

LIFE AFTER GOLD

Twentieth-Century Ballarat

Sturt Street, Ballarat



WESTON BATE

PRESENTED TO



THE VICTORIAN SQUASH ASSOCIATION
DURING THE 14TH AUSTRALIAN JUNIOR
SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BALLARAT

CITY OF
BALLARAT

*BY THE COMMISSIONERS
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Preface

The theme of *Lucky City*, the first volume of this study of Ballarat, was the interaction of a talented and adventurous group of migrants with a resource-rich environment that both challenged and sustained them. Massive gold deposits, fine soils, good rainfall and magnificent forests stimulated extraordinary economic activity. A mature city of over forty thousand people was created between 1851 and 1871 and was then consolidated during the rest of the century. Its metal works produced sophisticated mining machinery, railway locomotives and harvesters; its institutions were diverse and strong; its social, cultural and sporting life were vigorous; its streetscapes were handsome; and its confidence was summed up in the self-image of Golden City, to which was often added City of Statues and City of Gardens.

The twentieth-century story is quite different. The pioneers died, mining petered out traumatically, the two most important factories were closed, the forests had gone and many young men were slaughtered in World War I. The city was decimated; it lost about 10 per cent of its population in each of the decades 1901–10 and 1911–20. From locally produced fodder (for horses) and firewood (for boilers) the sources of energy turned to imported petrol and coal. Much of Ballarat's privileged position was undermined. Yet much also remained in the social institutions, the industrial skills of the population, the rich agricultural and pastoral hinterland and the fine urban infrastructure. How these helped to sustain the city during its population decline and then underpin expansion during and after World War II is a major theme of this volume.

Another important theme involves the past, always powerful at Ballarat. It had to be contended with psychologically during the downturn in the first half of the century but has been used during the second half, with great success, to stimulate tourism. In the celebration of great beginnings the

city has found a substantial gold mine at the Ballarat Historical Park, Sovereign Hill.

I would like to thank the many people and organizations who have made this book possible and the research for it enjoyable. In the Department of History at the University of Melbourne, where some of the foundations were laid, I was stimulated in particular by the late Lloyd Robson and Graeme Davison, and shared research on the 1930s with a wonderful group of final year students. Substantial funding has come from the Australian Research Grants Scheme; most of it was applied to *Lucky City*, but Mary Sandow-Quirk and latterly Vicki Peel helped, as research assistants, to break open the ground for this volume. Colleagues in Australian Studies at Deakin University, Renate Howe and Allan Johnston especially, contributed in general to the framework of ideas, while Frank Campbell, by sharpening my basic concepts about regionalism in Australia, shaped the approach considerably. I am grateful to two postgraduate students, Frank Hurley and Anne Sunter for insights and information, and to the School of Humanities for occasional funds that helped to employ Jan Croggon, Mary and Ron Hollick, Mary Mulvaney and my daughter Rosemary on specific tasks. Allen Jones let me use his study of life in Ballarat during the lead-up to World War II. The manuscript has been given elegance and accuracy through a rewarding interaction with Judy Barber (the chief), Bev Bartlett, Jan Wapling, Val Lestranger and Judy Waldie in the Humanities office. If they liked it, I knew I was on the right track. Deakin University also generously contributed the skills that put typesetting instructions on to their disk. At Melbourne University Press I have had the strong support of the Director, John Iremonger, and the Board of MUP has honoured me and the book by including it in their splendid Miegunyah imprint.

The City of Ballarat has been a major force, by paying half

my salary for three years and supporting in many other ways the production of the book. Among many councillors who have spurred me on, I should mention especially Jack Chisholm, Bruce McKnight, Jessie Scott and Wanda Chapman; and Frank Rogers, Ian Smith and David Peile of the administrative staff. Lyle Dale and Norman Hand, the hallkeepers, have shown me and my assistants many strange and productive nooks and crannies at the town hall—sometimes among pigeon droppings and flying table-tennis balls. The Shire of Ballarat was hospitable; so were the Ballarat Municipal Library (via Peter Mansfield and Kate Kelly), the Queen Elizabeth Home, the Ballarat Club, the Public Record Office Repository, the Ballarat Historical Society, the Ballarat Historical Park (especially Barbara Cooper at the Gold Museum), and the Melbourne University Archives under Frank Strahan. For photographs I am particularly indebted to the Ballarat Base Hospital, the Ballarat Municipal Library, the Ballarat Restoration Committee (whose collection has been lodged at

the Gold Museum), Max Harris, photographer, the Photographic Archive Project of the Museum of Victoria and, for splendid colour, to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and its Director, Margaret Rich. I am also grateful to the Gold Museum for the hand-painted postcards of early twentieth-century Ballarat.

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