LABOUR GROUPS AND RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION
IN OTAGO 1869 - 1873

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This long essay is concerned with identifying labour groups involved in railway construction in Otago between the years 1869 - 1873. Once identified the object is to see whether any of these groups fit a "railway navvy" stereotype drawn from observations of men engaged in railway construction in Britain.

The method involved is a simple one. The setting down of the stereotype will be followed by a brief statement of Otago's early railway development. The first chapter will focus on the building of the Port Chalmers line and second on the initial construction of the Dunedin to Clutha line. The third chapter will outline Brogden's Taieri Contract and discuss the Chinese labour question while the fourth, and final, chapter will deal with the importation of especially selected railway navvies from England and their Colonial experiences, with special reference to Otago. In the conclusion the three labour groups identified will be analysed and their relationship to the stereotype examined.
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## ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>S.T.R.</td>
<td>Southern Trunk Railway</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The British railway navvies were an anarchic elite of labourers who worked in constant danger, often miles from civilization, and lived according to their own laws. They were heathens in a Christian country, they drank, had many women but few wives, broke open prisons, and were not received in "good society". Often compared to an invading army, they came, made their earthworks and their depredations, and went, taking some of the local women and leaving the ruin of a shanty town. Peter Lecount, one of Robert Stephenson's assistant engineers on the London and Birmingham Railway, had a typically low regard for these men.

'Navvies' or Navigators are generally the terror of the surrounding country; they are as a class by themselves as the Gypsies. Possessed of all the daring recklessness of the Smuggler, without any of his redeeming qualities, their ferocious behaviour can only be equalled by the brutality of their language. It may be truly said, their hand is against every man, and before they have been long located, every man's hand is against them: and woe befall any woman, with the slightest share of modesty, whose ears they can assail. From being long known to each other they in general act in concert, and put at defiance any local constabulary force; consequently crimes of the most atrocious character are common, and

1. Terry Coleman The Railway Navvies p.22.
robbery, without an attempt at concealment, has been an everyday occurrence, wherever they have been congregated in large numbers.  

What sort of men became navvies, and where did they come from? First, they must not be confused with the rabble of steady, common labourers, whom they outworked, out-drunk, out-rioted, and despised. A navvy was not a mere labourer, although a labourer might become a navvy. The origin of the navvy was in the canal building gangs, bodies of men compacted into a recognizable social unit over a period of contracting work. Navvies did the hardest and most hazardous work, the blasting and the cutting and left truck-filling and menial jobs to the locally recruited casual labourers. The navvies usually travelled with one contractor until he had no more work to offer or until they heard of higher wages elsewhere.

The word navvy itself comes from navigator. This was the name given to the canal-builders of the eighteenth century and was inherited by the railway men. The Rev. D.W. Barrett, a Northamptonshire railway chaplin in the 1880's said of the word:

The term navvy is simply an abridgement of the longer and less poetical word navigator, which savours too much of the sound of alligator to be pleasant and in fact some people have a rough idea that the navvy is a sort

2. ibid. pp 22-23.

3. ibid. p. 25.
of human alligator who feeds on helpless women and timid men, and frightens children into fits.

The word was sometimes used more particularly to mean a man with a pick and shovel, an excavator, as opposed to a mason or bricklayer, but navvy almost always meant any man who regularly worked on railway building.

Terry Coleman in his book *The Railway Navvies* claims that it took a year's solid work to turn an agricultural labourer into a navvy. On first arriving at the works the man was likely to be an indifferent specimen of a labourer. At about three o'clock in the afternoon he would down tools too exhausted to raise a pick or lift a shovel his services being not worth more than two shillings a day to the contractor. But he gradually improved, his wages rose, he could buy better food and in twelve months he was as strong as he would ever be.

The navvies were paid once a month, sometimes not so frequently, and usually in a public house, and then for days afterwards they drank their pay, sold their shovels, rioted, and attacked unsuspecting women. An engineer commented on the performance, "They appeared to me . . . when half drunk the same as a dog that has been tied for a week. They ran about and did not know what to do with themselves." 5

What then were the tests of a navvy? First the

4. *ibid.* p.27.

5. *ibid.* p.29.
nature and severity of the work, which must be excavating, tunnelling, or blasting, or bridge-building, on public works. Second, the living together in encampments by the line, and the inclination to move with the railway to new works. Third, the ability to drink and eat, like a navvy. Two pounds of beef and a gallon of beer a day, and a man was accepted. The dress of the English navvy was also distinctive. They wore moleskin trousers, double-canvas shirts, velveteen square-tailed coats, hob-nail boots, gaudy handkerchiefs and white felt hats with the brims turned up. A navvy would think nothing of paying fifteen shillings for a sealskin cap and their distinct badge was the rainbow waistcoat. Nicknames also played a vital part in the navvy character.

The intrusive, repulsive life of a navvy was not commonly a long one. An old navvy was rare. Many died as boys run over by the wagons they were leading to the tip-head. The few who survived until they were sixty looked seventy and most died at forty. But while they lived they lived riotously contaminating the population with their vice, money and individuality. They appeared as a burst of colour on a drab landscape then disappeared leaving only memories of lust and liquor, toil and terror.

Leaving the Mother Country and turning our attention to her Colonies we find that in New Zealand, and in Otago in particular, railway development had naturally lagged behind. By 1870, (the starting date of the Port Chalmers Railway), the idea of building railways in Otago was not new, but positive steps were few and far between. As early
as 1860, only twelve years after the provinces foundation, James Macandrew, the Superintendent, addressed the Provincial Council regarding the subject. Had he the necessary professional data he said, he would have taken positive steps for "a tramway or railway in the Taieri and Tokomairiro Plains, with a view to soliciting public opinion on the matter." The Council, in its Reply to His Honour's Address, was quick to see the potential of such a move and the movement for railways in Otago begins from this point. It was not until 1863 however, that firm proposals regarding railways in Otago were tabled.

As a result of a resolution passed in the Provincial Council on 22 September in recognition of the fact that, "the time has now arrived when the subject of railways as means of internal communication should be taken up by the Government," a Select Committee was set up. The Report of the Committee reinforced the Provincial Council's original resolution and stated that -

as early as possible, the Government should institute enquiries on the subject and lines of railway should be carefully surveyed on a comprehensive scale in order that the land may be reserved from sale therefore avoiding the great expense and difficulty of repurchase when required.

As a result of the report public interest in railways


8. ibid. Appendix III Report of Select Committee on "Roads and their Construction."
both to Port Chalmers and to the mouth of the Clutha increased substantially.

Both the Government and the public recognized that communication was of vital importance to the development of New Zealand as a whole and the Province of Otago in particular. A railway penetrating the South would open up rich agricultural land as well as aiding settlement. It would also provide speedy and reliable communication for goods and produce to and from the provincial capital. The same was true for the Port Chalmers line.

If the city of Dunedin was to prosper as a commercial centre she needed a first class link with her port rather than the present unsatisfactory situation. The road to the Port was little more than a bridle track, its condition in winter extremely poor, while the use of harbour dredging, to allow the larger cargo vessels to birth at the Dunedin wharves, was only a short term answer. The remarks by merchants - that it took months to get goods from Port Chalmers to Dunedin, were a complaint that reinforced the lack of satisfaction with the existing arrangements. It came to be realized by the public and Government of Otago that the only alternative and reliable means of communications in Otago was the introduction of railways.

Enter on the scene assorted promoters and

capitalists attempting to foist their wares onto the Provincial Government. Messrs Davies and Clark first tempted the Scottish nature of the Otago Council with a cheap scheme for a railway built with wooden rails. William Dalrymple, whose pamphlet "Scheme for a Railway," invited the Council to consider his idea for a railway from Invercargill to Waitaki, with a station or shipping port every ten miles along the line, urged, "Let the country make Railways and Railways will make the country." The next step was a Special Commission which was appointed to Report on the question.

The commission recorded the opinions of seven professionals as well as taking evidence from four experts and nine others. They concluded "that railways are a necessity the want of which is being daily more felt." The proposed lines would create facilities and aid the development and progress of the province. The country would be rendered more habitable and better equipped to handle an increasing population, revenue would be increased by the increase in population, and, "a most useful class

11. W. Dalrymple "Scheme for a Railway" presented to his Honour the Superintendent 7 March 1864 Frontispiece.
of men would be introduced to carry on the work. The Commissioners thought no more than three lines should be contemplated - two of these for the purpose of developing the country - one to the North and one to the South, connecting Dunedin with her agricultural districts. Capital for these two large and expensive public works would probably have to be raised in England. The third railway - from Dunedin to Port Chalmers, was essentially a commercial venture. Its construction should be carried out by a railway company, providing that one could be formed for the purpose, under a guarantee of six per cent upon a fixed sum. The transformation of these plans during the years 1864 to 1870 is a part of political and economic history that is unnecessary to repeat here. The basic idea of the Port Chalmers line as a wholly commercial proposition did eventuate however, and with the birth of the Port Chalmers Railway Company, and its first steps, the Province of Otago has its first contact with the perils and joys of railway construction and constructors.

13. *ibid.* - this is the first mention of labour supplies in the history of Otago's Railway development.

14. The subject is well covered by two theses. N.A. Espie *op. cit.* is a general work which gives a brief narrative, along chronological lines, of the events of the years up to and beyond 1870. M.J. Darling *op. cit.* covers the period 1869-71 using the railways as an example of the failure of Provincial Government to cope with important Public Works schemes. The prolonged exasperating attitude of the Council is brought into the open by this in depth study.
WHO BUILT THE PORT CHALMERS LINE?

A special commission of the Otago Provincial Council reporting on the development of railways in the province stated "that a most useful class of men would be introduced to carry on the work." Immigration, however, was not a vital prerequisite to Otago railway construction.

In the months before the start of the province's first railway venture unemployment was a major problem for the Provincial Government. The distress of both working men unable to find jobs, and men of substance to provide positions, found expression in letters to Dunedin's newspapers. These letters complained at the lack of work for able-bodied men in the province, the inability of the Provincial Government to arrange for the commencement of Public Works to provide relief for the jobless, and the possible effects of immigration on an already serious work situation.

The issues raised by the letters were valid. The Provincial Government's chronic mishandling of the Public Works of the Province, and the internal squabbling which took place in the Council continually forced the starting


2. Work started on Monday 29 August 1870.

3. Refer to Appendix 1 where I have selected a letter from OW. 30 October 1869 as an excellent example of the tone and attitude of the period.
date of Otago railways further into the future. In addition to this, the immigration policy of the Colonial Government, although aimed at the long term development of the colony, was seen as an imminent threat in the short term. A letter in the Otago Witness dated 14 May 1870 echoed these views and then remarked:

Nor would you find any scarcity of labour tomorrow if the railway were to start, for there are numbers of men camped about the different bushes all over the province ready to start when any of their services are required.

Other letters to the O.W. reinforced the fact that there were numbers of men who were willing and able to offer their services if and when railway construction was to start in the province. The question of the rate of pay, so important in any discussion of Otago railway development over the next few years, was not brought up for comment. The unemployed's immediate goal was work. This fact is brought home by a statement made by Mr Oliver - one of the owners of the Port Chalmers line, at its official opening in January 1873.

You will remember that we were urged to begin without delay, because of the number of unemployed. A crowd surrounded the Provincial Government offices

4. refer to M.J. Darling op. cit. pp 82 - 4.  
5. OW. 14 May 1870, p. 21.  
6. OW. 23 April 1870, p. 14 "Working Man" asks when the Port Chalmers railway is to be started re employment.  
7. refer to court case in chapter on Chinese Navvies also chapter on Brogdens Navvies for importance of pay claim.
demanding work. Work was found for them and, owing to this railway and the other railways commenced by the Government . . . the price of labour is nearly one third higher.8

Where exactly the labour originated, if other than that provided by Dunedin and district unemployed, is a difficult question. The Otago goldfields still attracted some fortune hunters and while the days of the bonanza had passed, any numbers that left the area in favour of railway navvying were insignificant. As far as immigration was concerned, the days of Vogel's immigrant ships were still to come. Once again any numbers would be small.9 In fact the Port Chalmers line labourers were local men who knew nothing of the legends and reputation of the international railway navvy. For them railway navvying was a stop gap measure, something to provide them, and their families, with the bare essentials of life until something more attractive appeared.

The attempts of local unemployed to find quick relief in the employ of the Port Chalmers Railway Company were frustrated however by the inability of the contractors and the Provincial Government to reach agreement on the terms of the deal. A verbal pact had been reached between

8. O.D.T. 1 January 1873, p.3 report of Official opening of Port Chalmers Railway by Governor Bowen.

9. It appears that Peter J. Stewart's assertion that labour for the line was provided by disappointed Otago goldminers and Vogel's immigrants is not correct. Peter J. Stewart Days of Fortune A History of Port Chalmers 1848 -1973 p.30.
the two parties in December 1869. Then on 29 January 1870 the *Otago Witness* announced that a final agreement on the terms of construction had been negotiated. A five thousand pound deposit had been paid and the works themselves were timed to start in six weeks. But the *Witness'* prediction was negated by the vacillations of the Provincial Council, while the *Otago Daily Times* spoke out against the Government's inability to provide for the safety of the travelling public by neglect in the enforcement of engineering standards. While officialdom argued the unemployed took positive action. In May of 1870 they drew up a petition outlining their grievances and presented it to a Select Committee of the Provincial Council for consideration. Three hundred and fifty out of workmen — artisans, mechanics, and labourers, signed the document.

The Committee called numerous witnesses whose evidence throws considerable light on the situation of labour in Dunedin during this period. Mr Ashcroft (one of the Committee Members), attributed the depressed state of the labour market partly to the fact that the prospect of the commencement of the Port Chalmers Railway had brought a great number of unemployed labouring men in the area to

Dunedin before the contractor had been able to offer them employment. He stressed the desire that the commencement of the railway would absorb the efficient able bodied men and there would be no need to import artisans. "Many of the men out of employ would be useless as navvies" he concluded. Mr William Ahern, a George Street carpenter, said although he had his own business he was himself out of work. The remedy to the situation was, to his mind, cessation of immigration and commencement of the railway works. A former Dunedin Mayor Mr Haughton, (also Committee Chairman) referred to a number of men who hung around town with the sole intention of obtaining one or two days work which kept them for a week, or taking short term employment in the country only to drift back to Dunedin. These men would always be a problem for prospective employers.

On 6 June 1870 the committee produced its report on the Petition in which it summarized the findings of a reasonably full investigation. One of its more important conclusions was -

That a portion of the evidence heard by your committee is to the effect, that there are more unemployed than the usual number in

15. ibid. p.65.
16. ibid. p.66.
17. ibid. p.61.
Dunedin at the present time and this is attributed to the general depression of trade, and the low price of agricultural produce, which precludes the employers from paying the ruling high price of labor. Another cause suggested is, the expectation of the commencement of the Port Chalmers Railway works.18

By the time the report appeared in print, the Council had finally taken the necessary steps to effect an agreement with the contractors and was not prepared to back out.

It seemed at last as if the Province was to be blest by its very own railway negotiated by its own Provincial Council and contractors by a local firm with local capital.19

Months passed and it was mid-August before the first signs of action appeared from the contractors. They ran a classified advertisement in the O.D.T. from 16 August to 25 August stating that tenders would be received up until noon of Thursday 25 August for the construction of sections one, two and three of the Port Chalmers Railway line between the Railway Reserve and Logans point. Plans and specifications were available for inspection by interested parties at the Railway office of Messrs Proudfoot, Oliver and Ulph.20 The response was such that work was able to be started the following Monday 29 August. The O.D.T. commented -

18. ibid. pp 57-8.
The subcontractor Mr Packham deeming it right that the initiation of so important a scheme should not pass without some ceremony, however slight, smashed a bottle of wine over the first barrow load as it was tipped. Three cheers were given and all were 'treated'.

The work began slowly. A report in the Otago Witness of 1 October reported that Mr Packham had started work on the Stuart Street section of the earthworks employing thirty five men. Several other small parties were also engaged in contract work. It appears that a sub-contracting system was the basis of the construction technique for the Port line. Those who took up the sub-contracts recruited their own gangs of men and paid them how they liked - usually by the day. By May 1871 the O.W. was able to state that the works started at the Stuart Street Jetty had been chiefly carried out by contract in small sections varying in distance from five to twenty chains, and that excellent progress had been achieved. The Witness went on to praise the system as one suitable for adoption on other similar railway schemes. By supplying the workmen engaged on the different contracts with the necessary implements to enable them to complete their sections, the main contractors allowed all unemployed to

22. O.W. 1 October 1870, p.15.
23. ibid. p.15.
attempt sub-contracting rather than restricting work to those with capital or tools.\textsuperscript{24}

Thus the Port railway was pushed ahead by reasonably small parties of men labouring on a sub-contracting system. They either displayed few of the traditional navvy attributes\textsuperscript{25} or since the line was a commercial endeavour their exploits remained undetected by the local press. Anyway, in comparison to the Clutha line, few reports of progress were published apart from the usual stories relating messy accidents and mishaps.\textsuperscript{26}

Although the commencement of the Port Chalmers line provided relief for Dunedin unemployed and was an achievement for the Provincial Council it was, nevertheless, a very small portion of Otago's railway requirements. The line was essentially a commercial enterprise and to the settlers, removed from the provincial capital, an undertaking of comparatively slight importance. It did not help their particular interests or open their area up to active development. It did not provide them with cheap and speedy transport for produce, increase the population of their district, or increase the value of their land.\textsuperscript{27}

For these miracles they looked the Clutha line . . . if the prosperity

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{O.W.} 18 May 1871, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{25} (the navvy stereotype is presented in the introduction).

\textsuperscript{26} Typical example is \textit{O.W.} 17 February 1872, p.16.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{O.D.T.} 10 May 1872.
of the Province is to be promoted by railways at all, the Clutha line alone can render us effectual assistance. Prosperity depends on population and population is not attracted by a Port line of railway.28

It was also to be the Clutha line with its Colonial Government backing and Brogdenite labour29 which would attract the character recognized to be a "railway navvy". The Port Chalmers Railway kept some of the local unemployed busy for three years but the Clutha line was the beginning of the Otago navvy tradition - a tradition which would extend into the twentieth century with the completion of the branch lines.

28. ibid.

29. Term used to identify labour imported by Brogden & Co. for use on New Zealand Public Works schemes.
CHAPTER II

THE CLUTHA LINE

By early 1870 the future of the Clutha line hung in the balance.1 The interest and excitement engendered in the railway question in the latter months of 1869 had faded and no definite steps had been taken towards the actual commencement of the S.T.R.2 The bitter exchanges in the Special Session of the Council had neither advanced the issue nor reflected credit upon the procedures of the Council. But still nothing more existed towards the construction of the line than a pile of basically useless and often contradictory plans, reports, and resolutions.2 A considerable amount of money had already been expended in preliminary railway costs all of which had gone for nothing as the S.T.R. remained as it had done in the years prior to 1869.3

The Council faced two basic problems. First, the

1. for a fuller description see M.J. Darling op. cit. p.37 - 57.

2. M.J. Darling op. cit. p.45.

3. see M.J. Darling op. cit. p.57 footnote 1.

always imminent expiration of the Railway Ordinance necessary to enact a railway agreement, and second, the personal conflicts and dislikes within the Council which effectively halted any progress towards agreement. Nevertheless the Council's next move was to apply to the Central Government for a loan £650,000 of which £400,000 was earmarked for the construction of the S.T.R. The O.D.T. disapproved strongly of the proposal. "In the face of the evidence we have had recently as to the ability of the Government to conduct our railway business, His Honors remarks are ludicrous."  

John Miller, an active figure in Otago railway development, remarked that the abortive railway schemes of several successive Governments had given rise to no less than eight acts of Parliament - six Provincial and two General - more legislation than was required for thousands of miles of railway construction in America. But the application for a loan was not successful as the General Government had just ventured to incur an enormous loan liability on behalf of the Immigration and Public Works Act. Therefore it was unlikely that the Government would allow any Province to incur a proportionate liability of its own as the Colony would not be able to stretch its borrowing powers at all if the Provinces were allowed to borrow at the same time.

5. O.D.T. 27 April 1870.
7. refer to O.D.T. 7 September 1870.
At the next session of the Council the railway question was discussed and the Superintendent brought the new situation to the notice of the members on 17 November. He asked the Provincial Council to consider communication from the General Government regarding certain public works to be commenced under the provisions of the Public Works and Immigration Act 1870 viz:

1. Survey of a line of railway from Tokomairiro to Lawrence.

2. Construction of the S.T.R.

Donald Reid at first opposed this aggression into the arena of Provincial politics. Vogels success at the polls however, forced Reid to change his tune.

At the next Council meeting Reid moved that the General Government be requested to take such steps as were necessary to ensure the immediate construction of various Otago lines. With the passing of this motion Provincial negotiations for the construction of the major railways were brought to a close. Under the provisions of the new Act it was necessary to drop the cost per mile of the Dunedin - Clutha Railway to £5,000. One reader of the O.W. had a useful suggestion for the costing of the line to offer to the General Government. The Government in its wisdom preferred a different course of action however, and after a series of negotiations and tamperings, lowered the cost per mile to the required figure.

8. refer to letter in Appendix II.
9. refer to N.A. Espie op. cit. p.33
With this information at last in the hands of those in Wellington the all important orders were dispatched in a telegram from the Hon. W. Gisborne to Mr Blair on the 30 December 1870. "Call at once tenders for construction of railway Dunedin - Caversham. Prepare working plans for say about 15 miles."\(^{10}\) Section Number 1 of the new plan extended from Dunedin to Caversham. The line commenced at Jetty Street keeping along the railway reserve as far as Crawford Street, till it made a curve at a point near Andersons Bay Road. Here for a quarter of a mile the land had to be reclaimed. This three-quarter mile section was let early in March 1871 to Mr J.T. Chapman for the sum of £4,325-15-0.\(^{11}\)

Before we go on to examine the works in proper let us briefly outline the labour situation of the day. In the previous chapter we saw that the Provincial Council had been petitioned by local unemployed to find them work, one of the suggestions being the starting of the Provincial Railway schemes. We also saw that correspondents to local newspapers referred to the commencement of railway works as an excellent remedy for the unemployment ills of the Province. Although the P.C. line received the most of these enquiries (mainly because positive steps were being taken towards its commencement and the S.T.R. was still being wrangled over), the Clutha

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\(^{10}\) A to J 1871 D No 6. p.59.

\(^{11}\) A to J 1871 D No 5. p. 8.
line was nevertheless looked to as a source of employment by some.

As early as 30 April 1870 "Enquirer" in a letter to the Witness asked whether the Government had taken any tenders for the line and if so when would the work begin and the contractors be calling for labour. This letter was only one of many requests for information received by the Witness. The working men of the province no doubt awaited with interest the result of negotiations between the Provincial and General Governments as to the starting date of this important new venture. Given the surplus of men, it therefore seems something of an anti-climax when only twelve labourers could be employed on the first section of line situated at the swampy beach near the Andersons Bay toll-bar. The men were paid seven shillings a day for their services. The O.W. however predicted a brighter future when it observed that "when the work reaches the farthest side of the hill many more will find employment." The date was 14 March 1871.

The Official opening of the works took place on the following Saturday 18 March. The site chosen was a pad-dock belonging to Mr E.B. Cargill at Kensington where, shortly before 2 o'clock, a crowd of some three hundred people gathered to witness the ceremony. The Official Party, comprising the Governor of the Colony, Sir George

12. O.W. 30 April 1870, p.15.
Ferguson Bowen, the Superintendent of Otago, and other local notables, arrived to be greeted by Mr W.N. Blair the works engineer, and Mr Chapman, the contractor. The Governor then addressed the gathering with some of his remarks being directed at the men who would be employed in the construction of this important piece of Public Works. He urged the men to emulate their fellow workmen throughout the Colony by observing good order and respect for the law, characteristics which the Governor haughtily referred to as "prominent in our race". He then reminded the men that in a new country the respective claims of capital and labour should adjust themselves according to the natural laws of supply and demand without the disturbances which had upset both sides in the Old Country. The Governor went on to congratulate the men on being part of the British Empire, an Empire which -

\[ \text{the expansive freedom of our colonial institutions, even more surely than in the parent isles opens for all her sons the cheering prospect of wealth and fame if genius be combined with virtue and industry.} \]

After the addresses and replies had been made Governor Bowen lifted, with a specially made spade, a specially cut sod, placed it in a specially provided barrow, which he wheeled a few yards before overturning. Mrs

15. ibid. p.4.
Cargill repeated the performance and the onlookers raised three hearty cheers. 16 Some of those present however, were not amused by the Governors remarks. A regular correspondent to the Witness one "Master Humphrey" had already renamed the Caversham section of the line the "Cleversham Railway." 17 His caustic comments on the opening ceremony and especially the Governors speech gave rise to further thoughts about the purpose of the undertaking. 18

Despite "Master Humphrey's" criticism, within a month some sixty men were employed and the works presented a busy scene. At any spot in the neighbourhood of Dunedin men could be seen at work along the line. Another gang was employed at the nearby quarries carting debris for forming the earthworks. 19 The work was not without its dangers however. The O.W. reported the serious injury of one James Bandeen whose thigh bone was broken while attempting some dangerous quarrying operations. 20

As the work continued on Section 1 of the line, two more sections were let to the tender of Mr A.J. Smyth. The first section included the Lookout Point Tunnel at

16. ibid. p.4.
17. O.W. 1 April 1871, p.9.
18. ibid. p.9.
19. O.W. 8 April 1871, p.15.
20. O.W. 15 April 1871, p.15.
Caversham, while the second encompassed the railway as far on as Green Island. Mr Smyth sublet the tunnel work to Messrs Durcan and John MacKenzie who tackled the work with surprising enthusiasm. The number of men employed quickly rose to 250 when the open end at the South End of the tunnel had to be speedily excavated and shaped. Three shifts worked around the clock so that only three months after the official opening of the works, the boring of the tunnel from the South was ready to take place. At the North end boring did not begin until 13 March 1872 because of the long open cutting required. By this date approximately sixteen and one half chains had been excavated from the South. The tunnel, which entered the range directly beneath the industrial school, was drilled through soft sandstone, a rock which proved to be very favourable for the enterprise. The practical work of setting out the tunnel was entrusted to Mr Adam Johnstone, the Assistant Government Engineer, who had complete charge of the work throughout its construction.

The wish of the Governor, that the work continue unhindered by labour/capital confrontations unfortunately did not come to pass on the S.T.R.. As early as 29 April 1871 the O.W. remarked that complaints had been made by numbers of men seeking employment that the contractors of Section 1 would not take them on. The contractors immediately replied claiming that it was not their fault as unavailability of land had made it impossible to carry

the work beyond the Caversham Road. Once approval had been received from the General Government, and the land made available, more labourers would be found work. 22

Then on 8 July a letter bearing the initials "F.C." bitterly attacked the slow progress being made on the Clutha Railway and blamed it for the distress of families whose menfolk were out of work. 23 A letter of support from "R.A." reiterated the claims of the previous correspondent and attempted to bring to the attention of the Government the fact that the partial cause of the depressed Dunedin labour market was the slow progress made in the cuttings for the Lookout Point Tunnel. Added to this was the report, later on in the year, that parties of swaggers had continued to arrive at the works site from all over the province. 25 Obviously shortage of labour would not be a problem for the contractors.

Backing up these claims of surplus labour in the fact that on the non-tunnelling sections of the line work proceeded rapidly to say the least. This enabled the engineer in charge to announce that all grading and bridging had been completed. 26 What does appear odd, given the surplus of labour, is the report of an accident on the

22. O.W. 29 April 1871, p. 15.
23. O.W. 8 July 1871, p. 3.
25. O.W. 16 September 1871, p. 15.
26. A to J 1872, D No 5 p. 5.
Caversham section of the line involving a fourteen year old boy named Henry Sutton. The O.W. report gives the impression that the boy was actually employed labouring on the site.\textsuperscript{27} We can only presume that low wages were the reason for his employment and that the practise was not widespread enough to cause concern.

Meanwhile in the tunnel, work went on continuously with some twenty men making up a shift team. Smoke, caused by blasting, proved very troublesome to the tunnellers, but a fan driven by a series of belts from the waterwheel of a nearby flaxmill relieved the discomfort. The actual piercing of the tunnel took place on 26 September 1872 when a drill passed from one heading to the other. Soon afterwards excited workmen from both ends joined each other for the traditional celebrations.

While these three sections were being completed further sections were being let. From the Clutha end of the line a contract was let to McLeod and Company of Balclutha. For £12,949. 2.11\textsuperscript{3} they agreed to complete a ten mile section of line from Balclutha to the north.\textsuperscript{28}

About this time, despite the protests of other interested parties\textsuperscript{29} the General Government entered into contracts with John Brogden and Sons, Queens Square, Westminster,

\textsuperscript{27} O.W. 23 December 1871, p.14.
\textsuperscript{28} A to J 1872, D No 19B p.7.
\textsuperscript{29} refer to A to J 1872, D 22 p.8. The Government bound themselves by an agreement dated 1871, 18 December to offer all railway contracts to Brogden first, if the English firms tender was rejected A public tendering was effected.
London, to build such other lines as the Government saw necessary.

Positive negotiations with the Brogdens had started some time before with Julius Vogels mission to England. On his return to the Colony Vogel reported to Parliament "I may with some confidence assert that I have, on behalf of the Government, concluded an agreement highly favourable to the Colony." The Government was at liberty to choose between two initial agreements. The first agreement was for railways to the value of £4 million plus the landing of 10,000 European immigrants over a ten year period. The second agreement was for railways only, up to the value of £¾ million. What followed was a period of discussion and argument which culminated in Brogdens next offer, to form a Company in New Zealand for the purpose of building railways, being flatly refused. But the English financier persisted and eventually secured the contracts for several lines of railway including the Taieri Contract of the Dunedin and Clutha Railway. An agreement for the introduction of two thousand railway navvies and their families (not to exceed six thousand


33. for an explanation of Government policy see NZPD Vol 12, pp 423-7.

34. A to J 1872 D No 19. for specifications of the contract.
souls in all) was also part of the Brogdens railway contracts.35

The length of the Taieri undertaking was thirty four miles fifty five chains of main line, plus an additional two miles of sidings. The contract specified in detail the form in which the undertaking was to be executed - right down to the style of fencing and uniformity of embankments, drains, and cuttings.36 The document also set out rules for Brogden to follow in respect to labour. The Government appointed Engineer was invested with the power to require the dismissal of any workmen within twenty four hours, for any incompetency or misconduct, and that man was not to be employed again on the works. The most important clause of the Brogden railway contracts was, however, the disallowance of the infamous truck system - "the curse of the working class at home".37

Truck itself is payment not in money but in goods, or in tickets exchangeable for goods. At first glance this seems reasonable enough. Bands of men, working at a distance from the nearest town, far away from the ordinary markets, could perhaps be best supplied by their employers who would be able to purchase food in bulk, distribute it among the men and deduct the cost from their wages. This way the men could get better food much cheaper than they could buy it singly. But this supposed

35. A to J 1872 D No 1 p.11 for draft of proposal.
36. A to J 1872 D No 19 p.77.
37. O.W. experiences with a truck system at Green Island coal mine 26 October 1872, p.7.
honest and fair dealing. In fact the truck system became a system of plunder whereby contractors could make more profit from truck than from the railway works themselves.\textsuperscript{38} The system worked as follows.

By paying the men at long intervals - usually monthly, it was usual to find them running out of money. The penniless navvy could then apply to the contractor for a "sub" (subsistence allowance) up to the value of his daily wage. The sub was given in the form of a ticket which could be exchanged for goods only at the prescribed truck shop. At the shop the man was swindled in three ways. First, the goods offered were bad quality but the ticket was only good for that shop, the man had no choice. Second, prices were higher and short weight given - once again the man had no choice. Third, the ticket was often not even worth its face value in the truck shop as it was usual to deduct a commission of up to 10% as a gangers or contractors cut. So the navvy existed on truck until pay day when the value of his tickets was deducted from his wages and he was paid the balance. Often he was left with practically nothing.\textsuperscript{39}

The Colonial Government was strongly opposed to the imposition of such a system in New Zealand. Brogden at first objected to the truck clause being included in the

\textsuperscript{38} Terry Coleman, \textit{The Railway Navvies} pp 88-92. passim.

\textsuperscript{39} ibid. pp 88-92.
conditions of the contracts but he later withdrew his opposition. The truck clause read:

The workmen, tradesmen and labourers of every class employed on the works to which these conditions refer shall be paid their wages in full in money of the current coin of the Colony, and no ticket or other system of payment by provisions, liquors, or goods will on any pretence be allowed nor shall the contractor or any person employed by him or in any way connected with him establish any shop for the supply of liquors, provisions or goods nor shall the contractor oblige his workmen to take provisions liquors or goods from any person in particular. The workmen of every class shall be paid on the works if it be possible or in some building adjoining and in no case shall they be paid in a public-house or other place where liquors or refreshments are sold.

Generally speaking, the agreement between Brogden and the Government was the most comprehensive to be signed at that date in the Colony's history. The building of six railway lines in the first series of contracts negotiated was obviously going to require a large supply of men to enable their speedy, successful, completion.

40. A to J 1872 D No 19c pp 3-5.

41. A to J 1872 D No 19 p 74.

42. A to J 1872 D No 19. The contracts were Auckland to Mercer Napier to Paki Paki Wellington to Hutt Picton to Blenheim Dunedin to Clutha Invercargill to Mataura
The various gangs of local unemployed, plus those willing to leave other work in favour of railway navvying, were assured of work. But the Colony could not hope to find all the manpower needed for the schemes. This is where the second part of the agreements with Messrs Brogden is important because it allowed a bulk supply of immigration into New Zealand to implement the contracts.

The linking of Immigration with Public Works was one of the aims of Vogels policy for the physical development of the Colony. The immigrants would build the roads and railways then settle the areas they had opened up to enjoy the fruits of their labour. And it is this two fold need, railways and immigration, that sees Mr Brogden introduce railway navvies into an suspecting province of Otago, a province which was to feel their presence unlike the presence of any single group before.
CHAPTER III

"THE TAIERI CONTRACT OF THE DUNEDIN AND CLUTHA RAILWAY"

Brogden's Taieri contract started slowly at first with Colonial labour being used to push the project forward. On 7 September 1872 the Witness was able to report that Brogden and Company had taken on 120 men to work on the Taieri and Chain Hill section of the line. In its next issue however, the weekly remarked that the number of men had risen to 180. Some of these were employed by the piece while others worked only by the day. The contractors told the newspaper that a start had been made on the Waihola part of the section and consequently more men would be given the opportunity of work as soon as the necessary plant was obtained.

A week later the number of employed had risen to the 200 mark along the Taieri Plain and Waihola, while the people of the Tokomairiro intended to celebrate the starting of the line from the Tokomairiro end by having a ball at Milton on the next Friday. The ball itself was a great success, a feature of it being that no refreshments stronger than wines and beer were allowed on the

1. This is the actual title of Brogden's Contract A to J 1872, D No 19D.

2. O.W. 7 September 1872, p.15.

3. O.W. 14 September 1872, p.16.

4. O.W. 21 September 1872, p.15.
premises. This fact "added to the pleasure of the evening and the reflections of the following day" according to the Milton correspondent of the _Otago Witness_. The Mayor was present at the occasion and took the opportunity to praise the Central Government for their insight in starting the railway at last.

Agitation for a railway in the Tokomairiro had always been pronounced. As early as April 1871 the Mayor of Milton held a meeting to secure the commencement of the Dunedin to Clutha railway at different points along the surveyed line. The unemployment of local men, both married and single, was causing the Council concern he said, but if the railway works were to be carried out at different points it would both give these men employment and remove what he saw as the "present depression in the area." A Councillor, Mr R.W. Capstick, supported the Mayor's motion adding if the railway was only carried on from one end the surplus population at present in the area would receive no benefit from it. Mr Capstick also spoke out strongly against large contractors who would bring in men and supplies from outside the Tokomairiro district thereby harming local labour, tradesmen, and suppliers.

By the time the railway became a reality however, the situation was somewhat different. Despite the protests

5. _O.W._ 28 September 1872, p.11.
7. _ibid._ p.6.
of many, a large contractor had been given a big proportion of the work on the Dunedin to Clutha. The expressed fear, that outside contractors would ignore local tradesmen, failed to eventuate however, as Messr Brogden placed orders with Milton businesses for plant and supplies. Mr Smyth, now working as Brogden's agent, was the recipient of glowing tributes from the local press for this vote of confidence in Miltons commercial resources.

Mr Smyth has done much in the way he has gone about his work to reverse the just feeling of dissatisfaction with the manner in which the contract was let to Messr Brogden. 10

What had also changed measurably in the time elapsed since the Mayor's plea was the labour supplies. The army of unemployed, the life and soul of such an undertaking, had largely dissipated thanks to a change in the economic conditions plus the beginning of other Public Works. 11 The Bruce Herald reported that Messr Brogden were anxious to push ahead with their work as quickly as possible. "There is still room for a large number of men on the railway works" the editor remarked in late September 1872. 12 By November the number of men working on

8. letters from local contractors A to J 1872 D22 pp 8-9.
9. This is the same A.J. Smyth who had previously held contracts on other parts of the Dunedin to Clutha line.
Brogden's contract had risen to 320, (this included quarrymen and masons), but even more labour was required. Where was Brogden to get the much needed extra manpower?

In late April the O.W. reported that Brogden's agents were active in recruiting up to 1000 men from the counties of England to construct a railway in the Colony. By June, the weekly was able to print a report stating that, "large numbers of men are on the high seas engaged by Brogden and Company for New Zealand." But even the numbers of navvies which could be expected to arrive in Otago could not relieve the labour problem. The province was not the only one to have extensive railway development occurring at this time and therefore the stream of English railway navvies would find many outlets in the Colony.

Thus, when the services of 70 Chinamen were offered by two headmen, it is no wonder that Brogden took time out to consider the circumstances. John Millar, a leading figure in Otago railway development, felt that since the Chinese had already proved themselves to be excellent navvies in the U.S.A. why not in New Zealand. There were however, other serious factors to consider.

By 1871 the existence of comparatively large numbers

14. O.W. 27 April 1872, p.15.
15. O.W. 22 June 1872.
of Chinese in the Colony caused some concern to those who for social, economic, moral, or racial grounds wished the number halted or diminished. It is however a glad-enning comment on New Zealand prejudice that a number of people held strongly felt opposite views. In the same year the Chinese Immigration Committee issued its final report.

The report stated that no sufficient grounds had been shown for the exclusion of the Chinese and similarly a case for legislative action for their exclusion, or special taxing, had not been proven. As the goldfields the primary source of attraction, stabilized and then wanted it was expected that those Chinese who were able would return to their homeland using the savings they had accumulated during their stay in the Colony. The demand for labour to carry out the extensive Public Works schemes changed that situation dramatically.

On 22 January 1872 the Minister for Public Works J.D. Ormond sent a circular on the subject to the Superintendents of the Provinces and the Chairman of the County

16. by 1871 they comprised 6% of Otago total population A to J 1871 A -5B p.4.

17. refer to letters in O.W.
pro Chinese "Wm. Dalrymple" April 22, 1871.
"Chinese Merchant" April 23, 1871.
"David R. Hay" October 14, 1871.
anti Chinese "Miner" July 8, 1971.
"Pine Hill" August 5, 1871.

18. the full report is printed in Appendix III.
Sir,

Having in view the large demand for labour caused by the railways and other Public Works now being undertaken in the Colony, and the difficulty experienced in reducing a sufficient European immigration to supply that demand, the expediency of allowing railway contractors to employ Chinese labour to a limited extent has been suggested.

... I may state that it is already evident that the want of labour will prove a serious hindrance to the economical and rapid development of the Public Works scheme and unless every available means of obtaining labour be temporarily adopted until a sufficient flow of European immigration shall have been established, great difficulty and vexatious delays will be experienced in the execution of railways and other important works.19

The letter served to rekindle the flame of controversy surrounding the issue and public opinion again divided into opposing camps. Those against the suggestion saw sinister dealings between a capitalist contractor and a penny-pinching Government to be the base of the trouble. Cried one correspondent to the O.W. - "If the Colony is inundated with Coolie labour of course railway contractors and other large employers will have men at their own terms."20. The writer expressed a belief that this would lead to the ultimate destruction of the working

19. A to J 1873 D12.

class and the end of Colonial society as the presence of an "inferior race", would allow those who wished to dispense with the services of European labour for something cheaper and more subservient.\textsuperscript{21}

Despite the outcry against the Chinese, Brogden was in a difficult position. He had a contract to carry out and labour supplies were scarce. European immigration could not provide the numbers needed to carry out the work available, nor could the line be stopped until the navvies arrived. The Chinese had a proven ability for hard, honest work and what was even more important, there were large numbers available for employment with the Otago Goldfields not so distant. It therefore came as no surprise to those who had thought out the economics of the situation to read in the \textit{Bruce Herald} that a large number of Chinamen were available to accept work on the railway and that final negotiations were underway.\textsuperscript{22} The \textit{Otago Witness} appeared at first slightly shocked that, "Mr Brogden is going to employ Chinese in the construction of the Clutha railway not withstanding the outcry caused by Mr Ormands celebrated circular on the subject at the beginning of the year," but the newspaper quickly realised the seriousness of the situation the contractors had been placed in and lauded the Brogdens for their actions.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} ibid. p.7.

\textsuperscript{22} E.H. 20 November 1872, p.7.

\textsuperscript{23} O.W. 23 November 1872, p.16.
The first gang of some sixty Chinese commenced work at the southern end of Brogdens contract on Monday 25 November 1872. The men were placed on day labour and were paid "according to their merits" for Chinese labourers, and 8/- for skilled workmen. These men were only the pioneers of many more to come. Mr John Ah Tong, in his capacity as Brogdens Chinese emissary, had little trouble in inducing some 500 of his countrymen on the goldfields to consider taking up navvy ing. Needless to say not all the men actually took part in the construction of the line.

The Tuapeka Times also remarked that it was Brogden's wish to dispatch Mr Ah Tong home to China to arrange for the emigration of further Chinese to New Zealand, but he had refused quite definitely to take part in such an undertaking. Ah Tong believed that a large influx of his countrymen would be of benefit neither to the Colony nor the immigrants. On learning of his unwillingness to take part in the proposed scheme Brogden immediately shelved the idea. The O.W., in an editorial on the Chinese question, agreed entirely with the stance taken by Mr Ah Tong. The editor claimed that employing Asiatics at a low wage would "dam up the streams from which new blood should flow into

25. ibid. p.15.
27. O.W. 30 November 1872, p.16.
the Colony". 

If this was true then the few pounds that Mr Brogden might save would cost the Colony dearly in terms of future European immigration.

Then all of a sudden the Chinese, within days of taking up employment on the railway, were dismissed. The Tuaneka Times harshly remarked that the Celestials had proven themselves unworthy of half the wage of a European worker and consequently had been invited to terminate their employment. This was not a conspiracy against Chinese labour however, as the main reason for their dismissal appeared to be the dislike of the Chinese for day work and their preference for contract work. Not long after the stoppage, Brogden's agent, Smyth, made a statement to the Bruce Herald in which he disclosed that 96 Chinese had been reemployed, this time exclusively on contract work. The Celestials appeared to prefer this method as they could work as a group to their own time limits.

It is probable that relationships with European labourers on the works were also at times strained. Therefore contracting in all Chinese gangs would ensure any displays of racial intolerance, by either side, would be minimized. This did not stop the Chinese from indulging in some serious infighting however.

At the centre of this was Mr John Ah Tong. A native

of Canton who had left his homeland thirteen years before, travelled to the Australian goldfields, then to New Zealand, and eventually set up business in Wellington as a cabinet maker, he had previously given evidence before the Chinese Immigration Committee in 1871. The Committee asked him some exceptionally blunt questions and his honest and revealing answers, especially those relating to the changes in life style experienced by Chinese through emmigration to European countries, earned him the respect of many in the Wellington European community. Ah Tong appeared a logical choice for the position of procuring and superintending Chinese labour, so when he offered his services to Brogden and Company they suggested he leave for the Otago works immediately. As we have seen, once on the site he quickly formed the Chinese into an organized group. But feelings of tension quickly grew between Ah Tong and his men, the point of conflict being payment of wages.

On 10 January 1873 Ah Tong published a disclaimer in the Bruce Herald in which he outlined his position as solely one of an overseer, and claimed that the men were fully aware that Brogden paid all wages. On the same day however, one of his Chinese workmen, Ah Foo, instigated court proceedings against Ah Tong in the Magistrates Court, Milton. The incident created a lot of interest

31. A to J 1871 H 5, p.5.
32. B.H. 10 January 1873, p.5.
in the town and the Bruce Herald carried full reports of the proceedings in which the judgment favoured Ah Tong.33

However Ah Tong did not fare too well in another court case over wages when a certain Ching Ting brought an action against Brogden and Company for wages of £5.8.0. The evidence this time proved Ah Tong to actually be in the position of subcontractor and therefore responsible for the wages of the men under him. The whole proceedings were marred by the lack of written agreements, and difficulties in communication between Brogden's agent, Smyth, and Ah Tong, appear to have had some bearing on the outcome. The action against Brogden was dismissed and Ah Tong's reputation suffered a serious blow.34

The Chinese themselves were in a fairly demoralized state by this time. They had been placed in trying circumstances by the court actions, and had of course received no pay. The Bruce Herald was upset at the rumour of large numbers of redundant Chinese navvies camping on the edge of Milton "starving for want of food".35 A party of concerned citizens, lead by the Milton Sergeant of Police, travelled to one of the camps to ascertain the state of affairs and found to their dismay that the rumours were completely true. At the suggestion of two members of the Recreation Ground Committee the Chinese

33. see B.H. 21 January 1873, p.3. Court Case.
34. B.H. 11 April 1873, p.3.
35. B.H. 21 January 1873, p.5.
were given an afternoons tidying up around the ground for a wage of 2/6. The *Bruce Herald* was delighted to report that "They went cheerfully to their work and performed their labour in a manner satisfactory to all." 36 With their wage claims settled by out of court negotiations with Ah Tong and Brogden, the Chinese continued to work on the Clutha line. By 1874 navvyng had, apart from goldmining, the largest number of employed Chinese in any occupation in the Colony, 37 while Otago had the greatest proportion of these numbers. 38

But the Chinese were only a temporary measure enlisted to fill an emergency situation. The real needs of the Colony were only to be realized by immigrants of European stock who would take an active part in the Public Works schemes of the Colony and then settle and develop the land. Brogden's railway contracts had provided for the importation of such people, and it is the fate and fortune of these Brogdenites that we shall now pursue.

36. ibid. p.5.

37. N.Z. Census 1874, p.177.

38. ibid. p.174.
CHAPTER IV

THE NAVVY ONSLAUGHT

We have already seen that as part of the railway contracts negotiated by Messrs Brogden, the firm were to supply "a number of able-bodied European male immigrants not exceeding two thousand in number together with the families of such migrants . . . not to exceed six thousand adults."1 Commenting on the contracts, the Agent General, I.E. Featherston, wrote to the Colonial Secretary in Wellington.

I placed the services of my whole staff at the disposal of Messrs Brogden with a view of enabling them to complete the contract . . . within the shortest possible period, more especially as I was aware that it was absolutely essential for the construction of the railways in contemplation that a large proportion of the emigrants should be of the class known as 'navvies'.2

But before Otago was to experience the navvy character however, related reports filtered through from other areas of the Colony. Descriptive accounts of drunkenness, unprovoked violence, strike action over wages and conditions,3 and claims of ill-treatment, typified the despatches which were given full coverage in the Otago Witness.

1. A to J 1872, D No 1, p.11.
2. A to J 1873 D No 2a p.17.
3. The men started working a 9 hour day for 5/- but demanded the Colonial rate of pay which was 7/- for an eight hour day.
The most disturbing of these reports originated from Wellington, Picton and Auckland.\textsuperscript{4} We can only speculate at the result of this adverse publicity, but it would be logical to suppose that these emotive reports placed the province on its guard against these uncouth products of the Mother Country.

The first navvies bound for Otago disembarked not at Port Chalmers, but at Lyttelton, when the \textit{Lady Jocelyn} docked there on 11 November 1872. Fifty two men, under contract to Brogden and Sons, were earmarked for the Taieri contract, but as labour was readily available on the line at that time, (probably due to Chinese participation), they were removed to Southland.\textsuperscript{5} The Canterbury immigration officer, J.E. Morel, had already commented unfavourably on the character of the immigrants,\textsuperscript{6} and this, coupled with the earlier reports from other centres, caused considerable interest in Otago Province as to the men's behaviour. The reports were not long in coming forward. The \textit{Southland News} announced that:

\begin{quote}
a squad of navvies especially imported by Messrs Brogden and Company are not entitled to the designation in as much as they are profoundly ignorant of the art of filling and wheeling barrows. Several have been released from their engagement to serve the firm until they had worked out their passage money.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{5} \textit{O.W.} 20 November 1872, p 15.

\textsuperscript{6} A to J 1873, D 1, p.21.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{O.W.} 7 December 1872 p15 reprint of \textit{Southland News} report.
Meanwhile the Christian McAusland had arrived at Port Chalmers on 5 December. No sooner than the men were ashore and on the works at Chain Hills, than rumours drifted back to Dunedin alleging that the works had been stopped on account of strike action.\(^8\) The Evening Star investigated and found that the navvies had refused to work at the English wage rate. A.J. Smyth, Brogden's overseer on the site immediately increased the hourly rate from 6d to 9d and the men happily returned to work.\(^9\)

On 4 January 1873 the Zealandia, a second ship bearing "Brogden's people", docked at Port Chalmers. It is also possible that this ship brought the sixty married German who later took on navvying following an offer from A.J. Smyth.\(^10\) In fact these folk were not Germans, but German Poles, fleeing the political upsets of Prussia and Austria. They eventually worked as a contracting gang on the Taieri section of the Clutha line and when their work was completed chose a site by the Taieri river for a permanent settlement. Originally named Greytown in honour of Sir George Grey, the village's name was changed to Allanton, (in honour of pioneer James Allan of "Hopehill"), in 1895.\(^11\)

The first two arrivals of Brogden's navvies had been quiet, even peaceful, but the third however, proved

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8. E.S. 19 December 1872, p.2.
a notable exception. When the Charlotte Gladstone arrived in port on 16 February 1873, the immigrants signalled their presence in the provincial capital by drinking as much as the locals would supply and then picking fights with anyone they felt like. The constabulary were summoned to the immigration barracks, where drunken navvies were pelting each other with half loaves of bread. The police immediately intervened but restraining the men took considerable effort.\textsuperscript{12} The citizens of Dunedin were disgusted. The foul and common language of the immigrants and their unbelievable drinking habits were altogether too much for solid, sensible, Dunedin.\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{O.D.T.} summed up the feelings of the city in a paragraph:

\begin{quote}
Making an allowance for an exuberance of animal spirits on having some freedom after a long sea voyage, the scene presented in the barracks and the language used was most discreditable to any body of men.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

A sequel to the drunken spree occurred in the Dunedin Magistrates Court the next morning. Five navvies were brought before the Resident Magistrate after spending their first night in Otago locked up in the Dunedin Prison cells. The Court informed the men that it was their duty as colonists to be peaceable and orderly, and that contrary

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{O.D.T.} 22 February 1873, p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{ibid.} p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{ibid.} p.2.
\end{itemize}
to what they might think, their behaviour was neither approved of, nor would it be allowed to recur.15 "After suffering a recovery for a night in the lock up they the five navvies looked somewhat more subdued than they were on the previous day."16

The court released the five without fine, but remanded two others on charges of damaging property and drunkenness. The now sober navvies, along with the rest of their number, were quickly removed to the Chain Hills before any more trouble could brew up. This was not the end of the matter however. What the flare up had done was to bring home to the people of Otago the reasons for the considerable dislike, in some cases even fear, held by people all over the Colony for these new immigrants. The O.D.T. pointed out that the events at the Immigration Barracks made it easy to accept that the men held a widespread reputation for "rowdyism".17 This reputation had built up even before the navvies had left the Mother Country, however.

In December 1872, Jeremiah Hurley, a nominated immigrant, wrote to the Minister of Immigration expressing his displeasure at the system of bringing out navvies and assisted or nominated immigrants, by the same passage.

Mr Hurley vividly described his initial contact with "Brogden's people".

I saw a number of low ignorant looking individuals being served out with clothing and lunch. I really thought they were from the St. Pancras or some other workhouse and as night approached to see the drunken lot, men and women swearing, blasphemying and using indecent language - and this was in the presence of Brogden's agents - such as never struck my ear before (sic). 18

The letter then went on to describe the voyage out to New Zealand and the problems with the Brogdenites. Mr Hurley felt it was lamentable that respectable people should be obliged to associate with this "scum of English society". 19 The only real navvies on board had been appointed special constables by Brogden while the rest of his men were made up of goal birds, militia men, and discharged soldiers and mariners. 20

The Minister of Immigration had received similar letters in the post, and the tone of his reply to the Agent General regarding the series of complaints, indicated his concern for the situation as it stood. The Minister felt it desirable to forward the navvies and their families in separate vessels rather than in a mixed batch with nominated or assisted immigrants. He was also worried that the character of the navvies reflected insufficient

18. A to J 1873, D 1 D, p.18.
19. ibid. p.18.
20. ibid. p.18.
attention as to their selection.

"It is a matter of the most serious importance to the Colony that the character of the immigrants should be good as such characters must affect succeeding generations." 21

This despatch caused an immediate reaction from the Agent-General's Office in London. The Officer in Charge of Immigration, C.R. Carter, sprang to the defence of both the immigrants and the firm.

Using the example of the Christian McAusland, Carter admitted that the navvies were rough in their manners, often unruly, and required, "tact mingled with kindness," to manage them. 22 His overall impression of them as a class was one of honesty, ability for hard work, and above all suitability for the New Zealand requirements of Messrs Brogden. He concluded with a very sensible statement - "it is not the nice sort of immigrants who will be able or willing to make the heavy portions of the railways in New Zealand." 23 Carter included a letter from one of the board of doctors who had examined the emigrants. The letter outlined the checks performed on the applicants and stated that all who passed were free of disease and, in general, superior to the general run of emigrants. 24

21. ibid. p.17.
24. A to J 1873 D 1 p.75.
The Immigration Officers at Port Chalmers did not agree with Brogdens examination procedure however. On enquiry they found that only the men had undergone the necessary tests while the women and children boarded the New Zealand bound ships untouched. They raised this question in regard to the Charlotte Gladstone. The nominated and selected immigrants on this ship appeared a "respectable and healthy" set of people. Those sent out by Messrs Brogden however, belonged to the inferior class. They presented, according to the officers, signs of serious malnutrition, which when coupled with their "dirty habits and manners" made it all too much for the more genteel emmigrant to bear.  

The officers again requested that immigrants for a private firm be sent out separately from the immigrants nominated in the Colony or selected by the Agent General. They concluded their report by stating:

The former [Brogden's immigrants] are gathered up from all quarters, without enquiry into their antecedents and belong very often to the lowest classes of the community at Home; whereas the latter [assisted or nominated immigrants] generally belong to a respectable class of people, and suffer very acutely from indiscriminate association with a class beneath them in every respect.  

Clearly then the whole Brogden immigration process

25. ibid. p.75.

26. ibid. p.75.
was under attack, the most serious allegation being the questioning of the origins of labourers. It was vital that the Colony be supplied primarily with agricultural labourers rather than industrial workmen. The obvious reason was the objective of the Public Works programme as it applied to Brogden—that the men work on the railways and then settle and farm the land. What then was the social and occupational origins of the Brogden railway navvy? It so happened that the New Zealand Agent General for Immigration, C.R. Carter, was present for the selection of a large percentage of the men, and his report, issued after the Ministers enquiry, clearly outlines the situation.27

If the figures are to be believed, most of those engaged were of the farm labouring class with very few from the city or industrial areas. In this context A.H. McLintock's assertion that the Public Works programme drew to the Colony "the sweepings of the cities and towns of the old country" can only be seen as a loose generalization. The reality would appear to be the sweepings of the countryside. Carter provides the evidence. He called meetings at Great Bridge and Smethwick, (in the midst of the coal and iron works near Birmingham), and although they both attracted full attendances, the immigration Agent thought that a majority of the men would be

27. refer to the exhaustive figures contained in Appendix IV.

totally unsuited for outdoor work because of the years they had spent indoors. The class of labouring men whom Carter found most suitable and manageable were those he was able to select in Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire. It was from these areas that the great majority of Brogden’s Otago bound immigrants were drawn. As we have seen however, these men obviously included some black sheep. But even so the Brogden navvies were not without their spokesmen in the Colonial press.

In the light of the fiasco at the Immigration barracks and the consequent condemnation of the men’s behaviour by the Daily Times and Witness, many were surprised by the stand taken by the Bruce Herald. In an article which called for a sensible, level headed approach to the problem, the Herald warned the province not to credit the barbarous actions of some to all the immigrants. Was it not so that the relations between settler and navvy had been cordial on the Southland Railway? The "new chums" deserved another chance to show themselves in a more favourable light, the Herald concluded. No doubt the Herald’s sensible approach was greeted with nods of approval by some settlers who saw the Brogden labour as a quick answer to the age old Colonial problem of manpower shortages.

31. B.H. 26 September 1873.
In one instance, at Invercargill, some ninety men defect­
ed from Brogden to the land following the offer of higher
wages from local farmers. Naturally enough the Brog-
dens were distressed by this situation. Not only would
the railway, and consequently their chances of early com-
pletion, suffer, but also the men's promisory notes, sign-
ed in England, remained unpaid.

It was to recover these losses that the Company
entered a petition into the House of Representatives in 1873. The problem was a simple one. The men had sign-
ed a statement to the effect that the sum of £15 (which
covered passage to New Zealand plus some clothing) would
be deducted from their wages by the firm retaining 20% of their weekly wage. The payment period was expected
to extend over two years. As soon as the men defected
however, the Company lost all chance of recovering the
debt, unless the men could be traced and either them, or
their new employers, obliged to pay. Messrs Brogden
claimed the sum involved to be within £25,000 to £30,000.

The House set up a Public Works Committee to investigate
the petition and its findings throw considerable light on
the position of the firm in the field of immigration.

Although the committee members rigorously defended the Government, the evidence suggests that immigration
plans had been forced on the Company against its will.

32. A to J 1873 I 5, p.5.
33. ibid. p.4.
34. ibid. see letter pp 9-10.
The Company stated that they looked for no profit out of the undertaking and sought only to be covered by the New Zealand Government for any loss. They were under the impression that this had been assured, but that the Government was now backing out of their promise. "Thus the country has the advantage of the large number of selected men and their families for its industries and revenue but, unfortunately for us, at our cost." On the other hand the Government felt it had made it clear to the firm that they would accept no liability for the immigrants. The O.D.T. however sympathized with Messrs Brogden's unfortunate position.

In a strongly worded leader, the editor remarked that it was far easier to find excuses for the men being unwilling to pay back the Company, than it was to find excuses for the employers who would make use of the imported labourers without rendering themselves responsible for the sum expended in bringing them to the Colony. It is not surprising that he should have thought that he had arrived at the end of the world in morals as well as location if our brethren have treated him as he describes.

The Times' suggestion was that any Christian employer of ex-Brogdenites had a moral duty, as well as a duty to the

35. ibid. p.10
36. O.D.T. 7 January 1873, p.2.
37. ibid. p.2.
Colony, to reimburse the Englishman. Despite the petition, the Government refused to repay the Brogdens for their obvious loss of revenue and manpower. The O.D.T.'s plan for voluntary repayment of promissory notes by the men's new employers, also remained unheeded.

The Company had already ceased immigration operations when the petition was presented and the last of their ships the Lutterworth, bound for Otago, arrived at Port Chalmers on 5 April 1873. Some 90 men were later despatched to Moeraki to assist railway construction in North Otago and those left over were sent to the Clutha line. This body of men were the last to arrive on Otago railways within the set limits of this study. The total of imported Brogden labourers stood at 530 although various defections would have reduced this somewhat.

39. A to J 1873, D 4, p.4.
40. O.W. 19 April 1873.
41. There is some discrepancy in the figures between totals given from London and numbers actually arriving on ship - see Appendix IV.
CONCLUSION

The concern of this essay has been the identification of labour groups involved in Otago railway construction between the years 1869 - 1873. From the evidence presented three distinct groups emerge - the local unemployed, the Chinese labourers, and Brogdens imported navvies. The first railways attempted in Otago were closely related to the surplus in local labour and the position of the Provincial Council. The schemes of the General Government however, tended to drain the local resources and require outside assistance. The first of these outside groups were the Chinese, and the second, Brogdens navvies.

The economic condition of the province is the probable major cause of unemployment in the earlier years covered by this study. The outlook on the goldfields appeared reasonable in the earlier years up to 1872, but after this date falling gold returns coupled with attractive wages offered by railway contractors proved to be an attraction to some of the floating mining populations.


2. The Report on the Goldfields of N.Z. for 1872 stated: It will be seen that there is a considerable falling off in the mining population - attributed principally to the fact that the very high price of labour of all kinds which lately ruling throughout the Colony, has attracted from the goldfields to other more congenial pursuits a large proportion of the "wages men" many of whom were never "miners" in the true sense of term and whose chances of employment during the late stagnation in our great quartz mining field became exceedingly precarious - A to J 1873 H7 p2.
This of course included numbers of Chinese. In the days of the Provincial railway schemes, however, it was local unemployed who provided the initial manpower on the Port Chalmers scheme. This group showed considerable concern for the commencement of the two schemes - the Port Chalmers line, and the Dunedin to Clutha line, as a positive step to counter balance the Province's surplus of able-bodied men. Allied to this concern was the fear of what the colonial workers saw as "unfair competition", from Chinese labour, and the possible widespread exploitation of the Celestials, by unscrupulous capitalists, leading to a down turn in wages and conditions. Another factor was the vacillation and procrastination demonstrated by the Provincial Council. No doubt those working men who looked to the Council for relief and leadership in their plight, were sadly disillusioned by the attitude and action of the Provincial Fathers.  

The decision to employ Chinese labour was greeted with mixed feelings when it was first suggested. The situation however called for immediate action to those who had taken full account of the economics involved. The question of large scale importation of Chinese from either Australia or China was quashed by the Chinese head-men themselves. The stated intention of a majority of the Chinamen was the accumulation of capital in the Colony followed by a return to the Homeland. Only small numbers of these "Children of the Flowery Land", desired to settle.

3. refer to M.J. Darling op. cit. pp82-4.
in New Zealand. The disturbing factor with the Chinese, as far as the New Zealand workers were concerned, was the Celestials desire to work without what the Colonists saw as "due regard to the rates of pay". But the situation the Europeans feared, - being refused work on account of cheap Chinese labour supplies, simply never arose in Otago with the demand for labour easily outstripping available supplies on the Dunedin to Clutha line.

The Chinese themselves proved to be model workers, industrious, reliable, careful with plant and basically honest. The unfortunate incident over wages boils down to the question of whether or not John Ah Tong understood his instructions from Brogden and Company. Taking into account his reputation and high standing in Wellington, plus the confusing evidence given in the two relevant court actions, some doubt remains as to Ah Tong's guilt. Unfortunately further study on this aspect was outside the scope of this limited undertaking. With regard to Chinese / European relations, no direct evidence was found for racial tension between Europeans and Chinese workers. But the preference shown by the Chinese to work in separate contracting gangs was probably a precaution against such possibilities.

The third group, the Brogden navvies, were a totally new experience to the province. Never before had the Colony as a whole, and Otago in particular, encountered such manners, behaviour and opinions. In fact the navvies were undoubtedly the most distinctive group to unleash themselves on to New Zealand society in the Colony's
The citizens of Dunedin had their worst fears regarding the navvy character confirmed after the incident involving the immigrants from the *Charlotte Gladstone*. Once established, this "unnerving reputation for rowdyism," took some living down.4

Despite the opposing claims, the majority of Brogden's immigrants were from agricultural districts of England and were of the poorer class of labourer. The class difference between these people and the assisted and nominated Government immigrants was unfortunately a marked one, a fact which probably caused some hostility towards the navvies from the settled colonists who thought themselves a cut above these rowdy, loud mouthed labourers from Home. An important factor, other than the navvies themselves, is the role played by the press in formulating a "reputation" for the navvies to live up or live down. This could be an area for some interesting further research into attitudes and beliefs.

It must be remembered that the basic function of the immigrants was railway building and this service they provided as required. They were a special breed of person, introduced with a special task in mind. As C.R. Carter, the New Zealand Agent General for Immigration, remarked in his report to the Minister "it is not the nice sort of emigrants who will be able or willing to make the heavy portions of the railways in New Zealand."5


If only in this way the navvies provided a great service to the Colony. What subsequently happened after the completion of the required lines, whether the Englishmen did in fact settle as they were supposed to or whether they took up other trades or left the Colony altogether, is an entirely separate piece of research which is needed to complete the Colony's navvy experience.

The Brogden navvies appear to have organized themselves along lines similar to the Chinese. Brogden's overseer appointed gangs to different tasks and although it appears that the navvies, (at least the unmarried men), shared common quarters, some cohesion to a group pattern was maintained. Often a group of men would take up a collection to assist one of their number if injured during the course of the work and to pay any medical expenses incurred. This sense of identity, as different from the Colonial labour working on the line, was reinforced by several factors. The most obvious of these were the


7. Medical schemes seemed to be particularly popular. The Bruce Herald reported that one of the workmen claimed "that a very general feeling is entertained by the men that 6d. per week should be retained from each man's wages to be devoted to a Doctors or Hospital fund. B.H. 2 October 1872.

a letter signed "A Railway Navvie" in the T.T. 3 December 1873, p.3. expressed similar sentiments. The Chinese also had a scheme, refer to B.H. 19 January 1873, p.5.
navvies' like for liquor and brawling. Murray Gladstone Thomson's experience on two separate occasions proves this without a doubt,\(^8\) as does the incident in Dunedin with the Charlotte Gladstone immigrants. In another account the Bruce Herald claimed that Brogden's men were being paid in Hotels and Public Houses with disastrous results. The men spent their money on drink and then proceeded to argue and fight. The Herald demanded the Government take a tougher line with the contractors to ensure that this breach of the Truck clause in the railway contracts was effectively remedied.\(^9\) Nothing was done however. The Brogden navvies also spoke differently from the Colonial workmen. Although we have no evidence to suggest this caused "communication" difficulties between the two groups the speech difference was commented on by Otago newspapers.\(^10\)

From the analysis of the three groups it is obvious that the one with the closest relationship to the stereotype is the Brogden navvy group. Both the local unemployed, and the Chinese, can be equated with the casual labour used in British railway construction. That is, people

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8. Murray Gladstone Thomson's reminiscences are the only eye witness accounts of Brogden navvy behaviour, other than newspaper reports, that I have been able to establish. As they are important I have reproduced them in Appendix V.


10. see \textit{B.H.} 8 April 1873 p.2. article entitled "Bearing Navvies" also \textit{O.D.T.} 23 April 1873 p.2. trial of Brogdennenite named Bickle in Timaru.
who took employment on the line as it was being built in their area, then drifted off once it was completed.

On the other hand, Brogden moved his men around - from the Taieri to North Otago or Southland. The Brogden navvies had, without a doubt, the manners and temperament to hold their own with any railway navvies in the Old Country. On this point the evidence speaks for itself. The navvies unleashed a wave of drunken violence on the Colony such as would have done their English counterparts proud.

Brogden's men had the time on board ship to form into a cohesive social unit. The obvious dislike of the Government immigrants for them, plus the attitudes and reactions in the Colony, no doubt helped mould this sense of uniqueness. They were openly aggressive towards their employers. Brogden's overseer on the Taieri contract had to up the rate of pay by a third before the men would begin work. It was clear that these men would not be easily pushed around.

The class of men Brogden employs are not usually gifted with the most lamb-like dispositions, and are all men unlikely to submit to what they may consider close shaving without lifting up their voices or arms.11

The Colonial navvies did not have the Truck System to contend with under law but, as we have seen, irregularities did occur as to the time lapsed between payment and the

11. O.D.T. Editorial on the navvies 14 January 1873, p.5.
type of dwelling in which payment was made.

In conclusion we can safely say that the Colonial navvy showed appreciable similarities with his English counterpart. Admittedly he did not have the distinctive dress or jargon of the English example, but in drinking, brawling, sweating and toiling, fighting for better wages and better conditions he proved as good, if not better, than his counterpart at Home.
APPENDIX I


Sir,

Is it within the province of the Government of a young Colony to find work for the unemployed? This question naturally occurred to me today, after an interview with a stong healthy-looking man who asked for work, any work, by which he might earn a few shillings to keep him from starving. He had he said first arrived in Dunedin, hav­ing walked from Canterbury looking for employment all the way. In Waikouaiti he had met one kind gentleman who had tried hard to get him something to do in that town, going round to various likely places with him, but without success. Since he had arrived in Dunedin he had scarce been able to keep body and soul together and last night slept in a kennel like a dog, for want of the means to pay for a lodging. I am naturally suspicious of men who come with such stories, and generally take the opport­unity of telling them that doubtless their misfortunes are in most instances, traceable to intemperate habits or the such like. This however was a genuine case and, I am afraid, far from an isolated one: "only give me" said the poor fellow "work at any price and see whether I am not willing as able to earn a living" I looked him straight in the face, and it seemed an honest and sober face with clear bright eyes not those of the inebriate and felt al­most ashamed to offer him money, which I could give
instead of work which I could not. And then I thought how easily the Government could prevent much of this misery, and find work such men with direct and indirect profit to the community. . . . Government works would enable him at least to retain his self-respect and keep him from starvation and crime. Our magistrates and police know how steadily the ranks of our criminal are recruited from the ranks of our unemployed poor.

I am etc.

Motley.
reprint from O.W. 18 February 1871, p.22.

Sir,

I think it is evident that the Clutha Railway cannot be constructed for £5000 per mile. Sooner, however, than see this great and glorious work not carried out we ought to be prepared, not only to sacrifice some of our bigoted prejudices, but also to sacrifice some of our revenue. To reduce the rate of wages would meet with an outcry and also drive our labourers to other colonies. There is, however, another way in which we may accomplish the desired results. On the Pacific Railway, the most active zealous and cheap labourers were the Chinese. All who saw them at work had to say that they were most faithful and able workers. It is known that were sufficient inducement held out to them, we could obtain large numbers from China. If we could consent to employ them on the Clutha Railway we would reap two things. The Clutha Railway would be constructed for £5000 per mile and we would save £1,000,000 on immigration.

I am etc,

"A Working Man"
The evidence and information thus taken and collected has been very various in its character, showing wide differences of opinion as regards the various points of your Committee's inquiry, but your Committee find that the balance of evidence is largely in favour of the following statements, viz.:

1. That the Chinese are industrious and frugal.
2. That they are as orderly citizens as Europeans.
3. That there is no special risk to the morality or security of the community to be apprehended from their presence in the Colony.
4. That they are not likely to introduce any special infectious diseases.
5. That they are well adapted for menial and light mechanical and for agricultural occupations.
6. But that nearly all those who come to this Colony do so for the purpose of mining for gold.
7. That, as a rule, they occupy and turn to good account ground which at present would not pay the European miner.
8. That, as a rule, they return to China so soon as they have amassed a net sum of from £100 upwards.
9. That no considerable number of them are at any time likely to become permanent settlers in the country.
10. That they spend less per head than the European population.
11. That the presence of Chinese in the country has not hitherto entailed any additional police expenditure.

In view of the foregoing the Committee are of opinion that there have been no sufficient grounds shown for the exclusion of the Chinese; and that no sufficient case has up to the present time been made out to require the Committee to propose that legislative action should be taken having for effect the exclusion of the Chinese or the imposition of special burdens upon them.

William J. Steward, Chairman.

October 27, 1871.
## BROGDENS IMMIGRANTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married couples</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single men</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single women</td>
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## OCCUPATIONS OF THE MEN

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navvies</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labourers</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers (mainly farm)</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General labourers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bricklayer's</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrymen</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse drivers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyers</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine drivers</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Smiths</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brickmakers</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Bricklayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Platelayers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firemen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardeners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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## THE MEN WERE SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING PLACES (TOTAL 1298)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipton</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devizes</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Taunton</td>
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<td>Leamington</td>
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<td>Tipton</td>
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<td>Uxbridge</td>
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<td>Plymouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falmouth</td>
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<td>London</td>
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<td>Barslem</td>
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<td>Truro</td>
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<td>Whitehaven</td>
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<td>Brighton</td>
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<td>Exeter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swindon</td>
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<td>Banbury</td>
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<td>Ulcerston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smethwick</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marlborough</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Faringdon</td>
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<td>Wallingford</td>
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<td>Whitney</td>
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<td>Various</td>
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## NATIONALITIES OF THE MEN

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Appendix IV contd.

**Provincial distribution**
(already placed)

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<tr>
<td>Marlborough</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>669</td>
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<tr>
<td>Napier</td>
<td>219</td>
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<td>Auckland</td>
<td>250</td>
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**Navvies at Otago**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date of Arrival</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian McAusland</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>5 Dec. 1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zealandia</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>4 Jan. 1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Gladstone</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>16 Feb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutterworth</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5 April</td>
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</table>

519

A to J 1873, D –2D.
The first time I went on stable work was when I was sent with Mr. John Stewart, who afterwards succeeded Mr. J. W. Fish as foreman in the coach factory, to effect repairs at the Henley stables. These lay quite close to the White House Hotel, owned and occupied by Mr. Amos McKegg. At this time the railway contractors, J. Brogden and Sons, with their navvies, were building the railway across the Taieri Plain and were working across the Taieri River in front of the hotel, a short distance from the navvies’ camp. I think that I am right in saying that Brogden and Sons brought out most of their navvies from the English Midlands, and a pretty rough lot they were. We were there at the Easter holidays. There must have been a recent pay, for the navvies were frequenting the hotel in numbers and making the quiet little wayside inn a very busy and noisy one. Towards the close of our stay things were getting a bit lively, and on our last evening I suggested to Stewart that we should go for a row on the river in Mr. McKegg’s boat and thus keep clear of the house until the crowd had cleared out. It was a lovely moonlight night and away we went down stream. We had rowed the best part of a couple of miles below the bridge, I should say, before we thought of turning. We had left out of our calculations the stiff pull back against the current and consequently we were much later in getting back than we had intended. It was after midnight when we fastened up to the little landing place. All was in darkness and very quiet. On crossing the road to the hotel we were stopped by a policeman who wanted to know where we were going as the hotel was locked up for the night. We explained matters, and Mr. McKegg was knocked up and we were allowed in. Mr. McKegg was astonished to see his two carpenters (“Chips” as he called us) at such an unearthly hour; he had thought we were in bed.

It appears that after we left for our river excursion some of the navvies becoming unmanageable were refused more drink and were ordered out and the door closed. They then bombarded the hotel with stones, breaking the windows, so that Mr. McKegg sent into Milton for the police. I cannot say whether any arrests were made, because we left for Dunedin whilst enquiries were still in progress.

I came in contact with Brogden navvies on another occasion when with my mate, Harry Carey, I was sent to build a small lean-to at stables on the Lawrence Road.

For years the coaches on the Milton-Lawrence Road changed horses at Manuka Creek where there was a small roadside inn; but shortly after the railway was opened to Milton Mr. Chaplin made an alteration and from then on the changing was effected at a place a few miles further along the road, at the foot of the hill close to the Round Hill tunnel. The stables belonging to a Mr. Rae, who kept a small public-house there, were used. They were on the opposite side of the
road to the hotel, on a piece of ground overlooking a creek.

Our orders were to put up at the hotel, hurry on with the stable job, and return to town at the week-end. The timber and other materials had been sent on ahead of us.

On our arrival we found things in a state of commotion. There had been a disagreement between the engineers and the contractors who were putting through the Round Hill tunnel. All work had been stopped, and the men were temporarily suspended. Most of them were loafing about, thronging the hotel and drinking. Altogether, they were a pretty good sample of the Brogden navvy.

We were shown to a small room, the only spare room in the hotel. The bed was a built-in bunk running the whole width of it. It proved to be a very tight fit for two, and on alternate nights we slept front and back. We worked long hours, and in consequence were always ready for bed. We slept well, although at times there was much noise when some of Brogden's men became musical or quarrelsome.

We hurried on with our job, but were hampered by the navvies who hung around and passed uncomplimentary remarks about our work and ourselves. It appeared that because we worked in white aprons as we did in the coach factory, they thought we were new chums and treated us as such. One day, a couple of them came over bothering us and wanting to give us a hand. One of them, a young fellow, paid special attention to my mate who could be pretty smart in his answers. Convinced that we were new chums, he asked Harry what ship he had come out in and got the prompt reply, "the E. P. Bouverie." The young fellow, a little the worse of drink, said, "You're a liar, that's the ship I came in and you weren't aboard." "Oh!" said Harry in jest, 'I came in her in the voyage before you." "The Bouverie has only come here once, don't give me any of your — cheek or I will throw you into the creek," replied the young fellow. Fearing trouble, I told the men not to take any notice of Harry, that he was not a new chum and that he had been born at Carey's Bay, Port Chalmers, about eighteen years before, and that I had been in the country a good many years myself. They only laughed and persisted in calling us a couple of blooming new chums. As things were beginning to look nasty, to avoid trouble I invited them to have a drink. Going over to the hotel with them, I shouted, and soon had them in good humour. There I left them.

They did not bother us again, nevertheless we were pleased when on the Saturday, our work being finished, James McIntosh turned up with his coach and five-horse team and we took our departure for Dunedin.
### APPENDIX VI

#### Numbers of Railway Navvies*1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Colony</th>
<th>Boroughs</th>
<th>Outside Boroughs</th>
<th>Goldfields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1659</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>3225</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>2437*2</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Numbers of Railway Navvies per Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Auckland</th>
<th>Taranaki</th>
<th>Wellington</th>
<th>Hawkes Bay</th>
<th>Marlborough</th>
<th>Nelson</th>
<th>Westland</th>
<th>Canterbury</th>
<th>Otago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>828*2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Chinese Navvies in the Colony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 full category road, railway, labourer, navvy, excavator.

*2 includes one woman.

Figures taken from N.Z. Census 1874 and 1878.
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