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Pulletop and Thornthwaite: Photography, Taste and Class Mobility in 19th Century New South Wales

This paper will explore how two different photographic accounts of working landscapes in nineteenth-century New South Wales reveal changing social identities and preferences for cultural artefacts between 1860 and the mid 1890s.

Joseph and Ernest Docker's photographs of their own property (c. 1860-1869) disavow details of labour and land productivity in favour of producing picturesque landscape photographs. Both Dockers were educated amateurs, producing delicate, hand-made photographs demonstrating their cultural sophistication.

The photographs of Pulletop Station (c. 1886-1891), in contrast, celebrate conspicuous leisure, depict employed labour and articulate class relations. The owner, Edmund Westby, commissioned the photographs to celebrate the productivity and cultural refinements of the property (including photographs of the garden and the broader landscape). The photographer, Charles Bayliss, was a commercial views photographer based in Sydney: the cultural depiction of the landscape, as well as the labour that made the economics of the landscape possible, is passed to skilled operators. Shunning a painted commission, Westby's interest in a photographic celebration of the landscape suggests that he was concerned with new representational forms, creating a link between his economic and social mobility and the means by which it was represented.

The explicit visualisation of leisure and class relations in the later photographs of Pulletop arguably reveal how Westby was able to position himself within a social elite associated with the formation of an identifiable Australian social hierarchy. Significantly, the exposure of class relations was not distasteful him, creating a record of changing tastes in the landscape photography specific to Australia.

Introduction

This paper will explore how two different photographic accounts of working landscapes in nineteenth-century New South Wales reveal changing ideas about the representation of land, leisure, labour and class between 1860 and the mid 1890s. The two sets of photographs are different in remarkable ways, despite the fact that both sets depict the land surrounding specific homesteads. The photographs were made more than two decades and over 400 miles apart and the images reflect some significant changes in the economic, social and cultural life of New South Wales.

Joseph and Ernest Docker made the first set of photographs between 1860 and 1869 of their family property, Thornthwaite, in northern New South Wales near Scone. The

photographs, on the whole, depict the property within existing landscape conventions; that is, as picturesque with melancholic overtones and few references to the working life of the station. The second set of photographs of Pulletop, in the Riverina District of New South Wales, were commissioned by the owner Edmund Westby and were made by a commercial landscape photographer from Sydney, Charles Bayliss (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1984). Although there are some conventional landscape and view photographs in the set and some references to the cultural life of the station, there is much more emphasis on the working life of the station and the photographs depict labour relationships.

The differences between the two sets of photographs are not simply reducible to notions of “old” and “new money”, although the different sets do suggest changing ideas of symbolic representation of wealth and social prestige. Both the Dockers and Westbys were immigrants with some capital to invest in Australia and both families held positions of influence and respect within their communities (although the Dockers were more influential in this regard). Yet there were significant differences in the families, their fortunes and their relationship to economics and politics. There were cultural differences between the two families too. Some of these differences relate to the changing social and economic context in Australia between the 1860s and 1890s. The conventional and delicate photographs Thornthwaite reflect Docker’s educated, established and monied background, while the photographs of Pulletop reflect the sensibilities of Westby’s investment in modern working landscapes and the division of labour. The photographs are not simply descriptive, however, in this regard and indicate too an investment and interest in the symbolic significance of the landscape and pastoralism. This paper then will examine the backgrounds and histories of the two families in relation to the sets of photographs and the wider economic, social and ideological changes happening in Australia over the latter half of the nineteenth century. This will include a discussion of the changing context of photography, discussing the Docker’s relationship to amateur photography, and the commissioning relationship of Westby and his photographer, Charles Bayliss.

Methodology

The interpretive approach to these photographs and their contexts utilises an approach developed by Elizabeth Edwards in her book *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (2001). Arguing for a close reading of the photographs that identifies both ‘possible closures of meaning, and open spaces of articulation’ she proposes that the ‘whole performative quality of the image’ be acknowledged (p. 2). Like Edwards, I am interested in these photographs ‘beyond the surface level of evidence of appearance’ (p. 5) yet the surface appearances and descriptions the photographs provide are intrinsic to this paper. Whilst perhaps the photographs were meant to be secure in their meaning at the time of production what is produced by the photographs now are instead ‘points of fracture’ (p. 6). Indeed, these photographs are fragments of space and time, separated from history and, I might add, from the subjective and reflective responses of the original owners and viewers. The meaning of the photographs becomes arbitrary in the contemporary context, especially when little empirical evidence exists to provide a convincing historical context. In this instance, “meanings [in photographs or proposed by photographs] are not necessarily in the photographs themselves, but in their suggestive appearances within different contexts ... [and can be] transposed from the culture of viewing” to a new culture of viewing (p. 8).

In this sense, Edwards proposes ‘historiographic liberation’ (p. 17) that enables photographs to be invested with a degree of agency in the *making* of history.

Like the social saliency of the material object, active agency implies a level of performance, projection and engagement on the part of the object. In the idea of performance, and its more overt and formal manifestation, theatricality, [there?] is implied a presentation that constitutes a performative or persuasive act directed towards a conscious behold (p. 17).

Photographs produce the experience of being photographed and then the image becomes a ‘heightened sign world’, which ‘focus[es] seeing and attention in a certain way’ (p. 17). Additionally the sign itself is performative where the ‘mutability of the photograph’ is played out on a wider cultural stage (p. 17).

In relation to the photographs under scrutiny here, what Edwards' approach enables is a historical contextualisation of the production and use of the photographs, as far as is able, but the 'fractures' in this incomplete context enable the performative qualities of the photographs to be mined with a view to discussing what was, and is, at stake in these representational practices. It is clear (especially in the Bayliss photographs of Westby at Pulletop, but also in the photographs of Thornthwaite) that a performance is being conducted here *and* that the photograph was designed to act performatively in its use: citing and reiterating economic success and the acquisition of cultural capital associated with the ownership of land (an important social marker even in the latter part of the nineteenth century). What this paper aims to do is tease out the threads of what this performance might have meant in the cultural context of the late nineteenth century and to acknowledge that such an approach reflects my own current cultural context, motivations and interest.

Both sets of photographs enable their owners to perform, record and distribute their class status and his symbolic wealth as enabled through the ownership of a pastoral property. Yet Westby's ownership is also a modern one, celebrating the division of labour in the production and distribution of wool. Westby also looks like a visiting manager, leisured on his property, rather than appearing as a man who works his own land. Westby chooses a modern representational form to enable these distinctions to be depicted, one that both uses and exposes the symbolic aspects of land ownership and the resulting photographs are more optimistic and descriptive than the Dockers' small salt prints.

Why Class? And how is class understood, here?

In a country where the possibilities of economic and social improvement, especially within its early history, were motivating factors for immigration (Cannon, 1971, p. 11) it seems important to examine whether such ideas were represented in visual form. It is clear that there was a celebration of working men's labour in photographic form (as produced by Kerry, Caire, Lindt, Bayliss from 1870s to the early twentieth century) but it is not clear whether there were significant opportunities for an improved society to be imagined or created, or whether it was possible for working men to change their social status even if their wages were higher or their standard of

living was improved. Working men were subject to heroic celebration through photographic representations, and unemployed or travelling men played manifestations suggest a radical improvement in the lot of working men or of the society in which they live. Moreover, the repeated emphasis on such photographic representations of types of labour overlook the ways in which working patterns, class relations, and the ownership of land and its relationship to its occupiers have been represented in photography in the nineteenth century. Such questions about class relations, working conditions, the improvement of working men's lives, and so on, raise broader questions about class and class consciousness in Australian history. More specifically still, what were the cultural interests and preoccupations of the elite in Australia, especially if they had improved their social or economic situation? Perhaps the representations that they commissioned, purchased or commented upon will offer some insights.

There are precedents for such questions. T.J. Clarke, in *The Painting of Modern Life* (date), argues that the "contradictory class situation of clerks, shopworkers, and the like was internalised in the images of Manet and his followers as a powerful homology for subjectivity and experience. ... When the petite bourgeoisie became an established part of the bourgeoisie, he argues, the depiction of modern life ceased" (Edwards, 2006, pp. 6-7). Steve Edwards uses Clarke's work on class and representation, together with his own research on photography, to argue that there was an "ambiguous class position is the constitutive heart of photography" (p. 6). That is, photography's practices, practitioners and representations were structured by and reveal class relations and were structured by its relationship to labour and art. Edwards maintains that class is a useful category for understanding and explaining nineteenth century photography (p. 8), especially in its everyday form. Yet such approaches are fraught with difficulty. Locating the voices of working men in the nineteenth century, especially that of photographers and labourers is hard. Edwards writing enables us to see how photography itself belonged to the world of labour (p. 10) *and* to the world of art (p. 11). Indeed, labour and art acted as an organising theme for the discussion of photography and its practices in the specialist photographic press in the nineteenth century.

Art features in this paper in several ways. It enables the comparison between photography and painting as representations of the landscape to become manifest and it also enables a discussion of how labour is represented, as well as the differences in how the labour of cultural production was understood within a society structured by class. Edwards argues that photography is an allotropic form, that is, although the mechanics of photography do not alter greatly, the photograph is both document and art. Photographs are therefore both “free” (as in creative freedom) and a form of labour (p. 15). Although Bayliss was a commercial photographer, and commissioned to make the photographs of Pulletop, Edwards’ framework makes it possible to see the art in his photographs beyond their obvious formal qualities. The art of the Dockers’ photographs, being made within an explicit amateur tradition, perhaps require less attention within this paper.

So how is class being treated within this paper? Connell and Irving in *Class Structure in Australian History* (1980) provide both a theoretical and historical understanding of class relations, their formation and change in Australia. Their understanding of class is built upon historical notions, arguing that class refers to “patterns of social polarisation and transformation ... understood as processes in time” (p. xi). Moreover, their class analysis acknowledges structural relationships, “seeing connections [and] being able to interpret personal experience as a political problem [that make] relational interpretations structural” (p. 2). Eschewing stratification theory Irving and Connell promote a model of class that favours social formations and an understanding of class in its place within the “social division of labour *as a whole* (Poulantzas date in Connell and Irving, 1980, p 6). This enables class to be seen as politically, ideologically and economically formed (p. 6). In Australia, they maintain, “a society [was created that was] polarised around capitalist production relations... and the major transitions that then occurred within it – the linked changes of the dominant groups within the ruling class, of capital formation and the production process, and of the scale and depth of the working class resistance” is then explored (p. 16). Their historical investigation of the nineteenth century, and the changes and resistances that occurred during that time, help to interpret the visual and discursive changes evident in and suggested by the differences in the sets of photographs examined here.

Joseph and Ernest Docker – Thornthwaite as Home and Cultural Prestige

Joseph Docker (b. 1802, d. 1884), surgeon, Justice of the Peace, parliamentarian and one time landowner, together with his son, Ernest (b. 1842, d.1923), photographed their home and livelihood – ‘Thornthwaite’, a pastoral property near Scone in northern New South Wales. Before Docker had decided to settle in Australia he had been an employee of the East Indian Company as a surgeon (Docker, E.W., 2003, pp. 1-30). Docker purchased Thornthwaite outright in 1835 and whilst there established a family, six children in all, and acquired further land bordering Thornthwaite when prices in land had dropped (p. 38). Thornthwaite, however, was difficult to make a going concern and Joseph Docker borrowed extensively to keep it afloat. By 1869, debts against Thornthwaite amounted to £16,000 and in 1870 the property was sold to George Finlay for £1500 (Docker, E.W., 2003, p. 79). Docker and his family moved to Sydney, no worse for the experience as the debt against the property was annulled. Joseph Docker’s later career was in politics, which gave him a public profile. He was involved with the planning of International Exhibitions as well as being involved with The Philosophical Society where he showed his photographs (p. 48). Joseph took up photography very early in its history in Australia, practicing it at a vast distance from a metropolitan centre where chemicals and other necessary equipment were procured (Valdon, 1908, pp. 226-230). Significantly, Joseph Docker was also a Justice of the Peace whilst owner of Thornthwaite (Woodman).

Ernest Docker, showing promise as a scholar, attended the University of Sydney, trained as a lawyer and became a Judge. A keen amateur photographer, he witnessed key events in the Australian history of photography, such as the Eccleston du Faur expedition to the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains, and reported on Bernard Holtermann’s contribution to the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 (Docker, 1873, p. 537). Ernest took a keen interest in photography from the early age of eight, assisting his father in the preparation and exposure of photographs. As amateur photographers, neither Joseph nor Ernest had an interest in making money from their photographs, but both were generous in making copies of their endeavours and giving them to other amateur photographers and neighbours, especially when they lived at Thornthwaite. Thornthwaite was situated on the Dartbrook River, providing a picturesque setting for

the property; the photographs have been celebrated both for their documentary value and their aesthetic sensibility (Docker, E.W., 2003, p. 52).

The publicly available photographs of Thornthwaite are presented in one album and another scrapbook; both are held at the Mitchell Library in Sydney.¹ *Album of views of "Thornthwaite", Dartbrook, N.S.W., ca. 1860-1869* was deposited at the Mitchell Library in 1968 with a small portrait album and an album of views of New England (Docker, c. 1860-1869). The *Album of Views of "Thornthwaite"* was compiled by Ernest Docker, is very beautiful, leather-bound and has heavy wooden boards. Although the pages of the album are very thin, the photographs are remarkably well preserved and are briefly captioned. Although the album is titled Thornthwaite it also contains scenes from the Blue Mountains, Sydney Harbour, and other Sydney sights, a photograph of the Nepean River, a few photographs from Adelaide and photographs of Yosemite Valley, purchased from an American commercial views photographer. The photographs of distant locales in Australia punctuate the photographs of Thornthwaite and the river scenes of the Dartbrook, with the album finishing with the Yosemite photographs. It provides the impression that excursions were made from Thornthwaite, and each return brought confirmation of the ownership and existence of the pastoral property with a final break from the property associated with a tour to North America.

The homestead at Thornthwaite's has been systematically. The album opens with views of the homestead and its gardens, and emphasises the activity of gardening [show slide]. (It is not known who the gardener is, but I assume it to be a family member.) There are numerous views which treat the homestead as the centre of the property with the photographer exploring it in a circular motion from the north, east, south and west, each time looking back to the homestead [figs. 1.14, 1.15 & 1.16 – show slide]. Each view is labelled according to the relationship to the compass and there are many variations on this pattern: several photographs from the east, several photographs from the south etc. The homestead was recorded from an increasing distance: the views demanded by the points of the compass are retraced from further away from the homestead, the scale of the house looks smaller within the landscape and the sweep and majesty of the setting are increased [fig. 1.17 – show slide]. There are also images that situate the homestead and the boundaries of the property in

relation to other geographical features, such as the Liverpool Ranges to the north [fig. 1.18]. There is also one image which shows a road away from the property, and in this instance the photographer has situated himself close to the homestead and is looking away from home [fig. 1.19]. Thornthwaite, then, is visually constructed along this centralised and circulatory pattern, although there are other views that situate Thornthwaite in relation to the broader landscape and methods of communication such as roads.



Fig. 1.12 Thornthwaite



Thornthwaite

Fig. 1.13 Thornthwaite



Thornthwaite from the South

Fig. 1.14 Thornthwaite from the South



Fig. 1.15 Thornthwaite from the North



Fig. 1.16 Thornthwaite from the North



Fig. 1.17 Thornthwaite from the East



Fig. 1.18 Thornthwaite Liverpool Ranges



Fig. 1.19 Road to the Liverpool Range

The Dartbrook, one of the two rivers running through the property, features prominently in the album and is given picturesque treatment [fig. 1.20 – show slide]. Photographed from an unusually low vantage point, with an attention to the tonal scale and composition these are beautiful images of the river. Ernest was clearly proud of these images; two are reproduced in *The Australian Photographic Journal's* feature on him, celebrating his achievements in photography (Valdon, 1908, pp. 226-227). The image *The Dartbrook, or Wongamo* is reproduced with the title 'Shades of Evening' and sports a painted-in cloudscape suggesting a genre approach to this particular part of the property. Interestingly enough, the Dartbrook was not the 'working' river of the property; sheep were washed prior to sheering but on the Middlebrook River, which had a more central position in the station (Docker, E.W., 2003, p. 30).

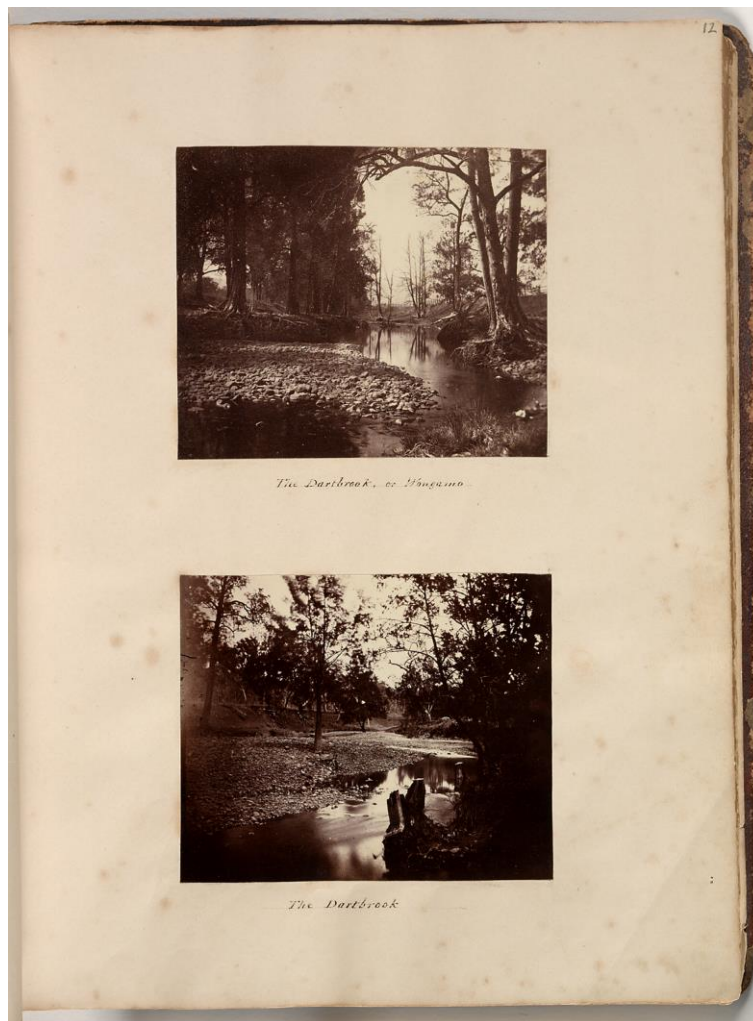


Fig. 1.20 The Dartbrook, or Wongamo [above] and The Dartbrook [below]

Indeed, it is remarkable the extent to which Thornthwaite is treated as a cultural artefact; there are signs of improvements and material progress, such as the garden and hints of clearing [Fig. 1.21 [show slide](#)] but these are also treated as framing devices, deliberately included as a desirable part of the scenery, and in the case of the garden, a beautiful thing in its own right. Significantly, although there are people in a few of the photographs, most of them are devoid of labour and images of labouring (although one of the images of cottages has a family situated in front of it). This album is not a document of the work required in making a successful station but as a working landscape that is appreciated for its scenic and spatial qualities. Its scenic qualities



Fig. 1.21 Thornthwaite

are, from the photographic point of view, much more highly valued than the land's economic or productive potential. Given that the album was compiled in the 1860s, when Ernest was spending much of his time away in Sydney studying, it is perhaps not surprising that his interest in the property is primarily one of space and aesthetics as it was already clear that he was not destined for a career as a pastoralist (Woodman, 2007). That his father, who was making these photographs with him, should see the property exclusively in these terms might be surprising, but Joseph Docker was a keen amateur landscape painter and clearly used to treating river and pastoral scenes as cultural objects. Moreover, as a magistrate, Docker was a member of the class making use of cheap labour through the convict assignment system (although it is not known whether convicts worked on this particular property). Nonetheless, Docker would have been a significant member of the community and

essentially a member of the local aristocracy (Irving and Connell, 1980, p. 33). As Irving and Connell have stated:

Pastoralism under the gentry created a polarised, patriarchal society in the countryside, a deep gulf of status, poverty and power separating the workforce from the rulers. The gentry attempted to entrench themselves politically in the institutions of the state and physically on the land (Irving and Connell, 1980, p. 53).

The solid classical and Georgian homesteads, which Irving and Connell describe as “ruling class domestic architecture” (p. 53), is a description that seems to fit Thornthwaite’s stone built homestead. Joseph Docker was also in a position to network with similarly educated and elite members of the New South Wales’ aristocracy, as his later political career attests. Joseph and Ernest did not view this property from the point of view of workers but as members of the landed gentry. The material operations of the property were not subject to aesthetic interest and treatment of any working subjects remained embedded firmly within the picturesque tradition (I’m thinking of John Barrell and *The Dark Side of the Landscape* here). Figures are too small and unspecific to be identifiable and remain part of the scenery.

[Consider cutting for the AVSA conference] In comparison the *Bingle family: scrap album, 1856-1880s* (Bingle Family, c. 1856-1880s, PXA 941) is much more informally arranged. It contains a total of nine photographs of Thornthwaite, which is proportionally small in comparison to the other contents: 167 pages with 69 loose items of poems, cuttings, flower arrangements, autographs, music, drawings and prints, some of which were executed by Sarah Bingle, the sister of the compiler of the scrapbook, Mary Bingle (State Library of New South Wales, 2007a). The scrapbook was compiled over an extended period of time, from 1856-1889. The Bingles lived on a run ‘Puen Buen’ on the Upper Hunter River and the Dockers and Bingles were neighbours. The photographs are not assembled in any particular order or structure throughout the scrapbook. It does embed the photographs intrinsically in the structure of the scrapbook and they significant to the scrapbook’s overall appearance. There are also other photographs in the scrapbook, predominantly of Newcastle, the nearest large city and port to the Hunter region. The inclusion of the photographs of the

neighbouring Thornthwaite in this album probably attest to the gift or contribution of photographs to the scrapbook from the Dockers to Mary Bingle, who may well have had a friendship or relationship with Wilfred Docker, one of Ernest's brothers.ⁱⁱ

Familiar views reappear in the Bingle album but new views and details are added. One photograph suggests crop establishment [fig. 1.28] and the location of cottages in relation to the main homestead [fig. 1.25] but there is no record of who lived where and their role in relation to the property, although it is known that previous owners of the extensions to Thornthwaite, the Barwicks and Dodds, were retained as farm hands (Docker, E.W., 2003, p. 36). The photographs of cottages do speak obliquely of class differences on the property. The housing of workers on the station are treated picturesquely, but unlike the homestead, are not stone built and do not have their own ornamental garden.



Fig. 1.25 Thornthwaite



Fig. 1.28 [Thornthwaite]

Thornthwaite's picturesque qualities were such that they could be shared and celebrated by other viewers who had connections to the property through friendship and location. The importance and picturesque setting of the homestead is privileged over the working and economic aspects of the landscape.ⁱⁱⁱ Given that Thornthwaite was constantly expanding and changing during Ernest's relationship with it (Docker, E.W., 2003, pp. 38-39 and Piddington, 1984, p. 5), his activities of situating and confirming its existence can be seen as part of the same place-making activity associated with settlement and necessarily contingent. Although the homestead features as the centre of the property, peripheral features such as the Dartbrook and the Liverpool ranges also provide Thornthwaite with a boundary and a broader context of location. The excursions to other places, including Newcastle and the scenic tours from Sydney provide other places to which Thornthwaite can be defined and compared.

The financial failure of the property was not significant as the demise of the Dockers' pastoral period coincided with broader changes in the political life of the colony. The Dockers' move to Sydney coincided with the elite sections of society residing in

urban centres who were in a stronger position to influence politics and policy making (Irving and Connell, 1980, p. 54). Indeed, many of these influential people were now merchants (and sometimes also landowners) and Irving and Connell argue that the merchants were not a separate class (p. 54). Given that political power was now centred in the towns and given the Dockers' social prestige, perhaps the departure from Thornthwaite was more than an economic necessity. The melancholic overtone of the photographs, in hindsight, figures as a wishful looking back on the idylls (and elisions) of an aristocratic pastoral existence, a vision that was impossible to maintain for economic and social reasons.

The Pulletop Photographs

Ken Taylor has researched the Westby family and has established that Edmund Westby owned Pulletop Station with his brother, Alfred from 1868 to 1911 (although Alfred died in 1876) (Taylor, 2000, p. 18). The station was purchased by their father, also Edmund Westby and given to the sons as a gift. The elder Westby was English and came to Australia in 1840, setting up a sawmill in Melbourne and becoming a merchant (State Library of Victoria). The son Edmund was educated in England and seems to have retained a tie to the country, remaining a member of the Oxford and Cambridge Clubs in London and making repeated return visits. Thomas E. Tylor or Taylor seems to have managed Pulletop in Westby's absence (Carr, 2004). Although Westby did not reside or work at Pulletop all of the time, the investment in the photographs indicates at least pride in the property and a possible attachment to the place. He also liked to entertain (Taylor, 2000, p. 18) and arranged for extensive improvements, including the landscaping of the garden, to be carried out.

There are eighteen photographs, held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which depict Pulletop. They were made by Charles Bayliss and are dated approximately 1890-97. These photographs were originally presented in album format, but are now disbound.^{iv} In addition, there are sixteen photographs of Pulletop at the National Library of Australia, five of which were produced by Bayliss (these are dated approximately 1885). The photographs show Bayliss's trademark choreography of

figures (Newton, 1988, p. 61) and they form a rare photographic overview of a single working property as captured by a commercial photographer.^v The photographs are remarkable for spatially mapping Pulletop, for displaying signs of significant cultural investment in the station and for its delineation of the wool production process: the source of the station's wealth.



Fig. 1.29 Homestead Garden showing perimeter fence and carriageway

[**Show Slide**] The album contains several photographs of the beautiful gardens and valleys surrounding the station and the owners are situated so as to establish their proprietorship over the area [fig. 1.29 & 1.30]. The relative rank of workers is delineated: the owners are depicted with the workers and the owners are given more significance than the gardeners or those working in the shearing shed [fig. 1.31 – **show slide**]. Nigel Lendon's account of the album (1980) focuses on the ideological implications of the photographs, that is, the production of wealth. Lendon therefore argues that these photographs were signs of "the buyer's social relationship to [the] ... production processes" (1980, p. 82) and they confirm the viewer as middle or upper class (1980, p. 79).



Fig. 1.30 Homestead in Distance, men and horses resting in foreground

Lendon further argues that these photographs were not able to transcend particularity, making their audience and messages of proprietorship more evident, especially in comparison to the paintings of shearing by Tom Roberts (1980, p. 82) [show slide]. Lendon also focuses on the infrequent depiction of labour in commercial photographs, which, he argues, was considerably less than the more generalised topographical views. Images of labour therefore “typify the subject-matter from the point of view of the buyer” and they “reinforced (or celebrated) the buyer’s social relationship to those productive processes” (p. 82). The photographs reinforce the buyer’s social position (that of a consumer within the production processes), and given the scarcity of copies of these images in other contexts, Lendon demonstrates that they did not appeal or were not circulated to a wider audience.^{vi} Yet perhaps the degree of control and supervision suggested in this photograph in comparison with other images of shearing sheds, prevented this photograph from having wider appeal: in showing the shearers in subordinated roles they would contradict the myth of the shearer as a man likely to take pride in his independence. Lendon’s argument is mainly plausible as social

relationships are revealed rather than obscured. Indeed, there are many more popular images of working men than Lendon allows but they typically avoid picturing hierarchical class relationships. Bayliss's photograph, in contrast, speaks of the rising bitterness of class conflicts of the 1890s (Irving and Connell, 1980, p. 107).

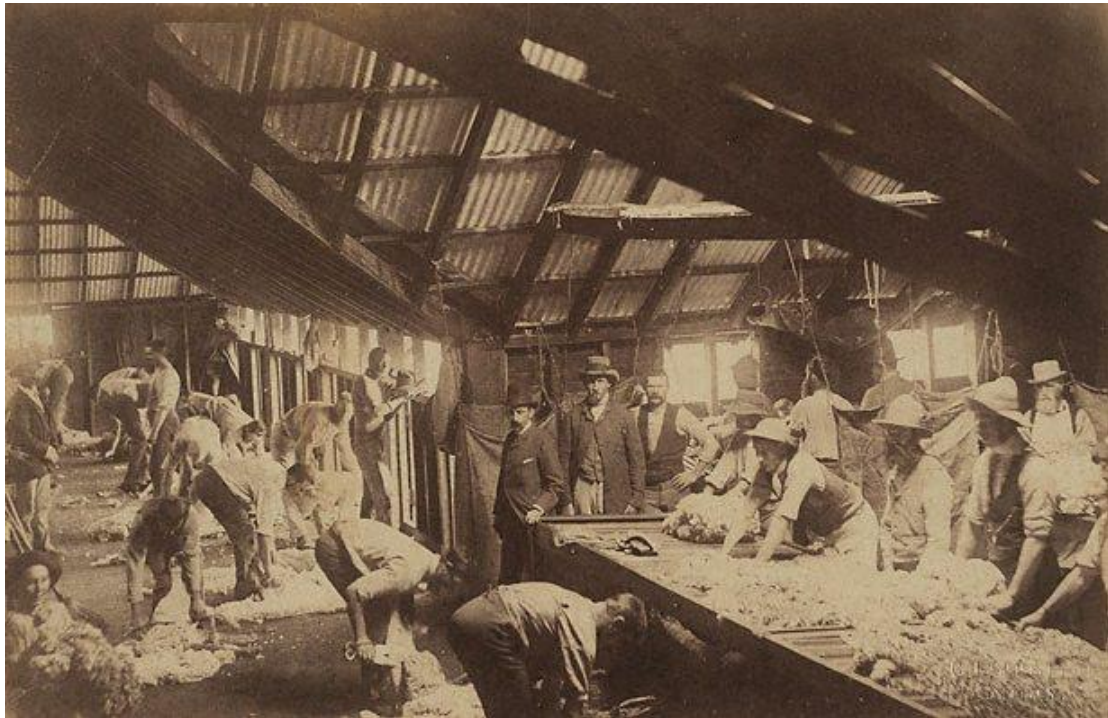


Fig. 1.31 Shearing Shed

More broadly the album situates the homestead within an aesthetic and cultured space. The gardens are immaculately maintained, which the presence of the gardener in three of the images reinforces [show slide figs. 1.29, 1.35 & 1.36]. In spatial terms, the homestead is considered to have a 'best side' as it is consistently photographed from the side that shows the veranda, although at varying distances. The emphasis on the garden within the set of photographs (and in Taylor's photographs too) suggests that Pulletop was a country retreat for Westby; the land was not just an instrumental means of making money or a place of work and responsibility but also a space for socialising and aesthetic pleasure.^{vii}

This album is equally, if not more so, concerned with the cultured aspects of the homestead [show slide figs. 1.37, 1.38, 1.39], its environment and the activities of the residents and owners. *Men on Horseback with dogs* [fig. 1.40], for example, suggests

a hunting scene and there are three photographs which reveal an interest in fine horses and horse breeding [show slide - figs. 1.41, 1.42 & 1.43]. So while there is much emphasis on the wool process, including its packing and distribution [figs. 1.31 & 1.44, 1.45, 1.46] this is not the only activity on the station and placed together creates a comprehensive statement about wealth and establishment complicating Lendon's analysis of class interests.

There are significant differences between the kinds of class interests demonstrated by the Dockers and Westby's class interests. As Irving and Connell have demonstrated, free selection (which was meant to enable small farmers to take up land) enabled squatters to become landowners, but their permanent ownership of land required financial borrowing (1980, p. 107). By 1890, they claim, "half the pastoralists of New South Wales were mortgaged clients of bankers or brokers" (p. 107) and "the plantation ideal of the pastoralists was weakened as the public sector legitimated [the] ideology of development and pastoral capital was absorbed into mercantile capital as the economy expanded ... The mercantile capitalist emerged as the leading faction of the reconstituted bourgeoisie" (p. 112). As a merchants and traders in Melbourne the Westbys were in a position to belong to this new powerful group yet the symbolic prestige associated with the purchase of land remained desirable, as well as providing opportunities for further economic development.^{viii}



Fig. 1.35 Homestead and garden (close up)



Fig. 1.36 Homestead and garden (middle distance)



Fig. 1.37 Homestead in Distance



Fig. 1.38 Homestead in Distance



Fig. 1.39 View of Shearing Shed in Distance



Fig. 1.40 Men on Horseback with Dogs



Fig. 1.41 Horses in a Paddock



Fig. 1.42 Stockmen and a group of horses



Fig. 1.43 Stockyards



Fig. 1.44 Stacking Wool Bales onto a Cart



Fig. 1.45 Processing Wool Bales



Fig. 1.46 Bullock Team and Cart Laden with Wool Bales in front of Shearing Shed



Fig. 1.47 View of Hillside and Ridge in Background

What is perhaps more surprising is that such a large difference should be discernible in the depiction of labour in the photographs by the Dockers and Bayliss, as both albums were made for similar classes who had control over the process of production. Westby, by appearing in these photographs, does not occupy a position of a disinterested and distant viewer and is instead involved – albeit in a highly hierarchical way – in the running of this station (he is not treating Pulletop exclusively as a cultural object). As a man with a family background in trading, Westby, despite being a new landowner, takes pride in the productivity of his land. This does not prevent him from enjoying the landscape of his property (fig. 1.30), but he does so in a way that demonstrates his position to the landscape (he is not a naturalized viewer but has to take possession of the place physically). Bayliss's photographs of Westby's presence at the station are not melancholic, but instead (from Westby's point of view) celebratory. Pulletop is not an idyllic pastoral and picturesque landscape, but a modern and productive space that openly inscribes the social and economic relationships on the land and in the photographs. This space is troubled (the tension of the wool shed is apparent – fig. 1.31) but also controlled and working.

Docker may well have found the explicit exploitation of labour distasteful which does not seem to be the case with Westby (perhaps Docker found their relationship to the land and the obfuscation of labour natural and inevitable – after all – the Dockers inherited a tradition where workers were picturesque subjects). Docker, however, chose to depict Thornthwaite as a space in which little intervention was apparently required, whereas Westby's album shows the economic imperatives of his station, as well as the labour required to maintain it, albeit from his specific class position. The gentlemanly gardener in Docker's album seems to be labouring from love (and may well have been a family member) whereas the gardener in Bayliss's photographs is clearly hired and exists in a specific class relationship to his employers. Westby takes a conspicuous pride in having sufficient wealth to employ a gardener, and the wool shed also depicts an interest in the quantity and production of wool.^{ix} Bayliss's photographs of wool production, however, also suggest some developments around the labour theme.

Stacking Wool Bales onto a Cart [show slide - fig. 1.44] does not depict the owners and overseers of the station. Placed with *Processing Wool Bales* [fig. 1.45], both images suggest pride in physical masculine labour as well as pride in the specific job at hand; the choreographed composition emphasises their effort and physique. Comparing *Processing Wool Bales* [fig. 1.45] to *Shearing Shed* [fig. 1.31] reveals less emphasis on the hierarchy of labour, despite the presence of foremen. Here the centrality of the managers and owners, their imposing demeanour, together with the stillness of the scene suggest a hierarchical rigidity and class tensions that are absent from the other photographs associated with wool production. Bayliss is able, through moving the managers to the periphery of the image and in making a central striking pose of the man operating the wool press [fig. 1.45] to prioritise and celebrate labour in a more optimistic way; physical strength and grace, here, is more important than any other facet to the distribution of wool. The album's overall context, however, where the viewer was likely to have a controlling interest in the labour market, mitigates how celebratory Bayliss's photograph can be presumed to have been on the part of the workers. The details of the wool production process also reveal the fine division of labour in the wool and packing sheds, pointing towards modernised production processes. Whilst elegant and celebratory the economic success and the cultural activities of the property within specific social historical relations remain prevalent.

Conclusion

Joseph and Ernest Docker were able to practice photography as an expression of their education and interest in science and the arts; this coincided with their interests in depicting the landscape (Joseph Docker was also an amateur watercolourist - Docker, E.) Although their photographs of Thornthwaite are a rare document of a working station, the photographs fulfil the conventions of the picturesque, disavowing the labour and the social relations that made Thornthwaite an economic possibility. The melancholic tone of the photographs suggest that the Dockers already saw the pastoral idyll as created in their images as part of the past, or at least unsustainable. Their pastoral period coincided with a period of Australian history that saw landowners as powerful social people and the construction of their images reveals their education and social prestige. However, when the power of pastoralists declined, the Dockers

continued to be socially influential but moved to an urban context. The Dockers' images of Thornthwaite contrast vividly to commercial photographs of the time, which concentrate on the successful establishment of the colony. The photographs of Thornthwaite disavow the productivity of land, there is little to suggest that active labouring was being undertaken on the property, there is no interest in the people working on the property and there are no photographs that explicitly document the development of the station.

Bayliss's photographs of Pulletop, whilst aesthetically accomplished, largely fit within the commercial practices of celebrating the productivity of the land and depicting transportation of goods. Bayliss's photographs of Pulletop depict the working landscape as part of an optimistic and cultured future. This approach seems to fit with Westby's interests in Pulletop, which is at once a place of leisure, entertainment and culture as well as a source of wealth and pride. Westby and his family did not simply class jump or "make it good" in Australia: they consolidated their existing capital from merchant businesses by investing in a pastoral property. Indeed, as noted by Connell and Irving, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, social, economic and political power were associated with the merchants of the urban centres rather than with pastoralism. The Westbys had already acquired their economic and social prestige before acquiring Pulletop. This historical context of the Pulletop photographs therefore suggests that the symbolic prestige of pastoralism was important to the Westbys. Indeed, although the population of Australia was largely urban, there was still a considerable interest in bush life and significant visual and symbolic investments were made in representing station and bush life to the wider public (Astbury, 1985). Although Bayliss's photographs did not circulate widely it seems that Westby was purchasing his own version of social prestige in relation to station life. The cultural prestige was associated with Australia's landscapes in the 1890s did not decline, even though the political efficacy of the pastoralists was waning by the time the photographs were made (Connell and Irving, 1980, pp. 105-187).

It is unclear how attached Westby was to a specifically Australian landscape, especially as he returned to England repeatedly. The photographs suggest that he was attached to the production of wealth and to the station as a site of cultured leisure.

Although it is not clear whether Westby or Bayliss intended a specifically Australian approach to the landscape, the description of modern working practices (the division of labour) and the explicit acknowledgement of social relations suggests that Westby and Bayliss were not concerned with the conventions inherited by the landed gentry. Instead, the land was there for taking and making, even if that was at the expense of exploiting labour. The explicit acquisition of land, wealth and the engagement of cultural pursuits was not distasteful to Westby and with Bayliss he created a record of his accomplishments that also recorded his position within the social relations then prevalent in Australia. This suggests that the acquisition of wealth was not necessarily frowned upon and the markers of social prestige coveted.

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ⁱ The Docker family still hold much of the material produced by J. and E.B. Docker (Newton, 2004).

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- ⁱⁱ The album of photographs of New England which forms part of the holdings of Picc.Acc. 1349 is inscribed: 'W.B. Docker from M.R.B. 20.6.11'.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The absence of agricultural workers is significant, it emphasises the land as cultural product and romanticises the working of land; both of which are important agrarian myths in nineteenth century Australia. These themes are explored further in Chapter Three.
- ^{iv} The album was in very poor condition when it was acquired and the original sequence of the photographs cannot be ascertained. However, the current numbering maintains the sequence of photographs as they were found.
- ^v Henry King and Fred Kruger were also commissioned to make relatively thorough photographic records of properties (King, c. 1895-1900). However, these are rare, especially when compared to Kerry's 'Squatter's Service' where fewer images of each property were made with the emphasis on the single encapsulating view that included stock, workers and owners (Willis, 1988, pp. 79-81). Bayliss's attention to detail and his depiction of the working processes of the station make this album unique.
- ^{vi} Josef Lebovic has confirmed that some few prints from the album were copied more than once, but they remain rare (Lebovic, conversation, 2004).
- ^{vii} There is probably more to say about cultural pleasures and pursuits. Hunting with dogs?? References to Henry Kingsley here? Need to do more reading on that but the image does suggest a hunt.
- ^{viii} Although the pastoralists were declining in political power in the 1890s they were still an influential group. Lists of pastoralists were still being published in (insert ref!) and Westby's name appears here.
- ^{ix} It is significant, however, that the sheep paddocks are not included in the album and only a later photograph from Pulletop emphasises wheat growing [fig. 1.48].