community identities.[143]

The societies of rural south west Victoria and the football community that resides in this setting are regionalised, or scaled down, examples of what Benedict Anderson would

141 Graeme Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand: International Sport and the Recognition of Australian Identity', in Bernard Whimpress (ed.), *The Imaginary Grandstand: Identity and Narrative in Australian Sport*, Kent Town: Australian Society for Sport History, 2001, p. 13.
142 Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand', p. 13.
143 Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand', pp. 12-26.

identify as imagined communities.[144] At an international scale, nations are considered imagined communities that are constructed though a collective mindset of group inclusion and communion. Regions and more localised communities can imagine themselves in similar ways. For communities in south west Victoria during the interwar years, Australian Rules football – the most popular and prominent winter sport in the region – was a platform of comparison and measurement with both neighbouring leagues as well as the elite metropolitan competitions in Melbourne, which was home to the highest standard of the code.

The tension that has governed the relationship between the city and the country throughout Australia has been best explained through Don Aitken's political history of the Australian Country Party and its ideological establishment based on a ruralised attitude known as 'countrymindedness'.[145] The ideology of 'countrymindedness' was most prominent from 1925 until 1960 and was generated from a rural-centric perception that the governance of the nation was controlled in the city, while the voices of the country were being marginalised, under represented, or not heard at all.[146] A number of key elements fostered the burgeoning ideology of 'countrymindedness' in the 1920s. Two of the main beliefs that stimulated the city-country political dynamic was the perspective that 'farming and grazing, and rural pursuits generally, are virtuous, ennobling and cooperative; they bring out the best in people' while 'in contrast, city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical'.[147]

The ideology of 'countrymindedness' revealed a sense of social disquiet and social divide between the city and the country. As modern industries grew within cities such as Melbourne, the idea that the nation's economic stability relied on its rural exports was

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144 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition), London: Verso, 1991.

145 Don Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness": The Spread of an Idea', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 4, 1985, pp. 34-41. See also Don Aitkin, *The Country Party in New South Wales: A Study of Organisation and Survival*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1972.

146 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', pp. 34-41.

147 Aitkin, '"Countrymindedness"', p. 35.

beginning to wane. In the early twentieth century, the centralised economic power of major Australian cities began to attract increased proportions of the population away from the country.[148] In the United States, a similar drift was occurring at this time which impelled the initiation of a 'country life movement' aimed at maintaining the populace and social fertility of country regions.[149] Prior to and after the Great War, an Australian version of this movement was intimated by the government who encouraged city dwellers to take up 'affordable' farming opportunities across the countryside. It was thought that the 'healthy' pursuit of the country lifestyle was favourable to the purported deviance which was seen to thrive in the city.[150] The popular Darwinian perspective of the period suggested that people on the land were of superior stock to their city counterparts.[151] This drove policy makers to implement strategies that were designed to repopulate the countryside and by association, stabilise the nation's future more broadly.[152] For many decades prior to this crisis, the rural worker, or bushman, personified Australia's burgeoning independence and represented the very best of the Australian ideal during the late nineteenth century. Thus, early twentieth century government initiatives such as the Closer Settlement Act – a precursor to the Soldier Settlement scheme discussed earlier in this thesis – were implemented with the belief that they would replenish the number of higher

148 Graeme Davison, 'Fatal Attraction? The Lure of Technology and the Decline of Rural Australia 1890-2000', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2003, pp. 40-55; and Bob Bessant, 'Rural Schooling and the Rural Myth in Australia', *Comparative Education*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1978, pp. 121-132.

149 For reading on the 'country life movement' of America, see William L. Bowers, 'Country-Life Reform, 1900-1920: A Neglected Aspect of Progressive Era History', *Agricultural History*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1971, pp. 211-221.

150 Graeme Davison, *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016, pp. 73-82.

151 During the early twentieth century there were growing concerns that urban environments threatened national degeneracy. This was a common theme among western countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and America. As this perception was popularised, rural areas were positioned as a social and cultural salvation of national prosperity. This mentality fostered sentiments of an urban-rural divide. For further reading on the gendered aspects of this divide, see Kate Murphy, *Fears and Fantasies: Modernity, Gender, and the Rural-Urban Divide*, New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2010, pp. 9-49.

152 Graeme Davison, 'Country Life: The Rise and Decline of an Australian Ideal', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Identity in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2005, pp. 1.1-1.15.

quality Australians being raised in rural settings.[153] The popular opinion that those on the land were the best of Australia ensured that the country held the moral and social high ground of the nation when compared to the city. However, in spite of this perception, the city maintained much of the political power and financial clout.

The sense of an urban-rural divide extended from the economy to social and cultural matters. Sport in general, and football competitions across Victoria in particular, were one such domain where a dominant metro-centric power was seen to influence the character of the game in rural regions. In 1927, as the Australian Country Party was gaining traction, a rural football organisation in Victoria – the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL) – was established to provide a keener focus on the needs and requirements of country football leagues across the state. They wanted a seat at the table with the leading metropolitan-based controlling body of football, the VFL, so that the voice of the country leagues could be heard and acknowledged in future decision-making processes that affected the game.[154] A primary concern that necessitated the formation of the Victorian Country Football League was the sense that the VFL had ultimate power in determining the clearance and transfer of players from city to country leagues and vice versa. Various country football league administrators across the state felt that the VFL unfairly refused many reasonable player transfer requests which reinforced ruralised perceptions that this professional city league utilised their power for their own benefit.[155] This 'competitive and nasty' edge to the VFL was begrudged by country league administrators and fortified an attitude similar to that of 'countrymindedness' that sought adequate recompense for what those people in the country offered the game. Much like the Australian political narratives that emerged during this period, the urban-rural football tensions

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153 Monica Keneley, 'Closer Settlement in the Western District of Victoria: A Case Study in Australian Land Use Policy, 1898-1914', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2002, pp. 363-379.

154 For detailed historical insight into the formation of the Victorian Country Football League, see Paul Daffey, *Behind the Goals: The History of the Victorian Country Football League*, Ballarat East: Ten Bags Press, 2017.

155 Daffey, *Behind the Goals*, pp. 41-53.

activated a divide that became a focus of debates around the game for years to come. Moves to establish the Victorian Country Football League were met with a positive response from leagues in south west Victoria. The president of the Corangamite Football League, who was present at a country league meeting, felt that the creation of the Victorian Country Football League 'would assist in up lifting football in country districts'.[156]

While the VFL may have treated country leagues unfairly, they also provided a model of how to coordinate and organise football competitions, hence country football leagues across the state tended to emulate them in both structure and ambition. Administrators responsible for coordinating leagues like the Hampden Football League in south west Victoria, strove for status and prominence by cultivating a high standard of sustainable competition. However, this was balanced with efforts to ensure that the local form of the game reproduced values that were consistent with moral standards of the surrounding towns and communities. It is through these complex negotiations around playing standards and moral integrity that urban rural divides were articulated and tested. The local football community preserved the idea that football provided a wholesome social space which nurtured the development of 'gentlemanly' citizens. Yet, the professionalisation of the game in the powerful and influential elite city leagues was seen as threatening this idyllic ruralised conception.

**Professional Versus Amateur**

Popular media has long played a central role in the dissemination of ideas of national identity.[157] Scaled down to a regional level, rural newspapers played a similar role for their relatively small audiences. The newspapers in rural south west Victoria during the interwar years, for example, were influential in advocating specific ideals while suppressing or

156 'Corangamite Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 16 October 1926, p. 6.
157 Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand', p. 12.

discouraging behaviour that threatened their professed values. As the coach of the Terang Football Club put it in 1938, players were expected 'to always play the game fairly and cleanly' as 'winning of the premiership was not nearly so important as it was to play in the proper spirit'.[158] Replicating this messaging, the press endorsed ideals which were synonymous with amateurism, and celebrated players, clubs, and administrators that encouraged playing football in the 'proper spirit'. But what was meant by the 'proper spirit', and what it looked like in this rural setting, were relatively fluid and did not always reflect traditional views of amateurism.

The amateur ideal in this rural context was a complex amalgamation of various influences. Historically, the values of amateurism in Australia have been linked to the nation's strong social, economic, ancestral, and political connection to the heartland of sporting amateurism, Britain. To quote Erik Nielsen, 'sport has much to offer our understanding of Britishness in the Australian context'.[159] British codes of amateurism have in historical terms been acknowledged as one of the earliest influences on Australian sport. But as Murray Phillips has argued, the globalisation of sport meant that there was a diverse range of contested opinions regarding what constituted the amateur spirit, rather than simply a singular British form.[160] In the nineteenth-century, idealistic constructions of British amateurism were based on masculine ideals of middle or upper class men who, as supposedly naturally gifted athletes, would not succumb to the 'ungentlemanly' act of training to enhance one's performance.[161] Amateurism was as much about the 'style' of play as it was a 'spirit' of play for 'amateurs were above all gentlemen, and gentlemen were not supposed to sweat and toil for their laurels'.[162]

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158 'Terang Club's Social', *Terang Express*, 3 May 1938, p. 8.

159 Erik Nielsen, *Sport and the British World, 1900-1930: Amateurism and National Identity in Australasia and Beyond*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 1.

160 Murray G. Phillips, 'Diminishing Contrasts and Increasing Varieties: Globalisation Theory and "Reading" Amateurism in Australian Sport', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2001, pp. 19-32.

161 See Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 98-100.

162 Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 100.

Traditional ideas of British amateurism did not always meld with Australia's national identity as the associated elitism was weighted too heavily on elements of class-based privileges while 'Australian society … perpetuated a myth of egalitarianism'.[163] But as in the rest of the world, it was unlikely that there was a singular defining construction of what constituted the amateur ideal in Australia. Rather, amateurism was diverse and flexible with various organisations, big or small, employing select elements of the amateur ethos which suited their particular purposes.[164] For example, when the VFL was established in 1897, the competition initially condemned any form of player payment. But the league was never strictly amateur, as the first generation of VFL players were permitted remuneration for out-of-pocket expenses.[165] Foreshadowing a turn to professionalism, clubs and players exploited the 'out-of-pocket expenses' exception and after just over a decade of competition, the VFL conceded that player payments were an inevitability that they could not police effectively. Henceforth, in 1911 they officially allowed payments to players and thereby ushered in the professionalisation of the game.[166] As the VFL embraced professionalism, the management of clubs and the league respectively projected a more 'business-like' front.[167]

The administrative formality popularised by amateur sporting bodies provided an example for how sport should be coordinated and organised with annual and general meetings, committees, and an inherent sense of sportsmanship key to the structure.[168] Professional competitions such as the VFL, which emerged from relatively amateur beginnings, maintained much of this formality, but once football became a profitable economic commodity this

163 See Phillips, 'Diminishing Contrasts and Increasing Varieties', p. 25.
164 Phillips, 'Diminishing Contrasts and Increasing Varieties', pp. 19-32.
165 David Ross Booth, 'Labour Market Intervention, Revenue Sharing and Competitive Balance in the Victorian Football League, 1897-1998', Doctoral Thesis, Department of Economics, Monash University, 2000, p. 36.
166 Booth, 'Labour Market Intervention, Revenue Sharing and Competitive Balance in the Victorian Football League, 1897-1998', p. 37.
167 Rob Hess, 'The Victorian Football League Takes Over, 1897-1914' in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 94-95.
168 Nielsen, *Sport and the British World, 1900-1930*, p. 10.

stringent form of organisation was perceived externally as revenue seeking and 'business-like'. This appearance was resisted and resented by country competitions who believed that the objective of the powerful metropolitan leagues should be to broadly enhance and better the game for competitions across the state. But according to the local press there were occasions when the VFL's 'attitude was too dominant and not in the best interests of the game'.[169]

Like the VFL, country leagues employed a formal managerial approach to their local competition with a committee, a president, a secretary, and delegates as well as other important role-players who as a collective did what was 'best' for their respective competitions. While some funding was required to facilitate the game locally, there was resistance to the elite metropolitan competitions who had supposedly let money debase the game. Indeed, there was clear opposition in the rural football environments to questions regarding money and professionalisation of the game. For example, a 1937 article in the *Mortlake Dispatch* discussing tension between country leagues and the VFL was branded with a sub heading that read 'Money-Killing Game'.[170] A similar belief had previously been expressed by the president of the Hampden Football League, F.P. Williams, who 'hoped that the money question will not come into the Western district' as he feared that 'if money enters, it is "Goodbye" to the game'.[171] Money in this understanding inevitably led to corruption, while 'clean football', free from the temptations that money threatened, 'meant the promotion of good citizenship'.[172] Yet, while committee members and administrators from country competitions such as the Hampden Football League deplored the idea of player payments and professionalising their local competition, by no means did their league conform to a strict or traditional regime of amateurism.

169 'Football', *Terang Express*, 28 April 1939, p. 8.
170 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 April 1937, p. 3.
171 'Club Dinner Great Success', *Cobden Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 3.
172 'Club Dinner Great Success', *Cobden Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 3.

During the interwar period the rural football competitions of south west Victoria grappled with the negotiation between professional and amateur aspects of local football. Clubs often listed on their yearly financial reports payments such as those for milkers to compensate for players who missed milking to play games, payments to playing coaches, and in some cases complimentary player dinners or functions. For example, the 1933 Terang Football Club financial report listed 'Players Expenses' which accounted for costs that included 'Milkers £87/5/; Petrol £33/1/10; Car Hire £1/16/6; Meals £8/2/'.[173]

The utilisation of such business practices by Australian sporting bodies that claimed to be amateur was common during the pre-war and interwar period.[174] Tending away from traditional ideals of amateurism, the less strict Australian guidelines were aimed at fostering the popularisation of various sporting bodies and creating public support.[175] In this rural setting, local football competitions were similarly motivated to enhance the quality of play as clubs employed professional practices such as the weekly training of players by means of the instruction of paid coaches. The press did not question this behaviour and indeed when players did not train the press expressed concern. For example, early in the 1939 season, the *Terang Express* noted that they were 'worried about the prospects' of the Terang team after a 'poor attendance' at that week's training session.[176] Comments such as this hinted that there was more to local football than just a game for the game's sake. The clubs and leagues may have appeared as if the game was enough, and playing in the right spirit was satisfactory, but there was an unmistakable urge to improve and enhance their footballing capacity, or, in other words to increase the chances of victory. Moreover, there was a social understanding that there was something more to be gained from being the best, popularising the game, and attracting broad public appeal in the name of economic benefit. This aspect of the game was less conspicuous

173 'Terang Football Club', *Terang Express*, 3 February 1933, p. 1.
174 Nielsen, *Sport and the British World, 1900-1930*, pp. 25-30.
175 Nielsen, *Sport and the British World, 1900-1930*, pp. 57-58.
176 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 May 1939, p. 8.

through the press, but was present and observable through analysis of reports from the committee meetings of the various local competitions.

The Hampden Football League became the dominant competition of south west Victoria in 1935, with the local media celebrating it as the highest level of the game in the region.[177] Having remained relevant and sustainable during the worst years of the depression, committee members of the Hampden League were eager to solidify their future with an attitude that the 'League should explore every avenue of revenue' while also ensuring that the current streams of revenue were not threatened.[178] Patronage of matches was far and away the main source of revenue for the Hampden Football League. Towards the end of the 1930s, ideas such as introducing a publican's booth for finals matches and buying rain insurance were seen as essential measures to encourage and ensure healthy gate takings.[179]

Technological advancements such as the advent of the wireless were seen as both an attraction for spectators, but also as a potential threat. Various clubs in the district were pleased to install a wireless 'for the benefit of supporters' so that they could hear sport results while watching the local football.[180] The radio was seen as an attractive draw card, but when in 1937 the local radio broadcast station 3YB offered to broadcast live commentary of one local football match per week, the league's committee permitted it under strict guidelines that were economically driven. Among the rules that governed the 3YB broadcast rights, there was a stipulation that they could not reveal which match they were to broadcast until just prior to its commencement. Also, the Hampden Football League 'was to be under no expense concerning the broadcast', and that the committee had the right to withdraw the permission of the broadcast

177 'Hampden Football League Major Status Accepted', *Terang Express*, 24 May 1935, p. 8.

178 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 August 1938, p. 1. It is important to note that not all sports in south west Victoria prospered during the height of the depression. For example, local polo competitions suffered a short recess in the district from 1930-1936. See 'Depression Stops Polo', *Terang Express*, 3 October 1930, p. 1; and 'Polo Revival Western District', *Terang Express*, 11 February 1936, p. 5.

179 'Hampden League Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 August 1939, p. 1.

180 'Week End Sport', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 14 July 1934, p. 3; and 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 15 June 1939, p. 1.

rights if the league found that it 'had an adverse effect on gate takings'.[181] Fortunately for the league's coffers, upon review of the 3YB's initiative 'delegates expressed themselves as being satisfied that the broadcast descriptions … had helped the league considerably'.[182]

This tone of reasoning regarding the protection of revenue streams and ensuring that football was making the most of its local popularity was most notably observed in the strategic planning of season fixtures. Both during the home-and-home portion of the season and the finals series of the Hampden Football League, revenue was a highly influential factor in decisions, which began undermining non-negotiable amateur ideals of fairness and sporting spirit.[183] The most contentious issue that threatened the fair and sporting image of the Hampden League were the annual negotiations between delegates to decide where finals matches should be played. The issue was most controversial in 1935 after Warrnambool defeated Mortlake in the grand final to win the league premiership. Questions were raised over the result after the game was played at the Friendly Society Parks ground located in Warrnambool. That the Warrnambool Football Club was given a home ground advantage while their opponent had to travel was considered by the *Mortlake Dispatch* 'not only a monstrous, but unfair decision'.[184] The only justification for staging the match in Warrnambool was the likelihood of a larger

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181 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 15 May 1937, p. 4; and 'Football', *Terang Express*, 14 May 1937, p. 5.

182 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 February 1938, p. 4. Radio technology was improved substantially in Australia during the interwar years, providing a new form of media which connected regions and nations. For more on the history of radio in Australia see K.S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932-1983*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983; and Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Changing Station: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009. Evolving technology and media outlets also had an important influence on how Australian sport was consumed by the public. See, for example, Bridget Griffen-Foley, 'Sporting Chances: Sport on Australian Commercial Radio, from the 1920s to the 1950s', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 23, no. 1, November 2006, pp. 37-61. Focussing on cultures of American football, Michael Oriard observes radios', and later televisions', power to convey cultural meanings associated with the game throughout the United States during the twentieth century. See Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001, pp. 44-56. For a brief history of 3YB during this period see Hugh Adams, *3YB: Pioneer of Country Broadcasting in Victoria, 1931-1981*, Warrnambool: 3YB, 1981.

183 Home-and-home refers to the rounds of matches prior to the series of finals. This is more commonly known as the home-and-away season in current football terminology.

184 'Where Will the Grand Final be Played?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 11 September 1936, p. 3

attendance. Speaking on the issue at the Mortlake Football Club's end-of-season dinner, Hampden Football League president F.P. Williams stated:

> that the rules should be so cast that [finals] games should be played on neutral grounds. It did not seem right and proper for one club to be at home and the other club having to travel. The league had to face that situation next year, and to consider whether the League desired to support the game, or whether it was revenue that was largely their object.[185]

The following year, Mortlake again qualified for the grand final and would face the winner of the preliminary final between Terang and Warrnambool. The question as to where the grand final was to be played should Warrnambool gain entry to the grand final was expected to incite 'heated discussions'.[186] In this scenario the integrity of the league was brought into question and highlighted the difficult balance between business and sport. For the *Mortlake Dispatch* the answer was 'obvious to all fair minded individuals that when the supremacy of the football world is at stake, the conditions should be equal to both teams'.[187]

The importance of grand final victories was clearly not to be understated in this rural setting. Yet the need to emphasise fairness hinted at the complex negotiation between local football as a serious competition and football as a naturally 'wholesome' pastime of the district. The *Mortlake Dispatch* 'hoped delegates of the League … [would] approach the matter in a true sporting spirit, and not with a biased mind on the matter of "gate-money" as was the case last year'.[188] The implied value of revenue and the associated importance of winning local football matches reproduced the idea that the influence of elite metropolitan professionalisation was filtering into the country leagues. While the tensions of an urban-rural divide in the football landscape provoked country leagues to openly rebuff ideas of professionalism, it was becoming

185 'Footballer's Entertained', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 20 September 1935, p. 3
186 'Where Will the Grand Final be Played?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 11 September 1936, p. 3.
187 'Where Will the Grand Final be Played?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 11 September 1936, p. 3.
188 'Where Will the Grand Final be Played?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 11 September 1936, p. 3.

common practice for rural football administrators to seek the most profitable circumstances for their competing clubs throughout this period.

During the interwar years there was a growing awareness within the local press that 'football was becoming a business' and in order to 'balance ledgers … it behoved [clubs] to get busy'.[189] After recognising patterns in football match attendances, the delegates from Warrnambool and South Warrnambool Football Clubs requested that the match between their teams not be played in the opening round of 1939. The town of Warrnambool had the biggest population of the region and hence this match-up had the potential to draw the largest crowd of the home-and-home season. Games between these sides often attracted a lot of attention from the residents of Warrnambool as the contest was somewhat of a local derby, henceforth gate takings were often well above the league average. With revenue for the league central to their argument, the delegates reasoned that 'to stage a contest between them on the opening day, before interest in the competition had been sufficiently aroused, meant a gate of about £40 instead of £80 or £90. Other delegates concurred with their view'.[190] Whether it was overtly stated or not, finances clearly played a significant role in the function of the league. Rather than dwell on this economically motivated contradiction to traditional amateur ideals, the press tended to focus on the idyllic spirit of the game in rural competitions. For although money was a factor in the game's local milieu, as long as the game was played in a 'proper spirit' motivated by attributes of fairness, sportsmanship, and congeniality, then the local image of the game was still heralded in the local press as a more idealistic form of the game when compared with the elite metropolitan competitions.

Rural football was therefore caught between the value of the sport as an exercise for the character of young men and the value of winning which was becoming increasingly

189 'Footballers Honoured', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 1 December 1939, p. 3.
190 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 March 1939, p. 1.

important in the elite metropolitan versions of the game. When in 1925 the VFL accepted the admission of three new clubs from the other elite metropolitan competition – the VFA – they effectively confirmed their status as the superior league of the state and the primary standard of what football should look like. This sentiment was reinforced by Mr Tibbles when describing the scenes of one of his gambling-oriented adventures. His confidence to place a bet on Cobden to beat Camperdown was increased significantly when it was revealed the Cobden team had acquired match tactics used by the 'mighty Richmond team' of the VFL:

> Up betimes an to the street where I … look for Mr. Colee [a Cobden official] an I do find him in a secret room … in deep study of a book which Mr. Colee tells me are the plans whereby Richmond do win their games. So to the street where we do meet a man who do wish to back Camperdown … So to secretly confer with Mr. Colee, who doth bid me take the bet as the men of Cobden do play by the same plans as the mighty Richmond team, an so I do lay £2 at a stroke.[191]

From the outside looking in, and particularly from a country-minded perspective, winning, revenue, and memberships were the primary features to these elite metropolitan football bodies. Mr Tibbles' account intimated a definite attitude that clubs sought every advantage possible in order to win matches. The newspapers of south west Victoria, however, preferred to disseminate a constructed image of amateurism for their readers, regularly emphasising that the manner of play was more important than the outcome. This front was occasionally disturbed by reports of some games which were apparently 'too important to permit of the giving of any latitude' and resulted in matches 'of a scrambling nature'.[192] While there was reputational value at stake for towns if their team played the game in the right spirit, there was similarly undeniable value to winning – a precedent set by the professionalised competitions of the city. This urge to win meant that local players and spectators occasionally veered away from the

[191] 'Mr. Tibbles at the Football', *Cobden Times*, 8 July 1931, p. 2.
[192] Old Star, 'Hampden League Football', *Terang Express*, 16 August 1938, p. 8.

amateur ideals for which the local competition was frequently praised in the papers at the conclusion of every season – but how could they be blamed for such reactions when there were some people who felt that 'the supremacy of the football world is at stake'.[193]

**The Value of Winning**

So, what was at stake in these matches? What was motivating the players, teams, and clubs to strive? Was it the nature of the sport of football or was there something else at play? In 1937 Camperdown lost to Warrnambool in the grand final of the Hampden Football League. At the post-match dinner Camperdown supporter Mr F.A. Robertson proclaimed, 'there is something about football which gets into the blood much deeper than either golf or tennis'.[194] It was this notion of football as a more passion provoking outlet that Mr Tibbles' exaggerated narratives provided insight. For instance, at one game he was purportedly a witness to a Cobden football follower engaged 'in hot discourse with a crowd of Camperdown barrackers'.[195] At another match when he heard a fellow supporter in 'violent discourse in the midst of a large crowd' Mr Tibbles believed some sort of brawl was taking place, so he pushed through the crowd 'being fearful lest they do something to harm him'.[196] Again these images did not meld with the rural understanding of football culture, but matched with the turbulent scenes perceived as a regular occurrence in the semi-professional Melbourne leagues. Indeed, as Mr Robertson emphasised in regard to his favoured Camperdown Football Club:

> the committee was not a body of men who always wanted them to win at any cost, but to do their best for the good of the town. They were as proud of them as if they had won the premiership, for, after all, it was only a fluttering pennant in the wind.[197]

193 'Where Will the Grand Final be Played?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 11 September 1936, p. 3.
194 'Camperdown Footballers Entertained', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1937, p. 4.
195 'Mr. Tibbles at the Football', *Cobden Times*, 24 June 1931, p. 2.
196 'Mr. Tibbles and the Defeat', *Cobden Times*, 23 September 1931, p. 3.
197 'Camperdown Footballers Entertained', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1937, p. 4.

Aside from a 'fluttering pennant' there were no clear financial rewards for winning the premiership, but there was no doubt that every club was extremely eager to win it. Winning played a central role in how a team or league viewed itself through the eyes of the local imaginary grandstands, but simply winning and winning in the 'proper spirit' were muddled endeavours.

The local press often privileged examples of victories that were the result of sporting contests played in a creditable spirit. This attitude to the game was best exemplified by a match report following Round 14 of the 1931 Hampden Football League season, when wet and muddy conditions turned a contest between Camperdown and Terang into 'more than a shillings worth of fun'.[198] The difficult conditions meant 'players were not in the mood to take things to heart' and the match was played in 'excellent spirit and the members of each team, realising that nothing was to be gained by making the play rough, thoroughly enjoyed themselves'.[199] The muddy scene meant there was 'plenty of incidents and amusements for the spectators, who were kept in roars of laughter almost the whole game'.[200]

The image which the local newspapers projected was that the players, club, administrators, and spectators were committed to the sporting spirit of the game and that while players were earnest in their efforts to win each match, they did so in manner that brought credit to the community they represented. As a former secretary of the Terang Football Club noted upon his resignation from the position in 1938, 'an active and virile football club was one of the best assets the town could have'.[201] The local press in reporting such opinions positioned football as holding a revered status within these rural communities. With football placed on such a pedestal, the expectation was that the players that donned their town's jersey each week would be met with the most wholesome of support. Winning clearly had a place,

198 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 11 August 1931, p. 5.
199 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 11 August 1931, p. 5.
200 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 11 August 1931, p. 5.
201 'Terang Football Club', *Terang Express*, 15 February 1938, p. 1.

but with no significant prizes to be won other than a 'fluttering pennant', the clubs and the press tended to place greater emphasis on the hope that players and administrators embodied and reflected positive attributes of their respective towns.[202] Pride of the town was on the line in every contest, but the press often downplayed this motivation as being measured through the spirit in which a team played, rather than the outcome. This sporting optimism led clubs to exude a sense that their sole intention was to 'field a team that will be worthy of the support accorded it by the public generally and reflect credit on the town whose name it bears'.[203]

Members of the Hampden Football League committee reinforced this line of thinking with statements such as 'playing the game though … is of more value than the mere winning of trophies'.[204] However, the behaviour of supporters at matches frequently reflected an alternative narrative to these idyllic perceptions of the game and exploring their reactions was instrumental in illuminating that the outcome of games was central to a town's identity. Especially revealing was evidence of how spectators reacted when their team lost matches. This, along with other discussions of general barracking behaviour, hinted that winning matches meant more to spectators than was revealed in the papers. Perhaps the images Mr Tibbles had presented were not so exaggerated.

While the committees of these rural leagues presented an image of 'countrymindedness' that separated themselves from the perceived corruptness and greed of urban polity of the VFL, the identity of this construction was manufactured as a self-fulfilling version of amateurism. Associated with the burgeoning business-like appearance that the local form of the game harboured, were responses from spectators that winning was central to the game's local culture. Again, the press was less explicit when reporting on the spectators, but occasional scenes of extreme jubilation expressed by supporters following victories implied an inherent importance

202 'Camperdown Footballers Entertained', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1937, p. 4.
203 'Terang Football Club', *Terang Express*, 11 February 1938, p. 8.
204 'Club Dinner Great Success', *Cobden Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 3.

associated with winning. A prime example followed Mortlake's premiership victory in 1936, where there were 'scenes of wild excitement' as 'followers of Mortlake went mad with excitement. Hats were thrown in the air, men shook hands and women embraced one another, while not a few were so excited that they were unable to speak, and not a few wept'.[205] The papers recognised that matches of football could induce excitement from the crowds of spectators so much so that 'in some quarters the barracking would have passed for any Fitzroy [a working class VFL team] stadium'.[206] These types of scenes were not uncommon following grand final victories, but these spectators were not celebrating the 'sporting spirit' of the match, they were overcome with emotions because winning was clearly significant to the broader football community of these rural townships. On the other side of the coin, occasional reports that highlighted a sense of the extreme dissatisfaction from supporters of losing teams also spoke to the perceived impact of football results in the district.

At the conclusion of a match in June 1938 'The Follower', writing for the *Terang Express*, was aghast at the treatment, or lack thereof received by the Terang players after they were narrowly beaten by South Warrnambool. 'Follower' stated that 'it was very noticeable in the room after the match that the players had ample space for dressing … the players must have felt akin to outcasts … Virtually they left the field and departed for their homes unhonoured, unwept and unsung'.[207] Such a lack of regard shown to the players highlighted a concern that the investment made by supporters was not aligned with ideals of congeniality and friendly spirited play that the papers tended to advocate. 'Follower' felt that the incident showed 'a very poor spirit of sportsmanship on the part of the executive and supporters'.[208]

This chastising report on the barrackers for their lack of support provided a glimpse at the conflicted status of the game in this rural setting. As a flow on from the rigid and serious

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205 'Breathless Grand Final', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 25 September 1936, p. 3.
206 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 18 May 1937, p. 4.
207 The Follower, 'Gossip on the Game', *Terang Express*, 10 June 1938, p. 8.
208 The Follower, 'Gossip on the Game', *Terang Express*, 10 June 1938, p. 8.

management of the game, other aspects of football culture associated with Melbourne leagues may have also trickled down into the local football landscape. The most overt was the type of barracking that was observed by the press at local football matches. At one extreme, the *Terang Express* believed that some barracking was abhorrent and if left untreated had the potential to infect the 'fair and open-minded man'.[209] These incidents hint at the idea that some supporters highly valued victory which caused them to lose sight of the values that the local press presented as central to the game's existence and cultural importance. Mr Tibbles provides a sense of the heightened tensions that may have pervaded the rural football scene, noting the discontent some Camperdown supporters had displayed when their team lost:

> But Lord more niggardly barrack [*sic*] than from the Camperdown supporters I have never heard, and never did I meet such illsportsmen who lay not their defeat to the mighty Cobden play but to the foulness of the umpire.[210]

While Mr Tibbles' expression was exaggerated for comic effect, a unique article titled 'Barrackers' Bedlam' penned in 1938 by a regular scribe who went by the pseudonym 'Bunyip' provided a more creditable representation of the crowds that followed this rural competition.[211] According to Bunyip's report, at a match between Terang and South Warrnambool there were yells from the crowd that would have fitted quite aptly in the stories of Mr Tibbles such as '"You've got 'em rattled." "Hoo, yer dirty cow." "Get specs, umpy."'[212] However, this behaviour was not reflective of all local football followers, as 'Bunyip' noted that the:

> crowd at a football match certainly lacks nothing in cosmopolitanism. Some are there because the day is fine; some to see a match before the season ends. These are the comparatively indifferent. Some have been to following their respective teams in fine weather, fair weather and foul weather for years. These are the enthusiastic.[213]

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209 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.
210 'Mr Tibbles at the Football', *Cobden Times*, 8 July 1931, p. 2.
211 Bunyip, 'Barrackers' Bedlam', *Terang Express*, 23 August 1938, p. 1.
212 Bunyip, 'Barrackers' Bedlam', *Terang Express*, 23 August 1938, p. 1.
213 Bunyip, 'Barrackers' Bedlam', *Terang Express*, 23 August 1938, p. 1.

The spectrum of support surveyed by Bunyip suggested that the game attracted a broad range of people with varying degrees of investment in the outcome of the result. While the press tended to leave out details of these more vocal supporters, impressions of the game such as this contested the simple and wholesome identity of local football.[214] 'Bunyip', however, celebrated the 'barrackers' bedlam' because:

> It is never monotonous. It is educational. It is entertaining. It is a tonic. A bob's worth of it is worth more than a pound's worth of patent medicines. It is never artificial: because it is Australian. It is original. It is ever so old; ever so new. It was. It is. It will be. 'Sprung of human that inhabit earth.' That sums up barracking. Likewise it explains why I like it. I am human.[215]

'Bunyip' reveals a celebration of the passions experienced by rural supporters at a time when the local press favoured the ideas of rural football's wholesome identity. This unusual article contrasted significantly with the more generic reports of the game locally where the expectation of the players, administrators, and supporters was that matches were conducted in a controlled fashion. This resulted in reports such as that from the 1936 Hampden Football League grand final which was memorable because 'the game was played in a very friendly spirit'.[216] But while the press rarely commented on the importance of winning, the spectator reactions made their feelings about results very clear. These conflicting images highlighted that winning was important to measuring a team in the local setting, but the press promulgated other narratives to contrive a communal image of wholesome inter town competition.

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[214] For detailed insight into aspects of the cultural history and passions associated with spectatorship in sport, in particular Australian Rules football, see Matthew Klugman, '"*Genus* Barracker": Sport, Anger, Partisanship, Pleasure, Science, Masculinity, and Race in Colonial Melbourne', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2019, pp. 171-187.

[215] Bunyip, 'Barrackers' Bedlam', *Terang Express*, 23 August 1938, p. 1.

[216] 'Breathless Grand Final', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 25 September 1936, p. 3.

**Contesting Values of the Rural Football Identity**

The local press was influential in shaping and presenting idealised aspects of the game while critiquing and calling out any behaviour or trends that threatened to destabilise the game locally. Following the reports of the local newspapers, the leagues in south west Victoria prided themselves on the way clubs and leagues went about the game both on the field and at an administrative level. End-of-season functions were a haven for self-congratulations as well as for doting appreciation on the conduct of administrators and clubs. At these sessions, idealistic impressions of how the game was and should be played were celebrated and promoted. For example, in 1937 at an end-of-season complimentary dinner to players of the Terang Football Club, a representative who proposed a toast to the Hampden Football League stated that the committee 'was worthy of admiration for the standard of its football and for the way it carried out its programme … one has only to sit amongst them to recognise their gentlemanly qualities'.[217] For the Hampden Football League, such views from the public were considered among the highest commendation to be received at an administrative level.

In striving to be seen as an exemplary body of harmonious and congenial management the league regularly celebrated such sentiments. This was especially evident in regards to the Hampden League in their opening years of competition when the league president made reference to 'the splendid harmony that prevailed among delegates, the players, and the followers of the various clubs' which in turn contributed to the simple, sporting, and gentlemanly coordination of the league.[218] Indeed, on one occasion the president went so far as to say that the league committee 'were a very happy family' and that it was this fact 'that enabled them to handle the affairs of the league satisfactorily'.[219] The press was unreserved in

[217] 'Facilities for Younger Footballers', *Terang Express*, 14 September 1937, p. 8.
[218] 'Hampden Football League', *Terang Express*, 14 October 1932, p. 1.
[219] 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 28 September 1937, p. 4.

the belief that maintaining harmonious relations within and between leagues from the district was a desirable trait of the game's organisation in this rural setting.[220]

Relations between major country leagues such as the Hampden Football League and nearby junior (lower standard) country leagues such as the Camperdown District Football League were also crucial to the game's development, prosperity, and social image in the region.[221] As one junior official noted in 1934, 'a most pleasing factor was the harmony that existed between the senior and junior clubs, a factor not always noticeable in some districts'.[222] In this respect the senior leagues did not want to appear to be hindering junior clubs by inducing their best players with the 'bait' of playing 'higher grade football'.[223] If such an opinion of the senior league was perpetuated with any regularity throughout the local press, it would hinder the image of the game's local administrators. In the words of leading Camperdown Junior Football Club official Mr Harrison, for 'a senior club to indiscreetly take juniors away from their own teams when they had an important game in view, is not beneficial and is not right'.[224] On this occasion Harrison was 'thankful to say that this had not been the case here'.[225] Indeed, when junior clubs allowed their players clearance to a higher grade of local football the senior clubs offered cordial appreciation for their sacrificial cooperation.

This highlighted the junior clubs as both aiding the progress of individual players while also contributing to the overall standard of football in the region. In 1938, a representative from

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220 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 3 April 1930, p. 5.

221 The term junior league does not refer to the age of players, but rather the status of the league. The majority of country football leagues across Victoria during this period were affiliated with the Victorian Country Football League. For example, in 1937, the VCFL was represented by 13 major leagues across the state. They were Ballarat, Bendigo, Central Gippsland, Hampden, Gippsland, Goulbourn Valley, Mornington, North Eastern, Murray Border, North Central, Riverina, Western, and Wimmera. Junior leagues refer to smaller district league competitions that were affiliated with the VCFL via their nearest major league. For example, the Hampden Football League was the major league of south west Victoria and the Camperdown District Football League was a junior league affiliated with them. Victorian Country Football League, 'Minutes Victorian Country Football League Annual Meeting', *Victorian Country Football League Minutes 26th July 1927 to 9th February 1958*, Harrison House: Melbourne, 16 April 1937.

222 'Camperdown Football Club Dinner', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 6 October 1934, p. 4.

223 'Victorian Country League. Western Area', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 22 May 1936, p. 3.

224 'Camperdown Football Club Dinner', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 6 October 1934, p. 4.

225 'Camperdown Football Club Dinner', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 6 October 1934, p. 4.

a neighbouring junior competition, the Mount Noorat Football League, was most pleased to respond to a toast offered to them at the Terang Football Club's end-of-season dinner, noting that 'he was glad that so many players going from his league had made good in better company'.[226] A sense of pride associated with players 'making good' in a higher league and promoting the value of the Mount Noorat Football League justified the sacrifice and encouraged congenial relations with the respective major league. However, when these relations were strained either through debates regarding player clearances or if the senior clubs were ever criticised for a lack of support or concern for their closely linked junior clubs, it resembled the tensions, disconnect, and hierarchy that existed between the city and country clubs. This image cast a complicating shadow over the imagined idyllic nature of the game locally. As an example, the Mortlake Seconds Football Club, essentially the main feeder club for the Mortlake Football Club, was mystified that patronage at their matches was lacking given that 'it is from the junior ranks that the senior club requisition their players from year to year. For that fact alone the juniors are deserving of encouragement and financial help'.[227] While the major country leagues strove to be the best in the state, junior leagues took credit for feeding these leagues with their talented players. Again, this was similar to the overarching relationship between city and major country leagues, for they felt they were supplying the VFL and VFA with their best and receiving very little in compensation.

In a similar vein, but with respect to the players, it was how they played the game that was most important for the reputation of the club as opposed to simply just winning games. A supporter of the Terang team stated at a club function, 'as one who had experienced the exultation of having played the game, the Terang team had given its supporters and all followers of the game great pleasure by the hard and fair manner in which it had played'.[228]

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226 'Football', *Terang Express*, 4 October 1938, p. 1.
227 'Caramut Association', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 31 May 1939, p. 1.
228 'Facilities for Younger Footballers', *Terang Express*, 14 September 1937, p. 8.

While supporters acknowledged and celebrated the 'hard and fair manner' in which the Terang side played, it was interesting to note that at the same function the Hampden Football League vice-president Mr D.E. Trickett was more enthused by the positive financial position the club had established, as well as the team's effort in reaching the preliminary final for the fourth successive season.[229] The business-like, competitive side of the league administration drove the importance of finances and results, rather than playing the game for the game's sake. Within this one evening there was displayed a variety of contested notions as to what constituted a 'successful' season. The managerial perspective from the Hampden League placed value on the business-oriented economics of the club as well as their win-loss ratio, while the internal club perspective was content with the fact that their men had played in a spirit that exemplified ideal gentlemanly conduct.

It was the latter of these contested narratives which the local newspapers perpetuated through football reports of the period and which they projected to broader audiences when the opportunity presented itself. To verify this internal view of the local country football scene the projection of a solidified, uniform, and 'gentlemanly' football landscape required exposure to competition external to their own community with which they could be measured and compared.

**Complicating the Wholesome Identity of Football in South West Victoria**

Given the opportunity, rural football competitions such as those in the south west of Victoria were eager to display their football credentials to an external imaginary grandstand. From Hampden Football League's inaugural season there was an earnest sense that they wanted to play an important role in the development of the game as a 'powerful, sportsmanlike body'.[230]

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229 'Facilities for Younger Footballers', *Terang Express*, 14 September 1937, p. 8.
230 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 3 April 1930, p. 5.

By the end of the 1930s the Hampden Football League had been elevated to the status of a major league of the Victorian Country Football League and according to their president despite the fact 'that the Hampden League had only been in existence ten years … it now occupied a most important position in the administration of country football'.[231]

This rise to prominence was no accident. There was a clear agenda at play early in the Hampden Football League's formation in which it sought to extend its influence beyond the boundaries of its rural community, and show off their football prowess to, and gain recognition from, other regions of the state. In 1930 the Hampden Football League inaugurated an annual bye round in which, rather than play and attend local football games, footballers and patrons were encouraged to board a specially organised train from the district to a VFL match played in Geelong. Under the purported rationale that 'there is such a lot that players can learn from observation and as a result of the trip the public will surely see a better standard of football than we have seen this season' patrons and players from rural south west Victoria were encouraged to see the game as it was being played under elite conditions.[232] Such a notion acknowledged that the VFL was the strongest competition in the state and that the style of football played in this competition was the pinnacle of the sport against which the Hampden Football League should be measured.

These excursions were also often coupled with an interleague game. The 1930 trip to Geelong saw a Hampden Football League representative team play a curtain raiser to the VFL match against a combined team representing the Geelong West Football League. The venture to play against another competition provided a unique opportunity to directly measure the south west Victorian talent on an inter-regional scale, and simultaneously be viewed by an audience external to their own community – a larger grandstand of real and imagined spectators.[233] The

231 'Football Pennant Unfurled', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 9 May 1939, p. 2.
232 'Coming Football Trip', *Terang Express*, 18 July 1930, p. 8.
233 Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand', p. 13.

Hampden side triumphed in the match, but in reporting on the day's events, the *Terang Express* prioritised the congenial relations that were observed between the players of the Hampden Football League representative team and respective administrators noting that it was 'a pleasing sight to see so many players representative of the four Hampden League teams, so socially united'.[234] That the train down to Geelong was 'well filled' and easily met the required quota set by the train services was proof enough for reporters to consider the venture a rousing success which 'would do a great deal of good for football in our district'.[235]

Through trips such as these, a number of cultural values could be tested and measured that supported both professional and amateur narratives. The 'gentlemanly' conduct of the players and administrators to engage socially with each other contributed to the idea that the league supported a 'sporting' collective of people. The papers were equally humbled by the on-field success of the league. By defeating another region, the league improved its football standing and effectively enhanced the reputation of the region and towns represented to an external audience. The spirit of play in addition to the outcomes of such matches were celebrated with a sense that through more ventures such as these, where players and patrons alike had an opportunity to observe VFL matches, the brand of football played back home would also improve. But what was good for the VFL was not always necessarily beneficial to the country competitions.

From the rural perspective, it was understood that the elite competitions in the city played a higher standard of football, and this was a major justification for their influence over the practical elements of the game's development. A practical example of the VFL's control during the interwar period was observed through the evolving re-interpretations of the 'holding rule' that were introduced and enforced state-wide early in the 1930s.[236] In particular, during

234 'Excursion to Geelong' *Terang Express*, 29 July 1930, p. 4.
235 'Excursion to Geelong' *Terang Express*, 29 July 1930, p. 4.
236 'Holding the Ball Rule', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 6 May 1930, p. 5.

the first half of the 1930 Hampden Football League season the backlash from the local press that opposed the adoption of the latest version of the rule highlighted the lack of power country organisations had in influencing the practical aspects of how the game should be played. The impact it had on the game locally was the major concern of this forced adoption. The *Camperdown Chronicle* noted that 'it is noticeable that the football has deteriorated considerably from last year's standard, mainly through the introduction of the new [holding the ball] rule, which so far, has succeeded only in baffling the players'.[237]

The opinion of country leagues on such matters counted for little, and further evoked tensions of an urban-rural divide in the game. This sentiment was evinced further when later that season in July 1930, after trialling the newest version of the 'holding rule' for the first half of the year, the VFL moved for its immediate repeal.[238] In south west Victoria, where the new interpretation of the rule had been criticised since its introduction:

> The return to the old rule proved highly popular with both players and spectators, and the game, although played in bad conditions, was a better display than has been staged on some fine days under the new rule.[239]

But that the reversion to the former rule only occurred at the will of the VFL highlighted the hierarchy at play in football across state. Like the ideological elements that established 'countrymindedness', the opinion of country leagues felt undervalued, and underrepresented. Country football was not played at the same standard as the elite metropolitan competitions and for this reason they had little influence on the game's development. But what they lacked in talent they compensated with the belief that they maintained the virtuous spirit of the game.

From the perspective of the country leagues, the VFL had lost much of its connection to amateur values and as such their dominant mentality had implications for rural football that went beyond the laws of the game. At a Cobden Football Club dinner, Reverend H. Abbott

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237 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 June 1930, p. 4.
238 Observer, 'Football – The Holding Law', *Age*, 19 July 1930, p. 16.
239 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 5 August 1930, p. 5.

articulated such a concern, declaring that 'the VFL had too much say in country football, and until there was equal representation, injustice to country football would go on'.[240] The VFL was seen to be contributing to an overarching denigration of the game by placing too much value on results rather than the way in which the game was played. As has been mentioned earlier, victory was a motivator for football clubs in the rural sector, but as seen here when compared to the city, this competitive edge was not quite so sharp, and the means to achieve such victories were not framed with the same economic or business-like motivations prominent in the city competitions.

Improving the spectacle of the game was a driving motivator for the VFL as they sought to financially benefit from and extend the game's popularity. The VFL's decision to become openly professional in 1911 can be seen as a by-product of this pursuit for increasing the appeal of the game.[241] Football at the elite metropolitan level therefore became a destination for talented players from all across the state. But paying players often meant that the balance of competition would be weighted unfavourably to the clubs with the most resources. To control the payment of players and maintain competition balance, the VFL in 1930 introduced the Coulter Law which set a limit on the maximum amount a player could be paid per match, originally set at £3.[242] Authorised player payments were not yet a feature of country football leagues at this time. However, as the premiership tally for the first eleven seasons of the Hampden Football League show, the competition was able to maintain a relatively natural balance without player payments with each of the six clubs winning at least one premiership during the period.[243]

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240 'Club Dinner Great Success', *Cobden Times*, 16 October 1930, p. 3. Reverend H. Abbott was at the time Vice President of the Camperdown District Football League and President of the Cobden Junior Football Club.

241 Joel, Turner and Hutchinson, '"Playing Dead" and Killing Off Amateurism', pp. 173-195.

242 Booth, 'Labour Market Intervention, Revenue Sharing and Competitive Balance in the Victorian Football League, 1897-1998'.

243 The premiership winners for each year were as follows: 1930 Cobden; 1931 Mortlake; 1932 Terang; 1933 Cobden; 1934 Terang; 1935 Warrnambool; 1936 Mortlake; 1937 Warrnambool; 1938 Camperdown; 1939 Warrnambool; and 1940 South Warrnambool.

Players in rural centres were encouraged to play for the love of the game rather than financial incentives, and at times there were scenarios where players were actively discouraged from sacrificing time from work in lieu of football commitments. This sentiment was expressed in 1934 when Roy Northeast, the Terang Football Club captain, had to close his business early to run training sessions for the team, which potentially lost him business throughout the course of the season. Ahead of the 1935 season the Terang Football Club committee, although appreciative of this sacrifice, 'did not feel justified in asking him to take this risk again, as no player is justified in jeopardising his business for football'.[244] The only financial assistance rendered to country football club players was compensation to pay for relief milkers when footballers were unable to do so, and meals or dinners, and this type of compensation became less frequent in the depression years as clubs attempted to cut costs and maintain a credit balance.[245] While these compensations went against a strict form of amateurism, they were socially accepted as these players were seen to be playing for the enjoyment of the game, not remuneration. It was this constructed form of amateurism that existed within the local leagues which the press continually advocated.

While the majority of country league footballers were amateurs, there was an exception to the rule at this time whereby playing coaches were eligible to receive payments for their services. The Coulter Law which was enforced in the VFL meant that metropolitan players could be tempted to apply for country coaching jobs where payment restrictions did not exist. While the Coulter Law was in place it was common for paid country coaches to be offered twice or sometimes three times more than if they played in the city. This anomaly added an unusual dynamic to the city-country football relationship as it was one of the few bargaining chips that country clubs could employ to enhance the quality of football in their respective

244 'Notes from the Clubs', *Terang Express*, 3 May 1935, p. 8.
245 'Terang Football Club', *Terang Express*, 11 February 1938, p. 8.

region. However, the VFL maintained a controlling position in regard to the transfer and clearance of players throughout the state. Towards the end of the 1930s, delegates of the Hampden Football League committee grew increasingly critical of the VFL's 'dominant' attitude towards the transfer and recruitment of country-based players to city clubs, and their frequent refusal to permit city players to transfer to country regions.[246]

The local press indicated that the attitude and actions of the VFL was 'not in the best interests of football' and that the metro-centric governance of the game was domineering and selfish. Not only were they supposedly 'poaching' country players, but they often made it very difficult for country clubs to get these players back regardless of whether or not their talents were being utilised by the respective metropolitan club which had recruited them.[247] The lack of equity in the relationship between city and country clubs was most perplexing for the local press to comprehend and resulted in calls for resistance to the dominant city competitions. When news reached south west Victoria that a country club in the Bendigo region had carried a resolution intended to quell the 'poaching' of players to the city, the *Camperdown Chronicle* celebrated the move and stressed that 'similar drastic action by other country clubs, in the Hampden League and elsewhere, is imperative'.[248] This point was further impressed upon the local public when a player, Leo Lafranchi, from the VFA club Coburg, was refused a clearance to coach the Terang team for the 1939 season.[249] The *Camperdown Chronicle*, irate with the unsporting nature of the decision, let fly stating that 'the frequency with which city club's rebuff country clubs in this respect makes one wonder why country bodies should be so ready to clear their best men to league and association clubs'.[250] While country leagues employed some professionalised protocols and practices there was an internalised understanding that

246 'Football', *Terang Express*, 28 April 1939, p. 8.
247 'To-day's Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 10 June 1939, p. 1.
248 'To-day's Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 10 June 1939, p. 1.
249 'Lafranchi Refused Clearance', *Weekly Times*, 1 July 1939, p. 63.
250 'Football Spotlights, *Camperdown Chronicle*, 29 June 1939, p. 1.

these measures were far less aggressive than the attitudes of their city counterparts. It was through sentiments such as this that country football presented itself to the imaginary grandstand of the state-wide football community as a morally superior and wholesome sporting entity that was being mistreated by an overbearing and corrupt metro-centric governing power.

**Conclusion**

In his tall tales, Mr Tibbles presented an image of the local football scene that contradicted the sense of wholesomeness that the general press preserved. He detailed the seedier side of the game and did not hold back in his descriptions:

> the last quarter do start, and lord, never have I heard such niggardly barrackers and never have I met so many who look through but the one eye; verily the gate keeper should only charge them half price as they see but half the game.[251]

However, with humour at the core of Mr Tibbles' antiquated style of writing, the events he wrote about and the behaviours he witnessed were not read as representative of the wholesome country football environment. The more common generic football related articles disseminated by the local press captured the idealistic features of the game that were based on a constructed form of amateurism and an attitude of 'countrymindedness' that favoured congeniality over aggressive competitiveness. Football in the country was internally perceived as a game modelled with ideals of amateurism and untainted by the complications of money and business. Such issues were recognised as an issue of the professional city competitions who controlled and governed the sport state-wide. Governance which favoured the city competitions often raised the ire of country football administrators and their followers. The social division of country and city football organisations mimicked the urban-rural divide observed throughout Australia during the early twentieth century. There had been a notable drift of country folk to

[251] 'Mr. Tibbles at the Football', *Cobden Times*, 24 June 1931, p. 2

the city during this period and there were concerns that should this trend continue that the future health of the nation was at risk. The country was revered as a domain that produced morally and physically healthy Australians while the city was presented as a corrupted space that threatened to tarnish the development of the white Australian race.

Football reproduced tensions that existed between the city and country with rural perspectives highlighting their moral superiority as their form of the game was not misled by business-oriented motives and revenue. However, a detailed analysis of the press from south west Victoria revealed that while the local form of the game projected a wholesome identity, it was mostly through their comparison to the elite professional metropolitan competitions where they could highlight their moral and 'gentlemanly' proclivities. The major issue that threatened the game was the implications aroused by money. Money dominated the major metropolitan leagues, forcing their professionalisation, a trend which country clubs were keen to avoid. The city competitions due to their superior standard of play were influential in the game's evolution in not only the city but also the country. Inevitably, professional practises such as paid coaches, compensating players for missed work, and revenue seeking attitudes leaked into the country form of the game.

By no means did rural football leagues in south west Victoria believe that they were conducted under purely amateur conditions. They functioned with a business-oriented organisation similar to the professional leagues, but as players were not officially paid for their services the rural version of the game remained closer to the traditional amateur origins of the game and hence projected itself as culturally and morally superior to its city counterparts. This image, which was presented to both internal and external grandstands, was complicated by growing implications that revenue-seeking behaviour was influencing decision-making processes. To counteract such dissolute motives, the narrative of congenial cooperation and

friendship between players and administrators was disseminated and celebrated by the local press with income essentially listed as a beneficial by-product of harmony.

That metropolitan clubs were ‘poaching’ players from country clubs propelled the idea that the metro-centric governance of the game was doing little to aid the games’ grassroots development. These tensions facilitated a kind of ‘countrymindedness’ in country Victorian football with the recognition that they were underrepresented and overlooked in regard to important game changing conversations. The metro-centric control of the game was thus considered corrupt and unfair as a result of its business-oriented approach. By comparison, the ruralised perception of country football was that it was devoid of the over competitive nastiness that professionalism had conjured up in the elite city leagues. It is the perpetuation of such positivist narratives throughout rural football settings that during and since this period have contributed to the cultural imagery that sustains the wholesome identity of football in the country. Yet, as this close reading of the local press has shown, the image was far more complex than was regularly articulated.

# Chapter Three

## 'No Pangs of Conscience': Nostalgia, Race, Masculinity, and the Emergence of Australian Rules Football in Rural South West Victoria

> Rules as we know them were unknown, but the main consideration was, by any means to stop your opponent from getting the ball if you could not get it yourself, and when the game was over, if your side won, to ask him to come over to the pub and have a drink. Gentlemen were gentlemen in those days, and he generally reciprocated.[252]
>
> *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

### Introduction

In 1935 a writer with the pen-name 'Old Eaglehawk' added to the interwar chorus of rural Australians reflecting nostalgically about the past.[253] Amidst a world that appeared to be transforming too rapidly, many people turned to memories of seemingly more stable times: some wrote glowingly of the former innocent beauty of the countryside, others of the industrious gardening of old ladies, and the social life of rural communities.[254] In south west Victoria, newspapers frequently told stories of how Australian Rules football used to be played with writers like 'Old Player', R.B. Prouse, and 'Wanderer' reminiscing fondly about their favourite players from bygone eras.[255] 'Old Eaglehawk's' yarns also focussed on Australian Rules football, but like the wistful interwar writers chronicled by Marc Brodie, 'Old

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252 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

253 A shortened version of this chapter has been published as a journal article. See Nicholas T.S. Marshall and Matthew Klugman, '"No Pangs of Conscience": Nostalgia, Race, Masculinity, and the Emergence of Australian Rules Football in Rural South West Victoria', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 36, no. 6, 2019, pp. 496-512 .

254 Marc Brodie, 'The Politics of Rural Nostalgia Between the Wars', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University Press, 2005, pp. 9.1-9.13.

255 See for example, Old Player, 'Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 June 1920, p. 4; R.B. Prouse, 'Football – Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 June 1920, p. 3; and The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5.

Eaglehawk' wanted to link his topic to the spirit of the early pioneers of country Australia.[256] Published in a local newspaper, the *Mortlake Dispatch*, 'Old Eaglehawk's' recollections were 'read with wide interest and intense pleasure'.[257] Indeed, so popular were these beguiling tales that three years later revised versions were published by another local paper, the *Terang Express*.[258] Although 'Old Eaglehawk's' accounts of the emergence of football in south west Victoria are not necessarily factual accounts, the connections they make to narratives of Australian pioneers remain of interest both for what they celebrate and for what they omit. In particular, they allow for an examination of how pioneer narratives could shape the circulation of Australian sporting pasts in the present.[259]

By the time Australia was federated in 1901, the pioneering bushman and 'home-grown Australian sportsmen' were already being celebrated as national heroes.[260] The pioneering bushmen were lauded in art, literature, and poetry for taming Australia's wild landscapes and helping bring economic prosperity for all.[261] Sportsmen were similarly extolled for showing that white men born in Australia were equal, if not better than the men born in Britain.[262] Yet

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256 Brodie, 'The Politics of Rural Nostalgia Between the Wars', pp. 9.1-9.13.

257 Ed. "D", '(To be continued)', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 9 August 1935, p. 3. Through descriptors in the various articles attributed to 'Old Eaglehawk' it was possible to discern that the correspondent was writing from the perspective of a non-indigenous Australian male of at least 50 years of age, if not reasonably older. This is evinced by references he makes to his 'boyhood days', and personal reflections referring to Indigenous Australians as 'they' and 'them' that date back to the 1880s. While 'Old Eaglehawk' occasionally mentioned other sports, the predominant focus of his articles was Australian Rules football. See: The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3; and The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 13 May 1938, p. 8.

258 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football In Its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1938, p. 8; The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football In Its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 13 May 1938, p. 8; The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football In Its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 20 May 1938, p. 8; and The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football In Its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 3 June 1938, p. 8.

259 For more on the circulation of the sporting past in the present see Linda J. Borish and Murray G. Phillips, 'Sport History as Modes of Expression: Material Culture and Cultural Spaces in Sport and History', *Rethinking History*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2012, pp. 465–477.

260 Richard Cashman, 'Australian Sport and Culture before Federation', in Richard Cashman and Rob Hess (eds), *Sport, History and Australian Culture: Passionate Pursuits*, Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2011, p. 15.

261 J.B. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 7, 1978, pp. 316-337; Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Second Edition), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966; and Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, North Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.

262 W.F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1973, pp. 225–246; and W.F. Mandle, *Going it Alone: Australia's National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, Ringwood: Allen Lane, 1977, pp. 24-32.

few historians have explored the connections between Australian sport and the rural pioneers. In a notable exception, Robert Pascoe and Gerardo Papalia have argued that the development of Australian Rules football was shaped by the 'frontier wars' fought between white settlers and Indigenous Australians.[263] However, like most historians of Australian sport, Pascoe and Papalia focus on a metropolitan setting, in this case Melbourne. Indeed, while general histories of rural Australia have acknowledged that sport has played a prominent part of rural life since the late nineteenth century, regional and rural Australia has largely been neglected by historians of sport.[264]

This chapter uses 'Old Eaglehawk's' memories of local football in south west Victoria as a launching place to begin the process of studying how the powerful narratives around Australian sport and Australian pioneers have intersected. Notions of masculinity, race, civility, and violence are central to this analysis. In the early twentieth century many Australians 'saw the nation's future as vested in its rural spaces', believing that regional Australia should be filled 'with a virtuous citizenry' of white male farmers.[265] In the small rural space of south west Victoria, 'Old Eaglehawk' upheld these ideals, looking back fondly on the local pioneers and settlers noting that their influence in 'not only sport but in every form of life has created far-reaching benefits'.[266] Nevertheless, as will be shown throughout this chapter, 'Old Eaglehawk' was also troubled by the effects that the often-violent settlement of Australia had on Indigenous Australians.

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263 Robert Pascoe and Gerardo Papalia, '"A Most Manly and Amusing Game": Australian Football and the Frontier Wars', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016, pp. 270-290. For more on Australia's frontier wars see Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006; John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788-1838*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002; and Jan Critchett, *A 'Distant Field of Murder': Western District Frontiers, 1834-1848*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1990.

264 See, for example, Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia*, Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005, pp. 131-143.

265 Kate Murphy, 'The "Most Dependable Element of Any Country's Manhood": Masculinity and Rurality in the Great War and its Aftermath', *History Australia*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2008, pp. 72.1-72.20.

266 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 9 August 1935, 3.

Historical studies of the engagement of Indigenous Australians with Australian Rules football have tended to focus on the contested connections between football and the Indigenous Australian ball game known as Marn-grook, along with studies of particular Indigenous footballers.[267] One key issue has been the relationship that Tom Wills – a 'founding father' of Australian Rules football – had with the *Djab Wurrung* Aboriginal people of Western Victoria.[268] Yet as Gorman et al. note, the intersections of race and football in rural Australia remain relatively neglected.[269] Notable exceptions include Dave Nadel's examination of an Indigenous Australian football team that played in rural south west Victoria in 1923, and Roy Hay and Athas Zafiris' recent chronicle of some games played by Indigenous Australian teams before the First World War.[270] Moreover, Hay has also charted many reports of football games played by Indigenous Australians in Victoria in the late 1800s and early 1900s.[271] While the deeds of these players often received 'grudging recognition' in press reports, the Indigenous Australian players were frequently belittled by newspaper correspondents, and the games were soon forgotten.[272] While the voices and experiences of Indigenous Australian's from this period are difficult to access, the recollections of 'Old Eaglehawk', provide a rare chance to explore

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267 Barry Judd, *On the Boundary Line: Colonial Identity in Football*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008; Jim Poulter, *Marn-Grook: Original Aussie Rules*, Melbourne: J. Poulter, 2003; Greg de Moore, *Tom Wills: His Spectacular Rise and Tragic Fall*, Melbourne: Allen and Unwin, 2009; Matthew Klugman and Gary Osmond, *Black and Proud: The Story of an Iconic AFL Photo*, Sydney: NewSouth, 2013; Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: A Biography*, Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994; Sean Gorman, *Brotherboys: The Story of Jim and Phillip Krakouer*, Melbourne: Allen and Unwin, 2005; Sean Gorman, *Legends: The AFL Indigenous Team of the Century*, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011; Trevor Ruddell, 'The Marn-Grook Story: A Documentary History of Aboriginal Ballgames in South-Eastern Australia', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2015, pp. 19-37; Trevor Ruddell, 'Albert "Pompey" Austin: The First Aborigine to Play Senior Football', in Peter Burke and June Senyard (eds), *Behind the Play: Football in Australia*, Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 2008, pp. 89-105; and more broadly see Colin Tatz, *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995.

268 See Judd, *On the Boundary Line*, pp. 1-76; and de Moore, *Tom Wills*, pp. 17-18.

269 Sean Gorman, Barry Judd, Keir Reeves, Gary Osmond, Matthew Klugman and Gavan McCarthy, 'Aboriginal Rules: The Black History of Australian Football', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 16, 2015, pp. 1947-1962.

270 Dave Nadel, 'Aborigines and Australian Football: The Rise and Fall of the Purnim Bears', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1993, pp. 47-63; and Roy Hay and Athas Zafiris, 'Australian Football's Indigenous History', *Meanjin*, vol. 76, no. 3, 2017, pp. 196–202.

271 Roy Hay, *Aboriginal People and Australian Football in the Nineteenth Century: They Did Not Come from Nowhere*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

272 Hay, *Aboriginal People and Australian Football in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 53.

memories of Indigenous Australians participating in such encounters. In examining the stories of these encounters, this chapter is also following the call of Gorman et al. for histories of Australian Rules football that 'incorporate Indigenous Australian stories' which have been suppressed or elided completely.[273] As Darren Godwell has argued, a lack of critical engagement 'has enabled assumptions about the Indigenous experiences in sport to go unevaluated' and therefore undervalued.[274]

The aim in this chapter is not to provide a substantive history of the encounters on the football field between rural pioneers and Indigenous Australian men in the south west of Victoria, but rather to begin the process of exploring them. 'Old Eaglehawk' constructed narratives focussed primarily on local football heritage, but the implicit connections between pioneers and Indigenous Australians that they illuminate make his memories invaluable as a starting point for historical examination. As Stephen Townsend, Murray Phillips, and Gary Osmond have noted in their exploration of social memory, the past 'is not remembered as it was but rather as a version of history that is curated in a way that best serves the cultural requirements of people in the present'.[275] It is important then to read 'Old Eaglehawk's' memories as not simply a reconstruction of the past, but as configurations of the past shaped by the concurrent context of his social surrounds. Taking this into account, it is possible to recognise that his memories speak to more than just the origins of football in south west Victoria, but to social issues from both the late colonial and interwar periods in rural Australian settings more broadly.

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273 Gorman et al., 'Aboriginal Rules'.

274 Darren Godwell, 'Playing the Game: Is Sport as Good for Race Relations as We'd Like to Think?', *Australian Aboriginal Studies,* nos 1-2, 2000, pp. 12-19.

275 Stephen Townsend, Murray G. Phillips, and Gary Osmond, 'Remembering the Rejection of Muhammad Ali: Identity, Civil Rights and Social Memory', *Sport in History,* vol. 38, no. 3, 2018, pp. 267-288.

**Tracking the Memory of 'Old Eaglehawk'**

To foreground the early years of football in rural south west Victoria, 'Old Eaglehawk' began his commentary from the end of the Ballarat and Bendigo gold rushes of the 1850s. It was at this time that the region became one of many attractive locations across Victoria for new settlers and selectors to take up plots of land under the Duffy Land Act of 1862.[276] Charles Gavan Duffy, who was responsible for the act, indicated that a driving motivation for opening up lands across the colony was in part to provide a 'healthy and pleasant pursuit' at the end of the gold rush for former diggers willing to become farmers.[277] In her classic history, *Men of Yesterday*, Margaret Kiddle has provided detailed insight into the impact of the Duffy Land Act and the settlement of squatters prior to its enactment in south west Victoria.[278] However, like many Australian historians, Kiddle was largely silent on the dispossession of Indigenous Australians from their land which enabled the 'healthy and pleasant pursuit' of settler life, simply detailing 'conflict between Aborigines and Europeans as a natural part of the pioneering experience'.[279]

South west Victoria was a site of prodigious wool production in the mid-nineteenth century and by the late nineteenth century it had become prominent dairy country as well.[280] Opportunities for employment in the district increased significantly in the late 1870s as agriculture in the region thrived.[281] Crafting an initially plain pastoral account of the region's

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276 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3. In these articles, Old Eaglehawk incorrectly stated that the so called Duffy Act came into effect in 1864.

277 Charles Gavan Duffy as cited in Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria 1834-1890*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 233.

278 Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, pp. 233-262. Kiddle refers to these post-gold rush settlers that took up relatively small plots of agricultural and pastoral land via these parliamentary acts as 'selectors' as opposed to the earlier larger landholding settlers and pioneers of the district which she referred to as 'squatters'.

279 Critchett, *'A Distant Field of Murder'*, p. 2 and 120.

280 Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 362. South west Victoria saw significant growth in the dairy industry across the district after the 1890s, for further details see Norman Godbold, *Victoria, Cream of the Country: A History of Victorian Dairying*, Hawthorn: Dairy Industry Association of Australia, 1989, pp. 36-39; and Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace: A Tapestry of Mortlake Shire*, Mortlake: Shire of Mortlake, 1985, pp. 54-56.

281 Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 468.

past, 'Old Eaglehawk' noted that the former gold diggers who made the transition to become settlers and selectors 'led the simple life and bred large families of the same type as themselves'.[282]

As 'Old Eaglehawk' told it, an apparent consequence of the population growth in the district was the growing number of young men who were 'naturally of a virile nature' and who, 'as they grew to manhood, required some kind of sport which would keep their virile proclivities as transmitted to them by their parents, under normal control'.[283] These young 'virile' Australian-born (white) men offered a sense of the nation's burgeoning potential as it was gradually shedding the British (and more global) perception that Australia was just 'a little boy'.[284] As such, they represented a rural depiction of the ideal (white) 'Coming Man', whom many commentators in the late 1800s hoped would advance the nation and the 'Australian race'.[285] At the same time, the Australian bushman was beginning to be lionised as a figure of national identity through the works of writers such as Henry Lawson and A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson and painters like Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin.[286] Above all else these settlers and pioneers in the rural regions of Australia were admired for their embodiment of idealistic qualities much favoured by white Australian society such as, 'independence, manliness' and 'a fondness for sport'.[287]

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282 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3. Kiddle also notes that corruption in the various Land Acts of the 1860s and 1870s prevented many would-be selectors from settling land that was offered by the government, but there were some who did manage to establish themselves through land selection schemes, see Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, pp. 233-262.

283 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

284 K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 16-18.

285 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 72-75. 'Coming Man' was a term – much like the national 'type' – which was used to identify the model citizen that represented the best in Australian values and which were idealised to uphold, propagate and maintain the Australian 'race', although there was vast debate about what this 'Coming Man' looked like exactly.

286 Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity*, Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2007, pp. 33-34, 182-185. See also White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 85-109; Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Third Edition), Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 130-133; Ward, *The Australian Legend*, pp. 180-206; and for a critique of Ward's arguments in particular see Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend'.

287 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 76-77.

'Old Eaglehawk' intimated that such settler and pioneer types were manly heroes of south west Victoria during the late colonial period and that their leadership in 'every form of life has created far reaching benefits. It is a pity that such men should ever die'.[288] 'Old Eaglehawk' noted that one 'form of life' that these esteemed pioneers supported was football's establishment in the district. Thus, as the region's most revered gentlemen endorsed the game, 'Old Eaglehawk' presented a version of the now familiar refrain that sport, in this case football, connected young men with favoured qualities such as 'fair play, stoicism, leadership, determination and discipline', as Martin Crotty has put it.[289] But what might have drawn 'Old Eaglehawk' to publish these recollections of the late 1800s in the 1930s?

A core element of 'Old Eaglehawk's' articles was a yearning for a past that he remembered as less complicated than the present. In sharing his memories of pre-war football from the south west of Victoria in the 1930s, 'Old Eaglehawk' provided a 'nostalgic creation' of the game's early development in the region. Fred Davis, through his exploration of the sociology of nostalgia, has argued that a primary function of nostalgia is 'constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing' individual and/or collective identities.[290] In a sense, these types of whimsical narratives are 'associated with the impulse to conserve and recover' aspects of the past, and reintroduce them into to a socially and culturally transitioning present.[291] Like the writers studied by Brodie, 'Old Eaglehawk' was seeking to preserve a valuable characteristic of the pioneering era that seemed threatened by the turmoil of the 1930s.[292]

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288 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 9 August 1935, p. 3.

289 Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001, p. 73. For similar narratives that discuss sport based developments of colonial masculinity in the antipodes see Jock Phillips, 'The Hard Man: Rugby and Male Identity in New Zealand, in John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (eds), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London: Frank Cass, 1996, pp. 70-90.

290 Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, New York: Free Press, 1979, p. 31.

291 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, p. 116. See also Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp. 34-37.

292 Brodie, 'The Politics of Rural Nostalgia Between the Wars', pp. 9.1-9.13.

Nostalgia can often be drawn out through a sense of loss.[293] 'Old Eaglehawk' indicated that the type of football that used to be played and the type of men who played it were no longer present in the 1930s. His reflections gave the sense that the 'present' day (1930s) form of the game in the district had, in particular, lost some of its manly qualities with which he affiliated his narrations. He implored in one article, 'you footballers of the present day just listen to this and think about stamina, training and enthusiasm' as teams of the 1880s were assembled with players who played despite the fact they received 'no payment' and 'no conveniences'. What is more, 'Old Eaglehawk' believed the only enticement for these players was the 'love of a kick of the football and a friendly bout with a decent lot of opponents in congenial surroundings'.[294] Although it was acknowledged that he was somewhat of a 'facile writer', there was a sense in the assertions made by 'Old Eaglehawk' that as a collective, local footballers of the 1930s were better off than, and therefore not equal to, their manly forebears in the local community.[295]

In addition to this sense of loss was the implications of historical events such as war and depression which had, and was having, profound social impacts on the local community during the 1930s. Such events can lead to what Davis calls a 'nostalgic reaction', a yearning for the past prompted by the unsettled state of the present.[296] In relation to 'Old Eaglehawk's' reflections that revolved around football memories of the late nineteenth century, he portrayed a snapshot of the game that was wrapped up in an era that was socially remembered as more stable. Therefore, these memories would have likely had a greater resonance with the broader

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293 Nadia Atia and Jeremy Davies, 'Nostalgia and the Shapes of History', *Memory Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2010, pp. 181-186.

294 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Early Football Days', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1935, p. 4.

295 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3. This sentiment was also reflected in the article written by 'Old Player' who stated 'certainly there is more inducement and encouragement to the present day [1920s] players, with the crowds of supporters, up-to-date training and coaching fares and expenses to players when travelling away from home, all of which help to bring together a better team than we could in those early days [1890s-1900s], when we had to pay our own fares, and drive in open drays to our destination'. Old Player, 'Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 June 1920, p. 4.

296 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, pp. 102-103.

public as the past was surrounded by a social context which would have also been remembered more fondly than the present.

For Australia, the interwar period saw a powerful form of remembrance which drew political attention towards the country areas of the nation.[297] In the rural setting, conservative ideals of 'tradition and stability' were iconic qualities of Australian pioneers of the bush, for which they were celebrated.[298] However, as the push for modernity crept into the national psyche after the First World War, 'tradition and stability' were threatened by the insecure economic circumstances of the depression which had serious consequences in both rural and urban environments.[299] In a specific reflection of the local football scene, 'Old Eaglehawk' bemoaned the decline in traditional football niceties throughout the district that were being lost in the modern form of the game. As an example, 'Old Eaglehawk' expressed much disappointment that customary formalities such as the half-time interval that were once upon a time frequently observed at local football matches during the late nineteenth century had almost completely faded from existence. He stated:

> It seems a pity that this old homely style of treating the visitors has really disappeared – it is quite a treat to attend a match … where the old customs still prevail and the interval at half time is spent in talking with old and new friends over that friendly cup of tea which does not create arguments.[300]

Acknowledging an apparent social transition in the game, 'Old Eaglehawk' looked to preserve the idea that football in the south west of Victoria was a prominent site where ideals of manliness and pioneer spirit were readily observed. Indeed, his memories provided a

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297 Brodie, 'The Politics of Rural Nostalgia Between the Wars', pp. 9.1-9.13.
298 Brodie, 'The Politics of Rural Nostalgia Between the Wars', pp. 9.1-9.13.
299 A brief account of the Great Depression's impact on rural towns in south west Victoria can be found in Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 79-81. For a detailed analysis of the economic issues associated with the Great Depression see C.B. Schedvin, *Australia and The Great Depression*, South Melbourne: Sydney University Press, 1970. For insights into real life experiences of people during the Great Depression and issues of the interwar period in Australia see Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Portrait of an Australian Working-Class Community*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1988.
300 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 9 August 1935, p. 3.

noteworthy point of entry into the game's social and cultural prominence throughout the district prior to World War I, and highlighted aspects of the game which led to its continued popularity through the 1930s and beyond.

The underlying theme of preservation that was threaded throughout 'Old Eaglehawk's' nostalgic narratives advertently promoted football as a socially and culturally significant pastime. 'Old Eaglehawk' instilled the sense that the local form of the game was raised on ideals synonymous with pioneer masculinity. A sense of apprehension that these foundations were being threatened appeared to prompt his reflections. In particular 'Old Eaglehawk's' memories focussed on the men whose masculinity he wanted to preserve – pioneers, squatters, and bushmen. Yet, his articles also alluded to more troubling aspects of pioneering men.

**Nostalgia's Secrets**

Davis has argued that:

> the proclivity to cultivate appreciative attitudes towards former selves is closely related to nostalgia's … tendency to eliminate from memory or, at minimum, severely mute the unpleasant, the unhappy, the abrasive, and … those lurking shadows of former selves about which we feel shame, guilt, or humiliation.[301]

In the case of 'Old Eaglehawk', although he appeared to describe the district's late colonial past as a prelapsarian time, innocent and unspoilt, it was not without its own troubling and complex history. Historically, pioneers, squatters, and bushmen were celebrated for their contribution to the district's – and the nation's – growth, but they also contributed to regimes of Indigenous Australian dispossession, an aspect of Australia's pioneering heritage that has until recently remained relatively overlooked by historians. As 'Old Eaglehawk's' articles illuminated connections between pioneers and football in the district they 'unmuted' some localised examples of dispossession, utilising memories of a local All-Indigenous football team

[301] Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, p. 37.

called the 'Framlingham Blacks' to foreground his commentary.[302] 'Old Eaglehawk' noted that imposing various virtues and cultural activities of white Australia on the land had had a significant impact on 'the original occupier of the country', Indigenous Australians.[303] In his correspondence 'Old Eaglehawk' articulated a conflict of conscience in European settlement's attempt at inoculating Indigenous Australians with white culture. As an example in one of his articles he considered the following:

> We took his [Indigenous Australian peoples'] country, rung his possum trees, and stole the carvings from his father's tombs; and gave him in exchange for this, a blanket and the whisky of his down; then turned him out a wanderer and a wreck.[304]

These words align with an observation by Richard Waterhouse who noted that in regards to the Frontier Wars between Europeans and Indigenous Australians in the early nineteenth century that 'Australians were in no doubt that slaughter on a large scale had taken place' which had critically impacted Indigenous Australians' occupation of the land.[305] However, memories of these confrontations had been collectively repressed in white Australian culture.[306] As Nicholas Gill has outlined, the legends of the pioneer:

> draw on a highly selective recollection of the past that is not simply an outcome of colonialism but is constructed from the mythical foundations that have informed, driven and justified non-indigenous settlement in Australia and the dispossession of indigenous people.[307]

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302 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3. The Framlingham Blacks were a team which fielded predominantly Indigenous Australians. In these reflections, it was recalled that the team consisted of 14 Indigenous Australians and six white men that were called the 'white blackfellows'.

303 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

304 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

305 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, pp. 170-171. For detailed analysis of Frontier confrontations between white settlers and Indigenous Australians in the south west of Victoria see Critchett, *A 'Distant Field of Murder'*. For historical analysis of the Frontier Wars more generally across Australia see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*; and Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788-1838*.

306 See, for example, Henry Reynolds, *The Whispering in Our Hearts*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998; and W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians: An Anthropologist's View*, Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969.

307 Nicholas Gill, 'Transcending Nostalgia: Pastoralist Memory and Staking a Claim in the Land', in Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis (eds), *Dislocating the Frontier: Essaying the Mystique of the Outback*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2005, p. 80.

From these 'mythical foundations' of Australia's past, pioneers and squatters arose as the embodiment of the typical Australian, a character that was celebrated and revered until the commencement of the Great War when such men were encouraged to transform themselves into soldiers and defenders of the British Empire. During the late colonial period, aspects of manliness that were connected to white settlement were central to beliefs of Australia's future prosperity and the nation's identity more broadly.

By the turn of the twentieth century many white Australians were concerned that migrants from Asia would 'invade' Australia and precipitate the racial 'decline' of the nation.[308] While Asian settlers were feared, Waterhouse has indicated that by the early twentieth century Indigenous Australians began to find a unique place in 'nostalgic terms as a mere "dying race"', due in part to their nullified threat to the Anglo-Australian culture that had been violently quashed by European settlers in the first half of the nineteenth century.[309] 'Old Eaglehawk' seemed fully aware of the implications associated with European settlement as he stated 'to see [the district] now makes one think of what civilisation means as understood by human beings, and its ultimate end'.[310] These sentiments were featured again in a revised version of an article from 'Old Eaglehawk' published in the *Terang Express* where he offered this additional thought:

> The survival of the fittest seems to be the universal law of nature, but even if it is found impossible to preserve the aboriginals (rather late in the day as far as Victoria is concerned) it is to be hoped that the remnants of the race will be allowed to disappear from the land of their

[308] See Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, pp. 141-149, for an extended discussion of the development of 'White Australia' policies during the early twentieth century and its links to fears of invasion and racial decline.

[309] Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, p. 192. Although Indigenous Australians were no longer viewed as posing a 'threat' to the 'white' racial identity of Australia, Federal and State Governments continued to enact policies aimed at the genocide of Indigenous Australians. See, for example, Colin Tatz, 'Confronting Australian Genocide', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25, 2001, pp. 16-36.

[310] The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

> forefathers in a manner that we, as a nation called Australia, will have no pangs of conscience in the future, as to the way in which it was done.[311]

Popular ideas of eugenics and Social Darwinism such as 'survival of the fittest' were socially accepted patterns of thought in white Australian society at the time and the declining population of Indigenous Australians was viewed by many Australians as an inevitability of the nation's development and progress. The ambivalence of 'Old Eaglehawk' towards the Indigenous Australians' dispossession in the district illuminated a perception of Indigenous Australians that was held by a significant portion of the white Australian population during the 1930s.[312] As Warwick Anderson surmised, 'the march of [white] civilization had been viewed as little more than an inevitable biological process, not as a phenomenon that might be judged as good or bad'.[313] The result of this 'biological process' during the 1930s was that Indigenous Australians tended to be perceived in the white Australian psyche as 'visible yet invisible'.[314] In south west Victoria, as early as the 1880s, and certainly by the 1930s, any remnants of Indigenous Australian communities or 'camps' were scarce, isolated, and their history relatively suppressed from the thoughts of white Australians in the region.[315]

During the interwar period, it was only on rare occasions in the district that the general public was made aware of Indigenous Australians' connection to the land. These sentiments of invisibility and an accepted ambivalence towards this presumed 'dying race' in south west Victoria were succinctly captured in a *Terang Express* article written by Annie S. Evans, who

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311 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 13 May 1938, p. 8.

312 Elder, *Being Australian*, pp. 147-177. Elder has provided detailed analysis of the historical narratives discussing white Australia's national identity in relation to the dispossession of Indigenous Australians.

313 Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002, p. 194.

314 Frazer Andrewes, 'A Culture of Speed: The Dilemma of Being Modern in 1930s Australia', Doctoral Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 2003.

315 See Critchett, '*A Distant Field of Murder'*, pp. 191-192; and Jan Critchett, *Our Land Till We Die: A History of the Framlingham Aborigines*, Warrnambool: Deakin University Press, 1992.

in 1923 observed an Indigenous Australian picnic that took place in Framlingham on the banks of the Hopkins River.[316]

> The aborigines of Framlingham celebrate the festival of Foundation Day by an annual picnic, not altogether for the reason that they have much cause for thankfulness to celebrate the event that marks this holiday. But each year from far and near their kinsfolk gather on this day and renew old acquaintances, and talk of the good old camp days of the past.[317]

Although Evans appeared to acknowledge Indigenous Australians' dispossession from the land and wrote fondly of the congregational environment she experienced at the picnic, she appeared to favour efforts made to 'Christianise' people who she recognised many white Australians considered to be an inferior race. She identified that 'before the advent of the whites, the native never had to exercise his mind … the mind of the aborigine is only opening'.[318] Furthermore, in stating the belief that 'Aborigines when they have become Christianised make good helpers and workers', Evans presented what she considered a generalised white Australian consensus that if Indigenous Australians could only adjust to white Australian values they would be an asset rather than a burden to national progress. Evans provided examples of Indigenous Australian assimilation that were valued by white Australians such as the fact that 'several Aborigines from here served in the Great War', or that some of 'these men are good cricketers and footballers', which by Evans' account made them worthy of commendation.[319]

**Football as a Site of White Cultural Adoption**

During the 1930s it was a common belief amongst white Australian society that 'whites' were the superior race in the nation, evinced by a perception of modernity and that their 'gentlemanliness' distinguished them from other cultures.[320] As an example of Anglo-

316 Annie S. Evans, 'An Aborigines Picnic at Framlingham', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1923, p. 4.
317 Annie S. Evans, 'An Aborigines Picnic at Framlingham', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1923, p. 4.
318 Annie S. Evans, 'An Aborigines Picnic at Framlingham', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1923, p. 4.
319 Annie S. Evans, 'An Aborigines Picnic at Framlingham', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1923, p. 4.
320 Andrewes, 'A Culture of Speed'.

Australia's perceived racial superiority, Bruce Pascoe has examined in detail how white settlers actively ignored the successful agricultural ingenuity of Indigenous Australians, instead using traditional European farming methodologies on land that could not sustain such techniques.[321] Such a dismissive attitude towards Indigenous Australians permeated throughout the late colonial period and featured in other aspects of race relations. It is through this lens of presumed racial superiority that 'Old Eaglehawk' provided his representation of the 'Framlingham Blacks' football team of the 1880s. 'Old Eaglehawk' emphasised that many members of the Framlingham team had adapted and adopted white Australian values such as 'manliness' and 'sportsmanship' and hence recalled that they received creditable recognition from the public when they competed against white teams from the district. With these articles written primarily for a white Australian audience, such representations of Indigenous Australians which tended to imply an affable existence continued to obfuscate the complex history of the Australian frontier, and thereby simplified the social environment that encompassed football's formative years in the district.

Local newspaper reports published in 1885 that discuss the Framlingham team exemplified the blatant belief that Anglo-Australian men of British heritage were greatly superior, both physically and mentally, to their opponents, 'the dusky sons of the soil'.[322] A Warrnambool correspondent reporting on the build-up to the inaugural match of the Greening Trophy competition between Warrnambool and Framlingham wrote:

> The dusky sons of the soil are engaged in active training for the contest. Some of them, I hear, running as much as ten miles a day. However, I don't think there is much chance of the darkies wresting the laurels of victory from the Warrnambool Club. Pluck is as great a factor of success

[321] Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?*, Broome: Magabala Books, 2014.
[322] 'Warrnambool Letter', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 18 July 1885, p. 3.

> in contests of this kind as speed and endurance, and for that quality the British lion and his descendants still stand pre-eminent among the nations of the world.[323]

Beliefs such as these from local newspapers of the 1880s provided a sense of the social environment that shaped 'Old Eaglehawk's' views of Indigenous Australians. As already noted, through his own articles written close to 50 years later, 'Old Eaglehawk' surmised for readers of the 1930s that the declining number of Indigenous Australians from the region was a direct result of white settlers' pursuit of 'civilising' the land. Yet, like Evans who advocated the benefits of 'Christianising' Indigenous Australians, rather than advocate an attempt to redress the pioneering acts of dispossession and violence, 'Old Eaglehawk' outlined how sport, and football in particular, could help the 'original occupier of this country' embrace the ideals of 'white people'.[324] It is here that 'Old Eaglehawk's' slight concern, as observed earlier in this chapter, is overcome by a belief that assimilation was beneficial for Indigenous Australians in the district.

Why some Indigenous Australians participated in white sporting culture is hard to ascertain as there are no doubt innumerable motivations for such action. In research exploring the athletic career of Indigenous Australian Albert 'Pompey' Austin in the late nineteenth century, Roy Hay has acknowledged the difficulty in identifying a singular motive. Hay offers two possible explanations, firstly that participation was a means of cultural accommodation, or secondly, and equally as likely, a form of protest.[325] 'Old Eaglehawk's' comments seemed to

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323 'Warrnambool Letter', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 18 July 1885, p. 3. Although there are multiple accounts of matches being played in Warrnambool and surrounding districts during the 1860s, from evidence examined it is believed that the 'Greening Trophy' in 1885 was the first formerly organised competition in the south west of Victoria. The 'Greening Trophy' consisted of seven teams from across the district: Warrnambool, Tower Hill, The Lake (Koroit), The Rovers (another Warrnambool team), Mortlake, Nirranda, and the Framlingham Blacks. For a brief overview of football in south west Victoria prior to World War I, see Fred Bond and Don Grossman, *Evergreen Hampden: History of the Hampden Football – Its People and Their Progress*, Warrnambool: PAP Book Company, 1979, pp. 15-16; and Robert McLaren, *Playing Footy and Milking Cows: The Mt Noorat Football League*, Leopold: R. McLaren, 2006.

324 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

325 Roy Hay, 'Albert "Pompey" Austin and a Golden Age of Australian Pedestrianism', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 34, no. 2, November 2017, pp. 39-58. Pompey Austin had a highly successful athletic career competing at athletic competitions in and around the western district of Victoria during the 1870s and 1880s.

suggest that for the 'Framlingham Blacks' participation in the local competitions was a sign of their attempt to accommodate and adopt white values in order to 'better' themselves. Sport, and football more specifically, was one of just many forms of white Australian culture which was inculcated upon the Indigenous population, and in amongst these reflections it was observable which characteristics of sport the white population in this rural district cherished and privileged.

'Old Eaglehawk' declared that it was via 'every class of sport' that many of the Framlingham Black footballers excelled in adapting to the white Australian modes of 'gentlemanly' behaviour.[326] As has been illustrated by multiple historians, fears of white racial degeneration were an ever present concern in Anglo-Australian society prior to and following the turn of twentieth century.[327] In particular, Anderson argued there was a social perception that 'white destiny in southeastern Australia was gradually condensing down to a matter of bad, impervious heredity – bad seeds – and the social life of germs – more bad seeds'.[328] To ameliorate this supposed threat sport was seemingly positioned as a vehicle that channelled the idealised masculine identity of white Australian culture. Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz contend that 'physical courage' was a key element of this ideal throughout this period in Australia.[329] Furthermore, sport, in particular football, was one domain in Australian society where a man's physicality could be tested and measured.[330] In a sense, sport nurtured Anglo-Australian traditions and associated models of manliness which were disseminated and propagated across rural and urban regions nationwide. As intimated by 'Old Eaglehawk' traits of fairness, sportsmanship, and humility were central to such gentlemanly behaviour.

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326 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.
327 See, for example, White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 66-72, 81, and 127; and Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*.
328 Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, p. 68.
329 Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 59-60
330 Booth and Tatz, *One-Eyed*, p. 60.

What is most poignant in these reflections of the 'Framlingham Blacks' is that in general the stories being told of their existence in the district were those of assimilation. Hence, the only recognition they received was linked to an ability to adapt to the cultural expectations of the white settlers and perform the behaviours associated with 'gentlemanliness'.[331] 'Old Eaglehawk' proclaimed with a patronising sense of surprise in one article, 'what an assortment of sports, and how remarkable that in one generation, they had assimilated the idea of the white people and learned how "to play the game"'.[332] He continued 'After years of playing with them and against them, I rarely saw one of them ever do an action in the sporting line that you could not call "cricket"'.[333]

Although sportsmanship was highlighted by 'Old Eaglehawk' in his reminiscence, other formalities that the Framlingham team observed such as their ability to host a post-football match dinner at the 'aboriginal station' was also apparently deserving of recognition. One such dinner was considered 'high-class' in nature due to the use of 'silverware' and a menu that consisted of 'roast duck and bronze wing pigeon … with plum pudding and brandy sauce to follow'.[334] The standards of what the white footballers in the district considered a fine 'repast' are instrumental in establishing a romantic representation of the traditions of football in the district, but also the standards that were expected to be met in order for the game and occasion to be worthy of acknowledgement and record. Although, it is worth also noting that 'Old Eaglehawk' made no effort to regale other stories of football dinners from other non-

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331 Indigenous Australians received very little attention from the local press, due in part to their marginal population, and on the occasions that they did feature it was often due to disorderly conduct within rural towns. See for example 'Local and General Items', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 19 September 1930, p. 2, when 'pandemonium reigned' in the Camperdown Mechanics Library after 'an Australian aboriginal … in the excess of high spirits which had been brought about by an over-free indulgence during the afternoon stumbled' into the reading room of the establishment looking for a place to sleep before being escorted off the premises by the police.

332 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

333 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3. In stating that he played 'with them' it is possible that 'Old Eaglehawk' may have been one of the six white men, so called, 'White Blackfellows' that played for the Framlingham Blacks in the 1880s. This is only speculative though.

334 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 13 May 1938, p. 8.

Indigenous teams, hence the efforts of the Framlingham team to attend to the cultural expectations of the white audiences appeared framed by a sense of surprise and novelty.

In these reflections 'Old Eaglehawk' thus depicted football as a tool that aided assimilation and a site for which men of the district could measure and compare their 'manly' virtues and character. Indicative of this idea was the fact that the only players from the 'Framlingham Blacks' who received acknowledgement were those who were seen to play in a manner that exceeded the expectations of the white observer. Indeed, according to 'Old Eaglehawk' the playing style of some of the Indigenous Australians was considered more in line with his expectation of a '"gentleman's" game' as a direct contrast to the 'win, tie or wrangle players of the present day [ – 1930s]'.[335] In light of the broader attitudes that Indigenous Australians were a less evolved, dying race, such a comment would have been taken as a direct and offensive indictment of the current corps of local footballers. Stating that present day (1930s) white footballers were less 'gentlemanly' than representatives of the Framlingham Blacks served as an explicit example that expressed fears of the game's local decline. To avoid such a decline in standard, 'Old Eaglehawk' eulogised the pioneer gentlemanliness that he felt characterised local football of the late nineteenth century and promoted a return to this model. Yet, in doing so, he overlooked more complex attributes of the pioneer, squatter, and bushman identity that had inconspicuously impacted the game's early development.

**How Local Pioneers Played the Game**

'Old Eaglehawk' considered that the 'gentlemanly' standing of these local Indigenous Australian footballers was simply a natural outcome of being introduced to a sport played in manner that was based on the characteristics of the district's most revered white men. Indeed, the Indigenous Australian footballers remembered in these articles were presented as an

[335] The Old Eaglehawk, 'Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 24 May 1935, p. 3.

apparent example of the game's capacity to cultivate idyllic masculinity, a form of masculinity which was reflective of the popular pioneering spirit of the period. In the 'Framlingham Blacks' team there were six white Australians, nicknamed the 'white blackfellows', who 'Old Eaglehawk' stated had 'far-reaching influence'.[336] These men were among the many of the pioneering and settler ilk whose impact on the 'evolution of the game in the Western District' 'Old Eaglehawk' thought 'was well worth recording'.[337] But aside from elements such as sportsmanship and discipline, it is interesting to consider what other elements of the idealised masculine pioneer type pervaded the game's local beginnings.

Angela Woollacott has critically explored the way that pioneers, squatters, and bushmen of the nineteenth century have generally been presented historically as embodying masculinised traits of 'responsibility, self-discipline, independence, and reason'.[338] In 'Old Eaglehawk's' evocative reflections it is these traits that he clings to so fervently when describing the south west district pioneers' manly influence on football's development. Description of such attributes were readily disseminated through his articles as they were likely to be fondly received by, and relatable to, the intended audience. Other traits of masculine identity are also presented by 'Old Eaglehawk', but they are less conspicuous to the reader. A general limitation of these nostalgic reflections from 'Old Eaglehawk', is the fact that they tended to overlook the confrontations of the past and downplay the violent side of their history that, as mentioned previously, led to much of the Indigenous population's relative isolation in south west Victoria.

The masked violent history associated with pioneers and settlers, which was in some ways stifled by the lens of nostalgia, was indeed an additional feature of the pioneers'

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336 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

337 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

338 Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 177-178.

masculine identity.[339] In a similar manner, 'Old Eaglehawk' downplayed the violence and roughness of football as merely part of the game's manly character. Violence, as Woollacott concluded, 'could be accepted as part of respectable manhood, especially if it remained understood but not articulated'.[340] 'Old Eaglehawk' characterised football as a rough game during its early years, but rarely did he consider this uncouth or unnecessary. Rather his reflection of the roughness was represented as natural and understood. For instance:

> Shoving [from] behind was also allowed and instead of getting ahead of your man it paid you to be behind him, a man with good shoving power soon cleared a space around him and quietly marked the ball on his own.[341]

While this passage hints at some of the rough tactics common in football during the 1880s, the description could also be seen as a metaphor of the way the violence perpetrated by squatters, settlers, or bushmen to clear land populated by Indigenous Australians was frequently diminished in (white) accounts. More broadly speaking, rough play was openly accepted as a memorable feature of football even when the game was supposed to be facilitating the development of 'civility'. Indeed it seems that white Australian footballers in this south west Victorian district were forgiven for acts of brutishness. For example, a Camperdown team in 1884 were remembered as being so 'rugged' in their play that they quickly earnt the nickname 'The Savages' from the crowd. Despite the negative connotations of 'savages' – characterised as a sign of barbarism or lacking in civility – 'Old Eaglehawk' still deemed these players 'a decent lot of fellows' due to the fact that 'a lot of them belonged to the squatting fraternity'. [342] Hence, their rough conduct on the field was seemingly accepted as part of the masculine identity of their pioneering ancestry; if not fully articulated as such.

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339 Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 177.
340 Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 177.
341 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Early Football Days', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1935, p. 4.
342 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1935, p. 3.

As ‘Old Eaglehawk’ noted of local football pioneers that he was celebrating, in the early days of football ‘the main consideration was’ that players use ‘*any means* to stop’ their opponents ‘from getting the ball’.[343] Be it playing football or settling land, the methods deployed were later moderated through nostalgic creation which belied the understated acceptance of the violence of white colonial men.

John Hirst has also addressed the romanticised depiction of the iconic pioneer that has evolved overtime to serve various means, politically, socially, and culturally. Hirst notes that historians continue to alter the social perception of the pioneer legend as the pioneers’ role in the dispossession of Indigenous Australians continues to be explored.[344] The ‘simple reading of the Bush’ that tended to ignore the atrocities committed by European settlers on Indigenous Australians provided a seemingly unblemished canvas on which positive memories of pre-war Australia could be painted for post-war audiences.[345] ‘Old Eaglehawk’ did, in a limited degree, recognise this connection between pioneers and Indigenous Australians. But the contextual implications of war and the inclement suffering from the major economical strife of the depression that framed the local rural landscape of the 1930s were likely a more pertinent concern of the district. Henceforth, ‘Old Eaglehawk’ provided a largely idyllic construction of local pioneers. Associating pioneers with the early development of football in the district would have greatly resonated with the local community as the memories emanated from a ‘simpler time’ when ‘gentlemen were gentlemen’.[346]

Pioneers and settlers of the western district were perceived by ‘Old Eaglehawk’ as utilising football as a tool to compare and develop their progeny into gentlemen. It was men of this pioneering ilk that were prominent in the local football scene that ‘Old Eaglehawk’

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343 The Old Eaglehawk, ‘The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District’, *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3, emphasis added.
344 Hirst, ‘The Pioneer Legend’, pp. 316-337.
345 Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, p. 192.
346 The Old Eaglehawk, ‘The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District’, *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

celebrated. He recalled memories of some of the region's most respected and largest landholders during the late nineteenth century stating:

> Passing away from the players and looking over the fence into the beyond memories of such men as J. J. Madden, of Koroit, W. B. Cumming, at Mount Fyans, Jim Mack, of Warrnambool, and R. A. D. Hood, of Merrang, come to mind. What sports and gentlemen they were in whatever games they took part as players or supporters. The influence they exerted not only in sport, but in every form of life has created far reaching benefits. It is a pity that such men should ever die.[347]

This description of some of the major landholders in the district was presented by 'Old Eaglehawk' in a eulogistic manner and heralding them as significant contributors to the local community. Indeed it seemed their only weakness was their human mortality. The sons of such revered gentlemen, however had not suffered the same hardships associated with settlement and therefore their 'virile proclivities' had remained relatively untamed due to the privileges associated with their upbringing.[348] As 'Old Eaglehawk' seemed to suggest, football in the late nineteenth century aided in cultivating their masculine potential.

If the social context prescribed by 'Old Eaglehawk' that life prior to the Great War was a simpler existence then it is not surprising that football in the local district also appeared to have a more cavalier character in the late nineteenth century. An article from an 1871 issue of the *Hampden Guardian,*[349] republished 60 years later in the *Camperdown Chronicle* outlined confusions regarding the interpretation of the then relatively newly codified sport of 'Victorian Rules'.

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347 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football Reminiscences', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 9 August 1935, p. 3.

348 Ideas of young men with 'virile proclivities' reflects characteristics associated with misguided, troublesome type of young men whom during the 1890s were commonly known as 'larrikins'. Although larrikinism had a more fundamental birth in urban colonial culture of the late nineteenth century there was nationwide concern that young men without discipline or guidance would quickly fall victim to this socially, culturally and racially degenerative trend. For detailed analysis of the history and use of the term larrikinism in Australian society see Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History,* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012.

349 The *Hampden Guardian* was a prominent local newspaper in the district during the 1860s before being usurped by the *Camperdown Chronicle* in the late 1870s.

> Falls and kicks were common and of course a few 'barneys' occurred on the subject of 'free kicks' but as these arose mostly from an imperfect acquaintance with the game, they were easily disposed of: indeed, where kicking was so thoroughly free, it is strange how any dispute could arise at all.[350]

While this scene alluded to undertones of roughness that were somewhat perplexing to the reporter of this 1871 article, 'Old Eaglehawk' argued that such roughness was more likely due to an underdeveloped comprehension of the rules more than intentional violence. Furthermore, according to 'Old Eaglehawk' football in the district did not begin to reflect the style of play or adequately follow the rules of the prominent metropolitan competitions until the early 1880s. The impetus for football's awakening was established when the pioneers and settlers of the local district began extending challenges to one another:

> The shearing sheds of Hexham Park, Merrang, Ballangeich, Salt Creek, Mount Fyans and Jellalabad were the scenes of many a heated argument as to the merits of their different champions, and the outcome was that challenges were issued for a match.[351]

It was common practice for many of these settlers, to send their sons away to schools in Melbourne, Geelong, or Ballarat where they were not only educated in essential academia, but also exposed to football as it was played in the metropolitan centres of Victoria.[352] Upon completion of their schooling and through their return to their respective family properties, matches of football that were played between these young men – now more familiar with the rules – evidently raised the standard of football in the district. Through 'Old Eaglehawk's' perception of how the game developed in the district, it is pertinent to note that it was the 'esteemed' settlers who harnessed the game's potential and helped transition it from 'Rafferty rules' to a more congenial sport that many towns in the district used to test their young men. In

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350 'Football in 1871', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 19 February 1931, p. 6.

351 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3. It was not uncommon for settlers on smaller selections of land to work part-time for the major landholding squatters that were established in the district. Hence, such shearing shed conversations were a likely site of broad community interaction, see Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, pp. 423-429.

352 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

general, pioneers were remembered historically for their role in the agricultural cultivation of the rural landscape. 'Old Eaglehawk's' correspondence, however, more broadly heralded pioneers as amongst the most influential figures in shaping the burgeoning cultures of such rural communities through social contexts such as sport and in this particular example, football.

'Old Eaglehawk' recalled fond memories of one of the earliest matches in the Greening Trophy competition of 1885. Many young men had been 'inoculated' with the 'germs of the class of football as played at the Geelong colleges' which lead to an improved style of play beginning to show out.[353] Games became less congested, open, and quick with high marking being the new order of play. The match itself was believed to be a 'turning point from the old bullocking push as push can style of football to a scientific exposition game'.[354] This article from 'Old Eaglehawk', and others from around the district like it, revealed much about the stakes at play in these matches. It seemed that a primary impetus for the early incarnations of football matches in the district was not only for the sake of sport or as an instrument to cleanse young men of their 'natural virility'. Football was a means by which to compare and contrast 'the merits of their different champions' in the district.[355]

According to 'Old Eaglehawk', local footballers overcame many obstacles and travelled great distances to determine the status and quality of men from neighbouring communities and thus compare the towns themselves. Challenge matches were no small commitment in the late nineteenth century. In some cases, after leaving in the early hours of the morning on horse and cart, some teams would generally not arrive at their opponent's ground until after midday. A lunch would be sought and then the match would eventually kick

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353 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3. Indeed, there was a reprinted report from a match played in 1883 between Geelong Grammar School and a Mortlake team which would have showed the schools connection to the region and which also likely provided a direct transmission of rules and tactical progress in the game locally. See 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 14 April 1937, p. 4.

354 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

355 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

off in the mid-afternoon and conclude on the cusp of dusk. Despite the ordeals of travel the games were played regularly with a primary aim of such matches being to provide a direct means of comparing and contrasting football teams in the district. The literal lengths, in regards to travel, teams went to prove themselves was indicative of the social standing the game had in the region even its early stages.[356]

In essence football teams and their players were a representation of a town or a community's status within the rural district. W.F. Mandle has commented on how, at an international level, the impact of national sporting success, for example an Australian cricket team defeating the English at their own game, was a notable factor in the development of national unity and identity.[357] In a similar manner it seems that in the late nineteenth century the identity of various rural communities could be enhanced – on a regional scale – through the success of their local football team. As Ian Turner suggested, 'the role of the players – especially in football – is determined by the demands of the spectators; and this in turn concentrates attention on the satisfaction spectators derive from sport'.[358] From the various reflective musings within that pervaded the local press of the inter war years it is likely that for the localised inter town football competition in rural south west Victoria, spectators seemed to make a connection between team success and the social status of the town.

**'Those Men Must Have had a Sense of Duty to their Club'**

For 'Old Eaglehawk', that local pioneers – men revered for embodying an idyllic masculinity – were influential in football's foundational years in his view essentially elevated the status of the game. From this elevated social pedestal, 'Old Eaglehawk's' reflections henceforth

356 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express,* 3 June 1938, p. 8. Old Eaglehawk recalled multiple occasions in the district prior to World War I when various teams had to overcome major difficulties and obstacles associated with inter town travel, such as flooded bridges and neglected 'axle-deep mud roads', just in order to play a game of football.

357 Mandle, *Going it Alone*, pp. 30-31.

358 Ian Turner, 'A Comment', *Historical Studies,* vol. 15, no. 60, 1973, pp. 536-538.

presented football as a vehicle of a town's status within the region during the late colonial period. By association the men that played during this era were also highly revered public figures. As noted earlier, 'Old Eaglehawk' was not alone in recalling late colonial era tales of football across the district.[359] However, while 'Old Eaglehawk's' reflections sketched intersecting narratives of football and pioneers, other writers tended to focus predominantly on the exploits of prominent players. Regardless of this more conventional approach to their football reflections, these other writers further hinted at the origins of the game's cultural importance in rural south west Victoria during the late nineteenth century.

For example, 'The Wanderer', a correspondent who contributed an article to the *Camperdown Chronicle* on 2 September 1937, provided narratives of football's local heritage that, like those of 'Old Eaglehawk' celebrated varying types of manliness within local football competitions prior to the war. 'Wanderer' painted a picture of the hardships associated with the game in the early days noting that the men who participated 'had to pay for a membership in a club before being allowed to play, stand up to all travelling expenses, and often enough help to finance some impecunious comrade when playing away from home'.[360] In comparisons made with 'present day' players it was these hardships that often made the exploits of past players seem all the more exceptional. Reminiscing about the merits of local champion footballers prior to World War I, an 'Old Player' wrote in 1920:

> Certainly there is more inducement and encouragement to the present day players, with crowds of supporters, up-to-date training and coaching fares and expenses to players travelling away from home, all of which help to bring together a better team than we could in those early days, when we had to pay our own fares, and drive in open drays to our destination.[361]

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[359] See, for example, Old Player, 'Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 June 1920, p. 4; R.B. Prouse, 'Football – Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 June 1920, p. 3; and The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5. The *Mortlake Dispatch* also on occasion republished articles from the 1880s with football specific content. See for example 'Mortlake in 1883', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 14 April 1937, p. 4; 'Mortlake in 1885', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 July 1937, p. 4; and 'Mortlake in 1885', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 July 1937, p. 4.

[360] The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5.

[361] Old Player, 'Past and Present', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 June 1920, p. 4.

In acknowledging the various sacrifices and obstacles faced by the players of the late nineteenth century writers such as 'Wanderer' and 'Old Player' emphasised that the best players of the district were men of high regard and that their moral and physical presence made them admirable characters of the district.

This positive reflection on the past illuminated the value of football in the town and highlighted the quality of men that these towns were capable of producing: some of whom, as 'Wanderer' noted, went onto play football in Melbourne amongst some of the strongest players in the state, men that had no equal in terms of the fairness they exuded on the field and, arguably most significantly, men that would later serve the British Empire during the First World War and make the ultimate sacrifice.[362] The messaging of his article reflected the idea that over the years football was a site occupied by the finest men a rural town could offer. Indeed, 'Wanderer's' article tended to indicate that the quality of men raised in Camperdown was a catalyst in their team's victories over their closely linked inter town rivals Cobden, Terang, and Mortlake. A 'fine body of footballers' and 'good men' who were praised for their contribution to the club's, and by association, the town's status in the district.[363]

In respect to the economy of the region, football team performance was also positioned as an apt reflection of a town's social and commercial growth and prosperity. For example, in the 1890s the growth of the dairy industry in Terang, together with the subdivision of some major landholder properties in the region, allowed many new families to establish themselves in the region.[364] Paralleled with Terang's growth into a major town of the district during this period was recognition of its burgeoning football capability, with 'Old Eaglehawk' proclaiming that it was at this time that 'Terang's star in the district football competitions had arisen at

362 The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5.
363 The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5.
364 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 20 May 1938, p. 8. The development of the dairying industry in the district was supported through government assistance in the late 1880s and early 1890s. For further details see Godbold, *Victoria, Cream of the Country*, pp. 36-39; and Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace*, pp. 54-56.

last'.[365] By the 1900s the district competition between clubs who would during the interwar years become known as the 'Old Four [clubs of the district]', Cobden, Camperdown, Terang, and Mortlake, was taking shape and with an increased number of 'educated' sons returning from the colleges of Ballarat and Geelong the standard of football continued to improve.

'Old Eaglehawk' acknowledged that playing games of football in rural south west Victoria during the late nineteenth century occasionally had its difficulties especially when considering the effort and time required to travel between towns on horse and cart. But while 'Wanderer' highlighted the unselfishness of players of the late nineteenth century, 'Old Eaglehawk' appeared to indicate that such a mantra was natural as 'those men must have had a sense of duty to their club and loved a game of football'.[366] It was the attributes of such players that 'Old Eaglehawk' also recalled fondly, as in part they projected a more cavalier yet dutiful position in the community that the current day form of the game had seemingly lost.

Although the style of play had improved, 'Old Eaglehawk' still projected a sense that football was 'better' in previous generations evinced by his recollections of the 'type' of men and the spirit in which they played the game. 'Old Eaglehawk', this time published in the *Terang Express*, shared a story from a match played between Garvoc and Mortlake in 1894. After a Garvoc 'goal-sneak' scored the opening goal of the game he:

> found himself confronted by an enthusiastic Garvoc supporter carrying a jug of water, a bottle of whisky and a small glass … the glass was soon filled and emptied. Another goal followed shortly afterwards, with another dose of the 'go-fast' lubricant, and for the rest of the match the goal-kicker was as game as Ned Kelly.[367]

'Old Eaglehawk' imagined that by 'today's' standards (the 1930s) such an incident was beyond fanciful, but it was explained that this type of behaviour was a reflection of an era when

[365] The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 3 June 1938, p. 8.
[366] The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 3 June 1938, p. 8.
[367] The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 20 May 1938, p. 8.

'football was played in a social manner' and 'footballers were tough'.[368] The emphasis on the manner and 'gentlemanly' nature of play in this description provided another layer to the idea that football was played in a more straightforward, 'simpler', and pioneer-like environment. From their 1930s perspective, the modern game these writers were presently bearing witness to had likely changed dramatically as a result of the game's professionalisation in the elite metropolitan competitions, and hence the nostalgic reflections of when the game was being played in a congenial manner was revealing of the tensions that some rural football enthusiasts – especially those from older generations – had to the modernisation and business-oriented direction of the game generally.

The belief that the pioneering footballers of the district were playing simply with a sense of service and comradeship was also revealing. Such attributes had been culturally elevated in the national psyche during the Great War when thousands of Australians inevitably lent their service to the protection of the nation and the British Empire with many returning home injured or not at all. It is unsurprising then that such attributes were emphasised in these reflections as no doubt a portion of these local footballers prior to the war would likely have become soldiers. This may have also influenced the perception of 'Old Eaglehawk' who tended to hint that many players of the 1930s did not compare to players of the past, as they had not been exposed to what many people considered the 'ultimate test' of manhood.[370]

## Conclusion

This chapter has begun the process of studying how the powerful narratives around Australian sport and Australian pioneers have intersected. As part of the nostalgic movement that swept rural Australia during the interwar period 'Old Eaglehawk's' stories reveal vital cultural

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368 The Old Eaglehawk, 'Football in its Infancy', *Terang Express*, 20 May 1938, p. 8.

370 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, Sydney: New South, 2010, pp. 30-32.

patterns of thought which encompassed notions of masculinity, race, civility, and violence that permeated the early history of football in rural south west Victoria. Like his contemporaries, he reminisced about great players and former glory days, but he furthered his reflections as he linked these memories to the influential and celebrated masculinity of Australia's pioneers.

Instances of nostalgic reflection, such as those from 'Old Eaglehawk' provide a valuable entry point for historical exploration as they tend to be shared as a response to changes that were occurring in the author's present. However, as has been shown, such contemplative creations which present a seemingly simple construction of the past have the potential to reveal far more than was likely intended. The 'simple' past shared through these memories of rural south west Victorian football development provide a rich insight into the complex narratives of Australia's colonial heritage. From his recollections, 'Old Eaglehawk' positioned the pioneers, settlers, and bushmen of the district as the benchmark for masculine ideals and that it was their influence across all parts of rural life that provided prosperity to the region. Australian Rules football was just one part of this late colonial countryside lifestyle in which notable characteristics – discipline, toughness, and resilience – were seen to aptly reflect ideals associated with the pioneer and settler spirit of the region. However, coupled with these positive images of the game were more violent attributes that meant football was at times rough and brutal, and although these attributes were not grandly celebrated throughout these memories they were accepted as part of the game's character. This attitude towards football violence paralleled the way the violence of Australian pioneers against Indigenous Australians was at once accepted and largely unarticulated.

As a sort of compensation for this dispossession, 'Old Eaglehawk' saw football as a valuable instrument for race relations in the region, in which Indigenous Australian communities of the Framlingham Reserve were encouraged and even celebrated for their engagement with the burgeoning form of the game locally. Interaction between Indigenous

Australian communities and white settlers in this district were becoming increasingly rare, but football was seen as a space for connection. However, rather than critique the inculcation of white settler culture upon this particular Indigenous community, 'Old Eaglehawk' perceived this sport-based adoption of white gentlemanly behaviour as another 'benefit' of pioneer endeavours. It seemed by 'learning how to play the game' the local Indigenous Australian men were seen in a positive light and the obfuscated reality of their fading presence in the district continued to predominate the attitudes of Anglo-Australian society.

As can be seen from these observations, 'Old Eaglehawk's' recollections publicised more than just the origins of football in rural south west Victoria. A deeper analysis of the articles highlighted football's association with the pioneers and settlers of the region who championed the sport as a recreational pursuit to compare their progeny. Through the influence of pioneers and settlers, football seemingly reproduced a type of masculinity that resonated within the region. Skimming over the complex narratives associated with the pioneers and settlers, these detailed positive memories connecting idyllic rural men to the foundations of football in the district, demonstrate how the game itself became a localised symbol of Anglo-Australian prosperity, a symbol which could remain a mainstay of this rural Victorian setting throughout the interwar years and beyond. In part, it was this associated foundation of perceived masculinity which as will be explored in the following chapter, allowed the game to re-establish its popularity and prominence within the local community following the war.

# Chapter Four

## 'See the Conquering Heroes Come': Local Footballers as Exemplars of Masculinity after World War I in Rural South West Victoria

> Voluntarily enlisting, these men – the cream of Australia's manhood of their day – fought and suffered and bled that life might be better and brighter and more secure for those whom they left behind and who were to come after them. In their noble task they succeeded. But at what cost! Each Anzac Day march sees the gaps in the ranks; the years taking their inexorable toll. Once splendid specimens of typical manhood, many are now crippled or diseased. They who once so readily went forth to help others are now incapable of helping themselves. They saved others; themselves they cannot save.[371]
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> *Terang Express*, 6 May 1938, p. 4.

### Introduction

After the Terang Football Club won the 1932 Hampden Football League Grand Final, the team was rushed back to Terang on a special train and welcomed at the station with a rousing reception. According to the *Terang Express* 'the joyous scene was almost reminiscent of Armistice Day'.[372] The *Terang Express* continued by stating, 'It was everyone's business that the Terang boys had won the premiership, and it seemed as though the entire population had turned out to welcome them home'.[373] In addition to the large supportive crowd, the players were marched towards the main street of town by the local brass band who 'struck up "See the Conquering Heroes Come"'.[374] This particular tune had, in years gone by, been synonymous with the celebrations associated with soldiers returning from World War I and so the recognised

371 'The Red Cross Appeal', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1938, p. 4.
372 'The Conquering Heroes', *Terang Express*, 20 September 1932, p. 8.
373 'The Conquering Heroes', *Terang Express*, 20 September 1932, p. 8.
374 'The Conquering Heroes', *Terang Express*, 20 September 1932, p. 8.

similarity of the celebrations to Armistice Day was by no means an over-exaggeration.[375] While such explicit comparisons between war and football were rare, such a gesture showed that footballers, like soldiers, were held in high esteem throughout the community during the interwar years. They were heroes revered by the community.

The Great War, still fresh in the memory of most Australian citizens during the 1920s and 1930s, was framed as a key event that facilitated the formation of an Australian identity characterised by strength, resilience, and independence.[376] The many young Australian men who took up arms for the British Empire proved their worth on the battle field and henceforth became symbolic figures of the nation and representative of a prosperous future. Those fortunate enough to return home were welcomed back as heroes and revered as models of Australianness.[377] Prior to the war, Australia was often viewed internally as immature, underdeveloped, and heavily reliant on the British motherland.[378] At the time, this sentiment was aptly represented by *Bulletin* cartoonist Livingston Hopkins' colonial character 'the Little Boy at Manly' (see Figure 3).[379] In an effort to shake off this persona, exemplars were sought which embodied the identity of a sustainable and self-reliant country. Australia's late colonial period saw men of the frontier and pioneers positioned as a representative figure of the nation's burgeoning promise, labelled by some as the 'national type'.[380]

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375 For examples of 'See the Conquering Heroes Come' association with soldiers returning home see 'Haig Returns Home', *Warrnambool Standard*, 23 December 1918, p. 3, 'Anzacs Welcomed Home', *Argus*, 25 November 1918, pp. 7-8; and 'The Returning Anzacs', *Age*, 24 October 1918, p. 6. See also the article 'Cheers, Tears & Kisses', *Age*, 13 February 1941, p. 6, which bemoaned the absence of a band to play the tune upon the arrival of a group of returned soldiers from World War II in 1941.

376 The official war historian C.E.W. Bean chronicled the exploits of the Australian soldiers during World War I, emphasising that through their actions on the battlefield they had proven their manhood and thus proven the worth of the nation more generally. For critical insight into how the idea of the idyllic Australian soldier pervaded the national psyche during the interwar period see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, Sydney: New South, 2010; and Alistair Thomson, 'Popular Gallipoli History and the Representation of Australian Military Manhood', *History Australia*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2019, pp. 518-533.

377 Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, North Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981, p. 135.

378 K.S. Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan*, Adelaide: Rigby, 1985, pp. 155-159.

379 Inglis, *The Rehearsal*, pp. 155-159. The character was also often referred to as 'The Little Boy from Manly'.

380 White, *Inventing Australia*.


Figure 3: 'The Little Boy at Manly' created by Livingston Hopkins. In this image, 'the Little Boy at Manly', representative of Australia is being chastised by the British motherland for its attempted input into global affairs. *Bulletin*, 19 February 1887, p. 11.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sport and physical team games such as football, provided another domain where white Australian manliness could be tested, measured, and compared.[381] At an international level, multiple historians have commented on the example of how Australian cricket victories over English teams during the late nineteenth century led some to believe that the Australian stock were as manly, if not manlier, than their

[381] Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 59-64.

British counterparts.[382] At the same time, public (private) schools in the metropoles of the nation often utilised sport to cultivate qualities of manliness in white boys born in Australia. A prominent sporting system within schools was deemed especially pertinent as concerns were rife that the harsh colonial environment 'had a tendency to produce unmanly boys'.[383] Sport provided a glimpse of Australia's manly characteristics, but as a source of national identification sport paled in comparison with what much of the western world recognised as the ultimate test of manhood – war. Without a war to formally test Australia's men, the nation would continue to be thought of only as being 'in a constant state of becoming'.[384] Through their participation in World War I alongside their British forebears, Australia as a nation was officially tested. The nation emerged from the crucible of battle no longer a 'little boy', but a growing young man with great potential.[385] The Great War confirmed Australian soldiers – also known as Anzacs or 'diggers' – as a nationally recognised symbol that portrayed qualities that the nation privileged; qualities which, if cultivated within the next generation, would prevent any perceived threat of racial 'decline', aid economic progress, and develop social independence from the British motherland.

This chapter navigates perceptions of the evolution of Australia's 'national type', paying particular attention to how the iconic Australian soldier was perceived and presented within the setting of rural south west Victoria, both during and after the war. While much has

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382 See for example White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 72; Daryl Adair, Murray Phillips, and John Nauright, 'Sporting Manhood in Australia: Test Cricket, Rugby Football, and the Imperial Connection, 1878-1918', *Sport History Review*, vol. 28, 1997, pp. 46-60; and W.F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 59, no. 4, December 1973, pp. 225-246.

383 See for example Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001, pp. 57-58. Crotty discusses in detail how Australian public (private) schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century utilised sport as a tool for cultivating manliness in Australian boys. One of the schools Crotty explored closely was Geelong Grammar School. This is important to note in regard to south west Victorian communities of the period because as 'Old Eaglehawk' suggested, many of the squatters and pioneers of the district sent their boys away to public schools in Geelong, Ballarat and Melbourne, thereby the habits they developed at the these various schools transformed and aided football's development at a local level.

384 Inglis, *The Rehearsal*, p. 159.

385 K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 79-84.

been written of masculine Australian icons such as the pioneers of the late colonial period and soldiers during the war years, this chapter explores how the cultural identification of Australianness evolved and transitioned throughout the relatively unchartered interwar period. As the echoes of war faded in this rural pocket of the country, so too did the relevance and resonance of the idyllic Australian soldier. Examining the implications associated with the shifting cultural landscape of this rural setting, this chapter shows that many returned soldiers became pitied as they faced financial and health-related difficulties, while prominent and popular footballers of the region came to be presented as a new 'type' of local hero to be revered.

**Perceptions of Soldiers during the War in Rural South West Victoria**

When war broke out in 1914 the British Empire called to Australia for reinforcements and support. In answering the call, Australia entered a war that would play a substantial role in defining the nation. Literal illustrations of Australia's identity such as cartoons published in newspapers and journals during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were renowned for offering a symbolic depiction of a nation.[386] Just prior to the Great War, Hopkins' 'Little Boy from Manly' was a primary symbol of Australia's burgeoning yet still vulnerable state in world standings. Despite its Federation in 1901, the nation was still heavily reliant on the British motherland for security and protection. However, once Australia assisted the British Empire during the First World War, cartoonists showed the 'Little Boy' transforming into a young man who was celebrated as one of Australia's courageous diggers.[387]

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386 See, for example, Ian Gordon, 'The Symbol of a Nation: Ginger Meggs and the National Identity', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol.16, no. 34, 1992, pp. 1-14. This paper provides a succinct description of comic art development in Australian newspapers during the late nineteenth century as well as their function as a symbolic representation of national identity. In particular Gordon explored the comic strip character 'Ginger Meggs', who was created by James Bancks in 1921.

387 For a sample of images that depict 'The Little Boy from Manly' and his growth into a young man see Inglis, *The Rehearsal*, pp. 156-163. See also Robert Crawford, 'A Slow Coming of Age: Advertising and the Little Boy from Manly in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 67, 2001, pp. 126-143. This paper complicates the evolution of this national identifier – 'the Little Boy from Manly' – suggesting

In April 1916, a year after the infamous Gallipoli landing, while young Australians were still at war, many rural south west Victorian towns and schools commemorated what had already become the defining moment of Australia's involvement in the war.[388] Presiding over the Terang schools' commemoration service in 1916, Reverend H.J. Cocks lauded the (failed) Gallipoli landing as the moment when Australia came of age:

> every great nation no doubt had its great days – days that shone out beyond all other days. Great Britain of course thought of Waterloo Day; our French Allies probably thought of Austerlitz and if we asked our American cousins what their great day was, they would say it was Gettysburg Day … But the great day for Australians was Anzac Day (Applause).[389]

In their interrogation of Australia's militarised history, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have observed that many of the early commemorations of Gallipoli throughout Australia depicted war as 'the ultimate test both of men and nations'.[390] At a local level the connection to the Gallipoli landing was made out to be a personal one as 'there were fathers and mothers in Terang who were very proud of the fact that some of their own sons had participated in that landing'.[391] From this point forward members of the community that went off to the war were regarded as the finest exponents of manliness from the district. In 1917, an Honour Roll was unveiled at the Terang State School which listed 'old boys' who had or were at the time serving in the war.[392] Ken Inglis notes that honour rolls like this were akin to 'scoreboards of commitment, intended to encourage other men to follow those named'.[393] While this was likely

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that he had already shown signs of maturation before the war began. Crawford contends that a visit from the American Navy to Australian shores in 1908 was marked as an alternative turning point for the nation's development. Cartoonist impressions related to the event indicated that the 'little boy from manly' was now a 'young man' ready to meet with the classic figure 'Uncle Sam' who represented America. Although these revelations highlight the contested notion of Australia's growth as a nation, it is generally acknowledged that it was after entering the First World War, particularly after the landing at Gallipoli, that 'the Little Boy from Manly' almost completely disappeared.

388 See, for example, 'Schools Commemorate Anzac Day', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 25 April 1916, p. 4; 'Anzac Day. A Local Celebration', *Warrnambool Standard*, 20 April 1916, p. 3; and 'Anzac Day. State Schools Celebration. The Terang Function', *Terang Express*, 21 April 1916, p. 3.

389 'Anzac Day. State Schools' Celebration. The Terang Function', *Terang Express*, 21 April 1916, p. 3.

390 Lake and Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?*, p. 30.

391 'Anzac Day. State Schools' Celebration. The Terang Function', *Terang Express*, 21 April 1916, p. 3.

392 'Anzac Day. Honor Roll Unveiling', *Terang Express*, 17 April 1917, p. 3.

393 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 107.

true, it was also apparent that as the war continued, and the Anzac Day commemorations became engrained in the yearly calendar, great local pride was taken in the supply of men a town provided to the nation. At the unveiling of the Terang State School honour roll in 1917, for example, the head teacher Mr E.W. Mylera declared that although 'Terang was not a very big place, he thought it had done more than its share in supplying men for the front. (Applause.)'[394]

As the war progressed, Australians were left in no doubt that the men representing Australia abroad were indeed the ideal to be followed. Prior to the war, sport had been one of the few domains where manliness was taught, tested, and measured.[395] But with war now a reality, a test of masculinity more earnest than any form of sport was now available.[396] Men with sporting backgrounds were perceived as ideal candidates to join the armed forces, as sport was closely linked to ideas of discipline, obedience, and comradeship. Thus, there was an expectation that men with sporting acumen would join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and that sporting organisations would go into recess for the duration of the war. Indeed, across the nation, recruitment posters for a military division to be known as the 'Sportsmen's 1000' enforced a clear message that activities related to leisure and sport were no place for a 'man' during the war years.[397] As professional sporting competitions such as the Victorian Football League (VFL) elected to continue play during the war, debates surrounding the role of sport at this time incited a great deal of social tension.[398]

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394 'Anzac Day', *Terang Express*, 27 April 1917, p. 4.

395 Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, pp. 31-73.

396 For further readings into the narratives of sport during war see Thierry Terret and J.A. Mangan (eds), *Sport, Militarism and the Great War: Martial Manliness and Armageddon*, London: Routledge, 2017.

397 Bart Ziino, 'Eligible Men: Men, Families and Masculine Duty in the Great War Australia', *History Australia*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2017, pp. 202-217. See also Murray G. Phillips, 'Sport, War and Gender Images: The Australian Sportsmen's Battalions and the First World War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1997, pp. 78-96.

398 Dale Blair, 'War and Peace, 1915-1924', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 114-138.

These tensions also filtered into conversations at a regional level. When the matter of football during war came up for discussion in south west Victoria, football clubs took the question very seriously. In May 1915, just weeks after the Gallipoli landing, the Terang Football Club voted after a lengthy meeting to continue to play in a competition against teams from Cobden and Camperdown. An opponent of the decision, club secretary A.A. Armstrong, stated that 'Football was a good sport, and a sport that he dearly loved: but there was something nearer to his heart at the present time than football, and that was the awful struggle in which the nation was engaged'.[399] It was not until the following year, when aside from the occasional charity game played in aid of the patriotic relief fund, that football in the district was practically abandoned.[400] As the war effort increased and the death of local men became an ever more present reality, the district was made increasingly aware that these men should be consider heroes for having made the ultimate sacrifice.

For those south west Victorians who made the 'supreme sacrifice', their status as local heroes was publicly chronicled for all in the community to mourn and revere. Often listed under their obituaries were their sporting credentials which acted as both an example and advertisement to other local sportsmen in the community of the kinds of men that were committed to Australia's cause. As an example, Private M. Donovan of Warrnambool 'a popular footballer, and … well known in sporting-circles' was labelled a hero by the *Warrnambool Standard* after news was received of his death in France on 27 September 1917.[401] Such acts of sacrifice were to be commended and revered by local communities as

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399 'Football and the War' *Terang Express*, 21 May 1915, p. 2.

400 'Pomborneit', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 29 July 1916, p. 4. This article reported the events of a charity match played between the Pomborneit Junior Football Club and the married men of the district raised 15/9 (15 shillings and 9 pence) for the State School Patriotic Fund.

401 'Heroes at the Front', *Warrnambool Standard*, 22 October 1917, p. 3. For other select examples of local soldiers who died at war and who were remembered as excellent footballers see 'Late Private H. Callan', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 10 March 1917, p. 3. 'The late Private Callan was some years ago the licensee … of the Commercial Hotel, Camperdown … [and] was at one time one of the best football players in the metropolis'; and 'Death on the Battlefield. Two Local Soldiers Killed', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 22 June 1916, p. 2. 'Private Arthur Millar … was of great assistance to the Camperdown Football Club and one year was awarded the medal for most unselfish play, unselfishness being one of his characteristics. … Private H.

was evident in many war-related death notices throughout the district newspapers. Private P. Keenan of Camperdown, killed in action in France on 25 September 1917, was praised for his willingness and commitment to the cause. The *Camperdown Chronicle* indicated that in death he had 'set a fine example, and one that could well be emulated'.[402] The supreme sacrifice was depicted as a badge of honour by the local newspapers who, although mourning the death of their townsmen, heralded the loss as a major contribution to the overall war effort.

By the end of 1918 news of the Armistice and the gradual return of local soldiers was met with jubilation. Reports from the local newspapers described the scenes that took place at schools, halls, and down the main streets of the various towns and communities in the district. In Framlingham, school children 'marched in precession from the school to the Mechanics Hall … each child waving a flag … on arrival at the hall, cheers were given and patriotic songs were sung by all present'.[403] The *Mortlake Dispatch* depicted similar scenes, announcing that when 'the news had been officially received from Paris, the fire-bell and school bell commenced to clang … the news was eagerly devoured and satisfaction was expressed at the complete victory achieved'.[404] The overt celebration of a 'complete victory' is significant here as the soldiers who had perished would forever be labelled heroes for their association with this final result of the war.

With the war formally concluded, families waited for the return of the brave local men that had done duty for their country and empire. When Lance-Corporal A. Poole and Privates G. McKinnon and C.M. Cowell returned home to Mortlake in December 1918, 'the welcome accorded the "boys" was of a fitting nature, and indicated to them that the people at home were

Merritt … had done yeomen service for the Camperdown Football Club and his abilities as a player were so highly thought of that a motor car was despatched from Camperdown to Melbourne for him so that he might take part in the final match for the 1914 premiership.'

402 'The Supreme Sacrifice', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 16 October 1917, p. 2.

403 'Framlingham', *Warrnambool Standard*, 16 November 1918, p. 9.

404 'Germany Surrenders', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 16 November 1918, p. 2.

fully conscious of the magnificent and splendid services rendered the empire on their behalf'.[405] The use of quotation marks which emphasised the word 'boys', hinted to readers that despite their apparent youth they were by no means framed with connotations of immaturity or innocence. The toils of war had transformed them into men. Much like the nation they represented, war had had an irrevocable impact on the way the country and the world more broadly looked at these young Australians. At both a local and national level, Australian soldiers were seen as the height of manliness and a symbolic representation of the nation's independence. The men that went to the Empire's aid and were tasked with protecting it – and by association Australia – were recognised as the finest representation of 'Australianness'.[406] As the world took note of the diggers' contribution to the war effort the feeling back home was that Anzacs were 'the custodians of nationhood'.[407] This now archetypal man was presented in the nation as a model to respect, aspire to, and cultivate so as to continue the healthy growth of Australia. Hereafter, servicemen were placed on a pedestal in Australian society, their efforts memorialised with war monuments and eulogised with the inauguration of Anzac Day commemorative services and observances in towns and cities across the nation.[408]

**Perceptions of Soldiers following the War in Rural South West Victoria**

In the years immediately following the Great War, returned servicemen continued to be held in high esteem locally. This sense of respect was articulated most prominently during and around Anzac Day commemorative services. While Anzac Day during the war had been

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405 'Honoring the Brave', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 December 1918, p. 3.

406 John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1988, pp. 113-142. During the war there was division in Australia regarding the nation's role in the war. In particular political debates and two separate referendums on the matter of conscription dominated national attention. While debate surrounding the war facilitated socio-political divisions along lines of class, ethnicity, and religion Australian soldiers during the war were revered nationally. For more detail see Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2013; and Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Third Edition), Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 156-169.

407 White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 130.

408 See Inglis, *Sacred Places*, pp. 197-250, for detailed examination of the inauguration of Anzac Day ceremonies and observances after World War I in both rural and metropolitan settings.

utilised as an event to stimulate support for the war effort, the finality of conflict and the fallout from it significantly altered the day's meaning. The evolving mood that encompassed Anzac Day commemorations paralleled a shift in the symbolic status held by the returned soldiers in the local context. Although the nation revelled in the lionisation of Anzacs as the epitome of Australian masculinity after the war, this status often competed with and complicated the evolving role of Australian men in society.[409] This shift was especially visible in rural settings, as men were increasingly expected to fill a more domesticated and dependable role in family life during the interwar period.[410]

In the first half of the 1920s, Anzac Day reports disseminated by the local newspapers regarding observance, reverence, and respect of both fallen and returned soldiers continued to perpetuate the sentiment that the towns, and the nation more generally, were indebted to the service of their local veterans.[411] During the war, the newspapers had advocated the honour associated with supreme sacrifices and heroic bravery. In contrast, the post-war recollections of the Gallipoli landing and other battles were often observed conservatively in simple services that presented a far more sombre outlook on the costs of war.[412] Often poems from local patrons published in conjunction with reports on Anzac Day church services illuminated the solemnity of the Great War's national legacy. In the *Terang Express* the closing stanzas of a poem by P.H. Clarke of Terang aptly captured localised feelings of life after the war:

> This is our Anzac Day,
>
> And here, our Aegean Sea,
>
> Which a land of youth with a heart of truth
>
> Will cherish in history.
>
> And on through the years to be,

409 Stephen Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 56, 1998, pp. 86-95.

410 Kate Murphy, 'The "Most Dependable Element of Any Country's Manhood": Masculinity and Rurality in the Great War and its Aftermath', *History Australia*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2008, pp. 72.1-72.20.

411 'Anzac Anniversary', *Terang Express*, 26 April 1921, p. 3.

412 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 1 May 1923, p. 2.

> As we grow to a nation strong,
>
> Our wealth of fame and a stainless name
>
> Shall live as a record that we played the game
>
> And triumphed o'er might and wrong.[413]

There was a sense of pride in the contribution of local men to the restoration of global peace. The local newspapers were prolific in communicating a narrative that suggested the community should embrace the memory of the war as a defining moment in the nation's development. But this feeling morphed and changed in the early 1920s as Australia, as a nation, decided just how these sacrifices should be commemorated annually.

Mary Wilson's exploration of the evolution of Anzac Day in Melbourne revealed that prior to it becoming declared a state-wide public holiday in 1925, it was in the churches that Anzac remembrance was most visibly observed.[414] This trend was similar in south west Victoria as often Anzac Day was 'observed very quietly' at local churches and state schools, while towns tended not to hold a 'general public demonstration of any kind'.[415] Yet, there was also a broader movement to establish a more secular ritual to the commemoration of the Anzacs. In 1921 for example, Prime Minister William Hughes wrote a widely distributed telegram calling for 25 April to 'be observed in a manner worthy of its solemnity and significance'.[416]

Between 1923 and 1926, Anzac Day was established in each state of Australia as a public holiday.[417] After this time, local Anzac Day commemorative services across south west Victoria began to take on a more grandiose form of remembrance with the public encouraged to attend services. Large attendances were accorded much attention from newspapers of the

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413 P.H. Clarke, 'Anzac Hymn', *Terang Express*, 22 April 1922, p. 3.

414 Mary Wilson, 'The Making of Melbourne's Anzac Day', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1974, pp. 197-209.

415 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 27 April 1923, p. 2. For other select examples of local Anzac Day services that highlight the solemnity of the occasion see 'Local and General News', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 April 1923, p. 2; and 'Anzac Memorial Service', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 April 1923, p. 4.

416 'Local and General News', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 April 1921, p. 2.

417 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 199.

region. Sub-headlines for the 1928 and 1929 Anzac Day Service reports in the *Terang Express* read 'Large Gathering at Terang Public Hall' and 'Crowded Attendance at Terang Public Hall' respectively. [418] These headlines stressed the far-reaching appeal of the day. The tone of the speeches as reported by the local newspapers continued to echo attitudes of pride associated with the Gallipoli landing and what that event meant to the shaping of the nation's identity. Reverend J.P. Hamilton opened his 1929 Anzac Day address to the Terang public by proclaiming that 'Fourteen years ago … the name of Australia sprang suddenly, very suddenly, into prominence, and our men gained fame and a place in the annals of war'.[419] In characterising the nature of the Australian soldiers, Hamilton noted that their sacrifice should not be left to die with them, but should be an example which those that are left should emulate and continue. The emulation of the fallen soldiers in civilian life was a central theme to many of these addresses. In 1930, on behalf of the returned soldiers, Basil Nehill urged his audience 'fit yourselves to be decent citizens, to uphold the glorious traditions of our fallen comrades'.[420] Yet, while the soldiers who had fallen continued to be admired after the war concluded, there were signs that returned soldiers were not garnering the same level of admiration. Indeed some of those who returned home were pitied or even demeaned as injury or failing health impeded their self-sufficiency and threatened their masculine esteem.

**The Evolution of Revered Figures in Rural South West Victoria**

The pre and interwar periods in Australia saw a distinct shift in the perceptions of the nation's identity, especially as concerns of racial degeneracy continued to circulate.[421] To quote Richard White, 'nagging doubts about the fitness of the race and the challenge posed by other vigorous

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418 'Annual Anzac Service', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1928, p. 6; and 'Anzac Commemoration Service', *Terang Express*, 23 April 1929, p. 1. Noteworthy is that although Anzac Day had been declared a public holiday since 1925 in Victoria, some commemoration services were held on the Sunday prior to 25 April.

419 'Anzac Commemoration Service', *Terang Express*, 23 April 1929, p. 1.

420 'Tributes to our Glorious Dead', *Terang Express*, 29 April 1930, p. 1.

421 See, for example, White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 125-139.

races were sharpened by mounting evidence that the white race was not as virile as supposed'.[422] To prevent such degeneracy, an archetypal white male Australian-born figure was sought out as an exemplar of national strength and progress. In addition, it was hoped that such a figure would provide Australia with a national identity which could be presented to the rest of the world. Catriona Elder has argued that national identity has been invented through various narratives of Australian heritage and that through a sense of commonality, ideas of nationhood are often based on '"types" of people'.[423] Whether labelled 'The Coming Man' or 'The National Type', there has been multiple ideas of what the archetypal Australian looked like during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, what was clear in the ideal was a blatant patriarchal exclusion of anything to do with women, Indigenous Australians, or migrant minorities, all of which were perceived as potential threats that might weaken white Australian progress and growth.[424] The privileging of Anglo-Australian men as symbols of nationalism reflected hierarchical social constructs of gender order that were prominent within Australia at the time. R.W. Connell's work on the historical dimensions of masculinity is helpful here, as she has observed that there are multiple types of masculinity, each one serving a specific time and place.[425] Following Connell, it is possible to trace the rise and fall of a number of types of masculinity and associated exemplars of manliness throughout Australian history.

Before the Anzac soldier was heralded a national hero, men of the land – pioneers, farming settlers, and the bush workers – were considered the backbone of Australia's development (as outlined in Chapter Three ).[426] Prior to war, these were Australia's 'Coming

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422 White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 81.

423 Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity*, Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2007, pp. 26-28.

424 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 76-84. For the discussion of exclusionary practices in the formation of national identity see also Elder, *Being Australian*, pp. 28-29.

425 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Second Edition), Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005.

426 See Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Second Edition), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966; and J.B. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 71, 1978, pp. 316-337.

Man' who would define the nation.[427] Farming pioneers were celebrated for 'the taming of the new environment to man's use … not working merely for themselves or their families, but for us – "That ye might inherit the land"'.[428] For decades this 'Coming Man' was admired for his resilience and toil on the land, but in 1914 the British motherland's call to arms attracted many of these types of men to war, and in battle they became diggers. The quintessential Australian soldier, many of whom made the 'supreme sacrifice', emerged from the Great War as the newest representative symbol of nationhood which was to be emulated by all future generations of young Australians.[429] In assuming the status as Australia's model of masculinity, there was a sense that returned soldiers should be rewarded and compensated for their sacrifice, as opposed to being supported through charity or 'welfare which smacked of dependency (and femininity)'.[430]

While monuments, medals, and services acknowledged veterans' efforts of the past in a public domain, there were other forms of reward that were aimed at utilising the purportedly innate and virtuous qualities possessed by the diggers that would continue the nation's progress. Qualities such as independence, resilience, resourcefulness, and coolness were central to the diggers' supposed aptitude, much the same as the nineteenth century pioneers, squatters, and bushmen. Henceforth, an apparently fitting mode of recompense offered to ex-serviceman for their sacrifice was the opportunity to enter into a farming land settlement scheme which gave them access to small allotments of acreage that were opened across rural

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427 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 76-79.

428 J.B. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', p. 316.

429 For an in-depth critical analysis of the militarisation of Australia's history through exploration of how the Anzac became such a central identifying symbol of Australia's nationhood and the ramifications of its creation on the cultural conscience of the nation see Lake and Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?*. See also Bruce Scates, Rae Frances, Keir Reeves, Frank Bongiorno, Martin Crotty, Gareth Knapman, Graham Seal, Annette Becker, Andrew Reeves, Tim Soutphommasane, Kevin Blackburn, Stephen J. Clarke, Peter Stanley, Andrew Hoskins, Jay Winter, Carl Bridge, Laura James, Rebecca Wheatley, Leah Riches, Alexandra McCosker and Simon Sleight, 'Anzac Day at Home and Abroad: Towards a History of Australia's National Day', *History Compass*, vol. 10, no. 7, 2012, pp. 523-536.

430 Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia', pp. 86-95. See also Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 118-142.

Australia. As the newly incarnated version of the nation's 'Coming Man' it was expected that the transition from battle fields to agricultural fields would be seamless.[431] As Marilyn Lake noted in her research of the soldier settlement scheme in Victoria between 1915 and 1938:

> many argued that soldiers would succeed as settlers … because they were consummate Australians. The bushman was 'the stuff of which Anzacs were made', so it was hoped the Anzac was the stuff of which successful settlers would be made.[432]

For rural Victoria and particularly in the south west, the soldier settlement scheme attracted a number of veterans to the region who looked to start a new life for themselves and their families on the land. But their impact in the district was relatively negligible after World War I. Despite receiving these masculinised rewards of land and settlement they 'could not hide the difficult problems of transition and adjustment' back in to everyday society.[433] With limited prosperity on the small allotments of land, some of which were later deemed unsuitable for farming, many of the soldier settlers found it difficult to engage and foster relationships in their local towns and communities, instead they tended to band together with other soldier settlers and form their own collective groups for support.[434] In the 1930s, more than a decade after the first soldier settlers arrived in the south west district, the prominence of returned soldiers as resembling a 'national type' that would continue Australian prosperity and progress did not live up to the lofty expectations set down by the nation in this localised setting.

The blame for the failure of the soldier settlement scheme was placed predominantly on the government, but the failure also contradicted the supposed characteristics of the diggers' adaptability and resilience.[435] In light of the evident financial difficulties associated with the

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431 For further detail on the evolution of Australia's 'Coming Man' during the late colonial period see White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 76-84.

432 Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria 1915-38*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 37. This work by Lake provides insight into the political motivations, strategies, and failures of the soldier settlement scheme across Victoria during the interwar period.

433 Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia', pp. 86-95.

434 Monica Keneley, 'The Dying Town Syndrome' in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton: Monash University Press, 2005, p. 10.10.

435 Lake, *The Limits of Hope*, pp. 195-228. Lake provides a detailed analysis of the fallout from the failure of the soldier settlement scheme in Victoria.

scheme, research by James Kirby has suggested that not all aspects of the soldier settlements scheme should be considered a 'failure'.[436] The labels of 'failure' and 'success' in regards to the scheme are contextually bound. While financial outcomes were used to determine success or failure, other aspects of community development and the satisfaction associated with the perseverance to cope in times of difficulty have been underplayed in the construction of the soldier settlement narrative.[437] It was, however, the financial aspect of the soldier settlement scheme that was most publicised during the interwar period, so that where once soldiers were seen as the protector of the nation and the British Empire, they were now becoming seen as a burden on the taxpayer. As early as 1924 the *Camperdown Chronicle* reported that soldier settlers were £3,000,000 behind on their repayments in Victoria alone, 'a most perplexing problem', according to the Victorian Minister for Lands, Mr Henry Bailey.[438]

It may be speculative to claim that the failure of soldier settlement alone diminished the status of the digger in rural Victorian society, but it is possible that the various issues associated with the scheme in conjunction with the prevalent health issues faced by many returned soldiers contributed to their lowering on the social pedestal.[439] A common ailment of many returned soldiers was tuberculosis or 'T.B.'. In preparation for the 1929 Anzac Day service, the Returned Soldiers' Association advised the public that although war pensions had been introduced to support injured soldiers, many of those affected with tuberculosis were not

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436 James Kirby, 'Beyond Failure and Success: The Soldier Settlement Scheme on Ercildoune Road', *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, no. 14, 2015.

437 Kirby, 'Beyond Failure and Success'. There is a consensus across many local histories of districts in south west Victoria that despite the lack of success experienced by the soldier settlement scheme following World War I it did provide a geographic and systematic foundation which aided the same scheme to see more beneficial results following World War II. See, for example, Pamela McGregor and Lynton Oaten, *Mount Elephant: A History of the Derrinallum and Darlington District*, Warrnambool: Pamela McGregor and Lynton Oaten, 1985, pp. 18-23, Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace: A Tapestry of Mortlake Shire*, Mortlake: Shire of Mortlake, 1985, pp. 76-78 and 96-98; and Robert McLaren, *Ballangeich and Ellerslie: Bridging the Years*, South Melbourne: Robert McLaren, 2012, pp. 244-261.

438 Telegraph, 'Soldier Settlers', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 14 August 1924, p. 3.

439 Accounts detailing some of the other struggles faced and issues associated with the loss experienced by returned soldiers and their families can be found in Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory, and Wartime Bereavement in Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; and Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War*, Kensington: UNSW Press, 2009.

covered by the scheme and hence required support and donations. Reverend M. McQueen noted that 'in regard to the living [soldiers], there still remained much to be done, and he hoped that what was due to the returned soldier would not be denied him'.[440] While the services and reports accentuated the contribution of fallen soldiers, often referred to as the 'Glorious Dead' or the 'Nation's Dead Heroes', the returned soldiers were offered only a supplementary form of remembrance.[441] 'Citizens Remember The Sacrifice' read one local newspaper headline, while a much smaller subtitle in the same article instructed the public to 'Remember The Living Too' as if to suggest that the returned soldiers were at risk of being forgotten on Anzac Day.[442]

By the early 1930s local veterans in Terang recognised a genuine shift in the attitudes towards ex-serviceman in their rural community. Their primary concern was that the hallowed memories associated with Anzacs and Anzac Day itself were beginning to decline in significance and that their sacrifices and that of their fallen comrades were being forgotten. In 1932 the *Terang Express* noted that the Terang branch of the Returned Soldiers' League (RSL) harboured concerns that Anzac Day was not being observed in a dignified manner by the general public:

> Outside of attending the sacred observance, private citizens do not observe Anzac Day in the spirit which should be conveyed by that anniversary of mourning, returned soldiers say … Anzac Day, it was pointed out, was not a day for either ordinary business or pleasure. It was a time for deep thought, and with the exception of essential public services no work nor holiday jaunts should take place on the day of a nation's mourning.[443]

The local returned soldiers that had been revered after the war for characterising the ideal Australian with virtues such as loyalty, manliness, dutifulness, and willingness to serve and

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440 'Tributes to our Glorious Dead', *Terang Express*, 29 April 1930, p. 1.
441 'Tributes to our Glorious Dead', *Terang Express*, 29 April 1930, p. 1; and 'Anzac Day Tribute to Nation's Dead Heroes', *Terang Express*, 26 April 1932.
442 'Anzac Day Tribute to Nation's Dead Heroes', *Terang Express*, 26 April 1932.
443 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1932, p. 4.

sacrifice themselves for the good of the Australia and British Empire, now appeared reliant on the local press to re-establish support and their prominence within the local community.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, emotive adverts in the local press that implored people to attend local Anzac Day services were emblematic of a shift in the day's significance. For example, the Terang and District Returned Soldiers Social Club earnestly appealed 'to every Digger to attend and make these services a success … Maintain the spirit of the fallen Anzac'.[444] As this advertisment indicated, there were concerns that even the war veterans themselves were showing signs of remembrance fatigue. The heroic narratives of the fallen soldiers that established the digger as the symbol of nationhood were to be preserved throughout the interwar years, but the soldiers that returned home were allegedly no longer living in the same manner and therefore could no longer be emulated with the same reverence, locally or nationally. This is not to suggest that they were not respected individuals, but it was apparent that the national perception that existed around the digger was not without its complications.[445] Fallen soldiers were immortalised as their death and sacrifice was linked to the major war victory. By comparison, as peace fell over the nation in the years after the war, the soldiers who survived were associated with a number of failings. Although still honoured in annual services, the often sick, ill, and poor returned soldiers were no longer celebrated as 'specimens of typical manhood'.[446]

As returned soldiers and the press began to make note of declining public support of Anzac Day services, there was a sense that the stories that related to war now only truly resonated with the soldiers themselves. As John Rickard put it, anything associated with

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444 'Anzac Day', *Terang Express*, 25 April 1930, p. 5.

445 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 125-157. White explores various factors that contributed to both the rise of the digger as the national 'type' and a symbol of Australian identity as well as the gradual drift away from these ideas of specifying a 'type' associated with racial identities. During World War II a major factor that began a declining trend in the use of a national 'type' to define the Australian identity was the fact that it appeared 'uncomfortably close' to the Nazi ideals of developing an Aryan master race. See also Booth and Tatz, *One-Eyed*, pp. 115-122, for insights into ideas surrounding Australia's pursuit of an identity separate to that of the motherland Britain.

446 'The Red Cross Appeal', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1938, p. 4.

Anzacs 'only had full meaning for the Diggers themselves'.[447] This feeling was illustrated by a *Terang Express* advertisement for an Anzac Day service that appealed to returned soldiers to attend by stating 'Remember, this is the one day in the year that belongs to you'.[448] At the bottom of the same advertisement, in much smaller text, the general public were only 'cordially invited' to attend services, reinforcing the idea that Anzac Day services prioritised soldiers.[449] These sentiments as well as the relative peace that ensued during the 1920s and 1930s created a social distance between the local public and returned soldiers. Cultivating model citizens based on the role model of the soldier seemed unattainable and unnecessary – unless war was to return.[450]

If the Anzac soldier's status as the idyllic Australian was in decline, who or what type of Australian would replace them – if any at all? There has been little academic work undertaken which examines which iconic Australian figures received the proverbial baton of the 'national type' from the soldier. In his classic work, *Inventing Australia*, Richard White has suggested that during the 1930s the national 'type' was found in a multitude of different realms throughout Australian life, but that each figure was not necessarily generalisable to the entire nation.[451] The most prominent example was the Bondi lifesaver of the 1930s, a popular figure who aptly reflected the values of manliness in Australia that were advocated by society. Like the previously lionised Australian soldier, lifesavers were characterised as having 'courage, coolness, initiative … sacrifice', attributes fittingly representative of an 'ideal' white Australian man.[452]

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447 See Rickard, *Australia*, p. 127.
448 'Anzac Day', *Terang Express*, 25 April 1930, p. 5.
449 'Anzac Day', *Terang Express*, 25 April 1930, p. 5.
450 Of course, war would return and become a reality of the early 1940s, which would reignite the model soldier type as a reverential and relevant figure to aspire to. But during the 1920s and 1930s, while peace was prevalent, the pedestal upon which the soldier was placed was somewhat diminished.
451 White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 154-157.
452 White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 157.

However, the limitation in positioning the Bondi lifesaver as a quintessential masculine expression of Australianness was that this image only served parts of Australian society. More specifically, the lifesaver served 'the city rather than the bush' in terms of reflecting an Australian identity.[453] In the ensuing decades the burly, bronzed, Bondi surf lifesaver would become a national icon which international audiences would recognise as synonymous with Australia. Yet, during the interwar years, the relevance of surf lifesavers to all members of society was more or less limited to communities possessing a beach culture.

That the celebrated masculine identity of the surf lifesaver only tended to resonate within a specific context fits appropriately with Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity which connotes that an ideal type of masculinity is constructed and dependant on the context which encompasses it.[454] A similar pattern of localised reverence was occurring in rural south west Victoria during this interwar era. A close reading of the local press revealed that Australian Rules footballers in the district reflected idealistic cultural attributes valued by the respective small-town rural communities. As the local newspapers channelled broader social and cultural patterns of white middle-class Australian society, the district's football competitions provided a platform for journalists to project for their readers more relevant and contextually meaningful role models.

After a lull in football's local development during the war, football in the district returned to its former popularity in the 1920s with the press implicitly reminding audiences of the code's capacity to communicate ideals of manliness. The local press championed exceptional football players in the district for acts, attitudes, and behaviours that the newspapers tended to advertise as masculine and, arguably more importantly, gentlemanly. In essence, these local footballers like the digger or the bushman that preceded them, were viewed

453 White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 157.
454 Connell, *Masculinities*.

as relatable and representative figures capable of upholding traditional values of an Australian 'type'. Harnessing the resurgent popularity in football, local newspapers preserved the idea that the game provided a site of manliness that the next generation of the local community should aspire to, as the game was seen to cultivate the type of men that were both 'footballer and gentleman'.[455] It is to a selection of narratives surrounding such admired players that this chapter now turns.

**'Go Out and Play in the Colin Watson Spirit'**

In rural south west Victoria, the peaceful post-war landscape provided cultural space for a more relevant 'type' of Australian masculinity to be sought out. Football presented an appropriate fit. Football had a prominent resonance throughout the district, not only for players and officials, but for the local followers of the game. It meant something to the public, and for the younger generation it represented an attainable and replicable form of masculinity. The newspapers implicitly highlighted this connection and advocated the exemplary manliness of some of the local players. These local footballers may not have grown to the status of attracting the gaze of an international audience, but they were worthy of drawing a prominent gaze from their local communities. Additionally, although footballers were not likely the only relevant masculine role models in the district, what is clear from the local newspapers is that they did provide at least one prominent example of manliness which the local community could understand, appreciate, and attempt to emulate.

For the local press that covered Australian Rules football in south west Victoria, the senior, experienced, and popular players were frequently given high praise for not only their ability on the field, but their strength of character and sense of citizenship off it. During the 1930s, one of the most popular and revered players in the Hampden Football League was the

[455] 'Frank Northeast, Doyen of Footballers, Retires', *Cobden Times*, 4 August 1937, p. 5.

former St Kilda footballer and 1925 Brownlow Medallist, Colin Watson.[456] Watson started his junior football career with South Warrnambool before attracting attention and offers to play for the St Kilda Football Club in the VFL, which he accepted.[457] He quickly became one of the leading proponents of the game at the elite level. He would eventually return to his country roots and captain-coach the South Warrnambool football team in 1930. After another stint at St Kilda between 1933 and the start of the 1935 season he returned to South Warrnambool for the remainder of 1935. The following year he transferred to a rival Hampden Football League team, the Cobden Football Club, where he played and coached intermittently until the end of the 1939 season.

Through Colin Watson the local newspapers created a representation of how a footballer and man of the community should look and behave both on and off the field. As Watson entered the twilight years of his career at Cobden, the press reports from the *Cobden Times* as well as the newspapers of neighbouring towns regularly applauded him for his sportsmanlike conduct. In 1939 the *Camperdown Chronicle* praised Watson and stated that he:

> is a pattern of sportsmanship, which many young footballers could copy with advantage. Though Sutherland [Watson's opponent for the day] held too many guns for him on Saturday, there was no semblance of spite in his play and, when he visited the Magpie dressing-room at the finish there was a ring of sincerity in his congratulations. Watson showed that he can take a licking without rancour, and that is something that cannot be said of every footballer.[458]

The comments from the *Camperdown Chronicle* are revealing in that credit is given to a player based on their character not on their physical prowess during the game. In the context of the

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456 The Brownlow Medal is considered the highest individual honour a footballer in the Victorian Football League (now Australian Football League) can win. It is awarded to the player adjudged the fairest and best during the home and away season each year.

457 Russell Holmesby and Jim Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers* (Ninth Edition), Seaford: Bas Publishing, 2011, p. 893. Watson's VFL career was marred by some controversy due to difficulties he experienced with the VFL when his application for a playing clearance from St Kilda to Stawell in 1926 was refused. For more detail on this and its role in encouraging the establishment of the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL) see Paul Daffey, *Behind the Goals: The History of the Victorian Country Football League*, Ballarat East: Ten Bags Press, 2017, pp. 28-39.

458 'Football Spotlights' *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 July 1939, p. 1.

1939 season, the win that Camperdown achieved over Cobden, essentially on the back of Sutherland's match winning performance against Watson, was considered important for their chances of making the finals. This point is prefaced by the reporter first and foremost, but in addressing Watson's on-field demeanour in the face of a disappointing loss, there is a clear endorsement of a specific 'type' of man that should be copied by onlookers.

In surmising that Watson was 'a pattern of sportsmanship, which many young footballers could copy with advantage', the local newspapers championed what they considered a preferable type of manliness to be emulated.[459] This identification and promotion of a specific type of manliness is further reflective of Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity'; a model of gendered hierarchy that is preserved through the exaltation of a masculine type that is specific to the 'current' cultural ideals of a particular locale.[460] As Connell explains 'to be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes'.[461] In a contemporary setting, Connell argued that the media is often responsible for creating these culturally relevant archetypes of masculinity.[462] Rural south west Victorian newspapers of the 1930s appeared to play a similar role in the idolisation of local footballers. Specifically, they celebrated local footballers that portrayed attributes perceived as culturally relevant to a localised perception of manliness. Notably, the newspapers that evoked, and were influenced by, dominant cultural beliefs of place and time guided readers through exalted representations of local football players. The modern 1930s footballer was idolised for embodying traits that reflected a turn to modernised Anglo-Australian perceptions of civility and fair-play, while the pre-war image as described by the likes of 'Old Eaglehawk' (from

459 'Football Spotlights' *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 July 1939, p. 1.
460 For a detailed explanation of hegemonic masculinity, see R.W. Connell, 'An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of Hegemonic Masculinity', in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (eds), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1990, pp. 83-95; and Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 77-78.
461 Connell, 'An Iron Man', p. 94.
462 Connell, 'An Iron Man', p. 94.

Chapter Three) had drawn more on the physically rugged toughness of players. This shift again highlights the idea that 'at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted'.[463]

Across the various local newspapers throughout the 1930s there are multiple accounts that detail the virtuous nature of Watson's character on and off the football field. His manner and style of play was revered by the football community. This was highlighted when in 1939, upon his absence from a Cobden versus South Warrnambool match, Ern Forster who acted as captain-coach in his stead was quoted as saying to the Cobden players, 'Now, chaps, go out and play in the Colin Watson spirit'.[464] The quality of Colin Watson's character is conspicuous throughout the local newspapers, but it is important to note that he was not the only player to be highlighted for their 'manly' spirit. Throughout the 1930s there was a prominent 'type' of footballer who was given regular distinction and made obvious to readers.

To comment on a player's 'gentlemanly' conduct on the field seemed, throughout the local newspapers, to be one of the highest accolades that could be attributed to a footballer or person more generally. At the conclusion of the match in which Forster urged his team mates to embody the 'Colin Watson spirit', the Cobden president Mr Monk noted that the game had indeed been played in 'an excellent spirit', and that much credit was due to the South Warrnambool coach, Jack Evans, whose performance according to Monk had 'been one of the most magnificent he had ever witnessed and he had certainly not seen a more gentlemanly account of himself given by any footballer'.[465] Praise of this nature was frequently reproduced in the local press and it promoted the wholesome nature of the game throughout the district. It is interesting to note that Watson and Evans (both products of country towns) had played significant portions of their football careers in the elite metropolitan VFL competition. Watson,

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463 Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77.
464 Cited in 'Cobden Jottings', *Terang Express*, 7 July 1939, p. 8.
465 'Cobden Jottings', *Terang Express*, 7 July 1939, p. 8.

originally from South Warrnambool, played several seasons for St Kilda, and Evans was recruited from Minyip to the Geelong Football Club where he played 149 games.[466] While to have played in the VFL was seen as an impressive by-line to these players' resumes it was not a prerequisite to the social construction of their revered status in the district.[467] Their experience and football aptitude commanded respect from opposition and supporters, but as these passages from the press articulated, their attitude and respected manner of play was equally celebrated. In this rural setting footballers were exalted for their sportsmanship and fair play, however these were not the only traits of value to the community. Other footballers that had preferred to dedicate their playing days to their home clubs, rather than taking their talents to the prestigious professional leagues in the city, were also distinguished in the newspapers for attributes such as loyalty, durability, and commitment.

Dave King, for example, had a playing career that lasted over 24 years for the Mortlake Football Club and a major claim to his popularity was the fact that he had, unlike Evans or Watson, 'refused many Melbourne League offers', over the course of his career.[468] He had also, in his later playing days, come out of retirement on occasion – it may be said reluctantly – in order to help the Mortlake team fill the playing the list when they were short on playing

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466 Holmesby and Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, pp. 253, and 893.

467 In some respects these players were admired in spite of their prior VFL experience. The professionalised leagues of the city had a reputation for fostering a more ruthless, win-at-all-costs approach to the game which was not endorsed in this rural setting. In the competitive metropolitan context of the interwar years there was growing concern of excessive violence on the field with some players criticised for their approach to the game. One such player Jack Dyer, who would later be known as 'Captain Blood', became infamous for the recklessness and physicality of his playing style during his VFL career at the Richmond Football Club. For example, the *Weekly Times* stated the following: 'Dyer's robust methods sometimes brings roars of disapproval from opposing barrackers, but he does not deliberately play the man … Occasionally an opponent who has the misfortune to be in his road will be bowled over but such incidents are inseparable from football. And a player of Dyer's calibre has to take every bit as much as he gives'. *Weekly Times*, 16 August 1941, p. 39. From the perspective of the city newspapers these characteristics were valued and part of the game, but from the rural perspective these characteristics were not generally advocated by the local press. Discussion of the inherent roughness associated with football during this period and how it was interpreted and debated in this rural setting is discussed further in Chapter Six of this thesis. For a succinct biography of Dyer's VFL playing career see Holmesby and Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, pp. 239-240.

468 'D. King to Retire', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 22 September 1936, p. 4.

personnel.[469] Upon his first retirement after winning the 1931 Hampden Football League premiership with Mortlake, he was awarded a framed picture of the premiership team 'as a mark of esteem in which he is held by followers of the game, both on and off the field'.[470] As the Mortlake Football Club president explained, the presentation to King was from players and members who 'desired to thank him for his magnificent service' to the club for over a decade.[471] The idea of a man providing a service to a community organisation such as the football club would have also been reminiscent of the service and duty of many men that served the Empire during the Great War. Ideals of service and sacrifice were still at the forefront of the ideal 'type' of man, however in this instance the commitment and loyalty was admired on a local, rather than national, scale.

Extended 'service' was a hallmark of the ideal footballer and another player that was admired for his durability during the 1930s was Frank Northeast of Cobden. Northeast reportedly played over 310 games for Cobden and acted as both captain and coach at varying points in his career. The *Cobden Times* proclaimed that Northeast was the 'Doyen of Footballers'.[472] This appraisal was offered by the local press following his retirement after '19 years of service'. Again, the word 'service' is emphasised by the press, and so too was the fact that he, like King, 'refused offers to play with Melbourne league teams'.[473] It could be queried that perhaps King and Northeast were not capable of playing at the next level; hence their resistance to moving to the city for football, but this was not communicated by the local press. On the contrary, Northeast was considered more than capable of playing and matching the

469 See for example 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 May 1937, p. 3. The match report noted the following: 'With fine sporting spirit – much against his inherent desire – Dave King was requisitioned to help the side. He proved useful as ever'.

470 'Veteran Footballer Honoured', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 19 February 1932, p. 3.

471 'Veteran Footballer Honoured', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 19 February 1932, p. 3.

472 'Frank Northeast, Doyen of Footballers, Retires', *Cobden Times*, 4 August 1937, p. 5.

473 'Frank Northeast, Doyen of Footballers, Retires', *Cobden Times*, 4 August 1937, p. 5. Like King, although Northeast stated that he was retiring from football, he would return to the field to assist the club in fielding a team when short, thereby prolonging his 'service' to the club. Advertisements in the *Cobden Times* indicate that Frank Northeast ran and owned a Hairdressers and Tobacconist which doubled as a Billiard Saloon in Cobden throughout his playing career.

metropolitan standard, however he did not pursue this career and the *Cobden Times* honoured his loyalty to the club by stating:

> no doubt that had his ambitions led him to the League he would have thrilled the city crowds with his glorious dashes and brilliant one-handed pick-ups as much as he does their country cousins.[474]

In Northeast, the *Cobden Times* saw not only a supremely talented footballer but also a person that set a standard for the model citizen. According to the *Cobden Times*, throughout his 'service' to the club, Northeast was considered 'a model of football rectitude every young player should copy' and as leader of the club he had 'always given a great example to his men'.[475] Role models and devoted citizens of their respective towns, players of the ilk of Northeast, King, Evans, and Watson were placed on social pedestals by the local press. They were frequently praised for their on-field performances, but what separated them from the other players in the competition, at least as perceived through the press, were gestures of sportsmanship and generosity off the field.

In a period of economic difficulty, even as the depression began to ease in the late 1930s, any form of donation received by the clubs was acknowledged. Secretaries or officials of the various clubs frequently asked the local newspapers to publish lists of donors.[476] Monetary donations were well received, but the donation of service as was provided by men such as Watson and Northeast during their time as captain-coach were publicised in a more grandiose manner. Under the laws of the various competitions throughout the district, it was common that only coaches were eligible to receive remuneration for their services to a club in

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474 'Cobden Defeated in Scrambling Match', *Cobden Times*, 5 May 1937, p. 5. The use of the term 'League' in this instance refers to the Victorian Football League.

475 'Cobden Defeated in Scrambling Match', *Cobden Times*, 5 May 1937, p. 5.

476 See for example 'Donations to Camperdown Club', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 April 1934, p. 2; 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 9 May 1930, p. 4; 'Football Donation', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 2 June 1937, p. 2; and 'Cobden Football Club', *Cobden Times*, 26 May 1937, p. 7.

a playing capacity.[477] Throughout the 1930s players from the metropolitan competitions were often enticed to coach at country clubs with payments frequently superior to VFL player wages. However, in the eyes of the local press the quintessential 'gentleman' of country football was willing to forfeit payment to lessen the financial burden on their respective club and take on the role of coach in an honorary capacity. In 1937, the Cobden Football Club had approached various VFA and VFL listed players with advertisements for a paid coaching position with the senior team. When, on the eve of the season, no player had been found to coach, it was decided by the committee to offer Frank Northeast the position, and he accepted 'on the provision that it be made an honorary one'.[478] Rather than exploit his vulnerable club, Northeast opted to generously donate his time and 'service' even though he was near the end of his playing career. It was expected that his extensive playing experience would account for any potential waning physical attributes. It was unclear what his motivations were for such an action, but regardless of the impetus behind such a gesture it was apparently worthy of praise from the *Cobden Times*.

Colin Watson 'proved himself a great sport' too, when in 1939 he made a similar gesture by refusing payments worth £6 a match to coach the Cobden team. When the Cobden president revealed this fact to the attendees at the end of year football club dinner, the news was received with '(cheers)' according to the *Cobden Times* report, a sign that Watson's generosity was significant in nature and appreciated by members of the football community.[479] Aside from the obvious act of generosity, a likely explanation for the grand appreciation offered to Watson was that it identified him as portraying idyllic sentiments of amateurism. Amateurism, the idea of playing a sport for the love, moral, and physical benefit of the game rather than a payment, was inextricably linked to traditional British and middle-class ideals of

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477 'Western District Football League', *Terang Express*, 26 March 1929, p. 3. This report of the 1929 Western District Football League annual meeting of delegates noted that the only player that could receive remuneration was a coach.

478 'Football Notes', *Cobden Times*, 21 April 1937, p. 1.

479 'Cobden Footballers Entertained at Dinner by President', *Cobden Times*, 5 October 1939, p. 5.

gentlemanliness which still appeared to carry weight in this rural Victorian context of the 1930s. This is evinced by the fact that although the elite football competitions in Melbourne were beginning to come to terms with the professionalisation of the code, rural football competitions in Victoria remained primarily amateur in nature.[480]

From the examples above, it was clear that the local newspapers associated football with a conception of manliness that tended to promote white male middle-class Australian values. Australia's reputation as an independent nation had been strengthened following the war, yet ideals of manliness in sport still remained relatively similar to those celebrated in British sport. This British model of sporting manliness had been preserved from previous generations, and during the 1930s local newspapers highlighted aspects of loyalty, durability, generosity, amateurism, and sportsmanship, more so than simple strength and resilience. These latter attributes were no doubt still valued, but without the same emphasis as had been apparent during football's formative years throughout the district. Martin Crotty has noted that public schools of the late nineteenth century had always promoted values of fair play, loyalty, acceptance of victory and defeat in their boys, but as war became an ever present reality for Australians, the tone of these traits became 'more allied to militarist purposes'.[481] In the post-war rural football competitions of south west Victoria, where the stakes were not as life and death as war, there was a sense that football promoted the development of a white middle-class Australian conception of gentlemanliness which favoured ideals of fair play and

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480 For detailed historical analysis on the link between British values of amateurism and their impact on Australian sporting identity see Erik Nielsen, *Sport in the British World, 1900-1930: Amateurism and National Identity in Australasia and Beyond*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Ideals of amateurism in rural south west Victoria during the interwar period is explored in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis. For details on the evolution of professionalism and player payments that crept into in Australian Rules football competitions in Melbourne see Rob Hess, 'The Victorian Football League Takes Over, 1897-1914', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 93-95.

481 Martin Crotty, 'Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 17, nos 2-3, 2000, p. 24.

sportsmanship. Working with this model, local press described the highly regarded players of the local football competitions in a manner that advocated this amateur-styled gentleman.

Other gestures that characterised the 'footballer and gentleman' and that often received courteous acknowledgement from the local press was the act of players in a losing team, often the coach or captain, going out of their way to congratulate the winning team. Just one of many examples came in 1933 when South Warrnambool lost the Hampden Football League grand final by a solitary goal. 'South Warrnambool, through their captain H. Hawkins, who has proved himself a fine example of the clean, sporting type of player, were the first to congratulate the victors' Cobden on winning the premiership.[482] Although the act of congratulating opponents after a match was by no means unique to rural football or seen as unusual, the regularity with which such behaviour was recorded by the local press reminded readers of the virtues of the ideal rural footballer, a 'footballer and gentleman' who could uphold the 'standards' of the rural community.

**Conclusion**

The Anzac legend is synonymous with narratives of Australia's national identity. The sacrifices made were recognised globally and as it had been in the history of other nations, war provided a defining moment in Australia's development. The Anzac soldier was honoured in a grandiose manner both locally and nationally. The soldiers that did return from the Great War were rewarded with opportunities that were deemed fitting and which would likely allow them to maintain their celebrated status in society. A prime example was the government-supported soldier settlement scheme which brought some returned soldiers to south west Victoria.

As the years passed, events such as Anzac Day commemorations began to highlight a growing divide between those who died and those who returned. The fallen remained an ideal

[482] 'Football', *Terang Express*, 19 September 1933, p. 4.

to be emulated, yet at the same time the status of those soldiers who returned began to fade. In south west Victoria, the way in which the returned soldier was presented in the press created an aura of financial dependence and pity from the local community due to war-related injuries and illness. Through no fault of their own, returned soldiers were presented as burdensome rather than beneficial to rural communities. This corroding perception of soldiers as the national type in the context of rural communities was enhanced by narratives of failure that encompassed the soldier settlement scheme. A complicated story framed a failure to succeed in an environment where it was expected success would come naturally to these returned 'Coming Men'.

At the same time as the returned soldiers' fall from grace, local newspapers emphasised other domains of society where masculine ideals flourished. During the 1930s, localised embodiments of the ideal man appeared to become more relevant for local communities than the nationally recognised digger. For rural south west Victoria, football remained popular through a period when life was complicated by the echoes of war and the struggle of the depression years, but football was preserved as a site where manliness thrived. The perception of manliness had altered significantly from pre-war to post-war, but the preserved sense that football in the district produced and harboured gentlemanly characters was promoted by local newspapers. While pioneering ideals of toughness and resilience were strongly linked to pre-war football, the local newspapers in the post-war period preferred to underline manliness that was characterised by acts of sportsmanship and fair play. Rather than the frequent metaphor of football as a form of warfare, football became seen as something better than war, a vigorous physical pursuit that could cultivate fair-minded and civil members of society. For a short time at least, football was seen as a better way of producing good manly citizens. Acts of generosity and loyalty were heralded by the local newspapers, and fielding men that exhibited such attributes raised the prestige of the club and by association the town they represented.

Players like Colin Watson, Frank Northeast, and Dave King were presented in the local press as the epitome of citizenship and manliness through their display of loyalty, fairness, and durability in representing their local teams. During the 1920s and 1930s the status of these players in the local community was highlighted in a way that encouraged readers to look up to them with admiration and nurture a community that replicated the players' esteem. Football's prominence in the local newspapers and in the district more generally provided a relevant platform for which the 'ideal' model of Australianness was displayed and celebrated on a local scale.

# Chapter Five

## ‘A Splendid Citizen’: Interwar Monumental Memorialisation of Football Identities in Rural South West Victoria

> Camperdown’s Sympathy.
>
> There’s a cloud overshadows Mount Leura,
>
> Camperdown in gloom is clad;
>
> We have lost our township’s idol,
>
> A bright winsome and well-loved lad.[483]
>
> *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 May 1933, p. 7.

### Introduction

On 9 September 1933, South Warrnambool and Mortlake journeyed to Camperdown’s Leura Recreation Reserve to play for a place in the 1933 Hampden Football League Grand Final. Although the Camperdown team was not part of the match, it was the most important match played at the ground that year. The pre-game build-up promised a large attendance with the *Camperdown Chronicle* advising readers that the match was expected to ‘arouse considerable local interest’.[484] Yet many of the locals were more interested in the ‘simple, but impressive ceremony’ that preceded the game.[485]

Located at the foot of Mount Leura in the south-east corner of Camperdown, the Leura Recreation Reserve was walking distance from the town centre and train station, and thus accessible for both locals and those venturing in from out of town. By the interwar period this reserve was already a special site of footballing memories for people in the south west of Victoria. Those who attended this game in September 1933 likely experienced a range of

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483 M. Robinson, ‘Original Poetry – Camperdown’s Sympathy’, *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 May 1933, p. 7.
484 ‘Football Final’, *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1933, p. 7.
485 ‘The Kane Memorial’, *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.

recollections of past glories and shattering defeats, of excellent players, and more generally of cold winter afternoons watching men play football in knee high mud at a frantic pace. Many also likely hoped they would see a game that afternoon which would be cherished for years. But the ceremony before the game, when memorial gates were unveiled, was designed to harbour and sustain a more sombre set of memories that would be evoked every time patrons entered the Leura Recreation Reserve. For the gates marked the life and untimely death of the young Camperdown Football Club player Joe Kane, who earlier that year had lost his life in an automobile accident. The 'simple, but impressive ceremony' was a commemorative service to formally recognise this loss to the local community and celebrate a life that was prematurely cut short.

Kane died when his motorcycle crashed into a car a few months earlier. Six years later, on 11 May 1940, another football identity in the district, John Goodall, was honoured in a similar manner with memorial gates unveiled at the Mortlake Recreation Reserve. His death had also been the result of a motor vehicle accident, but his status within the football community was not due to his playing career, but rather his long-term administrative service to both the Mortlake Football Club and the Hampden Football League. In both instances, the memorials – and ceremonies of commemoration – revealed as much about the role football played in these local rural communities, as it did of the two individuals being celebrated and mourned.

Statues, buildings, and other monuments of memorialisation have become of increasing interest to sports historians over the past two decades.[486] Yet the memorial gates of sporting

[486] See, for example, Gary Osmond, Murray G. Phillips and Mark O'Neill, '"Putting Up Your Dukes": Statues Social Memory and Duke Paoa Kahanamoku', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2006, pp. 82-103; Mike Huggins, 'The Visual in Sport History: Approaches, Methodologies and Sources', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 15, 2015, pp. 1813-1830; Linda J. Borish and Murray G. Phillips, 'Sport History as Modes of Expression: Material Culture and Cultural Spaces in Sport and History', *Rethinking History*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2012, pp. 465-477; Stephen Hardy, John Loy and Douglas Booth, 'The Material Culture of Sport: Towards a Typology', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2009, pp. 129–152; Murray G. Phillips, Mark E. O'Neill, and Gary Osmond, 'Broadening Horizons in Sport History: Films, Photographs and Monuments', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2007, pp. 271-293; Gary

fields and stadiums have received little attention. This chapter takes these two now largely forgotten gates from a pocket of regional Australia as a chance to begin the process of addressing sporting gates as an object of historical study. More specifically, it asks what is particular about gates as commemorative objects, and to what extent the cultures of war memorialisation that expanded during the interwar years shape these relatively early examples of rural sporting monuments. At issue are questions of celebration, loss, liminality, the sacred, and the way monuments can act as both a warning and a welcome while nourishing select memories of the past.

But before considering what these gates reveal of the meaning that Australian Rules football had for the people of Mortlake and Camperdown as well as the region more broadly, this chapter examines the study of monuments and memory in general, and gates in particular. I consider the gates themselves as portals between the towns and their football grounds, explore why Kane and Goodall were memorialised, and what this suggests of local responses to modernity and the rise of automobilism. The chapter ends with an examination of the process of planning for and constructing the gates in speedy fashion. In doing so this chapter shows how sporting gates could be used to turn a utilitarian structure into a site of memory that brought together mourning with the celebration of deeds so civically important that the ground they were performed on, and around, was considered sacred.

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Osmond and Claire Parker, 'Broadening Readings of Sports Monuments: The Arthur Baynes Memorial Obelisk', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 30, no. 12, 2013, pp. 1374-1393; Marion Stell and Celmara Pocock, 'In Community Hands: Memory and the Material Culture Legacy of a Mega Sporting Event: Commemorating the 1982 XII Commonwealth Games in Brisbane', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2019, doi: 10.1080/09523367.2019.1647170; and Jaime Schultz, '"Stuff from Which Legends are Made": Jack Trice Stadium and the Politics of Memory', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 24, no. 6, 2007, pp. 715-748.

**Monuments as Sites of Memory**

According to Michael Rowlands and Chris Tilley, 'Monuments and memorials exist as a means of fixing history'.[487] Often positioned in a prominent and specific space, they have the potential to generate multiple narratives and memories for the community which contributed to their construction. Monuments are a primary example of what Pierre Nora calls *Lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory): in this case a physical, concrete space 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself'.[488] But Nora also notes that monuments can also come in other forms such as 'gestures, images, and objects'.[489]

Sites of memory, especially those that take the form of physical structures, 'nourish' and circulate collective memories of the specific communities that have borne witness to past events. In turn, sites of memory aid in both the remembrance and forgetting of past moments.[490] Monumental 'performances of memory are both products of and constitutive of their cultures' thus, exploring the various memories entrenched within physical monuments illuminates historical moments of cultural significance and highlights internal values of the groups that contributed to their construction. [492] The gates commemorating Kane and Goodall were imbued with various memories by members of the community who passed through or by them and this in turn created a relationship between the past and the present which is open to historical interpretation and exploration.[493] Whether termed social or collective, memory can be unlocked from a variety of historical spaces, forms, objects, and commemorative services and navigating

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487 Michael Rowlands and Christopher Tilley, 'Monuments and Memorials', in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds), *Handbook of Material Culture*, London: SAGE Publications, 2006, p. 500.

488 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, p. 7.

489 Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 7.

490 Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 8.

492 Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 14.

493 Murray G. Phillips, 'Remembering Sport History: Narrative, Social Memory and the Origins of the Rugby League in Australia', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2004, p. 54.

this 'network of performances' provides a unique and holistic view of the historical contestation of the past.[494]

As monuments of a past connected with Australian Rules football in rural south-west Victoria, the gates acted as conveyances of various memories that were locally significant and which enriched narratives of the game's role and meaning within their respective communities. While this chapter does not aim to further develop the notions of social memory and collective memory, it does acknowledge that the terms are 'disorganised' within the disciplines of both history and sociology.[495] Instead of differentiating between social and collective memory, the phrases are used interchangeably throughout this chapter as they share the same basic principle that events of the past create moments of shared experience, and the memories created through these experiences can be captured within various objects which become available for historical interpretation. For this particular case study, the memorial gates, in conjunction with the newspaper reports prior to and after their unveiling, relay some of the diverse range of collective memories that circulated through this football landscape during the interwar period. Historical exploration of the gates alone reveals a multitude of other possible memories contained within their construction, form, and design. This chapter will illuminate only a selection of these memories and meanings to navigate. These memories enlighten unique aspects of football's heritage in this region and aid the exploration of the code's social and cultural significance to their broader communities as well as how they developed and maintained a central space within such communities.

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494 Phillips, 'Remembering Sport History, p. 54. For further reading and studies that utilise the concept of social memory, see Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*; Scot A. French, 'What is Social Memory?', *Southern Cultures*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1995, pp. 9-18; and Murray G. Phillips, 'Public Sports History and Social Memory: (Re)presenting Swimming in Australia', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1998, pp. 93-102. For further reading into the concept of collective memory, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

495 See, for example, Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 24, 1998, pp. 105-140; French, 'What is Social Memory?', pp. 9-18; and Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, 'Collective Memory: What is It?', *History and Memory*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1996, pp. 30-50.

It is possible to view the gates constructed in honour of Joe Kane and John Goodall respectively as storehouses that crystallised various community sentiments regarding the men themselves as well as the period and location in which they were built. Notably, these gates were designed to act as a constant reminder to anyone that went through or passed by them of men who were exemplary citizens that all should revere and imitate. Yet they also acted as a warning of the dangers of modernity.

Jaime Schultz notes that through sport based 'sites of memory' such as stadiums – or gates – the community which builds them implants within these structures social memories which are reflective of their collective identity.[496] Exploring these structures and the narratives that surround them provides an historically illuminating glimpse into the social and cultural role of football in this rural Australian setting. An exploration of the 'personal, artistic and cultural origins' of sporting monuments can also provide new insights into the meaning and value of sport in relation to their specified locations.[497]

In contexts outside of sport, monumental memorialisation has been shown to be a primary site of community identity. As the extensive research of Ken Inglis has shown, in the years following World War I, localised committees across the nation pushed for the installation of commemorative memorials that would 'stand as a community's statement of bereavement, pride and thanksgiving' to men from their respective schools, clubs, towns, and districts that had served the British Empire as soldiers.[498] In raising the funds, deciding on the form and securing a location for such memorials, their construction, and the ceremonies of commemoration, specific local meanings were constructed for each respective community.

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496 Schultz, '"Stuff from Which Legends are Made"', pp. 715-748. In this article Schultz explains that Iowa State University's football stadium was named after the university's first African American footballer, Jack Trice, to affirm that the university was a 'racially inclusive space'.

497 Osmond and Parker, 'Broadening Readings of Sports Monuments', pp. 1374-1393. Gary Osmond and Claire Parker demonstrated through an examination of the memorial obelisk dedicated to Brisbane rower Arthur Baynes the multiple levels of meaning that can be communicated by a sporting monument.

498 K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998, p. 124.

Thus, like other memorials, sporting or otherwise, the soldier memorials were loaded with ideals valued by the people that contributed to their creation.[499]

In south west Victoria war memorials were prominent throughout the district following the conclusion of the First World War. The processes to construct these edifices and the commemorative services that facilitated their dedication to local fallen and returned serviceman became common practice around the district in the 1920s.[500] A noticeable feature of many of the local war memorials was that they often listed the names of those local men who had died during their service – some monuments additionally listed the names of those who survived and returned home after war.[501] The memories associated with the physical monuments therefore, emphasised that these specific men were exemplars of the district first and foremost, as well as the nation and Empire in a broader sense. These memorials were symbolic and carried with them ideologies associated with nationalised ideals of the Anzac, but as community specific monuments they had a local resonance as they commemorated men born and bred from the district who had shown their value in a global conflict. When Sir Brudenell White unveiled the Camperdown Soldiers Memorial of a statue recognisable as Britannia in 1929, he praised the Camperdown community for creating a monument that 'was an inspiration worthy of the men that it commemorated'.[502] Although he went on to speak more broadly about the national image of the digger and their role in the defence of the British Empire, this monument specifically captured the memory of exemplary men from the Camperdown district whose lives had been cut short. The memorial, in other words, upheld the valour and masculinity of local men who had been exemplary citizens, and provided a model for others to

499 Osmond, Phillips and O'Neill, '"Putting Up Your Dukes"', pp. 82-103.

500 See, for example, 'Shrine of Remembrance', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1928, p. 2; 'Terang Soldiers' Memorial', *Terang Express*, 10 April 1923, p. 4; and 'Camperdown Soldiers' Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 December 1929, p. 7.

501 'Terang Soldiers' Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 19 April 1923, p. 4. Images of the soldiers' memorials located in Mortlake, Terang, Camperdown, and Cobden as well as many other rural Australian towns can be found at http://monumentaustralia.org.au/.

502 'Camperdown Soldiers' Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 24 December 1929, p. 7; and Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 173.

strive to emulate. It also provided a model of memorialisation for other exemplary citizens whose lives were also cut short, in the case of Joe Kane and John Goodall, men known for their deeds in relation to Australian Rules football, rather than war. But why gates, and why football?

**Gates as Monuments of Memorialisation**

The war memorial movement in Australia that followed World War I established a precedent for the utilisation of gates (amongst a range of suitable monumental forms) to memorialise dead and returned soldiers.[503] Like other forms of material culture, their meaning could be contested, but nevertheless memorial gates tended to have a distinct set of associations that differed from other monument structures.[504] While gates are similar to arches that celebrated victory, memorial gates were more aligned with the act of providing patrons both a literal and metaphorical portal into a new mnemonic space – a passageway into a place that was somehow 'sacred'.[505]

Memorial gates imbue these portals with rich symbolism that gives 'meaning beyond the utilitarian' structural function which they provide.[506] Tanja Luckins' *Gates of Memory* provides a useful example of the symbolic power of gates, exploring how the wharf gates that led up to the Sydney harbour suburb of Woollomooloo's War Memorial became a significant 'object on which to project memory' particularly at Anzac Day memorial services during the 1920s.[507] The gates at Woollomooloo were significant for a number of reasons, but notably their functional location as representative of the point where soldiers said their final farewells to family and loved ones before boarding ships bound for war were amongst the strongest

503 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, pp. 154-178.
504 John R. Stephens, 'Commemoration, Meaning, and Heritage of Western Australian War Memorials', in C.L. Miller and M.M. Roche (eds), *Past Matters: Heritage, History and the Built Environment. 8th Australasian Urban History/Planning History Conference*, 2006, pp. 479-490.
505 Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 157.
506 D.N. Jeans, 'The First World War Memorials in New South Wales: Centres of Meaning in the Landscape', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1988, p. 265.
507 Tanja Luckins, *Gates of Memory: Australian People's Experiences and Memories of Loss and the Great War*, Fremantle: Curtin University Press, 2004, p. 179.

memories perpetually rekindled by the gates.[508] As a monument that represents a mnemonic threshold, war memorial gates were also symbolic of masculine identification and reinforced imagery of innocent young boys venturing through into an unknown future that changed them forever.[509] War was positioned socially as 'rite of passage' to fulfil their masculine potential, a liminal space – like gates – where boys were on the threshold of manhood.[510] Exiting through the gates these boys, full of promise, had been expected to return home as strong men, but in reality many of the soldiers that survived the war returned home physically and mentally broken. Thereby, war memorial gates acted as a reminder of unfulfilled potential.

As was noted in Chapter Four of this thesis, while the lost promise of so many young men haunted Australia in the aftermath of the First World War, Australian Rules football came to be seen as a space for manly redemption in rural towns like Camperdown and Mortlake. Prior to the Great War, football, and physical sports in general, provided one of very few domains where white Australian manliness could be tested, measured, and compared.[511] As also detailed earlier, following the Great War, the soldiers that did return, 'once splendid specimens of typical manhood' were now viewed with pity with many 'crippled or diseased'.[512] War had broken many exemplary men. At this point football, particularly in this rural south west Victorian landscape, re-emerged as a wholesome space for the development of moral citizenship and fulfilment of masculine potential.

The narratives of promising lives cut short that encompassed Kane and Goodall's deaths followed a similar line to that of local soldiers that had fallen during World War I. The comparison was even explicitly noted by Canon F.P. Williams at the unveiling of the Kane

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508 Luckins, *Gates of Memory*, pp. 177-181.
509 Jeans, 'The First World War Memorials in New South Wales', p. 265.
510 Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage', in Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little (eds), *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, La Salle: Open Court, 1987, pp. 3-19.
511 Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 59-64.
512 'The Red Cross Appeal', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1938, p. 4.

memorial gates as he stated that 'it was men like him who helped us win the Great War and so long as we have this type of young manhood in this country, we can go ahead cheerfully and bravely'.[513] This transitional connection between war and football offers insight into why two local football identities were deemed worthy of monumental memorialisation. Like many of the Australian soldiers who were killed in battle, Joe Kane and John Goodall were viewed as men cut down in their prime who had proven themselves exemplars of citizenship and manliness through their contribution to the community, in particular through their impact in the popular football landscape. Thus, the significance of memorialising Kane and Goodall at these football grounds reiterated the game's central status in the identity of towns like Mortlake and Camperdown. John Bale has observed, a 'stadium [or football ground] may create a sense of place because of its quasi-religious connotations', with such facilities often considered as sacred places within a community.[514] While the local press never explicitly called these south west Victorian football grounds 'sacred', it was clear that these spaces were recognised and celebrated as sites where extraordinary feats of manliness and citizenship were demonstrated. Attaching memorial gates to these football grounds thus enhanced the sense of place and reverence the grounds cultivated in this rural setting.[515]

From these examples related to the war memorial movement it is possible to see that gates act as a threshold between spaces. The memorial gates dedicated to Goodall and Kane were connected both to the football ground – upon which they grant entry – and the town – by which members of the community would pass through or near as they return home. The gates

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513 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.

514 Football, or any sport, can be seen as quasi-religious as Bale contends, 'football certainly shares many similarities with religion; each seeks perfection, each is built on discipline, they involve an integration of mind and spirit, and they have established rituals and symbols related to people, places, and procedures'. John Bale, *Sport, Space and the City*, Caldwell: The Blackburn Press, 2001, pp. 64-67. For more on the connections between sport and religion see Niels Kayser Nielsen, 'The Stadium and the City: A Modern Story', in John Bale and Olof Moen (eds), *The Stadium and the City*, Keele: Keele University Press, 1995, pp. 21-44.

515 For further reading on the social, cultural, and historical significance of sport stadiums see Mark Dyreson and Robert Trumpbour (eds), *The Rise of Stadiums in the Modern United States*, Oxon: Routledge, 2013; and John Bale and Olof Moen (eds), *The Stadium and the City*, Keele: Keele University Press, 1995.

in this sense created a 'liminal space' – a threshold that linked the football grounds and the towns that surround them.[516] More specifically, the gates functioned as a portal between the every-day space of the towns and the celebrated space of the grounds which was primarily reserved for games of football in which special deeds were performed. Turning now to the football credentials of Kane and Goodall provides an idea of some the 'special deeds' that were performed by these men and why in death they were deemed worthy of local commemoration.

**Local Football Lives of Joe Kane and John Goodall**

To begin to comprehend why Kane and Goodall were honoured, it is important to first explore the status they held within their respective football clubs. To be memorialised was a substantial gesture that was afforded only to clubmen who had made significant contributions to and had strong connections with the sacred space of football. Surveying newspaper reports of Kane's burgeoning local football career prior to his unexpected death it was clear that he demonstrated a prodigious aptitude for the game that excited people for the promise of what he might become.

At the age of 19, Kane, who was still considered a 'junior' footballer, debuted for the Camperdown senior football team in the opening round of the 1931 Hampden Football League season.[517] In his first season of play at the senior level, Kane acquitted himself 'handsomely'

[516] For insight into the idea of how gates can act as a liminal space see Steph Berns, 'In Defense of the Dead: Materializing a Garden of Remembrance in South London', *Material Religion*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2016, pp. 165-188. For more on the notion of liminality in general see Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between', pp. 3-19; Bjorn Thomassen, 'The Uses and Meanings of Liminality', *International Political Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2009, pp. 5-13; and Nic Beech, 'Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction', *Human Relations*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2011, pp. 285-302.

[517] 'The Football Season', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 30 April 1931, p. 5. The 'junior' competitions in the region, also known as district leagues or associations were considered a step down in standard from the Hampden Football League, but despite the connotations of the term 'junior' consisted of players of all ages. It was common for younger players to start their local football careers in these competitions. In 1930 at only 18 years of age Kane was reportedly one of the standout performers in the Camperdown Junior Football team's narrow loss to the Terang Junior team in the Hampden and Heytesbury Junior Football League (HHJFL) grand final. 'Two Premierships Decided', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 September 1930, p. 5. In 1932 the HHJFL changed its name to the Camperdown and District Football League (CDFL) to avoid any potential confusion with the Hampden Football League. 'Junior Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 April 1932, p. 4.

in what was a much higher standard of local football.[518] As the season progressed Kane was frequently mentioned amongst the best players in the local newspaper reports and his name was conspicuous throughout match day reports as he was often credited with making passes to teammates that led to scores as well as scoring a number of goals himself.[519] His prowess in marking the football was also admired, with a reporter noting that he did 'much good work in the air' a description which presented him to local followers of the game as a young up and coming talent with great potential.[520]

If the newspaper reports throughout the 1931 season were expressing ideas of Kane's potential, then 1932 reports confirmed that he was fulfilling this potential and taking major steps towards becoming a vital member of the team. At his best, Kane's play was 'characterised by dash and judgement', qualities essential to him holding down the key backline position of centre half back which had been recently vacated by another locally acclaimed footballer Harold Maskell.[521] In Maskell's absence 'Joe Kane showed great promise in that position' and the club expected to see a rise in the club's fortunes the following year after finishing last on the ladder in 1932.[522]

Like Joe Kane, John Goodall died prematurely in a motor vehicle accident during the 1930s. Unlike Kane though, Goodall was not famed for his on-field ability or potential, but for his loyal long-term administrative work off it. Goodall had been a stalwart of both the Mortlake

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518 'Football Opening', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 5 May 1931, p. 5. The club introduced a number of 'younger lads' into the team at the beginning of 1931 with the hope that some of those 'who were tried' would go on to become permanent members of the senior team.

519 See, for example, 'Camperdown Wins', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 May 1931, p. 5; 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 21 July 1931, p. 5; and 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 25 August 1931, p. 5.

520 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 21 July 1931, p. 5.

521 Maskell had been recruited by Victorian Football League (VFL) club Geelong prior to the start of the 1932 season. Harold Maskell played nine games for Geelong in 1932. He then went on to play games for Carlton and Hawthorn in a relatively short-lived VFL career that ended in 1936. See Russell Holmesby and Jim Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers* (Ninth Edition), Seaford: Bas Publishing, 2011, p. 538.

522 'Football Activities', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 February 1933, p. 4. Camperdown finished in last place (fourth) on the ladder with five wins and ten losses during the 1932 Hampden Football League season. 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 18 August 1932, p. 7. During the 1932 season, Kane was also given the honour of representing the Hampden Football League in an interleague match against a representative team from the Geelong Athletic Societies' League. 'Football at Geelong', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 August 1932, p. 4.

Football Club and the Hampden Football League committees throughout the 1920s and 1930s before his death on 3 September 1939.[523] He filled various administrative roles for both club and league. Most notably Goodall was Vice-President of the Mortlake Football Club, the club's Hampden Football League delegate and at the start of 1939 he was also elected Vice-President of the same league.[524]

There is little doubt that both Kane and Goodall were well known and valued members of their respective football communities and towns more generally. But this was not the simple reason for the construction of these gates. Players with longer decorated local football careers had come and gone before Joe Kane had played his first game.[525] Yet none of them had received any such bastion where social memories were stored and interpreted for future generations. Moreover, while Goodall's resume may have been more extensive in terms of administrative contribution in the context of coordinating football's development in Mortlake, he was certainly not the only person in Mortlake to have influenced the game's local prosperity. When he died at 44 years of age it was true that Goodall had contributed a significant portion of his life to football in the region, but he was not alone in these endeavours, and no doubt there were other people of high esteem that were just as worthy of commemoration. The only difference between these two men and their similarly exalted peers was their premature deaths. Noting these points, it is clear that these gates were not necessarily created so that the public would remember specifically what these two men had accomplished on and around the football ground. But as prominent figures of the football community, they were both considered more

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523 'Corangamite Football Association', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 27 April 1922, p. 4. This article is the earliest reference found that noted Goodall's involvement in local football matters at an administrative level. The Corangamite Football Association was a precursor to the WDFL and the HFL respectively.

524 Hampden Football League, 'Meeting of Delegates', *Hampden Football League Minute Book 1930 to 1946*, Wheatsheaf Hotel: Terang, 24 April 1939; and 'Football – League's Delegates Meet at Terang', *Terang Express*, 28 April 1939, p. 8.

525 The Wanderer, '"Magpies" of the Past', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 September 1937, p. 5. This article provided details on a number of prominent players throughout the early history of the Camperdown Football Club. Published in 1937 it identified Joe Kane as one of the best players of the recent years, despite his comparatively short career to others mentioned in the article.

than suitable candidates to be celebrated and mourned as examples of what the football ground offered the broader community as a site of masculine development and exemplary citizenship. In death, the model citizenship that encompassed their contribution to the game could be literally and metaphorically set in stone for perpetuity. Exploring the process by which narratives of manliness and citizenship were fixed to these two men and by association to the gates through their construction, will now be considered.

**Fixing the Memory of Kane and Goodall**

The commemorative unveiling ceremonies of the gates, together with newspaper reports and eulogies, articulated a set of memories of Joe Kane and John Goodall that the gates were constructed to preserve. The narratives and memories selected by the speakers at the unveilings, coupled with other associated rituals such as pausing for a minute's silence and the wearing of black armbands as a sign of respect, enhanced 'mythic understandings' of the men for whom these gates were dedicated.[526] For Joe Kane a local writer – M. Robinson – penned a poem which expressed the broad communal grieving that was being experienced in Camperdown:

> Camperdown's Sympathy.
>
> There's a cloud overshadows Mount Leura,
>
> Camperdown in gloom is clad;
>
> We have lost our township's idol,
>
> A bright winsome and well-loved lad.
>
> Called home from youth's golden threshold,
>
> With his laurels so nobly won;
>
> We offer our heartfelt sympathy,

[526] Melissa Walsh, '"Lest We Forget": The Tradition of Anzac Day Football', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2008, p. 2. Kane's prominent connection to the local football scene was emphasised through rituals of symbolic significance, For example, noted members of the Camperdown Football Club acted as pallbearers at his funeral service, and Camperdown footballers wore black armbands as a sign of respect and acknowledgement in their next match against Mortlake. See 'Fatal Cycling Accident', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 May 1933, p. 2; and 'Footballer Killed', *Terang Express*, 12 May 1933, p. 1.

To the bereaved who mourn their son.

He gave a smile to the frown of a rival,

He treated defeat as a jest;

He was one of the whitest that God ever made,

He was one of the purest and best.

No need for white Cararra tablet,

Human hearts will enshrine his name;

In life idolised, in death immortalised,

Our deeply lamented Joe Kane.

Beyond the well of God's destiny,

Bloom flowers with sacred breath;

And love on the wings of a glorious dove,

Soars over the angel of Death.[527]

Gestures such as this poem, the news reports that detailed Kane's death, and the ceremonies that celebrated his life, gave the impression that his unexpected passing in a road accident was felt by the entire township of Camperdown.

For the neighbouring towns, Kane's status in the public sphere was ordained through his football prowess. For example, the *Terang Express*, after providing details of the accident under the headline 'Footballer Killed', noted that 'Kane was a brilliant half-back utility player. Only last Saturday his brilliance was the main factor in Camperdown's opening win against South Warrnambool'.[528] Metropolitan newspapers that reported Kane's death, such as the *Weekly Times,* focussed on the promising football narrative of his life stating that 'Critics had forecasted a great future for him, and tempting offers would have no doubt reached him from the metropolis before this season. Death intervened and "Joe" Kane was cut off in his prime'.[529] Kane was also noted for having an 'extremely likeable personality', but it was his football

[527] M. Robinson, 'Original Poetry – Camperdown's Sympathy', *Camperdown Chronicle,* 20 May 1933, p. 7.
[528] 'Footballer Killed', *Terang Express,* 12 May 1933, p. 1.
[529] 'Camperdown's Loss', *Weekly Times,* 3 June 1933, p. 65.

credentials and association with the Camperdown Football Club that made his death notable beyond the Camperdown community.[530]

Yet Kane and Goodall were to be remembered as more than simply football icons. Somehow football had turned them into exemplary citizens. When Joe Kane died the first *Camperdown Chronicle* report of the accident made note of his prowess as a local footballer, but his general popularity within the town was also a prominent narrative:

> Words cannot describe the surge of sorrow that swept over the town … and the sympathy that was felt for Mr. and Mrs Kane … Not only was Joe Kane the idol of Camperdown on the football field, where his brilliance as centre half-back and general utility man made him the outstanding player of the team, but he was universally popular because of his open and attractive personality, cheerful and clean-living in every respect he was one of the most respected young fellows in the town and made it a better place for his presence.[531]

As this passage attests, Joe Kane was more than just a footballer with a promising future, and local newspapers, especially the *Camperdown Chronicle* sought to advocate that Kane was a holistic and generous contributor to both football and town spaces. At the unveiling ceremony for the Kane Memorial Gates, President of the Hampden Football League, Canon F.P. Williams, explicitly celebrated Kane's status as a citizen and a footballer stating 'those who knew him on the football field as well as in his other fields of activity would agree that we, as a community, had lost a man of good and noble character'.[532]

Williams continued his acclamation of Kane by stating his 'life would be an inspiration to the rising generation by helping them to try and live a life such as he lived – a clean, sporting, just, honest, industrious, and conscientious life'.[533] Having lived by these attributes, Kane

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530 'Footballer Killed', *Terang Express*, 12 May 1933, p. 1.
531 'Head-On Smash', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 13 May 1933, p. 7.
532 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7. Canon F.P. Williams was the inaugural President of the Hampden Football League from 1930 through until the start of the 1939 season. See Hampden Football League, 'Continuation of Hampden League Meeting', *Hampden Football League Minute Book 1930 to 1946*, Wheatsheaf Hotel: Terang, 3 April 1930. Before 1930 he was President of the Mortlake Football Club.
533 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.

personified the exalted masculine image of the region and 'proved himself to be in every way the makings of a splendid citizen'.[534] Playing football for Camperdown served to elevate Kane's local status, because as 'one that always played the game … he had been held up as an example to the youth of the community both as a townsman and as player'.[535] Kane's football connection was in this sense explicitly linked to his celebrated manly spirit. Therefore, for many years to come, members of the community would draw on collective memories installed in these gates of an exemplary citizen whose exalted masculine character had been fostered by the local football competition.

This in itself highlighted the power that memory had in the construction of a town's identity and indeed the cultural significance of football within this town. As the recreation reserve was at the time occupied by other sporting groups as well as football, the installation of gates in honour of football icons continued the narrative of football as the dominant code in the region. Had the decision regarding these monuments been to select a slightly less conspicuous form, positioned within the reserves, they may not have conveyed football's local popularity. The gates symbolically maintained a link between inside and outside of both literal and metaphoric space of the football grounds; therefore, it was important that the men that the gates represented had strong connections to both the town and the game. The collective memory installed within these gates thus nourished narratives of football's status as a site where idolised citizens were found and developed.

The dedication of the memorial gates at Mortlake to the memory of John Goodall, although less detailed through the newspapers, constructed similar collective memories of his life. The commemoration took place during Round 2 of the 1940 home and away season before a match between Mortlake and Terang. As had been the case for the Kane memorial, the

534 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.
535 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.

proceedings were led by the then president of the Hampden Football League Mr D. Trickett of Terang. Trickett had spent much of the previous decade on the Hampden Football League committee alongside John Goodall so was likely among those who best understood his contribution to local football and the community more generally.[536]

With patrons standing in the shape of a 'hollow square' at the new entrance, Trickett, and the previous Hampden Football League president Canon Williams – also a former Mortlake Football Club administrator – addressed the crowd and shaped a memory of Goodall's life that was to be perpetuated by the gates. Williams said that 'he was very sorry to attend that afternoon for the purpose of dedicating the gates to the memory of one who did so much for the town and the Football Club'.[537] Again this sentiment identified that Goodall was more than just a football icon, but it was his contributions to local football that endeared him to the community more broadly. Williams proclaimed that Goodall was 'honest and upright in all his actions, and at all times tried to be fair'.[538] Indeed, 'as a delegate to the Hampden League he displayed a spirit of fair-play to all clubs in the league'.[539] 'Beloved by all', in particular his 'bereaved family', Goodall was presented as an impartial, honest and family-oriented man whose death reminded local patrons of the type of honourable characters that were moulded by and drawn to football.

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536 The Hampden Football League minutes note that Goodall and Trickett attended meetings and served on the committee for each of the first nine years of the competition's existence. See Hampden Football League, *Hampden Football League Minute Book 1930 to 1946*. That representatives from the competing Hampden Football League clubs as well as representatives from other district league clubs attended the service confirmed Goodall's status as an important contributor to the game locally. A representative from the Warrnambool Football Club was unable to attend the ceremony. The Warrnambool team reconciled this absence a month later at half time of a match they played at Mortlake. They assembled at the gates and observed a minute's silence in honour of Goodall. 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 June 1940, p. 2. The president of the Mortlake Shire, Councillor Scott, was also present, reaffirming the broader local significance of the monument's construction in town. 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1. Councillor Scott was president of the Mortlake Shire from 1939 through until 1942. Mortlake Historical Society, *Pastures of Peace: A Tapestry of Mortlake Shire*, Mortlake: Shire of Mortlake, 1985, p. 215.

537 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.

538 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.

539 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.

To conclude proceedings, Goodall's status as a family man was prominently exalted with the deepest of sympathies being offered to the relatives he had left behind. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Goodall's relatives were first to step through the gates into the reserve, followed by the football players and then by the 'general public'.[540] It is this moment of the ceremony that bears the most symbolic significance to the formation and installation of a collective memory. Within this one act of walking through the gates, those people in attendance were expected to associate these gates with the memory of John Goodall – a man that had just been highlighted through speeches as a citizen, a football icon, and a family man.

While the ceremony was brief, the gates were designed and presented as objects that would stand the test of time and preserve the legacy of these men. The *Mortlake Dispatch* highlighted that the John Goodall memorial gates were solid and permanent fixtures built 'of wrought steel, ornamental in design and supported by brick pillars on both sides' (see Figure 4).[541] That the gates would act as sites of memory was made apparent by Williams who declared that 'through the gates Mr. Goodall's memory will live for very many years in this centre'.[542] Once again attention was drawn to the prominent social status of the football oval in community and town life, and to the way the gates would act as a constant reminder of the sport's propensity to foster idyllic masculine values.

Preservation of memory was a key feature to the installation of these gates, but alongside the individual memory of these men were other messages that were linked to life in a rural environment and changes that were occurring at this time in Australia. Both the Kane and Goodall memorial gates were more than new functional entrances that modernised the

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540 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.
541 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.
542 'Memorial Gates Unveiled', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 15 May 1940, p. 1.

sporting grounds. Built quickly, they captured and preserved memories of the fragility of life however noteworthy a local citizen might be.


Figure 4: John A. Goodall Memorial Gates at Mortlake Recreation Reserve, Mortlake (D.C. Farren Oval) (Photographed by N.T.S. Marshall, 2018)

**Warning of a New Threat**

Public awareness of modernity and the dangers associated with automobiles was also encapsulated by these gates. Growing anxieties around car and motorcycle crashes was already in evidence in the *Camperdown Chronicle*'s reporting of Kane's death, with extensive attention paid to accounts of the inquiries and investigations related to the accident.[543] Motor vehicle ownership in Victoria, and in particular Melbourne, was an increasing phenomenon, but was

[543] 'Cobden Road Motoring Fatality', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

not common practice until after World War II.[544] During the 1930s, vehicles were considered more of a luxury item rather than a necessity in metropolitan centres as public transport such as trams and trains were prominent.[545] However, in rural centres, where public transport was not as prevalent, motor vehicles were becoming increasingly valuable for social mobility. For those that could not afford cars, motorcycles were a cheaper alternative that provided similar levels of mobility but with increased safety risk.[546]

Studies of the social reaction to early forms of automobilism around the world, and particularly in western society, reveal that a great deal of antipathy was felt towards this emerging technology during the early twentieth century despite the opportunities and mobility that it offered.[547] In Britain during the interwar period for example, as car ownership increased so too did concerns that the accidents they caused were becoming commonplace.[548]

As cars became a more frequent form of conveyance around rural south west Victoria during the 1930s, the *Camperdown Chronicle* created a new column titled 'Motoring Notes' which highlighted the dangers of cars and motorcycles while providing advice on vehicle and driver safety. In general, the messaging of the articles warned the public of the various dangers that may be experienced by those unfamiliar with the associated risks.[549] In 1930, for example, the 'Motoring Notes' columnist warned that the 'use of the motor car is a comparatively new experience and a few motorists have not yet learned to conduct themselves when driving as

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544 Graeme Davison, *Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities*, Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2004.

545 Davison, *Car Wars*.

546 Davison, *Car Wars*, p. 12.

547 Massimo Moraglio, 'Knights of Death: Introducing Bicycles and Motor Vehicles to Turin, 1890-1907', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2015, pp. 370-393. See also Peter Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008; and Sean O'Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring, 1896–1936*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

548 Michael John Law, 'Speed and Blood on the Bypass: The New Automobilities of Inter-War London', *Urban History*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2012, pp. 490-509.

549 'Motoring Notes', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 May 1930, p. 5. The *Terang Express* also featured a similar semi-regular column during the late 1930s titled 'The Motorist'. See, for example, 'The Motorist', *Terang Express*, 3 January 1939, p. 6.

they do in their other social relations'.[550] Most at risk were the 'self-centred know-all' who 'is the hardest of all to teach' about road safety.[551]

That Joe Kane died on a motorcycle may have led some to think that recklessness had led to his death. Was he a 'self-centred know-all'? Such an idea would have tarnished his memory, but the *Camperdown Chronicle* worked against this by publishing full details of the inquiries and detailed reports into the accident which clearly outlined that he was not at fault.[552] While the inquiry cleared Kane of any wrong doing, the man found responsible for his death was committed to trial for manslaughter.[553]

In the case of John Goodall's death, the accident was headline news and positioned in the first column of the first page of the *Mortlake Dispatch*. A sub-headline that read 'John Goodall J.P. Killed' made clear to readers that this man was of revered status in the community, evinced by the unusual inclusion of his role as Justice of the Peace in the title.[554] Detail of the actual accident was brief, but an additional sub-headline: 'Tyre Blow-Out Causes Car to Overturn' averted links to careless driving. The article and subsequent articles that noted the road accident and his subsequent death, blamed his car, and focussed on detailing his prominent local status within the community.[555]

In attributing the fault to Goodall's car, rather than his driving, the newspapers echoed a particular anxiety around automobiles in rural Australia. On the day that Goodall's death was

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550 'Motoring Notes', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 May 1930, p. 5.

551 'Motoring Notes', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 May 1930, p. 5.

552 'Cobden Road Motoring Fatality', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 May 1933, p. 8. This report was four columns in length – more than half a page. In the *Camperdown Chronicle* an article of this length was rare during this era. As a comparison the regular football match report generally only received two columns.

553 'Cobden Road Motoring Fatality', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

554 'Distressing Fatality', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 6 September 1939, p. 1. Unusual is the sense that the suffix J.P. was not found affixed to any other mention of Goodall prior to his death.

555 The fact that Goodall was a garage proprietor by trade and driving a car with six other occupants in at the time of the accident, including Goodall's wife Laura and his two sons Alan and William, also lends itself to a social belief that Goodall was comfortable with automobiles, and understood the necessary precautions required to handle a car safely. All six passengers of the car survived the accident with only one broken collarbone, one injured back, one concussion, and five reports of shock reported between them. 'Four Victims in Family', *Age*, 4 September 1939, p. 14, Laura who had been in 'bad health' following the incident, passed away 'suddenly' two months later, on 11 November 1939. 'Widow of Car Accident Victim Found Dead', *Weekly Times*, 18 November 1939, p. 3; and 'Deaths', *Argus*, 13 November 1939, p. 4.

reported in the *Mortlake Dispatch*, another article on page three asked the question, 'Are Cars Too Fast?'[556] Whether by design or coincidence the query was poignant. In rural areas where roads were not necessarily at an appropriate standard to cope with the increasing velocity of automobiles, these fears were heightened.[557] This messaging reinforced the idea that it was the modernisation of the automobiles, rather than drivers, that were responsible for the increased accident toll on the roads.

A fortnight after Goodall's accident, a further article in the *Mortlake Dispatch* celebrated the modern advantages of automobilism. As World War II had just begun, vehicles were heralded as a potentially invaluable tool for the quick transportation and evacuation of millions of Australians if war ever reached the nation.[558] These conflicting articles, in conjunction with the above 'Motoring Notes', underlined the multivalent voices and positions around automobilism in this part of rural Australia in the 1930s.

In a study exploring the meanings of Australian and New Zealand roadside memorials – informal markers which identify the location and death of motor vehicle accidents – Jennifer Clark has observed that memorials of all shapes and sizes can perpetuate memory.[559] Where vehicles and automobilism are seen as a primary site of progress and modernisation, roadside memorials complicate this historical perspective by highlighting the tragedy associated with technological advancement.[560] The reports of Kane and Goodall's deaths in road accidents were presented in detail in the weeks following their accidents. Yet, at the dedication ceremonies no mention of road safety was explicitly reported. Like the memorials that Clark studied, the placement and choice of the gates carried their own warning. Had the monuments taken the form of a statue or obelisk located within the reserves, the connection to the road may have

556 'Are Cars Too Fast?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 6 September 1939, p. 3.
557 'Are Cars Too Fast?', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 6 September 1939, p. 3.
558 'Motor Vehicles in War', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 20 September 1939, p. 3.
559 Jennifer Clark, 'Challenging Motoring Functionalism: Roadside Memorials, Heritage and History in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Transport History*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 23-43.
560 Clark, 'Challenging Motoring Functionalism', pp. 23-43.

been further removed. The gates however connected the road to the football ground, providing a message of caution regarding road safety not only for those who entered the ground, but for those that drove or walked passed the gates as well. In some respects, the gates may be seen as a precursor to roadside memorials which have become a prominent site of motoring heritage in recent decades, as they reminded those who passed through them of the frailty of life in a modernising world and the high cost some people pay for a simple mistake.[561]


Figure 5: Plaque affixed to the John A. Goodall Memorial Gates (Photographed by N.T.S. Marshall, 2018)

It is worth adding that while the Kane memorial only allowed patrons to enter the grounds on foot, the double gate design of the Goodall memorial gates was, and still is, only

[561] Clark, 'Challenging Motoring Functionalism', pp. 23-43.

just wide enough to permit vehicles to pass through – drivers needed to proceed through with reasonable caution to guarantee avoiding any contact with them. Moreover, the plaque bearing the name John A. Goodall was positioned on the right-hand side supportive brick pillar – the driver's side of the vehicle – providing an implicit message and warning for all drivers to take care. Like the local war memorials that acknowledged the past threat of war, these gates thus provided a warning of a new threat to the fulfilment of manly potential – that of the automobile (see Figure 5).

**Reading the Gates: Motives, Meaning, and Implicit Messages**

The process for building the monuments to honour the memory of Joe Kane and John Goodall followed a similar procedure to that of many Australian towns and communities when constructing soldier memorials in the 1920s.[562] For the monument dedicated to Joe Kane in Camperdown, an impromptu committee was formed a week after his death to commence the process of memorialisation. The suitably named Kane Memorial Committee was made up of members of the various local sporting clubs that were associated with the Leura Recreation Reserve, in particular the senior and junior football clubs as well as the cycling club.[563] The fact that the committee was formed by key stake holders of the Leura Recreation Reserve, although not surprising, is important to note as their eagerness to put into action a structural renovation and improvement to the reserve aligned with previously stated ambitions to ongoing upgrades to the facilities at the ground.

In 1929, four years prior to Kane's death, members of the various sporting clubs associated with the Leura Recreation Reserve met to coordinate a scheme to improve the

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562 For details on how soldier memorial committees raised funds in towns around Australia see Inglis, *Sacred Places*, pp. 129-135, and for a specific example within south west Victoria see 'Shrine of Remembrance', *Terang Express*, 24 April 1928, p. 2, which details the initial committee meeting of the Mortlake soldiers' memorial committee and their efforts to raise funds to build a statue in honour local men that served in World War I.

563 'A Proposed Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 18 May 1933, p. 2.

playing ground and facilities at the reserve.[564] After raising sufficient funds the club began renovation works the following year which forced the football clubs to relocate to the Camperdown cricket ground for the 1930 season.[565] By the time they returned to the Leura Recreation Reserve for the 1931 season, approximately £600 had been spent on renovations making it 'second to none as far as playing arena and beauty of the surroundings is concerned, to any in Victoria'.[566] That the same key stake holders of the Leura Recreation Reserve facility acted so quickly in gaining momentum to preserve the memory of Kane with a utilitarian structure, rather than a purely monumental form such as a statue or obelisk, may have seemed suggestive of an ulterior motive – to use Kane's death as an opportunity to further modernise the reserve.

At the initial committee meeting to discuss the form in which the memorial would take, it was recommended that entrance gates to the reserve would be an appropriate structure as 'a constant reminder of the days when a fine footballer and a fine gentleman played for the Camperdown Football Club'.[567] When the design of the Joe Kane Memorial Gates were announced to the public – 'the memorial will take the form of a ticket office to be placed in the centre of the entrance … and, on each side will be pedestrian gates' – less than a month after his death funds raised for the endeavour had already surpassed £22 (see Figures 6 and 7).[568]

564 'Camperdown Recreation Reserve', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 1 June 1929, p. 6.
565 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 3 April 1930, p. 5.
566 'Camperdown Football Club', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 14 February 1931, p. 3.
567 'A Proposed Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 18 May 1933, p. 2.
568 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 May 1933, p. 7; and 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 30 May 1933, p. 2.

Donations were primarily received from patrons at football matches and through members of the Kane Memorial Committee.[569]

Figure 6: Joe Kane Memorial Gates at Leura Recreation Reserve, Camperdown (Photographed by N.T.S. Marshall, 2018)

On 10 June 1933, a month after Kane's death, a letter from the Honorary Secretary of the Kane Memorial Committee to the *Camperdown Chronicle* revealed that £42 had been raised with only a further £8 required for works on the gates to commence.[570] It took another two months for the newspaper to confirm that the total funds required for the project had been raised, but despite this lag, the gates were built approximately a fortnight later.[571] As the date for unveiling the gates approached, the utilitarian nature of the monument was more

569 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 May 1933, p. 2. The Hampden Football League minutes indicates that the League donated a sum of £2/2/- (two guineas) to the memorial gates. See Hampden Football League, 'Meeting of Delegates', *Hampden Football League Minute Book 1930 to 1946*, Wheatsheaf Hotel: Terang, 23 May 1933.

570 'Correspondence', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 10 June 1933, p. 7. In 1933 the £50 total for the works would be the equivalent of approximately $5,000 in 2017.

571 'Kane Memorial Gates', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 August 1933, p. 2.

conspicuously acknowledged, with the addition expected to enhance the overall 'appearance' of the reserve. Indeed, in a side note regarding the installation of the gates, according to the *Camperdown Chronicle*, the ground 'requires only the provision of a grandstand now to equip it adequately'.[572] By the time the gates were ready to be unveiled, five months after Kane's death, the function of the gates was attracting increased focus. In the negotiation between the utilitarian nature of the memorial and its importance to the Camperdown Football Club and the Camperdown district more broadly, there is a sense that Kane's death provided an opportunity for fundraising to improve the aesthetics and functional facilities of the football ground as the gates would 'be a district asset to the already fine playing ground at Camperdown'.[573]


Figure 7: Plaque affixed to the Joe Kane Memorial Gates (Photographed by N.T.S. Marshall, 2018)

572 'The Leura Reserve', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1933, p. 7.
573 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 May 1933, p. 2.

Raising funds during the height of the Great Depression, the 'imposing entrance' was justified to the public as it was going to be a 'fitting memorial to the late Joe Kane'.[574] Creating such a monument when times were 'tough' enhanced the idea that local football provided a space that facilitated internal perceptions of civic cohesion and community togetherness. The entire community was 'suffering from various things' as a result of the depression, but in light of this, Kane's death was positioned as an inspirational beacon that highlighted the communities solidarity.[575] Such community fundraising emphasised the sense that local football maintained itself as a space of stability and cohesion during troubled times, be it demonstrating grief due to the death of a club member or the difficulties associated with the depression.[576] These sentiments were designed to be forever associated with the gates and with Kane himself as through his service to the football club he represented ideals of citizenship such as loyalty, sacrifice, and commitment. This monument was therefore a physical object to perpetuate a social memory of admiration for and replication of his idealistic citizenship, a type of citizenship that was exemplified by the town's commitment to strive even under the encumbrance of economic stress.

While the process to construct the Joe Kane Memorial Gates relied heavily on the role of community involvement and donations, the gates dedicated to the memory of John Goodall in Mortlake were dealt with in an 'in house' manner. The process that led to the installation of the gates dedicated to John Goodall was not outlined in the newspapers, but the commemoration service that inaugurated their opening to the public did mirror that of the Joe

574 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 30 May 1933, p. 2.
575 'The Kane Memorial', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 September 1933, p. 7.
576 Football's stability was also evinced by the fact that crowd numbers and gate takings at Hampden Football League matches remained relatively constant throughout the 1930s. Average gate takings per game for Home-and-Home matches (also known as Home and Away matches) during each season of the 1930s were as follows: 1930: £20, 1931: £17, 1932: £23, 1933: £21, 1934: £17, 1935: £15, 1936: £14, 1937: £17, 1938: £20, 1939: £18. Note that the cost of admission for matches during this period also remained constant at 1/- (1 shilling) for adults.

Kane gates as well as the many soldier memorials throughout the district in years previous.[577] According to the 1939 Mortlake Football Club financial statement published in the *Mortlake Dispatch*, the memorial gates were paid for by the club at a cost of £43.[578] Indeed, the expense contributed to the Mortlake Football Club running at a loss for the 1939 season, with total expenditure for the season amounting to £266/10/4 while the total income raised for the season had only amounted to £238/14/8.[579] A credit balance carried over from the previous season meant that the club maintained an overall credit balance of £39/9/10.[580] As the Mortlake Football Club was footing the bill for the gates there did not appear to be any public fundraising efforts. It is unclear why the Mortlake Football Club elected to pay for the gates out of their own pocket, but perhaps a contributing factor was that Goodall's death had occurred at the end of the season leaving very few opportunities – such as at matches or club-run events – to seek donations. The eagerness to memorialise Goodall, despite causing the club to run at a significant financial loss, speaks volumes of the value placed on Goodall's contributions to the club. It also provides a counterpoint to the notion that memorialisation was just an opportunity to modernise the reserve – although this was undeniably an associated benefit. The speed with which the gates were built in both instances aided to prevent aspects of these men's memory and death being forgotten or lost and again, underlined the important meaning Australian Rules football held in these rural communities at this time.

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577 While it should be acknowledged that Goodall's death coincided with the outbreak of World War II, the seriousness of this war was at this stage not yet fully understood and Australia's involvement still relatively minimal. Hence it is unlikely that the beginning of this war motivated the memorialisation of Goodall. Additionally, despite the implicit connections between the Kane and Goodall memorial gates there was no explicit connection highlighted through the local newspapers at this time.

578 'Mortlake Football Club', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 February 1940, p. 1.

579 'Mortlake Football Club', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 February 1940, p. 1.

580 'Mortlake Football Club', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 February 1940, p. 1.

**Conclusion**

The gates that memorialise Joe Kane and John Goodall still exist years after they were created. Multiple memories and meanings still reside within them, but they are now largely dormant. When these gates were constructed, the feelings and memories embedded within them attested to the regard that two footballing identities were held in by their broader communities. Yet at present, neither gate is utilised as the 'main' entry point to the respective reserves, so as sites of memory they have lost some focus and hence it could be said that memories associated with them have been 'malnourished' by a lack of interaction. Nevertheless, as long as they still stand they remain a site where memory can be retrieved and reinterpreted as has been shown throughout this chapter. The gates reflect a different time and provide a physical monument which capture ideals of the past that perpetuate throughout the present. They convey a clear message of football's connection to the town and the masculine role models that epitomised its presence in rural south west Victoria during the interwar period. At the core of this narrative was the sense that the sport of football in rural spaces was a site where splendid citizens are made.

As monuments of the past, these gates convey memories and narratives which can be interpreted in a number of ways in the present. As gates, they provide a connection both to the inner sanctum of the football oval space as well as a clear connection to the outer space of the broader townships in which they stood. Symbolically this represented the men that they were dedicated to as both football icons and exemplary citizens, and additionally it made a clear connection between the value football played in the community as a space that attracted and created good manly citizens.

Aside from these fairly explicit sentiments, these monuments presented other less conspicuous messages which were highly relevant to members of these rural communities at the time. The most obvious of these hidden messages was that of automobile safety. Caution

and safety was a regular feature of the press, but the consequences of not abiding such instructions were not necessarily expressed. These gates provided a physical reminder of the consequences of negligent driving. That two purportedly upstanding gentlemen in the district had been stuck down was emblematic of the indiscriminate nature of accidents on the road. With the gates functioning as a connector between the football oval and the road, it is likely that collective memories of road safety were conjured up upon entry, especially in the years just following their construction.

As monuments of the past these gates will, for as long as they stand, convey innumerable contested messages and meanings. Those presented here are just a selection of the collective memories which have been installed within them. As time passes other memories may evolve and other similar structures may be critiqued which will further explain the connection of football to this rural landscape, a connection which has been perpetuated by beliefs attached to such sites of memory.

# Chapter Six

# ‘A Fine Manly Game’?: Negotiating the Masculinity and Violence of Australian Rules Football in Rural South West Victoria during the Interwar Years

## Introduction

‘When will the ill-feeling that exists between Terang and Mortlake end?’.[581] This plaintive question from the *Mortlake Dispatch* in 1929 was not in reference to civic unrest, political machinations, or legal disputes between the two towns. Instead, it addressed the angst caused by a deepening rivalry between the respective Australian Rules football teams of each locality. It was an unusual expression of discontent that highlighted the game’s role in shaping local relationships. In general, the newspapers of south west Victoria emphasised the good that the game supposedly fostered, however in this moment, the papers of both Mortlake and Terang gave expression to sentiments of ill-will that also pervaded the sport. In so-doing, they also revealed broader debates around football’s meaning in this rural setting.

Historical literature regarding Australian Rules football during the interwar period of the twentieth century is replete with multiple accounts of violence at football matches on the field and amongst spectators.[582] Indeed, there were fears that the game was being ‘dogged’ by acts of violence in the professional Melbourne leagues of the 1920s.[583] Yet much of this research draws on narratives from elite metropolitan competitions where the ‘unseemly’ conduct was connected with growing professionalisation and the influence of money on these leagues. In the Victorian Football League (VFL) and Victorian Football Association (VFA) the

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581 ‘Football’, *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1929, p. 1.

582 See, for example, Peter Burke, ‘A Social History of Workplace Australian Football, 1860-1939’, Doctoral Thesis, School of Global Studies, Social Sciences and Planning, RMIT University, 2008, pp. 248-253; Chris McConville, ‘Football, Liquor and Gambling in the 1920s’, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1984, pp. 38-55; and Russell Holmesby, ‘In a New League, 1925-1945’, in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998, pp. 139-164.

583 Holmesby, ‘In a New League, 1925-1945’, p. 139.

business and profit-oriented nature of the clubs increased the stakes of each match and as a result undermined the importance of sportsmanship.[584] The dominant narrative of this period was that players became more desperate to win and thus elements of roughness increasingly characterised the play. [585] The increasing frequency of rough and violent acts was an example of an apparent deviation from the 'manly' traditions of the sport which administrators made efforts to uphold.[586]

In general, these discussions of violence and football during the interwar years do not consider rural football competitions.[587] One consequence of this is that the narrative that rural football competitions were more wholesome at this time than those in the metropole has gone unchallenged. However, as this chapter will reveal, rural football competitions during the interwar period were not immune to acts of violence or 'questionable' crowd behaviour.

In contrast to the semi-professional city competitions, many rural competitions during this period attempted to enforce ideals of amateurism.[588] For example, the Western District

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584 Ian Warren, 'Violence in Sport: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues in the Australian Context', *Paper Presented at Second National Conference on Violence Convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology*, Canberra, 15-18 June 1993.

585 During the interwar years gambling was also becoming an area of concern in the professional metropolitan competitions. There were a number of allegations that some punters were attempting to improve their odds by bribing players to 'play dead'. For more details see Holmesby, 'In a New League, 1925-1945', p. 142.

586 Holmesby, 'In a New League, 1925-1945'. Holmesby highlights the inauguration of the Brownlow Medal in 1924, a medal to honour the Fairest and Best player in the VFL. Holmesby points out that there had been much debate regarding the motivations of the VFL in minting the new award with some historians indicating that it was linked with cleaning up the game as perhaps 'gentlemen' that played needed to be reminded of the etiquette of fair play during this period.

587 Dave Nadel's article on the 1987 Purnim Bears is one of the few examples that provide any detail or insight into how football was played in a rural setting and the associated violence that pervaded the code locally. However, this article draws predominantly on material from the 1980s while only very briefly touching on the pre-history of the game in this rural setting. Dave Nadel, 'Aborigines and Australian Football: The Rise and Fall of the Purnim Bears', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1993, pp. 47-63.

588 The traditional idea of amateurism was that athletes participating in sport did so without any monetary incentive or other form of compensation. In this sense amateur athletes were seen to be playing for the love of the sport and congenial competition, as previously discussed in Chapter Four with regards to Colin Watson. While some elements of compensation and remuneration existed within football competitions of rural south west Victoria during the interwar period, open professionalism whereby players were paid for their services to a club as was the case in the VFL at the time, was not permitted. The complexity of the 'constructed' form of amateurism which was celebrated in this rural setting is explored in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis. See also Robert J. Paddick, 'Amateurism' in Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman and Ian F. Jobling (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 11-14.

Football League made clear at their annual meeting of delegates in March 1929, that only coaches were eligible for remuneration.[589] Henceforth, the professionalisation and money that was impacting the metropolitan versions of the code does not present itself as an adequate explanation to why 'unnecessary' levels of roughness would infiltrate rural football. At question then is what was at stake in these rural football matches which might prompt such angst developing between rival clubs in a local competition? And how did football followers in this rural setting read, react to, and understand instances of violence that were present in the local form of the game? Moreover, what role did the local newspapers play in advocating the expectations of player and spectator behaviour in the district and how did this impact upon the masculine culture of the game? This chapter uses the series of tense matches between Terang and Mortlake in 1929 to explore the multivalent notions of masculinity at play in instances of football violence in south west Victoria.

**Pre-Match Build-Up and Expectations of Supporters**

On 15 June 1929, three weeks prior to the *Mortlake Dispatch* posing the question about 'ill-feeling', the relationship between the two sides from Mortlake and Terang appeared amicable. Their next match up was to occur in Round 7 of the Western District Football League home-and-home matches.[590] For the relatively small rural Victorian towns of Terang and Mortlake,

589 'Western District Football League', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 29 March 1929, p. 3. During the 1920s the Western District Football League included teams from Hamilton, Port Fairy, Koroit, Warrnambool, South Warrnambool, Terang, Mortlake, Camperdown, and Cobden. In the latter part of the decade the league was divided into an eastern section and a western section. The so called 'Old Four' clubs (Camperdown, Terang, Cobden, and Mortlake) were in the eastern section and the other five clubs in the western. In 1930 the eastern side clubs seceded from the Western District Football League to form the Hampden Football League. For further reading on the formation of the Hampden Football League see Fred Bond and Don Grossman, *Evergreen Hampden: History of the Hampden Football – Its People and Their Progress*, Warrnambool: PAP Book Co, 1979.

590 'Home-and-home' matches refer to the fixture of matches played to decide the minor premiership. These matches result in the ranking of the clubs from best to worst on a ladder prior to the finals series of matches. Four points are awarded for a victory, two points for a draw, and zero points for a loss. In current times this is commonly known as the 'home-and-away season' or 'regular season' in various organised sport competitions. Following the 'home-and-home' matches a series of finals matches are played to determine the overall premier of the competition for that season.

the estimated crowd of 2000 people – equating to gate takings that exceeded £70 – was indicative that this contest had attracted significant interest from the public.[591] The two towns' geographical proximity rendered their teams natural rivals in this league as there was an understood endeavour to defeat neighbouring teams in the name of civic pride.

David Whitson has observed from a Canadian sport history context, the attraction of a home side was that in the early forms of inter-town sport the teams were comprised almost exclusively of 'local' people.[592] As noted in Chapter Three of this thesis, in its burgeoning years in this rural setting, football provided an opportunity for supporters to compare and contrast 'the merits of their different champions'.[593] While these early 'champions' were at the centre of 'shearing shed' discussions, the essence of this observation remained constant across south west Victoria during the interwar years. In other words, local teams were largely made up of players from that town, and were celebrated as such.[594] Hence, local football patrons tended to identify closely with their respective teams. It was this sense of inter-town comparison that led teams like Mortlake and Terang to be labelled 'old rivals' by the local press. This rivalry heightened the significance of the contest and increased the underlying stakes of their matches. Yet, considering that such towns had an otherwise harmonious relationship in other realms of social, cultural, and economic activity, the label of 'old rivals' was incongruent with this rural setting.

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591 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3. At the 1933 Census the township of Terang's population was 2262 and Mortlake's was 1082. Cost of admission to the match was 1 shilling (1/-) for adults. This price was consistent throughout the 1920s and 1930s. During finals the cost of admission for major local football competitions was 1/6 and 6d for children. £70 was the highest gate takings at Terang ground for home-and-home matches in 1929 and was approximately equivalent to $5,500AUD today.

592 David Whitson, 'Sport and Civic Identity in the Modern Canadian City', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, pp. 125-147.

593 The Old Eaglehawk, 'The Evolution of Football in the Mortlake District', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 7 June 1935, p. 3.

594 According to competition rules of the various football competitions in south west Victoria teams were required to select most of the men for their team from within their recruiting zone. This zone was often defined by a radius from a central point in the town such as the post office or by local government boundaries. For an example of how such radii or zones were defined and discussed see 'New Football Body', *Terang Express*, 6 May 1932, p. 2; and 'Football', *Terang Express*, 26 March 1935, p. 8.

Playing for four premiership points at the midpoint of the Western District Football League season the game was, according to the local press, likely to 'give a fair indication' of both teams' prospects for the remainder of the year.[595] The writer for the *Terang Express* exuded cautious optimism regarding the Terang team's current position stating that 'the Terang Club has advanced another step on the ladder of fame'. This enthusiastic reflection on the team's early success was moderated with the observation that 'the higher they rise, the greater the fall; so we hope they will watch their step'.[596] The sense of humility reflected the ideals of modest rural life that the newspapers of the region propagated at the time. Similarly, the *Mortlake Dispatch* saw promise in *their* side's prospects as they were coming off three successive victories after an otherwise slow start to the year. Realistic and respectful in their expression, the *Mortlake Dispatch* noted that for the side to be successful in reaching the top of the ladder it was 'necessary for a sterling game' to be played against Terang's 'formidable combination'.[597] The Mortlake side's mid-year revival was in part due to the influence of their newly appointed playing coach Tom Fitzmaurice, a former VFL player.[598] A lack of system and discipline in terms of training attendance and schedules had hindered the Mortlake side in the past, but Fitzmaurice's influence in this department had revamped the playing style of the side and 'built-up a morale among the players'.[599]

With the exception of playing coaches such as Fitzmaurice, footballers in the Western District Football League were not allowed to receive payments for playing.[600] Therefore, a

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595 'Football', *Terang Express*, 14 June 1929, p. 8.
596 'Football', *Terang Express*, 14 June 1929, p. 8.
597 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 14 June 1929, p. 2.
598 Tom Fitzmaurice had played in the VFL for Essendon from 1918-1924, winning premierships in 1923 and 1924. He then played for Geelong from 1925-1928 winning the premiership in 1925. A highly talented ruck and centre half back Fitzmaurice left Geelong in 1929 to coach Mortlake. He would later return to the VFL in 1932 to coach North Melbourne. For more details on Fitzmaurice's VFL career and background see Russell Holmesby and Jim Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers* (Ninth Edition), Seaford: Bas Publishing, 2011, pp. 269-270.
599 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 14 June 1929, p. 2.
600 'Western District Football League', *Terang Express*, 26 March 1929, p. 3. This report of the 1929 Western District Football League annual meeting of delegates noted that the only player who could receive

central motivation for success and commitment to the team was the inherent sense of town pride and civic cohesion that success reflected. The *Terang Express* identified that 'the harmony existing between all active members of the club and the support given by the public are the major factors towards success'.[601] Local newspapers presented an acute awareness of not only the economic value, but also the social value that supporters and football enthusiasts brought to the games every Saturday. These newspapers extended the responsibility of the team's success beyond the players and coaches and onto the club supporters, identifying that loyalty and the various expressions of this loyalty were a determining aspect of on-field results. One of many ways in which to express loyalty was through the support of the 'ladies refreshment booth' at the game by the 'donation of cakes or scones … to be disposed of at the booth'.[602] Another option was to purchase a football programme for the price of 3d, with the proceeds going to the injured players' fund. Without doubt, the most obvious expression of loyalty was through attendance at the matches and supporting the local team on game day. However, the details of the manner in which one was to go about 'supporting their team' was not plainly stated. For this expression of loyalty there seemed to be a spectrum on which members of the public were located. Local newspapers only tended to offer guidance and instruction on what they thought constituted appropriate spectator etiquette if supporters were seen to have broken a 'norm'.

**The Match: Incidents On and Off the Field**

Throughout the early stages of the 1929 Western District Football League season, the press expressed content with the even nature of the competition and the spectacle that this would

remuneration was a coach. This ruling, that only coaches were permitted remuneration for their services, was common across most rural football competitions of the period.

601 'Football', *Terang Express*, 7 June 1929, p. 1.

602 'Football', *Terang Express*, 14 June 1929, p. 8.

provide for followers of the game.[603] 'Barrackers will come into their own on Saturday' as interest in the local football matches will be at 'fever pitch'.[604] Indeed, prior to the Round 7 matches the *Camperdown Chronicle* intimated that 'the matches to-day should excite great interest'.[605] Yet in the aftermath of the game, the tone of the local newspapers changed to express a sense of surprise in the behaviour of some members of the crowd. The *Mortlake Dispatch* made special note that 'in fact their [*sic*] was far more "ginger" in the barracking than in the actual play, which at times was very lively'.[606] Although the match report acknowledged that barracking at this time was becoming an accepted feature of local football matches, the exuberance of some supporters' behaviour, in the newspapers opinion, did not 'tend to a neighbourly feeling existing' between the two townships.[607] The terms 'barracker' and 'barracking' which emerged in the late nineteenth century were defined as a manner of spectatorship that was commonly characterised by abusive language or offensive remarks.[608] This definition still resonated in south west rural Victoria during the interwar period as the term 'barrack' was frequently associated with the negative aspects of crowd behaviour. However, the *Mortlake Dispatch* reassured its readers that the 'ill-will is confined to a noisy few', sternly indicating that such behaviour should be frowned upon, adding that the actions of this vocal minority were 'decidedly nauseous to all concerned'.[609] According to this particular report the height of such abhorred conduct during the match came in the form of players being 'jeered at' for what the author considered only 'trifling incidents'. The author then reinforced that for the benefit of the game behaviour like this should be avoided.[610]

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603 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 30 May 1929, p. 4.
604 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 2 May 1929, p. 3.
605 'Football' *Camperdown Chronicle*, 15 June 1929, p. 5.
606 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.
607 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.
608 June Senyard, 'The Barracker and the Spectator: Constructing Class and Gender Identities Through the Football Crowd at the Turn of the Century', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 62, 1999, pp. 45-55.
609 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.
610 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.

The *Mortlake Dispatch* also brought public attention to an article written by a journalist from the *Camperdown Herald* who described a dispute that had unravelled between a number of female spectators at the same match. The brief account alleged that:

> A big Mortlake player who had gained the disapprobation of a section was returning to the field when a Terang lady ejected the contents of her ruby lips at him. A Mortlake woman resented the action, whereupon other women joined in the fray.[611]

With the assistance of 'some mere men', the dispute was subdued but not before an umpire had been hit with one lady's umbrella. The *Mortlake Dispatch* passed limited comment on the incident other than to label it a 'little episode'.[612] This incident highlighted by the *Mortlake Dispatch* complements research by June Senyard who noted that female barrackers were often characterised as 'viragos' in press of the early twentieth century. Crowd violence instigated by women was viewed far more disapprovingly than male crowd violence as the behaviour more overtly contradicted gendered expectations and by association brought into question their mental stability.[613] This was a clear example of 'ill-will' amongst the crowd that the local press considered to be of an undesirable standard. By playing down the female brawl as a 'little episode' or an outlier to the norm, the *Mortlake Dispatch* fostered the idea that, in general, football was a wholesome and humble social space.

Reporting on the same match, the *Terang Express* justified the exuberant preview of the match by noting that as predicted the match was a 'great tussle'. After remarking on the accuracy of the prediction, the author was surprised and disappointed that not all of the 'Terang "sports"' had answered the call to provide the support the newspaper had hoped for in the lead

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611 'Published Every Friday', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 2.

612 'Published Every Friday', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 2. From the evidence collected, the presence of women in rural football communities during this period was commonplace. The history of women in Australian Rules football and their role in the code's development is a growing field of interest for research. See, for example, Rob Hess, '"Ladies are Specially Invited": Women in the Culture of Australian Rules Football', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 17, nos 2-3, 2000, pp. 111-141; and Matthew Klugman, 'Female Spectators, Agency, and the Politics of Pleasure: An Historical Case Study from Australian Rules Football', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 33, no. 18, June 2017, pp. 2086-2104.

613 Senyard, 'The Barracker and the Spectator', p. 54.

up to the match. For those that had neglected the team, the *Terang Express* announced with pride that Terang's victory 'was a real triumph for the locals'.[614]

From this point on, the interpretation of the match from the rival newspapers skewed more obviously in favour of their respective teams. Events that the *Mortlake Dispatch* had cast aside as 'trifling incidents' the *Terang Express* branded 'as the most dastardly act they have ever seen on the ground'.[615] The incident in question involved Mortlake's captain-coach Tom Fitzmaurice. In the words of the *Terang Express*:

> Eye witnesses to the assault – for it was nothing less – made by Fitzmaurice, the captain of the Mortlake team, on 'Brush' Sadler, say it was the most brutal and disgraceful action they have seen on a football ground. Sadler had … kicked the ball from a free and the ball had travelled some twenty or thirty yards when Fitzmaurice charged in, and using the elbow, caught Sadler over the heart, brought his hand across to the jaw, and finally as a sort of coup de grace, drove the knee into Sadler's stomach. Naturally Sadler went out to it, and was out for some time.[616]

The *Terang Express* iterated that it was spectators who had described the scene and that even some Mortlake supporters 'incensed at the action of their captain, left the ground' in addition to other Mortlake members who 'were extremely strong in their disapproval'.[617] In light of the eye witness accounts, the *Terang Express* went on to discuss the manner in which they believed football should be played. Concerned for the status of the code in the district the *Terang Express* promoted the idea to its readers that football should be 'a fine manly game'.[618]

References to 'manliness' such as this resembled traditional British sentiments that encouraged the use of sport, particularly team sports, as a healthy pathway for the development of men's moral and physical character. Sports in British public schools during the mid-nineteenth century provided a means of teaching 'manly' behaviour to 'roughnecks … of some

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614 'Football', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 1.
615 'Football', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 1.
616 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.
617 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.
618 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.

social standing'.[619] However, 'manliness' – or 'masculinity' as it is otherwise commonly referred – was a contested notion, with what it means to be masculine shaped by both time and place.[620] Across varying sporting fields, masculinity has been linked to a diverse range of attributes and values including, but not limited to, sportsmanship, intelligence, fair play, resilience, discipline, and physical muscularity.

Through his examination of the relationship between American football and the press in the late nineteenth century, Michael Oriard noted that 'manliness' was widely acknowledged by reporters as a trait that was not naturally embedded in a man's make up, but a characteristic that was learned over time.[621] In this American context, a key feature of the term's use was an inherent understanding 'that [American] football offered American youths a rite of passage into manhood'.[622] In essence, the tough and physical nature of the various football codes was a standard feature, which earned those 'boys' willing to risk their welfare by playing these sports a path towards 'manhood'. The *Terang Express* reports following 'the Terang-Mortlake match' also reflected this sentiment stating, 'there are knocks to be taken by players, but that is all in a day's play'.[623] Bravery to compete, and toughness to cope with incidental bumps and bruises was therefore a feature of manliness that was revered by the local press. While injuries were a common occurrence in local football matches, they were often presented by the press as 'the result of an accident'.[624] The exact nature of these accidents was left to the reader's imagination, as more often than not such incidents were described simply as 'collisions or heavy falls'.[625]

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619 J.A. Mangan, '"Muscular, Militaristic and Manly": The British Middle-Class Hero as Moral Messenger', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1996, pp. 30-31.
620 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Second Edition), Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005, pp. 77-78.
621 Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p. 190.
622 Oriard, *Reading Football*, p. 193.
623 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.
624 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.
625 'Injuries to Footballers', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 11 May 1933, p. 2.

The press also considered the 'greenness' of players a contributing factor to explain injuries.[626] Roughness and scrummaging play was, during the interwar period, a game style described as unattractive by football reporters in the district. However, matches played in this manner were often associated with inexperienced players or junior competitions in the district.[627] Injuries that resulted from the 'greenness' of the players or accidents were therefore accepted and understood as part of the game. These explanations of footballing injuries in the local press shielded the game from public criticism, but if injury was the result of conduct deemed unseemly then the newspapers reacted more stridently.

Sport writers of the region agreed that unnecessary violence should be abhorred, as such conduct was thought likely to cause the game's local popularity to decline and by association attendances to drop. According to the local press, football attracted spectators who appreciated the fast physicality of the sport and begrudged any untoward scuffling. But the *Mortlake Dispatch* and the *Terang Express* did not agree that this particular incident was an example of 'unnecessary violence'. The *Mortlake Dispatch* presented it as an acceptable physical collision between two players. The *Terang Express*, however, intimated that Fitzmaurice's bump was a clear example of an unnecessary and crude act that was not aligned with the fair and sporting masculine spirit of the game as it was understood and articulated in this rural social context. Considering the perceived 'unsavouriness' of the incident, the *Terang Express* feared that the 'generous' support that was given to the local form of the game would 'surely fade out' if such violent 'tactics' were utilised on a regular basis.[628]

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626 'Injuries to Footballers', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 11 May 1933, p. 2.

627 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 4 June 1931, p. 6. This article provided a typical example of the scrambling nature of the junior ranks of competition. In a game between the junior clubs from Camperdown and Cobden the author of the report stated, 'As far as football is concerned, the first quarter was the best of the match for after that term it developed more or less into a scramble with far too many players on the ball. When junior teams especially come to the realisation that men are stationed in at 15 places on the playing field, and only three running free, then shall the public get more open and enjoyable football.'

628 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.

The *Terang Express* branded Fitzmaurice a 'gladiator' with the connotation that his actions were barbaric and reflective of the 'old Roman business of thumbs ups or thumbs down'.[629] In using this archaic and violence-oriented Roman entertainment as a point of reference the *Terang Express* further distanced itself from advocating any form of misconduct, rather preferring to align with masculine values linked to British middle-class sentiments such as 'fair play'. This middle-class interpretation of the violence associated with the Fitzmaurice incident was evidence that the 'manly' culture of Australia's burgeoning identity was at risk of being degraded by undisciplined and 'uncivil' members of society.[630] Although Australia had proved their metal as a nation in the Great War, there remained internalised concern for the nation's future independence and international standing. Henceforth, ideas that cultivating a 'civilised' type of masculinity would strengthen the Anglo-Australian population continued to dominate social and political tendencies during the 1920s and 1930s.[631] The clear disquiet the *Terang Express* disseminated in response to the Fitzmaurice incident emphasised their commitment to advocating sentiments of 'civility' in sport and across the community more generally.

In contrast to the *Terang Express*, the only mention Fitzmaurice received from the *Mortlake Dispatch* in the weekly match report was his efforts in scoring five goals for Mortlake. Although the match report from the *Mortlake Dispatch* did not mention any specific incident involving Fitzmaurice, it is not unreasonable to suspect that he was one of the players being

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629 'Local News', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 4.

630 For more on the idea of the degradation of British culture see Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001, pp. 10-13. For a more succinct version of Crotty's discussion of Australian maleness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century see Martin Crotty, 'Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 17, nos 2-3, 2000, pp. 10-30. The contestation regarding the degeneration of class and civility as reflected by football contests has also been explored in Oriard, *Reading Football*, pp. 216-223.

631 The most obvious example regarding the protection of the racialised identity of Australia came in the form of the 'White Australia policy', which continued throughout the interwar period after its establishment earlier in the century. For further discussion on Australia's evolving concerns regarding foreign threats see Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, North Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 140-144.

'jeered at for certain trifling incidents that would have passed without comment on other less important games'.[632] Fitzmaurice was also likely the 'big Mortlake player' who was spat at by a Terang lady with 'ruby lips'.[633] It was later revealed that R. Baxter, Terang's boundary umpire for the game, had reported Fitzmaurice for the alleged offence with the case to be settled by the independent tribunal of the Western District Football League at a later date.[634] While football followers in the region awaited an outcome, some Mortlake supporters took it upon themselves to express their discontent in relation to the *Terang Express*' assessment of the incident.

**Spectator Reactions**

The *Terang Express* articles discussed above featured prominently in their newspaper and with its district wide circulation the commentary on the Fitzmaurice incident was readily available to Mortlake readers on the Tuesday following the match.[635] This provided more than adequate time for Mortlake readers to digest, critically respond, and defend Fitzmaurice via incensed letters to the editor of the *Mortlake Dispatch* before its weekly publication on the following Friday. After crediting the Terang team with a hard-earned victory in the weekly match report, the *Mortlake Dispatch* turned its attention to the comments made by the *Terang Express* in their article regarding the Fitzmaurice incident, even going to the extent of republishing it verbatim for the benefit of those who may have missed the original version. Next to the republished article was correspondence from the Mortlake Football Club's honorary secretary, Mr E.S. Stewart. In his letter, Stewart rebuked the assessment of the incident by the *Terang*

632 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3
633 'Published Every Friday', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 2.
634 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 27 June 1929, p. 3. Each club was required to provide one boundary umpire, one goal umpire and one timekeeper for each match. These positions were generally appointed at the beginning of the season at the respective clubs' annual general meetings as part of the election of club officials.
635 The *Terang Express*, like many of the local newspapers in the south west district, was circulated throughout the district to neighbouring towns. The *Terang Express* was published twice a week on Tuesday and Friday, while the *Mortlake Dispatch* was only published once a week on Friday.

*Express* and proceeded to 'protest' against what he considered 'biased and misleading statements'.[636] Defending Fitzmaurice, Stewart felt that the *Terang Express* was attempting to influence the independent tribunal of the Western District Football League by exaggerating the gravity of the incident, as well as damaging the reputation of the Mortlake Football Club more generally. At the very least, Stewart considered that the article was 'not in the best interests of the game'.[637]

The match report from the *Mortlake Dispatch*, and Stewart's letter, presented the idea that the *Terang Express* had sensationalised the severity of the incident. It was this perceived 'misleading' interpretation of the incident which Stewart felt was 'not in the best interests of the game' as it had the potential to undermine the masculine image of the sport. In general, incidents that resulted in a player being reported were left in the hands of the tribunal and the local newspapers tended to respect any decision made by the independent body by providing brief and simple accounts of the tribunal hearing. As an example, in the week prior to the Fitzmaurice incident, A.L. Harper of Terang was suspended for two weeks after he was found guilty of striking a player from the Cobden team.[638] The *Terang Express* accepted the tribunal's decision without commenting on the verdict. Moreover, the report of Harper's indiscretion was kept very brief and was relatively inconspicuous in the football news, receiving neither a special headline nor even a sub-headline. However, when compared with the opinionated discussion regarding the Fitzmaurice incident, the claim by Stewart that the *Terang Express*' report had destabilised the game's social integrity indicated there were members of the public that thought violent aspects of local football were best left silent.

The profile of Fitzmaurice, a former player from the VFL and an excellent player in his own right, may have also contributed to the sensationalism in the pages of the *Terang Express*.

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636 E.S. Stewart, 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.
637 E.S. Stewart, 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 21 June 1929, p. 3.
638 'Football', *Terang Express*, 18 June 1929, p. 1.

As coach of the Mortlake Football Club, Fitzmaurice was paid for his services, therefore his motivations for winning matches may not have been as altruistic as town pride, rather results were necessary to justify his employment. However, no effort was made by either the *Terang Express* nor the *Mortlake Dispatch* to gain Fitzmaurice's view of the incident or his motivations. Instead, some of the Mortlake supporters acted by speaking on his behalf. Fitzmaurice's importance to the success of the Mortlake Football Club was not lost on their supporters and those who felt it was necessary attempted to defend his integrity. One such supporter, Mr M. Grostel, referred his defence of Fitzmaurice and critique of the incident via a letter mailed directly to the *Terang Express* and in so-doing continued the inter-town dispute regarding the incident. More than a week after the game it was clear that local football enthusiasts now had an invested interest in the outcome of the Fitzmaurice incident as the unusually prolonged commentary of the incident continued. The *Terang Express* reflected this interest by titling relevant articles with 'The Terang-Mortlake Match' as opposed to the more common and generic football news banner of 'Football'.[639]

Grostel started his letter to the editor of the *Terang Express* by stating that 'as a true sports-lover, it is with disgust and contempt I read your article on the Sadler-Fitzmaurice incident'.[640] Grostel who claimed to have witnessed the incident from a distance of approximately 30 yards, believed the clash was an 'accident' and that the jaw knock and kick by Fitzmaurice as reported by the *Terang Express* was a 'pure untruth'.[641] Moreover, Grostel argued that the *Terang Express*' assessment of the incident was 'surprisingly stupid', observing that if Fitzmaurice had intended to hurt Sadler he would have done so in a 'scramble' situation hidden from view rather than in open space as was suggested by the paper.[642] By defending Fitzmaurice with this statement, Grostel suggested an awareness of malicious football acts that

639 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
640 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
641 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
642 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.

belied the supposed fair and sporting nature of this 'fine manly game'. Indeed, the somewhat underhand method of hitting a player in a 'scramble' was presented as a cunning approach in the game which was understood, but rarely articulated by the local press.

Redirecting the discussion of the game away from Fitzmaurice, Grostel next expressed his discontent with the crowd behaviour, pointing out that some of the Mortlake fans who had reportedly left the ground did so in response to the 'number of rotten eggs, brought and used, by Terang barrackers', rather than as a result of their 'disgust' at Fitzmaurice's tackle.[643] Grostel also noted that the Terang team made threats that four of the Mortlake players would be 'put in their boxes' during the game.[644] In closing, Grostel questioned the editor's integrity, noting that if the editor truly considered that this incident was 'the most dastardly action seen in any match' then that was only due to their 'one-eyedness'.[645]

In response to Grostel's letter, the editor was just as quick to question Grostel's own bias, stating that '"There's none so blind as those that won't see"'.[646] Yet, rather than continue to belittle Grostel's argument the editor made the point that any violent act such as this should be brought under scrutiny for the betterment of football, regardless of what team the culprit represented. 'As far as we are concerned we don't care a continental whether it be a Mortlake player or a Terang player … we would say the same thing'.[647] In an effort to disprove the accusations of bias the editor even made reference to A.L. Harper's suspension and indicated that his punishment was 'deserved' and that 'we hope it will have a good effect' on discouraging violent conduct by players.[648] The editor also admitted that the issue of 'rotten eggs' was true, but that this was the responsibility of the police and not the football club. It was claimed that the sole intention of the original article was to 'clean up the game of football' and

643 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
644 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
645 M. Grostel, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
646 Ed. TE, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
647 Ed. TE, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.
648 Ed. TE, 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 21 June 1929, p. 1.

that it was likely that threats made to players of the opposition stemmed from 'school boy barrackers' rather than respectable supporters of the Terang team. In this response, the editor redirected the argument away from rivalry and turned the conversation towards the state of football in the district more generally. The article indicated that football played an important role in the lives of many local supporters and in order for it to remain a sport of high regard, its players must be held to account as they were seen to be an example to its followers, upholding masculine ideals of fairness and sportsmanship.

The tribunal meeting to determine an outcome of the reported offence was held on 25 June 1929, ten days after the incident had occurred.[649] The delay in resolving the case meant that discussion surrounding the incident continued to spill over into the following week's football reporting. Alongside their Round 8 match report of the game between Terang and Camperdown, the *Terang Express* provided space to publish the letter written by Stewart to the *Mortlake Dispatch* from the previous Friday. Again, under the conspicuous heading of 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', the *Terang Express* took exception to the assertions made by Stewart and reiterated that the main intention of their original article was 'putting down this class of play'.[650] The *Terang Express* also disputed claims that the tribunal would be swayed by comments made in the press and that such a suggestion was 'just about the baldest insult that could be offered' to the men of the independent tribunal.[651] This defence reinforced the idea that issues of impartiality and fairness were seen as important attributes of the masculinity associated with the administrators of the game locally as well as with its players. The *Terang Express* went on to suggest that some followers of football were not opposed to violence on

649 Tribunal reports in this competition during this period were not generally dealt with in the week following the incident. This meant that players, if reported, could continue to play until the tribunal had heard their case. In the Fitzmaurice case he did in fact play the Saturday following the incident. At the 1931 Hampden Football League annual meeting of delegates this tribunal delay anomaly was rectified. A motion was carried declaring 'that any inquires before the tribunal be opened, if possible, before the match following the ones concerning which reports were made'. See, 'Hampden Football League', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 3 March 1931, p. 6.

650 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 25 June 1929, p. 1.

651 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 25 June 1929, p. 1.

the field and even concluded that Stewart's views of the incident were enough to allege that he 'favors [sic] that class of play'.[652] Suggesting that Stewart approved of the unfair tactics, this statement questioned his gentlemanly status in the community and identified an inherent connection between ideas of fairness, manliness, and levels of social standing and class.

After the tribunal met with and handed Fitzmaurice a four-match suspension, responses from both sides of the dispute were critical of the decision. Mortlake supporters felt the punishment was far too harsh, while the *Terang Express* considered it too lenient. The *Terang Express* reaffirmed their stance by stating, 'light as the verdict is we sincerely hope it will act as a deterrent to foul play and that there will be no more cases of its kind brought to light in the Western District League'.[653] Concerned that public support would drop if matches were too violent, the *Terang Express* encouraged football to be played in a fair manner, as from their perspective 'no supporter of football wants play that endangers life and degrades a good sport'.[654] The press had been influential in constructing a conventional impression of the fair and sporting type of manliness to be expected in the local football competitions. In essence, there was consensus that excessive violence in this sporting context was not supported or tolerated, but supporters of Fitzmaurice intimated that his actions, although physical, were fair and simply part of the game. In opening the debates surrounding this incident, the press created a space for local football supporters to share a diverse range of perspectives on what they believed the ideal masculine footballer of the district looked like.

**More Spectator Reactions**

Three Mortlake supporters via correspondence in the *Mortlake Dispatch* offered very different ideas of what qualities typified the 'manliness' of football. While the *Mortlake Dispatch*

652 'The Terang-Mortlake Match', *Terang Express*, 25 June 1929, p. 1.
653 'Football', *Terang Express*, 28 June 1929, p. 1.
654 'Football', *Terang Express*, 28 June 1929, p. 1.

attempted to somewhat distance themselves from the letters stating explicitly that, 'We do not in any way identify ourselves with the views expressed by correspondents', their willingness to print them highlighted their prioritisation of opinions that emanated from their immediate Mortlake community.[655] These letters provided a rare opportunity to engage with broader public opinions from the local football scene and the diverse interpretations of the game's role in reproducing ideas of masculinity.

The first correspondent, under the alias of 'Not One-Eyed', questioned the consistency of the tribunal's series of recent decisions. In assuming the name 'Not One-Eyed', the author embodied idealistic traits of fairness and impartiality, attributes that were consistent with the 'manly' image of football presented by the *Terang Express* a week earlier. 'Not One-Eyed' argued that if the report of deliberately 'elbowing and … charging' had been 'proved' then Fitzmaurice should have been suspended for the remainder of the year, not just four playing Saturdays. Nevertheless, in comparing the Fitzmaurice incident with Harper's, 'Not One-Eyed' was perplexed that a deliberate strike from Harper that concussed an opponent had only garnered a two-week suspension, while Fitzmaurice 'fairly and squarely bumping a man' received a four week penalty.[656] In a final snide swipe at Terang, 'Not One-Eyed' noted that 'if a visit to Melbourne was made by some of these "squealers" they would learn something about football'.[657] The feminine undertones asserted by the term 'squealers' hinted at the idea that any effete attributes were perceived as non-compliant with manly ideals of the game.[658] This comment not only questioned the resilience of their opponents, but also elucidated that incidents such as the Fitzmaurice bump and the physicality required for this tactic would be an expected and celebrated feature in the elite metropolitan football competitions. The idea that

655 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.
656 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.
657 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.
658 Gary Osmond, '"Pink Tea and Sissy Boys": Digitized Fragments of Male Homosexuality, Non-Heteronormativity and Homophobia in the Australian Sporting Press, 1845–1954', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 13, 2015, pp. 1578-1592.

elite competitions of this interwar period produced vigorous players is supported by the VFL careers of players such as Jack Dyer, Syd Coventry, and John Lewis who were renowned for their strength, physicality, and contested work.[659] While elements of the game's professionalisation in the city was generally opposed (as explored in Chapter Two) 'Not One-Eyed' hints that the more vigorous physicality which stemmed from this professionalism was comparatively lacking in rural competitions. Considering Fitzmaurice's experience as a former professional footballer, 'Not One-Eyed's' argument therefore focussed on the question of Fitzmaurice's intent rather than the action, as toughness in the contest was perceived as a natural element to the game. Elite metropolitan competitions' influence on the code's development was presented here as the natural progression of the game in rural settings, but this overly physical, 'win at any costs' mentality did not gel with the ideals of amateurism and gentlemanliness that were often espoused by officials of the regions clubs.[660] 'Not One-Eyed' thus complicates this perception of the game locally, claiming that it was 'squealers' who could not cope with such physicality, shamed for their supposed effeminate weakness, who were threatening the code's masculine status.

The next supporter under the alias 'Armageddon' was more direct, sarcastically congratulating 'Terang on being successful in getting Tom Fitzmaurice out of the way for a month'.[661] 'Armageddon' went on to allege that Terang barrackers, jealous of Mortlake's affluence in being able to employ a player of Fitzmaurice's calibre in the position of coach, 'hooted' at him before he had even touched the ball. Revelling in the rivalry that was rising between the two clubs and their supporters, 'Armageddon' eagerly anticipated the next meeting, predicting that spectators might require 'armour' and 'life insurance' for the next contest. Although filled with exaggeration and sarcasm 'Armageddon's' letter acknowledged

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659 For brief accounts of these players' careers see Holmesby and Main, *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, pp. 496, 180, and 239-240.
660 'Camperdown Footballers Entertained', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 7 September 1937, p. 4.
661 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.

and amplified a feeling of discontent between the two supporter groups. In the final line of the letter, 'Armageddon' revealed further evidence for the idea that football in the district was clearly not just for supposed respectable members of the public, decreeing 'on with the dance and let joy be "unrefined"'.[662]

In using the term 'Armageddon', a title often used to reference World War I, as a pseudonym, combined with the suggested requirement of 'armour' and 'life insurance' for future contests, the correspondent presented local football matches as a metaphoric site of war and life or death for the towns and teams involved. This connection between sport and war was characteristic of the 'militarist nationalism' which pervaded the Australian public (private) school system of the early twentieth century where team sports were utilised to teach boys about discipline, loyalty, and obedience.[663] For 'Armageddon', the devotion and loyalty felt in this instance was directed at a more localised level of town and club defences, rather than an entire nation. Within this interwar rural context, 'Armageddon's' comments demonstrated another perspective on what constituted 'manliness' on the football field. 'Armageddon' supported and derived satisfaction from 'unrefined' play, while in contrast, the *Terang Express* intimated that this gladiatorial-like voyeurism should be discouraged in favour of more traditional middle-class sentiments conducive to congenial sporting behaviour. Debates like this that highlighted the violent aspects of football were rarely printed in the local press. Rather the local press preferred to emphasise narratives of 'footballers and gentlemen' such as those discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis. These letters thus disrupted the pattern of reporting that constructed an idyllic perception of what football meant to the public and the idealised characteristics embodied by players and administrators.

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662 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.
663 Crotty, 'Manly and Moral', p. 20.

The final letter of correspondence published in the *Mortlake Dispatch* continued the trend of Mortlake-based opinion that failed to conform to the conservative ideals of what 'a fine manly game' of football looked like. Similarly to 'Armageddon', this letter from a correspondent who referred to themself as 'Small Boy' indicated that Terang was responsible for Fitzmaurice's punishment. Although not clear on who specifically from Terang was responsible, 'Small Boy' was incensed at the result and felt that the only suitable response was for Mortlake to exit the league and 'let Terang play marbles amongst themselves'.[664] 'Small Boy's' remark was another example of shaming Terang for embodying a lack of manliness by associating them with the game of marbles, a supposed childish activity that required no physical presence or strength. Aligning with other socially prominent views of manliness during the early twentieth century, marbles was presented in this instance as a direct contrast to the heavily contact driven requirements of Australian Rules football. The contested nature of football was one of many like sports that 'served to distinguish manliness from effeminacy'.[665] Not only did these comments bring into question the masculinity of the Terang football community, but they reinforced a sense of discontent between the two teams and their towns that as mentioned earlier was not observed in any other social or cultural domain of life in the district.

While these three frustrated Mortlake supporters directed lament towards Terang, they clearly shared a passion for the game's prosperity with their rural neighbours and further exemplified the broad cultural appeal of the game locally. The way in which the game was played was central to both sides of the argument with the players', as well as the administrators', masculinity scrutinised. This question of what constituted exemplary masculinity on and around the football field had a multitude of competing definitions. While

664 'Correspondence', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 28 June 1929, p. 3.
665 Crotty, 'Manly and Moral', p. 24. Also see Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, pp. 60-61.

the *Terang Express* advocated sportsmanship and fair play as pillars of football masculinity, these impassioned responses from local supporters complicated these impressions by adding strength, physicality, and toughness as factors that contributed to the manly football idols of the period. Even within a shared social setting, such as this rural Victorian football environment of the late 1920s, the construction of manliness was not singular.[666]

The *Terang Express* positioned its argument and scrutiny of Fitzmaurice as an aid to the betterment of the game. In reality it created a platform that encouraged members of the public to present their own interpretations of what made the game masculine. An underlying impact of this debate was that it unlocked previously unarticulated understandings throughout the football community that the game harboured violent tendencies. In the lead up to the next match between Terang and Mortlake there was a clear shift away from the on-field action and towards the sidelines where the behaviour of spectators was brought into question. As the debate in the newspapers transitioned, a distinguishing feature of the diversity in perception became increasingly connected to the variety in social classes that supposedly frequented matches in the district.

**'A Certain Class of Cheap Barracking'**

As tensions between Terang and Mortlake increased during the 1929 season, the threat of 'barrackers' ruining the game of football was a growing concern for the *Terang Express*. Senyard has noted that, at football matches in Melbourne during the late nineteenth century, to be identified as a 'barracker' was to be associated with lower-class members of society, while 'spectators' represented the respectable upper and middle-class.[667] These connotations of class surrounding the term 'barracker' were still relevant to this rural football context of the 1920s.

666 Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, pp. 6-7.
667 Senyard, 'The Barracker and the Spectator', p. 48.

The local newspapers made a concerted effort to discourage any behaviour that did not reflect expected standards by belittling the character of those responsible. The *Terang Express* reinforced this association of a lower-class of people with 'barracking' as it identified in the build up to the next match that the overall spectacle of the game would be greatly enhanced as long as members of the crowd could 'refrain from losing their heads'.[668]

An increased level of resentment now began to threaten matches between Terang and Mortlake. Before Terang and Mortlake's next match in Round 10, the *Terang Express* noted that 'for years' apparently 'there has been a sort of animosity, not between teams, but from a certain class of cheap barracking'.[669] Oddly, there had been no mention of this 'animosity' in the previews to the three previous contests that year. The reason for this omission from previous articles is unclear, but after the events of the Round 7 game, the papers and the letters of correspondence illuminated factions of the game's support that the press had previously left silent. This was a clear shift from the idealistic manly culture of the game that the local papers more frequently disseminated. While matches between Terang and other teams such as Cobden apparently had 'no go or vim in it' where 'barrackers seemed as if they wanted a pin stuck in themselves', the Mortlake match-up attracted, what the newspapers considered, a more manic type of supporter to the football.

Quoting a remark made by an anonymous Mortlake supporter, the *Terang Express* indicated that it was '"the dog" element', which was bringing spectator behaviour into disrepute.[670] '"The dog" element', strongly connoting ideas of loud, mongrel-type behaviour, referred to a form of contagion that was spread by the 'ignoramus' in the crowd who 'infected … the fair and open-minded man'.[671] The most common culprits according to the report were

668 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.
669 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.
670 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.
671 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.

'cheap barrackers, small boys, and silly girls'.[672] These terms of insult used to dissuade fanatical barracking indicated that football in this rural setting was perceived as a domain for the separation of classes. However, as the press acknowledged, local spectator culture was in a state of transition, and football attracted groups of people from various sections of the public. The newspaper, however, diligently encouraged 'a standard [of crowd behaviour] that would be pleasing to all lovers of a good, manly sport' and anything less would have 'a bad effect on the game'.[673]

The dissemination of these thoughts hinted at the complex role of spectators at matches and indicated that their behaviour significantly contributed to the quality and spectacle of the football played. However, football in the district was purportedly bringing out '"the dog" element' in more than just a few 'ignoramuses'. 'Armageddon's' assertion that armour would be required by spectators was light-hearted in nature, but in hindsight this prediction was somewhat accurate. The 'ill-feeling' and 'animosity' that had surfaced or resurfaced between supporters of Terang and Mortlake made their next contest a heated affair that provided a sense that the '"the dog" element' was extremely contagious.

**Boundary Umpire Baxter's Rough Time**

The match report of Terang and Mortlake's Round 10 encounter from the *Terang Express* noted that 'loud whispers' had circulated around the towns that the match 'was going to be an all-in go' due to the 'tension' that had spilled over from the previous match between the two teams. The result of such community gossip was a crowd as large as had witnessed a regular season

672 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1. The idea that the 'cheap barracker' was infecting the 'fair and open-minded man' spoke to broader social concerns regarding the degeneration of the Anglo-Australian cultures during the interwar period. In particular the working class and poorer sections of Australian society were perceived as degrading the population with the spread of their immoral behaviour and conduct. See Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 165-168.

673 'Football', *Terang Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1.

game at the Mortlake ground. For the players' part in the contest, 'in spite of the excitement', they were noted to have played in a 'controlled' manner which featured football 'which was pretty to watch' alongside 'some hard knocks given and taken by both sides'.[674] This imagery of the on-field contest was consistent with the masculine ideals the press expected of the code. According to the *Terang Express*, the only unsavoury feature of the game occurred at the three-quarter time intermission when 'some of the light-headed ones among the [Mortlake] spectators made a decided move to mob R. Baxter, the [Terang] boundary umpire who reported Fitzmaurice'.[675] Two police officers and a number of Terang players whom the *Terang Express* praised 'for keeping their heads under the utmost of provocation' quelled the attack.[676] The *Terang Express* presented their bewilderment with the fact that umpire Baxter required police protection and that he had even received 'threatening letters' prior to the game. This was a state of affairs which once again indicated that the local football's idealistic standing was under threat from 'tainted' supporter behaviour.

The *Mortlake Dispatch* echoed the *Terang Express*' reaction to the crowd behaviour at the match stating:

> For countless years the keenest rivalry has existed [between Terang and Mortlake], but this year the feeling has been more pronounced, and it is regrettable that such a condition of affairs should continue over a game of football. It certainly is neither good for the game, the players nor the general public.[677]

However, the respective reports did take up slightly contrary positions regarding what instigated the 'unseemly disturbance' as well as who was involved in the field invasion. According to the *Mortlake Dispatch*, the invasion occurred after 'two players had a slight difference and with the prospect of a "fight" a few hot-heated barrackers from both teams

674 'Football', *Terang Express*, 9 July 1929, p. 1.
675 'Football', *Terang Express*, 9 July 1929, p. 1.
676 'Football', *Terang Express*, 9 July 1929, p. 1.
677 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1929, p. 1.

rushed on to the playing arena'.[678] The newspaper's brief account of the match play was overshadowed by critical analysis of the crowd behaviour, strongly condemning the actions of the approximate 300 spectators who besieged the ground. The *Mortlake Dispatch* also mentioned the treatment of the Terang boundary umpire Baxter, but no specific details of the culprits' affiliation were officially disclosed. According to the *Mortlake Dispatch* there was a combination of factors that led to the ill-treatment of Baxter. However, the suggestion that 'his indifferent work as boundary umpire during the game had incensed barrackers, and together with the Fitzmaurice incident Baxter was anything but popular', meant it likely that his assailants were Mortlake followers.[679]

Umpires were an easy target for newspapers, and their efforts, good, bad, or indifferent, were regularly noted at the conclusion of each match report.[680] For example when in the last round of 1929 a fight broke out between players from Mortlake and Camperdown, the *Mortlake Dispatch* identified that it was 'the incapacity of the umpire that contributed largely to the roughness and ill-feeling that was displayed'.[681] On this occasion, police were again required to clear the playing field of spectators who had invaded the field hoping to join in the fray that started after 'a couple of players came to blows'.[682]

While the *Mortlake Dispatch* did not condone the 'rough time' Baxter received, the overall assessment of the event indicated that the crowd felt partially justified in their actions. The partiality of the local newspapers is subtle in these exchanges, as they retain an essence of loyalty to their respective clubs and protect the reputation of their respective public, while still attempting to advocate and uphold the 'manly' standards of the sport.

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678 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1929, p. 1.
679 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1929, p. 1.
680 Match reports generally featured a line referencing the performance of umpires' control of the game and interpretations of the rules. Field umpires for the major country football leagues were sourced from the VFL while junior country football competitions sourced umpires from their local district. For example, the Mount Noorat Football League annually sought applications from the public for umpires. See 'Football', *Terang Express*, 13 March 1934, p. 1.
681 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 16 August 1929, p. 2.
682 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 16 August 1929, p. 2.

**Perceptions from the Press**

The loyalty shown by the newspapers was particularly prominent in the final meeting between the Terang and Mortlake teams in 1929. The newspapers of the district had skewed perceptions of every incident, which often favoured their local patrons, or team. The position was understandable considering that retention of local interest and readership would have been a core motivation in their writing as local papers were 'felt to speak, for the people of the community it served' respectively.[683] Following Terang and Mortlake's final encounter for 1929, the *Mortlake Dispatch* proclaimed that these sides had 'the keenest rivalry' and that this match gained extra interest as it aligned with Fitzmaurice's first game back since suspension.[684]

With only three matches left in the season and without a chance of making finals, Mortlake supporters had little incentive to patronise the football. Consequently, the *Mortlake Dispatch* alluded to the fact that due to Fitzmaurice's suspension, football enthusiasts lost interest in Mortlake matches as more than anything spectators for the most part wanted to see a close contest. Without their coach, Mortlake had not been competitive, and the team was beaten in each of the four matches for which he was suspended. The *Mortlake Dispatch* stated that all the clubs now began to recognise the detrimental impact Fitzmaurice's harsh punishment had on the league finances.[685] In short, it was suspected that the resultant poor form of Mortlake and lack of supporter interest had significantly reduced the gate takings during his

683 Jeffrey Hill, 'Anecdotal Evidence: Sport, The Newspaper Press, and History', in Murray G. Phillips (ed.), *Deconstructing Sport History a Postmodern Analysis*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 121.

684 'Terang Beat Mortlake by Two Points', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 2 August 1929, p. 4.

685 This recognition of the financial implications associated with Fitzmaurice's suspension provides a sense of the slight influence money had on the game. However, the issue of money in this sense was based more on the league seeking to secure enough funds to make the competition viable. This contrasted with the semi-professional city competitions which sought monetary profits.

absence.[686] These beliefs were supported when, upon Fitzmaurice's first game back 'the gate takings [at the Terang Oval] were the second highest this season, being £65'.[687]

However, football was not entirely back to normal as far as the *Mortlake Dispatch* could ascertain. Prior to the match, umpire Drysdale lined up the players from both sides to indicate 'what was to be expected of them'.[688] 'Surely it was not imagined that Fitzmaurice or any other Mortlake players were likely to do anything that was not permitted by the rules of the game?'[689] The *Mortlake Dispatch* took it as an indictment on the character of the Mortlake players that the umpire should take such action, an action which further indicated that footballers in the region were not naturally predisposed to maintaining the presumed 'manly' reputation of the game. Umpire Drysdale's actions reinforced the idea that 'fair play' was not a natural expression of the 'sporting gentleman' of this rural setting and that the attitude of players sometimes required firm direction.

In contrast, the *Terang Express* applauded the action by stating umpire Drysdale's 'arrangements for controlling what was anticipated would be a strenuous game were excellent'.[690] Despite their prominent opinion on the Fitzmaurice suspension earlier in the

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686 'Terang Beat Mortlake by Two Points', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 2 August 1929, p. 4. It is important to note that at the conclusion of the season dividends that primarily derived from gate takings were evenly distributed between clubs within the league. Therefore, any reduction in supporter interest and attendance negatively impacted all clubs.

687 'Football', *Terang Express*, 30 July 1929, p. 1. As a comparison, in Mortlake's match the previous round at Camperdown the gate takings had only reached £21 13/6. Fitzmaurice was still suspended for this game and the explanation for 'the smaller gate than was anticipated' was that 'football fans travelled to Cobden to witness the meeting of Terang and Cobden', rather than stay and watch a game that predictably resulted in a Camperdown win. See 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 23 July 1929, p. 3. The Camperdown Recreation Reserve had hosted four football games prior to this match. The gate takings totalled £152 8/6 or approximately £38 per match. See 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 27 June 1929, p. 3. Indeed, Mortlake's previous visit to Camperdown that season was considered a financial success. On that occasion 'despite the counter-attraction of the winter race meet at the Camperdown Turf Club, there was a very satisfactory attendance at the Reserve ... [and] many followers from Mortlake took a keen interest in the game'. See 'Football', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 14 May 1929, p. 4. As noted earlier, the only match of Fitzmaurice's four match suspension that did have a high gate taking was the match that saw Terang visit Mortlake. The gate takings for this game were £64 1/-. See 'Football', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 12 July 1929, p. 1. The explanation offered for this large attendance was that 'the match was one big bit of excitement, both teams and followers being quite strung up with the tension. "Loud whispers" that it was going to be an all-in go drew what must have been Mortlake's best gates' for the season. See 'Football', *Terang Express*, 9 July 1929, p. 1.

688 'Terang Beat Mortlake by Two Points', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 2 August 1929, p. 4.

689 'Terang Beat Mortlake by Two Points', *Mortlake Dispatch*, 2 August 1929, p. 4.

690 'Football', *Terang Express*, 30 July 1929, p. 1.

season, the *Terang Express* avoided any further conjecture and after witnessing his return performance credited him as 'one of Mortlake's outstanding players' in a match that overall was considered as 'one of the cleanest games this season'.[691] Within the space of this single game the status quo of masculine football had purportedly between returned to the game, an idea that the press wholeheartedly celebrated.

Although tensions between the towns had been raised during the season, this final match between Terang and Mortlake did resemble some form of the neighbourliness that the newspapers evidently expected of the teams and of their respective townships. Although the *Mortlake Dispatch*'s resentment about the Fitzmaurice's incident still lingered in their report, their dissatisfaction was not directed at Terang, but rather reconciled as an event of inconvenience, that in hindsight had been detrimental to the overall spectacle of football matches in the district. The respective newspapers shared prominently in the opinion that the quality of football played was the most vital aspect of the game and any threat to this was decidedly prohibitive. Unsavoury behaviour both on and off the field was met with bemusement by both newspapers. Reporters were aghast when certain members of the public brought down the 'manly' nature of football through crude acts of jeering, fighting on the field or by spreading the contagion of '"the dog" element' among respected spectators. As the press provided no further overt probes into on-field and off-field behaviour of this nature, the exploration of this case study provides rare insight into the dynamic, complex, and at times convoluted meanings attached to football.

## Conclusion

During the interwar years, professional elite metropolitan competitions were increasingly influenced by the business-oriented pursuit of money. The prevailing view of scholars is that

691 'Football', *Terang Express*, 30 July 1929, p. 1.

these economic motivations made winning more important than ideals of sportsmanship. Players and teams were encouraged to be more desperate for victory which resulted in rough and frequently violent play. Rural football competitions of this period were not so captivated by monetary rewards, but, as this chapter revealed, violence was still part of the game. Yet it was rare for rural newspapers to discuss the violent aspects of the game in detail as such discussion threatened the perceived fair, sporting, and wholesome nature of local competitions. The controversy over the Fitzmaurice incident disrupted these wholesome narratives, with the 'ill-feeling' creating a platform for various supporters to present their view of what they believed made football a 'manly' game. These debates thus illuminated complex, yet often hidden, tensions around the framework of masculinity and football in this rural context.

Local newspaper reporters expressed surprise at incidents that threatened a potential shift away from their idyllic masculine depiction of the game. The *Terang Express* feared that if football was played in an 'unmanly', 'unnecessarily' violent manner encouraged by 'cheap barrackers' then the game would degenerate into a barbaric rabble that resembled the perceived uncouth gladiatorial entertainments of ancient Rome. Concerned that such behaviour would undermine the game's values, the newspapers condemned player and spectator behaviour that failed to comply with their expectations of 'a fine manly game'. Yet, letters to the press revealed a multitude of beliefs around just what made the game 'manly'. While the local press predominantly promoted aspects of fairness, impartiality, and sportsmanship, there were a selection of Fitzmaurice sympathises who complicated and, in some ways, undermined these publicised views. A rare glimpse of public opinion surrounding football matters highlighted that there were members of the general public that believed that physicality, resilience, and toughness were favoured elements of the game that should be encouraged, and that those who were concerned with such roughness were weak and limiting the growth of the game.

In the fall out from the Fitzmaurice incident the press briefly attended to some of the tensions that existed between supporters of the Mortlake and Terang football teams. In particular, distinctions were made between ‘barrackers’ and ‘spectators’ who were purportedly drawn from different social classes and backed their teams in very different ways. Although citizens of each town were expected to support their local team, reporters suggested there should be limits regarding the standards and manner of this spectatorship. Throughout this series of games, the local newspapers expressed concerns that such standards were not being met, with supporters jeering or hooting, or even entering the playing field, attacking umpires, or spitting at players.

The *Terang Express* portrayed the Fitzmaurice incident as a kind of ‘line in the sand’. Although the incident was somewhat sensationalised, the discussion it stimulated in the papers revealed much about the inherent violence associated with the game locally. Other tribunal reports and on-field indiscretions that occurred throughout the season had also indicated that roughness was prevalent in football throughout the district at the time. Yet, rather than stamp each incident with a scowl of disapproval, the newspapers generally allowed the verdicts of the tribunal committee to pass without comment. Violence, in other words, was not something they generally wanted to draw attention to. The conversation surrounding the Fitzmaurice incident challenged the idea that football in this setting was defined with a singular perception of what constituted exemplary masculinity. It also showed how in the face of such challenges the local press worked to sustain the game as a cultural mainstay of this rural setting. At times the press contained and quelled local football disputes, and at other times they chose to highlight and condemn ‘unseemly’ conduct to protect ‘a fine manly game’.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

Of the past seventeen years in which I have played competitive Australian Rules football, eleven have been with country football clubs in Victoria. I reflect upon my time playing in these rural settings fondly and have developed the belief that these clubs have been, and remain, essential fixtures in the rural communities they serve. When I play the game, I am consumed by the competition and the contest. Upon reflection after each match I question what values have been reproduced by the actions of the combatants and followers alike. Essentially, I frequently ask what cultural meanings have been communicated in this setting and from where did these meanings originate?

These questions have been at the core of this thesis. As I commenced trawling through page after page of local newspaper reports from the interwar years, I uncovered some key themes of the game's cultural history in rural south west Victoria. It is important to note that this process is ongoing, and that this thesis is not seen as a conclusive cultural history of rural football, but rather a starting point from which further research into the diverse meanings of a game that has been prominent in a wide variety of historical Australian contexts. This final chapter summarises the observations of this thesis and offers guidance and direction for future research into sport history and Australian cultural history more generally.

Interest in the history of Australian Rules football has increased significantly in recent decades with academics chronicling key moments and developments in the game from its origins through to the modern day. This thesis builds on these foundations. Upon exploring the literature, it became clear that a great proportion of the narratives from the field of football history concentrated on metropolitan and professional developments of the game, while only vaguely signposting undeveloped tracks of analysis into areas where the sport has flourished. In particular, the game's expansion and popularity in rural parts of Australia has tended to be

only researched by amateur historians or local football enthusiasts interested in the most fundamental of stories and statistics from specific teams, leagues, or regions. While these works have provided basic chronological insight into each specific setting, the rigour of analysis did not match the academic navigations which have chartered a multitude of social narratives that encompass the elite metropolitan form of the game. Thus, the story of country football has been only partially told. Yet, the fact that a number of country football enthusiasts from across the nation have sought to chronicle their club's or league's history is testament to the game's social and cultural significance within such communities. This thesis therefore set out to explore historical narratives attached to the game's development and long-standing importance in a rural Australian community.

After selecting south west Victoria during the interwar years as an appropriate case study, I commenced analysing local newspapers from the region as a primary source of data. A close reading of over 3,000 football related press clippings from south west Victorian newspapers provided insight into a number of values that shaped both the game and the role it played in the cultural life of local communities. This analysis provided an opportunity to not only expand historical knowledge regarding football in a rural setting, but also tap into some of the deeper cultural meanings that are attached to the game's history.

During the interwar period football in rural south west Victoria was one of the most popular sporting pastimes. A sport played and coordinated by men, this sporting environment was dominated by gendered ideals of masculinity. While football's gendered construction did not come as a surprise, I noted that very little research has analysed how this masculinity was understood, what forms it took, and how it influenced the game's prominence. In exploring the role football played in the communication of masculine ideals in this rural setting a number of intersecting binaries were brought to the fore. The urban-rural divide was a prominent line of difference in exploring what constituted masculinity in these rural football competitions. The

differences in masculine ideals were intrinsically linked to division in opinion surrounding the growing professionalism of metropolitan football leagues, in comparison country competitions perceived themselves to be upholding traditional ideals of amateurism. That the city's influence in the game was disrupting the idyllic dimensions of play in rural regions highlighted the disconnect and tension between varying forms of masculinity that were emanating from both urban and rural forms of the code.

The rural football competitions themselves were presented as maintaining a close affinity to amateur sporting ideals – and the forms of masculinity central to these ideals – emblematic of the wholesome identity of country football. This belief was amplified through comparisons of country leagues with the elite metropolitan form of the game which was seen as corrupted by professionalisation. The press from south west Victoria heralded how local competitions played 'clean football' free from the taint of money. It was this 'clean football' which was at the core of the game's believed propensity to promote 'good citizenship'. However, country leagues were still shaped by the powerful metro-centric influences of the game, and as a result, aspects of professionalism filtered into the rural Victorian competitions, complicating the amateur idealism which country clubs projected. The imbalance reflected an urban-rural divide that shaped the nation more broadly during this era. Urban areas held economic power, while rural areas were seen as upholding the moral and cultural standards of Australia. In terms of football, metropolitan based organisations such as the Victorian Football League were perceived to be exploiting rural competitions that were underrepresented, undervalued, and undermined at the governmental level of the code. Ultimately, the urban-rural divide and hierarchy was the basis for country football leagues to construct the sense that they were morally and culturally superior to the business-oriented metropolitan leagues.

In late colonial Australia, rural male figures such as pioneers, settlers, and bushmen personified exalted forms of masculinity and were positioned as symbols of the nation's

independence and growth. As I analysed football related articles from south west Victorian newspapers, I found that country footballers were presented with similar reverence. A series of nostalgically oriented newspaper articles that focussed on football stories from the district prior to the Great War hinted at the game's manly heritage. In particular, these articles emphasised the game's association with prominent land holders of the district who were revered for their influence throughout the rural community. Henceforth, from its earliest local incarnations, football was intimately connected to celebrated forms of masculinity and placed on a cultural pedestal.

These memories also illuminated racialised conceptions of masculinity. Specifically, between traditional masculinised ideals linked to colonial settlers and Indigenous Australians. Football in this sense was positioned as an influential space where Indigenous Australians were seen to adopt the 'gentlemanly' attributes of white Australian culture. This transaction was presented as 'beneficial' to the few Indigenous Australians who were assimilated to the ideals of play. It was through cultural transactions, such as those that were precipitated by football during this period, which legitimised white Australians' acceptance of the declining Indigenous Australian population with 'no pangs of conscience' and presented this decline as an inevitable by-product of assimilation.

Amongst the memories that connected pioneers to local football's early development were hints of the violence entailed in the particular masculine culture of the game. Like the violence perpetrated by the idolised pioneers during the frontier wars, the bullocking play that characterised football was an implicit part of their masculine image that was rarely articulated. The inherent physicality was an understated element of the game that was socially suppressed in favour of more 'gentlemanly' traits such as fairness, congeniality, and sportsmanship. It was these traits that were promoted as among the most desirable masculine attributes rural footballers embodied.

The local press frequently disseminated football stories and reports that promoted specific attributes such as sportsmanship and fairness, features that presented the game as a social domain that developed moral character. Football became a space within the district where relevant exemplars and role models were easily found during the interwar period. Men who defined their masculinity through their contribution to the game were presented by the press not only as football icons of the district, but as admirable citizens for the rest of the community to uphold. Following the Great War, Australia had been elevated in global standings as a result of the celebrated contribution of Australian men to the war effort. Much like the colonial frontier pioneers, soldiers became masculine idols with whom the nation identified their independence and future potential. After the war, however, injury, illness, and financial insecurities undermined the status of the returned soldier. The soldier settlement scheme, for example, was expected to affirm returned soldiers' resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability, but was largely unsuccessful. While fallen soldiers were immortalised for their sacrifice in a 'successful' war effort, returned soldiers were stigmatised by failure. As the nation scoped out other realms and symbols of national success and promise, football in this rural setting provided figures – players and administrators alike – who had the social and manly esteem to be considered 'conquering heroes'.

Aside from the press, the legacy of rural football has been sustained by generations of anecdotal stories that position the game in the best possible light. But indicators of football's influence and historical importance to this rural setting are also found in physical sites and monuments that nurtured particular social memories. More specifically, the gates at two local football grounds became an important 'site of memory' of these rural towns. The long-term maintenance of these gates is in its own respect evidence of a game and space that the surrounding community has treasured and cherished for many decades. A space dedicated to a game is not sustained if the game itself, the memories it evokes, and the meanings it reproduces

are not important to the community. In this rural setting football grounds were a sacred space, with the gates installed to remember men who, through their contribution to football, were remembered as 'splendid citizens'. The power of collective memory reinforced ideas of football's wholesome identity through settings and rituals that emphasised important cultural values. While the legacy of these gates was a confirmation of football's capacity to produce 'splendid citizens', the game and the gates' prominent connection to the surrounding community also implicitly provoked concerns and awareness of dangers to the community associated with modernity, more specifically the rise of automobilism. The case study of these two sets of gates reinforced the idea that football is a cultural site that upholds the cherished manly values of the community, an idea that the local press continually reinforced.

In advocating specific types of masculine behaviours that made football the special social and cultural force it was in this rural setting; the local press was influential in elevating and maintaining the game's idyllic image in the district. With the press so enamoured with the state of the game's champions they rarely publicised anything that brought this rural form of the game into disrepute. Only after thorough analyses of local newspapers from this period were narratives that belied the wholesome nature of the game uncovered. It was the investigation of such incidents that allowed some of the more hidden meanings associated with the game to come to light, and to challenge the idea that football in this rural context was always considered 'a fine manly game'.

The violence associated with the infamous Fitzmaurice incident is a primary example which provided an entry point into the varied interpretations of what constituted masculine conduct and behaviour in this local football context. Self-selected spokesmen from rival towns were heavily protective of the game as a site of masculine ideals, but there were convoluted debates about just what attributes made football manly. The multitude of voices made available by the local press following the Fitzmaurice incident complicated how the community

interpreted the masculine identity of the game. A key revelation of these debates was that elements of violence and rough physicality were not only understood, but to many people, accepted and essential features of the game. Such characterisations of the game were rarely detailed by the local press. The events surrounding this incident thus highlighted flaws in the how the game was played and of the community more generally. While this had the potential to threaten the game's social status, the constructive power of the local press worked to quell the turbulence of these illuminating debates, redirecting attention to other narratives of the game that emphasised its sporting, fair, and wholesome image. Preserving the wholesome image of this rural football setting allowed those who were celebrated within this space to be confirmed as both 'gentlemen and footballers' of the district.

It is the perpetuation of narratives that promote the manly wholesomeness and social connectivity football provides which have helped maintain the game's prominence in such rural settings. Values such as sportsmanship, fairness, loyalty, and commitment during the interwar period emerged – and were promoted – as characteristics that justified the sport's existence as a profound site of moral and cultural development. But as this thesis has outlined, a multitude of meanings have been attached to Australian Rules football in this corner of Australia, some of which, if more highlighted by the local press, may have undermined the game's value to these rural communities. Such attributes were understood and accepted as part of the game, but rarely communicated openly as these views did not meld with the cultural complexion and identity of this particular rural Australian society.

The methodology and analytical approach of this thesis can be extended to examine other regions and/or other time periods in order to further our understanding of the meaning of sports like Australian Rules football in other contexts. This thesis has begun the process of uncovering the complex milieu of the gendered hierarchies that have facilitated rural sporting environments from the past and the memories that are transmitted to the present. While

Australian Rules football was the focus of this study, if the methodology utilised is adopted and adapted appropriately, there is potential to further understanding of other sports and activities of cultural significance in not only rural sectors, but other regions of Australia and the world more broadly.

Since the interwar years much change has occurred in the rural football landscape which should stimulate increased academic discussion. Cursory observations suggest that football in country Victoria has become more professional. At present, it is common for all players of a senior team to be paid. To prevent 'rich' clubs dominating rural competitions and promote the equalisation of competitions, the current metropolitan-based organising body of football across the state, AFL Victoria, has introduced a salary cap system to all senior country leagues, and a player ranking/handicap system.[692] Such measures contradict the image which the rural press presented in the past and suggest the gradual uptake of professional football practices. Yet, as a present-day country footballer myself, I have also played in matches where the 'wholesome' spirit of the game in rural areas overcomes these ultra-competitive sentiments and remains a site of congenial engagement between like-minded individuals.

In giving evidence to the Parliament of Victoria's *Inquiry into Country Football*, Graeme Allan insisted that '[w]e must never underestimate the role a football club plays in the local community'.[693] The underlying sentiment that football plays an important role in the cultural dynamic of many rural communities has permeated the rural football landscape for decades. Yet, this enduring sense of the game's value has for the most part been taken for granted, rather than being examined and articulated in any detail. This thesis has bridged this

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692 For more details on current rules and policies surrounding player payments, player ranking systems, and salary cap policy implemented by AFL Victoria see AFL Victoria, *Community Club Sustainability – Player Payment Rule*, Melbourne: AFL Victoria, 2018; AFL Victoria, *AFL Victoria Player Points System Policy*, Melbourne: AFL Victoria, 2018; and AFL Victoria, *AFL Victoria Player Salary Cap Policy* (DRAFT), Melbourne: AFL Victoria, 2015.

693 Cited in Parliament of Victoria Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, *Inquiry into Country Football: Final Report*, Melbourne: Parliament of Victoria, 2004, p. 26.

gap and delved into how and why the game emerged as such a significant cultural domain of rural Australia. Indeed, far from underestimating football's role in a rural setting, this thesis has identified the game's capacity throughout history to reproduce, promulgate, and sustain cultural values instilled within the communities that facilitated its perpetual popularity. Most importantly this work has illuminated the largely unarticulated and elided roles that the game plays in promulgating forms of masculinity for a specific rural community. These revelations justify continued explorations into the cultural history of sport, as through reading sport and the texts that discuss it, 'we can get close' to the audiences who watched and played the game to uncover the cultures and values by which they lived.

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