

Community in Rural Victorian New Zealand

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SETTLER New Zealand was a world of localized communities in which family, kin, and neighbours worked together, first to occupy, then to develop and maintain each new farming district. Due to primitive agricultural technology and settler poverty, many tasks needed more than one pair of hands, or a pooling of talents. When skills such as those of nurse, barber, midwife, undertaker, and horse doctor were needed, they were commonly sought among one's neighbours. Such community resources as school, church, cemetery, public hall were obtained and maintained by pooling labour, materials, and talents. Newspapers, local in circulation and outlook, publicized each little community's doings and accomplishments, keeping it well aware of the competing communities in its neighbourhood.

This picture has now been dismissed by Miles Fairburn as 'the Gardner/Oliver legend'. In its place he offers a world in which rapid frontier expansion scatters the settlers as transient strangers, isolated by atrocious communications. The crowds on public occasions produce only fleeting and superficial relationships. Farmer reciprocity is almost unknown until the 1890s. Truancy prevents schools from socializing the young. In rural service townships, community is devastated by high transience rates. Neither kinship nor class solidarity, mateship nor paternalism, can master the disintegrative forces shattering colonial New Zealand into an atomized society.¹

Social historians will have to choose between these mutually exclusive interpretations. If the cohesive community interpretation is correct, much settler interaction will have involved unwritten understandings and oral arrangements, with a minimum of written contracts and money payments. Unfortunately, the fieldwork techniques of rural sociology designed to uncover such interaction were not available until the twentieth century. Yet, significantly, rural sociologists who have looked at the small farmer worlds of New Zealand and comparable regions in Ireland, Canada, and the United States have found not only ample evidence of farmer reciprocity but also a common belief that mutual aid had been

¹ M. Fairburn, 'Local Community or Atomised Society? The Social Structure of Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, XVI, 2 (1982), pp.146-67; M. Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900*, Auckland, 1989.

more pervasive in the past.² The introduction of labour-saving technology and the associated rural depopulation explain the decline. To see whether or not these rural traditions and the Gardner/Oliver historians have got it right, let us go to some of the available historical sources. I will look first at several farming diaries from Victorian New Zealand, and then at two of the rural townships which Fairburn cites as examples of high transience rates.

Peter Bartrum Packard (1849–1925), who grew up on his father's farm at Motupipi, Golden Bay, kept a diary for 1869.³ For the first half of the year he worked for his neighbour George Gilbert; in the second half he began determined moves in a game plan to develop a bush section into a farm of his own, and to marry Jane, daughter of neighbouring farmer William Baird. In 1869 Peter lived mainly at home with his parents and two younger brothers, Reuben and James, who all supported him in his plans. Before examining his work I will comment on his social activities. Sunday was a day of rest, often with attendance at local church services, mainly conducted by lay preachers. On four Sundays Peter went 'to school' — apparently an adult Sunday School class. Church social contacts are not mentioned, but cannot have been insignificant. Apart from church, Sunday was spent mainly at home, or later in the year at Jane Baird's home. During the cricket season Peter took seven half-days to either watch or play the game. On four occasions (all week days) he spent the day with friends hunting wild cattle (or on one occasion, pigs) in the ranges. Frank Ellis went with him on each hunt, Jim Manson and David Nicoll each went twice, and Jack Manson once. Peter also attended various local occasions. He and his family were closely involved with Clifton Horticultural Society's annual show on 6 January, to which visitors came by steamer from as far away as Nelson. This show, the following tea for 250 in a tent borrowed from the Foresters' Society of Nelson, and a second sitting for the annual tea party of the Takaka district schools, must have involved Peter and most of this small community in months of planning and days of co-operative hard work.⁴ Peter also attended a picnic, a lodge anniversary, and three local funerals. The impression that Peter was integrated into a cohesive local community is further reinforced when we turn to the major content of the diary — his work record.

Peter's work for Gilbert included harvesting hay, oats, grass seed, and fruit, thatching, fencing, hedge-cutting, handling stock, cutting thistles. Often he worked with Gilbert. Occasionally his younger brother Reuben joined the team. Peter was handy with a bullock cart, and Gilbert sent him on carting expeditions, and lent him to others with carting jobs. Several times his own father borrowed him for carting or other tasks. To make up this time his father joined the work on Gilbert's farm. In January Peter spent three days on road work with the Mansons in return for work Tom Manson had done for Gilbert. One day he mowed Baird's

2 C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, Gloucester, Mass., 1961, esp. pp.70–75; M. J. Hedley, 'Mutual Aid between Farm Households, New Zealand and Canada', *Sociologia Ruralis*, XXV (1985), pp.26–39; C. P. Loomis and J. A. Beegle, *Rural Social Systems*, New York, 1950, esp. pp. 133–71.

3 Packard Family Papers, MSS 2084, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).

4 The occasion was fully reported in the *Colonist*, Nelson, 15 January 1869.

oats — on what arrangement he did not say. The overall impression is of a district handling its work in a friendly, co-operative fashion under informal but well-understood rules, which saw work teams matched to each task, special talents appropriately used, and a social enrichment of the daily round.

Peter's time with Gilbert was also broken by wet days and by a holiday in Nelson. On ten wet days, when all farm work ceased, Peter occupied himself mainly at home on odd jobs such as soft-soaping bridles and saddles and making a stock whip, or in borrowing library books and reading. The Nelson trip in April had several purposes, including joining the festivities for the Duke of Edinburgh's visit, having minor surgery for a growth on his face, and forwarding his suit with Jane Baird. Peter and his friend James Manson reached Nelson on horseback in a day and a half. There they joined friends who had probably come by sea. These included Jane Baird and her friends, Jane and Maria Batchelor. Together they looked around Nelson, watched a cricket match, went to church, spent an afternoon exploring the cemetery, and saw the Duke come ashore from HMS *Galatea*. Peter accompanied Jane Baird and Jane Batchelor on a visit to the wharship. After a fortnight in Nelson, during which Dr Carr dressed his face several times, Peter rode home with James Manson, accompanied for much of the way by another acquaintance, Fred Sparrow. This visit to the festivities of Nelson scarcely fits Fairburn's hypothesis that such occasions were 'productive only of fleeting and superficial relationships'.

Early in July Peter began developing his own property, and again community co-operation came into play. On the initial bush clearing, making space for his home, orchard, and garden, Peter worked with a friend, David Nicoll. David also was beginning a clearing, so they worked together, dividing their time between the two properties. When the space was ready, Peter enlisted Harry Harwood, a neighbouring farmer with sawyer and building skills. They spent about a month pit-sawing the timber for Peter's house. Although the arrangements were not explained, Peter probably paid Harwood from his savings, but kept down expenses by sharing in the work. At one stage, in order to get a huge log to the saw-pit they enlisted five helpers, of whom Peter named four — David Nicoll and his brother, Thomas Harwood and Peter's father. In breaks from the pit-sawing, Peter began his new orchard and garden, and worked for Motupipi nurseryman, Albyn Burt, in return for trees he was supplying. On 30 August Peter and his father began building the house, calling on Harry Harwood when his special skills, such as bricklaying, were needed. A team of three Harwoods, two Packards, and David Nicoll gathered to raise the frame. Time out was taken when work elsewhere needed attention. Thus Peter spent several days helping his brother James plant potatoes on their father's farm, and another few days fencing for Baird. Once his house was finished Peter began to fell a large patch of his bush, helped for a week or two by David Nicoll 'to pay back time I worked for him while he was at Collingwood'. Probably Peter had filled in to allow David to go gold-digging. Once David had worked out his time, Peter's father and brother James joined in the felling, and also a Mr Harwood, repaying Peter for milking for him while he was at the diggings. It was, of course, also dangerous to fell bush on one's own.

A last major episode in Peter's year was a spell of two and a half weeks in a gang cutting a bridle track to gold diggings in the hills behind Takaka. Peter's father went with him, until they met a Mr Cobb whom Peter apparently knew, and these two then went up together. Peter lists the five other workmen in his camp, as if he already knew them — their surnames link them all to neighbouring settlements. Peter returned from the job in the company of two of them after what does not seem to have been an 'atomised' work-gang experience.

Peter Packard married Jane Baird in June 1873, and farmed at Motupipi for the rest of his life.⁵ Local records show most of the young men with whom he worked, hunted, and holidayed in 1869 also became farmers in Motupipi or neighbouring districts. Marriage records would doubtless show a steady growth of kinship links — Peter's brother Reuben, for example, married a sister of the Manson boys.⁶ If the community life depicted in Peter's diary was at all common in rural Victorian New Zealand it was no 'atomised society'. For the next example I take an older diarist and a more mature settlement nearer to town.

William Wastney (1831–?) also kept an 1869 diary, while farming at Wakapuaka, on the coast eight miles north-east of Nelson.⁷ William landed in Nelson as a boy in 1842. His father Edmund Wastney made his way in pioneer Wakapuaka in partnership with a widower Thomas Doughty, first in sawmilling, then farming. William began work roadmaking, then building with his father, and finally, like his father, went farming. He married in 1855, and in 1869 had a family of at least two sons and several daughters. He served his district on the road board and on the school committee, which at times he represented on the Board of Education. He built Wakapuaka's Black Horse Inn for the brewers and from 1856 to 1861 was its first publican.

In 1869 William's farm carried beef and dairy cattle, sheep, horses, and pigs and had crops of mangels, potatoes, and grass for hay and grass seed. William worked the place with a hired hand, King, often joining him even at monotonous or unpleasant jobs, such as transplanting mangels or cleaning out drainage ditches. William's father joined the team for the height of haymaking, and also William's son George, who was shortly to leave for Nelson College as a boarder. In March William took on another labourer, Will Hill, but not having enough work for him lent him for much of the time to a friend, William Dyson. Hill left in October to join the Mounted Constabulary. There was other sharing of labour and equipment with neighbours. William often helped on his father's farm,⁸ taking King with him to mow hay, sending him to cart firewood from the bush, and himself cutting down willows in front of the house. A plough, a trap, harrows, and other equipment were moved between the two properties, without any indication as to their ownership. William also borrowed a trap from Dyson on one occasion.

⁵ *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* (CNZ), 6 vols, Wellington, Christchurch, 1897–1908, vol.5, p.213.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ William Wastney, *Diary 1863–75*, Micro MS 166, ATL.

⁸ William always referred to this as 'W & D', i.e. 'Wastney and Doughty'. The partnership apparently continued till Doughty's death on 1 November 1869.

Let me examine the first four months of 1869 for excursions abroad. William's farming activities sent him on three visits to Small about stray sheep, a visit to Dodson about a stray foal, several visits to Bell and Mackay about the buying and selling of pigs, two pieces of business with A. Lyford, one buying posts and palings, the other selling two horses, and a friendly trip with McIntosh to see some bush land he had bought. William made 12 trips to Nelson, half of them mainly on farm business. Twice the horse, Sal, had to be shod. Casks of butter and a bale of wool were taken in for sale. Eight bullocks bought by Dr Renwick were driven in to him. King also had three trips taking loads of hay to market.

There were also social outings. On New Year's Day the whole family went to Happy Valley bush. On Good Friday they all holidayed at Boulder Bank. On Sundays the family often went visiting, either to William's parents, or to friends such as the Dysons, or the Hodgsons in Nelson. Mary Wastney and the children also occasionally visited neighbours during the week. On 19 April 'all hands' went to see the Duke of Edinburgh come ashore. Next day William went with Dyson to the races arranged for the Duke's visit. He also attended church occasionally, entered an annual shooting contest, changed books at the local library, went to court as a witness and then as a jurymen, and went to Nelson with George to get their photographs taken. Clearly Wakapuaka of 1869 knew nothing of Fairburn's 'atomised society'.

Perhaps we should look to the colony's bachelors for examples of atomization. But first we must reject Fairburn's claim that 'for years after their arrival many men had difficulty in finding a wife'. His high figures for the percentage of the adult males designated 'never married' refer to those over the age of 14 at a time when the average age of marriage for men was around 30. Also he is too ready to quote aberrant figures from the height of the gold rushes. After carefully examining the available statistics, M. N. Arnold concludes that 'there is no indication that in the periods of high sex imbalance a proportion of males had to forgo marriage' and that 'it would seem that the lack of women led men to be less particular over whom they married rather than to forgo marriage altogether'.⁹ Enforced bachelorhood was not a significant colonial problem. Let me, however, turn to the case of Robert Petch.

Robert Petch (1852-?), son of a country-town lawyer in Kirby Moorside, Yorkshire, landed in Nelson early in 1876 with letters of introduction to some settlers there, intending to make his way as a colonial farmer.¹⁰ His Nelson advisers soon saw him off to new country opening up in the Patea district. His letters home over the next five years tell how he first spent a year gaining colonial experience, and then became a bachelor bush settler. Although a stranger, he did not move as an 'atom' even at the start. Fell, a Nelson lawyer, had recommended him to R. E. McRae, a former Nelson settler who had taken up a substantial land holding in the Patea district about three years earlier. Petch worked for McRae

9 M.N. Arnold, 'Aspects of Finding a Wife in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', *VUW Working Papers in Economics History*, 82/1, 1982. For Fairburn's claim, see his *Ideal Society*, pp.165-6.

10 Robert Petch, Papers 1876-82, MSS Papers 252, ATL.

in return for the experience, and moved shortly to McRae's home. While additions to McRae's house were completed, Petch stayed at the Kakaramea Hotel, where another passenger from the *Pleiades* was a fellow guest. Petch repeatedly found that being part of the migration flow from Nelson, and of the larger migration from Britain, brought him into friendly contact with other settlers.

On McRae's holding of mostly open, coastal land, Petch's colonial 'experience' included harvesting, breaking in wild horses, rounding up cattle, and helping with the shearing. More pertinent to his own plans were an episode of bush clearing, working as cook for a harvest team, and learning to do his own mending and washing. He had McRae's help in watching the market for the bush sections, and soon also reported that a government surveyor, Fraser, had invited him up to stay in his tent, to see the bush he was surveying. When Petch bought 217 acres of bush land at a government auction in October 1876, McRae accompanied him, and advanced him the required 25% deposit. His land was inland from Kakaramea, so he also bought an acre in the township. His letters home continually pressed his father for money to pay off his land and develop it. Fell of Nelson, through whom money was sent, probably kept an eye on the situation and advised Petch Senior.

Petch moved onto his land and hired an experienced old bushman, who 'can tell some rare yarns about his exploits and gold digging experiences'. He soon hired a second bushman. They lived in a tent, with Petch cooking. Hampered by wet weather, their season's work was clearing six or seven acres. Petch met his bachelor neighbour Struthers, a burly 40-year-old farmer from the Cleveland Hills of Yorkshire, not far from Kirby Moorside, who 'knows lots of people at home'. Struthers took the initiative in steadily deepening their relationship. Early on he charged across Petch's land after some bees, with a box to hive them. Petch declined to help with this project, and instead wandered down to Struthers' hut to read his Yorkshire newspapers. Two hours later Struthers returned in triumph with his bees. Over these early months in the bush Petch had other social contacts. Someone lent him a bulldog to hunt wild pigs. He bought a mare to run on McRae's land, as a means of getting about when down from the bush. Walking to Kakaramea to post letters home in December 1876 he got wet through and reported 'I am now decked out in the landlord's clothes — you would laugh.' Before 1876 was out he entertained a County Council candidate to tea in his bush tent, spent Boxing day at the Patea sports, and had discussions with a Mr Gabb, 'a very nice man, an old Nelson settler, whom Mr Fell knows very well', who had bought land nearby and wanted Petch to join him in buying cattle down the coast and bringing them to the Patea. Early in 1878 yet another migrant from Nelson became Petch's neighbour to the south.

By next felling season Petch had built a slab hut, and Struthers moved in with him. At times they worked together. Petch helped Struthers sink a well. This year their bush-felling was done by contract gangs. McRae now had a boiling-down works and his pack horses brought in legs of mutton each week for Petch, Struthers, and their men. A Mr Jackson, from Staindrops Hall, across the Durham border from Yorkshire, stayed with Petch. He had been a soldier in India, a sailor,

and was leaving the New Zealand Armed Constabulary to take up land. Petch sold him 100 acres of his holding. Over the winter Petch and Struthers debated their farming programme. Petch decided not to partner Struthers in dairying but could not decide whether to go for grass seed or for grazing beef cattle. He and Struthers had developed a flock of hens; he planted an apple orchard over the winter, and in spring his Kakarama acre in potatoes. Late in 1877 he won a contract for a road to his property, and carried it through, employing three men. When a huge rata tree fell across their road, they burned it, but the fire spread to Struthers' clearing, doing considerable damage.

The file of letters now thins out. By 1881 Struthers had a house and Petch was living with him, but Petch found him a hopeless cook, and moved back to his own hut. Struthers then sold out, having a desire to get more company. Petch believed Struthers would settle in Christchurch where his brother was a merchant. Petch himself seemed not to be lonely. He loved the hunting and shooting, and outings with his friends in the open country. But he was not succeeding at farming, and had trouble with creditors. The letters end in December 1882, although Petch can be traced in the district for another year or two. Presumably he then returned to Yorkshire. He and Struthers would count as transients in Fairburn's ten-year surveys. Yet whatever their shortcomings neither was 'atomised', and both were positive participants in their pioneer district.

It might be objected that the examples have all been from small-farming districts. Perhaps an 'atomised' community will be more readily found in thinly-settled sheep country. Let me go to Tutira in northern Hawke's Bay, where H. Guthrie-Smith conveniently provides the full text of T. C. Kiernan's diary for the first three months of 1879.¹¹ Guthrie-Smith tells how in 1878 his predecessors, the three young bachelors, Charles and Thomas Stuart and T. C. Kiernan, hopefully took over this Maori leasehold run. They were among the first to try grazing this unpromising region where 'the land was devoid of grass, the climate was wet, the access bad, the soil ungrateful and poor',¹² and within four years it had broken them. Let us see what the Kiernan diary extract can tell us about their community relations.

The diary shows that the three owners had four or five permanent hands to assist them. It was uncommon for any of them to work alone. Over these summer months of mustering and shearing there was much interaction with neighbours. As the stations mustered, representatives from Tutira went to help sort out their own strays and bring them back. This task fell mainly to Tom Stuart, youngest of the three owners. Between 7 January and 5 February he paid four visits to three stations, in one case also helping them muster, and in all spent eight nights away from Tutira. The other two partners and the hired man Kite each made one such visit. Each of the partners also paid a visit with a different purpose, such as to get shearers or to buy bullocks. Likewise their neighbours visited them. Thus George Goodall, a hand from Waikari, spent eight nights at Tutira while helping with a muster, and took home 100 Waikari strays, and Dolbel, manager of

11 W. H. Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira: the Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station*, 3d ed., Edinburgh and London, 1953, pp.127-35.

12 *ibid.*, p.153.

Maungaharuru, sent a hand with notice of a mob to pass through Tutira. Young Tom Stuart was sent to clear the way for them. Between 14 January and 24 March Tutira ran five distinct musters, as different areas were swept for the shearing, and then combed for strays. Each time a team of six or seven was assembled by adding to available Tutira staff a hand or two from neighbouring runs.

Tutira's 1879 shearing had two stages. Five Maori shearers put in a week in mid-January, and nine Maori shearers finished the job in the last ten days of February. As the wool came off, pack horses began getting it out to Petane. This task fell to Charles Stuart and the station hand Kite, working with teams of up to 12 pack horses. The job took ten round trips spread over ten weeks. The return trips brought in stores for the station and 13 hundredweight of wire. Charles and Kite also made a trip with cattle for a stock sale at Petane, staying there for two nights. They must have got to know the road to Petane and its other travellers very well.

Over January and February T. C. Kiernan, who seems to have been filling the main management role, hardly left Tutira. His turn came when the shearing finished. On 4 March he left for Napier and stations to the south, looking for sheep to buy. After five days in Napier he decided to look at some ewes at Okawa Station, inland from Hastings. He sent for Tom Stuart to go with him to Okawa. They purchased 1500 ewes from Beamish, the manager, and returned to Napier. Next day they set out to look for rams. After spending the night at Maraekakaho Accommodation House, they proceeded to Olig Station, but not liking the rams there returned to Napier. Tom then went back to Tutira, while Kiernan spent the week in Napier. Before returning on 23 March he hired musterers to drive the Okawa ewes home. On 26 March he set out with his men for Okawa, arriving at 6 p.m. On the 27th drafting finished so late that they spent another night at Okawa. Next day, after seeing the mob started, he proceeded to Napier, where he bought 60 rams from Russell of Waipukurau, and started south to select them. Next morning, Saturday 29 March, he missed getting them on the early train, so spent most of the day there, finally reaching Napier at 7.15p.m. On Sunday morning he got his rams off the trucks, but due to misunderstandings and a case of drunkenness, his men had only taken them as far as Petane by Monday night, 31 March, when the diary extracts ends. Its brief, often cryptic, entries tell us nothing of the social relations of Kiernan's time in Napier or of his excursions and overnight stays to the south. But it stretches the imagination beyond belief to accept that he operated throughout as a 'social atom'. In fact, this Tutira diary only makes sense if we assume a spirit of friendly understanding and mutual support among those working the station, and a steady interchange of information and pooling of resources among the stations of the district, based on a well-developed community spirit.

In the light of these farm dairies Fairburn's version of rural Victorian New Zealand is untenable. His assertion that 'seldom were goods and services exchanged, which suggests that there was insufficient cooperation between neighbours to warrant such visiting',¹³ is simply not true. Nor was it true that

13 *Ideal Society*, pp.169-70.

before the 1890s there were 'a mere handful' of 'examples of reciprocity during the busy season of the year — harvesting, mustering, shearing, haymaking — . . . and most of these are restricted to the grain-growing regions'.¹⁴ Copious station archives survive to confirm the Kiernan diary version. There are other diaries too for the yeoman farms: Harrison of Omata for 1864–74, Jupp of Waitara for 1851–79, Robert Dawber of German Bay (Takamatua) for 1869, John Lochhead of Leeston for 1875, to name a few examples.¹⁵ In 1961 W. B. Johnston published a careful analysis of the farm diaries of the Wells family of Huirangi for the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ He found that extra-farm work helping neighbours was present throughout. In the first few years of settlement most of the time was spent off the farm supplementing income at road work and bush-felling contracts. By 1882 more time was spent at home, but outside work on contracts or on a labour-exchange basis still made heavy demands. By 1900 extra-farm work was mainly helping neighbours at harvest and attending to mechanical breakdowns at the dairy factory.

I will move next to the rural towns, to assess Fairburn's claim that transience shattered almost all bonds of kinship and neighbourliness and prevented the flourishing of voluntary and leisure organizations. To assess both the methodology used and the interpretations advanced I will first examine Normanby 1878–89, Fairburn's example with the highest transience rate, and then comment more briefly on Marton 1881–91, a larger town with a transience rate nearer to his median.

Normanby's first settlers were small farmers and sawyers who established themselves under the protection of the Waihi Redoubt, built in 1866, and used as the field headquarters by the colonial forces over the following years. Fertile Maori bush clearings gave a further locality name of Ketemarae. The two names of Waihi and Ketemarae persisted for a time alongside that of Normanby, the private township around which the district was centred by the early 1870s. Normanby's early significance came from its border position, on the edge of the forests, whose timber it milled, and of the Waimate Plains, thrown open for settlement from 1880. Settlers poured through Normanby westwards on to the plains in the early eighties and more slowly northwards into the bush over the following decade or two, hence a high rate of transience. But Hawera, four miles to the south, shared these roles, and was eventually to outdistance Normanby. The undergraduate essay cited for Fairburn's Normanby transience statistics collated the town's listing in Wise's *Directory* for 1878 with that in the *Star Almanack* for Taranaki in 1889. I will centre this study on the 42 householders in the 1878 listing. How did they relate to each other, and to the ever-changing community about them? For those who left, what did transience mean for themselves and for Normanby? Figure 1 gives Wise's 1878 list. For ease of use there are two bracketed corrections. 'Lawson, J.' has been repeated in its correct

14 *ibid.*, p.170.

15 Harrison's diary is in ATL, Jupp's in the Christchurch Public Library, Dawber's and Lochhead's in the Canterbury Museum Library.

16 W. B. Johnston, 'Pioneering the Bushland of Lowland Taranaki, A Case Study', *New Zealand Geographer*, XVII (1961), pp.1–16.

alphabetical position, and Gideon Inkster has been included for reasons explained below.

FIGURE 1
NORMANBY HOUSEHOLDERS - WISE'S *DIRECTORY* 1878

Brett, F. H., hotelkeeper	Havister, G., settler
Brett, A. G., settler	[Inkster, Gideon, settler]
Blake, R. T., interpreter	Kenstrole, R., settler
Barrow, Jesse, settler	[Lawson J., settler]
Budd, Wm., sawyer	Long, J., carpenter
Beresford, C. H., storekeeper	Milmore, D., settler
Beresford, H. R.	Moriarity, T., settler
Collins, Edward, carrier	Maguire, F., hotelkeeper
Casey, C., settler	McGregor, Daniel, hotelkeeper
Campbell, Geo., carpenter	McGregor, James, postmaster
Eagles, R., baker	Ramage, A., settler
Finlayson, J., settler	Robson, Jas., proprietor saw mills
Finlayson, F., settler	Robson, Thos., settler
Fitzsimmons, J., carpenter	Steer, J., sen., carrier
Gibson, C. E., storekeeper	Sutton, Wm., station manager
Gibson, H., storeman	Treweek, John, settler
Golding, H., settler	Todd, A., carpenter
Guy, J., engineer	Vine, Wm., carrier
Goodson, J.M., settler	Wilson, Robt., settler
Hungar, F., blacksmith	Wreyford, C.
Harrison, J., carrier	Wallace, Chas., interpreter
Havre, J., teacher	Lawson, J., settler

A cursory glance at this list immediately raises several considerations. There are two each of the Bretts, Beresfords, McGregors, Robsons, Finlaysons and Gibsons, which suggests that Fairburn may be wrong in seeking to discount kinship as a source of community as 'mobility must have dispersed [kindred households], scattering them far and wide'.¹⁷ Allowing for female kin not disclosed by surnames, it seems that at least a quarter of Normanby's 1878 households had kinship links in the town. Almost any page of any directory from colonial New Zealand will confirm that this was a common situation. Another consideration that quickly strikes the eye is that some names are quite unreal. There may never have been Havres, Havisters, Kenstroles or Wreyfords recorded in New Zealand, except in this list. A collation with electoral rolls and other sources leads to the following corrections (original bracketed): Goodson, M. J. (Goodson, J. M.); Harre (Havre); McGuire, F. (Maguire, F.); Milmore, S. (Milmore, D.). Havister, G., settler, is most likely to be Gideon Inkster who had been farming in the area since the early 1870s, and is listed at Waihi/Normanby in every Wise directory from 1875-6 to 1890-1 except this one. Kenstrole and Wreyford remain mysteries. One surmises that the typesetter had difficulty with

17 'Local Community or Atomised Society?', p.150.

a careless manuscript. Fortunately we can make corrections from other sources and put some flesh and blood on these bare bones of names.

The sources show these men bound together by shared experiences prior to 1878. Charles Gibson (1847–1939) emigrated with his parents in 1860.¹⁸ His father farmed briefly at Marton, then became that settlement's first school teacher. After eight years of farm work and bullock driving, Charles left home for Taranaki in 1869, joining the camp followers of Colonel Whitmore's returning colonial forces. Teaming up with a travelling butcher, Treweek, he helped drive a mob of sheep, and kill and dress them as required by the commissariat. Treweek was later a fellow settler at Normanby. After shopkeeping with a brother in Patea, Charles joined a survey party, with which he had his first sight of Normanby. In 1872 he acquired land in the Ketemarae clearing, and opened a general store in Normanby. After a year or two he sold the store to Charles Beresford, and turned his hand to pit-sawing timber, erecting a hotel, and further storekeeping, before finally settling down as a farmer. Normanby's 1878 householders must all have known him well. Most would also have had dealings with Robert Wilson (1822–80), Normanby's pioneer sawmiller. A successful Wairarapa runholder, he retired to England, but could not settle. With a good supply of farm machinery and a steam engine, he returned in 1875 and went to Normanby, where he already owned land. Finding a chronic shortage of timber, he turned his mind and his steam engine away from farming to sawmilling, and quickly built a thriving business.¹⁹ The Robson brothers, who moved to Normanby from the Wairarapa soon after Wilson, probably already knew him. James Robson (1842–1932) was a gold-rush immigrant to Otago who soon moved north to manage sawmills, first at Upper Hutt and then Greytown. Moving to Normanby in 1875, he became first manager and then, in 1876, lessee of Wilson's sawmill.²⁰ Thomas Robson (1840–1931), who had been sheep-farming in the Wairarapa since about 1865, came to join his brother at the Normanby mill in 1877.²¹ As fellow Wesleyans, Robert Wilson and James Robson must have known each other in the Wairarapa. In July 1877 Wilson and Robson each promised £10 towards building a Wesleyan church in Normanby, and they, together with Vine, Inkster, Guy, and Treweek were elected to canvass for funds.²² Wilson died in 1880, but the sawmill went on from strength to strength as the Robson mill. Clearly some Normanby settlers had known each others years before they settled there.

I will take one last look at Normanby before 1878. In August 1875 a Wanganui *Weekly Herald* reporter, who travelled up the coast in the company of three businessmen, described a night spent at Brett's 'comfortable hostelry at Ketemarae'.²³ It was, he found, 'a country "pub" strictly speaking, where the few hours

18 CNZ, vol.6, p.247; *Taranaki Daily News*, 10 August 1939.

19 *Weekly News*, Wanganui, 15 May, 26 June 1875, 11 May, 5 August 1876.

20 CNZ, vol.6, p.190; *Taranaki Daily News*, 14 December 1932, 20 November 1939 (obit. of his daughter, Mrs H. Stowell).

21 CNZ, vol.6, p.222; *Hawera Star*, 26 January 1931.

22 *New Zealand Wesleyan*, 1 September 1877, p.208.

23 *Weekly Herald*, Wanganui, 28 August 1875.

between gloaming and bedtime' were spent with 'an agreeable host and hostess and other cheering company' discussing 'every variety of subject from potatoes to babies' boots, and Snider rifles to gingerbread', while a roaring log fire kept the frosty night at bay. In an adjoining room a merry party danced away to the sound of a fiddle, while 'farmers and others from around were occasionally discussing the L.S.D. [i.e. £.s.d.] over their "tots"'. Fairburn implies that drunkenness vitiated social intercourse in colonial pubs. This bucolic picture may well be closer to the rural realities.

It now turns to Normanby's community life 1878–89, looking especially for the involvement of the 1878 householders, and including no other local names. On 15 January 1878 the Ketemarae Small Farm Association concluded its brief but vigorous three months of life. It had begun on 27 October 1877 when, on Felix McGuire's initiative, a large gathering of working men and settlers met to form a small farm association to negotiate for a block of about 20,000 acres of forest land north of Normanby. Its purpose was to give men of small means, 'the bone and sinew of the country', a chance to settle without being run around by speculators. Charles Gibson was voted to the chair, and also elected as treasurer of the new association's committee of nine, along with Thomas Robson, F. Hunger, F. McGuire (Secretary), Guy, and Brett. By 6 November a delegation of four, including Robson, Hunger, and Guy, were in New Plymouth, meeting the Waste Lands Board, who at first gave some encouragement. Through newspaper advertisements the association invited 'small capitalists' to join. A general meeting in the Normanby Hotel on 29 November was given a progress report. The Waste Lands Board had only 4000 acres available. It was decided to telegraph an offer for this block, and to elect five competent persons to inspect neighbouring land which might be added later to make up the proposed 20,000 acres. Ramage was among those chosen. Anger swept Normanby in early December at the news that New Plymouth land sharks planned to outbid them for the 4000 acres. But within days all was changed by the passing of new land legislation, and the news that the Grey government had agreed to survey bush land north of Normanby and market it as a mixture of both cash and deferred payment sections. This removed any need for the Small Farm Association. At the winding-up meeting on 15 January 1878 the main excitement concerned which organizations should receive the association's small credit balance. Inkster 'ultimately talked down all the rest' in support of James Robson's amendment, which saw the Hawera Institute and the Normanby Sunday School favoured over the Patea Hospital as proposed in Gibson's motion.²⁴ How many of the 42 householders were among the 90 who joined the association there is no way of knowing.

In 1880 a group of Normanby citizens promoted an ambitious Town Hall, reported to be 'commodious enough for a place ten times the size' and calculated to 'considerably eclipse the Town Hall at Hawera, five miles distant, and with thrice as many inhabitants'.²⁵ This building, with provision for a proposed library

²⁴ *ibid.*, 3 November – 15 December 1877; *Patea Mail*, 19 January 1878.

²⁵ *Yeoman*, Wanganui, 11 December 1880, p.5.

and institute, played a major role in community life over the following years. It enabled Normanby to become a centre for holiday festivities such as those of Boxing Day 1883, when a crowded special train from Hawera helped assemble the crowd for a highly successful sports day, following which the renowned Town Hall was 'packed to suffocation' for a ball at which, 'as usual', Mrs Eagles and assistants were the caterers.²⁶ Advertisements were probably already out for the first Normanby Horticultural Show, planned for the following February. The idea was Thomas Robson's, and he had canvassed the district for donations. Again the Town Hall was packed for a highly successful occasion. The *Hawera Star* noted that the small settler class, 'the pride and hope of the country', not the large landholders, dominated the exhibits of flowers, fruit, cheeses, butter, vegetables, fowls, and bantams. At the Town Hall next May the Normanby Horticultural Society was founded with Hunger, Barrow, A. G. Brett, and Thomas Robson included on the provisional committee. The show became an annual event, with other activities, such as sports, soon appearing in conjunction with it.²⁷ The show, and a large commercial nursery established about 1879, for years the only one in south Taranaki, together made Normanby the horticultural capital of the district.

There were other efforts to stimulate the district's farming. In April 1883 Francis Brett chaired a meeting called to consider commencing a hop-growing industry. Several settlers tried hop culture for a time but abandoned it in the face of damage from high winds.²⁸ The spring of 1885 saw a more promising development when Albert Fischer, a Swiss cheesemaker, told a meeting of his plans to set up a cheese and butter factory in Normanby if the settlers would guarantee a sufficient milk supply. His fellow countryman, local pioneer settler Felix Hunger, interpreted for him. A committee of four, including Hunger and Thomas Robson, canvassed for guarantees to meet the required minimum of 300 gallons a day. At a meeting chaired by Inkster in Brett's Hotel in October 1885, the committee reported back. Further offers made at the meeting brought guarantees to 341 gallons, and Fischer agreed to proceed. As the industry became established, milk came in from six miles away. Fischer brought in several skilled Swiss assistants, exhibits from the factory adorned the Normanby Horticultural Show, and land prices in the district reputedly rose by £2 an acre.²⁹

The final example of community initiatives involving the 1878 householders is one in which friendship reached out beyond the settlers to their Maori neighbours. It probably owed something to the marriage in St Peter's, Wellington, in 1863 of sawmiller James Robson to Maori chieftainess, Mere Ngamai-ote-Wharepouri, a relative of Te Whiti of Parihaka. In the winter of 1886 a large party of Maori passing through south Taranaki were caught by pitiless weather at Normanby. Several settlers, among them Thomas Robson, arranged for the

26 *ibid.*, 4 January 1884, p.5.

27 *Yeoman*, 14 March 1884, p.10; *Hawera Star*, 1 March, 19 May, 11 December 1884, 26 January 1931 (obit. of T. Robson).

28 *Hawera Star*, 16 April 1883, 23 October, 22 December 1884.

29 *ibid.*, 2 October - 29 December 1885, 11 February, 9 March, 5 June 1886.

Town Hall to be put at their disposal. Another settler sent a load of firewood, and the Town Hall Company offered the use of their piano for a dance in which local settlers joined with their Maori visitors.³⁰

For the sake of brevity I have had to ignore copious evidence of the ways in which school, church, and sports drew the households together and involved them in community service and leadership. What has been given surely shows a town of friendly co-operation and community bonds. I next consider those who had left Normanby by 1889, to see what the fact of their leaving meant. Some of course died, including Robert Wilson in 1880, F. Finlayson in 1881, his son, J. Finlayson, in 1882, and M. J. Goodson in 1888 and possibly also the two Beresfords and J. Lawson. A few left Taranaki, for example, A. Ramage for Adelaide by 1882, and Charles Wallace for Otaki by the end of the decade. But far more had moved to the new settlements of south Taranaki.

The Return of Freeholders, 1882, recorded several of these moves. McGuire had moved the mile or two to Hawera. William Sutton and William Vine had moved a little further to the new town of Manaia, while George Campbell was in nearby Otakeho. For these three their Normanby acquaintance must have continued, and probably deepened. So also must that of Jesse Barrow and Henry Gibson, both of whom moved a few miles north to bush farms in Te Roti district. Te Roti settlers considered Barrow a real acquisition in 1888 because of his prize-taking for butter.³¹ Henry Gibson (1858–1933) finally settled to farm in Te Roti after a career not unlike that of his brother Charles.³² He first saw Taranaki as a boy of twelve when helping a brother-in-law drive cattle there from Marton. Like Charles, he joined the Patea shopkeeping business for a time, and again like Charles he helped survey Normanby, and had experience pit-sawing and storekeeping there. Edward Collins faced a problem as the successful bidder for a deferred payment section at the new settlement of Okaiawa, across the Waingongoro River from Normanby, put up for sale in September 1882. His profitable carrying business was based in Normanby, the closest railway station to the new Waimate plains settlements, but his Okaiawa purchase carried residential requirements. The solution was for his wife and two young children to occupy the land while Edward continued his business from Normanby. Though she had never previously milked a cow, Mrs Collins began a successful dairy farm, while Edward with his wagon and seven horses continued his carrying business all over the Waimate plains and as far as Parihaka.³³ James Robson's move from Normanby in 1883 was an important public event, for his sawmill went with him, ten miles up the line to Ngaera. The mill employed about 20 men and 50 bullocks, and sent most of its output of 4000 feet per day to the Waimate plains. Logs from Ngaere were railed to Normanby for months before the move.³⁴ No doubt there was a steady migration of workmen and their families

30 *ibid.*, 2 June 1886.

31 *ibid.*, 8 May 1888.

32 *ibid.*, 15 March 1933.

33 *Taranaki Daily News*, 16 February 1937.

34 *Yeoman*, 25 May 1883, p.4. James Robson lived at Ngaere until 1922, then retired to New Plymouth.

from Normanby to Ngaere as the new forest area was opened up, mill buildings erected, and finally all the machinery and equipment moved north. The colony saw many such community migrations as mills moved from cut-out areas to new forest districts.

What did these moves from Normanby to neighbouring new settlements mean in human terms? Certainly not the breaking of all ties of acquaintance and friendship. James Robson left his brother Thomas to farm the cut-over land at Normanby, but bonds of kinship must often have drawn them to each other's homes down the years. So too with Henry and Charles Gibson. Henry's Te Roti neighbour, Jesse Barrow, surely continued to exhibit his renowned butter at the Normanby Show, and indeed many who moved from Normanby must have come back each year to this festival, either as exhibitors, or for the social life of the occasion. McGuire the politician and Edward Collins the carrier are but two among many whose occupations will have brought constant renewal of Normanby acquaintanceships. What we have is people leaving Normanby together, continuing Normanby associations in new settings, and revisiting Normanby for kinship and friendship ties. A social, economic, and governmental network, centred on Hawera-Normanby, linked the new settlements. Those 'transients' not drawn back on business or pleasure were still reminded of Normanby friends by the press, and in gossip with mutual acquaintances.

My own transience rate for Normanby 1878-89 is calculated at 64%; Fairburn's was 74%. But I have strong doubts even about my transience calculations. I have no other information linking A. Todd with Normanby, and wonder whether J. Fitzsimmons is the Thomas Fitzsimons, Hawera, of the 1879-80 Egmont electoral roll. A system which turns up non-names such as Wreyford and Kenstrole may have got other things wrong. Several counted as transients may be there in 1879, more correctly named. We do not really know how these lists were compiled. It is unsound practice to base firm statistics on them.

I turn now to the Rangitikei town of Marton, examining first the basis of Fairburn's transience statistics, and then, as a complement to the Normanby study, looking at the immediate origins of Marton's new householders of the 1880s. There is something quite odd about the 1881 and 1891 householder lists used by Fairburn's undergraduate essayist. They show a 17.5% decline while the censuses show a 47.4% population growth and a 26.6% increase in occupied dwellings. The essayist knew something was wrong, but after expressing reservations and blaming the 1891 list as 'erroneous', proceeded to produce a 'transience rate' from the data. Figure 2 sets out these problem statistics.

Surely it is Wise's 1881 list which is the rogue. All else is consistent with steady growth in this rural town over these years, and nothing in its history suggests that around 1880-81 Marton had a momentary population surge. Scrutiny of the two Wise lists suggests that the affair should be labelled 'The Case of the Disappearing Billiard Markers'. The 1881 list included three billiard markers among the occupants, but all have disappeared from Wise's next list of 1883. The 1891 list has no billiard markers. In all, 96 of the 1881 names have disappeared in the 1883 lists, and also, consequently, from the 1891 list. The

FIGURE 2
MARTON STATISTICS 1878-1891

Year	Census date	Population: Census	Occupied Dwellings: Census	No. of Householders: Wise's <i>Directories</i>
1878	3/3/78	593		197
1880-81	3/4/81	662	139	308
1883-4				246
1885-6	28/3/86	908	167	227
1887-8				269
1890-91	5/4/91	976	176	254

1881 list has 11 labourers, whereas the 1883 and 1891 lists have none. The occupation 'labourer' is uncommon in Wise's. Householder labourers seem to appear under a more specific description, such as 'bushman', 'roadman', 'storeman', 'gardener', 'sawyer', or are listed without any occupation. The 1881 list also has three barmen and four women school teachers — two being teenage pupil teachers. There are no barmen in either the 1883 or the 1891 list, and there is only one woman school teacher in the 1883 list. Surely Marton of 1881 was not so flourishing that it supported three billiard markers and three barmen as heads of households? The two pupil teachers certainly would not have been heads of households. Walter Taylor, who appears only in the 1881 list, is an interesting case. His occupation is listed as 'loafer'. The 1881 list is undoubtedly inflated with many inhabitants who were not householders. There was simply no place for 308 householders in the 139 inhabited houses of the 1881 census, even allowing that a score or two of them will have resided in the surrounding countryside. Whoever drew up the 1881 list had surely forgotten or neglected to read the instructions, or had a personal interest in boosting Marton's importance. Whatever the source of the errors, Wise's had corrected them by the next issue. Many of those weeded out probably persisted but without householder status. No credence can be given to transience rates calculated from these two lists. The student essayist was surprised at the high persistence rate, but if the 1881 list had been clean the level would have been quite embarrassing.³⁵ These lists are quite unsuitable for calculating firm statistics.

Wise's 1890-1 list for Marton has 107 names which do not appear in the 1880-1 list. I will examine them to see whether they were likely to have had an 'atomising' effect on the town. For 46 of them no relevant information was found. Of the rest, 33 proved to be immigrants to the town, and 28 would seem to be home-grown Martonians moving up to householder status. For this latter group a certain amount of guesswork is involved. John Nicol, baker, Broadway (1891) was certainly the son of Charles Nicol, baker, Broadway (1891),³⁶ and

³⁵ To get some idea of what the figure might have been, I applied the technique to Wise's Marton lists for 1883-4 and 1892-3. For the nine years the persistence rate was 63%. The student's 1881-91 figure was 52%.

³⁶ CNZ, vol.1, p.1321.

Edward Parkinson, blacksmith (1891) was surely the son of C. Parkinson, blacksmith, Broadway (1881 & 1891), but one can't be quite so sure that F. & Auguste Poppe, settlers (1891) were sons of J. Poppe settler, Pakepapa (1881). Another local source of new names will have been working men of long residence moving up to householder status. One such was William C. Kitney, who worked for Sir William Fox as a gardener at Westoe for 13 years from the mid 1870s, but first appeared as a householder in Wise's 1887-8 Marton list.³⁷ There must have been quite a number of such moves, but without intense local research they are difficult to trace. One can probably safely say that recruits from this source would more than compensate for wrong guesses about locally-born sons moving up. And as these people were not really new to the town at all, they cannot have had an 'atomising' influence. The same is almost certainly true for the seven newcomers from neighbouring Rangitikei settlements. Joseph Gomez, cordial manufacturer, and Alfred Cleaver, carpenter, both from Bulls, William Larsen, baker, from Halcombe, and Thomas Ward, storekeeper, from Crofton, can scarcely have arrived in Marton as complete strangers. Of the immigrants from further afield, a significant number were men with public careers, which would have quickly integrated them into their new community. They include four bankers, two clergymen, two schoolmasters, a newspaper editor, and a police constable. Some were businessmen, who certainly would have got nowhere as 'social atoms'. Among these were an auctioneer and stock and station agent, a chemist, a hairdresser, and a bookseller. The bookseller was James Bettany, who bought an established Marton business in 1888. When a reporter from the Wanganui *Yeoman* visited Marton in December 1890 to write about the town, it was Bettany who took him around and showed him 'the lions' of the community. He commented that 'Mr Bettany appears to be a most popular townsman'.³⁸ Information on many of the other newcomers suggests that they too were popular townsmen, who would have taken only a matter of weeks to settle warmly into their new community. Marton was certainly enriched, but definitely not 'atomised', by the householders whose names Wise added to the list in the 1880s.

From this brief survey it is clear that neither Fairburn's transience statistics nor his 'atomising' deductions will stand up under investigation. His North American mentors' work is undergirded by manuscript census schedules, for which we have no parallel. Starting with Wise's directory listings one cannot achieve results which can be compared with the North American research. With a massive investment of time, using every available scrap of evidence, an experienced professional researcher might be able to create a New Zealand population listing as robust as the North American census material, but it certainly has not yet been done. But even with statistics comparable to the North American ones, there remain questions of interpretation. Transience in the American continental setting and transience in our island world will probably not have been the same thing. Undoubtedly there was much population movement

37 *ibid.*, p.1316.

38 *ibid.*, p.1325; *Yeoman*, 3 January 1891, p.8.

in Victorian New Zealand and it is worthy of study. But to claim that it 'atomised' society is to leap blindly in the face of the evidence. In researching these matters, too, we must be careful not to manipulate the settlers as mere names and statistics. We should listen for their hopes and fears, their achievements and mischances, and try to uncover the ever-changing dynamics and interconnections of their communities.

The 'atomisation' theory is a nihilistic abandonment of the true task before us. We can advance our understanding of New Zealand's colonial social history only by acknowledging the richly varied human relations which are evidenced in the sources. Especially for country life, this challenges us to make the imaginative leap back into a largely pre-modern setting. Much of a community's needs were met from local resources, in face-to-face transactions. To conclude, I will illustrate this fact by returning to the diarists and discussing their means of transport. Clearly they walked much more than we do, but for faster journeying or heavier loads they used the horse. Their power source came not from distant Coventry, Detroit, or Toyota City, but from their own local horse-breeding. As landlord of Wakapuaka's Black Horse Inn, William Wastney kept a stallion, and was involved in much negotiation with his neighbours for the horse's services. His 1869 diary revealed him rearing horses, and doubtless training them, hunting for lost foals, and horse-trading. He also grew and sold fodder. When he went riding, driving, or carting he used the products of local craftsmen — saddlers, harness makers, wheelwrights, cartwrights, farriers. For horsepower, vehicles, and fuel he was involved in neighbourly face-to-face transactions far more complex and intimate than those of our motorized world. The same went for Peter Packard at Motupipi, with his team of oxen and his horseback outings, and for the men of Tutira with their horseback and pack-horse links with the outside world. Similarly, Robert Petch's mare grazing at McRae's involved more complex negotiation than would an automobile garaged there. There is yet another consideration in making the leap back to colonial times. Before the motor age the highway itself was an important social setting. Travellers on foot or horseback, in gigs, carts or wagons, driving bullock teams or pack-horses, passed the time of day as they met. On 14 April 1869 William Wastney went to see if neighbour Mackay had pigs for sale. He had none, so William discussed his problem with those he met on the road home, including his neighbour Bell, who agreed to exchange six little pigs for two fat ones. If William had been motoring this would probably not have happened. A good example of the conviviality of the public highway comes to us from Normanby. William Rye had immigrated from Kent with his wife and family in 1879 and become a roadman for the Hawera Road Board. His wife helped their income by caretaking at the Normanby school. In September 1885 William went down with severe inflammation of the lungs. The *Hawera Star* thought this of sufficient public interest to carry repeated items on his misfortune and progress back to health.³⁹ Obviously the many who used the busy Hawera-Normanby road knew him. It is

39 *Hawera Star*, 31 May 1884, 21, 23 September 1885.

the modern roadman who is in more danger of being treated as a 'social atom'. One can only conclude, in the light of the evidence, that it makes good horse sense to stick with the 'Gardner/Oliver legend'.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ I have deliberately avoided theoretical jargon in this article. There is, however, plenty of grist here for those who wish to use it.