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'WITHOUT WORK, NOTHING'

A study of the changing attitudes towards the swagger in the 1890s

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Long Essay presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Postgraduate Diploma of Arts in History at the University of Otago, 1980.
PREFACE

When I first chose the broad subject of "swaggers" for this Long Essay, I had no idea how involved it would become; involved because it touched upon nearly all subjects that are relevant in the late nineteenth century - the changing types of farm, the increased use of machinery, and the Liberal reforms, to name just a few. But this is how the swagger should be seen; involved in New Zealand society and, therefore, affected by any changes that went on in the countryside. This hopefully will give the reader a greater insight into the swagger, or even spur further research in a similar direction.

I would like to take the opportunity here to acknowledge the assistance I received during the year. First, to David McDonald in the Hocken Library who was always finding obscure references which he thought might be useful; though sometimes I am sure I saw a look of despair on his face every time I wandered up to the fifth floor. To my supervisor, Tom Brooking, for all his suggestions regarding my essay. And to all those who took the time to answer my letters, to speak to me, and if they knew nothing to refer me to someone who did. To all these I extend my thanks.
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INTRODUCTION

The swagger has been preserved for posterity in the writings of John A. Lee in *Shining With Shiner, Shiner Slattery*, and *Roughnecks, Rollingstones and Rouseabouts*, as well as Jim Henderson's *Swagger Country*. But no serious attempt has been made to discover why the swagger began to die out during the 1890s.

This essay attempts to trace some of these reasons: the changing country, the changing type of farming and the resulting changing attitudes towards the swagger, so that in a sense he was forced to conform or to become an outcast. The swagger, in early New Zealand, was part of a rural system, he had a place within the workforce, whether he was going to the farms, to the goldfields, or to the kauri gum areas. In a frontier society, the only way to get about cheaply was to walk. But overall the swagger is associated with the development of pastoralism, the big estates and runs, the generous owner or manager who provided hospitality in the form of shelter, food and work in season. Where wool was plentiful, and meat a waste product, it could be generously given out to all swaggers who called.

It was a period when there was little in the way of social services - no poorhouse, no poor law, no minimum wage, no Factory Act (except one which applied only to women, but was largely unobserved). There were no labour laws, no old age pensions, no unemployment benefits, and no sustenance
payments. When these welfare aids actually came into existence, as the majority did in the 1890s, there had to be a change in the composition and numbers of swaggers. Changes came about with the Old Age Pension Act of 1898, with the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1894, with the development of trade unions within the rural sector, and the establishment of the Labour Department in 1892 to coordinate work and workers.

Throughout this essay, the reader must be aware that these changes were taking place at the end of the nineteenth century - New Zealand was growing up and the frontier-type swagger had no place in a modern society. Gradually his ranks diminished until only one part remained - the professional swagger, the man on the road out of choice.

Chapter One, therefore, investigates what constitutes a swagger. It should be noted at this stage, that the swagger was indigenous to both Australia and New Zealand, therefore examples and more particularly verse have been taken from both countries, until Chapter Six, when we discuss the differences between the Australian and New Zealand versions. Chapter Two looks at the men within the swagger ranks, and their reasons for being there - for work, for personal reasons, for reasons beyond their control. Chapter Three looks at the changing attitudes of the people within the rural and urban systems. This change in attitude is significant because it meant that the swagger was no longer

accepted as a necessity, but came to be regarded as a nuisance. The swagger was discouraged and therefore tended to decline in numbers. Chapter Four looks at explanations as to why the swagger ceased, and what happened to him. Chapter Five looks very briefly at why the swagger was revived in the 1920s and 30s, the depression swagger and in what ways he was different from his counterpart in the nineteenth century. Chapter Six, as mentioned before, looks at the differences between the Australian and New Zealand swagger. It will be argued that the feeling of mateship that the Australian swagger held so dear, was not so evident in the New Zealand context.

Having come to the end of the essay, it is hoped that the reader will have a better idea of the forces behind the decline of swaggers on the road; the most notable being a changing attitude which the Labour Department motto sums up:

'Without work, nothing'.
CHAPTER ONE : THE SWAGGER

The swaggers all were rugged men -
The heroes of the road;
Without a hand to greet them
Without a friend to meet them
Scarce one great soul to treat them
They tramped on with their load.  

The swagger, a rural phenomenon in both Australia and New Zealand, was associated with the development of the large stations, runs, and farms within the interior of both countries. These stations could run from day to day with a small permanent staff, but required the labour of these swaggers for odd jobs, particularly for shearing and harvesting. For example, Kyeburn Station on the Maniototo Plain needed only six permanent men - a manager, two shepherds, a spare-man with his own dogs, a jack-of-all-trades for maintenance work, and a cook, with additional labour for shearing.

So the swagger had a purpose in the social hierarchy and did not gain the stigma of the English or American tramp who usually came from the ranks of the urban unemployed. In England, the tramp or vagrant is associated with enclosure, industrialisation - a man forced out of a job, unable to get another. The displaced man with no skills just wandering around. In America, the tramp is also associated with progress.

The "tramp comes with the locomotive, and the almshouses and prisons are as surely the marks

of 'material progress' as are costly dwellings, rich warehouses and magnificent churches. Upon streets lighted with gas and patrolled by uniformed policemen, beggars wait for the passer-by, and in the shadow of college, and library, and museum, are gathering the more hideous Huns and fierce Vandals of whom Macaulay prophesied. 3

This is also indicated in the American farmer's opinion of the tramp. To them, he was a locust, a "frivolous emblem of improvidence", standing outside society, but blamed by the local people for any unexplained incidents. 4 Jack London also sees the tramp as a by-product of capitalism, the waste element of an economic necessity. He sees the surplus labour army as an economic necessity, for harvesting and to keep the existing workers in line because there were always more to replace them. But within this group of unskilled workers, there is a struggle which tends to discourage some members; members who reject work altogether and become either criminals or tramps, who, London thinks, it would be more humane to eliminate. 5 So the tramp was urban in character, a waste-product of the relentless march of urbanisation and industrialisation.

The swagger, in comparison, was an independent, rural, versatile worker. He was created because of the needs of the rural community. Mr Tregear, the Secretary of the later established Labour Department remarked:

... it is due to the fluctuating character of the work they sometimes offer that the formation of a class of wandering labourers is due. 6

... large numbers of men move about the country ... hard to wean from their nomadic life to more settled pursuits, but as their labour is almost a necessity at times, both to the sheep-farmer and the agriculturist (at harvest), it is difficult to see how their places could be supplied if their gypsy-life should be discontinued. 7

The term "swagger" in this sense, then, covered shearsers, harvesters, rabbiters, hawkers, or any unemployed searching for work, or a mixture of all:

He could do anything he swore,  
could skin a sheep or back a bucker,  
And asked for all his labour  
only a pound a week and tucker.  
Would take what came, nor shirk, nor fret,  
Be 'brander', 'rouseabout', or 'dagger'. 8

Fossiker, fencer, rouseabout and rabbiter he'd been  
From Riversdale to Naseby every hamlet he had seen. 9

So the swaggers were essentially wandering labourers, distinguishable because they carried their possessions rolled up in a swag and slung over one shoulder. There were of course exceptions in the way the swag was carried, the most notable being Barney Winter or as he was known, Barney Whiterats, who wore his swag "hitch-hiker" style as John A. Lee terms it, that is, over both shoulders. But the accepted

6. AJHR, 1895, H-6, p.2.
9. Hamilton Thompson, "Ned Dunne", in Woodhouse, p. 73.
norm was one shoulder. This swag then was a recognizable symbol of the man's availability to work in a period when there was no unemployment benefit, no old age pension nor agencies to co-ordinate labour with demand.

Despite the swagger being originally associated with a work philosophy, he came to be paired with a non-work attitude - the good-for-nothing layabout trying to avoid work. Since this negative view came to be widely held, we should look at the group which gave the swagger such a name - the 'sundowner', known as such because of his habit of arriving at the station at sundown with no intention of working. He was just cashing in on the owner's hospitality for food and shelter. Contemporary writers have tended to condemn this man:

... it was common knowledge that ten out of a dozen of these men would be grossly insulted were they offered work, but it is just those two out of the twelve who really are in search of employment, and the principle of the thing, that still uphold the custom of feeding and giving a night's lodging to any man who asks for it. 10

Many M.P.s expressed similarly contemptuous views:

I say there are lots of men now wandering about seeking employment. I know there are lots of people even in my own neighbourhood who are looking for work, but there are some who pray that they may not find it. Everybody knows that. 11

or as William Pember Reeves thought the worst insult to a swagger was to offer him a permanent job:


At length in unexpected way
Came for these smarts a cruel ointment.
He found a job. Alack-a-day!
Ah, then indeed fell disappointment.

... He went to work for evermore
A disappointed swagger. 12

The English immigrant compared him to the English beggar and vagrant. Sarah Amelia Courage, who settled with her husband in Canterbury said:

There are no such people as beggars here, but loafers there are in abundance; also 'sundowners' ... a lazy, good-for-nothing lot some of them are too, they profess to want work but if it is given to them they will not do a couple of hours of work in a day. 13

John Bradshaw, another English immigrant saw them as:

... idle, "blowing", undesirable, sponging alike on the runholder, the farmer, and the hotel keeper - an individual who won't work unless he's obliged to and sometimes not even then; a disgrace to his kind and fit only to be classed with the "casuals" of an English workhouse. 14

Were these men really as idle as is made out? For example, one swagger who has been seen to typify the anti-work ethic is Edmund Slattery, or The Shiner, 15 renowned for his tricks

15. Stories of the Shiner have been collected by John A. Lee in Shining with the Shiner and Shiner Slattery; but it is uncertain as to how many of the stories attributed to him were his, or whether someone hearing of a good dodge or cadge said 'that sounds like the Shiner' and the next thing the story is the Shiner's. Also Lee has admitted that one of the stories he attributed to the Shiner actually involved the Hon. John Burke O'Brien (Rouseabouts, p. 97). But we will continue to count the stories, not because they belong to one person, but because they express attitudes to the swagger community.
to avoid work. Many regarded him as a parasite, yet tolerated him because he provided a form of entertainment - everyone laughed at his victims, including the victims themselves. But there are contrary reports of whether he avoided all work.

In Swagger Country, a Violet Keen remembers:

My Grandfather had always The Shiner at harvest time, and regarded him as a good worker, but others had found him unreliable, walking out abruptly and leaving them shorthanded in the middle of harvesting. 16

At another place he worked through the harvest without wages for a farmer near Morven who had often put him up for the night and who, the Shiner knew, was now hard up himself. 17

And this was a man with a reputation for being a loafer! But judging from some of the stories he could be just as lazy. It seems to have depended on who he was working for and how he felt at the time. If he had a whim to leave he had the complete freedom and independence to do so. This seems to be the basis of the image of a sundowner - he was in a work situation but he could choose whether or not he worked. Either way he was still entitled to food and shelter, because next time round he might decide to work.

As to whether it was easy to loaf about the country, an article written from a swagger's point of view says:

I've heard it said that men of my sort don't want work, but only go about loafing on the public. Just you try it on: anyone who thinks a living's to be got that way, call in at the cockatoo's shanties when it is coming on a wet night and see

how many will give you a night's doss, let alone a feed.... Nine out of ten men who ask a night's lodging at a station would be very glad of a job if they could get it. 18

The cockatoos, or small farmers, were not the only force to be reckoned with, the swagger had to overcome the existing physical conditions of the world in which he was travelling.

Miscal distances ... rivers flooded ... overtaken by storms ... get drunk far from friendly shelter of the lock-up ... lie out in the open exposed to frost and weather. 19

Though the author in this case considered that such unpleasant accidents only gave greater zest to the kitchen fire and attentions of the cook at the next run. 20

Russel Ward, in his book The Australian Legend, thought that the 'sundowner' proper was a largely mythical figure and could cite only one case of men refusing work. In that case the rates of pay were lower than those set by the newly formed Shearers' Union. 21 This seems to be true in the New Zealand context. There are no reports of any actually refusing to work. They might not always finish the chore but it was started. For example"

My husband used to tell these men to go out and chop firewood while breakfast was preparing, but the generality of them, after chopping half a dozen pieces, would throw down the axe and go into the kitchen again. 22


20. ibid.


Even the Shiner if collared could and would work, though he would try to avoid being put in such a situation. Many of these men just did not want permanent employment; they respected their right to be able to work where and when they liked and then to move on. They were assured meals and shelter at most places, but first they had to get there!

So it becomes more correct to look at three groups within the swagger definition - the itinerant farm labourer, the unemployed man, and the man who is on the road more permanently than the others. The latter is the prototype for the mythical 'sundowner' and a focal point for a work-shy ideology. But all three strands were classed together as swaggers. There was no discernment between them; if a man stayed to work he stayed, if he moved on the next morning, he was gone. In fact, Mr Tregear, at a later date, said that one way of rid-ding the country of the more permanent swagger was for people to learn to discern between the different types of men:

The public will have to learn to discriminate between men really anxious to work and men who only call out for work. 23

It should be noted at this stage that women swaggers did exist, normally as hawkers. Women like the old Syrian woman who roamed the Waimate area in Canterbury around the beginning of the century, pushing a pram of pots and pans which she mended and sold. Or the sewing lady who had a sewing machine fitted in her pram. Similarly Lou who dressed and acted like a man. 24 But generally these women

23. AJHR, 1894, H-6, p.4.
24. Henderson, op. cit., p. 27.
did not receive sympathy because they looked out of place in an activity that was recognised as a male domain.

The swagger therefore belongs to a pioneering era of large runs, plenty of work available, of few roads, and even less outside communications. So the swagger had an additional purpose - that of newsbearer of the outside world. He carried information from one station to another, and news about the farthest parts of the owner's own station. The swagger, therefore, broke the isolation and to a certain extent entertained those on the station:

We sat and talked for half an hour on topics up to date,
For he was fairly well-informed, although he called me 'Mate',
And Passing Notes by Civis, he descanted on with
gust,
And sketches from the Bulletin hilariously discussed. 25

It is difficult to be exact about the number of swaggars on the road for two reasons. First, swaggering actually covered a wide range of occupations, and second, the census figures are very indefinite. Peter Gibbons places the figures as high as about one-fifth of the male working population26 - 13,716 agricultural labourers including farm workers who did not own their own farms, a large percentage of whom would have been fairly permanent, perhaps changing employers every few years; 13,767 undefined labourers, that is, a total

25. Hamilton Thompson, 'Ned Dunne', in Woodhouse, p. 73.
of 27,000 men whose occupations were likely to be 'casual'.
Plus another 10,099 alluvial gold miners (less nearly 3,000
Chinese), and 2,544 kauri gum diggers, as well as other
seasonal or casual workers, 6,427 drovers, shearers and shep-
herds, 2,536 bushmen, axemen and grubbers, 2,027 construction
labourers involved on railways or the roads, and 1,608 station
labourers. In addition there were rabbiters, trappers,
fowlers, and beehunters totalling 1,296, plus cooks, flaxmill
workers, and 200 hawkers and peddlars.27

As can be seen, the itinerant labourer covered a wide
span of occupation. Numbers were high, because those doing
a certain job permanently are indistinguishable from those
working on a casual basis.

Actual numbers would vary from season to season, culmin-
ating during the winter months when casual work was scarce.
But it becomes evident that the swagger existed in large
numbers in certain areas. A Hawkes Bay station which recor-
ded all the swaggers fed during 1894 came up with the astound-
ing figure of nine hundred in six months.28 Another station
had 400 swaggers pass its way in fifty-nine days, while a
neighbour fed another thirty in one night alone! Mr Buchanan
in 1894 again brought to the notice of Parliament the extent
of the problem. He recounted the fact that twenty-two unem-
ployed had found food and shelter on one night with a single

27. P.J. Gibbons "'Turning Tramps into Taxpayers' : The
Department of Labour and the Casual Labourer in the 1890s",
28. H.G.M. Norris, Settlers in Depression 1875-1894, (Hamil-
settlement. Another settler in the Wairarapa had given over 4,800 meals to travellers within the previous three months. 29

The swagger was part of a numerous, noticeable group needed during the earlier stage in New Zealand's history, but by 1894, the increasing numbers on the road were forcing the runholder to take another look at his commitment to the swagger system.

Even though there were three different types of swagger, no discrimination in treatment is evident. The swag was an accepted form of independence, for those who felt they had to depend on their own energy for their subsistence, rather than relying on the inadequacies of local charities or permanent employment. Swaggers were important in the pioneering country as a labour force and as a communication link. They played an accepted part in a frontier society; how this role came to change we will discuss in subsequent chapters.

Outback one leaves a fellow's past alone;  
What he did or where he came from is a subject  
for himself  
Entirely a matter of his own.  

Looking at the social background of the swaggers tends to cause problems because much of the information is hearsay, what other people have observed rather than what they know as fact. As the above quotation suggests, few questions were asked about their background or where a man came from. It was of no real importance:

Up in the camps of the far outback runs,  
In the lonely high ranges of blue.  
Where a man's pedigree and his family tree  
Count little and questions are few.  

What counted was how a man worked and acted in the present, here and now:

From shearing shed to shearing shed ...  
We learn the worth of man to man - and this we learn too well  
... I've tramped and camped, and "shore" and drunk with many mates outback -  
And every one to me is Jack because the first was Jack -  

It was an anonymous existence. Allen Adair, in reference to gum diggers, was fascinated by this notion:

Wild tales were told of the men who drifted to the fields, and there early arose the legend that in the gumlands were people with scions of noble English families, dukes' sons and sons of belted earls. There was uncertainty about every man you met.

This is what fascinated Allen. That man he had passed just now. Had he fled from a wife or from the law, from unbearable psychic torment or from a crime, from weakness in himself or from the irony of life imposed upon him. Had he come from a sordid suburban street or from a marbled hall?  

So there was this awareness of the diversity of backgrounds and reasons why they swagged. They came from no one social group but formed a heterogeneous group consisting of:

... the luckless sons of aristocratic parents, broken down guardsmen and ex-cavalry officers to the very dregs of colonial democracy.  

This wide range of backgrounds is evident if we look at the several groups which Wakefield has indicated. Going in reverse order, we firstly have the 'dregs of colonial democracy', or those who had to work. There are the Australian swaggers, who alternate between seasons in New Zealand. This could apply to any group because it was a common practice. There were the New Zealand born; men like 'Monkey' (Bill) Sharp who had matriculated at Nelson College, and had worked as a bank teller before going on the swag. Or 'Larry' (Dave Sinclair), whose sister, the wife of a prominent Invercargill businessman, would periodically outfit him. Despite this, he continued swagging until he was well into his eighties. Why these men swagged there is no indication.

7. ibid., p. 59.
Then there are those who had come in search of gold and stayed, mainly because they were too broke or too ashamed to go home. Within New Zealand there were men who continued to swag between new fields of gold and gum. For example, when the Maruwenua River attracted a steady stream of diggers, men who passed through Clifton Falls, in North Otago, would invariably stop at the stone cottage for a meal.  

Men who had been in military service included people like Fred, Baron (or Colonel) de Lacy, who had held a commission in a cavalry regiment, and Broomhall-Smith, better known as 'Gentleman Swagger' who had been an officer in the navy. The latter was also well-versed in the ways of society and looked presentable in every way, a fact which he used to his advantage. Learning the particulars of the people in the district which he was planning to travel, he would arrive late at night and ask directions to such and such a station where he was expected. Normally he would be asked to stay the night and would only end his visit when the unfortunate family saw fit to forcibly move him on.  

Then there were those who had had a good education. In one of the letters John A. Lee received about swaggers, the correspondent remembers one swagger who had an Oxford M.A. and M.Sc. diploma in his swag. They could of course

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9. Studholme, Te Waimate, pp. 204-5.

have been stolen but the way in which he cherished them indicates that they were his. The Honourable John Burke O'Brien was supposedly a master of six languages and could speak Greek fluently. Jimmy Wilson, the 'king of swaggers' reputedly spoke five languages and was keen on maths, history and astronomy. He had been first officer on a Spanish man-o'-war before he deserted for the gold fields.

Another man who deserted ship was Robert Winter, more commonly known as Barney Winter or Professor Barney Whiterats. He arrived in New Zealand in January 1847 on board the sailing ship Mariner. He deserted at Port Chalmers and began his long life of entertaining school-children over Otago and Southland. He was supposed to have been a big name in circus circles in the United States in his younger days and claimed to have given a command performance before royalty. How much was just talk or how true it was is anyone's guess, but at the age of forty-six he began a wandering life. He is an unknown entity; his death certificate places him as a loner, as he is not even registered under his real name and the names and professions of his parents are missing.


No-one knew him well enough to be able to fill in the missing details, or else they too were dead.

Another group of some importance is the Remittance Man, normally the disowned son of an aristocratic or well-to-do family. They were the 'black sheep' of the family, shipped to the colonies to avoid shaming the family name, but paid a remittance to keep them alive so long as they were far away.

The spendthrift, disinherited and graceless, accepted his pittance with an easy air, only surprised that he could escape so simply from the pheasant-shooting and the aunts in the close; took to the life, dropped easily out of knowledge, and tramping the backtracks in the summer haze let everything but life slip through his fingers. 15

Men like Old Fred, who came from a good county family, had studied for Holy Orders in the Church of England, had had music degrees in both organ and piano. A breakdown in health discontinued his theological studies so he became music master at Harrow, but lost the job eventually because of a drinking problem. 16 So off to New Zealand he was exiled.

Another was Somerset Plantaganet, who, it was rumoured, had letters after his name and was an English gentleman. He knew all about gardens, not vegetable gardens but those of the stately houses. Though he could have gained a permanent position anywhere, he stayed only a couple of weeks at each place before moving on. 17

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17. Interview with Harold Strode, Appendix E.
These men who made a mess of their lives have been popularised in contemporary verse almost to the same extent as the sundowner:

They say I am a "scally-wag"
A loafer and a dunce.
I'm making no excuses
But you should have seen me once.
A dandy on the race tracks
With a lady by my side
With all the people glad to know me
And respected far and wide. 18

He went on the swag because his girl left him, while Sweeny's reason for being on the track was a drinking problem:

Sweeny yarnd awhile and hinted that his folks were doing well,
And he told me that his father kept the Southern Cross Hotel. 19

Another was a drop-out:

He used to belong to a family group
with title, and money and land
But ... he came to grief like an ordinary thief
Because of another man's wife. 20

Most of these men went on the swag because of personal problems; others roamed for totally different reasons. First, some men had a natural roving spirit. If there had been no such thing as swagging they still would have found an excuse to wander:

A rover or a rebel
Conceived and born to roam,
As babies they will toddle
With faces turned from home;

They've fought beyond the vanguard
Wherever storm has raged
But home is but a prison
They pace like lions caged.21

Connected with this group were men with a pioneering spirit, used to battling it out on the frontiers, in harsh conditions, discontented with the settled life of a town. Being on the swag suited them as they could roam where they wanted, when they wanted, doing what they wanted. Their life was their own and they had no ties. Australian swagger, Phil Moebry or 'Scotty the Wrinkler', was one such man. He could have, if he so desired, joined any Sydney newspaper as a reporter, but preferred to swag. In his opinion, this was the most enjoyable of all occupations.

Another type was the transient, a man who changes his occupation, living off his previous earnings until he finds a new job, whether it be in the next town, district or island. The only way to find work was through walking. The new migrant to New Zealand sometimes swagged to get the feel of the country before settling down.

Then there were the unemployed, men desperately in want of work:

My man's gone now. He had to go
He couldn't find work around this town
Not for ages. Used his wages
Got up this morning - and he was gone.23


As before the only way to find work was to walk:

We'll honour the man who can't afford
To wait for a job that suits,
But sticks a swag on his shoulders broad
And his feet in blucher boots,
And tramps away o'er the ridges far
And over the burning sand
To look for work where the stations are
In the lonely Western land. 24

Though this is written in an Australian context, it is also true of New Zealand. Nothing came to those who waited. In a young country, those who worked were those who normally prospered. One New Zealander (though English-born) who found himself in such a position was William Cox. 25

I intend leaving here I think for Marton tomorrow as I must soon get work. I do not feel in very good spirit and fear I shall have trouble before I get work. 26

It was, in fact, a very unsatisfactory way of finding work:

I do not know what to do, which way to go to get work and am rather out of heart about it. 27

These were men who went out of necessity rather than choice.

Those who had personal problems seemed to have constituted a large group. They included men who had deserted families


25. William James Cox (1846-1925), an English immigrant of yeoman stock, spent some 45 years in New Zealand. He lived and worked around the Wairarapa area concentrating on Carterton. During the period 1892-3, he was forced through want of employment to swag around the Wellington and Hawkes Bay area. His reactions to what he saw and felt have been recorded on tiny pieces of paper, written carefully in pencil. These Diaries are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.


27. ibid., 3 Apr., 1892.
thinking it easier to find work as an unattached male, leaving the family to exist on what charity they could obtain, those who had been left by girlfriends or wives, those who had committed crimes. All existed as swaggers, amongst its anonymous ranks. One problem, though, did remain evident; that of alcohol:

"New leaf, new land", my motto was - I did my very best, 'Twas want of work that threw me back - an' liquor did the rest. 28

One verse written on the wall of an Otago shearing shed also states this problem as an explanation of a man's downfall:

Don't blame the wealthy squatter,  
If your luck it should be out; 
Don't blame the struggling cockatoo,  
For he knows what he's about; 
Don't blame the Colonial Government,  
If your children lack bread -  
But blame the wayside shanty  
For the reckless life you've led. 29

The picture of the swagger finishing off a job and going to the hotel to spend their whole cheque on liquor, is a popular one. C.W. Richmond, a former judge and Native Minister, wrote in 1894:

... spend the enormous wages they receive whilst work is plentiful at shearing time and harvest, in a few days at the public houses.... Having left themselves without a penny they travel the country as "swaggers" and "sundowners" - claiming everywhere at the stations food and free quarters. 30

John Bradshaw sees the swaggers not so much as drunkards but the drinking being more in the spirit of good fellowship and


30. Quoted in Gibbons, op.cit., p. 75.
the love of excitement. The men who worked hard, drank hard. Also the hotel was seen as the centre of social life, a place to meet and enjoy yourself. Getting drunk was not an attribute unique to the swagger. It was a firmly entrenched custom within New Zealand. Anthony Trollope in 1873 commented:

I must specially observe one point as to which the New Zealand colonist imitates his brethren and ancestors at home - and far surpasses his Australian rival. He is fond of getting drunk.

Yet the swagger, because he was more noticeable as a stranger within the community, became renowned for his drinking bouts. Some did have an addiction to alcohol, but usually it was a celebration, an end of a job, a social gathering.

Age is another factor in the choice of swagging as a lifestyle. Reports show that many of the swaggers, particularly in the late nineteenth century, were over forty years of age. These were men who probably could not keep a job against younger competition, or men who had arrived alone in New Zealand in its pioneering days, perhaps in search of gold; men who had neither married nor settled down, and now in their old age had no security or family to see them through. Mr Gilfedders, speaking in Parliament on the Old Age Pensions Bill in 1897, thought that it was wrong that these men should be humiliated by taking charity, and said:

... there are in the colony men and women who have borne the heat and burden of the day, who have been


left behind in the race of life - we have old colonists who have done their utmost to promote the interests and welfare of the colony, and to raise up the institutions of which we are justly proud. 33

Though not referring explicitly to swaggers, there was an awareness that these people who had developed New Zealand in its earlier days, now had no security for the future. The only thing left to them, besides charitable institutions, was to carry a swag. In addition, men who had already been carrying their swags for most of their lives, had to continue because they were not wanted and in some ways became a nuisance. Men like Mr Palmer:

"Useless old fool", I remember a man's voice saying .... "Quite useless. Always in the way. Give him his swag and get him on the road again." 34

Yet they had to work or make pretence of working to exist:

And working here and tramping there, they fought the battle to the end
Until the hair was grey enough, and the strong back began to bend;
And as the evening darkened down, they had to turn their weary feet
To the last refuge of the poor-dead-beat. 35

The only alternative was the Old Man's Home.

These men, whether they came from an aristocratic family or had been a poor gold-miner, whether he was a criminal or just a tired old man, were all considered swaggers. No distinctions were either sought or made.

33. PD, 1897, Vol. 100, p. 706.
35. David McKee Wright, 'In the Old Man's Home', in Station Ballads and Other Verses, (Auckland, 1945), p. 23.
CHAPTER THREE : A COMPARISON OF

URBAN AND RURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SWAGGERS

Ah! 'tis only in the country that such open hearts are found;
We are cautious in the city where the schemers prowl around,
But our fellow-men distrusting, where the trams and buses run,
We could not, for aye, continue if we found them like Ned Dunne. 1

The swagger was seen in very ambivalent terms by New Zealanders. The rural or farm people had always had a degree of tolerance towards him, while the urban dwellers were very intolerant because the swagger was outside their sphere of comprehension. "Urban" is used in the context of town dwellers rather than city, of closer settlements as a direct contrast to the separated farmhouses within the countryside. Within the city the swagger was just another man passing through, while in the town he was very much a conspicuous stranger. So the opinion of this latter group is important because it is typical of the views being formed towards groups that existed beyond their control. It shows also the attempts to gain the desired social control manifested in the establishment of institutions to confine the swagger within the bounds of society.

To the inhabitants of the townships, the swagger was a lazy drunkard, a disruptive element that had to be eliminated. In their settled lives they saw the swagger as representing a threat, not because of what he was, but because he was always on the move, free of the social restraints of community.

and family. He had not been moulded into an accepted social form and, therefore, was seen as a source of instability, a social rebel. Though the swagger should have been seen as part of rural society, as a necessary supplement to the labour force, he barely counted at all. He was not regarded as a settler, his drinking exploits were regarded with horror, and he was seen as being outside the ranks of the independent working man of the ideal rural society. 2

The only time that the townspeople saw him was when he was passing through on his way to a job, or when the job was over and the cheque was on the counter at the local hotel. Therefore, their view of the swagger tends to be negatively biased.

They saw the swagger, as has already been mentioned, as not being part of the community. More often than not he had no home ties, no woman to civilise him, to transform him into an ideal citizen. Accordingly, they would have totally rejected what one unmarried man wrote:

... we do not marry because we prefer to spend our money in other ways because an establishment is a nuisance; because a wife is not so necessary to our happiness as other luxuries; because there is no good like independence; because, much as I would like marriage, there is an aggregate of other things, the sum of which pleases me better. 3

The swagger was the antithesis of the family and home. The home was "the crystal of society and the nucleus of national character", a place and unit that encouraged responsibility.


3. NOT, 19 Feb., 1890
in adults while morally training the young. When a swagger did make it to the altar, there seemed to be a silent rejoicing that this man has made the right step. A frequent comment was "They eventually married local girls and were good citizens". Similarly, Lady Barker wrote:

The only real harm a swagger did me was to carry off one of my best maidservants as his wife.

But as he was only travelling about looking for work and had £300 in the bank it was all right, because this swagger was well on the way to becoming a good citizen.

Those who already had families were looked on more harshly, mainly because swagging led to the absence of the male head of the family. It was feared that the resultant decay of family ties and influence would result in the formation of gangs and delinquency. Henry Lawson's story of the drover's wife typifies some of the hardships these women had to go through. The wife alone brings up the children, taking over the male position as the head of the house. It is she who has to kill the snake, to try and save the dam during a flood, to fight the mad bullocks, the crows and the eagles, and to deal with "gallows-faced swagmen" who know there is no male around the place. Yet at the same time she has to bring the children up in a civilised manner:

4. Ringenbach, Tramps and Reformers, p. 4, says that this was also true of the attitude towards the American tramp. He was a threat to both the work ethic and the family ideal.


... on Sunday afternoons she dresses herself, tidies the children, smartens up baby, and goes for a lonely walk along the bush-track, pushing an old perambulator in front of her. 7

Though this story is set in the Australian bush it was the same in the town - the wife had to act as both mother and father to a growing family.

As the years passed, the townspeople became firmer in their belief that these men must be made to work permanently. Tregear, speaking for 'responsible citizens', put forward the Labour Department motto, "Without work, nothing". The Department itself was formed to co-ordinate labour and demand, 'to transfer workers from overcrowded localities to deficient areas'. This would replace what had come to be regarded as an uneconomic way of finding work, where the unemployed swagger nine times out of ten passes the farms where hands are needed. 8 The Department was designed to cut out any needless wandering. Any men loitering about the streets would be sent to do heavy work in the bush districts where they would have to toil unremittingly or starve. Another alternative was the state farm at Levin, where actual unemployed tradesmen could be retrained to undertake work in the rural districts. This forcing of men to work had already been tried on several runs, mainly to induce the swaggers to work for their food. Their swags would be confiscated until they had chopped a small quantity of wood or

performed some other trifling domestic duty. But people like Lady Barker were of the opinion that this would not have the desired effect because:

... swaggers will be led, not driven - what he did of his own accord for the sake of a nod or smile of thanks, he would not do for the hardest words which ever come out of a boss's mouth. 10

So the Department of Labour was not ensured of too much success in this respect.

The general feeling was that New Zealand had enough opportunities for the individual, that there was no reason for a man to become a swagger. All he needed was hard work, diligence, and thrift to become a success. Otherwise, the able-bodied lazy man who would not work by choice was a burden to society. In fact, one of the Labour Department agents attributed the decrease in numbers to the individual transformation possible in New Zealand's fluid social structure:

Men are, without doubt, becoming more thrifty and in place of throwing their hard earnings away they find their way to the savings-bank and put by a little for a rainy day. 11

At the same time, the swagger was being regarded as a vagrant, at a time when vagrancy was a criminal offence.


10. Ibid., p. 163.

11. Charles Bowden, Pahiatua, AJHR, 1900, H-11, p. xvi; Hank Morgan in the Sydney Worker, republished in the Labour Journal No. 9, quoted in PD, 1894, Vol. 83, p. 464a, thought that if the working classes were sober and thrifty they could put away sufficient money to tide them over sickness or old age.
Hence the attitude that he should be punished in some way:

work of some sort could surely be provided,
which, if they did not accept, they should be
sent to gaol and compelled to work. 12

In any manner possible, swaggering had to be stopped and the swagger reformed:

I am of the opinion that to retrieve the principles lost by laziness swaggering must be stopped, and a certain amount of force used in reviving the best principles of nature in those who have fallen into that habit which I have no doubt would be a preventive to others falling into such a state. 13

So the attitude of the townspeople was one of revulsion of a system they knew little about and which they tended to judge from a negative point of view, because for the large part that is all they came in contact with. It would not be these people who, in the early twentieth century, would be complaining about the fact that there was insufficient labour to bring in the crops. They were concerned only because such a movement threatened their own lifestyles.

There are two groups within this general "urban" context who should be looked at more closely, that is the police and the publican, who both came into closer contact with the Swagger.

First the police:

... he was well known
By the police on terms familiar,
Whose 'In again?' in cheerful tone
Perchance had jarred a temper sillier,
But he who knew their pleasant way,
At wit official was no nagger.... 14

12. Charles Smith, Napier, AJHR, 1897, H-6, p. xxi.
The attitude of the police was one of benevolence, generally most had been on the goldfields and knew that many cases of unrestraint, particularly after drinking, were just a result of over-exuberance, a consequence of coming to town with a large cheque and a desire for congenial company after a sojourn in the lonely outback.\textsuperscript{15}

Normally, the police had no trouble with the honesty of swaggers. In fact, much has been said about the comparative honesty of the group:

... if one swagger were to purloin the smallest article from a station which had fed and sheltered him every other swagger in all the country-side would immediately become an amateur detective to make the thief give up his spoil. \textsuperscript{16}

To steal anything would endanger the swagger's own chances in that district and those of the ones coming into the district after him. So it was important that this reputation was kept up.

In the days of swaggers, country folk went off for a day in the town and never thought of locking their houses. It was practically unknown for swaggers to steal anything. \textsuperscript{17}

Though they were known to steal food, and even chickens from the henhouse. Nevertheless, they were generally considered to be honest. In later years this seems to have changed slightly, with swaggers coming up before the court for stealing; for example, at Blairlogie Station, where:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Oamaruvian, "Celebrities of Old Tyne Street", in \textit{History of North Otago from 1853}, p. 119.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Lady Barker, \textit{Station Amusements}, p. 163.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Henderson, \textit{Swagger Country}, p. 135.
\end{itemize}
Ten hungry men took charge of the kitchen ... and helped themselves. They were arrested by Constable Collerton and brought to Masterton. 18

They were desperate men who wanted food. An Oamaru paper shocked New Zealand by announcing:

Two Australians passed through Oamaru yesterday and so far nothing is missing. 19

We should really consider these incidents as isolated, because if this had been an overall trend there would have been a growing intolerance towards them, particularly in rural areas. But judging from the interviews of men who knew swaggers in the early twentieth century, the same attitude that these men were honest exists. They were invited to help themselves from the cookhouse or were fed with the family, though their table manners sometimes left a lot to be desired:

... the odd people gave him a meal in the house and he never used a knife or fork, just pushed it in his mouth with his hands. 20

If the swagger had gained a reputation for dishonesty, they would not have been fed, let alone with the family.

The offence mainly associated with swaggers, was being a nuisance; their annoying habit of begging and hanging about farms and homesteads and calling at the houses for food when they knew that the men are absent.

18. Mr Buchanan, PD, 1894, Vol. 86, p. 343a; Post, 27 Sept., 1894.


20. Correspondence with Mr Bruhns, Appendix D2.
... they demand the very best food in the cupboard - and they get it. 21

Women alone in the house were afraid to answer the door in some cases; for example, Mrs McAuley, who was particularly unwilling to open the door because the swagger involved had a bad reputation.22 The news had gone on before him.

Reports of swaggers allegedly making threats if they did not obtain a feed have been exaggerated. It has been said that few dared to refuse their requests if they valued their hay stacks, which burned fairly easily, or their lives. Nothing seems to substantiate this charge. Even the swagger with the bad reputation confined himself to beating a nearby bush. Others just moved off in sorrow. There were never any reports of any swagger molesting a settler.

Another crime traditionally associated with tramps is vagrancy, or the law of no visible means of support. But the police do not seem to have regarded swaggers as vagrants in the earlier years. Oamaruvian says that even if this law had then been on the statute books, few of the old-time police would have known when to apply it.23 These were men who actually provided accommodation in the gaols over the winter. Piccolo Charley, for example, would spend the winter in the Hokitika Gaol with the door unlocked. In

21. F. Charles Smith, Napier, AJHR, 1897, H-6, p. xxi.
22. Interview with Mr Bruhns, Appendix D2.
return he chopped enough wood to last the constable until the next winter. Similarly Old Jack at Thames:

... would settle in comfortably, pottering about, dozing in the sun, doing a few odd jobs around the station, or languid weeding of the garden, a sporadic sweeping of the cell yard. 24

They were harmless men, the worst they did was to smash a few windows in order to get arrested and gaol ed. The Honourable John Burke O'Brien would turn up for the winter at "McGarby's Hotel", as the Terrace Inn Gaol in Wellington was known, after breaking a window or two. Another man just threatened to do so. He had crawled into the Auckland Police Station on two sticks, demanding shelter there in the Queen's name. When it was explained that he had not committed a crime

the old man explained to the officer that he would then be under the painful necessity of smashing some windows, as he must have shelter for the night ... in the Queen's name, he "ran him in". 25

But at the first stirrings of spring they were on the road again.

In Oamaru, the Old Tyne Street gardens were famous as a "doss house" of the "knights of the road". Sometimes Sergeant O'Grady would roust them out. However, they generally were left undisturbed.

In such cases the police were the friends of the swagger, he understood him and was reluctant to prosecute. This is evident in the figures for vagrancy which over a decade remain reasonably stable, at less than 3.5 percent of the total crimes committed. (Table 1).

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1889</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1894</th>
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<tr>
<td>No. of offences reported</td>
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<td>460</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>315</td>
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<td>370</td>
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<td>% of total crimes</td>
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<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.99</td>
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<td>209</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Showing vagrancy in relation to total crimes committed within New Zealand 1888-1897.


The swagger, to a certain degree, could prove that he was not a vagrant. For example, in the previously mentioned Blairlogie case, the police themselves testified that the men involved were of a respectable class. 26

A change in attitude comes about primarily because the police, particularly in country areas, become agents for the Labour Department. They come to view the swagger with a Departmental bias and become more favourable to moving them on and prosecuting:

The police narrowly watch these professional loafers, and when seen they are warned to leave town in search of work; and if they do not leave after receiving a warning they are then taken, as provided by the Act [Police Offences Act] before the Justices as to their mode of living being unlawful they are dealt with in a manner which prevents their repeating the offence, and which acts as a caution to others. 27


27. F. Charles Smith, Hastings, AJHR, 1898, H-6, p. xliii.
Also, within the force, as all over the country, there was a new type of man in power. Men who had not shared the same experiences as the swagger, and who had despised their parents for giving in to them. The new generation, therefore, tended to have a different view of the swagger and the way he should be treated.

Where Denis Senior thought the Shiner was a loafing virtuoso, Denis Junior thought he was a nuisance and thought offensively loud. 28

The police, because of new blood in the force and because of their dealings with the Department of Labour, began to see the swagger in a different light and acted accordingly.

This change in personnel was not confined to the police, even on the farms the new generation did not understand the swagger.

Unlike my father, I thought them a bloody nuisance. They used to camp in the woolshed, woolpacks for covering, and go to the cookhouse for a feed whenever it suited them, with no consideration for the cook. 29

The swagger found it hard because he had never been on the swag with these young ones; they had "never walked to shearing, harvesting, ditching, sod wall building, threshing" as had their fathers. 30

The second group which came into contact with the swagger was the publican:


The cheque was spent that the shearers earned, and the sheds were all cut out; the publican's words were short and few, and the publican's looks were black - and the time had come, as the shearer knew, to carry his swag Out Back. 31

The swagger was welcomed in the hotel as long as he was solvent, after that the "looks were black".

We had to have a drink anyhow, so we chanced it; we walked right into the bar ... and tried to look as if we'd just drawn our cheques and didn't care a curse for any man. We looked solvent enough as far as swagmen go. We were dirty and haggard, and ragged, and tired looking, and that was all the reason why we might have had our cheques alright. 32

Judging from the Shiner stories, the publican was a logical person from whom to bludge, a victim of the feeling that taking down a publican was robbing the rich to enrich the poor.

"The Shiner, he'd sweat a glass out of anyone. Always gets a lot from new publicans. Always knows when a pub changes hands, and works his old tricks again. Likes to know a city or North Island man has taken over. I've seen him pull the same trick half a dozen times ..." 33

Still it seems that the system worked both ways, in that the publican could take advantage of the swagger while cashing his cheque, sometimes by forcing him to take his change in drinks:

First of all, when we got our wages, the cheque wasn't a right cheque, it was an order written on flimsy or soft paper, on the nearest agent of the squatter, an' cashed by the nearest publican,

32. Lawson, 'Stiffner and Jim', Pahiatua Herald, 9 Mar., 1894; Typescript held in Alexander Turnbull Library.
33. Lee, Shiner Slattery, p. 41.
who of course never handed over a cent. A man was compelled to stay there and knock his cheque down 'like a man'.

Even so, it paid the publican to be reasonably honest because in small country towns rumours of dishonest practices spread like wildfire, and there were always other hotels which would welcome the trade.

Their attitude towards the swagger does not seem to have undergone some radical change - if the men had the money they were welcomed. The swagger provided some of their profits, so were treated fairly.

In general though, within the towns there was a hardening of attitude towards swaggers. They represented insecurity, and even men who had once understood them began to see them as a nuisance that had to be eliminated. The prevailing sentiment from the 1890s onwards was that the swagger should be forced to work.

Within the country districts, there was also this general hardening of attitude towards swaggers, particularly by the runholder, the traditional benefactor of the system. Partly because the latter was no longer totally dependent upon swagger labour, and partly because the numbers on the road began to act as a deterrent. In places like the Wairarapa, where the runholders had earlier welcomed the opportunity of cheap labour, were daunted by

... an unlimited number of men clamouring for food and shelter night after night is a condition outside their calculation but which they will have to put up with....  

This large number of men on the road was due partly to the Depression of the 1880s and early 1890s which increased unemployment in both the city and the country. But runholders were no longer prepared to put up with this large influx. At a meeting of runholders in May, 1894, of the Wairarapa South County Council, concern was expressed at the 'present system of allowing large bodies of unemployed to roam about the country levying blackmail on settlers'.  

As a result of the already mentioned Blairlogie incident, the runholders began to decline accommodation, though a number obviously relented. Two months later the effects of this policy could be seen in the numbers of men crowding into the four main towns in the district. By the winter of 1895, eight East Coast (North Island) station owners had formally published their decision to refuse free meals to swaggers, saying that they were doubly taxed; first by supporting unassisted 'a large army of itinerant labourers' and second, by contributing a pro rata share of rates to support the poor of Wellington. This type of attitude does not seem

36. ibid., p. 478.
37. ibid., p. 479; _Star_, 15 Nov. 1894.
38. Bagnall, p. 479.
39. _N.Z. Times_, 11 Jun., 1894; 16 Feb., 1895; Bagnall, p. 479; Mr Buchanan _PD_, 1894, Vol. 86, p. 618a, also mentions three places which previously had supplied food to travellers now advertising that they were now unable to do so. He felt the settlers were driven to this by their inability to provide the amount of food required for the large numbers of unemployed men.
to have prevailed in the South, because even as late as 1895, the Labour Department was reporting:

A large number of swaggers passed to and fro through this district in search of work, camping under bridges, and suffering the indulgence of station holders, farmers and hotel keepers. 40

Mainly because the area they were passing through was largely mixed farming, and not so vulnerable to the forces that strickened the predominantly sheep farmers of the Wairarapa. Yet it was becoming apparent that the runholders and farmers were no longer prepared to be so tolerant towards the swagger. Even the Labour Department was receiving complaints about the manner in which these workmen were being received when seeking work in the country.41 But at that stage, the existence of the swagger was still important to some of the large landowners and flockmasters so Tregear advised:

... the necessities and poverty of such workmen should meet with at least civil treatment. 42

Nevertheless, overall the large numbers of unemployed joining the ranks of the swagger, was making the system unworkable.

40. Robert Crawford, Timaru, AJHR, 1898, H-6, p. 1i.
41. Tregear, AJHR, 1895, H-6, p.2.
42. ibid.
CHAPTER FOUR : THE DECLINE OF THE SWAGGER

The spirit of the country changed;
they drifted, drifted, slowly down,
And life grew harder as they saw
the growth of settlement and town. 1

By 1895-6, the Department of Labour agents were reporting decreasing numbers of swaggers on the road. Part of the reason for this change we have seen was the development of a negative attitude which tended to discourage the swagger.

There is not now the number of swaggers to be noted coming into the district that there were in the earlier part of the year. They do not receive the same encouragement as formerly and are beginning to realise the fact that they are not required. 2

The same was occurring in Pahiatua where there were few swaggers on the road:

I attribute it in a great measure to the fact that the local bodies here do not offer any premium to these men; they can not get board or lodgings here from either the Borough or County Council. 3

It was an undisputed fact that the number of swaggers was declining, but the rate of decline was too rapid to be simply accounted for by changes in attitude. The swagger was being made redundant by the increasing use of machinery, and the introduction of the small family size farms which required

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1. David McKee Wright, 'In the Old Man's Home', in Station Ballads and Other Verses, (Auckland, 1945), p. 23.
3. Charles Bowden, Pahiatua, AJHR, 1897, H-6, p. xxii.
no extra labour. These changes within the rural system directly affected the swagger. This section, therefore, will look at these and other reasons why the swagger declined, concentration on transitions within the Otago region, particularly North Otago, chosen because it was an area of large estates, later broken up under the Liberal land settlement schemes, that at one stage employed large numbers of casual labourers.

The estates in North Otago had no need for a large permanent staff. Filleul's station, for example, in 1853 employed nine men and boys and by 1859 still had only eight men, including three cadets. Clifton Falls, by comparison, employed only two or three. This was not unique to this region alone - Kyeburn Station employed only six.

During harvest time, however, a large number of men were required to augment the permanent staff, for example, Windsor Park employed 150 during the season. This was not exceptional, some 200 worked at one time on the much smaller property of Gifford and Clowes.

Even between harvests, there were always plenty of men, tired of tramping around, willing to work for lower wages to help out. It would, therefore, be profitable to consider where the swagger fitted into the annual farm programme.


5. Interview with Harold Strode, Appendix E.

Appendix A1 shows the type of work the farmer expected to get through each month. This is only a very generalised calendar, the actual work load and type depended on the variables of regions, climate and type of farm. Appendix A2 shows the work the swagger probably helped with; work that was, apart from harvesting and shearing, largely unskilled. Hence, these jobs could be tackled by the average swagger, principally a jack-of-all-trades. Harvesting and shearing were the main activities when extra labour was required for tasks which required a certain amount of expertise.

In North Otago towards harvest time the men used to assemble in all the villages near the station until it was overflowing with two to three hundred men dossed down in hotels, stables, lofts, or just camping out.7

What changed this large assemblage, was first the introduction of mechanisation. The New Zealand Farmer in its 1895 issues was printing such advice as:

... everything should be got in readiness for the work as soon as possible. Look carefully to your machinery; have all necessary repairs or alterations affected .... Lay in a sufficient quantity of twine for the reapers and binders, have all the parts thoroughly oiled and working smoothly. 8

And in February the same year:

Machines are at work in early oats before Christmas and this week harvest is general. There is not nearly the amount of crop this year that was expected ... and consequently there are more hands, than are required to harvest it. 9

7. ibid., pp. 32 and 101.
8. The New Zealand Farmer, Jan., 1895, p.4, cl. d.
9. ibid., Feb., 1895, p. 58, cl. c.
The men who would have helped with the above harvest were out of work because of a smaller croppage and through the use of machines:

... in the country districts, large estates can be worked by agricultural machinery attended by a few hands, where, under the old conditions, hundreds of persons would have been employed. There can be but one result to all this - namely, the increase of "unemployed" year by year.... 10

The introduction of machinery made the farmer less reliant upon "promiscuous labour". But with reports like those at Leeston:

Sixteen threshing machines, employing two hundred men have been in full swing since the first week of February 1899, and they will not have the threshing done before the end of next month [May]. 11

One wonders how many men would previously have been employed to do the threshing. Appendix A2 shows the details of what machines were actually taking over the work that the swagger would have once performed, with approximate dates of their introduction.

First came reapers and binders, which followed one after the other cutting down the heavy crops of wheat. A newspaper article about James Mackintosh's career between 1860 and 1885, reported that in the early 1880s he acquired twenty-five reapers and binders. Correspondence relating to the above article, said that by 1880 there were more than forty machines at work in Southland alone. In 1869, Reid and Gray of Oamaru demonstrated their reaping machine, resulting in

10. Tregear, AJHR, 1894, H-6, p.4.
twenty-two being manufactured during the season. To demonstrate its use, this machine cut ninety acres of forty bushel crop in five and a half days "in first class style". One farmer in the area, Mr Meek, used as many as ten of these machines in a paddock, with seven men required for each machine and perhaps another thirty more stockin'. This meant that approximately 100 men took the place of the 150 to 200 previously employed.

When the binder was introduced in the late 1870s, another farmer, Mr Mitchell, worked three machines in a single paddock employing fifteen to twenty men. That is, another ten to fifteen men, at least, were out of work.

There were various shows and competitions to demonstrate these machines - competitive trials to compare performance and brand names. Reports like the following were common:

A public trial of the Howard reaper and binder will be held on Friday first, in Mr Robert Brin's paddock of oats near the Junction Hotel. Mr James Reid, the local agent, invites farmers and others to be present.

Again, at the Christchurch Show in 1895, such machines as ploughs, drills, scufflers, harrows, curd cutters, threshing machines, traction engines and portable engines were exhibited. The Southland show also demonstrated the farmers'
'favourite' combined grain drill, which could be adapted to all manner of crops, including peas, beans, turnips, oats, wheat, barley and maize. Machines were constructed to remove tree stumps, to dig potatoes, to thin the turnips, in fact to do most of the small, time-consuming jobs. Traction engines to pull these new innovations became increasingly popular. In 1894, there were over 200 in Canterbury alone which were used for driving threshing machines, chaff-cutters and every conceivable implement.

The machine that revolutionised the pastoral runs was the shearing machine. Robert Wallace in his book on Australian and New Zealand farming noted that shearing machines were rapidly being introduced especially in large holdings where the expense of supplying the necessary power to drive them, owing to the amount of work achieved, was of little consequence. Those machines were operated by any common source of power - wind, water, steam, gas or hand-labour.

_16. ibid., Feb., 1895, p. 51, cl. b, c._
_17. ibid., Oct., 1895, p. 400, cl. d._
_18. ibid., Mar., 1905, p. 235, cl. b. Announces the trial of Mr F.O. Andrew's patent potato digging machine on 7 Feb._
_19. Farmers' Advocate, 23 Jan., 1904. Had been tried but unsuccessfully prior to the development of this machine in 1904._
_20. Mr McLachlan, PD, 1894, Vol. 85, pp. 230 b - 231 b. Also in 1895, The New Zealand Farmer reported "The traction engine in some parts of New Zealand is still a novelty, but in Canterbury and other provinces of the South Island it is almost as common a feature as the Singer's sewing machine van"._
Wallace feels that they were important because the shearer no longer needed the same skill, in fact, an unskilled man could easily use them.\textsuperscript{22}

The use of threshing machines was brought to the notice of parliament in 1894\textsuperscript{23} because the operators wanted protection against mortgaged crops, that is, to ensure they got paid if they accidentally threshed a crop which was mortgaged. An ordinary threshing plant in Canterbury and Otago cost about £1,000 complete, therefore not all farmers could afford one. This, then, introduces a second cause in the decrease in the usage of the swagger - the utilization of contractors and village labourers. This is particular true in North Otago because of its close proximity to Oamaru. The introduction of this practice tended to reduce the labour competition to a minimum, but was highly economical in regard to time and travelling.\textsuperscript{24} The gang knew where and when they were going to work. Casual work as well as threshing, harvesting and shearing, all came to be done by contract - turnip thinning at ten shillings an acre, stooking and forking wheat at two shillings an acre, hedge cutting at from sixpence a chain.\textsuperscript{25} This system worked against the swagger, as he not only lost the work he traditionally did, but found it exceedingly difficult to get into the contract gangs:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} ibid., p. 378.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} PD, 1894, Vol. 84, p. 559, cl.b.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Belshaw et al., Agricultural organisation in New Zealand: a survey of land utilization, farm organization, finance and marketing, (Melbourne, 1936), p. 201.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Scatter, op. cit., p. 24.
\end{itemize}
The travelling swagger often finds it difficult to get employment, as the local contractors know where to get good workmen amongst the small farmers here without trusting to casual labour. 26

There was this greater tendency to use local small farmers who

... while cultivating their holdings or, perhaps, only their gardens are, in the country, grouped in villages or near stations. They provide the general, agricultural and pastoral labour and are to be relied upon in case any of their richer neighbours wish to employ them. 27

For example, at Five Forks in North Otago, there were men who did contract work and share-cropping on the Elderslie and Balruddery estates. 28

Another factor affecting the swagger was the break-up of the large estates to small farms; farms that required little extra labour. No longer was there the bigness associated with the large runs, a sentiment expressed by George Meek:

We have seen the last big shearing, we have baled the last big clip; We have railed the last big tally from the sheep's back to the ship; We have seen the last big muster, with its hundred thousand sheep The last big pastoral holding, with its thousand square mile sweep. 29.

The new, smaller farms, could be run effectively by the farmer

27. Tregear, AJHR, 1895, H-6, p.1.
29. George Meek, 'Station Days in Maoriland', in Station Days in Maoriland and other Verses, (Oamaru, 1952), p. 11.
and his family. Table 2 shows the increasing numbers of relatives being used in both agricultural and pastoral farms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1886</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>10,989</td>
<td>14,286</td>
<td>12,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>11,097</td>
<td>14,660</td>
<td>13,579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Showing the number of relatives assisting on the different types of farms.

Ref.: N.Z. Census, 1886, 1891, 1901.

As can be ascertained the greatest increase came in the five year period between 1886 and 1891. Part of this marked increase is probably explained by the depression that hit the New Zealand farmer in the late 1880s. This too would account for the slight fall in numbers by the 1901 Census. But as the 1890s progressed it was noticeable that farmers tended to use more family labour than outside help.

By about 1872, much of North Otago was divided into large freehold estates. This period was a time of the "strong, romantic appeal in station life", ...

the big homesteads ... the freehanded owner with his generous hospitality and kindly interest in his men, the trim station buildings, the great flocks, the bustle of shearing time .... 30

But it was becoming clear that no matter how generous the owner, the system had reached the limits of its economic utility and that land monopoly was retarding the development of both population and production. So from about 1879, the estates began to be subdivided (refer Appendix B).

In 1879, there had been 466 landholdings in North

30. K.C. McDonald, History of North Otago, (Oamaru, 1940), p. 188.
Otago, by 1884 there were 592. By 1902, a total of 44,000 acres had been acquired in the area at a cost of about £300,000, dividing six estates into 252 farms. Teaneraki, excluded from the above figures, was one of the first estates bought up by the government under the terms of the Land Act of 1892. It was divided to form a village settlement of thirty-one sections from five to twenty acres and offered for lease in perpetuity on 7 February, 1894. While in May, 1896, sixty-four sections of the Ardgowan estate were offered.

Support for the break-up of the large runs included Oamaru businessmen who published the Oamaru Mail, mainly because closer settlement would result in more people and accordingly more business. The swagger was naturally an opponent to the development although not necessarily vocal. To him the hospitality of the large run holder was his livelihood - a man he could rely on for work, food and shelter:

We loved the good old station life
on Kiley's Run
With little thought of care or strife.
Old Kiley seldom used to roam
He liked to make the Run his home
The swagmen never turned away
With empty hand at close of day
From Kiley's Run.

31. ibid., pp. 167-9
33. ibid.; D Hamer, 'Towns in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', NZJH, Vol. 13, (Apr. 1979), pp. 5-20, sees the towns in general represented by urban storekeepers and newspaper men wanting subdivision of the land. Not only because it would mean more customers, but because it would represent a clear-cut distinction between urban and rural.
But even on the Kiley Run, once it was sold and renamed Chandos Park estate

    The lonely swagman through the dark
    Must hump his swag past Chandos Park -

The lonely swagger wandering past the station that had once fed him provides graphic evidence of the change taking place.

The smaller farmer was generally poorer than his large counterpart, therefore he could not afford to issue, as the latter did, free rations to every passing swagger; a man whose labour he did not plan to utilize.

A rabbiter or digger cove will stand a chap a feed -
The poor man helps the poorer best in any time of need -
But cockatoos with decent homes and fireside warm and bright
Will send a starving fellow-man to sleep outside at night.
With stations mostly busted up that once were pretty fair
It's little wonder there's a feel of hunger in the air. 35

The smaller farm was made viable because of the development of the frozen meat industry, utilizing surplus meat that once had been killed for the swagger.

    ... the perfecting of scientific methods of freezing meat opened up a prospect of turning to better account our annual growing surplus of beef and mutton. 36

By 1885, forty-four freezing works had already been established in New Zealand, where meat was converted from an almost useless by-product into a valuable export.37

35. David McKee Wright, 'The Swagger', in Station Ballads, p. 32.
37. Belshaw et al., op. cit., p. 7.
In 1895, The New Zealand Farmer reported:

... wool is no longer king, as it used to be in these colonies .... Frozen meat is one of our principal exports. 38

Though the figures do not agree with this statement (ref. Table 3), it does offer a recognition of the increasing export value of frozen meat at the expense of wool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wool</th>
<th>Frozen Meat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>51.94</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>48.12</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>47.86</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>29.15</td>
<td>17.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: % of the total value of exports (£)


The frozen meat industry was expanding rapidly. Wallace was of the opinion that if the Belfast works had not burned down in December 1888, New Zealand could well have exported one and a quarter million carcasses. He estimated that by the end of 1890, there would be freezing space on board the ships to carry 4,432,000 carcasses of mutton. 39 All this was only eight years since the first cargo of frozen meat had been exported to England in 1882. Table 4 shows the phenomenal growth of the industry within these eight years.

38. The New Zealand Farmer, May, 1895, pp. 161, cl.b - 162, cl.g; June 1895, p. 199, cl.d.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total (in lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1,707,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>9,853,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>28,445,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>33,204,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>38,758,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>45,035,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>61,857,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>73,564,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>100,934,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Exports of Frozen Meat


What this meant in the countryside, was that the pastoralist no longer held the pre-eminent position he had once claimed as his. In fact, refrigeration was changing the entire country:

The gruff, hardy old-time squatter in the main has journeyed west;  
The refrigerating bus'ness has since changed the sheepman's guest;  
And will serve its useful purpose, till more scientific ways  
Are devised, then it will vanish, like the good old station days. 40

Refrigeration made the smaller scale intensive farming viable and these smaller farms had little need for extra labour.

40. George Meek, 'Station Days in Maoriland' in *Station Days in Maoriland*, p. 11.
... the greater number of settlers in this district have small holdings and therefore do most of the labour required themselves. 41

The use of machinery together with co-operative action between neighbours meant that there was no longer a use for the swagger;

Every farm had a reaper. For stacking, however, more men were needed and it was the custom for neighbouring farmers to combine operations. Extra labour could be drawn from the small settlements. 42

The swagger tended to regard the small farmers or cockatoos as mean and stingy; an unfair judgement because they too had a living to make, and the swagger had no place in the new system. He belonged to the period of large estates.

Other factors affecting the swagger were bad harvests and depressions. If the latter occurred the farmer would be less willing to plant additional crops and even inclined to curtail the area planted:

Landowners will spend as little money as possible and will leave the land for grass; farmers are disheartened at the bad harvest and poor prices, and numerous farms are in the market for sale ... low prices of grain, impoverishing the farmer to such an extent that he cannot afford to employ the same amount of labour as formerly. 43

The swagger, at the base of the rural hierarchical scale, was extremely vulnerable to changes in farming technology. Yet he too was beginning to adapt, utilizing the new developments to his own advantage - for example, the railway. No


43. William Farnie, AJHR, 1895, H-6, p. 29; J. Mackay, Wellington, 1895, H-6, p.16.
longer was there the need to walk all the way:

I left Palmerston at 11.45 a.m. and came by train to Marton.
I left Huntersville at 9.15 a.m. and came by train to Marton, where I put my swag on my back and walked through Bulls, London and Awahui to Feilding.
I left about 9.30 a.m. and carried my swag to the Clareville Station and came by train to Masterton. 44

The railway network fostered under Vogel's public works scheme of the 1870s, opened up the interior of New Zealand. By 1877, the North Otago railway system was completed, which meant that labour could easily travel a good distance into the region - as far as Tokarahi - while goods could be transported with greater ease. 45 The men began to arrive at the farms by horseback or gig, or on foot, having swagged from the last shed or merely from the nearest point that the coach or train had passed. 46 The times had changed, particularly for those in gangs. They now had a definite destination in mind and a means of getting there.

Besides the use of trains, the swagger was forced to adapt to the new society that was developing. Whereas the earlier swagger had been a "jack-of-all-trades" who knew how to make do with whatever scanty materials were available, the new swagger became increasingly specialised. There were few opportunities for a general labourer who could turn his hand to all manner of tasks in an increasingly sophisticated

44. Cox Diaries, 30 Mar. 1892; 5 Apr. 1892; 12 Aug. 1892.
45. McDonald, op. cit., p. 125.
46. HEB, 'Shearing Time', in Otago Witness, 13 Jan., 1931.
society. The advent of machinery meant that a greater mechanical aptitude was required than in the past. Skills that needed a slow accumulation of experience became less necessary. No longer was maturity and responsibility a major concern, instead what mattered was whether or not you could work the machine.

This trend was reinforced by the development of unions. In 1890, the Oamaru Labourers' Union was established, laying down rules and rates of pay for shearsers and other labourers working in the country in a publication entitled 'Shearers and Labourers' Log' (ref. Appendix C). This marked the start of specialisation. Now a swagger became a shearer or a labourer subscribing to union notions of collective bargaining and security. At Benmore Station in December 1893, for example, there was a dispute between the shearsers and manager as to shearing wet sheep. Similarly, Bowland Station in the Wairarapa in January, 1894, the men wanted £1 per 100 sheep extra because the food supplied was bad and the sleeping conditions were in a stable with the rabbiteres and their dogs. These one-time swaggers were beginning to press home their demands for a living wage in addition to adequate living and working conditions.

To counteract this growing unionism, the Benmore Station brought men over from Australia for the next season; others hired Chinese or any other men who were willing to work for

47. Gibbons, op. cit., p. 16.
49. Tregear, AJHR, 1894, H-6, pp. 1-2.
lower wages:

I asked a cove for shearin' once along the Martha guy:
"We shear non-union here" says he. "I call it scab", says I.
I looked along the shearing floor before I turned to go -
There were eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-shearing in a row. 50

Nevertheless, the unions must have had some effect. In December 1905, the Otago Shearers' Union took steps against any sheep owner not endeavouring to secure the election of a shed representative immediately after calling the roll. 51

By 1931, the shearer were paid an award rate of 27s 6d in comparison with the 15s per hundred sheep in the 1890s.
The prescribed accommodation was cubicles fitted with stretchers, mattresses and pillows; with bathrooms, kitchen and dining room made available to them. The flocks were not so large and shearing machines were used extensively. 52

One aspect of unionisation was the recognition that the opportunities were no longer available to those who wanted to move about. Transiency was viewed unfavourably, so the itinerant worker had to develop a skill and to make do.
To make this transformation, he became militant, struck for what he considered to be his right. Even so, in the earlier days of the embryo unions, the farmer still had the upper

50. 'Banjo' Paterson, 'A Bushman's Song' in Macartney, op. cit., p. 65.
52. HEB, 'Shearing Time', op. cit.
hand because he could get alternative labour, normally from Australia, as illustrated by the Benmore Station strike.

The union trend alarmed some people:

... those who can calmly and judicially examine the claims of those who recognise in unionism a present salvation from all the ills that labouring flesh is heir to. 53

A fear that men would use the unions to better their conditions at the expense of their employers. Swaggers who tried to claim union rates for the work they undertook did not get a good reception. One lady recounted an incident with a man who came to her looking for work:

I started him pulling up weeds in the garden, and after doing a couple of hours' work I gave him 5s and a good dinner. However, this was no good to him, and he demanded 16s 8d, stating that this was the award rate. Considering that he came to my house pleading poverty and that I only gave him work out of sympathy, I consider that his demand was unjust. 54

Similarly there was little sympathy for workers unwilling to work below union rates:

... the Workers' Union have passed word to their men to avoid coming to this district for the harvest. Better advice was never given. When men are offered 8d an hour, and rather than take less than 9d, prefer to go idle, it is their own lookout; there are plenty of hands in the country unconnected with any union, who will reap the benefit of full employment at 8d and the ninepenny men will have the pleasure of looking on. 55

This problem became acute, especially when there was a scarcity of farm labour, early in the twentieth century:

53. NOT, 31 Jul., 1890, p.3, cl.c.
54. J.H. Beattie, Clippings, Newspaper clippings held in Hocken Library.
"That the attention of the Government be drawn to the scarcity of farm labour."

Mr Leadly said he and his neighbour had been put to serious inconvenience through want of labour - some farmers were compelled to do their own ploughing. 56

The farmers tended to blame this problem on Government legislation:

The Labour Department should not be surprised that men in the country have a distaste for hard work, when their fellows in the town are able to restrict their output, shorten their hours and obtain increased pay - when, in fact, organised idleness is a success. 57

The Arbitration Act was singled out for attack. Its chief effect, it was felt, was

...to enable "born-tired" socialists to avoid work as much as possible, and to extract the maximum amount of pay from employers. 58

The Farmers' Union, of which The Farmer's Advocate was the official mouthpiece, claimed that those who did not want to work in the country were suffering from the new disease that was ravaging New Zealand; "born-tired".

This scarcity of labour in the country was more noticeable when there were good harvests:

So abundant was the supply [of wheat and other cereals] that in several parts of the South Island the scarcity was of hands to gather in the crop and not of material to garner. 59


57. The Farmer's Advocate, 3 Sep., 1904, p. 76.


59. AJHR, 1899, H-11, Tregear, p.i; John Lomas, Christchurch, p. xi; L.D. Browett, Napier, p.xiv; P. McCormack, Leeston, p.xx. This scarcity of labour is also evident in the demands of the New Zealand Farmers' Union for increased immigration especially agricultural labourers and domestics.
Many did literally go on until they dropped:

He came one winter evening when the tree
Hunched its back against the rain and made
His camp, and slept, and did not wake again. 64

Men like Joe Fleming, the swagger poet, who was found frozen
to death, with his own obituary in his pocket:

Poor Old Joe Fleming had a habit
He never burrowed like a rabbit
Across the countryside far and wide
He walked until one night he died. 65

Others tried the Old Man's Home, but found that the closed
space was too restrictive, and left after a couple of weeks.
Others lasted until the spring came and were off again; men
like Barney Winter who having spent the winter in the Oamaru
Old Man's Home, was on the road again with the first sign
of spring, enjoying the life he loved, earning his keep by
entertaining those around him.66 He died in the Victoria
Home in Oamaru on 14 July, 1911. The Shiner became an
inmate of the Old Man's Home in Tyne Street, Oamaru, where
he used to "wander up and down the old street, a lonely
old man, seemingly without friend or kin, unknown to those
that passed him as they were unknown to him, for those were
of a later generation". The Shiner's friends had "gone on"
ahead of him.67 He actually died in the Caversham Benevo-
 lent Institution in August, 1927, so he too must have gone

64. Nancy Cato, 'The Dead Swagman', in Thompson et al. (ed.)
The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Verse, (Great

65. Lee, 'The Swaggers', in New Zealand Heritage, the Making
of a Nation, pt. 60, p. 55.

66. Gladys Nicholson-Garrett, St Bathans, (Dunedin, 1977),
p. 74.

67. Oamaruvian, op. cit., p. 120.
on the road again. To the swagger an old man's home was a totally different life from that which any of them had experienced:

Their arms were strong, their eyes were bright, and all the world was at their feet; And now they're in the Old Man's Home - dead beat. 68

The number of old men on the road caused the Labour Department some anxiety. They were men who had

... long since passed the meridian of life, and are not physically equal to the rough and arduous life of co-operative railways and roadworks. 69

The Department wanted to provide some alternative arrangements for them, particularly in the area of lighter tasks being made available to them:

I am of the opinion that something ought to be done to relieve those old men; they are not fit to compete in the labour market with young men, of whom there is an abundance. The old men are to be pitied, especially in winter-time, having to travel wet roads, with no certainty of a night's shelter. 70

... How best to utilise the labour of old men has occupied my attention for some time past ... vine-culture in Central Otago ... attempt to cultivate New Zealand flax-plant. 71

Because it was positively unkind to place many of these men on the average co-operative works; "yet in their zeal to

68. David McKee Wright, 'In the Old Man's Home', in Station Ballads, p. 23.
70. D. Brosnahan, Waipawa, AJHR, 1898, H-6, p. xlix.
obtain employment they often press unduly to be sent to such works". 72

Before any of these schemes took shape, Richard Seddon introduced his Old Age Pension. He estimated that there were 21,756 people in the colony over the age of sixty-five. 73 This shows a marked increase in the number of old people in New Zealand, as the 1886 census shows only 10,433 people over sixty-five, plus another 2,161 of unspecified ages. Of the total number over sixty-five, 6,003 were male, while in 1896, 12,156 were male, an increase of over two hundred percent in ten years. 74 This increase in the numbers of old people was due to the fact that the young men of the early days in New Zealand were growing old.

Provisions in the Old Age Pensions Act provided for only 20,000 because a large number would be unable to comply with the conditions. Gaining a pension was so involved that Reeves considered that less than forty percent of the aged would be entitled to it. First the applicant had to be sixty-five years or more, and to have spent at least twenty-five years in the country. To have left the country for more than two years during that period automatically disqualified the applicant. Those with an income of more than thirty-four pounds per year, or holding a property

72. D. Brosnahan, Waipawa, AJHR, 1898, H-6, p. xlv.
73. Seddon, PD, 1897, Vol. 100, p. 56a.
valued at more than fifty pounds were ineligible. Also excluded were "aliens, nomads, and Asiatics ... criminals, drunkards, wife-deserters and those living a scandalous and notoriously immoral life". More than five years in gaol disqualified the applicant, who was supposed to have led a sober and respectable life for at least five years prior to applying. In fact, a man had to be a veritable saint before he could earn a pension.

Where did this leave the swagger then? A man with an income of less than thirty-four pounds per year, and no property, but who sometimes left the country to work in Australia:

There are hundreds of working men now who leave these shores for about three months each year to shear in the Australian Colonies. 76

The swagger was known for his drinking bouts with most of the country considering him a drunkard. He had normally spent some time in gaol even if it was only for the winter months. But above all he was a nomad. So where did this leave the swagger? Under the criteria of the Act he was largely excluded, though some swaggers must have found ways around the regulations. Men like Jack Vincent who worked but spent all his money on beer. Jack Vincent was the name he gave when he got into any trouble, but he had another name which he was planning to use when the time came to apply for his pension - a name that would be as clean as snow. 77

76. Mr Flatman, PD, 1897, Vol. 100, p. 88.
77. Helen Wilson Tapes.
The Labour Department applauded the new system, attributing the reduction in the numbers of wandering unemployed to the Old Age Pension. If this was true then more swaggers than envisaged must have found ways to get the pension. Agents reported:

Old and decrepit men, who were only fit to be inmates of some charitable home, are not, as formerly, to be found on the roads. This no doubt is owing to the passing of "The Old-Age Pensions Act, 1898". 78

So after 1898, all that were theoretically left on the road were those men too old to work, but too recently in New Zealand to qualify, and those

... who prefer leading a Bohemian life, having no care or trouble, and appearing to be quite as happy as the man in regular employment. 79

Men who would walk until they died or were forced into the Old Man's Home, doing a little work here and there, but largely existing on what they were given.

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78. AJHR, 1899, H-11, Tregear, p.i; Charles Bowden, Pahiatua, p. xvii; 1900, Charles Bowden, Pahiatua, p. xvi.
For years swaggers have been as rare as the tui or parrakeet. Now they may be seen in many parts of New Zealand.... One wonders why the bluey, the billy and the Crimean shirt have made their reappearance. Is it a sign of the times, or is it that the recent arrivals, the designated immigrants, consider this the correct style of making their appearance in the Antipodes? 1

The depression swagger was essentially a different type of man, on the road simply because he was unemployed. He was, in fact, tramping

... in search of self-respect, of a life less soul-destroying than the dole queue or weed-chipping on city pavements. 2

He wanted to get out of the city:

Things were bad in Auckland. The first thing they knew they were out of money and standing in a food queue.

"There's no sense in this", Scotty said. "These towns never did me any good..."

He wanted to go on north and get into the country again, but Scotty wouldn't go. 3

There was always the hope that the situation would be better in the country, but this seemed to be a false hope:

... this comes of living in towns, I'll get to hell out of here the first thing I can, it can't be worse in the country. But men coming in every day to the camp from the country said it was worse, farmers were turning off old hands, working themselves the way they'd never worked before, getting sold up by the banks. 4

Swagging was a way to fill in time until a brighter day came,

4. ibid., p. 46.
until the economic situation was in a better condition; they were men working where they could and waiting. However, the altering circumstances within New Zealand were greatly influencing people's opinions:

Johnson felt the temper of the country changing. It had always been a lucky country, a country where if a man were well and strong, he could wander about and live well and eat well, where everybody was your friend in a hard, casual way, where a man tramping the roads in the back country could be sure of a night's rest and a meal wherever he stopped. It was strange to see how things changed now that the luck had turned, how people grew uneasy and careful with each other and kept to themselves, watching and saving what they had. 5

How did this sort of attitude affect the swagger, a man who traditionally relied on the good will and hospitality of the rural areas?

Within the Maniototo district the numbers of swaggers were never too great; Mr Bruhns saw about two or three per month, but that was during the summertime, so there might have been a few more in the winter when it was harder to get work; Mr McAtamney saw about one per year but this number seems too low to be realistic, Mr Dickson, in contrast, saw about eight or nine a year. So the numbers were paltry. Mr McLaren thinks this is because the country was so depressed that the farmers could not be bothered with them. This is substantiated by Mr Strode who said that Naseby, the major town in the district at the time, was very badly hit by the depression.

5. ibid., p. 42.
Most of those who did come into the area were past middle age, but still capable of doing farm work. Some had specific skills such as sharpening knives, scissors and other tools. One swagger, Mr Ramsay remembers, was a qualified carpenter who stayed in the district for some time building several houses. These men, for the large part, seem to be men whose skills were no longer required in the towns because of business closures and because their skills might be regarded as "luxury" skills. If there was no money around people are not going to want houses built or others to sharpen their knives when they probably did an adequate job themselves.

The majority were about middle-age; the first group that got the sack if a business was getting near to closing - the older ones with no dependents rather than the younger man who had a wife and children to support.

Contrary to what Mulgan said, the swagger on the Maniototo was treated considerately. He was always fed (whether it be by the wife or the cook) with the workers, the family, or alone:

They usually arrived in the late afternoon and were given an evening meal and breakfast before they moved on, both of which meals, in our household, were eaten with the family. Some households gave them their meal apart, no doubt, but my mother believed in the equality of all men and made no distinction.

6. Correspondence with Mr Ramsay, Appendix D1.
7. ibid.
8. ibid.
Even when the depression was at its height, when there was little money and not much work in the offing some swaggers were happy to work for their keep for a while, though "we always paid them something". Even Johnson, John Mulgan's hero, who was searching for work in this period, found himself in a similar situation:

'I got a job', Stenning said, 'but there'll be no wages, not to speak of. You know what I took off my farm last year? Fifty-two pounds. I can keep you in tobacco, some money if we make it.'

Though his wife was not too pleased:

'And who he is God knows, and you don't, and up to no good around here. But that doesn't matter to you that I've enough work already without cooking and feeding him as well. And I suppose you think there's enough food in this house for everybody?'

But in general, even if the money was not available, there was still the sense of what is mine is yours.

At some places the swagger was asked to work for his supper, but not at many. At places like the Kyeburn Station they were sometimes asked to chop wood or to fill the coal buckets. But there was a tendency of not asking them to do too much because they were not listed as

9. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*, p. 79.
12. The same sentiment had been evident in the 1880s depression, when distressed runholders met to discuss whether or not to continue giving free hospitality to the swaggers. 'Big Jack' McLean of Morven Hills, stood up and in a gruff Scottish burr, declared: 'If there's only one Merino left on Morven Hills, I'll share it with a swagger'. William Vance, *High Endeavour: Story of the Mackenzie Country*, (Timaru, 1965), p. 68.
permanent staff on insurance lists in cases of accidents and possible injury. 13

On the whole, the swagger once again seems to have behaved himself. The country people accepted him as part of the rural life and "I am sure genuine people showed no resentment to them". There was no record of using threats and indeed "this would have been self-defeating, as such news would soon be spread". 14 There were no threats of troubles, mainly because people were very tolerant towards them. Food and even work was found when it was required, no matter how badly the farmer had been hit by the depression.

When comparing these swaggers with those in the nineteenth century, it becomes apparent that these men were searching for work, hoping that they would find it in a system that had employed a previous generation. But, though they were tolerated, the work they actually did was minimal, non-essential; mainly domestic chores.

Miss K.E. Goulter says that during the depression years she never heard her family refer to 'tramps' or 'swaggers', it was always 'a man off the road'. 15 This does not hold true in the Maniototo where the swagger was always a swagger. Another thing she remembers was their "stillness":

13. Interview with Mr Strode, Appendix E1.
14. Correspondence with Mr Ramsay, Appendix D1.
They rarely smiled, and seldom spoke, except to thank for the handout and to add the invariable "Any change of a shakedown for the night?" 16

Another indication perhaps of the seriousness that swagging had come to mean. No longer the light-hearted loafer, instead the swagger had been transformed into a man intent on finding a way to exist. Though this type of swagger had existed in the nineteenth century, he was in the minority.

Once the depression ended, the swagger again disappeared, except for the die-hard professional. Yet another indication that the swagger on the road during the depression was on it out of necessity and not from choice. Once the economy recovered the swagger died out. He had no part in the existing rural life, though he was treated well by the country folk. He was just marking time until the economic situation improved and he again could work at his chosen profession. As in the late 1890s, any swagger left on the road was absorbed into the community through state aid. The late 1930s system was more comprehensive, in the form of the developing Welfare State and Social Security. A universal superannuation scheme provided a benefit, as distinct from charity or a pension, for people over sixty-five years. For the unemployed, public works programmes commenced with full pay rather than relief wages. This creation of the Welfare State took away the

16. ibid., p. 76
last fetters of shame surrounding charitable aid, while at the same time, providing a means for a family to live, even during times of unemployment. There was no place left for the swagger in this new world; he had been made redundant.
CHAPTER SIX: THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND

SWAGGER AND MATESHIP

On sunset tracks they ride and tramp
Till speech has almost died,
And still they drift from camp to camp
In silence side by side.
They think and dream, as all men do;
Perchance their dreams are great -
Each other's thoughts are sacred to
The swagman and his mate. 

The concept of mateship amongst swaggers has become generally accepted as being part of the Australasian experience, especially in Australia where the swagger had a definite need for a mate. But to what extent is this true of his New Zealand counterpart? Necessity forces us to look first at the Australian swagger for an insight into why this doctrine of mateship developed, and then to compare him with the New Zealand swagger and conditions.

Russel Ward in his book, The Australian Legend, traces the Australian ideal of mateship back to the convicts in early Australia, the feeling of 'honour among thieves'.

It developed, he thinks, as an alternative to the individual cunning which the criminal had previously depended upon, to a social collective behaviour within his own group. It was his defence and means of survival against the powerful organs of state authority; an egalitarian class solidarity, based upon resourcefulness and improvisation. This idea is conveyed in the metaphor of the green stringy bark, which had numerous uses:

Stringy bark will light your fire,
Green hide will never fail yer,
Stringy bark and green hide
Are the mainstay of Australia.

Ward continues to trace mateship through the bush-workers to the diggers where alluvial mining could only be performed effectively by teams of at least two or three men. The diggers were known to enforce their own justice. Punishment was a rough expulsion from the fields which more or less accounted to exclusion from all fields because of the nomadic habits of the diggers. Again, mateship was based upon adaptability and egalitarian independence.

before Australia was colonized. Coral Lansbury, 'The Miner's Right to Mateship', Meanjin Quarterly, Vol. 25 (1966), pp. 435-443, also traces the origins back to Britain, but to the mining classes of Northumberland, Durham and Wales. The consensus of opinion is that mateship did exist in Australia, what is disputed is its origins, and what group most valued the doctrine of mateship.


While a code of honour existed within each group, it was confined only to that group. A man was despised if he robbed his mates:

... there was a great deal better feeling existing than I subsequently observed in Victoria; no-one scarcely remained to take care of the tents during the day ... and at night no-one thought of taking their mining tools away from their claim, and I scarcely heard of any being stolen, and no-one made any hesitation of lending another a crow-bar or anything they wanted, no matter whether a stranger or not, it was sure of being returned. 6

This, then, was a sense of brotherhood, a common class joined together for mutual interest based on ideas of equality, independence and versatility. It should be noted at this stage, that it was an equality among white men, rigidly exclusive of any Asians, though other coloured people were sometimes accepted. 7

The conditions of Australia, more particularly those of the outback, made a sense of brotherhood important. It was required to combat the harsh climatic conditions, the geographic and personal sense of isolation. Security came from knowing that someone would help if problems occurred:

6. ibid., p. 114.

7. ibid., p. 122. This same sentiment is expressed by Lawson in 'The Shearers', Roderick, Vol. 2, p. 12:

And tho' he may be brown or black
    Or wrong man there or right man
The mate that's honest to his mates
    They call that man a "white man"!

In New Zealand, a half caste negro, Billy Parker, swaggered around the Hyde area, Correspondence with John F. Ramsay, Appendix D1. Henderson, Swagger Country, p. 27, recounts a story of a Chinese swagger around Waimate, pushing a small hand cart of vegetables, who was always viewed with some apprehension. But whether he was accepted within the brotherhood of swagger is unknown.
On the last day lost on the lignum plain,
  When I staggered half blind, half dead...
When life seemed finished - then death began
  As down in the dust I sank,
But he stuck to his mate as a Bushman can,
  Till I heard him saying "Bear up, old man!"
In the shade by the mulga tank. 8

Climatic conditions in the outback were harsh:

  ... roads were hot and dusty, and the plains were
    burnt and brown
Where the sunbaked earth was gasping like a creature
    in its pain
You would find the grasses waving like a summer grain
  And the miles of thirsty gutters, blocked with sand
    and choked with mud
You will find then mighty rivers with a turbid sweeping flood. 9

The mateship that developed held in it common practical ideals
of rules of conduct, or habitual modes of thought and action.
The harsh realities of the bush and outback had dictated that
such an institution as mateship should exist. The hardship,
the hazards, but above all, the loneliness of the interior
meant that every man had to treat another as his brother,
because in cases of accident or illness the individual was
completely dependent upon whoever was nearest.

  Ward follows this sense of mateship through to the devel-
  opment of unions:

Unions came to the Australian bushman as a religion.
  It came bringing salvation from years of tyranny.
It had in it that feeling of mateship which he
  understood already, and which always characterised
  the action of one 'white man' to another. Union-
    ism extended the idea, so a man's character was
      gauged by whether he stood true to union rules or
        'scabbed' it on his fellows. The man who never

went back on the union is honoured today as no other is honoured or respected. 10

Unionism was a symbol of a man's loyalty to his mate, and the most dangerous threat to it came from the Asiatic, who was prepared to undermine the union by working non-union. Paterson writes of Moneygrub, a London absentee owner, who instructs the manager of his Australian property:

'You are on no account to employ Union Shearers this year, and you must cut expenses as low as you can. Would it not be feasible to work the station with the Colonial-experience men and Chinese labour?' 11

When you compare Australia with America, both countries with large open frontiers, you find that while one developed the ideal of individualism the other turned to collectivism. Carter Goodrich attributes this to the fact that the American frontier was largely a small man's territory, the Australian frontier belonged to the large man. The little man in Australia, therefore, had to develop a defence against the big man. The shearing sheds, camps and settlements developed this sense of comradeship and brotherhood, with the choice of co-operating with others or dying. Predictably, he took the former choice. 12 So overall, this sense of brotherhood was a defence against elements the small man could not control.


But Australian mateship developed into something even deeper — that of a more restricted and personal sense, normally between two swaggers or bushmen:

There is a great deal of this mutual regard and trust engendered by two men working thus together in the otherwise solitary bush, habits of mutual helpfulness arise, and these elicit gratitude, and that leads on to regard. Men under these circumstances often stand by one another through thick and thin; in fact, it is a universal feeling that a man ought to be able to trust his own mate in anything. 13

The mate was a comforter to offset the individual from the loneliness of their lives and to protect him against its dangers. He was a companion, a protector and above all a mate. With this mate, he shared his money, his goods and even his secret aspirations, and for whom he was prepared to make almost any sacrifice, even when his mate was wrong:

We could have started on the back track at once, but, drunk or sober, mad or sane, good or bad, it isn't bush religion to desert a mate in a hole. 14

Macquarie, who on being admitted to hospital with three fractured ribs, a cracked head and various abrasions, was all set to leave when he learn that his dog and mate, Tally, was not allowed to remain in the hospital:


He stooped and lifted his swag, but the pain was too great, and he leaned back against the wall. 15

He was not going to desert his mate:

"That there dog, is a better dog than I'm a man ... and a better Christian. He's been more a mate to me than I ever was to any man ... or any man to me. He's watched over me; kep' me from getting robbed many a time; fought for me; saved my life, and took drunken kicks and curses for thanks - and forgave me. He's been a true, straight, honest and faithful mate to me - and I ain't going to desert him now...." 16

This was the task of the true mate, the dog fulfilling his part of mateship. Now Macquarie had to fulfil his. Tally, for his part, is admirably rewarded - a recognition of his worth:

"Oh, the dog's all right" said the nurse, rather impatiently. "Don't bother. The doctor's setting his leg out in the yard". 17

Again in Vance Palmer's story, The Cook's Mate, the cook's mate is given a job, although useless, simply because he is the cook's mate and the cook is popular. As the job nears the end the mate disappears with £13. The boss proposes to put the mounted police on his tracks:

The cook's red face showed genuine signs of distress. He was getting his blankets together and rolling them into a swag. 'No, don't do that, Boss', he pleaded. 'For God's sake keep it quiet. It's up to me to stand the racket and I don't mind ... he's a mate of mine.... This ain't the first time he's done it on me - no, nor the fourth - but a man's got to stick to his mate and see him through.... You take it out of my cheque, and I'll take it out of him'. 18

16. ibid., p. 34.
17. ibid., p. 35.
He was still his mate, and whether right or wrong, he remained his mate.

This deeper sense of mateship was a sense of sharing - material and spiritual - as well as one of common experiences.

I had a chum, when the times were tight
We starved in Australian scrubs;
We froze together in parks at night,
And laughed together in pubs! 19

Lawson explores this theme again in 'Since Then':

By the tracks we camped far out -
The sweltering scrub and the blazing flat
When the heat came down through each old felt hat
In the hell-born Western drought.

The cheques we made and the shanty sprees
The camps in the great blind scrub,
The long wet tramps when the plains were seas,
And the oracles worked in days like these
For rum and tobacco and grub. 20

Spiritual in the form of shared confidences:

Those old men had each three pasts behind them.
The two they had told each other when they became mates, and the one they shared. 21

This gave each mate a greater understanding of the other:

Sometimes he might have seemed strange and uncouth to us at first, but the old man never appeared the least surprised at anything he said or did - they understood each other so well. 22

This, then, was the Australian sense of mateship. A sense that existed on two levels, that of a brotherhood and that on a more personal level - the wider and the more

22. ibid., p. 21.
particular. When Russel Ward dissects a 'Typical Australian' one of the qualities he finds is mateship, where a man will stick to his mates through thick and thin, right or wrong.23 Crossing the Tasman, we find what looks like a similar man, but what importance did mateship play in his experience?

The New Zealand swagger, in comparison, seems to have been a loner, even though the broader concept of brotherhood did exist. Normally, he travelled alone, although every now and again he might travel with a partner, but not for long because New Zealand had opportunities that the Australian outback lacked:

We were mates, and that didn't mean jokers who meets for a year or a day,
We meant to go jogging together the whole of the blooming long way,
We slept with one blanket between us the night that we run from the port,
There was nothing above us, but heaven, yet we took it as jolly good sport.
And now he's the boss of a station, and I'm - well, the bloke you see;
For he had the luck and I hadn't, and now he looks sideways at me. 24

By the end of the poem, he is recognized, and realises that Jack was not looking "sideways at me". But still there is


24. David McKee Wright, 'Old Mates', in Station Ballads, p. 42; there are arguments as to whether or not this social mobility existed in the Australian outback, whereas Ward stresses the frontiers as belonging to the big man, where the chances of an employee becoming an owner are slight. T. Inglis Moore in Social Patterns in Australian Literature, (Sydney, 1971), sees society as being fluid for both the station owner and bushworker; Hirst, op. cit., p. 326.
not the sense of mateship that exists in Henry Lawson's "An Old Mate of Your Father's", whereby the old mates are recognised and made welcome. An indication that the ties have been kept up. Judging from the New Zealand verse, this is not so. First, the above man does not recognise his "mate", and then there are men like Harry:

... the bloke I worked with, the time I was over the Coast,
He went for a fly-round over to Sydney to stay for a fortnight - a month at the most
He never came back, and he never wrote to me - I wonder how blokes like him forget. 26

Even the times they spent together seems much shorter than in Australia:

Then he went one way and I the other - we'd been like brothers for half a year;
He said 'I'll see you again in town mate, and we'll blow the froth off a pint of beer.
He went to a job on the plain he knewed of and I went poisoning out at the back,
Find I missed him somehow - for all my looking I never could knock across his track. 27

A true Australian swagger would never have split with his mate in such a fashion; they would both have gone to one job. But this fierce personal loyalty seems non-existent in New Zealand. Men walked together but for different reasons. The Shiner walked with the Honourable MacKay to

25. Since there is no literature relating specifically to the question of mateship within New Zealand it is necessary to rely on men who have either swagged or come into contact with swaggers. Therefore, this section relies heavily on the writings of David McKee Wright, Hamilton Thompson and John A. Lee, all who have had some contact with swaggers.


27. ibid.
Dunedin to help him spend his remittance cheque, but as soon as it is gone, it is "Must get back on me itinerary", until the next cheque comes around. Yet the Honourable Mackay was willing to share his good fortune with a fellow-swagger.

New Zealand was not big enough to harbour the personal sense of mateship - a man did better by himself - he got a better reception if he turned up singly at a house, although several might turn up from different directions. But in the morning they always left in different directions, if possible:

There was chaps from the other side that I shore with that I'd like to have taken along for mates, But we said, 'So long!' and we laughed and parted for good and all at the station gates. 29

There were not the same harsh elements as in Australia to warrant such an ideal. New Zealand had a different temperament, a different type of man with whom the swagger had to deal, and a different type of country, one that still offered opportunities. John A. Lee sums up this difference:

But there is no way of equality on the open road, only equality of opportunity. One man gets a handout and another an invitation to sit down. One man has one sort of method, one some other. Only in New Zealand when the land was young could there have been such an itinerary as the Shiner's. In the United States and in Australia the world would have been too wide for such frequent calls, in Great Britain the world would have been too crowded. 30

29. David McKee Wright, 'While the Billy Boils', in Woodhouse, p. 39.
New Zealand was the right size for a different system to evolve. And this is the essential difference between Australia and New Zealand. In the former it was bigger, and the conditions were harsher. Mateship was essential for survival. It is more evident if we compare the rural conditions of both Australia and New Zealand.

Appendix F shows the landholdings of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company in 1891. It becomes very noticeable that holdings in Australia were immense when compared with those in New Zealand. Only one New Zealand station, the Kawerau Run, exceeds the acreage of the smallest Australian station. Nowhere in New Zealand do you get stations described in terms of miles, like the Anlaby some eighteen miles in length, or the Peel River Estate, forty-six miles. Also, while the Australian stations remain pastoral, only one New Zealand and Australian Land Company station could be described as wholly pastoral, again the Kawerau Run. New Zealand had a totally different farming system, branching out more to agriculture and cross-breeding of sheep. Only in the high country do you get an inkling of the Australian-type farming, of large stations and many thousands of sheep. The numbers of sheep each station carries accentuates the differences. The New Zealand properties have an average ratio of 1.2 sheep to every acre, a figure which would be higher if the areas under cultivation or used by other livestock was taken into account. The Australian holdings of the company carry one sheep to every two acres, a remarkably low figure when

compared to other Australian stations which carry less than one sheep to twelve acres.\textsuperscript{32} Or areas of sparse rainfall and isolation from the outside world and railways which require a minimum of 5,000 sheep, or an area of 75,000-100,000 acres to prevent overstocking; 15 to 20 acres per sheep.\textsuperscript{33} We can only conclude that the Company's properties are affected by their ability to store water making them less vulnerable to low rainfall and bush fires. The impact of these factors made the Australian landscape unsuited to the small farmer or grazier. As previously mentioned, a large number of sheep had to be carried to offset losses due to extreme climatic conditions, which meant large land holding because of the low ratio of sheep per acre. So the Australian outback was a big man's frontier, while New Zealand developed more in the direction of America with individual small and middle-sized farms.

Therefore, as expected, the swagger conforms to the different rural patterns - the Australian version is totally involved in all facets of pastoral life, particularly shearing and mustering, while his New Zealand counterpart is more versatile, shifting from pastoral to agricultural farms with considerable ease. The very largeness of the Australian stations meant that a considerable number of swaggers could


be absorbed, while in New Zealand, only a certain amount of work could be provided. But New Zealand had the distinct advantage of distance. The farmer could just direct the swagger to the next farm, normally not too far away, at least nothing like the forty-six miles of the Peel River Estate. Imagine, the Australian farmer telling the swagger to move on, pointing in the vague direction of his neighbour's homestead some 20 to 40 miles distant!

Robert Wallace, while travelling in Australia, came up against this question of distance and monotony of landscape. While still relatively near to the coast, he travelled the forty-four miles from Kapunda to Clare in an open carriage drawn by a pair of good horses in five hours, in spite of the damaged conditions of the road. Judging from the map, he went through only one town large enough to be mentioned, Riverton. So what of the swagger tramping or more commonly in Australia, riding, the same track? The more he travelled inland, the less numerous the towns became, so he expected to camp out at night. The New Zealander, in comparison, was relatively assured of finding some sort of shelter for the night, because the towns were more evenly spaced to accommodate the traveller. He, therefore, could rely on himself and the closeness of the next farm, station or settlement.

Australia and New Zealand were dissimilar physically. One country was huge, with corresponding large, predominantly pastoral stations. There were few of the smaller towns and farms which were becoming prevalent in New Zealand by the

34. Wallace, op. cit., p. 7.
late 1880s and early 1890s. 35

The New Zealand swagger had no need for the personal mateship, so a different system evolved - the lone swagger on a circuit or itinerary:

"When ye've an itinerary, ye friends expect ye." 36

Mr Strode reinforces this idea when he speaks of men whose circuits took about three months to complete. When it was time you began to expect and to look out for the swagger. 37

The swagger travelled alone from place to place in a regular pattern. Circuits such as Joe Fleming's were common:

Goodbye to you, Old Geraldine, I now am on the track,
I'm going by shanks pony with my swag upon my back.
I'm going toward Temuka and if work I cannot find
I'll steer my course to Washdyke and leave Temuka far behind.
Perhaps I'll call at Timaru and round will have a look,
And if no farmers wants me there, I'll drop down to the Hook,
Then push ahead to Oamaru, Ngapara and Duntroon,
Where farmers often work by the pale light of the moon.
When harvest days are over and the corn is in the sack
I'll shoulder bluey once again and by the rattler I'll go back. 38

A man got to know the district he was walking in and because of this regularity, the swagger came to gain a knowledge of

35. Refer Appendix F2.
37. Interview with Mr Strode, Appendix El.
the houses at which he would be given food, shelter and even work. Because of this, it was thought that the swagger left signs indicating which houses were best for hospitality. Mr Dickson thought that they worked in pairs, with one ahead marking the good houses for the one behind; a slight variation on the above theme. Others thought that the information was passed on verbally. This seems closer to the truth, especially with stories of new chums joining up with someone who knows the district. William Cox was one of these:

I cannot hear of any work and the mate I have now does not want to get work, I do not know what to do, he knows the country and I do not but I fear there is small chance of getting work while I am with him. 39

He did not want to remain with his mate, but had to because he did not know the area. Similarly, the Shiner advising a new chum, a man just out of prison, how to act. First of all, the new chum had to get a swag to make him inconspicuous.

"A man on the road with a new suit, no swag. He's just out of jail." 40

And then Shiner actually takes Arthur Beaumont under his wing for a while, as an apprentice:

For a fortnight he would walk with a partner and avoid his regular places of call, "me itinerary" and live the life of an ordinary swagger, except that Arthur Beaumont would do the cadgering "to learn". He would tell him where to cadge and what to ask for, work him hard, keep him from becoming hungry and despondent when a door was slammed in his face, teach him a new trade. 41.

41. ibid., p. 131.
But it is noticeable that even though he taught Arthur the swagger "trade", the Shiner did not introduce him to his "customers" and only stayed with him until he had a job. So even though these men were considered and called mates, the relationship between them was not strong.

It should be noted that not all swaggers had a regular beat. The Honourable MacKay, for example:

"I live today because I don't know where I'll be tomorrow".... He would never know which way he would fare as he came from sleep on an average morning. 42

This idea is reinforced by the way in which each swagger viewed himself and his position. William Cox wanted work and was disheartened when he did not obtain any; his mate did not want to work if he could help it. The same applies to the Shiner who was proud of his standing and refused to go hungry, while the Honourable MacKay was more inclined to be ashamed. If he was turned away from a door, he tended to become sensitive and might walk for a couple of days until hunger brought him to the point of collapse, and then he would make up his mind and ask again with a violence akin to highway robbery. One wanted to shine, the other to be an honourable, inconspicuous citizen. The Shiner cadged his way to sit down meals in the country while the Honourable MacKay sat on his swag by the gate and waited. 43

And these were men who travelled together for a while, men recognised as mates, yet of totally different temperaments

42. ibid., p. 143.

43. Lee, Shining with the Shiner, pp. 160 and 163.
and methods that made them unsuited as mates:

They walked together. They did not share the tent. Each erected his own. The shared the fire or a room in some deserted shanty. That was different. 44.

Each New Zealand swagger seems to have had his own tent, for example, when they were gathering for shearing:

There were a dozen white calico tents under the Canterbury pines.... There were a dozen calico tents on the Wednesday night and two dozen on the Thursday. And all would strike camp sometime after midnight on Sunday to be at the station by the rise of the Monday's sun. 45

The tent, then, seems to be a symbol of privacy, something the swagger had to himself. He was quite willing to share his food, as the Shiner did with Arthur Beaumont, the camp fire and his possessions in a sense of brotherhood. But he had a sense of reserve that was unknown in Australia. He might meet in a paddock, or in a hut before shearing or harvesting, have a good time, but as soon as the job was finished, he was away, alone.

Mateship on a brotherhood level did exist, the willingness to help your brother in trouble. For example, Ned Dunne who, after being told by a stranger he had met on the road that he did not have half a crown on him, offered:

'If you are broke
    I'll wire a pound to Cromwell, for you seem a decent bloke'.
'Just stay there till tomorrow, and I'll wire a pound to you.
When I get to Alexandra and get back the borrowed two. 46

44. ibid.
45. ibid., pp. 90 and 92.
Though Ned had no money at the moment he was still willing to help out.

The Australian and New Zealand swaggers were fundamentally different in that they evolved different institutions suited to their individual environments. The question could be raised as to whether or not convict origins influenced the Australian experience. Research, by Australian historians, into the source of the doctrine, has shown that within Australian society there are many groups, who did not come into contact with the convicts, who display the same characteristics of mateship. It, therefore, becomes evident that mateship would have developed regardless of any one origin as it was essentially a unique response to the environment - the loneliness, the extreme climatic conditions, and the predominant type of farming. New Zealand's rural and physical circumstances were dissimilar, so the swagger developed totally different characteristics. The swaggers, in both New Zealand and Australia, formed part of the itinerant work forces for the large estates and stations, but there were major variations in their basic outlook.
CONCLUSION

The swagger was a non-materialistic, pre-modern man working to fulfil his modest needs rather than an obligation to society. He rejected full-time permanent wage employment, but could not be considered a parasite. He was pre-modern in the sense that around him there began to grow the ideal of a modern society - industrialised, urbanised, orderly. A society that was ideally thrifty, sober and independent, with no social problems and no non-conformist groups. The swagger did not fit into this vision. He was a transient, potentially an unstable element, and regarded as a boozer, spending all the money he had earned in one drinking bout. So the story of the swagger in the 1890s is one of how he is increasingly socialised into the community, made subject to its laws and norms.

Men had joined the swagger ranks from different backgrounds and for many reasons. But in the 1890s, this heterogenous group was being broken up, identified and eliminated. The unemployed were brought under the auspices of the Labour Department, so that they no longer aimlessly wandered around the countryside in search of work. The old man went to the Old Man's Home, or collected a pension so that he no longer had to tramp as a way of supporting himself when old age ruined his chances of permanent employment. The itinerant worker began to gain a definite skill, joined gangs and identified with that group. Unions were a form of protecting the rights of a certain skill group. No longer was he the versatile man, a jack-of-all-trades. The only remaining group
on the road was the professional swagger, on the road because he enjoyed the life or the unemployable because of his age or lack of a particular skill. The truly pre-modern man; but he was literally dying out.

The swagger in the 1890s was in a paradoxical position. The townspeople wanted him to work regularly, in a stable environment, at a time when the country was finding ways to dispense with his labour, chiefly through the development of smaller farms and the increased use of mechanisation. In this way, the swagger was forced to cease his swagging, to reorganise into different groups. So the swagger entered society not as a swagger but as a shearer or a contract labourer, or an old man. The need for the swagger was no longer existent, so with no function and no status within a rural society, he gradually changed.

The changes within the country, mirrored the changes towards the swagger. Just as the concept of mateship had developed as a response to the swagger's environment, so too had the original swagger developed in response to the needs of the large station owner. Now that that need was no longer so great, the swagger again had to change towards the new type of society that was developing. This last adaptation, however, was fatal, because the swagger lost his identity. When the swagger again appeared during the depression years it was for a specific reason: unemployment. The new society could no longer meet his needs, so he turned in desperation to the old system. But once the economic situation was again on its feet, the reason for his swagging was removed and the swagger again disappeared.
The swagger, then, was a worker, yet came to be part of an ideal which swept the country—without work, nothing. He was losing his job in the country at a time when the people were increasingly demanding that every able-bodied male should work. The swagger in the 1890s was a victim of change. A man of the old society that had to be adapted to the new. As the twentieth century began, the swagger was already becoming an extinct species.
APPENDIX A1

FARM CALENDAR

JANUARY

Harvest wheat, barley, oats
Shearing
Thin carrots and mangolds
Making hay
Sow grass

FEBRUARY

Harvest
Early potatoes lifted
Shearing stragglers
Making hay
Mustering and drafting lambs

MARCH

Harvest weaning and branding lambs
Threshing
Ewes to rams for early lambs (Aug.)
Repair work on farm buildings
Collecting peat

APRIL

Carting hay
Sow wheat
Dig up potatoes
Plough
Ewes to rams (Sept. lambs)
Cutting firewood and grubbing gorse
Maintenance work

MAY

Sow wheat, winter beans, barley
Firewood/gorse/maintenance
Harvest turnips, mangolds and carrots
Clean out and repair ditches, drains
JUNE
Sow wheat
Pull up turnips
Threshing
Cart out manure
Carting salt
Firewood/sawing timber

JULY
Put drains in
Ploughing grasslands
Firewood/sawing timber/scrub
Sledge stones for fence
Stybuilding

AUGUST
Sow oats, beans, peas
Ploughing

SEPTEMBER
Sow barley, mangolds, carrots, grass and clover seeds
Plant main potato crop
Lambing
Cart rocks for bridge
Clearing tussock

OCTOBER
Plant potatoes, turnips, carrots, parsnips
Sow lucerne
Cart rocks for bridge

NOVEMBER
Hoe carrots, mangolds
Plant cabbages
Mark, cut and tail lambs
Pre-shearers finish fences, planting potatoes and gathering scrub
General shearing
DECEMBER

Sow main crop of turnips
Sow grass-seed
Haymaking
Shearing
Weed carrots
Maintenance

Based on the diaries of Haldon Station, Puketoi Station and the farming programmes in The New Zealand Farmer, 1885.
## APPENDIX A2

### WORK PROBABLY DID

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Machine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting - wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, turnips, beans, peas making hay</td>
<td>Combined grain (peas, beans, turnips, oats, barley) dill. 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinning and hoeing carrots and mangolds</td>
<td>Potato digger 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shearing</td>
<td>Reaper 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustering</td>
<td>Binder late 1870s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Turnip thinning machine 1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewood</td>
<td>Shearing machines in use by 1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grubbing gorse</td>
<td>Smaller farms - not so many men needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sledging stones for fence</td>
<td>Stumping machine 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying drains</td>
<td>Laid by steam power in Southland 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshing</td>
<td>Use of traction engines 1895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traction engines were common in the South Island 1895

Plough
APPENDIX B

1879
Totara Estate - 2400 acres sold
Alma and Totara village sections
Meadowbank - subdivided by Mr Barraclough

1880
Incholme - 1300 acres
Floraville
Ngapara - village sections by Mr Menlove

1881
Weston - village sections by the New Zealand and Australia Co.

1882
Newborough - subdivided by Dr Fleming
Ardgowan - 630 acres subdivided

1893
Teanaraki Estate - 344 acres bought by the government
Maerewhenua - 11,163 acres by Mr J. Borton

1895
Ardgowan - 4267 acres

1896
Tokarahi - 11,259 acres by Mr A. McMasters

1899
Elderslie - 11,618 by J. Reid

1902
Windsor Park - 3821 and 2179 by Mr Menlove

1903
St Helens

1905
Waitaki Plains - 21,936 acres by St John Buckley

1906
Corriedale - 6136 by Hon. R. Oliver
Totara Estate - 3161 acres by New Zealand Land Co.
Kurow - 963 by Logan

1907
Airedale - 17,495 acres by Messrs Cameron & Hunter

1908
Otekaike - 18,418 by the late Mr W.H. Teschemaker

1912
Elderslie - 1763

1913
Clareview - (near Herbert)
Te Puke (in the Georgetown district)

Ref. K.C. McDonald, History of North Otago
(Oamaru, 1940), pp. 138-188.
APPENDIX C

Excerpts from the Shearers' and Labourers' Log.

Rules of the Oamaru Labourers' Union.

1. Unskilled labour of all kinds is 8s per day; a day's work is 8 hours; and overtime is 1½ times the pay.

2. Ploughmen and teamsters get no less than one pound per week with rations; one pound five shillings extra during harvest.

3. Harvest hands is not less than 10d per hour with rations.

4. Threshing hands is not less than 10d per hour with rations.

5. Potato digging - crops from 10-12 tons per acre, not less than 8s per ton; 9 tons per acre, 8s 6d per ton; 8 tons is 9s per ton; 7 tons per acre is 10s per ton; 6 tons per acre is 10s 6d per ton; 5 tons per acre is 12s per ton.

8. Shearers paid not less than 16s 8d per 100 crossbred sheep, rams to count as 2 for 1; merinos 15s per 100, rams 2 to 1.

9. Shed hands, butchers etc., not less than one pound ten shillings per week of 48 hours. Musterers three pounds per week and rations.

North Otago Times, 26 June, 1890; p. 1.
I will try to answer some at least of your questions about the "swagger era".

1. I was born in 1906 and lived for the next 60 years on a farm three miles from Hyde, on the Hyde-Middlemarch road, taking over the farm myself after the death of my parents, so that I had plenty of experience of the swagger years.

2. There was no set pattern. They just turned up, though some of the regulars would return about once a year. To most it was a way of life. Most were past middle-age, were quite capable of doing farm work, and some had other skills, such as sharpening knives, scissors and other tools. Most were clean-shaven, though some sported a moustache.

3. At our place they were given a bed in the men's hut, a comfortable stone building with a fire-place, or if this was occupied by a permanent employee, they slept in the loft above the stable or occasionally in the woolshed. Most would accept work if it was offered and indeed some remained for several weeks, particularly at harvest time, or doing fencing work and cleaning irrigation races. They usually arrived in the late afternoon and were given an evening meal and breakfast before they moved on, both of which meals, in our household, were eaten with the family. Some households gave them their meal apart, no doubt, but my mother believed in the equality of all men and made no distinction. They invariably travelled alone, but on occasions we had two arriving from different directions.

One heard that they left signs at a house where good treatment could be expected, such as a sign on the gate post, but I never saw any such signs and doubt if this was so.

4. Country people accepted them as part of the rural life and I'm sure genuine farming people showed no resentment to them. I personally never knew any to use threats, and indeed this would have been self-defeating as such news would soon be spread.

5. We knew the names of all the regulars. One, Billy Parker, a half-caste negro, worked for us for a month or two on various occasions. He was more commonly known as Pio-the-diddle, or Pio for short. I still
remember his crop of fuzzy black hair, in which he took great pride. He usually moved on when his thirst got too great for him. Another, Steve Hambly, had both wrists broken when run over by a dray in his youth. Both had been set, presumably by an amateur, bent inwards and never reset. In spite of this handicap he could set rabbit traps and do most other farm work. One, whose name I can't recall, travelled on horseback, followed by his dog. He always got a feed of chaff for the horse, and a bone for the dog.

A few of course were skilled and really looking for work. One of these was given work on the farm, but later we discovered he was a qualified carpenter. He stayed in the district for some time and built several houses.

During the nineteen thirties when the slump caused so much unemployment we had many callers, but there was little money and not much work offering. Some were happy to work for their keep for awhile, though we always paid them something.

When social security was introduced they gradually disappeared from the roads and the end of that decade (the thirties) saw most of them disappear, to end their days in hospital or an old man's home.
APPENDIX D2

Correspondence with LEN BRUHNS (Ranfurly) July, 1980

I can remember swaggers about 1914 or so when I was living at home at Hyde which was a very small farm at that time. I had only been to school about one year, but still remember them calling at home with their billy for a billy of tea. They always got a few sandwiches as well. Always left their swag on the side of the road before coming to the house. Some of them sat on their swag and have feed; others would put their swag on their back and walk on. I can never remember any more than one calling at once. It may have been weeks before you seen another or you may see two or three in a month (in summertime). I don't think my mother ever turned them down for a feed. We never had any sleep the night as we had no hut etc. But our neighbour about a quarter of a mile away used to give them shelter. As for signs some of them had as they got a meal at our place about 2 p.m. there abouts and would take about three or four to cover that quarter mile knowing they would get shelter at our neighbours for the night plus another feed.

Some of them would offer to cut wood or fill the coal bucket but few. Never were any of them demanding or ill-mannered what I saw of them. Some of them had beards some a week or more in fact one asked for a mug of hot water and sat on his swag with a wee mirror and shave with the old blade razor (cut throat as they were called).

Most of them were around the forty or fifty mark not so young ones but I never seen them all as I left school at fourteen and was out trying to get a bob myself. I always remember one fellow had a horse to ride a rough fellow always wore an old torn overcoat went almost to the ground he was a real dirty type. I know of the odd people who gave him a meal in the house and he never used a knife or fork just pushed it in his mouth with his hands. It was later found out that he was a remittance man and had plenty of money.

Another man I knew very well came to Hyde on the swag and was given a job for a couple of days and finished up staying there for over twenty years. (His name was Steve West and the people he worked for were the Ramsays.) There was another one he had a pet goat for company. Then there was another old fellow was around for years; he had a stick with him and if there was a bush of any sort on the side of the road he used to bash hell out of it and carry on. Used to know his name but have forgotten.
Correspondence with MR McATAMNEY (Patearoa) August, 1980

Mr McAtamney remembers seeing swaggers before 1910, when he was living on a farm at Patearoa, as a child. There were only about one per year and were old men. They only asked to have their billy boiled and for tea. They arrived separately and were never asked to work for their supper. People were very tolerant towards them, and so were not subject to any threats. If they were refused anything they just moved off in sorrow.

Specific swaggers he remembers are Cockney Joe, Yarkee and Brumney from Birmingham whose real name was Whitehead.

I knew many old men who merely existed from when gold mining ran out, until R.J. Seddon introduced the 10/- per week pension round about 1910 when I was 8 years old. Most of the old miners took up residence in Patearoa in old mud huts of previous miners. I am writing of Serpentine miners. They were about 3000 feet lower, now closer to civilisation and handier to the store, butchery and hotel. Their homes are now heaps of rubble and their remains in the Hamilton or Naseby cemeteries.
Interview with HAROLD STRODE (Naseby) July 21, 1980

Mr Strode was manager of Kyeburn Station; had his own farm above Waipiata; and was Mayor of Naseby for ten years (1967 - 77).

Kyeburn Station was one of the major stations in the area (others include Eweburn, Hamilton, Patearoa, Linwin, and Puketoi), until about the 1920s when they were subdivided. Kyeburn Station was 100,000 acres and in the 1920s carried 15-20,000 sheep. There were six permanent staff including a manager, two shepherds, a spare-man who had his own dogs, a jack-of-all-trades to do most of the maintenance work, and a cook.

While working on the station, Mr Strode remembers swaggers calling. They were always fed either by the cook or by Mrs Strode if the cook was not at home or else they were told to help themselves. Mr Strode remembers two swaggers who were told to go and help themselves from the cookhouse, but quarrelled over who was going to make tea or steaks. The result was that one left unfed.

They were asked to cut firewood or something in return for the food, and though they never refused to do anything he asked, Mr Strode is unsure whether they did everything the cook asked them to. In fact, he sometimes only knew what the cook said, that is, "a couple swaggers here for the night ...". They were a bit scared to ask the casual swagger to do too much in case they had an accident because they were not on the permanent staff for insurance purposes.

What came out of the interview was that people "felt sorry for them and were prepared to offer them food, work and shelter". There was the use of huts and special blankets (Mrs Strode spoke of the smell of the blankets, normally patchwork rugs made up of old rugs). Mr Strode sees the swaggers as a good crowd, who did not like permanent work. He remembers one, Jimmy McLennon, whose parents had a farm at Wedderburn. He also used to disappear every now and then to work a gold claim he had.

As to travelling together, six is the most he can remember but he says that this was unusual. Normally they arrived in ones and twos. Mr Strode was under the impression that information as to what farms to go to was passed on rather than through signs. Especially when some were on circuits or regular beats of about three months long. These men you tended to know and did not look on them as swaggers. Also you knew the time to expect them and would begin to look out for them.
Mr Strode remembers them as well-dressed, though some were mouldy. Mrs Strode saw them as smelly, tying their clothes together with binder-twine. When asked if she ever asked any of them to wash before they were fed, she answered that to heat the copper to get hot water was too much trouble therefore she did not ask them to wash.

Mr Strode did not see them as big drinkers, though he remembers one man, Geordie Simpson, who did have a drinking problem. This swagger had ended up staying on as a gardener and cook for about three years. Every now and then he would go into Naseby to spend his money on drink. But otherwise he was an honest, clean old chap with a neat little beard.

Work for them included cutting firewood, digging potatoes (pre-winter), - in fact, gardening was an important odd-job - and in the winter repairing fences. The swaggers that called at the station were no trouble nor a nuisance and never threatened them, mainly because they were fed. He did hear of some threats to burn down buildings etc. but were not carried out to his knowledge.

The depression saw an increase in the number of swaggers between 1925-35, with the closure of businesses either permanently or for a few months. Many were attracted to the area by the gold-mining; using pans and cradles they could get some but it was not worth very much at this stage. Also during the depression, miners were subsidised at ten bob a week and all the gold they could get. There were quite a few tradesmen included in the number of "miners".

Specific examples:

- Cockney Joe

- Barney Whiterats, who gave shows at the school.

- Brummy (real name was Whitehouse), though Mr Strode did not really consider him a swagger. He used to sew and carry bags at the mill, but used to camp out.

- one rode a horse which sometimes had a foal following behind.

- Somerset Plantagenet, who had letters after his name and it was rumoured that he was an English gentleman. But he knew all about gardens and stayed several weeks.

Mr Strode remembers swaggers from about 1912 at a rate of four per day. During April and May with mustering extra men were required to help. It took eight men two weeks to muster. But he noticed a decrease in the number of shearers required - from 30-40 the numbers went down to eight with machines.
Interview with MR McLaren (South Dunedin) July 30, 1980

Mr McLaren was born in the Styx, ninety-seven years ago and worked mainly around the Maniototo especially at Patearoa and the Styx farming and wagonning. He also worked at Elderslie just out of Oamaru 1903-4. He had a farm at the Styx before the 1921 slump put him out of it. So he went to Milton, back to Ranfurly where he obtained a stock job and continued there until 1948 when he came to Dunedin to work with his son-in-law C.F. Roberts in a wood factory for sixteen to seventeen years.

He considers swaggers to be layabouts who would not do a day's work. Most had no ambition in the world and lived a very empty life, looking neither to the past nor future. There were more around in the summertime, though never more than two travelling together and normally only one. Most found warm spots in the winter. They were aged and none were less than forty. They walked in circuits, and he did not know anything about signs.

The clothes they wore varied - normally dungarees with bow yangs, or moleskins which were terrible things to wet because they became very slimy. They had few clothes and if they got wet in the rain they were probably left on to dry.

The swaggers were given old clothes. Mr McLaren remembers one man who could not or would not talk and was very shy. Once the McLarens left a pair of boots out for him. He took them but returned them later; Mr McLaren thought they must have been too small. But instead of taking them and giving them to someone else, he returned them.

Mr McLaren considers swaggers to be "harmless people". They asked before they took anything, and took whatever was given to them. They were fed after the farm workers but never went away hungry. I asked if they were ever blamed for strange happenings, thefts, etc., he said he did not think so. The children though were frightened of them just as they were of the Chinese - just because they always had a queer look about them. He considered that if they took anything it would have spoiled their chances of getting anything the next time they were around. A lot of women could not stand the look of them while at the same time being afraid they might do something especially when they were at home alone. But the swaggers never molested anyone.

Mr McLaren also remembers the "six-monthly" men who mustered six months on each station before moving on. Also that rabbiting was seen as the lowest job out.
Once when he was at Puketoi (where he was waggionning at the time), McLaren met up with a swagger who wanted some tobacco. Because McLaren did not smoke he said he would ask some of the other blokes. The swagger asked specifically for the dark stuff because anything else was not strong enough. Instead of asking, McLaren went to half a barrel of raw tobacco which was kept for making a solution to treat footrot, and gave him a piece. The swagger never asked again!

Mr McLaren remembers, with a grin, carrying a swag once when he was about nineteen or twenty years - he was working just out of Oamaru and did not like the job, so he packed his gear swag-like and went down Thames Street to a boarding house. But he could not roll it up as neat as these blokes!

He never saw any of "these blokes" swags open so he could say what was in them apart from the familiar billy and tin mug (pannikan).

He did not know the real names or backgrounds of the swaggers. They kept to themselves, mixing if they met on the trails, but normally apart. He remembers Cockney Joe and McKenzie; McKenzie especially because he actually died in one of the huts. He was old and frail and asked if he could stop a day or two. He just wanted shelter, and not food. He was an excellent shearer in his younger days but McLaren never saw a pair of shears in his hand. Two others died in the huts - one had been mending fences and was a surfacer for the Maniototo County Council. McLaren's father had to bring the bodies out.

Another swagger he remembers is Barney Whiterats who set up his screen of calico in the Patearoa Church. He did not know where he got his food, but he always looked a grimy old fellow.

During the depression there were none around at all. McLaren thought the reason was that the country was so depressed that the farmers could not be bothered with them, so they did not come. Also it was a period when they were being phased out.
Interview with ARCHIE WYNDHAM (Waipiata) July 4, 1980

Mr Wyndham lived about two miles out of Balclutha and remembers seeing swaggers up until 1936 at the rate of about twenty per week though most were just passing through on their way to the country districts. He saw them as being all types (school teachers, professors, etc.) who had lost their jobs; a mixture of urban, rural and immigrant backgrounds; and of mixed ages.

Most of the older ones travelled on a circuit, and so they came to know when to expect their arrival. Though some travelled in pairs most travelled alone, but would pass on information about which houses to go to (rather than signs). They would work, mostly on harvesting, shearing, stockering, yet would bludge off anyone. They were always fed and huttoed for the night. Mr Wyndham knows of no swagger threatening if they were not fed. They were resented a bit, especially if they thieved chickens just after they had been fed.

Specific swaggers he remembers:

- Robinson Crusoe who had a hut at Finegand, but every harvesting season he was off with his swag.

- Another was a White Russian who had escaped to New Zealand about 1927 and swagged until his death in 1965.

- Another wrapped himself in newspapers and slept under hedges, bridges etc. He once tried to stay in the Salvation Army Home, but lasted only two days before he was off again. He would knock on the door but never came in and he was willing to work.
APPENDIX E4

Interview with DOUG DICKSON (Waipiata) July 3, 1980

Mr Dickson was born in 1919. He worked for three years on the Scott farm at Kyeburn where he came into contact with swaggers about 1934. He saw about eight to nine per year, but never the same ones. He considered that they did have some form of signals - a stone in the fence, perhaps. In relation to this, they travelled in pairs - one a day ahead to case the area. He thought that they probably swapped over every now and again.

The swaggers slept in the hut next door to the one he slept in and they would always get a meal. But Mr Dickson again stresses that they knew where they would get it. Most of the swaggers were old, rather than young, and were unemployed from the city. They did not really want to work, though some would if asked.
APPENDIX E5

Interview with HUGH McAULEY (Ranfurly) July 27, 1980

Though he was young at the time, he does not remember much of the swaggers going through Hyde. His mother was by herself during the day, while his father was working so they were not encouraged, though their billies were always filled.

He remembers one old man who had a bad reputation. This day his mother saw him coming and did not answer his knock; so he knocked again and again using the stick he carried. She did not want to answer, but finally just to get rid of him she opened the door a little bit and told him to go away. He did, but on the way down the path he beat the bush that grew there and also the macrocarpa tree that grew further down the road. He often did this when he was refused.
APPENDIX F

New Zealand and Australia Land Company

Land Holdings, 1891

AUSTRALIA:

Bundure: upwards of 117,000 acres, 70,000 Merino sheep, no cultivation.

Walhallou: 105,000 acres freehold and 80,000 acres leasehold, a total of 185,000 acres; 30,000 sheep for fattening in addition to 130,000 regular flock. The area is subject to severe droughts, but is situated near a railway.

Till Till: 365,000 acres leasehold and 8,000 acres freehold, a total of 373,000 acres. Droughts are severe and losses of sheep are correspondingly high. Rabbits are a problem. Water is stored artificially in tanks and wells. 90,000 sheep are carried if there is favourable growth of food.

Wellshot Run: upwards of 1,000,000 acres leasehold. 350,000 Merino sheep. Water dams are necessary, because without artificial supplies of water the run could not be occupied. 80,000 lambs are bred in addition to a stud flock. Situated close to a railway which traverses the 400 miles to the coast town and port of Rockhampton.

NEW ZEALAND:

Acton Estate (Rakaia River): 12,000 acres planted in English grass. 23,000 – 25,000 sheep. A large number of sheep are fattened annually off the turnips. The flat land lends itself to agriculture. Situated on the railway to Christchurch.

Levels Estate (vicinity of Timaru and harbour): 35,000 acres sown in English grasses, about 10,000 sheep, almost all cross-breds. Turnips are grown.
Pareora Estate (south of Timaru on the main railway line): Some of the best farming land in New Zealand. 28,000 cross-bred sheep plus a number for fattening.

Hakataramea Estate: is more pastoral with 70,000 acres, 65,000 sheep, the majority of which are Merinos. But on the low ground there are cross-breds.

Totara Estate: 65,000 acres of English grass. Sheep in addition to potato cultivation.

Moeraki: Lincoln sheep, crops and Merino sheep.

Clydevale (between Molyneux and Pomahaka Rivers): 36,496 acres of agricultural country. More than 20,000 acres under grass and cultivation with about 49,000 sheep and 600 head of cattle. There is no railway link, but a river ferry makes transport relatively easy.

Kawerau Run: 200,000 acres, 50,000 Merino sheep. No crossbreds and no cultivation is possible.

Edendale Estate (20 miles north of Invercargill): Once had been 620,000 acres freehold, but had been reduced by sale to 54,214 acres, of which 8,400 acres are leased mainly to dairy tenants. Stock is brought in for fattening and marketing, 10,000 are fattened annually and 4,000 cattle are sold for beef.

APPENDIX F2

Statistics Relating to Farm Holdings and Sizes
in Australia and New Zealand

Australia:

The trend to have large farms has continued up to the present day, as can be seen in the figures for Western Australia, 1970-71.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size (acres)</th>
<th>No. of holdings</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>3,612</td>
<td>15.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 599</td>
<td>4,282</td>
<td>18.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 - 999</td>
<td>2,161</td>
<td>9.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 +</td>
<td>12,537</td>
<td>55.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>22,592</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classification of rural holdings according to size.

Ref.: Statistics of Western Australia, Rural Industries, 1970-71, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Western Australian Office, Table 37, p. 73.

705 holdings or 222,564,862 acres are deemed pastoral, an average of 315,695 acres per holding. A further breakdown of these figures shows that 69.5% of the holdings contain 99% of the total acreage of pastoral land in Western Australia. That is, 99% of the total pastoral land is held in farms of 10,000 acres upwards.

In comparison, the agricultural holdings (21,887) with a total acreage of 60,542,130, an average of 2,766 acres per holding fall mainly within the 1,000-9,999 bracket, a medium-sized farm. Only 1.9% of the total holdings are over 10,000 acres, though this category contains 34% of the total agricultural land.

Western Australia, therefore, is a land of large and medium-sized farms, rather than the small farms of New Zealand.
### Classification of Pastoral Holdings according to size and total acreage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size (acres)</th>
<th>No. of holdings</th>
<th>% total</th>
<th>total acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 49</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>20.14%</td>
<td>2,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 99</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
<td>1,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 9,999</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>75,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 +</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>222,485,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>222,564,862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref.: ibid.
Appendix F2 continued

New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of holdings</th>
<th>No. of holdings</th>
<th>Freehold</th>
<th>Leasehold*</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10 acres</td>
<td>11,116</td>
<td>28,124</td>
<td>24,343</td>
<td>52,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 640</td>
<td>29,081</td>
<td>2,748,362</td>
<td>1,701,433</td>
<td>4,449,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>640-10,000</td>
<td>3,243</td>
<td>4,016,058</td>
<td>2,236,387</td>
<td>6,252,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-100,000</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>4,500,558</td>
<td>2,344,424</td>
<td>7,564,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals 1891</td>
<td>43,777</td>
<td>12,410,242</td>
<td>6,987,287</td>
<td>19,397,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>36,485</td>
<td>11,728,236</td>
<td>5,348,838</td>
<td>17,077,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>30,832</td>
<td>10,309,170</td>
<td>4,897,727</td>
<td>15,206,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding Crown Pastoral Lands

New Zealand Land Holdings classified by size and how the farm is held, either freehold or leasehold, 1891.

Ref.: New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1892, p. 94.

In the decade 1881-1891, a total of 12,945 new holdings have been recorded. This would be particularly true after about 1886 when, with the construction of railways and technical and market changes, the country began to favour a more intensive farming. So many Crown pastoral leases were withdrawn from pastoral leases to be sold or leased in smaller farms.

In addition to these totals, there are the Crown Pastoral lands, or Crown land being leased for pastoral purposes only. In 1886 there were 1,246 holdings, increasing to 1,566 in 1891. These holdings were ideally suited to extensive pastoral farming because of their infertile soil (unsuited to agricultural or intensive farming), and/or inaccessible character.

The country, in terms of holdings, belonged to the small farmer. 92% of the holdings were with the "small farm" range of less than 640 acres, while the bigger farms (above 640 acres) had only 8% of the holdings. In terms of total acreage, the latter group was predominant, holding 70% of
the land, 38% of that being in farms between 10,000 - 100,000 acres. These were the New Zealand large stations, but unlike Western Australia, they are in the minority.
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