

The Rise and Fall of Goldfields Towns

"Cities do not grow up of themselves, countrysides set them up to do tasks that must be performed in central places." Mark Jefferson¹

Introduction

This paper introduces two important components of goldfield towns development—central place theory and the movement of people around the goldfields. These factors had an interacting effect on town development. The miners moved around the goldfields following the gold rushes, while the storekeepers and other basic retail and service industries followed the miners. If a goldfield was worked out, the miners and the storekeepers simply moved on to the next rush. Nevertheless, if other reasons existed—such as good agricultural land or potential as a centre of communication—some storekeepers and miners would settle, thus giving the township a degree of permanency. When the miners, having either made their 'fortune' or having decided to return to their original trades, decided to settle down, the level and range of services and retail stores available in the towns played a part in their decision about where to settle.

The paper is largely based on directories such as *Baillierie's Official Post Office Directory* of 1868 and *Bryce Ross's Diggings Directory* of 1852, as well as the newspaper advertisements of the local newspapers. At this stage of the research, the newspapers consulted were *The Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* (16 February, 1861), the *Tarrangower Times* and the *Mount Alexander Mail* (both various issues 1855—1868). Electoral rolls were also useful in following the movements of people around the goldfields.

¹ Jefferson, Mark "Distribution of the world's city folks." *The Geographical Review* 21, 1931 p 454

Central Place Theory

According to Canadian-based geographer, Leslie King, "it is generally accepted among geographers that central place theory constitutes a deductive base for the understanding of the real world patterns of the location and operation of retail and service business."² The relationship, which exists between not only cities and towns, towns and villages, but also between villages and their surrounding rural area, is an important component in the development of urban areas.³

Walter Christaller originally developed a Central Place Theory, based on a hierarchy of towns and villages, in an attempt to explain 'the size, number and distribution of towns across space'.⁴ The idea of an hierarchy of settlements is not a new development, as hierarchies have existed in societies for hundreds of years, as shown in archeological excavations in China and other countries.

Central place theory can provide a very useful tool to assist in the understanding of the development of the goldfields towns. Beyond metropolitan areas, central place theory usually classifies this hierarchy as cities, towns, villages and hamlets (in descending order of size). However, most central place theorists agree that size ranking is not the only important component in developing a hierarchy of towns; the range of economic activities or functions available in the town or village is also very important.

The functions of cities, towns, villages and hamlets will differ, not only geographically across countries, but also over time, so central place theory does not attempt to identify what goods and service are central to each level of the hierarchy. According to Brown, "this is an empirical question for any system of cities".⁵ For example, one would not expect to find blacksmiths and lemonade sellers in today's country town, nor would one have found Internet cafes in the country towns of the 1850's.⁶ E.A. Wrigley, writing about pre-industrial towns, in western Europe, stated that "even small villages had butchers, carpenters,

² Beavon, K.S.O. *Central Place Theory: A Reinterpretation* Longman Group Ltd, New York, 1977 p1

³ King Leslie J. *Central Place Theory*, Sage Publications, Inc Beverly Hills 1984 p12

⁴ Brown, Douglas M *Introduction to Urban Economics* Academic Press, New York 1974 p51

⁵ *ibid* p 52

shoemakers and perhaps a miller and a minister. Larger villages and towns boasted in addition bakers, innkeepers, a barber, schoolmaster, perhaps a lawyer and a doctor, weavers, a clothier. The county town or provincial city had a far wider range of those engaged in dealing and administering...A major regional center...took the process of specialization a step further...Goods and services flowed in both directions through the channels of trade and communications." ⁷

A very different range of functions would be found in these cities today, although the principle remains the same.

This paper, as mentioned previously, is part of a larger work, which will examine the functions available in the Central Victorian goldfield towns over the period 1851-1871. Based on these findings a hierarchy of functions will be developed for goldfields towns of the era, and an explanation for the pattern of urban development advanced.

Functions of goldfield towns in the years 1851-53

In this section, the functions of the **early** gold mining towns of Bendigo, Castlemaine, Ballarat and Buninyong are identified. During the early gold rush years of 1851-53, the miners moved from one rush to the next without putting down any roots in the township. The supporting trade that followed them was mainly limited to canvas stores with the inevitable sly-grog tent or two. At the end of 1852, even the mining camp with the largest retail trade – Bendigo - had only one hundred and thirty general stores, twenty four smiths, forty one butchers, twenty doctors, twelve accommodation and eating houses, twenty lemonade sellers and one Wesleyan chapel. ⁸ Castlemaine also had a similar limited range of functions, which included one hundred general stores, fifty-one butchers, twenty-five smiths, sixteen doctors, fifteen lemonade and ginger-beer sellers, nine accommodation and eating houses, six bakers, four druggists, a

⁷ Wrigley E.A. "Parasite or stimulus: the town in a pre-industrial economy". In *Towns in Societies*, ed P Abrams and E. A Wrigley Cambridge University press Cambridge 1978 p 390

⁸ Ross, Bryce *Diggings Directory*. Melbourne 1853 p9

tobacconist and a barber.⁹ The settlement at Ballarat at this time was even smaller; it had only thirty general stores, eight butchers, four doctors, four smiths and a Roman Catholic chapel. Buninyong, the first inland township in Victoria had not grown at all and, in 1852, had only the Buninyong, Vietch's and Victoria stores, the Buninyong and Crown inns and Thomas Stead's smith and wheelwright business.¹⁰ Thus in the first two years of the gold rushes, the range of functions available in the four settlements was virtually the same for all towns, although the numbers of stores, butchers etc varied according to the size of the settlements.

At this stage of development, no hierarchy of towns existed in the Central Victorian goldfields towns. However, not only was there no hierarchy of towns, the range of functions was extremely limited. In fact, the functions were those that were required for a very basic level of itinerant living. We can compare the range of functions available at these four mining settlements with Wrigley's pre-industrial small villages in Western Europe. As previously mentioned, Wrigley found that the functions available in small villages included carpenters, shoemakers and perhaps a miller. Bryce Ross did not find these occupations in Central Victoria mining settlements, although he did find lemonade sellers and accommodation houses. Even up to the mid 1850's, little had been added to the functions of the goldfields towns with the exception of entertainment. For example, the rush to Dunolly in 1856 produced "a main street three miles long flanked by canvas stores and lodging houses, dozens of saloons and sly-grog houses, theatres, music halls, boxing booths, shooting-galleries, skittle and bowling alleys, bagatelle and billiard-rooms, gambling-houses and brothels".¹¹

Functions available in the later rushes

From the mid 1850's, partly as a result of the change from largely alluvial mining to deep lead and quartz mining and the consequent rise in company mining, but

⁹ Bonwick, James In Bryce Ross's *Diggings Directory*. Melbourne 1853 p10.

¹⁰ Ross op cit pp11 and 12

also as a result of technological advances in mining technology from 1858, the functions required by the miners became more sophisticated. The latter often required the services of surveyors, engineers and lawyers. Transport was becoming somewhat easier as roads and bridges were built, and possibly the miners were becoming more demanding. The functions available in the early stages of the later rushes were much more diverse than those of ten years before. For the example the Mountain Creek (Moonambel) diggings were opened as late as November 1860. The business advertisements of the *Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* of February, 16, 1861 indicate that the retail trade already included some more specialised functions not available in the early goldfield towns. For example, A Melville, a wholesale stationer and dealer in fancy goods also offered a “splendid assortment of Flutinas, Concertinas, and other Musical Instruments on hand” as well as Berlin Wools and patterns, Crochet Cottons &c.’ A. Melville also repaired musical instruments.¹² Bartlett and Cannon, painters and signwriters also provided “glazing, gilding, decorating and paperhanging’. From these examples it can be seen that the traders were offering items, such as musical instruments, that would only tend to be in demand in a more settled society. They were also offering goods such as wools, crochet patterns and fancy goods that would only be bought by women indicating the greater presence of women on the goldfields, a factor that could be expected to lead to a more settled population. Even The Pioneer Newspaper and Job Printing Establishment offered printing of cards, circulars, **cheque-books**, bill-heads and handbills.¹³ Banks had not offered their services on the goldfields until about 1856, and even then had looked for more than just gold, for example agricultural prospects, when deciding to open a branch or agency. The role of banks on the goldfields was discussed in greater detail in an earlier chapter of the main paper. Therefore, it was unusual to find the London Chartered Bank of Australia had an agency open just two months after the rush had commenced. Another difference to the early rushes was the many Wine and Spirit merchants advertising, the restriction on liquor having been lifted. For example, W. Wise offered brandy, whiskey, port

¹¹ Searle, Geoffrey *The Golden Age* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1968 (first published 1963)

¹² *The Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* February 16, 1861p4

wine, beer and champagne cider by the case. Mr. E. Tufton Smith, a solicitor and Mr. Boyle, a barrister at law had already opened for business by February, as had five doctors and surgeons and a dispensary.

Moving around the Goldfields - miners

During the period 1851-1854, the size of the goldfield settlements of Central Victoria was determined, to a large extent, by the miners' success in winning gold. Upwards of ten to thirty thousand miners swarmed over a new rich find only to move on as soon as news of another, richer rush reached them. Often the first field would then be almost deserted with only a few miners left. Very often, and not surprisingly, given the lack of transport and the terrain, the miners moved around the immediate district, rather than striking out to a far distant field. Relatively small movements of the miners appear to have been the most typical. For example, William Dale and his family arrived in Melbourne from Ireland about 1852/3. While the family first settled in Collingwood in 1854, it was not long before they were goldfields bound. Their movements around the field can be traced by the location of the occurrence of births, deaths and marriages in the family. As these occurred at infrequent intervals, it is possible that their actual movements involved greater changes than is apparent from the official records. In 1855 the family was in Sandhurst where William's wife Jane died from dysentery. In 1860, William married Elizabeth in Castlemaine; their first child Martha was born, in 1862 at Porcupine, while their second child, John, was born in Majorca at the time of the 1861/2 rush. By 1864 they were back in Porcupine for the birth of their third child, Hugh. Elizabeth, the fourth child was born at Castlemaine in 1866, while Martha, the fifth child, was born at The Loddon in 1868. (The first Martha did not survive childhood.) As far as can be ascertained, all the births were home births. William Dale subsequently worked on the railways, and spent the latter part of his life Lancefield, where he died in 1893.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid p4

Another example of this rather limited movement around the gold fields may be found in a history of the Beggs family. Much of the information in the early years of this history was found in births, deaths and marriages, as well as in electoral rolls and Bailliere's Official Post Office Directory.¹⁵ Maurice and Mary Beggs and their family of nine children arrived in Melbourne in 1853, where Maurice was initially employed by a Mr. Campbell. The family soon left for Maryborough, where another daughter was born in 1854. It was however, the children of Maurice and Mary who apparently followed the later gold rushes, although it should be noted that their occupations were generally not given as miner but rather labourer, dairyman, sawyer or carrier. It would appear that they supplemented their usual livelihood with a little gold mining (or perhaps vice versa). Thus William, the eldest son and Mary, who were married at Glenpatrick in 1866, had three children while at Amphitheatre (in 1867, 1868 and 1870), one at Crowlands in 1871, two at Elmhurst in 1873 and 1874, before returning to Crowlands for the birth of the seventh child in 1876. The remaining six children were born in Kerang, where Maurice and Mary had settled after apparently giving up gold mining. It is interesting also that four of their children went to Western Australia for the 1890's gold rush. The movements of these families indicate the very mobile population which had obvious repercussions for the establishment of permanent towns.¹⁶

Moving around the Goldfields – retail and service trade

Generally, the supporting retail and service trade followed the miners as they moved from rush to rush. Some evidence for this can be gleaned from *The Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* of February 16, 1861.¹⁷ The paper itself is somewhat unusual in that it was first published less than a month after the rushes to Redbank and Mountain Creek commenced. Relatively few of the mining settlements attracted newspapers in the early stages of the rushes, and of those towns that did, few very early copies of the newspapers remain. For example,

¹⁴ Unpublished manuscript Martin, Zelda *The Wandering Dales* pp 2-4

¹⁵ Unpublished manuscript Lewis, J *Our Victorian Beggs* pp1-2

¹⁶ *ibid* p2

The Bendigo Evening News was first published in 1851 (earliest copy available 1865); *Bendigo Weekly Advertiser* first published 1853 (earliest available 1856); *Ballarat Times* first published in 1854 (available 1854) *Maryborough Advertiser* first published 1854 (earliest available 1854), and *Castlemaine Mail* first published 1854 (earliest available 1857). The reasons for this are fairly obvious; the cost of the printing press and difficulties in transporting it meant that a potential newspaper proprietor would have to be fairly confident that the mining settlement had a longer-term future. Thus *The Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* provides an unique glimpse of the early life of the settlement. Because the advertisers were new to the township at this time, many were probably anxious to establish their credentials with the miners, and many gave their previous trading place almost as a reference. Cornelius Mulcahy of the Shamrock Hotel in Redbank (a mining township about three miles from Mountain Creek) advertised that he was late of the Shamrock Hotel in Lamplough. J. Stevens (Hay and Corn store) advertised that he was late of Ararat and Lamplough, while Adam Shaw, a gold-buyer for the Bank of Victoria had also come from Lamplough. Some traders such as Overs and Crick, Produce Dealers, retained their Lamplough store when they opened in Mountain Creek. However, one of the most interesting advertisements in the paper was a "Great Sale!!! £30,000 of drapery and clothing to be sold by Harbottle, Porch and Pudney upon the expiry of their partnership, and consequent retirement from business. They thanked the inhabitants of the various goldfields where they had traded. These included Back Creek (Talbot), Lamplough, Inglewood and Kingower, as well as Mountain Creek,¹⁸ so they had certainly followed the gold rushes.

Moving around the Castlemaine/ Maldon area—retail and services trade

In researching this section, business advertisements from various issues of the Tarrangower Times and the Mount Alexander Mail, were extracted into a database. Movements of businesses between towns were noted, and the names of business owners were compared with the Victorian list of names, addresses and

¹⁷ op cit *The Pioneer and Mountain Creek Advertiser* February, 16, 1861

occupations in the 1868 Bailliere's Official Post Office Directory in order to find the location of the business in 1868. It was also found that some storekeepers and owners of other services had retired from business, while others had chosen a different occupation. Very many were not traceable in Victoria; many of these would probably have returned to England or to other states or countries. Some would have died, while there were also many reasons that why a person might not appear on Bailliere's, for example, they did have to have a postal address. This excluded those living in tents on the edge of towns or those who did not live in a defined postal town. Of course it was inevitable that there would be a measure of uncertainty regarding many of the people, particularly those with names like John Smith. Despite this, it was possible to identify three clear trends in movements.

Publicans and doctors were apparently the most mobile of the occupations in the Castlemaine/Maldon area. The life of a publican on the goldfields was very difficult, and, given the backgrounds of some of the miners, often quite dangerous. It could also be quite lucrative. These factors contributed to the mobility of the publicans, many of whom either moved to hotels in larger towns or retired to city life. Among the publicans who did move from Maldon were David Duffy of the Metropolitan Hotel who went to a hotel in Ballarat and W. Bignell of Bignell's Hotel who also moved to a hotel in Ballarat. T.C. Cooper moved from the Eaglehawk Hotel at Maldon to a 'beershop' at Elphinstone, while Stephen Dorman apparently changed his occupation to that of contractor of Taradale. Robert Page was a publican in Maldon; by 1862-3 he had become landlord of the Albert Hotel in Forest St, Castlemaine.¹⁹ Frederick Bond of the Clyde Hotel in Maldon retired to Melbourne.²⁰ James Bromfield was one publican who defied the trend, remaining a publican at Maldon for the period 1859—1868; prior to 1859 he had been the proprietor of Daverean Hotel at Baringhup.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid p 1

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *Tarrangower Times*, various issues and *Bailliere's Official Post Office Directory*, 1868

By contrast doctors, many of whom worked under difficult and primitive conditions, often found it difficult to make a reasonable living on the goldfields. "The majority of the diggers were poor, and thousands of them could not afford to pay their monthly licence fee, let alone pay their doctors."²² Bowden, in his extensive study of doctors at Ballarat, found that many doctors who arrived at Ballarat, stayed there and soon became part of the community. For example, George Clendinning, Bachelor and Doctor of Medicine, arrived in Ballarat in 1853 and remained there until his death in 1876, including a time as Mayor of the Borough in 1865.²³ Other doctors, particularly those in the smaller goldfields were very mobile; for example Richard William Schmidt M.D. went to Castlemaine in 1854, where he became insolvent, then went to Dunolly and Avoca in 1856, to Smythes Creek in 1858 and to Clunes in 1863. He died in 1869.²⁴ Bowden also pointed out that there were a number of unqualified doctors on all the goldfields.²⁵ Among the doctors and surgeons advertising in the Maldon and Castlemaine papers, who moved were Mr. W. Langford, surgeon, of Talbot who went to Kyneton, Thomas McGrath, surgeon, of Castlemaine who moved to Melbourne and J.H. Hardy, surgeon of Campbell's Flat who made the comparatively short move to Chewton.²⁶

Business people in smaller towns such as Maldon tended to move to Melbourne or to larger towns or towns with the availability of more functions, indicating that Maldon lacked many of the facilities that they saw as necessary for a comfortable lifestyle. However, business people from Castlemaine were more likely than those from Maldon, to move into similar sized towns, indicating a measure of satisfaction with the functions available in a town of Castlemaine's size. Among the Maldon traders moving on were G. Custin from Maldon's Timber Yard, who became a publican in Daylesford; J. Buhl, hairdresser who became a hairdresser in Castlemaine; John W. Excell a wholesale draper in Maldon carried on the same occupation in Kilmore; E.W. Bagshaw, surveyor to

²¹ *Tarrangower Times*, various issues

²² Bowden Keith Macrae *Goldrush Doctors at Ballarat* 1977 p xi

²³ *ibid* p109

²⁴ *ibid* p118

²⁵ *ibid* p xi

the same occupation in Ballarat, and W. J. Rogers, tinsmith moved to the same occupation at Echuca. J Paterson was a carter in Maldon, then apparently became a salesman in Castlemaine.²⁷

Many instances also occur where miners returned to their old trades, often in another township, after mining suffered some decline, for example, Thomas Rowe had been a miner in Maldon. By 1862/3 he had become an assistant at McPherson and Cunnack's tannery in Castlemaine. Similarly John Freeman, who also had been a miner in Maldon, became a carpenter in Castlemaine by 1862/3.

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However, some of the Maldon traders did move to smaller or similar sized towns, and some changed their occupations, for example J. G. Hornblower left his stationery shop in Maldon after four years to become a journalist in Inglewood. Similarly, Charles B. Spearing was accountant in Maldon but when he went to Beechworth he became a bookkeeper. Those people taking the opportunity for a career change had possibly made their money, and were opting out for either their old occupation or a completely new one, and often away from the goldfields. William Dale, mentioned earlier, became a railway worker, taking the opportunity for a regular job.

Storekeepers and other traders located in Castlemaine were also more likely to move to a smaller town, for example, by 1868, M. Monaghan, a bootmaker of Castlemaine had moved to Terang (away from the goldfields) to carry on the same occupation. Similarly, C Cherny, a painter moved to Newbury, while William Newbound, an undertaker moved to Alexandra, and J. Craven, blacksmith of Campbells Creek moved to Majorca, all carrying out their same occupations.²⁹ In many cases these were new newer towns, undoubtedly offering new opportunities. The Castlemaine traders also appeared to move either to Chewton or around the few goldfields—for example Barkers Creek,

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

Campbell's Flat and Forest Creek—that later were encompassed by Castlemaine township. These could be interpreted as a move to the 'suburbs', where land was more easily available. Thus W. Froomes, draper moved from Castlemaine to Barkers Creek, while J.H. Hardy, surgeon, moved from Campbell's flat to Chewton and J. Lansdale, tailor moved from Castlemaine to Chewton.

Perhaps rather more surprising, was the large number of traders who remained for significant lengths of time in the one town. As mentioned earlier, as quartz mining became more predominant, the towns gained more sophisticated functions. Maldon was one of the towns where quartz mining became important in the 1860's thus requiring more sophisticated functions. The stores in Maldon that remained for significant lengths of time, and were still there in 1868, included Wm Luelf, a cabinetmaker; Howlinston Tate and Co, stationers, and Wm Noell, tobacconist. However the trend of long term stayed was particularly evident in Castlemaine, with very many traders operating in the town for most of the period. These included people such as W. Goodwin, a confectioner; Haslen and Granger, drapers; B Martin, a pawnbroker (not a common occupation in the early days); E. Schroeder, tobacconist, and G. Chapman who owned a brassfoundry.

In conclusion it could be stated that the traders of the goldfield towns were particularly mobile in the early years as the alluvial gold was won. Later as towns such as Maldon started mining their significant quartz deposits, the townships grew and developed a wider range of functions, which helped retain the residents. Castlemaine's location at the centre of the early trade routes helped it to develop into a vibrant town.