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**BEARBRASS OR BALLARAT?
ASA BRIGGS' MIDDLESBROUGH AND THE PATTERN
OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY URBANISATION**

By David Taylor

The significance of nineteenth-century urbanisation in Britain is beyond dispute. Further, since at least the 1960s and the publication of seminal works by historians such as Briggs and Dyos, there is a clear recognition of the diversity of urban development. The one-size fits all Coketown stereotype no longer has a place in historical writing. British towns and cities are rightly seen to have different characteristics and functions and to have developed at different rates and times and for a different mix of reasons. That said, there is still a tendency to assume a more general commonality that stems from the long-established patterns of settlement to be found across the country. Hamlets grew into thriving villages, villages into bustling towns, and towns into complex cities. However dramatic change might have been at any particular point in time, there was growth which had an underlying organic quality. As a consequence of this urban growth in Britain is to have a different set of characteristics from that of 'new' countries, with fast-developing frontiers, such as America or Australia. Thus, as early as 1885, E G Ravenstein, in a highly influential article, singled out for special mention, as the exception to the rule, the town of Middlesbrough because it exhibited 'features generally credited only to the towns of the American West.'¹ This notion of the distinctiveness of Middlesbrough was subsequently endorsed by Asa Briggs who, in his major work, *Victorian Cities*, first published in 1963, strikingly described Middlesbrough as 'the British Ballarat ... on a turbulent urban frontier' and explicitly compared it to the 'whole new communities ... with a rough but vigorous life of their own' associated with

the gold fields of California and Victoria.² However, closer examination of this characterisation of Middlesbrough is required as there is a danger of misrepresenting not only the specific development of one town but of overstating the contrast between 'old world' and new in a manner that limits our understanding of urbanisation in both.

Briggs' characterisation of Middlesbrough as the 'British Ballarat' gave eloquent expression and authority to one of the town's most powerful and most popular founding myths that coloured the self-perception of the town's inhabitants throughout its history. For all the civic progress achieved later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Middlesbrough remained 'Ironopolis', 'the infant Hercules' in Gladstone's oft-quoted phrase, a town with a distinctly masculine – not to say macho – ethos of hard work and hard play derived from its frontier days. The purpose of this short essay is not to challenge this image of the town *per se* – though it is an oversimplification of a more complex community – but to question the appropriateness of the comparison with Ballarat in Victoria at mid century, and, by so doing, to highlight similarities between what are often seen as contrasting urban experiences in the old world and the new. It will be argued that a more apt comparison would be with early Melbourne (that 'Victorian community overseas' that Briggs analysed in the chapter following his study of Middlesbrough) and that this comparison highlights similarities in development, problems and potential between the two towns.

Alliteration aside, one can see the attraction of the parallel with Ballarat. The fortuitous, and almost simultaneous, discovery of mineral deposits – the more prosaic iron ore in the case of Middlesbrough – gave rise to dramatic population growth characterised by long-distance migration and a community that was both very youthful and disproportionately male. Furthermore, but unsurprisingly, both communities had a reputation for high levels of drunkenness and violence and serious problems of policing, especially in the early 'frontier' days. However, despite this superficial attractiveness, the comparison is flawed in a number of

important ways. First, the chronologies do not match. There were important differences before the discovery of the mineral wealth that underpinned the two places. Middlesbrough by the late 1840s was already a town of some size with a population approaching 8000 and rising to some 19,000 by 1861. In contrast, Ballarat in the 1840s was merely part of a largely unpopulated pastoral area. Even in September 1851 there were only some 500 licensed diggers there, though by 1854 there was a population of just under 16,000 and of just over 61,000 by 1861. Second, there were significant differences between the discovery and exploitation of the basic raw material. Although settlements developed later, the exploitation of gold led to often-frantic 'rushes' in a manner that was never seen in the Cleveland iron-ore district. While it is undoubtedly the case that several East Cleveland villages grew as a consequence of the discovery of iron ore, they were pre-existing communities that attracted incomers as demand for labour grew. More importantly, the discovery of iron-ore provided the basis for the development of a local iron, and later steel, industry. Third, there were significant differences in the composition and perception of the immigrant populations. The people that moved to Middlesbrough, and surrounding villages, in the mid nineteenth century were drawn from all parts of the United Kingdom. Although there were the 'low Irish' who were viewed with considerable suspicion, not least by the police, there were also 'respectable' elements, not least the Welsh families who moved *en bloc* to the town. In contrast, the people who flocked to the Victorian goldfields were drawn from all parts of the world but, significantly, included ex-transportees from Tasmania. The demonising of these men had a significant impact on the way in which the authorities problematised the diggings. Finally, and directly related to the last point, there were major differences between the scale and nature of policing. Middlesbrough, particularly in the 1840s had been lightly policed. In the 1850s this was to change but, even after the expansion of the force in 1857 (itself a product of the financial provisions of the 1856 County and Borough Police Act), the police population ratio was just under one to a

thousand.³ In Ballarat, by way of contrast, the police population ratio was 1:102.⁴ Policing on the gold fields was influenced more by the ethos and attitudes of the Royal Irish Constabulary rather than the Metropolitan Police and the police increasingly became (and were seen as) enforcers of an oppressive and unjust licensing system. As well as adopting a more paramilitary approach, the gold field police quickly acquired a reputation for corruption and inefficiency that led to the antipodean equivalent of a 'no taxation without representation' conflict that culminated in the dramatic events at the Eureka Stockade.⁵

However, if the parallel with Ballarat is unsatisfactory, a more valid comparison can be made with Bearbrass, or, as it is more familiarly known, Melbourne.⁶ In terms of the timing and nature of their early development as towns and of the nature of the problems they shared there are certain similarities, which cast valuable light on the frontier qualities of the two communities. What was to become Middlesbrough was not *terra incognita* at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the small farmstead located near the river Tees in a wild and isolated part of North Yorkshire was not the obvious site for major development in a country that was slowly but inexorably becoming both more urban and more industrial. Even less so was the area surveyed by Charles Grimes in 1803. Moving a mile up a large river – the Yarra Yarra – he saw 'swamp on one side and high [land] on the other' with agricultural potential in its red and black soils.⁷ Transformation took place in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century.

From the outset, modern Middlesbrough – in theory at least – was a planned settlement. When, in 1829, Joseph Pease and his 'Quaker gentlemen' associates purchased the Middlesbrough estate that fronted on to the Tees, they had in mind, not only an outlet for the export of 'black diamonds', as they dramatically described coal, but also a new town that would be deliberately designed explicitly to produce 'some uniformity and respectability in the houses to be built' and implicitly to instil similar virtues in the inhabitants. The new town was planned to have a population

of 5000 but by the end of the decade that number had been exceeded by 10 per cent; by 1851 the town was almost twice its planned size.

Not surprisingly, the intended uniformity and respectability was overwhelmed by the pressure of numbers. The 1841 census recorded labourers dwelling in temporary 'Hutts' near Durham Street while some unfortunates were living in tents, keels and steamboats. House building proceeded apace but was outstripped by population growth in the 1840s. The original town soon became densely populated. The size of the original plots enabled builders to construct cottages (as many as 12 per plot) behind the three or four front houses on each parcel of land. The situation was further compounded by the juxtaposition of residential and commercial premises in the old town. The decline in the state of health was starkly revealed in 1849 (and again in 1852/3) when outbreaks of cholera were reported in the town. There was a major epidemic of smallpox in 1852 while, less spectacularly but more continuously, typhus, diarrhoea and measles took a high annual toll, especially of young lives. The Ranger Report of 1854 painted a grim picture of defective houses cramped together, with inadequate drainage and ventilation. Diseases were rife and with a mortality rate of 30 per thousand in 1852 and 35 per thousand in 1853, Middlesbrough was one of the unhealthiest towns in the country. A private act was brought before parliament in 1855 to permit the 1848 Public Health Act to be applied to the town but its impact was muted by the ever-increasing scale of the problem and the absence of building regulations that gave a free hand to private contractors who had responded to the demand for housing with a programme that was cheap and often nasty.

But it was not simply the physical deficiencies of the town that gave cause for concern. The social composition and moral health of the town worried contemporary observers. Mid-century Middlesbrough was characterised by a distinctively youthful working-class and male-dominated population. As late as 1871 almost 40 per cent of males in the town were aged between 20 and 40 years of age. In the same year men outnumbered women by

some 3,500 with three-quarters of that surplus concentrated in the 20 to 40 age band. The gender imbalance was most striking among the lodger population of the town among whom 90 per cent and more were male. Long-distance immigration was also associated with a disconcerting rootlessness and riotousness. There is little doubt that the presence of a large number of young, unmarried working-class men, many in relatively well-paid occupations but with few or no immediate familial ties represented considerable potential for unrest.

The absence of gentlemen, let alone a recognisable middle class, was a source of considerable anxiety. One observer in the late 1830s had commented on the 'rough set ... in Middlesbrough [with] *not one gentleman in the place*', though the letter writer who retailed this observation conceded that there was in fact one gentleman (a shipbuilder and well-known teetotaler) in the person of Mr Holmes. Furthermore, the town also had one of the higher levels of recorded crime in the country and a reputation for being a hard-working but hard-drinking town that was not confined to the significant minority of Irish in the local community.

Despite its dynamic early years built on the export of coal, Middlesbrough faced serious competition from near-by and better-located Hartlepool. The town's economy (and with it the town itself) was in danger of stagnating as the 1840s came to a close. However, the fortuitous discovery in June 1850 of iron ore in the Eston hills, only a few miles to the east of the town, wrought a further transformation. The local iron industry was revitalised and enjoyed a period of unprecedented expansion in the 1850s.⁸ Engineering and shipbuilding similarly prospered. On the long-term upward trend, however, was superimposed a shorter-term pattern of boom and slump. The period 1858 to 1861 was one such period of down turn for the iron industry, in particular. Although not immediately apparent at the time, the discovery of the Bessemer process in 1856 was to herald the long-term decline of iron-making and the rapid emergence of the local steel industry. Nevertheless, the broad picture was one of growth and opportunity. The demand for labour, and the associated high level

of wages, attracted people from many parts of the country. Between the censuses of 1851 and 1861, the town's population more than doubled – from some 7,500 to approximately 19,500. By the census of 1871 there was a further doubling and the town boasted a population of some 40,000. The number of households grew from 7,631 (with an average size of 4.54 persons) in 1851 to 18992 (average size 5.23 persons) ten years later and reaching a total of 39,563 families in 1871 (with an average size of 5.33 persons).

The increase in migration to the town exacerbated many of the physical problems that had characterised the original settlement. Overcrowding became a major problem as the initial planning idealism – that vision of well-spaced houses furnished with gardens – was swept aside by the sheer force of numbers. New houses, often of poor quality, were thrown up in the gardens of existing houses and an intricate, and often unhealthy, network of courts and alleys developed. Even worse were conditions in the newer district in the west of the town. Despite being considered by the Medical Officer of Health as unsuitable for housing, because of its low-lying nature and vulnerability to flooding, this was the area that absorbed most of the incoming population. Poor location, poorly constructed housing, inadequate sanitation and insufficient fresh water added up to a recipe for disaster. The health of the town remained problematic – indeed the crude death rate for the town which had been below the national average in 1851 soared well above it by 1871. Additionally, issues such as adequate paving and lighting exercised the minds of the founding fathers.

Not surprisingly, early Middlesbrough was characterised by a variety of social tensions. The town had a relatively high percentage of working-class Irish who were cut off from both indigenous Protestants and Catholics. Religious conflict, though not on the scale found in Glasgow or Liverpool, was an ongoing reality. The notorious dock riot of 1840, which did much to give the town its reputation for lawlessness, was fuelled by a combination of economic grievance and religious intolerance. Irish labourers

willing to accept lower wages than the original Lancastrians who had been hired to dig out the docks became a target for large-scale violence.⁹ Less spectacular but more common were the incidence of drunkenness and assault that dominated the local crime statistics and much contemporary commentary on the mores of the town. Recorded crime statistics have to be treated with caution, and particularly so in the case of drunkenness. Local evidence shows clearly that drunkenness accounted for some 30 per cent of all prosecutions for petty crime. To give some perspective it is useful to relate the absolute level of prosecutions to overall population. There is, in the late 1850s and early 1860s, a very stark contrast between the national rate for drunkenness (400 arrests per 100,000) and the Middlesbrough rate (1990 per 100,000), which cannot be explained away in its entirety in terms of differential policies regarding the arrest and prosecution of drunks. Next to offences related to drunkenness, assaults were the most common petty crimes, accounting for some 20 per cent of the total. Again there is a contrast between that national picture and the local. For example, in the late 1850s the national average figure for all assaults was some 400 per 100,000 compared with 1300 per 100,000 in Middlesbrough, while the rate of assaults on police constables was about 70 per 100,000 whereas in Middlesbrough the figure was 200. The unpopularity of the local police might explain part, but not all, of the difference. Perhaps more telling is the fact that ordinary citizens were also at above average risk of physical violence in the town. Ignoring the very serious assaults – such as the public disembowelling of Francis Coates by Henry Hughes – there are numerous examples of men fighting one another (usually in a drunken brawl), Englishmen fighting Irishmen, Irishmen fighting each other, men assaulting partners and family members and, quite commonly, women fighting other women in what the local press often quaintly referred to as ‘clothes line quarrels’. And finally, men and women, English and Irish on various occasions – and on several occasions in large numbers – attacked the local police. Not for nothing did Middlesbrough have a reputation as a frontier town!

But what of that antipodean frontier town, Melbourne? Its origins were untidier. Illegal settlements, on a very small scale, were established from the mid-1820s onwards but the decisive moment came in 1835 when John Batman came across what he felt to be 'as rich land as ever I saw in my life' and famously declared that 'this will be the place for a village.'¹⁰ When Police magistrate Stewart delivered his report on Port Phillip in June 1836 he noted that 'the town "Bearbrass" ... at present consists of 13 buildings viz. three weather-boarded, two slab and eight turf huts' with a European population comprising '142 males and 35 females.'¹¹ The somewhat chaotic appearance of the settlement was similarly noted by Captain Phillip Parker King, who visited the area on *HMS Rattlesnake*, in March 1837. He noted in his diary that 'the settlement suddenly burst upon our view. It is scattered, of course, at present, but consists of perhaps 30 or 40 huts. Some are of sods, others framed and weatherboarded, others wattled and plastered.'¹² As in Middlesbrough, the social composition of the town gave rise to anxiety. William Lonsdale noted with some alarm that 'the only persons of any respectability at present there are Mr Bateman and Mr Thomson' and, not surprisingly in Lonsdale's eyes, at least, 'many of the lower orders of people who have come over on adventure, were taking advantage of the absence of power to behave in a lawless and intimidatory manner.'¹³ Unlike Middlesbrough, Melbourne (as it was to be known from 4 March 1837) had to contend with 'emigrants from Van Diemen's Land [who] are constantly arriving ... but scarcely any of them are persons of respectability.'¹⁴ Indeed, these incomers brought a taint of criminality rather than a tincture of respectability to their new abode. King noted, in somewhat exaggerated tones, that 'squatters from Van Diemen's Land, illegally occupying crown land [had] produced anarchy [and made Melbourne] a place of refuge for many of the worst characters from Van Diemen's Land.'¹⁵

The physical layout of the town was transformed by Governor Bourke. As he noted in his journal, he had ridden 'over the ground adjacent to the huts with Surveyor Hoddle and traced the general

outline of a township upon a beautiful and convenient site.¹⁶ Like Middlesbrough, Melbourne was to be laid out in grid-iron fashion but, unlike Middlesbrough, with no central square and no single owner as blocks of land were sold off between 1837 and 1839. Nonetheless, there was a clear wish to control the development of the town. Samuel Perry, deputy surveyor of New South Wales since 1829, insisted to Robert Hoddle that he could not 'impress too strongly upon your attention the necessity for insisting upon a strict adherence to the plan of the Town' so that the greater 'regularity' that characterised it would 'be not deformed by the cupidity of small allotment speculators' thereby ensuring that the town became 'one of the most striking ornaments in the southern world.'¹⁷

The reality was somewhat different. People flooded into the town. 'They come so fast', wrote Thomas Walker in 1837, 'that it is impossible to provide them with houses, and they are living in tents and huts of all manners of shapes.'¹⁸ It was soon recognised that Hoddle's original plan for the town was insufficient to meet the demand of potential purchasers of land. Expansion to the south was limited by the flood-prone nature of the land adjacent to the Yarra River but the northern boundary was extended from Lonsdale Street to La Trobe Street.¹⁹ By 1841 there were some 6000 people in Melbourne, only a few hundred more than in Middlesbrough. But whereas the population of the latter doubled over the course of the 1850s, that of the former increased by almost a factor four.

Early Melbourne, probably to a greater degree than Middlesbrough, was poorly paved and poorly lit. One of the great problems was the presence of tree stumps, in road and pavement, or worse the potholes that were created when the gum-trees were removed. The problem of furious driving of beasts through the streets of Middlesbrough contrasted with that of bullock-bogging in rain-swept Melbourne. 'The thoroughfares of Melbourne,' noted the *Herald* in 1843, 'dignified by the names of streets, are worse than ever; they form one mass of liquid mud, varying from 3 inches to 3 feet in depth.'²⁰ The impact of passing traffic was

easy to imagine. Thomas Strode, a Melbourne newspaperman, reflecting in 1868 on earlier times, recollected how 'at almost any hour of the day may be viewed the interesting spectacle of drays being bogged down in the muddy depths of Collins-street ... We remember on [one] occasion a dray of bullocks were so hopelessly imbedded in a hole in Elizabeth-street, that the animals were allowed to stifle in the mud ...'²¹ Pigs, on the other hand, survived the conditions to the point of becoming a public nuisance.²² Garryowen, (Edmund Finn), was scathing in his description of the physical squalor of Melbourne in 1840 and felt that it 'could hardly be called a town' but was rather 'a kind of big "settlement" in groups pitched here and there, with houses, sheds, and tents in clusters, or scattered in ones or twos.'²³ Nonetheless, Melbourne was incorporated in 1842, eleven years before Middlesbrough achieved similar status, and over the course of the next decade Melbourne acquired a distinct urban appearance and lifestyle but was not without its problems. One visitor, writing in 1860, noted how, as a result of a shower of rain, both Swanston Street ... and Elizabeth Street ... were complete rivers running in volumes and with a velocity that was startling to look at, and perfectly impossible to cross with safety on foot.²⁴ Wagons were brought to a halt and the garbage of the town was circulated with a vengeance.

Not surprisingly, the town's health record was poor. In 1848 a report of a committee of the Melbourne Corporation, chaired by Thomas McCombie, commented that 'accidental, local and remedial causes had occasioned the greater portion of the disease' in the town.²⁵ The lack of drainage, the filthy conditions of the narrow streets, courts and alleys, the filth created by slaughterhouses, the inadequate sewerage and inadequate supply of clean water was singled out for criticism. The local press were similarly critical of the lack of amenities.

In passing through Lonsdale Street ... we observed in two pools of stagnant water, which exist in the most crowded portion of that street, no less than seventeen dead animals, varying from the good-sized calf to the

*diminutive kitten, and we have no doubt that the water concealed from our view other bodies.*²⁶

The *Argus* condemned those who 'trifle with the health of the community by casting the carcasses of animals in the public streets' and tartly concluded that 'in a warm climate such as this, with the inefficient drainage which the town possesses, the worst possible consequences may be expected to arrive from the abominable nuisance we have pointed out.'²⁷ An 1852 report on sewerage and water supply painted a picture of a town every bit as unhygienic and life-threatening as to be found in England.

*There was an astounding accumulation of putrescent substances and rubbish of all kinds, [worse] than I ever inspected in the very worst parts of dirtiest England ... in the Block bounded by Great and Little Bourke-street, Elizabeth-street and Swanston-street, there is a space of upwards of one hundred square yards hitherto occupied by a green, putrid, semi-liquid mass, partly formed by the outpourings of surrounding privies... [In fact] one-fourth of the surface area of the blocks already measured is occupied by a layer of from a few inches to several feet in depth of natural clay combined with decomposing vegetable and animal substances, in so large a proportion as to form a fetid putrescent mass of tenacious mud, exhibiting on the surface masses of fly-blown putrid meat, entrails of animals, bones, discarded wearing apparel, and other unsightly rubbish.*²⁸

The list of measures recommended for immediate attention – including extending the provisions of the *Towns Police Act*, for an inspection of nuisances in private property and for establishing a system of sewerage, proper regulation of cesspools and dust bins, and the prohibition of in-town animal slaughter – indicates the limits of public health reform.

But, as in Middlesbrough concern was not confined to the

physical shortcomings of the town. Its social composition gave rise to concern. The population was overwhelmingly youthful – over 90 per cent were under 45 years of age. There was ‘the almost total absence of women on the street [and a] paucity of old men. In those days anyone over thirty was spoken of as old So-and-so.’²⁹ Adult men outnumbered women by a ratio of 2 to 1 (though if children are included the ratio falls to 3 to 2) and, perhaps most worrying of all, there was a significant minority (perhaps some 25 per cent of the adult male population of the Port Philip district as a whole) who were ex-convicts, though many of these became pastoral labourers.³⁰ The temptation to resort to strong liquor was furnished by an ample number of taverns and grog-shops, which flourished in a town where the licensing law was a dead letter.³¹ The moral well-being of the town was put in further jeopardy, in the eyes of certain contemporary observers, at least, by the fact that ‘by far the larger proportion of its [Melbourne’s] inhabitants were indifferent to religion beyond its mere surface, or external observances.’³²

Despite the spectacular growth of its early years, Melbourne faced economic difficulties in the 1840s but, if iron-ore gave new stimulus to the growth of Middlesbrough, the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 had an even more profound (and more complex) impact on Melbourne. In the first instance news of the findings threatened to drain the town of its population. Lieutenant-Governor C J La Trobe lamented the fact that

*Within the last three weeks ... Melbourne and [its] suburbs have been in appearance almost emptied of their male inhabitants... Not only have the idlers to be found in every community. And day labourers in town and adjacent country, shopmen, artisans, and mechanics of every description [have] thrown up their employment, and in most cases, leaving their employers, their wives and families to take care of themselves, run off to the workings, but responsible tradesmen, farmers, clerks of every grade, and not a few of the superior classes have followed ...*³³

The discovery of gold also attracted men from all parts of the globe and encouraged lawlessness, in varying guises, which went largely unchecked in the first instance because of substantial defections from the Melbourne police force. On the roads from the goldfields as well as in the town itself, thieves sought to take advantage of the newfound wealth pouring out of the goldfields. A correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, not the most impartial of observers, commented on the 'cheating and robbery, open and covert' to be found in an 'inefficiently managed' town that saw 'chaos reign triumphant' in a manner unparalleled in the southern hemisphere.³⁴

The discovery of gold had a direct impact on the development of banking and insurance but indirectly it encouraged various programmes of house building and road building that had a positive effect on the local economy. Population growth continued apace – indeed the rate of expansion clearly exceeded that of Middlesbrough in the same period – and by 1861 there were some 126,000 inhabitants, of whom 37,000 lived in the city itself. Migrants, not least from England, flooded in and, in the short run, exacerbated local economic problems, which came to a head in the depression of 1857. The depression years lasted until the early 1860s and exposed the extent to which coastal settlements like Melbourne lacked the economic opportunities of the inland goldfield towns (Ballarat, Bendigo, Beechworth and Castlemaine) to meet the aspirations of their inhabitants. However, as with Middlesbrough, the undoubted realities of short-term depression should not detract from the longer-term growth trend.

As well as exacerbating a number of physical problems (as noted above) the dramatic population growth of the 1850s brought other physical dangers to be encountered. Rowdiness, drunk and disorderly behaviour, assaults and indecent exposures were often reported incidents in the Melbourne as well as the Middlesbrough press. There was a ready availability of drink through legal and illegal sources.³⁵ Heavy drinking was commonplace within the working class communities of Melbourne. A measure of the

problem was the institution, required under the licensing act, of the dead house – ‘a place of accommodation, on or near the premises, for the use of the customers, in order to prevent offences against decency – a device that also enabled the inebriate to avoid arrest by the police.’³⁶ Success was limited and in 1854 Samuel Freeman, Inspector of Police and Police Magistrate for Melbourne, introduced special hand carts to enable constables to wheel semi-conscious drunks to the lock-up.³⁷ Drink-related offences were a major element in the local crime statistics and a staple of the local press. But violence was also a common problem. The catalogue of conflicts noted above in relation to Middlesbrough was, unsurprisingly, replicated in Melbourne. But there were additional ingredients to the more predictable mix of violence. Member groups of the aboriginal nation living in the district were involved in a number of conflicts between themselves on the streets of Melbourne but, perhaps more surprisingly, ‘gentlemen rowdies of the Waterford school’ brought mayhem to the streets.³⁸ And, according to Garryowen, duelling, albeit at times in a somewhat tongue in cheek manner, also took place among members of the higher classes.

These characteristics of a ‘frontier’ society, in both towns, have to be kept in perspective. There was a range of institutions – churches, schools, mechanics institutes, temperance societies and the like – that sought, with varying degrees of success, to civilise the lower-class inhabitants. Similarly, there was a range of individuals, in public as well as private life, seeking to improve the spiritual and moral health (as they saw it) of their home town. More specifically, though not for detailed discussion here, there were municipal governments, with strikingly common agendas, which, through a variety of motives – not least civic pride – sought to create a modern society, well provided with basic amenities but also enjoying a legal-cum-moral framework in which all citizens could conduct themselves in a rational, responsible and respectable manner.³⁹ Clearly there are not exact parallels between Middlesbrough and Melbourne in the mid-nineteenth century but, notwithstanding some important differences noted

above, there are significant similarities between one of the most frontier-like towns of nineteenth century England and one of the most English-like towns of nineteenth century Australia.

This point has an importance that goes beyond a simple revision of Briggs' characterisation of Middlesbrough as the British Ballarat because it highlights the existence of a continuum of urban experiences in the nineteenth century that is often overlooked. To contrast the 'evolutionary' experience of the Old World with the 'revolutionary' experience of the New, especially on its moving frontier, is tempting but not necessarily the most fruitful way of conceptualising urban development. There is a real danger of underestimating the extent to which the English urban experience was influenced by 'frontier' problems and potential – the development of Middlesbrough in the mid-nineteenth century was unusual but not unique – and, correspondingly, of underestimating the extent to which frontier towns had common characteristics with and common approaches to those of older metropolitan communities.

NOTES

1. E.G.Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, xlviii, (1885), p.215.
2. A.Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, chap. 6 'Middlesbrough: the growth of a new community', reprinted in A.J.Pollard, ed., *Middlesbrough: Town and Community, 1830-1950*, Sutton, Stroud, 1996.
3. D.Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002, p.38.
4. In other parts of the goldfield the figure was even lower. In Bendigo, for example, there was one policeman for every 85 people.
5. The origins of the uprising are to be found in the acquittal of James Bentley and his wife, owners of the Eureka Hotel, and John Farrell, who had been tried for the murder of James Scobie. Concerns with corruption and bribery in high places led to a more generalised demand for the redress of grievances on the gold

fields. On 11 November 1854, at Bakery Hill, some 10,000 miners met to form a reform league with demands for full and fair representation and manhood suffrage. A stockade was erected and the flag of the Southern Cross raised above it. Troops attacked the stockade on 3 December and 25 diggers were killed and 30 wounded. A further 114 were arrested. Martial law was briefly declared and thirteen men tried for high treason. All were acquitted and soon after the highly unpopular licence fee was abolished and replaced by a Miner's Right that gave electoral rights to the holder. R.Haldane, *The People's Force: a history of the Victoria Police*, Melbourne University Press, 1995, esp. pp.45-8 for an introduction.

6. Police Magistrate Stewart, in his report to Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on Port Phillip, dated 10 June 1836 noted that 'the town Bearbrass is on the left hand of the Yarra, about seven miles from its mouth'. P.Jones, ed., *Historical Records of Victoria: Foundation Series, Volume One. Beginnings of Permanent Government*, Melbourne, 1981, p.41. Bearbrass was one of a number of names – others include Bareport, Bareheep, Barehup and Bareberp – supposedly variants on the place's Aboriginal name, whereby Melbourne was known in its early years. E.Scott, 'Captain Lonsdale and the Foundation of Melbourne', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, iv, 1915, pp.97-116 and R.Annear, *Bearbrass: Imagining Early Melbourne*, Melbourne, 1995.

7. 'A Journal of the Explorations of Charles Grimes, Acting Surveyor-General of New South Wales' published in J.J.Shillinglaw, *Historical Records of Port Phillip: the first annals of the colony of Victoria*, 1879 and reproduced in C.M.H.Clark, ed., *Select Documents in Australian History, 1788-1850*, Sydney 1958, pp.89-90.

8. For further details see D.Taylor, 'The Infant Hercules and the Augean Sables' in A.J.Pollard, ed., *Middlesbrough: Town and Community, 1830-1950*, Sutton, 1996.

9. See D.Taylor, *Policing the Victorian Town: the development of the police in Middlesbrough, 1840-1914*, 2002 esp. chapter 4 for

fuller coverage of the issue of crime in early Middlesbrough.

20. J. Grant and G. Serie, eds., *The Melbourne Scene, 1803-1956*, Melbourne University Press, 1978, p4.

31. P. Jones, ed., *Historical Records of Victoria* (Foundation Series: Volume 1 Beginnings of Permanent Government), Melbourne, 1981, p.39. (Hereafter *HRVI*)

42. *Ibid*, p.108.

53. William Longdale to Colonel Sec, 30 September 1836 and William Longdale to Sir Richard Bourke, 2 October 1836, in *HRVI*, p.82.

64. William Longdale to Sir Richard Bourke, 1 February 1837, *ibid*, p.87.

75. Captain Phillip Parker King to W E Lloyd, 5 March 1837, and to Colonel Sec, 13 March 1837, *ibid.*, pp.116 & 118..

86. Governor Bourke, Journal of visit to Port Phillip, 4 March 1837, *ibid.*, p.101.

97. S.A.Perry to R.Hodde, 13 May 1839, *ibid*, p.146.

108. T.Walker, *A Month in the Bush of Australia*, London, 1838 cited in Grant and Serle, *Melbourne Scene*, p.28.

119. For full details see *Historical Records of Victoria*, Volume 3, *The Early Development of Melbourne, 1836-1839*, Melbourne, 1984, Part 1, especially chapter 13.

20. Cited in Annear, *Bearbrass*, p.53. 'Garryowen', *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, cited in Grant & Serle, *Melbourne Scene*, pp.35-7.

21. *Ibid.*, p.53 See also 'Garryowen', *The Chronicles of early Melbourne*, Melbourne, 1888, *ibid.*, p.36.

22. *Port Phillip Patriot*, 18 February 1841, *ibid.*, p.44. It was noted that 'a child was dreadfully mangled by a ferocious sow in Little Flinders Street [while] a child has had its ear torn off by a pig...'

23. M.Weidenhofer, ed., *Garryowen's Melbourne: a selection from The Chronicles of Early Melbourne, 1835-1852*, Melbourne 1967, p.43.

24. W.Kelly, *Life in Victoria*, London, 1860 cited in Grant & Serle, *Melbourne Scene*, pp.97-8.

25. Report of a Committee of the Melbourne Corporation, 1848 quoted in T.McCombie, *History of the Colony of Victoria* and cited in *ibid*, p.60.
26. *Melbourne Argus* cited in *ibid*. p.61.
27. *Ibid*.
28. Report from the Select Committee on the Sewerage of and Supply of Water for Melbourne', 1852, pp.x-xi, *Votes and Proceedings of the Victorian Legislative Council*, 1852, vol. II cited in Grant and Serle, *Melbourne Scene*, pp.100-101.
29. E.M.Curr, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1883 cited in Grant and Serle, *Melbourne Scene*, p.35.
30. G.Serle, *The Golden Age: a history of the colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne, 1977, p.4.
31. Weidenhofer, *Garryowen's Melbourne*, p.28.
32. Kelly, *Life in Victoria* cited in *ibid*. p.109.
33. C.J.La Trobe to Early Grey, October 1851, Further papers relative to the discovery of gold in Australia, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1852, xxiv, 1508.
34. 4 November 1852 cited in Serle, *Golden Age*, p.67.
35. Sly-grogging, the sale of liquor without a licence was a major problem and not helped by the fact that one of the larger sly-grogging establishment was in the police hospital. R.Haldane, *The People's Force, a history of the Victoria Police*, Melbourne, 1995, p.57.
36. Annear, *Bearbrass*, p.229, Weidenhofer, *Garryowen's Melbourne*, p.35.
37. Haldane, *People's Force*, p.48.
38. See examples from the local press cited in Annear, *Bearbrass*, chapter 4.
39. See D. Taylor, 'Civilizing the frontier: bringing morality to Melbourne and Middlesbrough in the mid-nineteenth century' forthcoming, which looks specifically at the problems of policing and public order and decorum.