

ARCHIVES OF A JOINT-STOCK COMPANY

The Australian Agricultural Company; its system of administration and its records, 1824-1970.

by

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Australia's first joint-stock company, the Australian Agricultural Company, was instituted by an Act of the Imperial Parliament (5 Geo IV, Cap. 86) on 21 June 1824. On 1 November of that year it was issued with a Royal Charter which, with the By-Laws, laid down the procedure for its operations. This important pastoral (and formerly mining) company operates in a modified form to-day, under an efficient system of administration which has its roots in a meeting held on 10 April 1824 in the Lincoln Inn Chambers of John Macarthur junior. Though the younger Macarthur played a significant role in the moves to establish the Company, it was the long-standing ambitions of his father, the "Perturbator of Camden Park", which were being realised.

At that meeting, a group of bankers and merchants considered the expediency of instituting a company, to obtain a grant of land in the Colony, to extend and improve the flocks of merino sheep, and for other purposes. After considering observations on the colony, based largely on the published reports of Commissioner J.T. Bigge, these speculators examined a plan for a company to be incorporated by letters patent or act of parliament, with a capital of £ 1,000,000 sterling. In addition, they hoped to obtain from the Crown a grant of one million acres of land. The prime purpose of the corporation was the formation of an agricultural estate for raising fine wool. Subordinate to this aim was the cultivation of the vine, olive, flax and other products then being imported into England from the Mediterranean.

The affairs of the Company were to be managed in England by a Court (Board) of Directors, and in the Colony by experienced and respectable agents.

Within the London Office at 12 King's Arms Yard, the Secretary co-ordinated and managed the policy directions of two committees. John Strettell Brickwood, superintendent of the daily office administration, received despatches, and forwarded to Sydney advice and policy decisions from the General Committee of Management. This Committee, through its secretary, also presented periodical reports to meetings of proprietors (shareholders). A Special Committee of the Court of Directors was appointed to conduct negotiations with the Colonial Office.

At the Australian end, the executive chain of command was again two-fold. A Sydney office was maintained at Macquarie Place with a resident secretary/accountant (T.C. Harington) and clerks. A five-man Colonial Committee was

appointed to superintend business operations and advise the Chief Agent superintending the agricultural estate. The membership of the Committee (consisting, at least as far as active members were concerned, of members of the Macarthur family and one of their in-laws) was such as to draw upon it the scathing attention of the Australian newspaper, and the criticism of the Chief Justice of New South Wales, Francis Forbes. Captain John Macarthur was especially anxious to have other persons appointed when it became impractical for Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott and Captain Phillip Parker King to serve on the Committee. The remaining trio were James Macarthur, Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur and James Bowman. The last-named, about this time, married into the Macarthur family.

The headquarters settlement of the agricultural estate was located at Carrington on the north shore of Port Stephens harbour. This wide harbour, which extends inland about fifteen miles, is some ninety miles north of Sydney and about thirty miles (by road) north of Newcastle. The decision to form the initial base in a location which to-day seems injudicious was made on firm grounds. Animal husbandry in 1826 was not the sophisticated science to which the grazier of 1970 is so accustomed, and the weight of expert opinion favoured the lands between Stroud and the Manning River as being suitable for the growth of fine wool. As late as 1845, and even until the sale of its sheep stock to the newly-formed Peel River Land and Mineral Company in 1853, the A.A. Company maintained its choicest flocks of fine woolled sheep in the valley between Stroud and Gloucester, and on land leased along the Barrington and Gloucester Rivers. The tyrannous factor of distance was also an important one in the decision to stay close to water transport.

A subordinate office for daily administration of the estate was established at Carrington. This office was ultimately the responsibility of Robert Dawson, the Chief Agent, who used the services of an accountant and clerks. Dawson was the type of man to puzzle future generations. He came to New South Wales with the most prestigious references the Macarthur family had ever seen, and there can be little doubt as to his competence in questions of agriculture, animal husbandry and estate management under English conditions. Unfortunately, he was also a proud and stubborn man little inclined to brook opposition or even constructive criticism of his management. His summary dismissal in September 1827 of the Carrington accountant involved him in troubles with respect to the financial administration of the establishment at the very time that the venture was experiencing its most rapid expansion.

As a result of this maladministration Dawson was dismissed, without due process of enquiry or explanation, in April 1828, and his place was taken (quite unconstitutionally) by Captain John Macarthur. Macarthur re-organized the estate until severe illness forced him to return to Sydney in August, and to hand over command to James Edward Ebsworth, a young officer who had accompanied one of the Company's shipments of Saxon merinos to Port Stephens late in 1827. At the end of 1828 the Sydney office was vacated and W.H. Barton, the secretary/accountant, moved permanently to Carrington.

At the end of 1829 the Colonial Committee was dissolved and a Commissioner,* appointed from London, assumed the executive functions formerly exercised jointly by the Chief Agent and the Colonial Committee. By 1834 the bulk of the administrative worked centred on Booral and Tahlee/Carrington. A large store at Booral Wharf on the Karuah River was conducted in conjunction with a warehouse at Carrington. The Commissioner resided in the newly-erected "Tahlee House" and supervised the management of the venture.

Sir William Edward Parry, R.N., the first Commissioner, nursed the enterprise through a very severe time of trial at a period when the financial resources of the Company were precarious. Parry brought to the infant enterprise a wide experience gained in the Royal Navy and in Arctic exploration. He was the son of Caleb Hillier Parry of Bath, an eminent experimental agriculturalist who carried out some of the most important early research on the merino. Edward Parry served in the Channel, the North Sea the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean during the Napoleonic Wars. From 1818 to 1828 his attention was concentrated on the Arctic and exploration to the latitude 82° 45'N. This latitude was not reached again till 1876. After these outstanding achievements in Arctic exploration Parry accepted the offer of the A.A. Company to take the office of Commissioner and arrived in Sydney in late December, 1829

Parry quickly established an efficient and orderly system of administration and management which was expanded to meet changing circumstances by his successors. He divided the administration of the agricultural estate into various establishments; at the head of each was placed a qualified superintendent. These were the establishments of flocks, stud and stock, accounts, medicine, boats, buildings, and manufactures. Each of these superintendents established, where appropriate, a subordinate chain of command.

During Parry's term of office, the Australian Agricultural Company began coal mining on the Newcastle Coal Field. Coal mining had not been envisaged as an activity when the corporation was first formed. The introduction of steam navigation into the ambit of the East India Company was the occasion for the innovation. Three Directors of the A.A. Company were also Directors of the E.I. Company, and two others had close connexions with the latter. Rather than ship coal to India from Newcastle-upon-Tyne those Directors with interests in both corporations were able to influence the Home Government in a policy of allowing the Australian company to take over the previously inefficiently-conducted Government mines at Newcastle. A colliery establishment arrived in Sydney on the Australia in January 1827 and began survey work at Newcastle and around Parramatta. Due to a misunderstanding between Governor Sir Ralph Darling and the Colonial Office, and due also to some obstructive opposition from the Colonial Committee, the initial attempt did not succeed. In 1828 a renewed agreement between the Court of Directors and the Colonial Office was made, and this gave the Australian Agricultural Company monopoly rights in coal mining for a period of 31 years.

*A list of Chief Agents, Commissioners and General Superintendents appears as an Appendix to this paper.

In 1830 Parry and his colliery manager, John Henderson, began a careful examination of the Newcastle deposits. During the following year the first shaft was sunk and sales began to the Commissariat and to the general public. Despite the 31-year monopoly given to the Company, in 1839 the Colonial Office allowed other mines to be opened in Western Port in what is now Victoria. The question of monopoly became more complicated in 1843 when James Brown and Edward Turner opened mines near East Maitland. On the petition of Phillip Parker King, the A.A. Company Commissioner, the Supreme Court of N.S.W. upheld the monopoly rights of the corporation in 1845. In 1847 this decision was reversed. Shortly afterwards a Select Committee of the Legislative Council began collecting evidence on the coal trade, and completed its hearings. Shortly before it concluded, word was received in Sydney from the Colonial Office that a new agreement had been reached between the A.A. Company and the Home Government. Monopoly coal mining had definitely come to an end, and the way was opened for competitive mining on the Newcastle field.

During Parry's administration the A.A. Company surrendered to the Crown six hundred thousand acres of the original grant, lying between Port Stephens harbour and the Manning River. Robert Dawson had made an inadequate examination of the eastern section of the grant, and he, under the pressures of establishing a large enterprise, purchasing stock and acting as a magistrate, had been forced to rely on the judgements of assistants. If Dawson and his Superintendent of Flocks, Charles Hall, had been able to make a more detailed examination of areas in which he had delegated the task to assistants not accustomed to raising sheep, it is probable that the Chief Agent would have delayed the formal delineation of the million-acre grant. Pressure from the Colonel Secretary and the Survey Department for an early definition of the boundaries, and the lack of time to carry out experiments with sheep and wool production, combined with the desire of John Oxley to redeem a mortgage on the Kirkham Estate¹, brought about a premature decision to take the whole million acres in one block.

During 1830 Parry attempted to find suitable land north of the Manning River. Even after his assistants, Alexander Nisbet and Henry Dangar, found a route over the Great Divide on to the Liverpool Plains, Parry was reluctant to move inland. He next thought of looking for land north of Port Macquarie, or even south of Sydney, in preference to going inland. It was only the determined advocacy of Henry Dangar of the proposal to go inland that caused Parry to reconsider his decision.

Dangar returned to the inland area along the Peel River and about Liverpool Plains in October 1831 where he carried out a detailed survey. Parry accompanied him to the region in March 1832 and was won over to the views of his assistant. In June 1832 Parry applied to Governor Sir Richard Bourke for two large grants at Warrah and the Peel River in place of the alienated land along the coast.

1. At the time, John Oxley, Surveyor-General, was suffering a mortal illness, from which he was soon to die. He had raised a mortgage from the A.A. Company of £2000 on the Kirkham Estate.

By 1832 squatters from the Hunter Valley and Bathurst had established themselves on the Liverpool Plains, and the Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell opposed the establishment of the Company on these lands. Instead, he attempted to convince Parry and Dangar that they should choose land along the Peel from its source to its junction with the Muluerindie River, and to the top of the mountain ridges on each side. The question was finally settled by a decision of the Colonial Office in 1833 which enabled the Company to take de jure possession of rich lands along the Peel and at Warrah (Liverpool Plains).

Parry appointed a superintendent at the new station established on leased land at Warrah in October 1832. In January 1834 Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Dumaresq, successor to Sir Edward Parry, transferred the sheep stock from Warrah to the Peel and appointed Charles Hall as Superintendent. In January 1835 a track was found up the valley of the Barnard River from the Gloucester region to the Peel which led to the opening up of the northern end of the retained portion of the original grant, the establishment of new stations and the appointment of a superintendent at the Gloucester station.

The appointment of superintendents at the Peel, Warrah and Gloucester stations merely expanded the structure of the administration created by Parry. Each of the superintendents (on the agricultural estate, and at the Colliery) submitted regular reports to the Commissioner. The Commissioner then compiled monthly despatches to the Court of Directors in London. Such despatches usually enclosed details of production and expenditure within each establishment of the agricultural estates.

The present writer has not concerned himself with the changes that took place in the administration of the Company in the second half of the 19th Century, nor in 20th Century developments, for his thesis work (being undertaken as a Ph.D. Scholar in the History Department, School of General Studies, Australian National University) relates to the history of the Company from its inception in 1824 till the beginning of 1849. This is the period in which the bases of the Company's operations were laid, and a full understanding of these foundation years, and of the records created during this time, will enable historians of the latter days of the Company to grasp more surely the problems of more recent development.

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The first attempt to compile an authentic and connected narrative of the A.A. Company's operations from official records was made during the first decade of the 20th Century by a former General Superintendent². In 1907 Jesse Gregson published the work which has served as the standard secondary source on the activities of this important corporation.³ Gregson's aim was confessedly apologetic.—

2. This office was created in 1849 to take the place of the former office of Commissioner (See list of Chief Agents, Commissioners etc. in Appendix).
3. J. Gregson. — The Australian Agricultural Company, 1824-1875. Sydney 1907.

I have been actuated by a hope that I may in some degree remove or dispel the disfavour with which the Company is sometimes regarded, as being the absentee owner of large estates.

Such an aim is understandable against the background of the agitation over the land question during the 1890s and the sale of the remaining lands at Port Stephens to the Gloucester Estates Syndicate in 1903.

Gregson's achievement is considerable for its time, and the book reveals the integrity and capacity of a man who was able to command a strong sense of loyalty from his associates and employees. While firmly committed to its aim of depicting a corporation which he had helped to develop, the book attains a degree of non-partisanship which can only be admired.

With a renewed interest in historical research and writing over the last decade has come a quickening sense of Australian identity and self-awareness. It is only natural that the present generation of Australian historians should look afresh at the period reviewed by Jesse Gregson, Stephen Roberts, Malcolm Ellis and others.⁴ This is, of course, an illustration of the social relevance of historical study achieved by each generation returning to the primary sources. In Australian history, we are also looking at many of the primary sources for the first time. At the same time Hugh Stretton⁵ has recently reminded us that it would be nonsense to expect men of the 20th Century to put "other than twentieth century questions" to the past.

In recent years Australian historians have been conducting this necessary type of enquiry. They have been re-examining, in the post-War period, many of the accepted and traditional assumptions about the pastoral, economic, social and political development of this country. The Australian Agricultural Company has played an important role in such development since its foundation here late in 1825. With the continued maturing of the historiographical tradition has come an awareness of gaps and unauthenticated legends about the fine wool industry, the development of stud cattle, the breeding of high quality horses and the associated blossoming of the squatting age which set important trends in the pastoral industry. Australian historians to-day are asking questions the answers to which were assumed in Jesse Gregson's time. The importance of the A.A. Company in all these questions has always been recognised but only a decade ago archivists concluded that there was insufficient documentary evidence available for a re-writing of the early history of the Australian Agricultural Company.

4. S.H. Roberts. – The squatting age in Australia, 1835-1847, Melbourne, 1964 (first published 1935); S.H. Roberts. – History of Australian Land settlement, 1788-1920 Melbourne, 1968 (first published 1924); M.H. Ellis. – John Macarthur. Sydney, 1955

5. Hugh Stretton. – The political sciences. London, 1969. p.186

It seemed as though there was little chance of finding out more about the venture which had brought to Australia the first Durham cattle, the first Cleveland horse, large importations of Saxon merinos from the Silesian studs of Prince Lichnowski (the close friend of Beethoven) and important new strains of grape for the early wine industry. This company had also brought to Australia some very important families, e.g. the original colonial ancestors of Patrick White and Geoffrey Dutton, and the father of Edmund Barton. It had facilitated the carrying out of important early scientific work around Booral and Tahlee, Port Stephens. John Armstrong, the A.A. Company's first surveyor, carried out a hydrographic survey of Port Stephens harbour during 1826. Sir Edward Parry, with Henry Dangar, spearheaded important exploratory, survey and cartographic work in Northern New South Wales. Phillip Parker King, Commissioner for ten years, and the first Australian scientist to win international recognition, acted as catalyst to such scientists as Ludwig Leichhardt, T.H. Huxley and Count Strzelecki during their time in New South Wales. Some of Australia's most important early families had been associated with the A.A. Company. There was obviously a need to know more.

Malcolm Ellis, in 1955, published his life of John Macarthur, the progenitor of the corporation. In the same year Lady Stanham lodged documents in the Mitchell Library – the important Macarthur family papers. At about the same time, the A.A. Company moved its offices from Wharf Road, Newcastle, to Brisbane Street, Tamworth, and the opportunity arose to examine the records. N.G. Butlin, then Reader in Economics at the Australian National University, searched every nook and cranny of the Newcastle building, which the popular press rather amusingly portrayed as the nerve centre of an empire within the Empire.

While Butlin contributed his share to the folk-lore of the Company he was initiating an important move for the realistic interpretation of Australian history. He brought back to the Australian National University the foundation collection for its Business Archives – “Deposit 1”. The City of Newcastle may well have believed that it was losing part of its character with the removal of some three hundred linear feet of records to Canberra. The land sale records of the Company's original two-thousand acre coal grant and the purchased Platt's Estate were left in Newcastle. These records are currently in the proud possession of the University of Newcastle at Shortland. Because of their intrinsic value to Newcastle such records quite rightly remain in that City.

There is no doubt that this deposit of business papers ranks amongst the finest accumulations of business archives that have been deposited in any archives institution in Australia. It includes the originals of despatches sent from the Court of Directors to the Colony in the period 1829 to 1870, together with either indexes or abstracts of such despatches for the years 1853 to 1857 and 1876 to 1898. The earliest despatches from the Chief Agent to the Court are missing, though one volume includes despatches written by the Australian Committee of Management to London in the years 1824 to 1826; and from 1830-45, and from 1851-93, there are letterbooks or drafts of despatches from the Commissioner (later, the General Superintendent) to the Court, with indexes or abstracts for the years 1852 to 1878. One of the disad-

vantages of the letterbook type of recording is that, in the majority of cases, the enclosures to despatches were not copied, only the despatches themselves. A general in-letter series covers the years 1862 to 1912, and there are minutes of the Board of Advice set up to assist Arthur Hodgson, General Superintendent, in the years 1856 to 1860. Frequently, the historian can obtain more accurate insights into the affairs of the Company from reading the semi-personal letters of the Secretary in London to the principal officer in Australia, than from reading the more formal despatches, and these semi-personal letters are available from 1863-73 and from 1903-19. There are general outward letterbooks for the following periods. - December 1829 to March 1834, July - December 1839 and January 1853 - April 1908. There are various sub-groups within the deposit, the largest being a valuable set of papers on the Company's coal-mining activities (1830 - 1931). Other sub-groups relate to papers on land and the work of surveyors (1849 - 1928), papers on the Port Stephens estates (1849 - 1914), Gloucester Estate papers (1851 - 1909), Newcastle papers (1838-1940), legal papers (1854 - 1917), Accountant's papers (1856 - 1939), Warrah station papers (1852 - 1958), Corona station papers (1911 - 53), Bladensburg station papers (1915 - 53), Headingly station papers (1915 - 53) and a few documents relating to the Peel River Land and Mineral Company (1932 - 47).

Perhaps some of the most valuable documents are the Company's maps and plans. Some of the early ones reveal hitherto unknown journeys of exploration in the region north of Newcastle and south of Port Macquarie and New England by Company surveyors and explorers. These maps reveal also a remarkable skill in cartography.

The question of the most fitting repository for the archives of a Company such as the A.A. Company has certainly been debated, and will probably give rise to further discussion and even recrimination. However, it is surely appropriate that a Company with Australia-wide activities should decide to place its records in the National Capital. The logical outcome of the division of the record group would be to house portions in Sydney, Newcastle, Armidale, Brisbane, Adelaide, Darwin and Perth. Pushing this argument for division to its (il)logical conclusion, it would not be difficult to see Perth pegging its claim for the records of Fielder Downs and Argyle stations; Adelaide or Darwin might press for the records of Newry, Auvergne, Rockhampton Downs and Avon Downs stations; Brisbane and Townsville might vie with one another for the papers of Wrotham Park, Headingly, Toolebuc, Brighton Downs, Corona, South Galway and Caldervale stations; in New South Wales, New England, Newcastle and Sydney might dispute for Brewon, Drildool, Muttama, Goonoo Goonoo, Windy, Warrah and Warranilla stations' records. The argument for the integrity of the collection is surely one that cannot be denied and so these valuable business records remain in the Business Archives of the Australian National University.

Important use of the original deposit has been made in such studies as N.G. Butlin.— Investment in Australian economic development; R. Gollan. — The coalminers of New South Wales; Alan Barnard (ed.).— The simple fleece; and J.R. Robertson.— Warrah, the genesis of a pastoral station. These studies are substantially concerned with the post-1860 era.

In 1961, a fortuitous event turned attention to the pre-1860 period. Ann Parry, working on a biography of her famous ancestor, Sir Edward Parry, visited Mr. Birchby, the London Secretary of the Company in Broad Street. Mr. Birchby evinced a very keen interest in contemporary Australia but was, understandably, so pre-occupied with the administration of a large and flourishing corporation that he did not have the time to investigate the extent of a collection of old records in storage. He generously allowed Miss Parry to examine the extant early records of the Company. It was her understanding that this examination was the first time the records had seen the light of day for fifty years.

Interest on the part of the Australians quickened when Miss Parry informed the Business Archives at the Australian National University of her find. At last, it seemed that a valuable source of information on Australian history had survived despite the rigours of Hitler's Blitzkrieg.

Negotiations between the Australian National University and the Australian Agricultural Company began in 1961. A change in the office of the Company, which moved from Broad Street to Bucklersbury House in Queen Victoria Street facilitated the process of deposit. At length, in February 1966, after five years of negotiation, the main bulk of the London Office records (covering the period up to 1916) arrived at the Australian National University. Included in the deposit were a great many records of the Peel River Land and Mineral Company. One of the virtues of the new deposit (Deposit 78) was that gaps in the records received as Deposit 1 were filled.

Whereas, in Deposit 1, there are letterbooks or drafts of despatches from the Commissioner or General Superintendent in N.S.W. to the Court for the years 1830-45, and 1851 - 93, in Deposit 78 there are the originals of the actual despatches (including enclosures) extending from November 1824 to December 1916. There are also series of private letters from the General Superintendent to the Secretary in London covering the periods May 1899 to December 1906 and January 1910 to December 1916. The correspondence in the other direction (London to New South Wales) is covered by letterbooks in the second deposit, the period coverage being October 1838 to October 1915. There are also private letters from the Secretary in London to the principal officer of the Company in Australia for the periods August 1825 to January 1840 and August 1899 to May 1914. The London Office was also, at least for the years 1853 to about 1880, more careful to preserve for its own reference copies of its enclosures to despatches, for a series exists in Deposit 78 corresponding with those years.

Series 78/9 consists of four volumes (the fourth being an index to the first three) which contain copies of letters sent to the Colony by the A.A. Company from 5 July 1824 to 13 July 1829, copies of despatches from both the Chief Agent and the Committee of Management to the London Court over the period 1 November 1824 to 6 September 1828, and copies of other correspondence emanating from the A.A. Company in Australia from 30 September 1827 to 25 February 1829. It is obvious that this series was compiled specially to acquaint

the incoming Commissioner, Sir Edward Parry, of events in the Company's life up to the time of his appointment, and there is a note in the front of one volume to indicate that, should any letters not have been copied, it was because they were inconsequential. The four volumes in Deposit 78 were, of course, the office copies of this documentation retained in London when Parry was supplied with the main copy. Only one of the volumes that were actually handled by Parry has come to light - and has, in 1970, been included with yet another deposit of A.A. Company records placed with the Australian National University.

The Peel River Land and Mineral Company records in Deposit 78 cover despatches from 1853 to 1916 (inward, to London) and from 1853 to 1911 (outward, from London), indexes to them, and several series of ledgers.

The documents received in February 1966 throw light on a great many aspects of the economic, social and political life of early New South Wales. They cover, for instance, events concerning the Macarthur family, the beginnings of the coal trade in Australia, the treatment of Aborigines, the activities of bushrangers, the operation of the penal system, early Australian steam-boats, the northern gold fields, railways, the effects of the land laws, and so on. And they describe in detail every aspect of coalmining and the operation of pastoral runs in colonial New South Wales.

Though 1955 (the year of the first deposit) and 1966 were undoubtedly vintage years in the development of the Australian National University's Business Archives, 1970 promises to be almost as important. Already one deposit of A.A. Company records from the present Australian headquarters at Tamworth has been received (documents up to 1916), and a further deposit is now being collected (documents from 1916 to 1940). And the present Court in London (thanks to the help of the Secretary, Mr. F.R. Maddock), has agreed to deposit further records from the London Office, (that is, material from 1916 to 1940) under the same conditions as applied to other deposits of A.A. Company material.

The main condition of these deposits is that, should any bona fide scholars wish to consult the records, they must sign an undertaking that no information from the records will be published in any form whatever until the notes based on the records have been submitted to the Company's office in London, and its publication approved by them. And the A.N.U. Archives has agreed that it will supply microfilm copies to the London Office of any material which is required in London.

When the "Warrah" homestead portion of the original Liverpool Plains alternative grant of 1833 was offered for sale by auction in the Tamworth Town Hall on 6 November 1969 an opportunity arose to remove more records to Canberra. Thanks to the co-operation of the Australian Secretary and the General Superintendent it was possible to bring back to the A.N.U. all the remaining Warrah records up till the legal "cut-off" date, as well as material relating to the Queensland stations from Goonoo Goonoo.

A corporation of such importance to the economic, social and political growth of the country had, of necessity, many contacts with the Colonial administration in Sydney. The Archives Authority of New South Wales holds many important State archives covering various aspects of the Company's development. The Mitchell and Dixson libraries likewise possess numerous papers, journals, letters and maps relating to the Company. The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, holds the papers of Sir Edward Parry. Some annual reports of the Company, various secondary sources and miscellanea, are held in the valuable collections of the National Library of Australia in Canberra, the Library of New South Wales, and the Mitchell and Dixson Libraries. Some additional source material is held in the Archives of the University of New England at Armidale.

There can be no doubt that a full descriptive list of the records, made available in such a way that all interested scholars could see it, would be of immense value to the study of Australian history. In the course of time, it may be possible for a selection of the early despatches and other records to be published (subject, of course, to the consent of the Company) along the lines of the Clyde Company Papers. This would be a first-rate contribution to the needs of research historians, local historians, libraries and the general reading public.

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The present writer hesitates to draw many conclusions from his at present imperfect study of the records of the A.A. Company. However, it is already clear from what has been said above that a very different picture is emerging of the early pastoral development of New South Wales from what has been traditionally inferred. There can be little doubt that the first thirty years of its existence show that the Company was a developmental concern, playing an extremely important role in animal husbandry, exploration and coal-mining. To discover that, till 1853 the Company retained its fine woolled sheep on land that observers have traditionally dismissed with scarcely feigned contempt will jolt historians out of their complacent assumptions about the development of the fine wool industry and the movement westwards of sheep. These thirty years reveal impressive achievements against the background of the time and show the valuable contribution made by the A.A. Company.

It is almost beyond doubt that later historians, working on the latter part of the 19th Century and on the 20th Century records, will uncover equally surprising influences and interpretations, and begin to see in renewed light the activities of the venture which brought the first significant investment of British capital to New South Wales.

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APPENDIX 1

AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY

LIST OF CHIEF AGENTS, COMMISSIONERS, AND

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Chief Agent | Robert Dawson | Dec. 1824 – Apr. 1828 |
| Chief Agent (Acting) | John Macarthur | Apr. – Aug. 1828 |
| Chief Agent (Acting) | James E. Ebsworth | Aug. 1828 – Dec. 1829 |
| Commissioner | Sir W.E. Parry | Dec. 1829 – 1834 |
| Commissioner | Lt. Col. H. Dumaresq | 1834 – 38 |
| Commissioner (Acting) | James E. Ebsworth | 1838 – 39 |
| Commissioner | Captain P.P. King | 1839 – 49 |
| General Superintendent (Acting) | James E. Ebsworth | 1849 – 51 |
| General Superintendent | R. Westmacott | 1851 |
| Deputy Governor | A.W. Blane | 1851 – 52 |
| General Superintendent | M.F. Brownrigg | 1852 – 56 |
| General Superintendent | A. Hodgson | 1856 – 61 |
| General Superintendent | E.C. Merewether | 1861 – 75 |
| General Superintendent | J. Gregson | 1875 – 1905 |
| General Superintendent | F.L. Learmonth | 1905 – 13 |
| General Superintendent | J.S. Christian | 1913 – 19 |
| General Superintendent | J. Henry | 1919 – 32 |
| General Superintendent | J. Holloway | 1932 – 40 |
| General Superintendent | R. Schmidt | 1940 – 62 |
| General Superintendent | R.T. Schmidt | 1962 – |