PART III — EFFECTS

Chapter 12

Some Effects of Gold-mining at Rocky River

Just before payable gold was found at the Rocky in October, 1852, a correspondent of the Moreton Bay Courier pointed out that the greatest need of pastoralists in New South Wales prior to the gold discoveries had been labour, and that gold was attracting labourers to the colony, concluding that in time this influx would solve the squatters' problem. Shortly after the first discoveries of payable gold at the Rocky and elsewhere in the north, John Everet, the Ollera pastoralist, was worried about their short-term effects, but he too hoped that many of the immigrants coming in search of gold would tire of mining and come to the squatters' aid. Labour had certainly been scarce in the north before the discoveries, and they did result in an access of population; but the question, whether the finding of payable gold and especially of a deep lead at Rocky River at first aggravated the local squatters' labour problem but ultimately contributed to a fulfilment of the reporter's prediction and Everet's hope, requires some examination.

1. In ABC 9/10/52, p. 2, cf. ed. 28/9/51; ed. 7/11/51; 14/11/51; 10/12/52; ed. 28/9/51.
2. Letter 14/12/52 to Henry Everet — "Old Thorpe our cook talks of leaving; he will be a great loss having lived so long with us. The gold has driven the whole country mad...I hear of large numbers of immigrants coming into Sydney so I hope we may soon see labour more abundant!"
3. In 1856, e.g., Bloomsom, a Glen Innes settler, has imported Chinese shepherds (A. Horton, Reminiscences, p. Mackrell, op. cit., p. 27) and there had been some excitement in Armidale for the reintroduction of convict labour in the north (Mackrell, op. cit., p. 27), cf. also R. Duncan, op. cit., p. 26.
4. See above, e.g., pp. 8, 14.
It is probably true that, so long as good returns were readily obtainable at the Rocky, the local pastoralists' labour supply did not improve; there was still a general scarcity in the north in 1853; in 1854 it was said that many experienced shearmers preferred the diggings to the shearing-shed; labour was scarce on Beaumaris and other stations near the Rocky in 1855; and after the Mount Jones discovery in 1856 men who arrived on the field with little or no capital at first found plenty of miners willing to hire them at wages much higher than local squatters were willing or able to pay for labour, and there was a demand for "shepherds, watchmen, bullock drivers and men of nearly every occupation". Clearly, pastoralists were not in a strong position to attract labour immediately after payable gold had been discovered in their district, nor so long as the field remained highly rewarding; they could hardly have expected much relief under these conditions. But there are some grounds for doubting whether their problem was more acute than it had been before 1852: those who had been able to find workers before the gold discoveries, and had employed them on contract, were protected under colonial law — from May, 1851, applicants for mining licences had to satisfy the Commissioner that they were not "improperly absent from hired service"; even if some experienced shearmers preferred mining, many men regularly left the Rocky in

2. See 12/11 in add. 10/11/54.
3. [Note: No 14/3/55.
5. See 16/4/56. Cf. edl. At 3/5/56; advt. from Beaumaris in At 17/4/56, p.1 (for "2 Descent Families to take charge of 2 sheep stations at the Rocky River", and for a stockman); At 24/7/56; etc.
the summer for shearing and other employment on the land; labour sometimes became suddenly abundant when mining was affected by bad weather, even during the boom; and squatters as a body were accused, with some justification, of being responsible for the introduction and retention of the export duty on gold, as a means of depressing mining and compelling diggers to resort to shepherding and stock-keeping at low wages. Thus, although it would probably be true to say that mining at the Rocky was one factor among several keeping local squatters short of labour between 1855 and 1856 or 1857, it certainly did not create the shortage, and possibly did not even aggravate it.

Ultimately, the New South Wales squatters' labour problem was largely solved by the influx of gold-attracted immigrants — by 1858 there was already said to be a surplus of labour in the colony. Pastoralists in the northern districts had "no difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of shepherds" in 1860, and, as there appears to be nothing to indicate that they had much difficulty during the 'sixties, when the Rocky and other goldfields which had attracted some thousands of men to the north in the 'fifties were declining, it seems clear that these fields, of which the Rocky was probably the most important, played a considerable part in the solution of their problem.

1. See above, pp. 89, 91, 372. The Mercury alleged that gold had not proved injurious to landed interests in 1855 (ed., 11, 1/1/55), and the fact that many miners left the Rocky for shearing in 1854 proved to the satisfaction of one of its reporters that goldfields were advantageous to squatters (id., 2/11 in ed., 1/1/54).
2. Id., ed., 19/7/56, p. 2.
5. Id., 1/12/55.
Local squatters and farmers profit from the sale of their stock and produce to the Rocky’s diggers. Early in 1853 Dangar, for example, was supplying wethers at 5s. per head, and cattle were selling at 30s. per head. It is not clear if the Evertts sold directly to Rocky buyers, but the following extracts from their letters show that the gold discoveries in general were a godsend to them, and suggest the kind of impact which those at the Rocky probably made on neighbouring squatters:

"The gold now begins to tell in raising the price of stock, and our station is likely to be a valuable property. Wool sells well, and there are now mouthes to eat mutton, and the price of the wether consequently nearly doubled, and it is predicted by the knowing onee that the fat wether will be 1l before twelve months. Two years ago thousands were boiled down for their tallow. Horses also have risen in value, last week’s papers quote £50 and £100 for heavy draughts."

"We have also lately sold 300 head of cattle for £550 which does not sound a great price to an English farmer, but they are not fat cattle and many of them are very old. They are bought to take to Port Phillip to fatten on the Murray River and then feed gold diggers."

"We shall be obliged to ride like mad now (mustering cattle) and not think of our horses legs for every fat beast we get is worth £6 instead of £1 — as they used to be. I was over at Cape’s Creek the other day and got £10 for a cow and calf, and am going again tomorrow and hope to get £20 or £30. . . we have sold 30 head to the butcher, and have agreed to sell him 40 more."

These remarks were made in 1853 and 1854, when the Rocky had already attracted many new "mouthes to eat mutton" and beef. Whether or not the field was one of the Evertts’ markets, Dangar and others sold stock there, and it is clear from complaints by miners that, even before 1856, the squatters were not always able

1. Some squatters practiced agriculture, but there were some farmers who were not woolgrowers (see Dunlop, e.g. p. 51), so that the distinction between "squatters" and "farmers" in the following material, while convenient, is also not altogether artificial.
2. 15/12/53.
5. Edwin Evertt, 20/7/54, to John Evertt.
to satisfy the demand for meat, and could sometimes sell at a high price almost any animal they could spare. Local farmers supplied potatoes, corn and vegetables to the diggers in 1854 and 1855 — again, when these commodities were scarce, at high prices.

The influx of population to the Rocky in 1856, providing a big and ready market for stock, and for cereals, potatoes, vegetables, eggs and dairy products, further increased the prosperity of those local squatters and farmers who were in a position to take advantage of it — indeed, according to the Express, they "derived more substantial benefits from the discovery of gold-fields in the district than the miners themselves." This result of mining was often stressed, when the Rocky's production began to fall, as a reason why local stockholders and agriculturalists should help to finance parties prospecting for new ground in the

1. See e.g. 23/6 in 30/6, 13/9 in 30/9, 20/9 in 27/9, all RRC/MN, 1854; RRC 18/10 in MM 24/10/55; and cf. above, pp. 216-217.
2. See ibid. (all); and RRC 8/3 in MM 14/3/55; RRC 26/7 in MM 1/8/55.
3. See e.g. RRC 8/3 in MM 14/3/55; cf. above, p. 216.
4. See e.g. advt. for sale of Kentucky run, in MM 7/8/56 ("Kentucky ... bounded on one side by the ROCKY RIVER, the productive diggings of which river supply a ready market for all surplus stock"); RRC 28/10 in MM 4/11/55; MM 5/6/57, p. 2 and above, pp. 239-239, passim. Between 1847 and 1856 the number of sheep on the Northern Tablelands rose from 239,000 to 650,000; cattle from 10,000 to 75,000; by 1861 the figures were 200,000 and 109,000 respectively (cf. Macrelli op. cit., p. 26); Levis' asked, in 1858, "would not the vast increase of the herds and flocks of the colony have been confined to the boiling-down pot if the goldfields had not been discovered?" (Reported in MM 4/2/58) — John Everett's remark (16/6/53, q. above, p. 361) e. g. suggests that they probably would have been.
5. See above, pp. 239-239, passim. For cereals, etc. resp. of. also 9/6 in MM 10/6/56 ("...the impulse given to speculation by the rush to the Rocky has caused a material rise in the price of cereals and these interested anticipate materially higher prices"), and RRC 4/9 in MM 9/9/55; Crinan 6/7 in MM 10/7/56, and 10/7/56 in MM 11/7/56; RRC 28/10 in MM 4/11/56 and RRC 26/7 in MM 3/2/57; and Levis 14/5 in MM 26/5/57.
district.  

By 1860 much of the farm produce consumed at the Rocky was  
grown by the miners themselves; the squatters were still supply-  
ing beef and mutton, but, as the demand for meat suffered in the  
sixties with the decline of the Rocky and other Northern gold-  
fields, pastoralists tended to revert to their old practice of  
concentrating mainly on breeding sheep for wool.

Both because of the increased profits made possible by the heights ened demand for stock and produce, and because of the pres-  
ence or likelihood of gold deposits, the value of land at Rocky  
River and in its vicinity rose — rapidly during the boom, and  
probably to some extent also in the earlier years. In 1856, the  
chief attraction featured in an advertisement for the sale of  
fifteen acres belonging to Samuel McCrossin ("McCrossin's Sheep  
Station") was that they lay in the centre of the goldfield; high  
prices were asked for a number of farms on Sasmures Creek, on the  
ground that the land was probably auriferous; and Levien, in  
urging the abolition of the escort fee, considered that much land  
around Uralla, valueless except for grazing before 1852, could  
have been sold by the Government in 1856 at prices which would  
have paid the cost of a dozen escorts. Had it not been for  
gold, another writer argued in 1857, "low rents and low prices

1. See e.g. AS 14/2/57, p.2 ("Were it not for our goldfields having  
been partially opened, stock owners would not have a quick and  
ready market, where they can turn their spare cattle or sheep  
into cash with very little trouble; the agriculturalists would  
not get half the present figure for their wheat..."); AS  
2. See e.g. AS 21/1 and 31/3/60; cf., above, p.229.  
5. Advt. in AS, weekly, 9/3 to 30/3/56, p.4. The station was not  
sold then, and was advertised again, with similar comments,  
in AS 6/12/56, p.4.  
for property would (have been) the rule. At least during the
boom, then, another effect of mining at the Rocky was a consider-
able rise in local land values.

Relations between the established settlers in the vicinity
of Rocky River and the miners (most of whom were newcomers to
the district) were generally strained. Although landowners took
advantage of the new opportunities for selling their stock and
their produce, and although some of them realised that labour was
likely to be abundant once the goldfields began to decline, they
resented some of the short-term effects of the gold discoveries —
especially the need to pay much higher wages to attract or retain
workers if these were not bound to them by contracts protected
by goldfields legislation, and to some extent also the invasion
of their solitude by hordes of people of whom they had a low
opinion. The miners, for their part, sometimes complained
about specific activities of local landowners — their practice,
for example, of allowing their sheep and cattle to stray on to
the diggings and to eat the grass around the tents of the miners,
many of whom had their own horses and other animals. The qual-
ity and price of the meat supplied by the squatters was often
 criticised. Most of all, the diggers objected to the manner in
which the squatters, as a body, exerted their dominant influence

2. See above, p.379.
3. See e.g. John Everett, q.above, p.16 (1852); letter to AS (1858),
q. Mackrell, op. cit., p.28 ("I am one of the old brigade, not
one of the hybrids of these days who claim the name (of gen-
tleman) without its attributes").
4. See e.g. AS 23/5/57, p.2; cf. R. Duncan, op.cit., p.99.
5. See above, pp. 216, 222, 229.
on legislation and to the fact of that dominance. We have noticed
the charge that miners were most unfairly taxed, particularly in
comparison with squatters, and, behind this, the accusation that
squatter-dominated governments sought to depress mining; and we
shall see that the diggers also resented the difficulty of acquiring land. It became clear to them that a major political change was needed if their disabilities were to be remedied — the time had come, said one in 1858, "for the struggling people of this
colony to rid themselves of the mushroom squattting aristocracy".
Hoping to do this constitutionally, they selected a man of "liberal"
views as their representative while goldfields formed separate
electorates, and later campaigned for Liberals in general elect-
ions — the Rocky, according to the *Express* in 1864, was the
"sheet anchor of any Liberal candidate for New England". On
economic, social and political grounds, then, there was some
antipathy between Rocky miners and local squatters.

**Before the passing of the Robertson Acts in 1861, miners and
reporters often complained of the difficulty of acquiring satis-
factory land in the Uralla district, because of the size and
character of the squatters' runs. True, some diggers grew**

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1. See above, pp. 388-389, passim. 2. See below, pp. 386-388.
3. In *A. E* 9/1/58, p. 2; cf. e.g., *A.E* 6/2/58. A comment on the progress
   of the 1858 poll illustrates the miners' contempt for local
   squatter-politicians — "It is presumed that Moriarty will be
   first, Taylor second, and Rusden where his sheeps' tails are —
   'all behind!'" (RRC 11/2 in *M.A.* 16/2/58).
4. *Edl*, 1861, 24/12/64.
5. See e.g., *A.E* 19/4/56 (re Gostwyck, a station of 48,600 acres, in
   the purchase of which pre-emption, the auction system and
   "picking the eyes" had all played a part); *A.E* 23/8/56, p. 3
   (complaint re number and size of runs); *SC* 19/4 in *A.E* 23/4/59,
   p. 2 ("detrimental...landlocked system"); *WR* *SMH* in *A.E.* 12/9/60,
   p. 4 ("mining population (had) never been offered facilities for
   permanent settlement").
but and vegetables on the goldfield itself\textsuperscript{1}, but the land
liable there for cultivation was narrowly limited\textsuperscript{2}, and the
conditions of its tenure did not give security\textsuperscript{3}. Permanent
settlement elsewhere in the neighbourhood was almost out of the
question — some miners, indeed, left the district because, having
as well at the Rocky, they were unable to invest the proceeds
nally in land\textsuperscript{4}. The "landlocked system" was deeply resented
many of those who remained, especially as very little use
being made of the land, and as it was thought eminently
stable for agriculture\textsuperscript{5}. It is not surprising, therefore,
it the miners insisted on having as their parliamentary
representative someone who would press for liberalisation of
policy\textsuperscript{7}. Complaints about the land situation were still
made in 1860, but by then it seemed clear that reform was
inent, and some miners acted on this assumption — "the gar-
ence of preparation (were) beyond anything of the kind
arked in here before", more substantial fences were erected,
in other ways legislation giving greater security was

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\textsuperscript{1} See above, pp. 213, 229.
\textsuperscript{2} As 11/5/61, p. 2 — 800 sq. yds. was the maximum permitted before the ACTs — this was regarded as quite inadequate for agricultural purposes, and two, three or even ten acres (9600, 14400 or 43200 sq. yds.) were suggested as reasonable limits. See As 21/9/61, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.; cf. AE 13/6/59("Give the digger the opportunity of acquiring the land while he possesses the means of paying for it").
\textsuperscript{4} As 16/6/60, p. 4("unbroken expanse of bush" around Uralia); WR SMH in AE 12/5/60, p. 4("no agricultural improvement or settlement although the vast rolling plains which here form the summit of the main ridge extend to the heights over Uralia and are everywhere suitable for the growth of wheat and other cereals").
\textsuperscript{5} See e.g. Prospectus of Miners Protection League, clause 4 (in SMH 12/3/61); and cf. WR SMH in AS 21/4/60("We must cease to permit a few favoured flocks and herds to roam at will over our vast districts large enough to form small kingdoms").
\textsuperscript{6} As 28/5/59, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{7} See e.g. As 16/6/60, p. 4.
anticipated.

Because of the scarcity of information for the year 1862, the immediate reaction of Rocky miners to the Robertson Acts is difficult to assess. It seems, however, that the miners were satisfied that they had been given much greater security for their land on the field itself, but that they were very dissatisfied with the opportunities given them to buy land elsewhere in the district — Hoskins, their member, complained that the land thrown open for selection around Uralla was densely timbered and ill-supplied with water, while there was plenty of good land not in use which had not been made available, and that this was typical of the way in which the Government had pandered to the squatters. The first of these reactions proved correct: under the clause of the Crown Lands Alienation Act permitting the sale of two-acre allotments on goldfields, many Rocky miners bought land, and proceeded to build or improve houses and seriously to practice small-scale farming; it was sometimes felt that the prices asked for homesteads (42 to £4.10s. per acre in 1864) were too high, but it was admitted that the clause had given more security to landholding miners than any previous legislation; and by 1866 most miners on the Rocky were "permanent residents", living in "comfortable dwellings", and owning some land. On the other hand, so far as land outside the limits of

1. SC 10/9 in AM 16/9/60, p. 2; cf. above, p. 213.
2. The Express files for 1862 are not available.
3. At 18/7/1913 — "Miners who have made homes will no longer be at the mercy of any person whom a few days' absence of the proprietors might tempt to 'jump' house and home, as sometimes has been the case".
5. See e.g. SC in AM 30/1/64, p. 2; and cf. above, p. 213.
6. See e.g. AM 6/8/64, p. 2.
7. See e.g. AM 17/9/64, p. 2.
the goldfield was concerned, there is some evidence to suggest
that the criticism made in 1862 of the Alienation Act may not
have been warranted: in 1864 small settlers were taking up some
of the land between Uralla and Armidale for wheat-growing; 1 a
good deal of land in the Armidale district was thrown open for
conditional selection in 1866; and in 1867 consumers were said
to be feeling the benefits of closer settlement in the area.
Nevertheless, the Robertson Acts did not result in the permanent
settlement of a large number of ex-miners in the district. The
author of an article on the history of Uralla wrote in 1925:-

"The great influx of miners...led to a closer permanent
settlement, for, as the gold gave out, many of them
looked to the land for their future sustenance and wool-
growing, fruit-growing and agriculture now combine in
making the Uralla district one of the richest in the
State". 2

This is most misleading. The separate propositions are probably
true, but the implied connection is more than doubtful. By 1877
many complaints were being made that the design of the 1861 leg-
islation to provide for small plots was being frustrated by
accumulation, 3 and the situation worsened in later years. Many
miners had 'looked to the land for their future sustenance', but
their hopes were seldom realised, and the "wool-growing, fruit-
growing and agriculture" practised in 1925 was the preserve of
a comparatively small number of land-owners, usually with large
holdings.

1. AB and ST, both 4/6/64. 2. AE 6/1/66,p.3.
3. AB 9/11/67,p.3. Cf. on the extent of settlement, R. Duncan,
op. cit., pp. 95-99.
5. TO 24/11/77,p.4; cf. on the permanence of settlement, R. Dun-
can, op. cit., pp.102-120, and esp. pp.120-121.
6. See e.g. UWT 9/3/78,p.2; AE 22/5/85,p.4.
The opportunities provided by mining at Rocky River for storekeepers and other businessmen operating on the field itself, and the use these people made of them, have been incidentally but sufficiently discussed in dealing with the development of the field and with the miners' standards of living.¹

Relations between miners and local businessmen were sometimes strained. It was often argued by miners and by the press that, as local businessmen owed much to the gold discoveries in general and to mining at the Rocky in particular, they should support the organization of prospecting parties²: sometimes, when mining matters were dull, local store- and inn-keepers proved willing to contribute to prospecting funds in an effort to revive the field, but more often they were apathetic, and were judged for refusing to co-operate³. Here the conflict was one of behaviour. There were also conflicts of interest, particularly when dissatisfied miners were attracted by reports from distant fields, and local storekeepers and publicans, anxious not to lose their custom, lauded the Rocky, and, usually with the co-operation of the press, advised the miners not to listen to rumours and in other ways disparaged goldfields elsewhere.⁴

On the whole, however, relations between miners and local businessmen were probably more harmonious than those between miners

¹ See above, resp. Part I, passim (e.g. pp. 32, 65-66, 72), and pp. 315-322.
² See e.g. 21/1, 14/2, 28/2, all 1857; 4/6; 3/9, 4/10, 24/12, all 1858; 7/7, 1/9, 29/9, 13/10, all 1860; 21/3, 11/7, both 1863; 13/5, ed1/9, both 1865; all AE.
³ See e.g. 20/3, 10/4, 24/4, all 1859; 24/12, 59; 17/6, 65; 19/8, 67; all AE.
⁴ See e.g. 28/2, 4/4, 18/4, all 1857; 3/11/60; 30/5, 11/7, both 1863; 23/1, 10/9, both 1864; 13/5, 24/6 ("an apathy unusual in New England"), 9/9, 23/9, all 1865; all AE; and cf. ST 30/1/64, p. 4.
⁵ See e.g. AE 1/5/58, p. 4; and above, pp. 373-375.
and landowners, as their interests were much more closely allied, and there is comparatively little evidence of conflict.

The township of Uralla virtually owes its existence to its proximity to the Rocky River goldfield. Before 1853 Uralla was the name of a tiny village on the Northern road, with a "business community" consisting of Samuel McCrossin the innkeeper, a blacksmith, probably a butcher and a storeskeeper, and practically no one else, and depending for its trade primarily on travellers, though presumably patronised to some extent also by the district's handful of landowners and their employees. After the discovery of payable gold at the Rocky, a boarding-house proprietor, a bootmaker and other shopkeepers and tradesmen set up businesses, and in July, 1854, a reporter wrote:

"The formation of the township at Mr. S. McCrossin's, on the great Northern road, and so long spoken of, is most anxiously looked for by the entire population, but particularly by the diggers, who would be afforded an opportunity of investing their earnings in the purchase of allotments, and erecting for themselves and families permanent residences, and teaching them to feel a spirit of independence in the fact that they possess a home. The township would, we believe, ere now have been ready for sale but for the departure of Mr. Galloway for Europe. His experience at once pointed out to him the appropriateness of the site, as well as the importance of a township at such a point on the Northern Road, and I may add forming a part of or bounded by the present Rocky River Gold Field."  

1. See above, e.g. pp. 72, 215-232, 232-242 passim, Chapters 8 and 10, passim. 
2. E.U.B. p. 3. On McCrossin, see advt. 24/6 in M 30/7 and 6/8/51 M 1/5/52 and B.U.B. p.3. His hotel was named, significantly, the "Travellers' Rest".
3. E.U.B. p.3. 
4. RRC 27/7 in M 2/8/54. Cf. RRC 7/1 in M 10/1/55 — "I quite agree with a correspondent that the formation of a township on this river is most desirable; no place in New England is better adapted for it; indeed the only wonder is that the Government have overlooked the thing so long".
In 1855 a site for a township at Uralla was surveyed, and a sale of a few allotments was held early in 1856. Partly because of this official conversion of the village into a township (itself mainly a result of the early development of the goldfield), but chiefly because of the discovery and working of the Rocky's deep leads, Uralla grew. At first, because official encouragement was limited and arduous, its growth did not keep pace with the diggers' demands. By the end of 1856, though Kirkwood's mill had been completed and was providing flour for the diggers, Uralla had not been "gazetted as a place to which the provisions of the act for the sale of wines and spirits, in quantities not less than two gallons, (had) been extended" (a move which would have been "a boon to the diggers"), and miners were becoming impatient because few town and no suburban allotments had been put up for sale — Levien, indeed, was advocating the formation of a second township on the field itself, because of this.

Early in 1857, however, a fresh survey was made, and, as it was announced that suburban and new town allotments would be offered for sale, the miners' faith in Uralla revived, and the township was "progressing most favourably". No sale appears to have been held until July, but all the allotments then offered were bought, and the demand was by no means satisfied. By this time, because of the quality and reasonable price of the flour he produced, and the handiness of his mill to the field, Kirkwood

1. GARDNER, MS 11/34; RNC in MM 22/6/55("it only requires the opening for sale of the township recently surveyed here, with an increased population...to make us go ahead").
2. DC 31/12/56 in MM 10/1/57, p.2; cf. RNC 11/8 in MM 16/8/56; MM 24/1/57, p.3.
5. 22/12 in MM 25/12/56; cf. RNC 4/9 in MM 9/9/56.
6. RNC 28/1 in MM 9/2/57.
had been able to "(transfer) that branch of trade from Amidale to Uralla"1. In 1858 Uralla was rivalling Amidale "in the superior character of the buildings...daily upringing up", and this was attributed directly to the Rocky's influence2. Six months later, Uralla could boast of "several compact dwellings and prolific gardens", three hotels, a flour mill, a post office, some stores, a smithy and a school, and by September, 1859, a Presbyterian church had been added.

A Herald reporter, visiting Uralla in 1860, wrote of it:-

"In this quiet retreat there is no stir, no business pushing forward, no indication of the vicinity of a large gold-field. In fact the inhabitants appear to concern themselves but little about gold or gold-fields". Out of the context of the history of the district, this statement is manifestly misleading. In that context it demonstrates, as clearly as does anything else, the relationship between the Rocky River field and Uralla. For by 1860 the Rocky had begun to decline, and only the opposite of the remarks in the reporter's first sentence would cast doubts on Uralla's considerable dependence on the goldfield in the 'fifties. The comparative dullness of the Rocky during most of the 'sixties was reflected in the quietness of Uralla6. But Uralla did not become a ghost town, partly because it was not wholly dependent on the goldfield - its position athwart the Northern road, and later on the railway route7 was advantageous, and it was a centre for a small agricultural district - but also because the sporadic minor revivals of the Rocky in the 'sixties and much later were of some benefit to

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1. HUC in MII 6/8/57.
2. AC: SH, q, III 3/6/58.
3. As 29/1/57, p. 96.
4. As 13/6 in MI 17/6/57, p. 2; cf. above, p. 354.
5. NR SH in MI 12/5/60, p. 4.
6. See e.g. As 5/8/65, p. 2.
7. See e.g. HJ, pp. 10-11.
The main points are clear: that it is most unlikely that Uralla would ever have been anything but a small village had it not been for the early mining at the Rocky, that the Rocky boom gave it a considerable impetus, and that the township stagnated as the goldfield declined.

"The Rocky River had been the first cause of raising Armidale from a village to a town" (1865).

"Armidale was built from gold extracted from the gutters of the Rocky River" (1889).

The contemporary and near-contemporary belief expressed in these statements and in others like them is challenged by R. Duncan, in his Armidale: Economic and Social Development, 1839-71 (1951). Indeed, the role of the Rocky in the development of Armidale is one of the central themes of Duncan’s work. A discussion of this problem, therefore, may best take the form of an examination of the relevant sections of his argument.

1. See e.g. WR SMH in AN 9/6/66, p.4; MR 1875, p.50; WUT 25/5/78, p.2; WUT 13/3/89.
2. Speech reported AN 1/7/65, q. Duncan, Armidale, etc., Introduction, page 1.
3. Speech reported AN 7/8/89, q. ibid.
4. See e.g. WR SMH 5/5/60, p.4 ("...the town, although well-situated in the centre of a thickly-settled squattting district, advanced but slowly until the opening of the Rocky River gold fields, when it rapidly rose to a position of considerable importance..."); letter from old resident, in AN 16/7/89 ("The discovery of a rich alluvial deposit at the old Rocky River gave the first stimulant to trade in Armidale. The failure of the Rocky was a great drawback to her future prosperity; in fact, previous to the discovery of Baker’s Creek (Hillgrove)...trade and general business of Armidale were almost paralysed").
5. See Duncan, op. cit., esp. Introduction, page 1 — "Basic at every stage of the enquiry will be the importance of mineral discovery as a factor influencing the town’s growth".
description of Armidale in 1852 as "a rising town". On Duncan's own showing, however, Armidale's population after fourteen years was less than 600, its collection of shops and stores modest, its "industrial concerns" few and very small. Possibly it was no longer a village, but it hardly merited the name of town — the word "township", applied to it in 1850, seems more appropriate; and to say that the Armidale of 1852 was the product of "marked economic expansion" is clearly to exaggerate. Further, the conclusion that such growth as there was before 1852 was not greatly retarded by a labour shortage in town and district is questionable — at least, there is more evidence than Duncan gives for such a shortage; but, even if it were true, the argument that leads him to it is that Armidale had been so little developed that a shortage of labour could not have made a great deal of difference. "Marked economic expansion", indeed! More important, the claim made in 1866 was not that Armidale began to grow as a result of Rocky gold (as Uralla virtually did), but that the Rocky had been responsible for "raising Armidale from a village to a town". Duncan himself shows that the township's growth was checked in 1851 and 1852, because of the attraction of gold in other parts of the colony, and admits that the discovery of gold

2. Duncan, pp. 9-14.
3. Gardner, MS 1, 4, q. ibid., p. 13.
4. See above, p. 376.
5. Duncan, op. cit., p. 25 — "It would seem probable that very few people engaged in either trade or industry during the first decade of Armidale's existence would have employed more than one or two hands. We are perhaps justified then in asserting that, before 1851...little retarded by labour difficulties".
6. Ibid., pp. 13-14, 25; cf. above, pp. 1-2 and AC 26/4 in MM 1/5/52, p. 2 — "business is...very dull; in part a characteristic of this time of the year, but more attributable to the numerous departures for the various gold fields...".
in its vicinity "perhaps" revived Armidale (though he thinks this effect was short-lived); one may go further and say that, had it not been for this discovery, Armidale would probably have relapsed into a tiny village. Rocky River gold from the recent alluvials, then, revived Armidale, and at a critical time in the township's career.

Duncan convincingly demonstrates that Rocky River gold not only did not result in any rapid or permanent increase in the population of Armidale, but actually checked its rate of growth, and that the rate speeded up again only when the goldfield began to decline. These (with the possible exception of the failure to produce an increase in permanent population, a failure in any case questionable in view of the last point) are the effects one would expect from the discovery, boom and decline of a goldfield twelve miles from a township, and they show that the connection between the Rocky and Armidale was close. Duncan concludes, however, that they make "nonsense of claims of the type that Armidale rose from a village to a town because of the Rocky". This follows only if, as he assumes in arguing this point, the sole distinction between a village and a town is one of population. But the people who made the claims almost certainly knew that the immediate effect of the more important discoveries at the Rocky had been to decrease the neighbouring township's population, and that even in the long run they had not led to any significant increase; almost certainly, therefore, these people had something other than

1. Duncan, op. cit., p. 57; cf. RRC 1/3 in MM 9/3/53 - "It is to be said in favour of the gold fields here, that they have given a most beneficial and stirring change, in the way of business, to the fine island village of Armidale."
2. Duncan, op. cit., pp. 41-43.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
a growth of population in mind when they made "claims of the type that Armidale rose from a village to a town because of the Rocky". In the first place, the possibility that Armidale was used as a staging-camp by miners bound for and coming from the Rocky is admitted by Duncan, and there is some evidence to suggest that it was — if it was, the miners presumably gave some impetus to trade in Armidale while they were there, however short their stay; secondly, a further impetus was given through the habit many miners developed of making week-end and holiday visits to Armidale; and thirdly, as we shall presently see, the township benefited from securing what was probably a considerable proportion of the diggers' trade through agents on the field. These effects on trade are at least as important as the effect on population in deciding how far the improvement in Armidale's status was due to gold.

It is perhaps because Duncan under-estimates the extent of the diggers' trade with Armidale that he ignores the effect of this trade on the status of the township; he does, however, enquire at some length into the extent of the trade. He finds that some Rocky gold was bought in Armidale between 1855 and 1856, but that after May, 1856, it was bought chiefly at the Rocky and

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1. Duncan, op. cit., p. 42.
2. See e.g., AC 27/12/52 in MM 1/1/53 ("Armidale is rather busy just now, and many strange faces are to be observed in town, being persons who generally have been attracted by the reputed richness of our gold fields..."; AC 27/1 in MM 5/2/52 ("The faces we now look upon are not the old familiar ones; we scarcely now recognise... one countenance out of twenty which we know"); and above, p. 193.
3. See e.g., AC 2/11 in MM 9/11/53 — "The diggers usually come into town on Saturday afternoon and return on Monday morning... advantage of not only attending the services of religion but also of transacting their ordinary business".
4. See e.g., AC in MM 5/1/53 — Over the Christmas period Armidale had had "the pleasure of a visit from many of the Rocky diggers...".
in Maitland\(^1\); that the first months of 1853 and the period from March to August, 1856, witnessed trade booms in Armidale\(^2\), but that these lasted only during the “interval required for a sufficient number of storekeepers and publicans to establish themselves on the field”, and that there is not much sign of a connection at other times\(^3\); and that there is very little evidence of support from Armidale businessmen for prospecting movements, except in 1858 and 1867, whereas Rocky storekeepers were rather more liberal. He sees that “there remains the possibility that the stores and inns on the Rocky may have been merely branches of similar establishments owned by Armidale men”, but goes on:—

“There is evidence that one storekeeper opened a branch on the diggings, but whether his example was followed has not been discovered. In the absence of evidence that other branch stores were set up we may perhaps regard this as a solitary instance”\(^4\).

It may be that little Rocky gold was sold in Armidale after May, 1856, though this has not been conclusively established — one Armidale businessman, Gilchrist, bought £3,000 worth in July\(^5\), and it seems more likely that August marks the time at which many diggers ceased to sell to Armidale buyers, for it was then that many were reported to be holding their gold in anticipation of the resumption of the escort service\(^6\); and it is true that Armidale businessmen apparently showed little interest in prospecting movements, though it is worth noticing, first, that one of the

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1. Duncan, op. cit., p. 60. Cf. above, p. 31, and below, Appendix B, Table 1.
3. Duncan, op. cit., p. 57.
4. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. See above, p. 53.
7. See above, pp. 55, 59 and 336, and below, Appendix D, Tables 7 and 8.
excepted years, 1858, was a crucial year in this connection, a time in which many people felt that the boom was over but in which hopes for the Rocky's revival had not yet been blighted by years of disappointment, and secondly, that 1865 was a third year in which some interest was displayed. But there is a weakness at the heart of Duncan's whole argument on the subject of trade relations between the Rocky and Armidale which affects both these points and his main conclusion. "In the absence of evidence that other branch stores were set up we may perhaps regard this as a solitary instance". It was far from solitary instance. An examination of the advertisements in the Express between 1856 and 1867 reveals that several Rocky businessmen were agents for Armidale people, and that a good number of others had connections with Armidale businesses. Of the innkeepers, Has had visited the Rocky from Armidale as an auctioneer in 1856, before buying the "Criterion"; Heffernan had also been in business in Armidale, as a storekeeper; Furnivall was a partner in an auctioneering firm in Armidale, owned eleven blocks of land in that township, and probably employed a manager at the "Union Arms" in 1857-58; Hayes owned an Armidale store, and employed managers at the "Sydney Arms" in 1859-60; and Allingham, Scholes and Osborne had Armidale connections. Of the storekeepers, Cleghorn and Jackes, and Gorman, like Hayes, owned stores both at the Rocky and in Armidale, and Cohnheim was an agent at the Rocky for George Allingham of Armidale. Of the doctors, Morris, West and Spaschall, and for a time Montgomerie and Brereton, visited the Rocky from Armidale residences, and several of those who lived on the goldfield.

1. See above; re 1858, esp. pp. 130-131; re 1865, pp. 184-185.
2. See Appendix C, Part I.
3. See Appendix C, Part II.
worked in partnership with one or other of the men with Armidale practices\(^1\). Of the other business and professional men, Denton, and Hamilton and Furniff, were auctioneers who sold both at the Rocky and in Armidale in 1856-57, and Oxenham, the solicitor, probably operated from Armidale\(^2\). Thus, there were seven innkeepers, four storekeepers, five doctors, and two or three other men who are known to have been owners of businesses both in the township and on the goldfield, or who were agents at the Rocky for Armidale businessmen; there may well have been others. Duncan's conclusion, then, as to the absence of connections between Armidale and Rocky River businesses is untenable. This does not necessarily mean that a significant number of Armidale businessmen became rapidly and permanently prosperous as a result of their connections. A satisfactory conclusion as to the effect of Rocky gold on Armidale businessmen, on those who had branches at the Rocky as on those who had not, could not be reached without a knowledge of the profits or losses made by those businessmen in the relevant years such as seems impossible to obtain. Nevertheless, it seems clear that some, at least, benefited from Rocky gold for some time after the boom was over: the store and inn owned by Hayes were still flourishing in 1861; Cleghorn and Jackes, in business at the Rocky since 1856 or early 1857, were able to expand their Armidale premises in 1858 and were evidently prosperous seven years later; and again, there may have been a good number of others\(^3\). The efforts made by the Express to disparage the Snowy River diggings in 1860 are also suggestive\(^4\).

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1. See App. G, Part III.
3. See App. G.
4. See above, pp. 373-375.
Duncan considers that gold discoveries and gold mining at the Rocky had a number of harmful effects on Armidale — increasing lawlessness, keeping employers short of labour, encouraging excessive optimism in business, and disrupting communications. These criticisms have some weight. The increase in horse-stealing, mail-robberies and other forms of theft, especially in the 'sixties, may have been in part the result of mining and particularly of the decline of mining. Armidale employers certainly found labour scarce in 1856 and perhaps in 1857, but from Duncan's own work it is clear that there was no shortage after 1857, though he fails to stress this beneficial result to the same extent as he stresses the shortage in 1856. It is quite clear that Rocky gold encouraged excessive optimism. As for communications, it is true that the high cost of carriage in 1856-57 was largely due to gold, but the fact that stores were often under-stocked was due not only to keen demand but also to the bad state of the roads, and it is not true that the bad state of the roads was originally a result of mining — Duncan himself demonstrates earlier in his work that the roads were in a wretched condition before gold was discovered. True, their condition worsened in the early 'fifties and especially in 1856, because they were used more, and at a time when it was difficult to obtain labour to improve them; but, as Mackrell has shown, by 1860 considerable improvements had already been made in the Northern roads, and for these the presence of the Rocky goldfield was partly responsible.

Moreover, the deterioration of the roads in the early 'fifties, as Duncan admits, had one advantage for Armidale, namely, that local woolgrowers turned more to the township for their supplies because of the increasing difficulty of obtaining them directly from Sydney, and

"Armidale could have gained substantially only if some of the squatters who began to purchase in the town continued to trade there after transport again became easier...there is some evidence to suggest that this is what happened."¹

Duncan admits without question one other benefit Armidale received from the Rocky, that is, the increase in the numbers of people engaged in agriculture in the district, people who were largely dependent on Armidale for their supplies.² To this might be added the minor advantages that accrued to special groups: the churches, for example, were strengthened in the early 'fifties and again in the 'sixties by church-going miners;³ and there was a good deal of rivalry between the goldfield and the township in sport.⁴ Duncan is unwilling to admit that the establishment of the Armidale branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank late in 1856 was connected with the development of the Rocky,⁵ but it is difficult to credit that it was not. And finally, it is probable that parts of Armidale were literally built from the profits made by its businessmen from the Rocky. Mackrell assumes that Mundy's description of the township's buildings — "two inns, the commission house, two or three private stores, two or three other slab and bark huts and a sprouting church"⁶ — applies to 1852.⁷ In fact it applies to 1847.

and it must be conceded that Duncan has shown that Armidale's buildings in 1852 were more numerous—six or seven hotels, six stores, several other small shops, smithies and so on, two steam flour mills, and a church. Duncan also demonstrates that some of the businesses established during the over-expansion of 1856-57 did not long survive. But in 1860 there were still ten inns, ten stores, two mills, several small factories, a bank, three churches, a court-house, a gaol, a hospital, two schools, a newspaper-office, and a number of solid residences; and many of these buildings had been erected in 1856-57. True, Duncan shows that further businesses and factories failed in the 'sixties', but presumably most of the buildings remained intact. It is at least partly true to say that "Armidale was built from gold extracted from the gutters of the Rocky River".

One may agree with Duncan, then, that the Rocky benefited Armidale by stimulating trade in 1853 and 1856, by being indirectly responsible for a change in the local squatters' trading habits and partly responsible for increasing the numbers of agriculturalists in the district, and, though he does not stress this, in ultimately relieving the labour shortage; and that it harmed the township by accentuating the shortage of labour in 1856 and perhaps in 1857, by aggravating the transport problem for a time, and perhaps by being responsible for increasing lawlessness and by encouraging excessive optimism. The main point of difference is the extent of trade. That is, it seems clear that Duncan has not probed deeply enough in examining the connections between Armidale businessmen and those on the goldfield.
and that, in consequence, he has grossly under-estimated the number and importance of these connections; the benefits received by Armidale businessmen from the diggings were almost certainly not confined to brief periods in 1853 and 1856, but were probably more or less continuous throughout our period — if they were most obvious in 1853 and 1856, this was because these were the years in which the expansion in the goldfield's production was most marked. The other points of difference are comparatively trivial; it is this question of trading connections which suggests that contemporary writers were near the mark in assigning to the Rocky a major rôle in the development of Armidale.
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