

## Taradale Meets The Ideal Society and its Enemies

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IN a very favourable review of Miles Fairburn's *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*, Alan Ward suggested that 'Fairburn has set the terms of debate for some time to come. His terms, his statistics, his chronology will be challenged by specialists in the field. But the categories he has used will no doubt illuminate comparable studies of the twentieth century — and perhaps produce surprises for Fairburn himself.'<sup>1</sup> In the same publication, Rollo Arnold began that challenge, especially to Fairburn's statistics, questioning the transience figures he used for Normanby and Marton.<sup>2</sup>

The argument and pace of *The Ideal Society and its Enemies* are intense. The reader is swept along as Fairburn outlines and then rejects alternative interpretations of nineteenth-century New Zealand before offering his own atomization thesis. His book is undoubtedly one of the most important recent works in Pakeha historiography. It is therefore crucial to step back from it and critically assess the validity of its central thesis and to do so now, before a Fairburnian legend of nineteenth-century Pakeha society becomes entrenched.

I have been engaged in an historical study of Taradale, in Hawke's Bay. Today Taradale is a suburb of Napier but in the time period of my work, 1886-1930, it was quite a separate area, with never more than 3000 inhabitants. Taradale provides us with an opportunity to test the general theory Fairburn propounds on a particular place. As Ward predicted, I intend to question Fairburn's terms, statistics and chronology as Taradale meets *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*.

Two aspects of Fairburn's terminology I will question first: his notion of atomization, and his use and rejection of the idea of local community.

Since at least the early 1980s, Fairburn has been promoting the idea of atomization.<sup>3</sup> He believes that the nature of the immigrant population, combined with the situation they faced in New Zealand, meant that people in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially 1850-80, were atomized. They travelled to New Zealand either alone or without extended family support. More men than women migrated and immigrants tended to be young: Pakeha New Zealand had an age and sex imbalance in its population. On arrival, these people did not settle

1 Alan Ward, 'Review Article', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24, 1 (1990), p.76.

2 Rollo Arnold, 'Community in Rural Victorian New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24, 1 (1990), pp.11-20.

3 See Miles Fairburn, 'Local Community or Atomized Society?', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 16, 2 (1982), pp.146-65.

but moved from area to area in search of better opportunities. They moved so frequently that they had neither the time nor inclination to establish social ties with those around them, if indeed they had neighbours. Fairburn makes much of the spatial isolation of the population and the poor lines of communication of the frontier. According to Fairburn these factors, along with others such as the nature of work, ensured an atomized population, which in turn accounts for the very high rates of drunkenness, interpersonal violence and civil litigation at the time. People who lacked informal mediators such as kin or neighbours and felt no community restraints, settled their disputes either through violence or litigation.

Fairburn's work on colonial crime is very interesting, but in itself I do not think it establishes the validity of the atomization thesis or refutes the existence of local community. In the first place, the two theories should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. It is possible for some members of a society to live in local communities and some to be outsiders, atomized. Contrary to Fairburn's assertions, I do not think that any of the historians he puts in the 'local community' basket actually argue that all of colonial society was involved in local communities.<sup>4</sup> But even if we allow for the possibility that not everyone lived an atomized existence, is it a valid concept to describe at least some of the population? I think that what Fairburn refers to as an atomized society is not atomized at all. I will argue that the people he portrays as kinless, neighbourless, transient individuals who often drank to excess, became violent and engaged in civil litigation, were not atoms but members of a separate culture within Pakeha society. Fairburn's notion of atomization is my idea of a masculine culture of young, single, manual working men.

Fairburn's dismissal of local community is also open to question. Unlike Fairburn, I argue that local community did exist in nineteenth-century New Zealand. I would not argue that everyone lived in local communities, but a sizeable percentage of the population lived in small towns and urban centres, even during Fairburn's decades of great expansion, 1850-80. By 1874 over half of the Pakeha population lived in either small towns or the four main centres. By the turn of the century this figure had risen to over two-thirds of the population.<sup>5</sup> Living in a small town obviously should not be equated with living in a local community, but it does allow for the possibility of living in one. Yet Fairburn's atomization thesis does not allow for that eventuality. Fairburn's concentration on those who lived in the 'boo-ay' is further questioned if we consider the size of land holdings at this time. Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century an average 60% of all holdings were of 100 acres or less and three-quarters were of 200 acres or less.<sup>6</sup> These farms were not so large as to prevent contact with neighbours, especially when it is remembered that the homestead

4 For example, W.J. Gardner in 'New Zealand Regional History: General and Canterbury Perspectives', *Historical News*, 41, October (1980) says that New Zealand's 'metropolitan element was divided among four centres; most of its middling and small communities had a comparatively vigorous life of their own' (p.1). He does not maintain that *everyone* lived in clustered settlements, yet this is how Fairburn represents his work.

5 See Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, Table 6.2, p.174.

6 See individual censuses of population between 1874-1896 for figures on number and size of land holdings.

was not necessarily built in the middle of the holding. Fairburn denies local community at a general level, but he never considers a particular local area to determine whether or not it deserves the label local community.

It is important to define what is meant by a local community. There are two components to my definition. First, the place. A local community is a particular geographical area. As Meining said, history takes place.<sup>7</sup> But area only influences local community; it is not synonymous with it. The second and more important aspect of the definition is very similar to the parameters of Fairburn's book. The common ties and social interaction of the inhabitants of this particular place make it a local community.<sup>8</sup> In his introduction Fairburn states that his governing category is 'the colony's social organisation — the fabric of interpersonal relationships, the sorts of ties people formed, the settings and institutions which bonded them together and through which they interacted'.<sup>9</sup> That is, the *phenomenon* of community is his framework. But this should not be confused with *local* community. They are not the same thing. Local community is the phenomenon of community within a particular area. Fairburn dismisses local community without ever studying it. He discusses the absence of community festivals, kinship, neighbourly bonding and voluntary organizations in general terms. He looks at national aggregates rather than local experience, the general rather than the particular. Yet conclusively to disprove local community one needs to apply these measures to a local area and demonstrate that within that particular area individuals were atomized. This is my approach to Taradale. As a particular area, is it best characterized by local community or atomization?

I am not claiming that if Taradale was a local community then all local areas were local communities. Taradale is a case study, it is not New Zealand writ small. There is a problem questioning a nationwide theory on the basis of one study which cannot be claimed to be representative. At present there is a paucity of thorough historical studies of local areas in New Zealand. Until more people are involved in local history we will not know how typical Taradale is. But that should not prevent us from using it, and any other relevant material, to begin to question Fairburn and suggest alternative interpretations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Pakeha society.

One of the major questions hanging over Fairburn's portrayal of nineteenth-century society is his methodology. Ward was right when he asserted that people would critically assess Fairburn's statistics. Fairburn has quantified the past, and his reliance on official statistics presents problems. His approach to concepts such as community or mateship is statistical, yet such ideas are not particularly suited to a statistical refutation. He tries to deny the existence of mateship, partly on the grounds that when single, manual working males died they did not have good enough mates to fill in their death certificates for them.<sup>10</sup> Yet when I looked

7 Quoted in John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek; Life on the Illinois Prairie*, New Haven, 1986, p.xiv.

8 This definition is derived from Hillery's study of 94 definitions of community. See George A. Hillery Jr, 'Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement', *Rural Sociology*, 20, 2 (1955), pp.111-23.

9 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.11.

10 *ibid.*, p.144.

at the death certificates of manual working bachelors, married men and married women in Taradale, 1886-1900, I found that 52% of the bachelors' certificates were not fully filled out, but that 50% of the married men's and 48% of the married women's certificates were also incomplete.<sup>11</sup> The death certificate of William Corbin, who died in 1895, contains no information about his father or mother, yet Corbin had been married for 33 years, and his wife and at least two of his five surviving offspring lived in the Taradale area. Fairburn maintains that 'the doctor or coroner would have had little trouble in obtaining these data if among the bedside mourners or grief-stricken at the inquest were a faithful friend or group of "mates" familiar with the past life and background of the deceased.'<sup>12</sup> Platonic and other 'mates' seem to have had the same problems. Perhaps this tells us that grief is not conducive to genealogy, rather than indicating a lack of a high frequency of male relationships. Fairburn's statistical approach to culture is fraught with difficulties.

The other major problem I have with Fairburn's statistical approach is that males were far more likely to be counted, either as heads of households or breadwinners, than females. *The Ideal Society and its Enemies* is very much his story. The male pattern is assumed to be the norm, largely without considering female experience. In questioning Fairburn's methodology his general approach should be tested on a particular area and gender should be considered. By reassessing Fairburn's statistics I hope to demonstrate that factors such as transiency disproportionately affected one group within the population, that they did not lead to atomization but a separate masculine culture, and that local community could and did exist in nineteenth-century New Zealand.

Fairburn dismisses the existence of local community in the nineteenth century on four grounds: the lack of importance of community festivals, the absence of kinship, the weakness of neighbourly bonding and the dearth of voluntary organizations. If we look at the evidence Fairburn offers in his dismissal of local community in the colonial era it is again obvious that his statistical approach is ill-suited to refuting concepts, his focus is malestream and his general approach ignores the particular reality.

Community festivals are rejected as a bonding mechanism by Fairburn because they were 'too diffuse, fleeting and infrequent to be effective instruments of social interaction'.<sup>13</sup> But Fairburn uses as an example the Wellington Anniversary Day celebrations, ignoring the fact that Wellington was not a local community but contained local communities within it, such as Lower Hutt and Miramar, which organized their own festivals. In Taradale there were a multitude of social occasions in the late nineteenth century. The local race course meetings, sporting events, church socials and bazaars, school balls and prize giving, Lodge meetings and balls, ploughing matches and horticultural shows, all involved large numbers of people. For example, in May 1886 among other

11 Twelve of the 23 manual working bachelors' certificates were incomplete as were 17 of the 34 married men's and 22 of the 46 married women's certificates. Interestingly, none of the four single women who died in the area during this period had incomplete death certificates.

12 *ibid.*, p.144.

13 *ibid.*, p.161.

things the Taradale area saw the annual meeting of ratepayers of the Meaneer Road District, the Taradale Rivers Board met as did the Taradale Town Board, a new friendly society, the Foresters, was opened and met twice, the Oddfellows met twice, there was a concert by the Meaneer Mission school, which filled the Oddfellows hall and was attended by all denominations, and the Taradale School Committee held a meeting, as did the Anglican church's committee.<sup>14</sup> Not all of these events can be classed as 'community festivals', but they do indicate the extent to which people in a local area could be drawn into organizing and running their community. Fairburn not only ignores the number of community festivals; he also ignores the importance of the preparation and post-event period. The day at the A. and P. show may have been fleeting but to compete in the show could require months of preparation and anticipation and the experience could live on past show day.

The second avenue Fairburn explores is the possibility of local bonding through kinship. For three reasons Fairburn maintains that colonial New Zealand was kinless. For a start the colonists were immigrants; they travelled alone or with only their nuclear family, relatively few migrated as colonizing communities or in chain migration, and there was a dearth of adult females in the population and a shortage of elderly people. His second point is that New Zealand had a short biological history and so had not had time to right the imbalances through reproduction. The third factor mitigating kin ties was geographical mobility within New Zealand. But like his refutation of the importance of community festivals, Fairburn had neither explained why he has chosen this indicator nor has he applied it to a particular area to demonstrate how it operated in that area to prevent local community. None of the historians Fairburn quotes as recognizing local community in nineteenth-century New Zealand focus on the importance of kinship; Olssen and Levesque even go so far as to say that 'kinship never became the basis of social organisation'.<sup>15</sup> Certainly an immigrant population, new to a country, could not have the same density of kin ties as an old, established population; not that the population in England was static. Geographical mobility within England would have also weakened kinship links.<sup>16</sup> The studies Fairburn holds up as a model of kinship are open to question and it must be remembered that we know very little about the peopling of New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> We do not know how many people came as kinless immigrants, how many travelled with only a nuclear family group, how many with extended family, how many followed out kin, or later brought out kin.

14 See the *Daily Telegraph* for May 1886.

15 Erik Olssen and Andr  e Levesque 'Towards a History of the European Family in New Zealand' in Peggy G. Koopman-Boyden, ed., *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington, 1978, p.4.

16 For example, almost two-thirds of the inhabitants of English towns in 1851 had been born in the country. H.R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Wellington, 1987, p.8.

17 For example, Fairburn maintains that Young and Willmott's study indicates 'the close collaboration between mothers and married daughters' in Bethnal Green (*Ideal Society*, p.163); yet Young and Willmott based this aspect of their work on only 27 wives, whom they do not claim to be representative of the total district. Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London, 1957, pp.xix and 30.

While there were kinless individuals in Taradale, and others with only a nuclear family group, some were members of extended families and through intermarriage quickly established extensive kin networks. As Arnold pointed out in his reassessment of Fairburn's transience figures for Normanby, several of the heads of households shared common surnames, thus suggesting that they were related.<sup>18</sup> A breakdown of those men who enrolled to vote from the Taradale area for 1887 reveals a similar pattern. Of the 375 individuals, 203 or 54% did not have obvious kin links with other men in the area, but 46% did. There were nine men from the Jeffares' extended family on the roll, and two other groups each with five members enrolled. Eighteen percent of those enrolled shared their surname with one other elector and 20% with two other voters. It cannot be stated categorically that all of these men were relations but other male kin links are obviously ignored by this method, such as brothers and brothers-in-law, maternal uncles and nephews. It would appear that Fairburn's dismissal of the importance of kin has underestimated the density of ties within particular areas.

Fairburn's dismissal of kin has also overlooked some important differences between the kin experiences of men and women in colonial New Zealand. There were three times as many men without any known kin enrolled to vote in 1893 as there were women.<sup>19</sup> Information from birth and marriage records in Taradale, 1886-1900, also seems to indicate that women were not as kinless as men. The parents of a third of those children born in Taradale over this period were married in Taradale. The vast majority of these parents were overseas-born, two-thirds, but if that is broken down we find that three-quarters of the fathers of Taradale-born children were immigrants but only a half of the mothers. We also find that it was four times more likely that the mother was either Taradale- or Napier-born than the father. Of the 222 couples, almost 40% of the mothers were from Hawke's Bay, but only 13% of the fathers. So it would seem that the mothers were less transient than their husbands had been and, therefore, more likely to have kin in the area. This is also borne out by an examination of those who married in the Taradale area between 1886 and 1900. Again, the majority were overseas-born, but more grooms than brides were foreigners and again it was over twice as likely that the bride was either born in Taradale or Napier or the rest of Hawke's Bay than the groom. The grooms were, however, more likely to have been born elsewhere in New Zealand, reflecting greater male transiency within New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> David Pearson's study of Johnsonville marriages indicates very similar gender-specific patterns. Of those who married in Johnsonville 1883-1905, brides were over twice as likely as their grooms to be locally born and three times as likely to have been born in the Wellington region.<sup>21</sup>

18 Arnold, p.12. Twelve of the 42 heads of households, or 29%, shared the same name.

19 Of 578 men, 87 or 15% were men alone, while 22 of 481 women, or 5%, were women who did not share their surname with anyone else on the roll.

20 Out of 165 weddings 58% of the grooms were foreigners, compared to 47% of the brides. Sixteen per cent of the grooms were born within the Hawke's Bay area, whereas 36% of the brides were. Twenty six per cent of the grooms were born in the rest of New Zealand while only 17% of the brides were.

21 David Pearson, *Johnsonville: Continuity and Change in a New Zealand Township*, Sydney, 1980, pp.104-5.



The brides at the Taradale weddings were also three times as likely as their grooms to have their kin as their witnesses, which probably partly reflects the greater stability of the female population and also the fact that if they were geographically mobile they were more likely to move with kin rather than as individuals.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that a more geographically stable female population could operate in a more kin-centred or community-oriented way than footloose men. It could be that in frontier New Zealand women were the community.

The third area which Fairburn considers but denounces as a local community-inducing factor is neighbourly bonding. He dismisses its importance on two grounds: the 'phenomenal transience' of the population and the small and scattered nature of settlement.<sup>23</sup> But again he has ignored the local and assumed that the male pattern is the norm.

Fairburn's evidence for transience indicates that the population of the nineteenth century was floating, not just locally but moving in waves up and down the country. According to Fairburn, the period 1850-80 was the most transient and 1880-1900 was more transient than 1900-1939.<sup>24</sup> Fairburn defines transience as 'the migration of households or members of a household from one locality to another at some distance'.<sup>25</sup> Using research essays from third year and honours' students and David Pearson's study of Johnsonville, he deduces that in a ten-year period almost 60% of a given population will have moved out of a locality. This, he argues, is evidence of atomization. Fairburn views transience as an individualistic and conservative action, claiming that people move for their own benefit not for the wider good and that the frequency of their movements means that they do not have the time or inclination to establish ties with those around them, if indeed they had any neighbours. However, I do not assume that transiency in itself negates the existence of local community. It is possible that nineteenth-century Pakeha moved from one local community to another rather than in isolation, especially since by 1874 the majority of the population lived in either small towns or the four main centres. People who were members of a church, had children in school, belonged to a friendly society or some other organization, could easily re-establish ties in the new area they moved to. Admittedly membership numbers for friendly societies and figures for church attendance indicate that many people did not belong to these institutions, but everyone does not have to belong to everything to establish or re-establish ties. As Fairburn points out, the frequency of geographical mobility meant that New Zealand was not characterized by regional diversity, so when people did move from one area to another they would not have problems with dialect or other local peculiarities. The 'cultural uniformity' of the frontier could help the movers to re-establish ties.<sup>26</sup> It is feasible that in a new society re-establishing bonds would

22 For 1886-1900 I could establish a familial relationship between the witnesses and bride and groom in 108 of 165 weddings. In 18 (17%) cases the witnesses were related to both bride and groom, in 70 (64%) instances the witnesses were only related to the bride, and at 20 (19%) weddings the witnesses were the groom's relations.

23 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, pp.171-77.

24 *ibid.*, especially pp.128-34, 266, 268.

25 *ibid.*, p.125.

26 *ibid.*, p.134.

not take as long, given that most people had experienced migration and realized the importance of establishing social ties. But the major problem I have with Fairburn's transiency statistics and argument against neighbourly bonding is its masculine focus and assumption that the male pattern is the norm.

The 15 studies Fairburn uses are based on the percentage of heads of households, as recorded in street directories, who were still in the area ten years later. The median transience rate for these 15 urban and rural localities, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was 57.5%. So just over 40% of the heads of households remained. I have 'refined' the method of measuring transience in my study. Rather than use street directories, I have used electoral rolls to measure the adult population, thus including all enrolled adults rather than just those men who headed households. This means that I know who stayed and who left every three years rather than using the arbitrary figure of a ten-year period. But in my opinion the greatest strength in using electoral rolls is that, from 1893, I can look at patterns of female transience as well as male transience, rather than assuming that they are the same. By using the electoral rolls in tandem with death records and marriage records, I can also adjust the figures to take into account those who are known to have died and therefore involuntarily became 'transient' and those women known to have married who changed their name but not, necessarily, their address.

Like the studies Fairburn uses, my research indicates that the population of Taradale was very mobile. Less than half of those enrolled in 1887 were still in the immediate area six years later.<sup>27</sup> By the 1896 roll only 30% of those enrolled in 1887 remained on the roll. A similar pattern is obvious with the settlers of 1890. After nine years only 27% of the electors had continuously remained in the Taradale area. As Fairburn mentions, the methodology of the studies he uses underestimates transiency because it ignores those who did not head households, who were more likely to be transient. But unlike Fairburn I do not think that the only way we can read this information is as proof of an atomized society.

Of those enrolled for the election in 1893, the first time women could vote, women in Taradale were more stable, or less transient, than their male counterparts. Overall 73% of those enrolled for the 1893 election also enrolled for the 1896 election, but if that is broken down we find that only 69% of men re-enrolled whereas 79% of the female voters remained on the roll. By the 1899 roll 52% of men who enrolled in 1893 were no longer enrolled whereas 57% of women still registered as voters. By 1902 male transiency was 62%, very similar to the pattern in the studies Fairburn uses for heads of households after a ten-year period, but female transiency was only 55%.

Just as Fairburn assumes that the earlier period was characterized by even more transiency than the last quarter of the nineteenth century so I speculate that the earlier period would be characterized by even more marked gender-specific patterns of mobility-persistence. The reason I speculate in this way is connected with the reasons Fairburn offers for transiency. One reason to move was the nature of work: much work was seasonal, such as shearing, or tied in with

27 Of 375 men enrolled only 143 (38%) were still enrolled in 1893; that is these men enrolled in 1887, 1890 and 1893.



extraction; gum digging, gold mining. Once the extraction was complete, the workers left for greener pastures. That is, male work encouraged transiency, in particular the work single, working-class men undertook.<sup>28</sup> We do not know how transient females in paid employment were at this time. It could be that since the vast majority of those in paid work were employed as domestics, if and when women did change positions, they could do so within a locality, given the great demand for servants. However, the chief difference between men and women was that the vast majority of women were not in paid employment and so had much less need to wander in search of work. Judith Elphick estimated that less than 18% of women over the age of 15 who lived in Auckland in 1871 were in paid employment, compared to nearly 45% of women in England and Wales.<sup>29</sup> Also, women married at a younger age than men and were more likely to be married than men thus also lessening their chance for geographical mobility, given that families were more stable than single men.<sup>30</sup>

Another explanation Fairburn offers for geographical mobility is the disproportionate number of young, single, striving males in New Zealand, constantly on the move until they found fame and fortune, or at least a reasonable job or piece of land. But rather than assuming that this was a general Arcadian desire for success, as Fairburn does, it can also be viewed as a gender specific phenomenon; a masculine culture of the young and single. The expectations of and for single women on the frontier were quite different from the expectations of and for single men. Women could hope to marry one of the successful strivers rather than scour the countryside in search of their own success. And it would seem that the men would come to them and they not have to chase or follow the men.

Women were transient in the nineteenth century, but it would appear that they were not as transient as men. I also think it is more likely that the women who moved did so in kin groups — either as married women or as daughters — rather than as individuals, given the social norms of the time. Overall, it would appear that women had stronger kin ties, and stronger links to a particular area than men. Females were also more likely to live in urban areas than males. In 1867 40% of the total population was female but females accounted for 47% of the population of the chief town of each province.<sup>31</sup> All of these factors make it possible that women experienced neighbourly bonding and local community to a greater extent than men, especially young, single, manual working men. These men were the most transient section of the population. This is the group Fairburn is really

28 For example, in 1878 45% of adult men had never married, but on the goldfields 64% of the adult men were unmarried. *Population Census of New Zealand*, 1878.

29 Judith Elphick, 'What's Wrong With Emma?' in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, eds, *Women in History; Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1986, p.73.

30 For age at marriage see Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character; Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-century New Zealand*, Wellington, 1990, p.138. Only 13% of adult women had never married in 1874, whereas 49% of men had never married. By 1901 29% of women had never married, substantially less than the 42% of men who had never married. Source: *Census 1926, 'Conjugal Condition — Statistical Tables'*, pp.6-7. For the relative geographical stability of families see Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.135.

31 *Census*, 1871, Table III.

dealing with in his atomization thesis.

The final avenue Fairburn explores and rejects as a local community-inducing agent is the role of voluntary organizations. His interpretation of the role of churches and friendly societies will be discussed in greater depth later. At this point a few provisos need to be made regarding his approach. By discussing only formal voluntary organizations which left statistical records, Fairburn is again trying to dismiss concepts through quantitative methods rather than also recognizing their qualitative aspects. He has not taken account of Sutton and Kolaja's point that the communityness of an action is measured not just by the number of actors but also by the knowledge of the action.<sup>32</sup> His methodology is also problematic when it comes to women's leisure. Women did not have an equivalent to a friendly society, women were not Volunteers and there were very few sports teams for women. So apart from church participation, women's voluntary organizations cannot be considered by Fairburn's approach. His desire to quantify has meant ignoring informal leisure and voluntary actions. Women who help women in times of childbirth, with child care, or during illness are not seriously considered. The role of visiting within a local area is not studied.<sup>33</sup> Yet given that women appear to have more kin within visiting distance than men, given their greater tendency to live in clustered settlements and their lower rate of geographical mobility, it is possible that women had a greater experience of local community than men. This could explain why women do not feature in the statistics Fairburn offers as evidence of frontier chaos.

In the third part of his book Fairburn puts forward his own case for the atomized society. He argues that Arcadian New Zealand was not an ideal society because its minimal social organization meant that it was chaotic — the footloose, scattered and continually growing population lacked ties; they had left behind their kin and community in the old world. They were prone to loneliness and when they got lonely they got drunk, violent and litigious. In the old world their family or friends would intervene in any such disputes or prevent them from drowning their sorrows, but in Arcadia, with no one to look after them they lost control and often ended up in front of the local magistrate.<sup>34</sup> But I do not see this as a pattern for the whole of the frontier population. A certain group of men rather than women seem to have hit the bottle or just hit anyone or anything.

Fairburn shows that there was a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and drunkenness convictions in the nineteenth century — which is hardly surprising. He argues that this is not evidence of a macho culture but an indication of an atomized culture. I disagree. As Fairburn points out, women had only a quarter of the conviction rate of men for drunkenness in 1872, yet he never

32 Willis A. Sutton and Jiri Kolaja, 'The Concept of Community', *Rural Sociology*, 25, 2, (1960), p.200.

33 In the section on 'Community Through Neighbourly Bonding', Fairburn briefly discounts the role of visiting, but his examples tend to be not from local areas but isolated sheep stations. See Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, pp.168-9.

34 Fairburn is contrasting the New Zealand situation with the model J.A. Sharpe offers in his study of English villages, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth-Century English Village', in V.A.C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker, eds, *Crime and the Law, The Social History of Crime in Western Europe Since 1500*, London, 1980, pp.97-119.

explains why there was a gender-specific pattern.<sup>35</sup> He claims that drunkenness was a result of frontier loneliness, so should we assume that women did not get lonely? If they were not lonely does this mean that they were not atomized? Could it be that other forces or norms such as kin or friends acted to prevent women from turning to alcohol? Fairburn views excessive drinking as the endeavour by 'the bulk of lower-class men and the inarticulate, in town and country' to express and compensate for their loneliness.<sup>36</sup> Frontier chaos was not due to a general atomized population; frontier chaos was a reflection of a specific male culture, a masculine culture centred on young, single, working-class men.

Another chaotic result of an atomized society, according to Fairburn, was the high rate of interpersonal violence colonial New Zealand suffered. He claims that this was not due to a macho culture, domestic stress, population pressures, the age structure, or urbanization. Rather, there was a strong relationship between violence and drunkenness, and, most importantly, he attributes our punching past to the atomized nature of the society. Without kin ties, with a high percentage of overseas-born and a transient population, people either did not know or chose to ignore group norms. Without the non-official mediators of the old world — kin, friends, clergy, employer, squire — people fought and often ended up in court.<sup>37</sup> But again, Fairburn fails to explain why it is that men rather than women fought. One explanation for women's substantially lower rate of court appearances for drunkenness and violence is that they experienced the sorts of controls operating in Sharpe's English village. If a woman was in dispute with another person, then that woman's kin or friends or neighbours would intervene. Women were more likely than men, especially young, single, manual working men, to have such networks, given that the vast majority of women married and therefore had at least their own nuclear family, and that women were less geographically mobile, more likely to live in an urban area and more likely to attend church, thus giving them access to another informal mediator, the local minister. It was not 'lady-like' to be drunk, especially in public, or to engage in physical brawls. Since women had a stake in the area they lived in, the fear of gossip and social ostracism would deter them from participating in such activities in a way that footloose men did not feel restrained.

So far I have questioned Fairburn's theory of atomization and viewed it as a male-centred theory. Women were not the '51% minority' in the nineteenth century but that does not mean that they should be ignored. Nor should it be assumed that they simply followed the male pattern — that the masculine experience was the norm. It would appear that women were less transient than men and less likely to get drunk or violent. If these are among the key indicators of atomization then it would appear that women were not atomized or were less atomized than men. But were men atomized?

Unlike Fairburn, I do not assume that single, transient, manual working men were atomized. These men may not have experienced local community, but rather than seeing atomization as the alternative I argue that they experienced

35 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.210.

36 *ibid.*, p.203.

37 *ibid.*, pp.217-25.

their own masculine culture. In his rejection of Jock Phillips's mateship model, Fairburn discounts the idea that there was a male subculture of violence and believes that the decrease in crime over the last two decades of the century indicated that crime was 'not an esteemed value cultivated by male peer groups'.<sup>38</sup> I disagree. Most of the criminals in the nineteenth century were male and as Fairburn indicates there was a strong negative statistical relationship between the number of convictions for violent offences and the number of adult females in the population over the period 1853-1930.<sup>39</sup> If this was an atomized society, if everyone was atomized, then why were women not acting in such a violent way? Perhaps we are dealing with gendered cultures rather than an atomized society. The decrease in crime could reflect changes within masculine cultures rather than the lack of a separate normative code. As the male population aged, as the nature of work changed away from casual, extractive industries, as more men married, it could be that the norms of this culture changed, just as the norms of any culture change over time.

Fairburn also rejects the idea of mateship on the basis that there was a lack of mechanisms for stable and intense interactions between men. He argues that men could not establish an alternative value system because they moved around so much, the nature of so much work was seasonal and temporary and contact between work mates was short-term. The working and social relationships of men may not always have been long-term, but that does not mean they were not built on a recognized male value system. John Martin's recent work on the Shearer's Union in the 1870s indicates that large numbers of men could and did organize at this time.<sup>40</sup> Men may have travelled alone between jobs, but they were not often alone on the job. As Phillips points out, the nature of much of the work in the rural sector required group effort. Such relationships between men may have been short-term but that does not mean that they were not intense.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than a model for the entire Pakeha population, I believe Fairburn's atomization thesis is most relevant to a certain section of the population: young, single, manual working men, who moved around in search of work and improved opportunities. A case can be made that these men were not atoms but members of a distinctive masculine culture; a culture which did not view drunkenness and petty violence in the same way that local magistrates did. Different cultures have different norms. Because Fairburn largely ignores cultures in his study, he does not take account of this possibility.

I have discussed Fairburn's atomization thesis in terms of its male bias and its less than adequate refutation of the idea of local community in the nineteenth century. One further test can be made of it. As Ward indicated, Fairburn's chronology also needs to be questioned and challenged.

There is a strong sense of change in *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*. The years 1850-80 are Fairburn's main decades of atomization; but he argues that

38 *ibid.*, p.147.

39 *ibid.*, p.199.

40 John E. Martin, 'The Struggle for £1. The Emergence of the Shearer's Union in the 1870s', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24, 1 (1990), pp.56-73.

41 Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male — A History*, Auckland, 1987, pp.26-7.

even up to the turn of the century New Zealand still had a demographic imbalance, a third of the population still lived in rural isolation, there had been little improvement to the roads or other avenues of communication, the population was more geographically mobile than it would be in the period 1900-1939, and women, children and manual workers were still excluded from most forms of voluntary organizations. He says that in 1900 'a large, bondless element in society still existed'.<sup>42</sup> But for the period of the 1920s to the 1960s he claims that all of this had changed. By then 'social organisation can best be characterised as a large collection of powerful and intimate local communities'.<sup>43</sup> According to Fairburn's chronology, the atomization of the nineteenth century gave way to local community by the early twentieth century.

Fairburn's periodization needs to be recalculated. The nature of the changes in local areas over this period are also questionable. Rather than a change from atomization to local community I would argue for a continuity of local community experiences. However, I think there were changes within and between the gendered cultures of Pakeha society during this time, and that this accounts for the decrease in 'chaos' from the frontier period.

To demonstrate continuity rather than change in local community, we need to look again at Fairburn's indicators of atomization and apply them to the twentieth century. Fairburn leads us to believe that from the 1920s Pakeha society settled down, both literally and figuratively. The population became less transient, kinship ties became more dense, neighbourly bonds strengthened and people joined voluntary organizations in greatly increased numbers.<sup>44</sup> Yet if we look at Taradale during this time we do not see a great settling down in the overall population. We see instead a change in the gendered cultures within the local community, not a change from atomization to local community.

One area where we would expect to see great change is in the transiency rate. Fairburn claims that the period 1850-80 was the most mobile, but that 1880-1900 saw more people move than 1900-39.<sup>45</sup> This claim connects with his idea of the movement away from atomization towards community and helps to explain the decrease in crime statistics. However, my research in Taradale and Pearson's work on Johnsonville lead me to question Fairburn's assumptions. As we have already seen, the populations of Johnsonville and Taradale were very transient in the nineteenth century. But if we look at their transiency rates in the twentieth century there is no marked decrease in their rates of geographical mobility. Fairburn leads us to expect a J curve of increased stability in the population, yet instead there is a continuity of transiency. As the graph indicates, in Johnsonville only 30% of the heads of households remained in the area from 1885-1900; for the decade 1910-20 27% remained. Other decades had a higher rate of persistence: 1900-10 saw 45% remain, 1920-30 41%.<sup>46</sup> The general pattern is not an upward curve of increased stability. The same is true for Taradale. The Taradale data are derived from electoral rolls, but only men have been considered since

42 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.255.

43 *ibid.*, p.268.

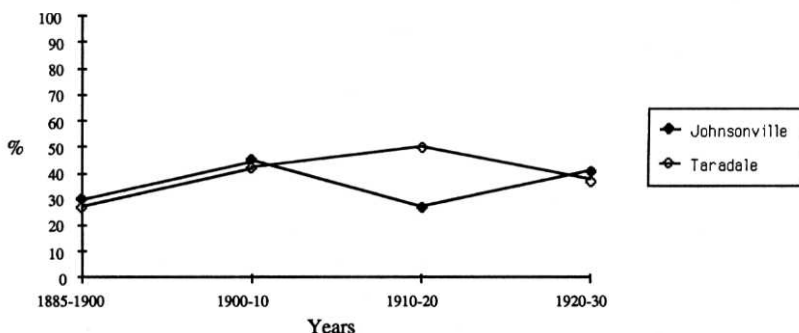
44 *ibid.*, pp.252-3.

45 *ibid.*, pp.128 and 252-3.

46 See Pearson, p.102 for the base numbers.

Pearson used male heads of households to calculate his figures. Elections were not held in the years for which Pearson provides information, so the closest electoral roll has been used. For example, to calculate the figure for 1900-1910, men enrolled in both 1899 and 1911 were counted.<sup>47</sup> These two studies, coupled with the fact that Fairburn gives us no data to back up his assertion about the decrease in transiency, lead me to question further whether geographical mobility should be viewed as an indicator of atomization. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both local areas had a steady core of 30 to 40% of the population who stayed behind. Pearson argues that 'it only took a small number of families to foster a Johnsonville identity',<sup>48</sup> and I would make the same claim for Taradale. Everyone does not have to stay to make a place a community — just enough people with the time, inclination, skills and resources to build up and maintain community infrastructure. It would appear that about the same proportion of the population was staying behind in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than a change from atomization to local community I would argue that this demonstrates more of a continuity of local community.

'Persisters' in Johnsonville and Taradale, 1885-1930 (%)



Geographical mobility is not the only indicator Fairburn uses to argue for atomization in the nineteenth century and against it for the twentieth century. He believes that in the nineteenth century there was a lack of a critical mass to form and maintain organizations, and that Pakeha society was not yet a society of 'joiners'.<sup>49</sup> The implication is that by the 1920s these problems had been

47 The figures for Taradale are

Years	Base Number	Rate of Persistence %
1887-1899	375	27
1899-1911	359	42
1911-1919	602	50
1919-1928	724	37

48 Pearson, p.159.

49 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, pp.183-4.



overcome, and intimate and powerful local communities could and did flourish. Yet if we look at some of the voluntary organizations Fairburn discusses and dismisses in the nineteenth century, do we see a marked change in participation rates by the 1920s?

Religious participation is the first area Fairburn considers when discussing the possibility of local community through voluntary organizations. He points out that on average only a quarter of the population usually attended church in the period 1874-96. He contrasts this to the situation in England and Wales 'where the church was the "centre of the community"',<sup>50</sup> and the rate about 12% higher. What he has failed to account for, however, is that among British rural labourers and the urban working class, that is, the type of people who came to New Zealand, church-going involved less than a third of the population.<sup>51</sup> The slight decrease in New Zealand's nineteenth-century figure can at least partly be accounted for by the demographic imbalance, women in both societies being disproportionately represented at church on Sundays.<sup>52</sup> But Fairburn's main point, and my main point of contention, is that by the 1930s three-quarters of all households in 'Littledene' were represented at church every Sunday:<sup>53</sup> in the local community religion is a majority experience, compared to the minority practice of the atomized society. Fairburn accepts Somerset's 'statistic' unquestioningly, yet if he read Somerset closely he would see that only slightly over 300 individuals attended church each Sunday, that is, less than 20% of the population, or lower than the nineteenth-century figure.<sup>54</sup> Fairburn leads us to expect that, like mobility-persistence figures, religious attendance will demonstrate J curve growth. Yet the increase is only slight, and not consistent. In 1874 23% of the population attended church, by 1891 this had risen to 28%, by 1911 it was down to 23% again, and by 1926 had risen to 34%.<sup>55</sup> Two other statistics can be used to demonstrate that nineteenth-century New Zealand was not as lacking in church-centred community as Fairburn maintains, and that the twentieth century situation did not show marked change.

As Fairburn himself points out, at its low point in 1871, over 52% of Pakeha children aged 5-15 attended Sunday school.<sup>56</sup> By 1901 69% attended but by the 1920s attendance was back to the 1870s level.<sup>57</sup> Thus in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century over half of Pakeha children were Sunday school attenders, a mass movement in the way Plunket was later to be. What Fairburn has not grasped is that not only did these

50 *ibid.*, p.178.

51 Jackson, pp.7-8.

52 *ibid.*, pp.25, 73, 117-9, 124.

53 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.178.

54 H.C.D. Somerset, *Littledene; Patterns of Change*, Wellington, 1974, p.52.

55 The figures were arrived at by dividing the number of people attending services by the total population. For 1874 see the 1874 *Census*, Part X, Table IX; for 1891 see the 1896 *Census*, Appendix A, Table XLIII; for 1911 see the 1911 *Census*, Appendix D, Table VII, and for 1926 see the 1926 *Census*, Vol. XV, p.7

56 Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.185.

57 The 1901 figure is from the 1901 *Census*, Part VI, p.287. In 1921 55% of 5-15 year olds attended Sunday School and in 1926 the figure was 56%. See the 1921 *Census*, Appendix B, p.225 and the 1926 *Census*, Vol. XV, p.6.

children have access to a Sunday school, thus questioning his concentration on people living in the 'boo-ay', but they also either desired to attend or were forced to attend by their parents. Either way, we are not dealing with atomized individuals. If children wished to attend and mix with others, they can hardly be viewed as lonesome atoms. If their parents made them attend then their parents were hardly atoms, unaffected by community pressures. Indeed, if attendance at Sunday school is added to church attendance, then perhaps the nineteenth century comes close to the 'Littledene' pattern of three-quarters of families being represented at church each week.

The other statistic the census gives us to consider are the numbers of churches and chapels per head of the population. As a more church-centred community arose we would expect more local communities to build places of worship. Yet in 1874 there was one church or chapel for every 547 people and by 1926 the figure was one per 544 individuals.<sup>58</sup> It would appear that in the nineteenth century local areas were just as prone to build religious centres for their areas as their early twentieth century counterparts. It is astonishing how quickly areas built churches and continued to support them. 'Littledene' had its first church in 1865 and its second in 1866; Johnsonville had a church in the 1840s, and Taradale's first two churches were built in the 1860s.<sup>59</sup> With each church came a committee, constant fund-raising to pay the minister's stipend and pay for church upkeep, socials and bazaars, not to mention religious services. Churches were also one of the few avenues of organized leisure open to women throughout the period. The Mother's Union offered Protestant women regular contact as did temperance movements associated with churches.

Fairburn's idea of a shift from a non-religious atomized society through to a religious, local-community oriented society must, therefore, be treated with caution, and likewise, his other claims concerning a lack of voluntary organizations in the nineteenth century. As he points out, New Zealand's membership rate for friendly societies was much lower than England's; but he ignores the different conditions of the two societies. Not only were the men in New Zealand proportionately younger than their English counterparts, they were also less likely to be married and had greater opportunities in terms of employment. All these factors would lessen the impetus to join an insurance scheme. There was an increase in membership by the 1920s, but it was still less than 25% of all men — nowhere near the 75% 'Littledene' figure Fairburn quotes.<sup>60</sup> Clearly 'Littledene' should not be taken as being representative of the whole society. The increase in attendance was not a reflection of community spirit replacing atomization but rather a reflection of the changing male population. As more men married and as the male population aged, so more would be likely to join lodges. It could be that lodges were seen as a legitimate meeting-place for married men, in the way that the hotel was for single men. As the proportion of men in these different masculine cultures changed so lodges increased in size.

<sup>58</sup> *Census*, 1926, Vol. XV, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> Somerset, p.50; Pearson, p.22. For Taradale see *Taradale Town District Jubilee 1886-1936 Souvenir Booklet*, Napier, 1936, p.23.

<sup>60</sup> Fairburn, *Ideal Society*, p.178. Annual membership figures for friendly societies are reported in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*.

The decrease in the amount of drunkenness and violence can at least partly be accounted for by the decrease in the proportion of the young, single male population. Like churches, lodges seem to have sprung up in local areas at an early stage, and even if they did not survive, they were replaced by other, similar institutions. 'Littledene's' first lodge, the Nil Desperandum branch of Oddfellows established in 1868, was joined by a second branch in 1876.<sup>61</sup> Taradale had Oddfellows from 1871 and Foresters from 1886—two lodges when the electoral roll records only 375 adult men in the area. Rather than a change in the whole society from atomization to local community, I think this evidence indicates changes within masculine cultures. That raises the question as to how feminine cultures were affected.

Fairburn's periodization is not as watertight as one might first imagine. The idea of atomization being replaced by the 1920s with a community-centred society appears to be less than clear cut. But one change which did occur was the quite rapid downturn in rates of drunkenness, violence and litigation. These were the results of atomization, according to Fairburn, and so their decrease would indicate that the atomizing agencies in New Zealand society were no longer operating to such an extent. Yet as we have seen, the society was still geographically mobile, thus lessening the chance for neighbourly bonding, and voluntary organizations, such as the friendly societies, were still not a majority experience. So if the decrease in frontier chaos was not due to the waning of the forces of atomization, what can explain it?

Frontier chaos was largely a male phenomenon; to explain its decrease one must study what was happening to men at this time. The peak of frontier chaos in terms of civil suits, violence and drunkenness largely relates to the gold rush era. As the 1860s gave way to Vogel's immigration in the 1870s, so the chaos began to decrease. The 1860s was definitely the decade for men on the frontier, and they punched and drank and sued their way through it. But then things began to change. For a start, the ratio of males to females in the population was beginning to correct itself—from a low point, with the discovery of gold, of 622 females to 1000 males in 1861 to the post-World War I era, when there were over 900 females for every 1000 males.<sup>62</sup> By 1878 slightly more adult men were married than unmarried and this was a growing trend; by 1926 over two thirds were either married, widowed, divorced or separated. I do not think this indicates the demise of masculine cultures, but I do think it changes the nature of the gendered cultures. It is conceivable that married men had less time or money or inclination to go to the hotel, get drunk and pick a fight. Also, the population was ageing—in 1874 38% of Pakeha males were in the 20-39 age group, by 1926 this group had fallen to 30%. In 1874 only 7% of males were aged 50 or over, by 1926 this had reached 17%.<sup>63</sup> There were proportionately fewer men, more married men and older men. A masculine culture centred on booze and violence was for the young and single. As they decreased as a proportion of the population

61 Somerset, p.39.

62 Phillips, p.7.

63 G. T. Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*, Boston, 1984. For ratios of females to males see p.29; for marital status data see p.72; for age group figures see pp.49-51.

so the chaos they caused decreased. The nature of work these men did also changed; extraction industries and casual labouring became less common. In 1874 32,865 men worked on the gold fields; by 1926 only 8384 men were employed in mining and quarrying. Men who worked in industry or even the growing white collar sector were more regulated than their predecessors on the gold mines or gum fields.

The study of colonial New Zealand must be alert to gender rather than just assuming that women acted and were acted on in the same way as men. I do not think women on the frontier were atomized as Fairburn defines atomization. They were not as geographically mobile as colonial men; they were more likely to have kin in the country, or at least to have established their own family. Women did not turn to drink to escape from frontier loneliness; they did not engage in petty violence or civil litigation in the way that men did. Nor do I accept that all men were atomized. I think the society Fairburn portrays is a reflection of a masculine culture on the frontier — but not the only masculine culture. Certainly there were mobile, kinless, communityless, violent, drunk, litigious men roaming around, but there were also family men and community leaders. Men, and in particular young, single, manual working men were chaotic colonials. Why they were chaotic and why they ceased to be so by the 1920s is not, in my opinion, a story about all of Pakeha society moving from atomization to local community but a story about the changing nature of masculine cultures in New Zealand. If masculine cultures were changing then, given that gender is a relational concept, that would affect feminine cultures. How they were changed as the chaotic colonials became family men awaits further study.

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