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Front cover: South Melbourne showing the Robur Tea Building, c. 1927.
Courtesy State Library of Victoria.

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**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



Wodonga's Bonegilla: Depicting and Remembering the Impact of Post-war Immigration

Bruce Pennay

Abstract

This article is about local engagement with a post-war immigration reception centre. I explain immediate host community perceptions of and interactions with Bonegilla, its residents and ex-residents while the centre was operating. Then, I trace the way locals, working with ex-residents, created and championed Block 19 Bonegilla as a memory place and heritage asset. In attempting to fathom the local circumstances of Bonegilla's memorialisation, I emphasise the roles played by locals and local government. I portray the heritage-making of Bonegilla as a facet of a broader process of the place-making of Wodonga and Albury-Wodonga.

Add another Five is a ten-minute black-and-white film made in 1964 to promote Wodonga. It was produced for Wodonga Shire Council by the border district's new television station, AMV4, to accompany the town's entry in Victoria's triennial Premier Town Contest. It follows a simple storyline in which Shire President Jack Hore takes a newly arrived migrant family of five from Bonegilla on a tour of the town to show them the employment and education opportunities, the comfortable housing and the friendly reception they might enjoy if they settle locally. It begins with a sweeping panorama of the Bonegilla Reception Centre, the biggest in Australia.² It ends

Fig. 1 A copy of the film *Add another Five* survives in the archive of the Rotary Club of Wodonga, which instigated its production in 1964 when the club president was Col. Henry Guinn, the director of the Bonegilla Reception Centre. (Collage: John Pennay)



Notes on Contributors

David Corke is a retired educational film-maker and photographer who first visited Cooper Creek and Brahe's famous Depot LXV in 1979. He soon became captivated by the extraordinary story of this disastrous expedition with all its anomalies and enigmas—later writing a small book on the topic for Thomas Nelson's *Young Australia* series called *Partners in Disaster*. The author also published an article in volume 6, number 1, of the *VHJ* (1994) called 'Where Did They Bury Charlie Gray?' and has never lost interest in trying to find solutions to the many errors and inaccuracies in the story. He is a past president of the Burke & Wills Historical Society.

Don Garden OAM, FRHSV, FFAHS taught history at the University of Melbourne where he is now an honorary fellow. His books include a history of Victoria, a number of local histories, an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific, and the study of a number of nineteenth-century El Niño events. He is president of the RHSV, president of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, and a member of the Australian Heritage Council.

Alice Garner is a teacher and historian with a particular interest in the social and spatial history of coastal communities. She explored the French Atlantic town of Arcachon in her book, *A Shifting Shore: Locals, Outsiders and the Transformation of a French Fishing Town, 1823–2000* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005) and has more recently been a presenter on the documentary series *Coast Australia* (History Channel/BBC).

Rod Giblett has published many articles and book in the transdisciplinary environmental humanities and environmental activism, focusing particularly in both on wetlands. His recent publications focus on ecocultural studies and nature writing. He lived by Forrestdale Lake, was involved in its conservation, wrote about both and taught at a number of universities for over twenty-five years. His latest book is *Cities and Wetlands: The Return of the Repressed in Nature and Culture* (Bloomsbury Press, 2016). He is currently researching and writing a book called *Modern Melbourne: City and Site of Nature and Culture*. His article is drawn from this book.

Peter Griggs is an historical geographer with an interest in agriculture and environmental history. Since 2000 he has been a senior lecturer in human geography at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University. He has published extensively on the Australian sugar industry. His current research project is an economic and social history of tea in Australia.

Patricia Grimshaw FAAH, FASSA held the Crawford Chair of History at the University of Melbourne and was a founder of the International Federation for Research in Women's History as well as the Australian Women's History Network. She has published extensively on New Zealand, Australian and American women's history, as well as the history of missionary women and Indigenous Australians. She headed the recently completed ARC-funded project on the History of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia.

Kylie Mirmohamadi is a research associate in English at La Trobe University, and also works on the Mallee Lands project in History. She has published widely in Australian history, cultural studies, literary history and literary studies.

Elizabeth Morrison researches and writes nineteenth-century Australian newspaper, publishing and literary history. She is the author of *David Syme: Man of the Age* (Melbourne, Monash University Publishing, 2014).

Bruce Pennay OAM, FFAHS is an adjunct associate professor at Charles Sturt University. He has pursued research interests in two broad areas—the cultural heritage of the NSW/Victorian border region; and post-war immigration history and heritage. He has provided research assistance to groups responsible for the Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre both as a professional and as a volunteer.

Susan Priestley MA (University of Melbourne) is a fellow and former president of the RHSV, and a founding member of the CJ La Trobe Society. She is the author of eleven commissioned histories, seven entries for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, one for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and a biography of a much misinterpreted activist, *Henrietta Augusta Dugdale* (2011). Her current interest is discovering particulars of individual lives that can illuminate the general.

Thomas Rogers is a casual course coordinator in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, where he completed his PhD in 2014. His thesis examined how free settlers of the Port Phillip District used recurring tropes to define themselves against convicts and Aboriginal people, and the links between these tropes and physical violence on the frontier.

Richard Sadleir is a retired science administrator with a life long interest in the career of his great grandfather. His prime sources have been a book John wrote, family memoirs and the record of his evidence before a government commission. He has recently published an e-book entitled *The Life of John Sadleir (1833–1919) and his Role in the Capture of Ned Kelly*.