

Information, Staples Production, and Environmental Change

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Introduction

The very rapid increase in exports of wool from Australasia to Britain during the nineteenth century is well known, and there is an extensive literature on the nineteenth century wool market and on the role of stock and station agents in supporting and facilitating pastoral enterprise. The development of wool marketing, and especially the shift from sales in Britain to sales in Australasia, have also been analysed.¹

If pastoralism was the vehicle of profound economic transformation in the Australasian colonies, it also entailed environmental change on a massive scale. At first sheep depended on indigenous grasses (and the impact of pastoralism on such grasslands was profound), but a growing appreciation of the requirements of the British market and the possibilities of improving fleece quality (and, later, carcass quality) by attention to breeding and to nutrition through exotic grasses prompted widespread pasture conversion by the early twentieth century. In New Zealand, for instance, some 16.1 million acres of a total land area of 66 million acres had been planted in exotic grasses by 1920. While a good deal of this pasture was established after the development of refrigerated shipping in the early 1880s, some 2.4 million acres appear to have been sown in grass by 1878, and 5.5 million by 1886.²

There were influential advocates of exotic pasture before 1880; the Christchurch merchant Robert Wilkin of Christchurch was one example. He was the son of a Dumfriesshire farmer, and migrated to Australia in 1839, spending nineteen years there as a station manager and then runholder in partnership. Like a significant number of other Australian Scots, in 1858 he moved on to New Zealand evidently having significant capital reserves, and investing in a number of pastoral properties. In 1871 he also established a stock and station agency. Among his pastoral interests was St Leonards station in the Amuri, which he owned with Robert and George Rhodes in the 1860s and 70s. Wilkin's interest in exotic grass was evident at that stage: in 1870 the station manager was careful to seek Wilkin's approval of intended pasture mixtures.³ Wilkin was also instrumental in establishing the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association, and in an 1877 lecture to the it, he enumerated the various species commonly grown and discussed their merits as stock-feed. He began by noting that 'we have an area approximating to that of the United Kingdom, and the entire vegetation of this large area has to undergo a change before it can be made thoroughly profitable'. While the North Island was, 'in its natural state, destitute of grass, and ha[d] to undergo a considerable change before it can be made into pasture', the South Island had 'a great deal of land covered with indigenous grasses, many of them excellent in their way, but which, from the slowness of growth, [were] not fitted to carry the number of stock the land is capable of doing, and hence the necessity of superseding those grasses by others of a more profitable nature'.⁴ A recent study notes that exotic pastures not only carried more sheep than native

¹ Barnard, *Australian Wool Market*; Ville, *Rural Entrepreneurs*; Ville, Relocation of the international market for Australian wool.

² Brooking, et al, 'The grasslands revolution reconsidered', p. 169; *New Zealand Census, 1878*; *Statistics of New Zealand, 1886*.

³ Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*; Gardner, *Amuri*, p 130.

⁴ Robert Wilkin 'Grasses and Forage Plants best adapted to New Zealand' *NZ Country Journal* (NZCJ), vol 1, 1877, pp 3-4.

grasses, but they carried bigger sheep as well; indigenous grasslands required regular burning to encourage regeneration but that, in itself, had its costs.⁵

A topic that has been less comprehensively explored is the means by which Australasian growers became aware of the requirements of British manufacturers and merchants.⁶ Although the endowments of the Australasian colonies made them ideally suited as suppliers of raw materials, their development in this respect was neither inevitable nor instantaneous. This paper addresses some of these issues with reference to New Zealand. In essence, it is concerned with some of the economic dimensions of environmental change, and particularly the way in which information relating to the requirements of metropolitan manufacturers was conveyed to New Zealand sheepfarmers.

New Zealand developed somewhat later than New South Wales and Victoria as a wool producer, and accounted for a relatively small proportion of the total Australasian clip. New Zealand's climate and landforms were rather different from the other colonies; for much of the 1850s and 60s European settlement in New Zealand was rather fragmented. Nevertheless, New Zealand pastoralists quickly came to occupy a significant position as suppliers of long wools to the West Riding worsted trade. This paper will examine the role of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce and colonial interests in that development. By way of contrast with this relatively loose network, a tight Scottish Borders network of merchants and manufacturers, which had major colonial investments, will also be examined.

Communicating Bradford's needs to the Antipodes

The Bradford Chamber of Commerce was established in 1851. Its full name was the Chamber of Commerce for Bradford and the Worsteds District. Membership extended to Halifax, Keighley, and Bingley and was open to 'Bankers, Merchants, Spinners, Manufacturers, and others interested in the Trade of the Town of Bradford and its Neighbourhood, and the Worsteds Trade generally'. The Chamber was initially concerned largely with lobbying for postal and railway communication and with the legal environment for business. There was also desultory attention paid to improving quality of manufactured goods, to the potential of recently-annexed parts of the Empire as a market for British manufactures, and to free trade.⁷ As the manufacturing trade grew, attention shifted to the more technical dimensions of

⁵ Robert Peden, *Sheep farming practice in colonial Canterbury*, p 90.

⁶ Barnard, *Australian Wool Market*, pp 22-24, briefly discusses the issue and more recently Robert Peden, *Sheep farming practice*, has discussed the matter in outline with reference to Canterbury.

⁷ The records of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce are held in the West Yorkshire Regional Archives, Bradford repository. First annual meeting 26 Jan 1852; Second annual meeting 31 Jan 1853. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69. The famous missionary, David Livingstone, had given a lecture in Bradford to some 4000 people and the Chamber congratulated him for his 'exertions on behalf of Christianity, of Science, and of Commerce' which, 'as the natives of South Africa grow more civilised, and as the productions of their country become valuable' were seen as 'opening out to England a wide field for future commercial transactions, in which the Worsteds District may fairly hope largely to participate'. Livingstone comments in Seventh annual meeting 18 Jan 1858. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

manufacturing and particularly to the quality and sourcing of wool. Free trade after 1846 had allowed high-quality French woollens into Britain, and as Bradford manufacturers could not compete they explicitly oriented themselves to the mass market and by technical improvement in dyeing and machinery ‘a great variety of articles were successively produced which combined great beauty and usefulness with remarkably low prices.... for the use of the working and middle classes’. Demand soared, and as raw materials became short ‘the whole world had to be ransacked to supply the ever growing demands of our machinery’.⁸

Silesian and Austrian wools were extensively used, and there was some interest in French merino.⁹ Many other possible sources of supply were considered. The Mayor of Halifax, reflecting on both cotton and wool, observed that ‘there was no doubt the prosperity of our trade depended, to a very great extent, upon the cheapness of the raw material’. He suggested India as a source of wool as well as cotton. A Bradford alderman thought Argentine wools ‘might by improvement in culture be rendered suitable to the trade of this district’ although ‘the unsettled state of that country very frequently interfered... with any attempt to introduce improved modes of culture’. Others, noting the idle capacity in Bradford, suggested sourcing wool ‘from our own Colonies’.¹⁰ Australian wool was well known but evidently had to improve in quality.

In February 1859 the Chamber appointed a committee to stimulate increased supply of long or combing wool, particularly as scarcity had resulted in increased prices. The committee intended to ‘offer suggestions and to give information to the Growers of Wool (more particularly in our colonies)’ on the basis that ‘no large additional supply can be expected from our Home Growers, but there are countries, such as New Zealand, Australia, India, and the Cape District of Southern Africa, where the Growth of Wool may be extended to an almost unlimited amount, and its character generally improved’. The committee would disseminate to growers ‘the information and modes of management already at the command of more advanced communities’.¹¹

A circular to the trade noted that ‘the peculiar excellencies of our [English] Long Wools are dependant upon our temperate and humid climate and succulent grasses: but those are partially to be found in New Zealand, Australia, and the Cape District of Southern Africa; not to mention other countries’. Local growers were addressed: ‘in all the present Wool Growing District great improvements may be made, by acquainting the Growers with the large increase that may be given to the value of their Wools by adopting improved breeds of sheep, by judicious crosses, and by taking care to secure a continuous supply of food through the year, to prevent the Wool becoming tender or cotted at any period of insufficient nutrition, and also discouraging the practice which prevails at the Cape, of clipping the sheep twice in the year, and

⁸ Titus Salt, Sixth annual meeting 26 Jan 1857. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

⁹ Report of delegation appointed to visit Paris Exhibition 26 Nov 1855; Fourth annual meeting 29 Jan 1855. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁰ Sixth annual meeting 26 Jan 1857. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹¹ Ninth annual meeting 16 Jan 1860. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

rendering it too short for combing purposes'.¹² Similar prescriptions would be offered overseas.

Attention was not limited to the settler colonies. In 1857 the chamber had received sample fleeces from a small Chinese breed, the Shanghai, which was thought to have some potential for cross-breeding.¹³ During the next year a member of the chamber spent hundreds of pounds financing further experiments in China but a Shanghai/Southdown fleece was very poor.¹⁴ The Indian empire was thought promising. Between 1840 and 1857 the share of British wool imports arriving from India had increased from 4 percent to 15 percent of the total, and in quantity from 2.44m pounds to 19.37m pounds. It was impressed upon the Indian Chancellor of the Exchequer, James Wilson, that most of this was of low quality, and effort should be directed to improvement. The key to the increased supply had been the opening, in 1851, of the port of Karachi, and the establishment by the British resident of an annual trade fair for caravans from Kabul and elsewhere. Wilson, who hoped that 'English enterprise, which was never wanting on these occasions' would establish firms for direct trade with Karachi instead of going through Bombay firms, was asked to get word through the Karachi customs office that long wool was particularly wanted, and the Bombay Chamber of Commerce would be asked to let it be known that shearing should only be done annually. He was given samples of longstapled English wool and East Indian wool for comparison, and it was suggested that Indian sheep be crossed with Leicestershire rams. Wilson promised that 'nothing shall be wanting on the part of the authorities in India to give effect... to ... suggestions as to the improvement of the quality of the Wool shipped from India, and to increase its quantity'.¹⁵

The wool committee had also had extensive discussions with P M Dalziel, the Karachi collector of customs, when he was home in Edinburgh on leave. Dalziel noted that wool imports from Sind were mostly sourced from Afghanistan, and the increase during the 1850s had been largely due to the abolition of internal duties in Sind and Punjab by Sir Bartle Frere. Dalziel noted that there were still heavy tolls levied by Afghan chiefs on transit, not to mention a 3% export duty imposed at Karachi, which he believed should be abolished as an encouragement to the Afghans to do likewise. Abolition of duty would also encourage direct export from Karachi instead of requiring carriage to Bombay; proper wool-classing could be done in Karachi, on relatively low wages. Dalziel also reported that the Punjab government had made sporadic efforts to encourage crossbreeding, and that he had tried to persuade the government to import good Kerman sheep from Persia to Afghanistan, where '[e]xcellent pasture lands are found in the more elevated regions, whose climate is not inimical to the European Constitution; an admirable field, therefore, seems open to the Capitalist for a profitable cultivation of the Golden Fleece'.¹⁶

¹² an appendix to the letter to the trade, in Ninth annual meeting 16 Jan 1860. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹³ Seventh annual meeting 18 Jan 1858. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁴ Eighth annual meeting 17 Jan 1859. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁵ an appendix to the letter to the trade, in Ninth annual meeting 16 Jan 1860. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁶ Dalziel's letter quoted in an appendix to the letter to the trade, in Ninth annual meeting 16 Jan 1860. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

During the first part of 1860, Dalziel visited Bradford, addressed a meeting, and was provided with ten Leicester rams to take back to Karachi. In the event, Afghanistan was too unpredictable a source, but the precedent was followed with regard to other wool-growing countries. During 1861 the chamber sent suggestions on improving wool to all wool-producing countries with which the United Kingdom had diplomatic relations. It was understood that this would be a slow process but was essential in terms of 'our anticipations with regard to an extended trade with France, China, and Japan'. The wool committee was prepared to act as agent for any overseas party wanting to buy English rams for stock improvement.¹⁷ Likewise, the committee provided instructional material on wool-growing to the Colonial Office for transmission to colonial governors and others, attracting some interest. G F Bowen, the governor of Queensland, had the material published in the government gazette and visited Bradford, promising to give all assistance and noting the considerable amount of wool already exported from Queensland.¹⁸

Many of the information networks were relatively loose. From the mid 1850s New Zealand newspapers regularly included information on the British wool market.¹⁹ The *Otago Witness* gave reports on the London sales, usually contributed by wool brokers via Dunedin merchants or sometimes directly from London. Exhortations to improve quality were both explicit and implicit. Of the 1859 sales it was reported that 'for really choice combing descriptions the competition for foreign accounts against Bradford specimens led to a high range of prices and many flocks presenting all the features required were bought with great eagerness at long prices'. Jacomb and Sons' Wool Circular was quoted to the effect that 'Many fine Australian flocks appear to have retrograded both in breed and condition, whilst burrs and carrot seeds have reduced the prices of many from those of former years. This want of care may possibly be one effect of the avidity to purchase anything in the shape of wool in the colonial markets'. It was also noted that 'Many flocks from the Canterbury and Otago settlements give great promise. Auckland and Wellington flocks, however, for the most part show heavy condition and irregularity of classification, which may be easily improved'.²⁰ There were also frequent reports, however, like Bradbury and Cook's circular which noted 'no improvement in classification, packing, or condition' and a decline in the quantity of New Zealand combing wool in the August sales. There was an implicit warning that Cape wools 'were in good condition, and showed great improvement' and New Zealand wool prices were given as a guide to growers.²¹

Much of the advice on breeding and pasture was at least indirectly from Australia, whether articles copied from Australian periodicals or individual pastoralists sharing experiences. An East Taieri farmer, for instance, recounted successful experiments by friends in Tasmania crossing Cheviot rams with Merino ewes. Advice from

¹⁷ General meeting 29 Jun 1860; Tenth annual meeting 21 Jan 1861. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁸ Eleventh annual meeting 20 Jan 1862. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

¹⁹ Peden, *Sheep farming practice*, p 145, has pointed out that South Island newspapers varied greatly in the space they devoted to pastoralism. The two main Christchurch newspapers, the *Lyttelton Times* and the *Press*, gave relatively little space. The *Timaru Herald* gave the subject much more attention. Clearly, the *Otago Witness* was more attentive than the Christchurch newspapers.

²⁰ *Otago Witness*, 22 Oct 1859 p 3.

²¹ *Otago Witness*, 10 Dec 1859 p 3.

Dalgety was quoted, that this wool could be ‘the very thing wanted’ and warning against trying to get it too fine, for that was done at the expense of weight of the fleece and was therefore counterproductive.²² Local farmers also shared their experiences. A letter from a North Otago pastoralist, James Gardiner, to an Oamaru newspaper was copied by the *Otago Witness* to publicise the fact that the Fenwick brothers had pioneered the introduction of Australian merinos in North Otago. They were thus ‘the first importers of a stock which is the result of thirty years’ careful breeding, and always in one direction. They have now attained an excellence unrivalled in Victoria’ and are as long in the staple but not longer as ‘all recent circulars from London confirm’. For a while German rams were best in Otago but ‘now that our ewes are finer, it is certain that carefully-bred and well-culled rams of New Zealand or Australian breed will pay us better than any rams in all Germany. We ought to breed sheep that will yield strong second-combing fleeces – they pay best’.²³

Only a fortnight later there was another letter on breeding. W H Poole of Poptunoa gave lengthy advice, noting that merino might be thought to be suitable for native grasses in a relatively undeveloped state but there was room for improvement with introduced grasses. Ewes needed to be of the right age, and a farmer without sufficient personal knowledge of rams should get advice from those better versed in the matter. Rams should be ‘above all, well-woolled from the ear to the scrotum. If the latter is bare of wool, the produce will inherit the defect, and be light shearers’. Crossing was not to be discouraged but ‘never lose sight of the more important object you are endeavouring to arrive at – the length and quality of the staple of your wool’. Successful crossing required good enclosed paddocks in good English grass, and rape for winter feed ‘for the country, in its natural state, will not feed Leicester, Lincoln, Cotswolds, or South Downs, without artificial aid.... Good feeding is half the battle’. Poole thought that Leicester and Cotswolds were preferable; South Down and Cheviots if crossed with merino resulted in short wool, while Lincoln crosses gave wool that was too coarse.²⁴ George Rich, who had a property at Palmerston, had travelled to Europe with samples of New Zealand wool and bought stud merinos in England, France and Germany. ‘And the moral is, that if the sheepfarmers of New Zealand pay attention to breeding, they have got advantages in their favour which will enable them to command the market in any part of the globe’.²⁵ A German farming in Otago, Charles Golts, advised on management for fleece quality. Above all ‘draft out all your black-woolled ewes and lambs, all, even those with ever so little black wool, and sell to the butcher.... Next, draft out all those with very coarse wool and send them after the black’ i.e. those with matted fleeces which don’t open well. Moreover, ‘almost as bad... are those of the other extreme, i.e. with open and loose fleeces’.²⁶

²² *Otago Witness*, 26 Nov 1859 p 6.

²³ *Otago Witness*, 12 Jan 1866 p 14.

²⁴ *Otago Witness* 27 Jan 1866 p 8, and also 24 Feb 1866 p 8.

²⁵ *Lyttelton Times* of 25 Feb 1860 copied in *Otago Witness* 10 Mar 1860 p 7, see also *Otago Witness* 6 Feb 1869 p 6. Peden, *Sheep farming practice in colonial Canterbury*, pp 49-50, argues that Rich’s strategy was typical of other good sheep breeders in beginning with Australian stock and improving them by imports from Europe.

²⁶ *Otago Witness* 9 Jan 69 p 21 letter from Charles Goltz, Schaafzüchter, Grange Farm.

Bradford interests sometimes made direct contact with Australasian pastoralists. A letter from the Wool Supply Committee was published in Canterbury in 1863, urging pastoralists to concentrate on 'long-stapled fleeces, of a medium quality and length, between the fine Merinos of Australia and the long-grown Leicester of this country'.²⁷ In 1865 or 66 the Wool Supply Committee received samples of wool from the South Otago sheepfarmer James Chapman Smith. Smith's Cotswold wools were long in the staple and of a type widely used in Bradford; his pure Leicester was very good and the committee reported that if the sample was of a year's growth 'it would be the most valuable that could be sent to this country'. The Merino should not be allowed to grow for longer than a year as otherwise the combing machinery could not handle the wool; in short, annual shearing, no more nor less, was required in Bradford.²⁸ Smith's clip, which comprised both clothing and combing wools, had been shown at the 1865 Exhibition in Dunedin before being sold in London by James Morrison and Co with a clip from W. H. S. Roberts at Ardmore. Clearly the whole episode was a marketing exercise intended to stimulate interest in New Zealand wool, for particular attention was paid to packing and presentation, and full information on prices was given in the Otago newspaper.²⁹

By the end of the 1860s the Bradford Wool Supply Committee was fully occupied evaluating samples of imported wool and sending out exemplary samples of English wool to overseas growers. The Bradford trade was sourcing, or at least sampling, wool from over two dozen countries or regions. Specifications for combing wool were clear and detailed. Shearing, as already noted, should be annual. As a rule and depending on fineness, the staple needed to be between four and ten inches and as uniform as possible in quality. Flocks should where possible be improved by 'introduction of carefully selected English rams', preferably Leicester for length and soundness. All year round pasturing on succulent grasses was preferable, but if that was not possible supplementary food should be used to prevent the staple becoming tender. Freedom from burrs or other vegetable matter was of the greatest importance and 'more than anything else' insufficient food and shearing more than once a year made 'otherwise good and useful Wool' inadequate. Classing had to be systematic and 'packing itself... thoroughly trustworthy and honest'.³⁰

Many clips were poor, with inadequate classing, breeding, and winter feeding all undermining quality. The River Plate clip was dominated by merino, short and weak in the staple and quite unsuited for worsted manufacture; washing and packing were often very bad with mud, stones, straw and cotton finding their way in. The Australian colonies were differentiated from each other. Port Phillip supplied a good deal of combing wool 'in a perfection unattained in any other part of the world' and the local halfbred – a Leicester-Merino cross - would be very profitable if it was expanded. Some Sydney wool was very good but most of it was badly classed, with poor flocks and runs 'greatly overstocked and often neglected'. Adelaide was of only ordinary quality and often dirty; the arid South Australian climate made it poor sheep country. New Zealand wool was, due to favourable soil and climate, doing very well

²⁷ Lyttelton Times 22 Dec 1863, quoted in Peden, Sheep farming practice in colonial Canterbury, p 52.

²⁸ Sixteenth annual meeting 21 Jan 67. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/1 1851-69.

²⁹ Otago Witness 3 Feb 1866 p 8.

³⁰ Nineteenth annual meeting, 24 Jan 1870. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

in Bradford, especially the longstapled wools arising from Leicester influence. It was noted that Natal and parts of the Cape had similar natural advantages but much more needed to be done to improve flock quality and packing.³¹

Australasian growers were particularly urged to concentrate on either combing or clothing wool – long or short staple, a distinction which too many growers did not understand. Often clips were neither one nor the other, which meant that by default they were used for clothing wool. For combing, the length of staple was more important than fineness. New Zealand was noted for ‘specimens of valuable combing Wool, believed to be of the pure Merino breed, [which] have been received, but requiring more care in the getting up and packing’. In the early 1870s it was observed that Australia and New Zealand had much to do yet in producing good combing wool, in terms of weight of fleece, length of staple, and fineness; extra value would be worth the extra work. The Wool Supply Committee accepted that it ‘must submit to the superior judgement of the graziers in the colonies, as to the best breed of sheep for the certain class of land, but where the climate and land will produce deep stapled wool, it will find a readier and better market in this country’.³² A Victorian classer who also had manufacturing experience in England, responding to a query from New Zealand, urged the benefits of classing wools. A good flock would be expected to give a clip comprising 50 per cent combing wool, which was twopence a pound better than clothing wool. Worsted spinners needed to receive it classed, as otherwise they bought stuff they had to resell.³³ Detailed advice was given on desirable crosses, suggesting that a mixture of the Lincoln and newer Leicester breeds being thought to give best results in Australia in terms of length of staple, fineness, and lustre. Cotswolds were not wanted as their fleece was coarser and they were more suited to higher ground. Such recommendations matched the experience of colonial growers like Poole.³⁴

These views were constantly echoed in the colonial press. In 1869 the *Otago Witness* reprinted an Australian summary which observed that South America and the Cape were sending a great deal of low quality wool to London, the implication being that Australasia should compete on quality. However, the ‘circulars of three influential London brokers’ noted that Australian wool was poor too. ‘Australian wool of good body and character would command a fair figure, but seedy and faulty “Sydneys” were a drug in the market’. Some improvement had recently been noted, not only with better preparation but also the influence of some good rams. There was, however, a strong opinion against crossbreeding of any description and advocating pure merino.³⁵ Another London source also emphasised the poor quality of much colonial wool, being burry and seedy. ‘If our colonial growers expect prices to recover to the level at which they stood some years back, more attention must be given to the quality and getting up of the staple.... The quality of the staple is annually deteriorating’. Fresh rams were needed.³⁶ An article copied from the

³¹ Nineteenth annual meeting, 24 Jan 1870. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

³² Wool Supply Committee, in report of Twentyfirst annual meeting, 15 Jan 1872, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

³³ *Otago Witness* 21 Aug 1869 p 16.

³⁴ Twentysecond annual meeting 20 Jan 1873, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

³⁵ *Otago Witness* 23 Jan 1869 p 16.

³⁶ *Otago Witness*, 29 May 1869 p 17.

Sydney Morning Herald emphasised the importance of packing, and advised against rigorous classing in the shed – a task best left to experts – but sorting at the level of hoggets, wethers, ewes, pieces, and locks was important.³⁷ Jacomb and Co's wool circular was frequently quoted: 'we are glad to hear the good resolutions which are being uttered in the colonies as to bettering the condition and treatment of their produce, which alone can redeem them from the steady reduction in price, which has been the result of a rapidly increasing production of an annually deteriorating article'.³⁸ Dalgety and Co lamented burry Victorian clips and urged pastoralists to concentrate on good bright-haired half-bred wool for combing.³⁹

By 1873, the Wool Supply Committee could report 'marked success' in encouraging colonial growers to concentrate on longstapled combing wool.⁴⁰ This success was evident on a grand scale at the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition, where Bradford judges reported most favourably on Australasian wool. The Australasian colonies put up several hundred exhibits of both combing and clothing wool, from Merino, Saxon Merino, Rambouillet, and a great variety of crosses among Lincoln, Merino, Leicester and Cotswold. The Bradford judge enthused that there had 'never been such a fine collection of Wool brought together as that shewn by the Australian Colonies'. Canadian wool was also well regarded, but South African was only fair. Argentina, with a very large exhibit of merino wool, was beginning to catch up with Australasia in terms of quality. Manufacturing also came in for notice: some Australian tweeds were damned with faint praise: 'of a somewhat primitive character, but substantial and useful'. American manufacture was thought to be lacking in flair and originality and it was regretted that more British cloth was not exhibited, as the Americans might have seen what they lost by protection. In general it was reported that 'while Saxony, Silesia and some parts of Russia produce wool of the finest qualities adapted for the manufacture of the best woollen cloth, Australia and New Zealand produce a much greater variety suited for combing and clothing purposes, of medium and fine qualities, and are making greater progress in cultivating the growth of these wools than any other country in the world.... No part of the Exhibition was more striking or impressive than that of the British Colonies, the space occupied being quite as large as that allotted to the mother country'.⁴¹

Bradford and the Colonies in the later 19th Century

The Philadelphia exhibition marked a transition. Looking back in 1887, the Wool Supply Committee recalled that in 1851 the industry had relied largely on local wool, but as demand grew, the Committee therefore spent much time and money in sending out long-woolled sheep to the Colonies, as well as freely giving its advice to Colonial breeders as to the best methods of producing the now well-known cross-bred sheep'. The supply of combing wools increased rapidly, and by the 1880s colonial

³⁷ Otago Witness 25 Sep 1869 p 16.

³⁸ Otago Witness 13 Feb 1869 p 7.

³⁹ Otago Witness 24 Jul 1869 p 18.

⁴⁰ Twentysecond annual meeting 20 Jan 1873, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

⁴¹ Report by Henry Mitchell on Philadelphia Exhibition, 26th annual meeting 15 Jan 1877, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

woolgrowing was more than established. In New Zealand, merino had largely been replaced by crossbreds except in alpine regions. With improved transport and communication, and many more smaller growers, the major sales were relocating from Britain to the colonies.⁴² The Chamber's efforts thereafter emphasised the detail of packaging and classing. Public relations were also a considerable effort. In August 1886, in connection with a major Exhibition in London and a meeting of the Imperial Chambers of Commerce, and following a request from the Prince of Wales, dozens of representatives of the colonies and India were hosted to Bradford and shown over various manufacturing establishments.⁴³

Increasingly attention turned to packaging, partly because technological advances had meant that coarser wools made up almost as well as fine, and with less margin for fineness, packaging and cleanliness became more important.⁴⁴ This was not a new concern. In 1870 growers had been exhorted to pay proper attention to the packing (or 'winding') of wool. Negligent or fraudulent packing was not uncommon and a circular was issued 'calling the attention of all flockmasters to the injury caused to their own interests wherever such practices exist'. Shearing in badly prepared locations could result in contamination of a bale by straw and chaff 'to the great deterioration of its value' but 'even more reprehensible' was poor docking or dagging ('clagging' in Yorkshire) which meant that fleeces were downright dirty. There was also a general lack of attention to cleaning the fleece before shearing, causing contamination by 'tar, stones, sand, earth, clay, dung, straw, grass, or other substances'.⁴⁵ In 1891 Scottish woolbrokers sought a combined approach on false marking, and contaminated fleeces.⁴⁶

By the late 1890s contamination by packing material was a major concern; fragments of string or jute in the fleece were difficult to detect and damaging because they would not take dye. In 1897 the Chamber's wool merchants section wrote to all colonial chambers of commerce complaining that fleeces were often loosely tied with low quality twine which got caught up in the fleece. There had been so many complaints at the Liverpool sales about South American wool that a premium was paid for wool which carried a guarantee that 'No string has been used in tying these fleeces'.⁴⁷ In 1905 English, colonial, and South American growers and chambers of commerce and agriculture were circularised, along with wool-brokers in London and elsewhere. It was noted that shipping wool was more or less rough and it was easy enough for string or twine to break and contaminate bales. The injunctions were to wind fleeces carefully and cleanly, cut bales open at seams to avoid contamination by

⁴² 36th annual meeting 17 Jan 1887, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/4 1885-94. Ville, The relocation of the international market for Australian wool. Peden, Sheepfarming practice, pp 51-60.

⁴³ 36th annual meeting 17 Jan 1887, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/4 1885-94.

⁴⁴ 44th annual meeting 21 Jan 1895. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/5.

⁴⁵ Note by Wool Supply Committee on Fraudulent Winding of Wool, in Nineteenth annual meeting, 24 Jan 1870. Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/3 1870-84.

⁴⁶ 40th annual meeting 19 Jan 1891 Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/4 1885-94.

⁴⁷ 47th annual meeting 19 Jan 1898, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/5.

bale fibres, line the bagging with paper, and sew bales with black string to make fragments identifiable.⁴⁸

The quality of jute packs was thought to have declined, despite assurances to the contrary from the jute trade. Bags were more likely to fray; after three to nine months of being inside such a pack the bale would be ‘frequently covered with thousands of such particles of jute fibre’. Jute had to be picked out of the wool by burlers after it had been dyed; the wages of burlers, who were women, amounted to thousands of pounds for some firms and had increased tenfold in recent years. Contamination by burrs, grass, seeds or thorns was dealt with by carbonising, but that affected quality and was not at all desirable for combing wool. A further problem arose because of the number of steps in the commodity chain. If the manufacturer was the buyer of the wool he could easily enforce compliance, but there was a buyer, a topmaker or importer, a comber, and a spinner, all handling the wool before the manufacturer received it as yarn. Advantage was taken of the presence in Britain of overseas growers in September 1907 to meet with them, and London brokers, in Bradford. At least two New Zealanders were present, as well as five Australians. ‘From this discussion it appeared that the Australians realised for the first time the far-reaching effects of the presence of jute, hemp, and other vegetable matter found in the wool, and sympathised very keenly with the difficulties the manufacturers and traders of Bradford had to contend with’. It was felt that ‘the great bulk of the mischief is traceable directly or indirectly to the unsuitable character of the wool-pack in common use in the colonies’.⁴⁹

Out of this meeting an International Committee on Vegetable Fibre, of growers, brokers, importers and manufacturers, was established in an attempt to deal with the matter across the commodity chain.⁵⁰ Its initial recommendations included printed cards to be displayed in shearing sheds and warehouses giving rigorous specification of packaging and handling requirements. After many months, the committee was able to report that there was more general agreement that the quality of packs had declined gradually over a decade, and recommended that bags and string should be spun tighter. Thick corrugated paper lining was also useful. The committee noted ‘extreme gratification with the manner in which a large number of Colonial growers have already interested themselves in this question’ and already improved packs are evident which is ‘as surprising as it has been gratifying’. It was emphasised that consistent satisfactory packing would enhance an individual grower’s reputation and was therefore worth the small extra cost. Moreover, ‘it is most improbable that anyone who takes a pride in his clip will send it to market in anything but the most merchantable form. Indeed, it could scarcely be imagined that any trade would send forward to market its commodities in any but the most attractive form to the buyer’.

⁴⁸ circular 13 Jul 05 in 55th annual meeting, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. 24 Jan 1906 WYB 111/2/7.

⁴⁹ 57th annual meeting 5 Feb 1908, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/8.

⁵⁰ The Committee included Acton Adams from Canterbury; two London selling brokers (Jacomb, Son and Co and H Schwartze and Co); four Colonial Wool Merchants (Malcomess Suhr and Co, London; William Murray of Sanderson Murray and Co, London; R T Turbull and Co, London; and H Dawson and Co, London); three members from the Wool Buyers’ Assn (Hobbs, Taft and Co of Boston with a London address; Thos Hirst and Co of London, Bradford and Huddersfield, and Newman and Co of Gloucester). There were also French and German members.

The report was widely circulated in Australia and New Zealand among growers and packers.⁵¹

In the event, the response was variable. Many growers were unwilling to meet the expense of better bags 'and great difficulty is found in combating their argument that as the buyer benefits he should pay the extra cost of packing'. Although 'many of the leading growers' were setting a good example the only way to make progress was by giving preference to those growers whose bags were of sufficient quality; many spinners and manufacturers in England and on the Continent were indicating a willingness to do this. There had been a 'most gratifying' response from leading growers in Victoria, New Zealand, and South Africa. However there was little co-operation in New South Wales, Western Australia, and South Australia.⁵² During July 1912 there was a well-attended Exhibition Conference and Dinner by the International Vegetable Fibre in Wool Committee; various packs were displayed and the various colonial governments were represented and sent information back home.⁵³

The Bradford Chamber of Commerce was at the centre of a very loose network. It was nevertheless effective over decades in providing information and encouragement to colonial pastoral interests to direct their efforts to meeting the requirements of a major metropolitan market. A contrasting approach is provided by an example from the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders and the Antipodes: A Tight Family Network

The Borders was another area of fast growth in woollen manufacturing, particularly around Galashiels and Selkirk. As in the West Riding, until about 1830 the supply of local wool – mainly from Cheviot sheep which became the dominant breed in the 1790s – was sufficient for Borders manufacturers but thereafter demand grew to require outside supply, at first from Saxony and Australia. As early as 1833 it was noted that 'there is no wool known to spin so well as the Australian wool from its length of staple and peculiar softness'.⁵⁴ Moreover, Scottish sheepfarmers paid increasingly little attention to fleece quality, often shearing clips that were dirty or tarry. The Statistical Account of Scotland observed in 1840 that 95 per cent of the wool used in Galashiels was of local origin; within a decade it had become 95 per cent imported.⁵⁵ The contrast with Bradford is that there whereas Bradford operated through a diffuse network of merchant houses, a significant part of the Borders-Australasian relationship was concentrated in a very tight network involving a small number of families. The firms in this case study are Sanderson and Murray of Galashiels, fellmongers and woollen merchants; George Roberts and Co. of Selkirk, woollen manufacturers specialising in fine Scottish tweeds, John Sanderson and Co. of Melbourne, woolbuyers and stock and station agents, and Murray, Roberts and Co.

⁵¹ 59th annual meeting 19 Jan 1910, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/9

⁵² International Committee on Vegetable Fibre in Wool, 25 Aug 10 in 60th annual meeting 25 Jan 1911, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/11

⁵³ 62nd annual meeting 21 Jan 1913, Bradford Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports. WYB 111/2/13

⁵⁴ quoted in Gulvin, *The tweedmakers*, p 111.

⁵⁵ Gulvin, pp 109-11.

of Dunedin and elsewhere, also essentially a woolbuyer but with many other interests in pastoralism and produce.

John Murray had begun his working life in the 1830s employed by relatives in the carting business, and began dealing in waste wool on his own account from Galashiels to Yorkshire in the mid 1840s. At the same time he married Jane Sanderson, whose brother William was a partner in a small building firm. When Sanderson and Murray began as wool dealers, Sanderson supplied the capital and Murray the expertise. They soon began importing Australasian wool into Galashiels, and in 1856 established a fellmongery in the town.⁵⁶ By 1857 the firm was a considerable purchaser at the colonial wool sales in London and in Galashiels a skinnery was built for pulling wool off skins imported from Australia, the Cape, and South Africa. The partnership not only dealt with British firms but also bought wool in London on behalf of German clients, and bought in the French markets as well.⁵⁷

In May 1857 John Sanderson, son of William, went out to Victoria to extend the firm's involvement in colonial woolbuying and to purchase pastoral property in Australia and New Zealand. The decision to establish the Victorian branch evidently followed dealings in the London markets and amounted to a process of vertical integration. Initially at least, the Victorian operation was financed with some bank credit and possibly also reinvested profits from Galashiels.⁵⁸ As well as being enjoined to judge the market carefully, young Sanderson had to pay strict attention to quality. An early consignment back to Galashiels contained several good medium wools but others were very burry or full of sand and dirt. Young Sanderson was informed that he had been cheated and should check all bales carefully, not buying on the strength of small samples: 'there are dishonest people in the colony'.⁵⁹

No doubt partly from a desire to ensure maximum control over the quality of wool supplied to the home firms, Sanderson, Murray and Co followed the establishment of the Victoria branch with landbuying in Australia and New Zealand as well as Argentina through a variety of partnerships involving one of the firm's bankers and his brothers, and merchants in wool and other goods from the Borders, Clackmannanshire, and Wellington.⁶⁰ Argentina was less highly regarded than Australasia, while it was thought that 'New Zealand will ultimately be a better country for wool than even Victoria'.⁶¹

⁵⁶ McLaren, *Sanderson & Murray* 1844-1954, pp 34-46.

⁵⁷ William Sanderson to Eastwick and McKellish [Burroyong?] 31 Mar 1857; William Sanderson to Messrs Mannheim 26 May 1866; William Sanderson to Robert Stewart 30 Mar 1867. Sanderson & Murray, Private Letterbook no 1, SC/S/6/1/1 Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁵⁸ William Sanderson to John Sanderson 25 Feb 1858, Sanderson & Murray, Private Letterbook no 1, SC/S/6/1/1 Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁵⁹ William Sanderson to John Sanderson 15 Mar 1858, William Sanderson to John Sanderson 25 Apr 1858, William Sanderson to John Sanderson 12 Aug 1858 Sanderson & Murray, Private Letterbook no 1, SC/S/6/1/1 Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁶⁰ William Sanderson to George D Stewart 8 Jul 1863. Sanderson and Murray, Private Letterbook no 2 SC/S/6/1/2, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk. McLaren, pp 47-58; Gulvin pp 112-15; William Sanderson to John Sanderson & Co, Melbourne, 18 Oct 1861. Sanderson and Murray, Private Letterbook no 1, SC/S/6/1/1, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁶¹ William Sanderson to John Sanderson & Co 24 Jan 1863. Sanderson and Murray, Private Letterbook no 2 SC/S/6/1/2, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

It was at this point that Sanderson and Murray's relationship with the Roberts family enters the record. They had a long history as woollen manufacturers in Galashiels. James Roberts was a manufacturer of stocking yarns in the typical family-run small factory. In 1819 his third son George travelled to the United States. It is not clear whether this was intended to be a permanent move but two years later, on the death of his father, he was called back to Galashiels to run the factory.⁶² At first George continued as before manufacturing yarn but later in the decade moved into finer flannels and eventually relocated to the neighbouring burgh of Selkirk.⁶³

As one of the largest manufacturers in the Borders, it was natural that George Roberts and Co would use colonial wools and it is likely they had dealings with Sanderson & Murray from the early 1850s. By the end of the decade Roberts was evidently attempting to purchase wool directly in the colonies.⁶⁴ Clearly, Roberts wished to have his own sources of supply but that required a presence in the colonies, preferably a family member or business partner.

All these factors came together in 1864 when George Roberts' son John was placed with John Sanderson & Co in Victoria. Clearly John, aged nineteen, was expected to familiarise himself with the colonial wool trade and cement a business relationship between his father's firm and the Sanderson and Murray operations. Like John Sanderson, John Roberts received much detailed paternal advice, particularly directed at building the relationship with Sanderson. The importance of honest dealing was repeatedly urged: 'above all should you be entrusted with money matters see that you are correct to a farthing, it is the surest and best way of furthering your own interest, to do everything in your power to promote the interest and obtain the confidence and good opinion of Mr Sanderson, and those for whom he acts, they have much in their power in the way of helping you on in the stock farming and other business, it is even possible that you may one day become partner in their large concerns. If you let them see that you deserve it, and by a little help with money from home'.⁶⁵

Young Roberts was impatient to take up runholding, and chafed at learning the business from the bottom. His father professed sympathy but also emphasized that 'a little hard work and roughing it in the bush will do you no harm'.⁶⁶ Various possibilities for station ownership were canvassed through 1866, and in the meantime John began buying wool in Victoria for his father's mill on commission and was soon managing stations for Sanderson.⁶⁷

⁶² Charles Roberts to John Roberts, 17 Jul 72, Murray Roberts MS 625/9, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁶³ Southern Reporter (Selkirk) 29 Mar 1877; Robert Hall, *History of Galashiels*, p 352; Roberts, *The Textile Industry*, p 114.

⁶⁴ William Sanderson to John Sanderson 18 Oct 1859, Sanderson and Murray, Private Letterbook no 1, SC/S/6/1/1, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁶⁵ George Roberts to John Roberts, 25 Feb 1865 Murray Roberts and Co MS 625/1, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁶⁶ George Roberts to John Roberts, 25 Jan 1866 Murray Roberts MS 625/2, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁶⁷ Alex Roberts to John Roberts 25 Jun 1866 Murray Roberts MS 625/2, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

By the end of the year George Roberts was expressing a preference for New Zealand in terms of both climate and land legislation.⁶⁸ Some effort was put into searching for pastoral property, utilising various Borders networks.⁶⁹ A suitable property was not immediately available and in May 1867 it was suggested that John Roberts could take charge of Sanderson Murray & Co.'s fellmongery at Green Island, near Dunedin. John Murray suggested that this would involve the Roberts family in a lucrative wool trade partnership.⁷⁰ John Roberts was initially less than enthusiastic, but the Selkirk family clearly preferred that he do this both for their own financial interests and to stay close to Sanderson and Murray, and John yielded.⁷¹ Murray, Roberts and Co was established as a partnership in the middle of 1867, with Sanderson and Murray putting in two thirds of the capital and George Roberts the rest; John Roberts would receive a yearly salary of £200 and any later investment in pastoral property would be in the same proportions as the original capital.⁷² Before things were finalised the proposal for pastoral property changed, with George Roberts intending to buy property himself and leave it to John by will. This may have been partly to persuade John to concentrate on fellmongery and wooldealing in the first instance; he was reluctant to abandon the idea of station ownership.⁷³ The fellmongery was not doing particularly well in any case and shipping wool on behalf was more lucrative. It was also expected that John Roberts would be purchasing wool on behalf of the two parent firms.⁷⁴

Murray, Roberts and Company's business grew through the 1870s. The connection with Galashiels remained strong, with John Sanderson in 1875 noting the possibility of Murray Roberts buying wool for two other major firms as well; the attraction of this level of cartelisation was obvious.⁷⁵ Roberts continued to receive detailed advice

⁶⁸ George Roberts to John Roberts, 25 Aug 66, 25 Dec 66 Murray Roberts MS 625/2, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁶⁹ This effort particularly included enlisting the advice of the director of the colony's Geological Survey, James Hector. Hector's sister had married a Galashiels minister, and this gave Roberts an entrée to Hector's own extensive connections, including Hector's father in law Sir David Monro, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and a leading Nelson settler. Hector and Monro had both trained in medicine at Edinburgh University; that training gave students the option of a considerable training in botany which both settlers used to considerable effect. The point on the Edinburgh medical training was made by John Mackenzie in an address to the NZ Historical Association conference, University of Otago, November 2003. James Hector to George Roberts 30 May 1867, 31 Jul 1867, Murray Roberts MS 625/3, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷⁰ George Roberts to John Roberts, 24 May 1867 Murray Roberts MS 625/3, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷¹ George Roberts to John Roberts, 24 Jul 1867 Murray Roberts MS 625/3, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷² All permutations were considered: Sanderson Murray, Sanderson Roberts, Sanderson Murray Roberts, and the eventual decision Murray Roberts and Co. George Roberts to John Roberts, 30 Jul 67, 25 Dec 1867, Murray Roberts MS 625/3; George Roberts to John Roberts, 25 Feb 1868 MS 625/4, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷³ George Roberts to John Roberts, 24 Aug 1867, 25 Sep 1867, 25 Nov 1867 Murray Roberts MS 625/3, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷⁴ William Sanderson to John Sanderson, Melbourne, 26 Mar 1868, William Sanderson to John Sanderson 16 Jun 1868, Sanderson Murray & Co Private Letterbook no 3 1868-69, SC/S/6/1/3, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk. George Roberts to John Roberts, 31 Jul 1867, Murray Roberts MS 625/3, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷⁵ J Sanderson to John Roberts, 24 Dec 1874 Murray Roberts MS 625/9, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

and instruction from John Sanderson on the price of wool and desirable purchasing strategies.⁷⁶ As well, Roberts continued to supply his own family's mills.⁷⁷

During the 1870s Sanderson Murray and Co. established other subsidiary partnerships in New Zealand. These firms, like Murray Roberts who were always involved, were principally woolbrokers and mortgage lenders. In 1875 William Common, a Scot, went into partnership with the bigger firms and opened Murray, Common and Co in Wellington (Roberts had at first wanted a larger share of the Murray Common business to his name and was politely told by William Sanderson to pull his head in). This partnership expanded to Napier in 1877 and Gisborne the following year; in the wake of the Glasgow banking crash of 1878 Common's careless financial management became evident and the firm was taken over by Murray Roberts as their North Island branches, with Charles C Murray as manager (leaving the Gisborne office to be reconstituted by Common and another partner). A smaller Invercargill firm known as Murray, Dalgliesh and Co was essentially a branch and was also absorbed by Murray Roberts in 1892.⁷⁸ In addition to the formally constituted partnerships, Sanderson and Murray were profitably investing considerable sums for Galashiels clients in the North Island and taking 1% commission.⁷⁹

The death of George Roberts, in 1877, prompted a change in relationships, with the Roberts family becoming discernibly more independent and more assertive in buying pastoral property. The various members of the partnership had been purchasing stations since the beginning of the 1870s, often with other family members or associates in Scotland or New Zealand. By 1876 the total holdings amounted to some £80000.⁸⁰ The jewel in the crown was the adjoining Otago stations Gladbrook and Patearoa, which John Roberts purchased from the estate on his father's death. Much of this was reinvestment of spare cash from Selkirk, the Roberts family there feeling that strikes, overcapacity, and political uncertainty in Europe made the investment climate at home difficult. It was intended, too, that New Zealand pastoral profits would be reinvested in safe New Zealand securities.⁸¹

George Roberts had left about £70000 and his children evidently decided to invest much of it in New Zealand pastoral property, principally a station at Cape Turnagain, in Hawkes Bay. Again Sanderson and Murray were in the partnership, as well as six other Scots, four of them Borderers.⁸² Evidently the Roberts interests dominated, for Thomas Roberts frequently wrote to his brother demanding full details from his brother of the condition and proposed management of the station, and later offering to

⁷⁶ Sanderson to John Roberts 4 Aug 1876, 1 Sep 1876, 27 Oct 1876, Murray Roberts MS 625/18-1, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷⁷ Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 18 Jan 1877 Murray Roberts MS 625/19-1, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁷⁸ Sanderson to John Roberts 7 Jul 1876, Murray Roberts MS 625/18-1, Hocken Library, University of Otago; * Family Affair, pp 37-38.

⁷⁹ Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 6 Jun 1876 MS 625/20-2, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁸⁰ Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 6 Jun 1876 MS 625/20-2, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁸¹ Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 15 Jan 1878, Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 13 Feb 1878 MS 625/20-1; Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 26 Jun 1878, Thomas Roberts to John Roberts 26 Sep 1878, MS 625/21, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁸² * Family Affair, pp 30, 38

send grass seed out from Scotland.⁸³ The Roberts family bought two other stations near Napier in 1880 and 1882, laying out £96000.⁸⁴ The network also developed substantial investments in Queensland pastoral property during the 1880s.⁸⁵ There was also renewed interest in Argentina in the 1880s. Various members of the Murray and Roberts families were involved with others in two landowning syndicates in the early 1880s, which held the land for a short time before selling at a good profit (this was largely at the instance of the aging John Murray, who wanted a short term venture).⁸⁶ John Murray continued closely to watch the New Zealand investments which connected the Sanderson and Murray families with the Roberts family and rely on John Roberts' reports (this was so even though Murray had one son in Hawkes Bay managing the branch there, as well as another in Victoria).⁸⁷

Conclusions

This paper has suggested that the integration of colonial pastoralism with the requirements of metropolitan manufacturers was not automatic, but was a process extending over a considerable period and one which relied on various networks, both loose as in the case of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and tight, as in the case of the Borders manufacturers and merchants with their colonial investments. Particularly in the case of Bradford, many other sources of supply were considered and encouraged but for various reasons proved less satisfactory than the Australasian colonies and, later, South Africa. Pastoralists in the River Plate region tended not to produce wool of sufficient quality for British manufacturers but it seems that the lower quality of their wares was no barrier to acceptable markets in continental Europe. The Borders network, a very tight one, was because of its reliance on family and other close connections less amenable to widespread adoption or expansion on the scale which characterised the looser Bradford arrangements. The Borders interests were very much a close personal network, amounting to cartelisation and on a global scale but sheeted home to a very small number of people. Particularly in view of the wide range of potential sources of wool considered by the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, we must, therefore, modify Barnard's observation that 'the intimate economic, social and political bonds between the colonies and the mother-country dictated that Britain was to be the consumer of colonial wools'.⁸⁸

Some other points are suggested by this study. One striking aspect is the openness with which pastoral advice was shared. Pastoralists and stock and station agents and other interested parties had few reservations about publishing their recommendations,

⁸³ Thomas Roberts to John Roberts, 22 Nov and 20 Dec 1877, 9 May 1878. Sir John Roberts, ms 625 20/1, Hocken Library, University of Otago.

⁸⁴ Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand, 1882.

⁸⁵ John Murray to William Murray 1 Dec 1881, J P Murray to W Murray 1 Jun 82

⁸⁶ Land Shareholders in the Argentine Republic, SC/S/6/5/40. John Murray to John Roberts 10 May, 29 Jun, 15 Nov 1888, 18 Apr, 8 Aug 1889; Sanderson and Murray Foreign Letterbook 1886-98, SC/S/6/1/11, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk. Minutes of meeting of syndicate owning land in South America, 9 May 1888, SC/S/6/5/42, Sanderson, Murray and Co papers, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁸⁷ John Murray to Charles Murray 26 Jan 1882, 9 Feb 1882, Sanderson and Murray Foreign Letterbook 1881-86, SC/S/6/1/10, Borders Regional Archive, Selkirk.

⁸⁸ Barnard, Australian Wool Market, p 132.

and information on British markets, in the colonial press for all to read. Much of the literature on entrepreneurship emphasises the importance of innovation, but there is a particular dimension to entrepreneurship in primary commodities. That dimension is in the importance of place of origin as an indicator of quality. In wool, as later with dairy and meat exporting, ‘Port Phillip’ or ‘New Zealand’ had to be a recognisable symbol of quality and the interest of any individual pastoral entrepreneur was advanced by widespread and collective attention to quality. Although many theoretical approaches to entrepreneurship stress the individual entrepreneur and some suggest that the information that is the basis of the entrepreneur’s judgement should remain secret, that is, a monopoly, in the case of improved farming practices a widespread dispersal of the information was much more efficacious.⁸⁹ This is partly due to the scale of farming operations, and partly to the fact that marketing of farm produce, especially in overseas markets, relied on a country brand rather than an individual brand. This in turn required widespread commitment on the part of farmers to this sort of innovation, or at least to adopting the results of such innovation. Obviously, if a single New Zealand farmer improved his pasture and stock to the point that the highest quality wool or meat and butter were the result, that would avail him little if New Zealand produce generally had a reputation for inferiority.⁹⁰ The importance of this collective dimension, in terms of the mass marketing by national or regional origin, may be another way in which farming entrepreneurship differs from commercial or manufacturing varieties. Innovation and judgement are critical, but monopoly much less so. Lastly, this study provides further example of the extent to which New Zealand economic development in the nineteenth century was related more to the interests of provincial British manufacturers than to those of City of London financial interests.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Casson, *The Entrepreneur*, emphasises ‘the essence of entrepreneurship is superior judgement, and the reward to this judgement depends critically upon the entrepreneur enjoying monopoly power’ p 117. Casson notes not only monopoly, but also first mover advantage: – ‘if several people arrive at the same source [of information] simultaneously, then no-one can gain a monopoly. Competition will be present right at the outset’ and it follows that the information must be kept secret (p 117).

⁹⁰ See generally Higgins, “Mutton Dressed as Lamb?” p 162.

⁹¹ A matter which I have discussed in McAloon, *Gentlemanly Capitalism and Settler Capitalists*; see also Hopkins, *Gentlemanly Capitalism in New Zealand*.

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