

Swan Guildford Historical Society



Charles Harper: An Antipodean Owenite or Colonial Socialist?

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Agenda



- The Research Program
- Positioning Harper
- Western Australian Exceptionalism:
 - Colonial Socialism
 - Co-operation



Bibliography



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The Research Program



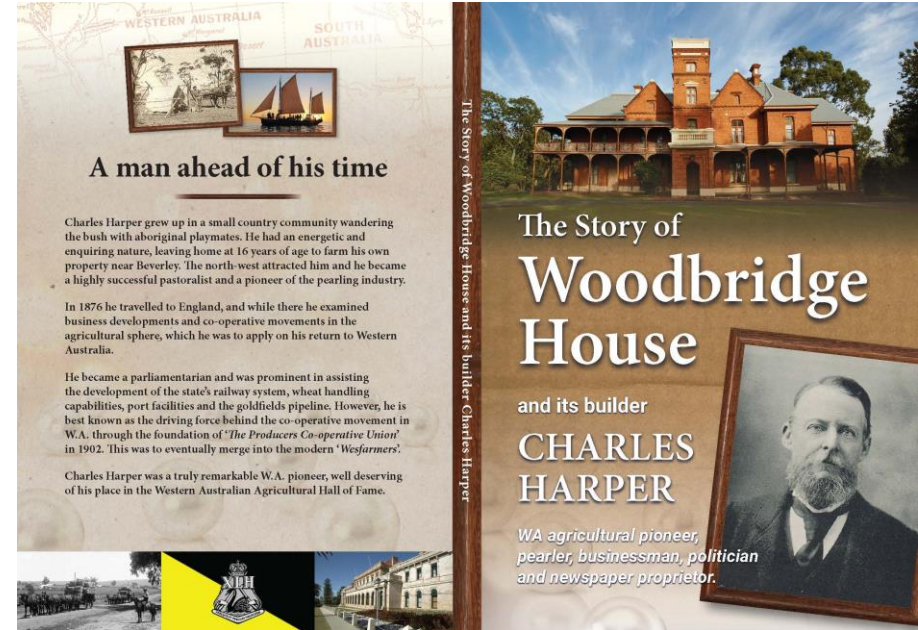
Western Australian Exceptionalism:

- Geography: External
- Geography: Internal
- Timing: Imperial Government Focus
- Inter-colonial Competition
- Long Stagnation (1829-1890) Reinforced Govt Role
- Counter-cyclical response to 1890s depression



Charles Harper

- 1842 – 1912
- Newcastle
- Northern Districts
- Beverley
- Woodbridge
- M. Fanny de Burgh
- 10 children



Charles Harper



Farmer

Squatter

Politician

Publisher

Company Director

Scientific Farmer

Entrepreneur



Focused, determined and pragmatic



The Nature of the Discourse



- Ideology v pragmatism
- Imperial v colonial
- Public v Private
- Elites v New Money/New Influence
- Positive state actor impacts v Negative state actor impacts
- World & Imperial Economic Drivers v Local Economic Drivers



Colonial Socialism: Butlin's Monograph



- Part of Hugh Aitken's "The State and Economic Development" 1959
- Chapter 2: "Colonial Socialism in Australia, 1860-1900"
- An Australian form of state socialism:
 - No argument it exists: form? Causes? Impacts?
 - Australian Pragmatism: Albert Metin; J. K. Galbraith
 - Based on the political and economic development trajectory of the colonies
 - Butlin does not go unchallenged/unrefined



Elements of Australian Colonial Socialism...



- Initial period where survival and subsequent economic growth depended on public economic action
- Application of public investment where private would have been preferred elsewhere
- Governments were major employers and investors
- Focus on land alienation to elites



Harper & Colonial Socialism



- Metropolitan Consumers
- Protect agriculturalists
- Inter-colonial & inter-state trade
- Rail, Harbours, taxation, anti-dumping
 - = Integrated value chain
 - = Interposed entities
 - = New immigrants



Co-operation: The Terrain – The Imperial Baggage



- Mutability of Man
- Appropriate Form of Associationism
- Rejection of Self-regard
- Role of Government / Philanthropists
- The Distribution of the Rewards of Production
- Democracy / Paternalism
- Religion
- Equity as a pre-condition of a better society
- Producer versus Consumer Co-op



Harper & Co-operation



- Realised the extant co-operative ventures were inadequately organised
- Sought to resolve the major problems of lack of capital and transport
- Believed that a co-operative organisation would:
 - Allow farmers to manage their own affairs
 - Ensure middle men were unable to take the earnings of farmers
 - Encourage government to provide much needed capital for infrastructure & cheap loans
 - Protect the public's interests



Harper & Co-operation



- Not interested in the social benefits arising from co-operation of the Owenite variety
- Saw co-operative association as a way to mitigate the problems of the sector given individual farmers could not do so



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