2. Sir Keith Hancock: Laying the Foundations, 1959–1962

Ann Moyal

Genesis

The genesis of the idea for a biographical dictionary of Australia lay with the librarian, classicist and scholar of Australian history Laurence (Laurie) Frederic Fitzhardinge (1908–93). A graduate of the universities of Sydney and Oxford, he was, from 1934, a research officer in the Commonwealth National Library, where he immersed himself in the documents of Australia's history. In 1943 he began teaching Australian history at the newly established School of Diplomatic Studies within Canberra University College. Taking up an appointment in 1951 as reader in the sources of Australian history at the young Australian National University, he headed the then small history department in the Institute of Advanced Studies and initiated the training of the first intake of postgraduate students to do their PhDs in Australia.¹ Previously, the ANU Overseas Scholarships scheme had provided funds for ANU people, including Bob Gollan and Ken Inglis, to do their PhDs elsewhere. The ANU intake was a talented coterie, as it proved, of young Australian historians destined for prominent academic careers, including Allan Martin, Eric Fry, Russel Ward, John Tregenza and Michael Roe. As his original ANU title (later converted to reader in Australian history, in the Research School of Social Sciences) suggested, Fitzhardinge was widely read in the Australian historical sources and was aware that, if the study of Australian history was to make headway, there was a clear need to build the sources of biographical knowledge.

Fitzhardinge had first advanced the idea of an Australian dictionary of national biography in 1947, as a team project for the planned Sydney University Press, but no press eventuated. On study leave in Britain later that year, he spent time with the Clarendon Press in Oxford, studying the procedures of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB). Two years later, publication of Percival Serle's two-volume *Dictionary of Australian Biography* (1949) gave zest to his concept and pointed the way to the possibility of a cooperative project.²

1 Robin Gollan, 'Laurence Fitzhardinge 1908–1993', *Proceedings*, vol. 18, 1993 (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1994), pp. 52–4.

2 Percival Serle, *Dictionary of Australian Biography* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1949).

Laurie Fitzhardinge at his home, 1981

Photographer: Alec Bolton, National Library of Australia, an14465757-1

At the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) Congress, held in Brisbane in 1951, Fitzhardinge publicly canvassed the idea of a national biographical dictionary. Responding to interest from a number of historians who were becoming alert to its need, he began to develop an embryonic national 'index' of names and, in 1954, employed Patience (Pat) Tillyard (later Mrs Wardle) as an assistant in the history department to work on it.³

Sir Keith Hancock arrives at Canberra airport in 1957 to take up his appointment as director of RSSS. Left to right: Laurie Fitzhardinge, Mark Oliphant, Keith Hancock and Leslie Melville; Ross Hohnen is in the background

ANU Archives, ANUA225-511-6

Hancock's return to Australia from Britain in 1957, as founding director of the RSSS and professor of history, gave new impetus to Fitzhardinge's idea. The question of an Australian dictionary was raised as a departmental project before Fitzhardinge departed on sabbatical leave that year. The dictionary project now fell into Hancock's lively grasp. As a former member of the central committee of Britain's *DNB*, he was experienced in national dictionary matters and saw Fitzhardinge's biographical initiative as 'a work of fundamental importance to the future history of the Dictionary'.⁴ In 1957, shortly after his arrival, and acting, in Ken Inglis's view, as the archbishop of Australian historians, he called a conference in Canberra at which he raised the biographical concept.⁵

4 'BR/ADB—Organisation and Development, 1957/8/-59', box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

5 K. S. Inglis, 'The Foundation Chairman', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 12 (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1990), pp. xi–xii.

Fitzhardinge's 'Paper Prepared for the Conference of Historians 24–27 August 1957', setting down his 'sources of information for methods of inclusion' and adding a description of the project to be built from his existing 'index', further shaped the idea of a central source for the sharing of biographical information, to be located in Canberra.⁶ It attracted considerable support from State university historians, among them John La Nauze and Geoffrey Serle from the University of Melbourne, who made subsequent inputs.⁷ It also fired the enthusiasm of the independent Sydney historian and biographer Malcolm Ellis, who was invited to attend. In April 1958 Fitzhardinge responded to the enthusiasm with a two-part document outlining the plans emerging from the conference suggestions and putting the 'register' on a more systematic footing.⁸ Central to this were the questions: was the register method satisfactory; was the venture worth continuing; and should a national dictionary of biography—or, alternatively, a concise dictionary of biography—be undertaken?

Fitzhardinge saw the index's 4500 cards as essentially a basic tool available for reference in Canberra directly or through postal inquiry, and 'in occasional monograph publication'. On the second point, he wrote:

On the question of the 'D.N.B.', I myself think that the long-range objective should be the organization, with the co-operation of the other universities and of other specialists, but under the auspices of the A.N.U., of a full scale Dictionary, on the lines of the D.N.B., the Dictionary of American Biography, and the projected Dictionary of Canadian Biography. This would be a big undertaking, in which perhaps the Social Sciences Research Council and other bodies might assist financially, but I think we should be prepared to take responsibility for its planning and organization.⁹

Envisaging that such a work would cover the period up to 1939 and be completed in 10 years, Fitzhardinge had early mooted the idea of an 'ultimate' dictionary of national biography for Australia; however, as an old man, he acknowledged that Hancock 'had a dynamism and energy, and immense reputation and great charisma. He was able to get it off the ground on a scale and in a way which I could never have been able to do'.¹⁰

6 'Paper Prepared for the Conference of Historians', in folder 'BR/ADB—Organisation and Development, 1957/8/-59', box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA. Robin Gollan, 'Canberra History Conference', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 8, no. 29 (1957).

7 'Report on ANU Biographical Card Index and the Possibility of a Concise DNB' (n.d., c. October 1957), box 57, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

8 'Biographical Project' (19 February 1958), box 57, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

9 'BR/ADB—Organisation and Development, 1957/8/-59', box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

10 Laurie Fitzhardinge, Interview by Barbara Ross, 4–26 March 1987, TRC 2159, transcript, NLA.

Ann Moyal, 1960s

By courtesy of Ann Moyal

What emerges from the documentary evidence is the gradual nature of the evolution of the biographical enterprise in a busy research department that consisted of Hancock, Fitzhardinge and the labour historian Robin Gollan. All were deeply engaged in their own research projects and in the supervision of an expanding corps of postgraduate students. It was into this environment that, from Europe, as Mrs Ann Mozley, I sent my overture to Hancock inquiring about a possible position in his department.

A first-class honours graduate in history from Sydney University, I had been working for the previous four years as personal research assistant for Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian-born newspaper proprietor and politician.¹¹ But after nine years in Britain, I determined that it was time for me to return to Australia and dispatched inquiries to both Hancock and Jim Davidson, director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, asking about possible openings at the ANU. Two letters arrived simultaneously from the ANU, one from Davidson offering me a postgraduate scholarship in Pacific history and the other from Hancock inviting me to join him to work on a proposed national dictionary of biography.

I had met Hancock in England early in 1949 when I visited him at the British cabinet office in London where he was editing the British official World War II histories. I was hoping that he might offer me some work. This small, inquiring man was to have a singular influence on my life. While unable to offer me a temporary research position, he helped to secure me a post with Nicholas Mansergh, working on the *British Survey of Commonwealth Affairs* at Chatham House. He also put my name on his list of possible researchers where, four years later, Beaverbrook's archivist, who was looking for someone for Beaverbrook to employ, picked it out. Thus, in 1958, I was known to Hancock. Attracted by his reputation and the pioneering nature of the biography project, I declined the scholarship and chose the dictionary.

Arriving in Canberra in November, I was met at the train by a ragged Fitzhardinge, his toes poking through his shoes. Talking volubly, he whisked me away to his farm at Narrabundah and on to University House. On my first morning at the history department, then lodged in the old Canberra Community Hospital building, Pat Wardle sat me down and asked me to fill in a card for the Biographical Register to see if I could manage it. I wondered mildly if it might be 'downhill all the way'.¹² In the event, the creative 'founding days' of the ADB would prove a dynamic and constructive episode in my career.

11 Described in Ann Moyal, *Breakfast with Beaverbrook. Memoirs of an Independent Woman* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995).

12 Mozley was appointed a research assistant in November 1958 with 'main responsibility' for 'the organization of the Register of Australia Biography and preliminary work towards a Dictionary of Australian Biography': *ANU News*, 11, no. 1 (August 1959), p. 27.

Keith Hancock, 1948

ANU Archives, ANUA225-511-4

The *ADB*'s first offices were in the old Canberra Community Hospital, which became part of the ANU. Keith Hancock had the room on the left of the front entrance and Douglas Pike had the room on the right of the entrance

Photographer: Brian Wimborne, *ADB* archives

Foundations

Sir Keith Hancock's letter inviting me to join the dictionary project has not survived, but writing later to the vice-chancellor, he recommended that I be promoted to a research fellow dedicated to the dictionary project: 'I have chosen her specifically for this job ... I should want to keep her until the complete Dictionary is published, say, ten years from now'.¹³ Certainly my appointment at the ANU as a research assistant proved a trigger to action. Defined as 'partly academic and partly administrative' and designed both for work on the Biographical Register and for developing initiatives for the dictionary, it inaugurated a series of developments that required Fitzhardinge, Gollan and myself to implement some early structures and processes. Malcolm Ellis, enthused by the historians' conference, had called on Hancock in Canberra in mid 1958 with the proposal that work on an Australian dictionary might 'be done in chronological sections rather than as a whole'—a suggestion that was put fruitfully on hold. In December 1958, with personnel now to hand, Hancock, for his part, started to consult with members of all the history departments in the Australian universities with the aim of linking them cooperatively to the venture.¹⁴

¹³ W. K. Hancock to Sir Leslie Melville (22 July 1959), box 70, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

¹⁴ 'W. K. Hancock Files—Organization', box 70, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

A doodle, thought to be by ADB staffer Jim Gibbney, of a possible coat of arms for the ADB

ADB archives

His judgment was shrewd. Tensions had grown since the national university's creation between its well-funded RSSS and the impecunious State teaching departments. Hancock considered that, as we could now implement the plan, 'we should so far as possible, give the impression of going ahead with work that other people want us to do, and not merely pushing ahead on our own'.¹⁵

Accordingly, as a first step, a 'Memorandum of a Dictionary of National Biography', initialled by 'W. K. H.', 'L. F. F.' and 'A. M.' (Hancock, Fitzhardinge and myself) was sent out in February 1959 under Hancock's covering hand, giving details of the contents of a 'National Register' (later called the Biographical Register), which was already in use. The first specialist monograph of biographical notes, by A. W. Martin and P. Wardle, *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1856–1901*, developed as a pilot study, was with the ANU Press. As the memorandum indicated, while the question and problem of the dictionary were long term, the ANU department of history would accept responsibility for the register and the monograph pilot scheme, pending the time when 'more formal machinery for collaboration will probably become necessary'. Meanwhile, it was thought that, for a time, conference by correspondence would prove a fruitful source of criticism, and State colleagues were urged 'to advise, exhort and warn us'.¹⁶

They did. James Auchmuty, representing Newcastle University College and the University of New South Wales, accepted the present plans as 'of great historical importance from the point of view of preservation of significant historical

¹⁵ 'Biographical Register and Australian Dictionary of Biography Development and Procedures', and also W. K. Hancock to L. F. Fitzhardinge, Dr R. Gollan and Mrs A. Mozley, requesting such an overview (18 December 1958), box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

¹⁶ W. K. H., L. F. F. and A. M., 'Memorandum on a Dictionary of National Biography' (February 1959), box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

data and as a sound interim measure'. He looked forward to the 'unlikely day when some organization or editorial board would empower them to undertake the organization of a dictionary which will become the work of a great mass of historical scholars in this country'.¹⁷ John La Nauze at Melbourne also temporised about the foreseeable future of a dictionary but made suggestions on register items, as did Geoffrey Serle.¹⁸ Other history professors also recorded their willingness to share information and to encourage their postgraduate students to supply biographical data from their theses.¹⁹

Initially, Hancock had conceded much to Fitzhardinge's register concerns. Reflecting later on the early history of the dictionary project in 'Retrospect and Prospect', he recalled, '[w]ith me this phase lasted one year. It was not until late 1958 or early 1959 that we really got going'.²⁰ He now seized on the cooperative responses from the universities as a go-ahead for formulating definite plans for moving the dictionary project forward. In response to the university departments' and public libraries' 'criticisms and comments', I presented a seminar to the Department of History in April 1959 considering the difficulties and outlining a plan 'for moving ahead with the long term project—the production of a Dictionary of Australian Biography', to elicit colleagues' comments on organisation, finance and editorial policy.²¹ Hancock began to settle his plans on a small central steering committee within the history department to consider organisation and finance, and a committee of the State universities, drawn in the first instance from members of the history departments, to be responsible for advising on the selection of subjects and contributors. He envisaged a 'biographical centre' with a research fellow and assistants.

The provisional editorial committee of the dictionary, comprising Hancock, Davidson, Manning Clark, Fitzhardinge, Gollan and myself, first met, under Hancock's chairmanship, on 19 June 1959.²² It defined its objectives as 'the publication of the Dictionary within ten years' and discussed three different methods of approach

1. publication of the work in strictly alphabetical arrangement on the model of the *Dictionary of National Biography*
2. publication in chronological order, the method adopted by the *Canadian Dictionary of Biography*
3. arrangement by subject headings.

17 'Organization and Development', box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

18 Geoffrey Serle, 'Report on ANU Biographical Card Index and the Possibility of a Concise DNB' (n.d., before 4 November 1957), 'Suggested projects' file, box 57, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

19 W. K. Hancock to all professors of history in Australia (7 October 1959); see, for example, John McManners to W. K. Hancock (14 October 1959), box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

20 Keith Hancock, 'ADB: Retrospect and Prospect' (18 June 1963), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

21 A. Mozley, 'The Project of a National Register and a Dictionary of Australian Biography', a work-in-progress seminar to the Department of History, RSSS, ANU (23 April 1959), box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

22 Minutes, Provisional ADB Editorial Committee meeting (19 June 1959), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

While no decision was reached, the Canadian ‘chronological’ model was recommended. To make a start, two working parties were appointed as pilot schemes, one on the period of the naval governors (1788–1809), and the second relating to the Pacific region. The history department, the meeting agreed, would carry the financial burden of the dictionary for some time.²³

The provisional editorial committee held its second meeting on 1 October 1959 to discuss the organisational plan that Ellis had devised and presented to Hancock in August.²⁴ Topped by a designated ‘Board of Control’ of four prominent men drawn from commerce, finance and the professions, and headed by a distinguished citizen, such as chief justice Sir Owen Dixon, it prescribed substantial money from government and private sources, an administrative office with a director, an administrative editor, the establishment of State working parties, a national advisory panel of State representatives, and the commissioning and payment of authors. At this meeting, it was agreed that the provisional editorial committee should be formally constituted as the Editorial Board, which would be the central body of the dictionary, located at the ANU, and ‘available for meetings at short notice’.²⁵ Ellis’s ‘tycoons’ (as Hancock called them) were set aside, and academics, Hancock, Clark, Davidson, Fitzhardinge and Gollan, and also Mozley, were named as permanent members of the board. Members of a national committee would be included on a geographical basis. Editors of successive volumes would be invited to join the board for the currency of their volumes. Hancock wrote enthusiastically to Ellis: ‘I think that the proposed scheme, if it wins a majority approval, will work. Something like it worked very well in my thirty-volume series of War Histories’.²⁶ Ellis’s suggestion of one of his younger friends as a possible editor was tactfully declined. The concept of a chronological basis for dictionary entries was endorsed. At the time, Hancock attributed ‘breakneck speed’ on organisation, content and publication plans to ‘the zeal of Malcolm Ellis’; while I, too, found ‘Ellis’s zeal ... compelling’, we discussed the ‘overcomplicated’ plans and ‘difficulties’.²⁷

Meanwhile, Hancock dispatched letters to the key representatives of university history departments—John Ward and A. G. L. (Alan) Shaw at Sydney University, Gordon Greenwood at Queensland, Frank Crowley at Western Australia, Douglas Pike at Adelaide, Auchmuty at Newcastle and Malcolm McCrae at Hobart—inviting them to come to Canberra to discuss the formation of the National Advisory Committee. Simultaneously, he sought the formalisation of

23 ‘ADB Editorial Board, Agenda, Report and Minutes, 1959–61’, box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

24 M. H. E. [Malcolm Ellis] to W. K. Hancock, ‘Notes on the Suggested Design of Organisation’ (n.d.), and Malcolm Ellis to W. K. Hancock (25 August 1959), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

25 Minutes, ADB Editorial Committee meeting (1 October 1959), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

26 W. K. Hancock to M. H. Ellis (13 October 1959), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

27 W. K. H. to Mrs Mozley (n.d.), and, in reply, Mozley to Hancock (30 August 1959), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

the Editorial Board as an 'instrument of the university', authorised to make agreements with editors and contributors in the university's name from the ANU vice-chancellor.²⁸

Early in 1959, I had made an exploratory trip to Adelaide and Perth, where the ANZAAS conference was in session, to, as Hancock put it, 'make my face known'. I did. Involved in a car over-spin on the road at Tailem Bend, near Adelaide, I arrived with my face littered with cuts. In both capitals, I met with the professors of history, specialists in Australian history and interested members from other institutions, including the State archives and libraries. It proved a most lively time. As the prospective dictionary's administrator, I made direct connections with likely key participants and found a remarkable sense of commitment to the dictionary idea. I noted on my return to Canberra that 'the overall response was one of wide and genuine approval of the plan'. Amid expressions of surprise that we had progressed so far, academics and librarians endorsed the need for a 'full scale Dictionary of Australian Biography', and judged it as 'the rightful task' of a national university.²⁹

The outcome was immediate action. In Adelaide I met with a provisional State working party, instantly convened under Douglas Pike as chair and including Ken Inglis and Harold Finnis. Hugh Stretton offered a strong commitment of help. This group at once drew up an initial list of inclusions for the period 1851–1900, and recommended that articles be 'candid and unbiased' and drawn widely from contributors to offset any 'progenitor' emphasis in that State's selection. In Perth, equally positive, Frank Crowley called together a provisional WA working party, consisting of the government archivist, Mollie Lukis, Geoffrey Bolton (a recent research fellow from the ANU, who was attending the ANZAAS conference) and myself to discuss the State's situation. Crowley intended to add Alexandra Hasluck to the group immediately. A plan also shaped there for a second Biographical Register monograph; G. C. Bolton and Ann Mozley, *The Western Australia Legislature 1870–1930*, was published in 1961.³⁰

On the way back to Canberra, I visited Hobart and invited a working party to meet under McCrae's chairmanship at the University of Tasmania. Members included the State archivist, Robert Sharman, the journalist and former clerk of the House of Representatives Frank Green, Janet MacCrae (research assistant in the history department) and the president of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Robert Garvie. The Tasmanian situation was unusual. While its members had a declared interest in the period 1788–1850, none had specialist

28 'Organization and Development' file, box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

29 Ann Mozley, 'Report of My Journey to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Hobart, August–Sept 1959', box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

30 G. C. Bolton and Ann Mozley, *The Western Australian Legislature, 1870–1930* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1961).

knowledge and would rely on suggestions for inclusion from New South Wales and Victoria. It was anticipated that a different membership would deal with the next period (1851–1900).

In Melbourne, Serle made thoughtful criticisms and suggestions for membership of a Victorian working party to work on the first volume. He urged, in these early days of Australian historical research, ‘flinging the net wide in order to bring in good people’ to write articles, including members of historical societies and ‘first class schoolmasters’.³¹

The formation of working parties was fundamental to the dictionary’s advance. In a period when Australian historiography was only slowly beginning to gather depth and range, the working parties were conceived as the essential mechanism for an Australia-wide participation in the dictionary’s growth. The first working party on the period of the early governors had begun its meetings in early August 1959. Attended by Hancock, Fitzhardinge, Gollan, Clark, Ellis and myself, it laid down some specific policies. On Ellis’s suggestion, it agreed to extend the scope of the first volume from 1788–1809 to 1788–1825 (eventually two volumes would cover the period 1788–1850). It recommended that experts should be set up in specific fields wherever they might be conveniently located (arts, science, military and the Pacific were cases in point) to draw up lists of names for inclusion, which would be referred in the future to the State working parties to circulate for criticism and advice.

Also at this meeting (although this concept does not appear to have been formally recorded) the notion of including people in the dictionary in a chronological period on the basis of their *floruit*—the period of their main contribution to Australian life—was set in train. It was then, too, in my recollection, that we accepted the distinctive view that Hancock’s favoured principle of ‘span’ should be our guideline in the selection of names for inclusion and that, while we should cover all strands of Australian life from governors, chief justices, politicians, administrators and bureaucrats through to industrialists, artists, clergymen, scientists, writers, surveyors and engineers, we should also include some scoundrels and colourful vagabonds. Inclusions should also embrace those who, like Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Anthony Trollope and Mark Twain, had visited Australia and contributed knowledge about the country.³²

My reconnaissance around the States had yielded a consensus on working party approaches and methodologies, which I would later carry to the universities of New England and Queensland. These were incorporated into ‘A Manual of Instructions for Working Parties’, setting length, style and content of dictionary

31 Mozley, ‘Report of My Journey to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Hobart’.

32 Ann Mozley, ‘The Australian Dictionary of Biography’, *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 9, no. 35 (1960), pp. 313–14.

entries. Articles were to have a minimum of 500 words and a maximum of 6000, while major articles would fall between 2000 and 4000 words. They were to be 'factual, precise and unbiased' but with critical appraisal and evocation of character and atmosphere. It was agreed that contributors should be unpaid according to the practice of Australian scholarly journals. The dictionary of biography, as a national enterprise, belonged to that class.³³ The contacts I made personally with librarians and archivists in the States also fertilised work and the planning of shared resources for the Biographical Register.

Hancock, with his rare skill for building bridges between colleagues, had received positive responses from the history professors for his plan of a national advisory panel or committee within the dictionary structure and their agreement to be the representatives of their State. The one exception was Gordon Greenwood. Replying from the University of Queensland in December 1959, he expressed the view that in his department the younger staff members had their own careers to make rather than turning to this new venture and that 'the structure of the organization should give them more regional credit for their work than would appear likely under the proposed scheme of organization'. He felt that the national advisory committee was 'a somewhat functionless body with little real influence' and should either change places with the Editorial Board or be merged with it. While he considered that the executive function should belong to the smaller group, for example, the Editorial Board, where the primacy of the ANU would be recognised, he felt strongly that 'the formulation of general lines of policy ... should be a function of a nationally constituted group'. Greenwood knew from my visit that the general proposals had received 'enthusiastic endorsement' elsewhere but he argued that Queensland was 'perhaps the most difficult state' owing to its size, dispersion of population and because 'there had been so little serious historical published work'.³⁴ Later, he warned Hancock, '[w]e will do nothing for the ANU. But there is nothing we will not do with the ANU'.³⁵ He agreed, however, to serve on the National Committee and his intervention proved crucial.

The far-flung National Committee, as it now became known, was to meet annually but conduct its business otherwise by correspondence. This arena fell to me. As the assistant editor, I was from the outset a member of the National Committee and the Editorial Board.

33 ADB, Working Party Procedures (3 November 1959), boxes 31 and 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

34 Gordon Greenwood reply to Sir Keith Hancock (17 December 1959), box 67, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

35 W. K. Hancock, 'The Australian Dictionary of Biography', presentation to the ANU Council (12 April 1962), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA, p. 6.

National collaboration and the Ellis interlude

Throughout these events, Malcolm Ellis was assuming a growing presence in dictionary affairs. Born in Queensland in 1890, the son of a storekeeper and itinerant fettler, Ellis had won a scholarship to Brisbane Grammar School. He had risen through journalism in Brisbane, Sydney and London to become, in 1933, a special feature writer and columnist ('Ek Dum') for the *Bulletin*. The author of biographies of Lachlan Macquarie, Francis Greenway and John Macarthur,³⁶ Ellis was a respected writer and historian, president of the Australasian Pioneers Club and of the Royal Australian Historical Society, and a man of wide and active contacts.

From the outset Hancock saw Ellis's independent involvement from outside academia as an imaginative addition to the dictionary's evolution. This brought Ellis frequently to Canberra, where he stayed at University House, enjoying the Oxbridge rituals of 'high table', and where, as a resident, I saw much of him. His round, currant-bun face glowed with contentment. Early in November 1959, with Manning Clark, he was formally endorsed by the provisional Editorial Board as a joint editor of Volume 1 and as such became a member of the board. Yet, as we were soon to learn, he had a volatile temperament and, holding no degree, was touchily suspicious of academe.

36 M. H. Ellis, *Lachlan Macquarie: Some Aspects of His Life* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1942); M. H. Ellis, *Lachlan Macquarie: His Life, Adventures and Times, with Reference Notes and Bibliography* (Sydney: Dymocks, 1947); M. H. Ellis, *Francis Greenway: His Life and Times* (Sydney: Shepherd Press, 1949); M. H. Ellis, *John Macarthur* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955).

Malcolm Ellis was one of the first recipients of an honorary doctorate conferred by the University of Newcastle, in 1966

University of Newcastle Library, P041

The Australian dictionary project had been launched in the belief that cooperative national scholarship and interest could compensate for the lack of external funding. Certainly we looked with some envy at other national dictionaries—Britain's *DNB*, funded by Oxford University Press; *The Dictionary of American Biography*, brought out under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies; and the recently established *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, about to be launched with a handsome bequest of \$1 million. But, as Hancock later summed up: 'With a skeleton staff, limited funds and the enthusiastic co-operation of people all over Australia, the work began'.³⁷

Plans for publication had occupied our discussions as early as April 1959, when a kite was flown to the Oxford Clarendon Press and the virtues of the major Australian presses were examined.³⁸ On 29 October 1959, a special meeting of the provisional Editorial Board was called to meet George Ferguson of the Sydney publisher Angus & Robertson, which had recently completed publication of the *Australian Encyclopedia*. Encouraged by Ellis, Angus & Robertson had offered an expression of interest. The meeting, which Hancock, Fitzhardinge, Clark, Gollan, Ellis and I attended, concluded with a decision to accept the Angus & Robertson offer if, as anticipated, it was formally made with sample pages and dummies.³⁹ I visited the press in Sydney. At the same time, Hancock wrote to the vice-chancellor, suggesting that the Editorial Board be set up on a basis whereby it would make agreements with editors, contributors and voluntary consultants in the name of the ANU. The copyright of the work, he assumed, would be vested in the university and 'whoever may publish'.⁴⁰

37 F. Alexander, A. B. Gibson, M. Gowing and R. Gollan, 'Hancock. Some Reminiscences', *Historical Studies*, 13, no. 51 (1968), pp. 229–306.

38 Mozley, 'The Project of a National Register and a Dictionary of Australian Biography', p. 8.

39 M. H. Ellis to A. Mozley (19 November 1959), on details of proposal with Angus & Robertson and arranging for Mozley to visit the press in Sydney; Mozley to Ellis (8 December 1959), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

40 Minutes, ADB Editorial Board meeting (1 October 1959), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA. W. K. Hancock to John Ward (5 November 1959), discussing his memo to Sir Leslie Melville, box 66, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

Jim Davidson, professor of Pacific history, ANU, was a founding member of the *ADB* Editorial Board

ANU archives, ANUA225-297, 1973

While we awaited a specific follow-up from Angus & Robertson, Melbourne University Press (MUP) indicated their keen interest in the project and, in December 1959, sought informal discussions. Their proposal, outlined by the publisher, Gwyn James, gave more detailed provisions than any yet received from Angus & Robertson.⁴¹ Accordingly, the provisional Editorial Board, to which the ANU registrar, Ross Hohnen, and Leicester Webb, chair of the university's publication committee, had been added, met on 28 January 1960 to discuss the position. Ellis did not attend. While the board noted that MUP's overture had created a situation 'not anticipated by the Board in October' and that Angus & Robertson 'were entitled to very real consideration', no conclusion was reached and the matter was referred to the publication committee to report back. Ellis's absence was particularly regretted.⁴²

In February 1960 Hancock received Ellis's first threat of resignation, over the decision to open negotiations with MUP, but, by swift action, he dissuaded him from doing so. Both Hancock and I were soon enmeshed in problems that loomed from Ellis's ingrained disposition to dominate and a temperament entirely unsympathetic to the maxim 'never resign; wait until you're sacked'. During his three years with the dictionary, he resigned no less than six times before the seventh throw brought him down.⁴³ In the event, on 8 April 1960, the provisional Editorial Board accepted the recommendation of the ANU publication committee to publish with MUP. Thereafter Webb, as chairman of the publication committee, became a member of the dictionary's central board, which was entrusted with dealing directly on all publishing matters with the publisher.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly the critical highlight of dictionary development was the conference of the National Committee and the Editorial Board held in Canberra on 23–24 April 1960, which marked a crowning national consolidation of dictionary affairs. Under Hancock's chairmanship, it fused the Editorial Board with its permanent membership of Hancock, Clark, Davidson, Fitzhardinge, Gollan, Hohnen, Webb, Ellis and myself, with the State representatives John Ward, Greenwood, Auchmuty, Crowley, Pike and Russel Ward (representing the University of New England), La Nauze representing Serle, and A. G. L. Shaw, who was visiting Canberra from the University of Sydney. La Nauze and Shaw were promptly appointed members of the National Committee. The minutes

41 Ann Mozley to Malcolm Ellis (16 December 1959), about MUP's proposal; see also (25 January, 2 February 1960), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

42 Minutes, *ADB* Editorial Board meeting (28 January 1960), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

43 Chairman's Notes for *ADB* Editorial Board meeting (9 November 1961), 'Personal Notes, W. K. H. 5/12/61', box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

44 Ann Mozley to W. K. Hancock, 'Chronology of Publishing Arrangements' (22 June 1960), box 66, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

affirmed that the conference marked 'a rearrangement and renaming of the existing constitutional framework ... [that it] might more accurately reflect the national character of the work of the Dictionary'.⁴⁵

The function of the newly arranged joint organisation was to deal with all matters of broad policy and procedure, including working parties, volume priorities, criteria for inclusion and instructions to contributors. The Editorial Board, made up predominantly of representatives of the ANU, retained its power to appoint editors, approve all financial proposals and make decisions on matters of publication. It would also carry out the executive tasks of the National Committee, which conducted its consultations by correspondence apart from its yearly meeting. Greenwood's firm representations for a national body with full decision-making powers had triumphed. As Hancock later acknowledged, 'we all owe him a great debt'.⁴⁶

The April meeting of the National Committee was ready for action. Formally endorsing the decision to publish the dictionary in chronological slabs, it recommended that work on the second period (1851–90) should begin at once and that the question of appointing editors for these and later volumes covering 1891–1920 should be settled in the immediate future. The meeting also agreed, 'with reluctance', to abandon the title 'Dictionary of Australian Biography', already pre-empted by Percival Serle's two volumes, and to accept the alternative title *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.⁴⁷ The ADB was officially established!

We entered into a new epoch in ADB affairs. Hancock's wife, Theadon, died in March 1960 and he left Canberra for eight months at the end of July to take up a position as fellow of All Souls, Oxford.⁴⁸ Geoffrey Sawyer of the RSSS law department succeeded him as the ADB's interim chairman. The ADB archives attest to the constantly expanding web of correspondence and consultation that formed the basis of this Australia-wide enterprise. These processes of communication fell to me, as its assistant editor, and, working through the records to write this chapter, I was startled by its size and range and the myriad typescripts of those formative days that reflect my self-taught, far from perfect typing skills! According to Hancock:

We went ahead with determination but also with patience. The responsibility for planning has been put upon us, but we realised that in this national enterprise our plans for it would come to nothing unless

45 Minutes, Conference of National Advisory Panel and ADB Editorial Board (23–24 April 1960), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

46 W. K. Hancock, 'Retrospect and Prospect', box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

47 Minutes, Conference of National Advisory Panel and ADB Editorial Board (23–24 April 1960), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

48 'Theaden: Portrait of a Marriage', in Jim Davidson, *A Three-Cornered Life: The Historian W. K. Hancock* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), pp. 421–56.

they were firmly grounded upon national support. Consultation and discussion were fundamental. At every stage, we submitted our plans to our colleagues in the Australian Universities.⁴⁹

During his absence, Hancock remained connected to *ADB* affairs through a problem that continued as a dominant feature of these establishment days and made serious calls on patience and time. Central to the problem was Ellis's refusal to work within the cooperative processes established between editors, working parties and the Editorial Board.

In June 1960, alert to Ellis's political antipathy to Manning Clark—Ellis, in a resignation letter to Hancock in June 1960, had described Clark as a 'crypto-communist'—the board had accepted the proposal to separate their joint editorship and to give Ellis Volume 1 and Clarke Volume 2.⁵⁰ Early that year the chairman of the NSW Working Party, John Ward, notified Hancock that 'there seems no prospect whatever that he [Ellis] will work with us in what I am sure was originally intended as a partnership of editors and Working Parties'.⁵¹ Passing through Sydney, Hancock met Ward and sent me word that 'we both believe our gains are likely to outweigh our anxieties. M.E. is still the best editor for Vol 1, as far at least as knowledge is the qualification'.⁵² From the outset, Hancock had set himself the task of maintaining harmonious relations with this informed but quarrelsome member of the team. He hoped that Ellis 'would gradually get used to academic habits of discussion and decision. But he didn't'.⁵³ As time went on and tensions continued to disturb working party progress in Sydney, the blue air letters that fluttered to my box from Hancock at Oxford reflected his attempt to grapple with the problem at a distance. In November 1960, he wrote me:

I think it very desirable if possible to retain Mr Ellis, but not at *any* price. The Board may fairly ask the Editor to spread the work within reason. I think it should be prepared to raise matters such as this courteously and firmly in my absence. We can concede a good deal to an original personality.⁵⁴

49 Hancock, 'Formation of the Australian Dictionary of Biography', box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

50 W. K. Hancock to M. Ellis (27 June 1960), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA. For a broader consideration of Ellis's views about Clark, see Andrew Moore, "'History without facts': M. H. Ellis, Manning Clark and the Origins of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 85, no. 2 (1999), pp. 71–84.

51 See Malcolm Ellis to A. Mozley (18 September 1961); Note from Professor John Ward attached to NSW Working Party List (18 September 1961), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

52 W. K. Hancock to A. Mozley (Private collection).

53 W. K. Hancock to Malcolm Ellis (3 October 1961); Chairman's Notes for *ADB* Editorial Board meeting (9 November 1961), 'Personal Notes, W. K. H. 5/12/61', box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

54 Hancock to Mozley (November 1960), Moyal private collection, cited in Moyal, *Breakfast with Beaverbrook*, p. 142.

Manning Clark jointly edited Volume 2 of the *ADB* and was a member of the Editorial Board until 1990

ANU archives, ANUA 225-222, 1977

I had some sympathy with Hancock's desire to retain the independent historian on a long and encouraging lead; academic historians could be given to loftiness. But at the centre of affairs at headquarters, attitudes hardened, and, as a member of the NSW Working Party, I wrote to Hancock in November:

Everything really depends on a decision that would ultimately be yours, whether Mr Ellis's knowledge, zeal and speed, and the quality of the volume he might produce (of which he himself would probably write 70 per cent) outweigh all the hazards and disadvantages of trying to work with him along normal lines.⁵⁵

In correspondence with Ward, Hancock agreed that he had misgivings over Volume 1 being 'the collected papers of Malcolm Ellis'. Ellis would give the dictionary 'a better start if he would spread the authorship more widely'.⁵⁶ Later that month, in a further letter, I put on record:

The salient thing that emerges from going through the Dictionary correspondence since the beginning of this year is the number of conciliatory letters that we have all written to Ellis, and the pains we have taken to go along with him. One might, with a detached eye, see him as a bully; it is hardly as deliberate as that; he is thoroughly disorganized, and, of course, with academics, insecure.⁵⁷

A different picture of achievement with Period 2 began to emerge. We had moved ahead in laying the ground plan for the volumes covering the period 1851–90 with the appointment of three 'provisional editors'—Greenwood, Ken Cable of the University of Sydney history department and Geoffrey Serle—with Gollan as convenor. I wrote to Hancock:

The Dictionary has gathered pace. The New South Wales Working Party have picked out the major articles for the volume and offered contributors, and these lists are now circulating and drawing some very interesting and frank criticism which recommends the adoption of our democratic principles. The South and Western Australians are already writing their articles for this volume, both large and small. The Victorian picture will be clear within a few weeks. The Editor will then be able to embark on the assessment between states, and the whole pattern of the volume will be complete ... So very real progress has been made.⁵⁸

I urged Hancock to communicate the success of Volume 2's constitutional processes to Ellis as an encouraging exemplar. He did, and in doing so, he set

55 Moyal to Hancock (November 1960), Moyal private collection.

56 A. Mozley to John Ward (6 September 1960), box 27, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

57 Moyal to Hancock (November 1960), Moyal private collection.

58 Moyal, 'Chronology of Progress', box 66, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

down an illuminating picture of how he saw his chairman's role, which, in all its unanticipated density and commitment, had come to him as the busy director of the RSSS as somewhat of a surprise. He told Ellis that one of his motives in returning to Canberra, having shed the office of director, was to leave himself more time for the dictionary.⁵⁹ His letter to Ellis, written with an ameliorating tone, reflected a belief that ran strong in Hancock, that he could extract the best. In May 1961 Ellis again threatened resignation unless arrangements were made to let him carry out his work 'expeditiously and efficiently', and twice more in September and November 1961 over relations with the NSW Working Party.⁶⁰

Other ADB affairs moved forward. Judy Robinson and I produced the *Biographical Register Short List* to which she had been substantially adding information. Made available to working party chairs, it formed the basis of later editions and of Jim Gibbney and Ann Smith's *A Biographical Register 1788–1939* (1987).⁶¹ At the same time, I had written an article on the ADB, making public for the first time its development, methods and purposes.⁶² Bolton and Mozley's *The Western Australian Legislature 1870–1930* was moving towards completion.⁶³ A provisional style manual was developed and copies sent to MUP and the editors. Communication with a number of key consultants abroad, whom we called informal correspondents, was set in train and, aided by Hancock's presence in England, included Taylor Milne at the Institute of Historical Research, London, Phyllis Mander-Jones, the first Australian Joint Copying Project officer, who was based at the Australian High Commission, and the American historian Hartley Grattan.

With Hancock's return, a meeting of the National Committee was convened on 12–13 August 1961. The committee, as well as its core members, Hancock (chairman), Clark, Sawyer, John Ward, Crowley, Auchmuty, Pike, Gollan, Shaw, McCrae, Hohnen, Ellis and myself, now included La Nauze, Serle and John Salmon. Allan Morrison stood in for Greenwood. Hancock categorised progress to date: the existence of working parties in each State plus two regional subcommittees of the NSW Working Party at Newcastle and New England; the Armed Services working group led by Gavin Long; and an informal subcommittee on foreign immigrant groups convened by Charles

59 W. K. Hancock to M. H. Ellis (3 October 1961), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

60 See Malcolm Ellis, 'Dispute Between the Editor of Volume 1 and the Editorial Board' (15 January 1962), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

61 *National Register Short List* (Canberra: History Department, Australian National University, 1959). *Biographical Register Short List. Supplement* (Canberra: History Department, Australian National University, 1961). *Biographical Register Short List* (Canberra: Department of History, Australian National University, 1963). H. J. Gibbney and Ann G. Smith (eds), *A Biographical Register 1788–1939: Notes from the Name Index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1987).

62 Mozley, 'The Australian Dictionary of Biography'.

63 Bolton and Mozley, *The Western Australian Legislature*.

Price. Decisions on procedures for working parties were carefully stressed. A subcommittee on criteria consisting of Pike, Serle, Crowley, Gollan and myself was appointed; SA and WA entries had been commissioned; Queensland and Tasmanian lists had been finalised and major entries commissioned; plans for the period 1851–90 were in progress; and arrangements had been set in place for Serle's provisional editorship and responsibility for Victoria and Tasmania, Pike's for South Australia and Western Australia and Morrison's for Queensland, with Gollan again acting as convenor. In a progress report for the period April 1960 to August 1961, Hancock concluded: 'By any fair standard of comparison ... a great deal has been achieved during the past sixteen months. We have solid grounds for satisfaction and confidence'.⁶⁴

The need for a general editor

On the meeting's second day, Hancock, having experienced an evident sea change about his role as a de facto editor, presented a paper on 'The Need for a General Editor'. He drew attention to the 'rapidly accumulating' business involving 'Working Parties, Volume-Editors and contributors', and foresaw the 'heavy and meticulous editorial work' that lay ahead. After paying tribute to me and my work, he also noted that 'Mrs Mozley now wished to resign her position as Assistant Editor to enable her to accept an opportunity for individual research and writing'.⁶⁵ He went on to say that the chairman and the assistant editor together could not provide the leadership required at the centre because they were not experts in Australian history able to deal with the detailed problems of scholarship. The assistant editor's position, moreover, lacked 'status and authority requisite for leadership'. Therefore a new position, that of general editor, was required. Hancock's broad definition of the functions of a general editor were: to serve as the chief administrative officer of the dictionary, taking over (with as much assistance as necessary) all the secretarial and administrative channels of communication and functions now performed by the assistant editor; to act as secretary to the National Committee and as executive officer to the Editorial Board; as the chief academic officer of the dictionary, responsible for the coordination of policies, procedures and standards between volumes; and to visit the working parties once a year. He wrote with clarity:

There emerges a fairly clear picture of the type of man required [women did not feature here]. He must have a knowledge of Australian society in historical breadth and depth, an awareness of conflicting historical interpretations where they exist and a sensitiveness to the trends of

64 W. K. Hancock, 'The Need for a General Editor' (July 1961), Agenda and papers, National Committee meeting (12–13 August 1961), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

65 Minutes, National Committee meeting (12–13 August 1961), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA, p. 3.

scholarship, so as to ensure, so far as possible, that the Dictionary will neither be constricted by past-preoccupations, nor become the victim of ephemeral fashions, but will satisfy the needs of scholars for many generations to come.⁶⁶

At the same time, Hancock notified that he had received a letter from Greenwood paying tribute to Mozley and putting his preference for a 'team of four' rather than a general editor. The National Committee, however, endorsed the proposal for a general editor 'at the centre' and a subcommittee of Hancock, Clark, John Ward, Serle, Pike and Gollan; Hohnen and Morrison (representing Greenwood) were appointed to pursue it. A major function of the general editor would be to give guidance to the working parties—notably, on the work of other working party lists. And, in the fluidity of the moment, it was thought that the appointment should be 'a young man ... able to organize and edit and check articles and provide leadership'.⁶⁷

Although the position of general editor was not advertised, word circulated in the ivory towers. Between October 1961 and February 1962, the National Committee subcommittee dealt with a veritable rollcall of possible candidates. It gave 'unanimous and ardent' support to La Nauze, then at Cambridge, who was tempted but declined on the grounds of his commitment to the history department at Melbourne.⁶⁸ Most of the historical fraternity was sounded. Sydney Butlin at the University of Sydney was expressly invited but declined. Others, including Hugh Stretton, Ken Inglis and Allan Martin, were approached but did not want their names to go forward. An abundant short list—Crowley, Fitzhardinge, Serle, Shaw, Russel Ward, Gwyn James (from MUP), Don Baker (School of General Studies, ANU) and Adelaide historian John Tregenza—confronted the subcommittee. Hancock ruled Fitzhardinge out, believing he should not interrupt his work on the biography of Billy Hughes on which he had been long engaged. Baker, an exceptional teacher in his forties, yet to make his reputation in research and publication, was a popular candidate.⁶⁹

The last man standing was Pike. A member of the subcommittee, he had twice declined attempts to interest him in the post as he had recently taken up a chair of history at the University of Tasmania; but with his deep interest in the *ADB*, he was prevailed upon to take the general editorship. Hancock wrote him winningly in December 1961: 'I can imagine no greater service that any

66 Hancock, 'The Need for a General Editor' (July 1961), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA, pp. 4–5.

67 Minutes, National Committee meeting (12–13 August 1961), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA, p. 4.

68 See, for instance, W. K. Hancock to John La Nauze (27 October 1961); La Nauze to Hancock (12 November 1961), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

69 For a discussion of the candidates, see, for instance, W. K. Hancock to John Ward (27 November 1961); G. Greenwood to W. K. Hancock (1 December 1961); G. Serle to W. K. Hancock (6 December 1961); G. Serle to Hancock (8 December 1961); J. Ward to W. K. Hancock (30 November 1961); Syd Butlin to W. K. Hancock (6 December 1961), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

historian could render just now to academic standards in Australia'.⁷⁰ Even the vice-chancellor of the University of Tasmania, about to lose his professor of history, thought that Hancock was right to think Pike was ideal for the job.⁷¹

There was one obstacle arising from his recent move to Tasmania and his appointment was proposed on a part-time basis for two years until his permanent physical transfer could be made. Pike's acceptance was reported to the Editorial Board meeting of 6 February 1962. A new era in the *ADB's* affairs was about to begin.

Other events had also introduced change. There was continuing dissent and disagreement within the NSW Working Party over who should write the contributions on the major governors. Ellis had signalled to Hancock in Oxford: 'I am setting myself to do all the Governors, all of their periods except Phillip, of whom I have a reasonable knowledge, are at my fingertips'; Ward had indicated that the 'Working Party is strongly of the opinion that no one author should write the biographies of more than two governors' on grounds of principle.⁷² Ellis offered his sixth and, as it proved, fatal threat of resignation, as editor of Volume 1, to the chairman early in December 1961. An Editorial Board meeting on 13 December resolved that, as confidence no longer existed on either side, between Ellis and the board, the chairman request him to submit his resignation no later than 10 days from the date of the chairman's letter.⁷³ Hancock's letter of 20 December thanked Ellis for his valuable assistance to the dictionary and expressed the hope that he would continue to contribute his knowledge to it.⁷⁴ At its meeting in February 1962, the board accepted Ellis's written letter of resignation and appointed Alan Shaw as editor of Volume 1.⁷⁵ At his own request, Ellis remained a member of the National Committee to lend his knowledge and scholarship to the work but, in one of those swift changes of mind that marked his volatile personality, he asked that all reference to 'conflicts' with the Editorial Board and the National Committee be removed from the records. They were. His intemperate words were destroyed.

70 W. K. Hancock to D. Pike (8 December 1961); see also Pike to Hancock (7 December 1961); Hancock to Pike (12 December 1961); Hancock to Pike (4 January 1962), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

71 Keith S. Isles, Vice-Chancellor of University of Tasmania, to W. K. Hancock (21 March 1962), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

72 See Malcolm Ellis to Ann Mozley (18 September 1961); Note from Professor John Ward attached to NSW Working Party List (18 September 1961), box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

73 Minutes, *ADB* Editorial Board meeting (13 December 1961), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

74 W. K. Hancock to M. Ellis (20 December 1961), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

75 Minutes of an Extraordinary *ADB* Editorial Board meeting (2 February 1962); M. H. Ellis to W. K. Hancock (1 February 1962); Hancock to Ellis (2 February 1962), box 64, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

ANU vice-chancellor Ian Chubb and the *ADB*'s first member of staff, Ann Moyal, cut the *ADB*'s fiftieth birthday cake, December 2009

Photographer: Peter Fitzgerald, *ADB* archives

Ellis, however, had not finished with the dictionary.⁷⁶ Frustrated and unforgiving, he resigned from the National Committee and, cutting all links and contributing not one word, he published his detailed assault upon the *ADB*, its organisation and his own dealings with it in a long article in the *Bulletin* on 15 June 1963, entitled ‘Why I Have Resigned: The Australian Dictionary of Biography—Intrigues, inefficiency, incompetence’. He demanded that the vice-chancellor set up a public inquiry into the conduct of the *ADB*’s administration. The registrar wisely counselled Hancock against attempting to answer. Hancock came to believe that Ellis was indeed a ‘peacock among parrots’ (as Ellis had described himself on one occasion). For his part, Hancock thought, in retrospect, that he had underestimated the vast differences in the ‘intellectual and practical experience between Ellis and “university people”’.⁷⁷ The experience had been, as Fitzhardinge shrewdly put it, ‘very much like building your home on the top of a volcano’.⁷⁸

Conclusion

For my part, I agreed with Hancock’s reasoning about the need for a general editor and I looked forward to returning to historical research. I would stay with the *ADB* for a seven-month interim period as Pike made a transition into the work.⁷⁹ My own conclusion on the establishment era, despite the high demands of the task, was that it had been a period of formidable achievement from which we were handing a solid legacy to the first general editor of the *ADB*. For me, it had been a particularly rewarding experience, working closely with Hancock on so important and pioneering a national venture. I enjoyed the title bestowed on me subsequently by a deputy editor, Chris Cunneen, of ‘Founding Mother’!⁸⁰

Dr Ann Moyal is a historian with a special interest in Australian science and technology.

76 M. H. Ellis to W. K. Hancock (6 and 7 June 1963), box 65, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

77 ‘Notes for Concluding Speech by W. K. H. (to be departed from or elaborated according to circumstances): [L. F.—please advise me what to cut out]’, 8 pp. (n.d., c. June 1963), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

78 Fitzhardinge interviewed by Ross (1987).

79 Ann Mozley’s Letter of Resignation (8 March 1962), box 66, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

80 Moyal, *Breakfast with Beaverbrook*, p. 149.

Document

In 1959 Ann Moyal (then Ann Mozley) set off on a trip around Australia to set up working parties for the fledgling dictionary project and to source material for the National Register.

Report of My Journey to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Hobart, August–Sept. 1959

I shall submit the report in two parts; (1) steps taken in connection with the Dictionary of Australian Biography, and (2) discussion and proposals on the work of the National Register.

Dictionary of Australian Biography

My journey has been a most profitable one. I have now had the opportunity of discussion and conversation with members of the History Departments of the four Universities, and in particular with the specialist Australian history staffs; with interested members of other Departments whom we might later want to co-opt to the Dictionary work; with the Archivists and Libraries of each centre; and, particularly in Tasmania, with the members of the Historical associations whose help with the early volumes of the Dictionary will be important.

The overall response in all these discussions has been one of wide and genuine approval of the plan and a readiness to carry enthusiasm into action as soon as invited to do so. There was considerable surprise that we had progressed so far, though the view was general in academic and library circles that there was a need for a fullscale Dictionary of Australian Biography, and that now was the time to begin. Everyone agreed that this was the rightful task of a National University.

In view of this most positive reaction, it seemed appropriate to accept suggestions for provisional Working Parties and to arrange exploratory meetings. I did this in Adelaide, Perth and Hobart. With Professor La Nauze's coming visit to Canberra, there were no round table discussions in Melbourne, but I found my talk with Dr. Serle particularly profitable and encouraging.

Plans for Volume 1

In Hobart, after talking with Professor McManners⁸¹ and Mr McRae, and independently with Mr. Sharman (the State Archivist) I invited a Working Party to meet and advise on the existing list of inclusions for the period 1788–1825 and to make suggestions. Its members are Mr. McRae, Chairman, Miss Janet McRae (Research Assistant in the History Department responsible for the collection of Tasmanian Historical Documents), Mr. Sharman (who will be replaced by Mr. P. Eldershaw, member of the Archives staff when Sharman leaves in October), Mr. Frank Green (journalist and ex-Clerk of the House) and Mr. Garvie (President of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association and founder member of Tasmanian Historical Records Society). It has been suggested that the Chairmanship should pass to Miss McRae when her brother goes on study leave in November.

This is a rather unusual Working Party; none of its members have a specialist knowledge of the period though all have a real interest in it. Their contribution will therefore be more of an industrious researching into claims for inclusion than the decisions from experience made by Malcolm Ellis. For this reason they proposed that we should use the help and advice of members of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association for expert opinion on particular small aspects of the early period and I have a list of interested members for this purpose. The Working Party also acknowledged that they would have some difficulty in nominating contributors for Volume 1 as there is a dearth in Tasmania of persons qualified to write on the first 25 years. Suggestions, they felt, would have to come in the main from N.S.W. and Victoria. The military and naval people, for example, would certainly be better dealt with from N.S.W.

A second meeting of the Working Party was called for September 16 and I now expect their amended list for Volume 1 together with a short Appendix list to supplement Professor Manning Clark's.

As there was a meeting of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association while I was in Hobart, I was able to talk with many of the people to whom we will circulate the proposed list of inclusions. This is a most robust and lively association and their co-operation and interest in the Dictionary seems assured. I have, in addition, made arrangements with the editor of their journal to publish the list of Tasmanian inclusions in Vol. 1 (and any N.S.W. figures with Tasmanian connections) in this year's last issue. This will give the list the widest possible circulation.

Outside the Working Party, Professor McManners gives his blessing to the plan though he contemplates no active part in it himself. He has a proprietary interest

81 John McManners (1916–2006) was a cleric and historian of British religion and the Ancien Régime.

in the collection of Historical Documents by the History Department and feels that the gradual discovery of this material may provide good reason for a later reprinting of the Dictionary in straightforward alphabetical arrangements, when new light has been thrown on the earlier periods,⁸² but this he feels is no argument for holding up the work now.

Plans for Volume 2

In each of the Universities I discussed our ideas for producing a second volume of the Dictionary, possibly in 1963. The concept of two chronological volumes covering the entire early period of the Australian Colonies, and produced almost simultaneously, was a popular one, and there seems no good reason against embarking on the early work of the second volume right away. In each State I formed the impression that while the History Departments are quite hard pressed on their own projects, they were genuinely disposed towards being identified with the Dictionary and making a start on it now.

South Australia

In Adelaide, Dr. Douglas Pike is a strong advocate of the Dictionary plan and supports our ideas of centralisation in Canberra and an Advisory Committee consisting of one representative from each University to act in a consultative capacity. He would be the obvious choice for this and has expressed his readiness to take charge of the South Australian Working Party on the 1825–50 period. Dr. Grenfell Price was proposed as the second member of the team, and Mr. Finnis (local historian on the early period). Another candidate would be Mr. Pitt, former Principal Librarian who began the Archives' biographical index.

At a provisional meeting of the Working Party, Dr. Pike presented a preliminary list of S.A. names for inclusion in Volume 2, which discussion reduced to 52. The amended list is attached. The intention was to have a further meeting with Dr. Grenfell Price (who was unable to join us in Adelaide) and to consider lengths for the proposed biographies. Dr. Pike thinks that the minimum length for a biography should not be more than 400 words; he contends that the articles should be candid and unbiased, maintaining that the Dictionary will afford an opportunity of reducing some historical figures to size. His chairmanship should, I feel, offset the danger of the 'progenitor' emphasis in the S. Australian selection. He thinks we should consider extending the date of Volume 2 to 1856.

The position in South Australia is therefore that a Provisional Working Party has been nominated, and we have a preliminary list for circulation. Dr. Price

⁸² In 1959 and 1960, Period 1 was planned to be up to 1825; and Period 2 1826–50. It was decided to amalgamate the first two periods at the National Committee meeting of 13–14 August 1964.

(who seems to have some reservations in view of his other commitments) is visiting Canberra in November and will talk with us then. If expansion of the Working Party seems desirable, Mr. Pitt might be invited to join it.

Professor Stretton endorsed the project and has offered to appoint a Research Assistant in the Department to help in the basic work for the S.A. contributions, a certain amount of which is likely to devolve on Dr. Pike. Among other members of the History staff there seems to be a very real interest in the Dictionary and, in particular, Dr. Inglis should be helpful when we reach the later period. The Archives people have also promised their support.

Western Australia

In Perth, Dr. Crowley's reaction was most enthusiastic and positive, and he at once offered to draw up a tentative list of inclusions for Western Australia up to 1850. I took the opportunity therefore, as G. Bolton was also in Perth, to organise a provisional Working Party of Dr. Crowley, Miss Mollie Lukis (Government Archivist), Mr. Bolton and myself to discuss the W.A. position. Mrs Alexandra Hasluck has been nominated as a fourth member of this Working Party, and she has the advantage of links in both Perth and Canberra.

The Western Australian contribution to Volume 2 will, of course, be comparatively small. The list which the Working Party considered when it met, contains 25 names of which a number have been marked for review against the other lists in order to determine relative importance. It was agreed that this method of comparative assessment would be the most satisfactory way of determining final allocation between the States. The W.A. list is hence essentially provisional; it does provide some estimate of lengths of proposed biographies. In the case of the West it was suggested that the practice of the D.N.B. in amalgamating the lives of father and son when one is of lesser distinction, could usefully be applied. This Working Party shared the view that we have set our minimum wordage too high.

Dr. Crowley and Miss Lukis will certainly form a competent and hard working nucleus of the W.A. Working party, and Mrs. Hasluck would give it another dimension if she can be persuaded to join. The question of contributors is not likely to present many difficulties here; there are several obvious choices of authors, and Dr. Crowley will undertake two or three major ones, although there is a prospect of his absence in Malaya for two years. Miss Lukis has offered to do any research in the archives on the minor characters. The Working Party has supplied me with the names of persons among whom the list of inclusions should be circulated.

Victoria

In Melbourne, Dr. Serle gave me much of his time and many thoughtful criticisms and suggestions. He expressed the keenest interest in our proposals, and despite his own present undertakings, I am sure we can anticipate some very constructive help from him.

He recommends the following members for a Working Party on the 1825–50 period. Mrs. June Philips (Department of History), Philip Brown, Ian McLaren (Chairman of Historical Society) and himself. He would be willing to chair this group. One of the members of the Melbourne Library should, with the advice of the Librarian, be added to it.

Dr Serle has also given me names of a number of people who will be useful for consultation on the lists of inclusions. He is also ready to make *Historical Studies* available to publicise the Dictionary project and for the publication of proposed lists of inclusions. The list for Volume 1 should, desirably, be printed in the March number. He advises that we should bring in the Historical Societies to help us as consultants, and that we should aim to associate some first class schoolmasters with the writing of Dictionary articles, flinging the net wide in order to bring in good people.

Importantly, he proposed that we should also be considering constituting a Working Party for the post 1850 period, as from the Victorian viewpoint, this will be when the strain will be felt, and that we should begin now accumulating material on these more difficult years.

This view is endorsed by Professor La Nauze who would, I gather, be prepared to take on the chairmanship (possibly with Professor Crawford or with Dr. Serle) of a later Working Party. Geoffrey Blainey is recommended as someone who would be a particularly useful member. Professor La Nauze feels that this long term group should at least make an early start drawing up names and estimating the problems. He has offered that a Department Research Assistant could be made available to help in the work.

The first step in Victoria is to assemble the 1825–50 Working Party (Mrs. Philips has indicated her willingness to join) to draw up a list; with this in progress we will be in a position to think in terms of the post 1850 Party.

Tasmania

The problem of two concurrent Working Parties arose in Tasmania. The view of the History Department was that the Working Party for Volume 2 should be drawn from completely different personnel than those engaged on the early period in order to ensure speed of production. Two names have been agreed upon, and others have been put up for consideration.

Mr. John Reynolds (who recalls your first advocacy of a Dictionary in the late 1920s) has offered his help. His own researches now lie in the field of Victorian mining and company history post 1850 and in later political biography and he has undertaken to give us consultative assistance there. At the same time he has agreed to work on the Tasmanian Working Party 1825–1850, and would be willing to take the chair. Mr. K. Dallas of the Economics Department has also consented to join.

Of the other names advanced, no real agreement existed in Hobart. Mr. von Steigletz, a Launceston local historian strongly recommended by Mr. Reynolds, was not supported by the academics; Mr. Stancombe of Launceston would make a sensible contribution but his specialist interests are surveyors and highways; Professor Townley, Department of Political Science, though he contends that he has moved away from historical interests of the last century into the post 1930s, would, I imagine, respond with the right approach.

My own feeling is that we should, in part, resist the opinion of the History Department and induce Miss McRae to sit in on the second Working Party as the documents she is investigating relate particularly to this period; and that we should also have an Archives representative, either Mr. Stilwell or Mr. Eldershaw, on this committee. We could continue to circularise the Historical Association and Royal Society members for this later period.

Mr. Reynolds, who showed a lively interest in our plans, underlines that we should be thinking about building up personal recollections of important recent figures from competent living contemporaries—if necessary by a process of interviewing and recording first hand impressions.

Conclusions

All these steps taken so far will need consolidating, and it seems desirable to constitute the Working Parties—which have in most cases already acted—by formal invitation as soon as possible.

I have indicated that we hope to clarify problems of organization and procedure after October, but I think my discussions and provisional arrangements should be underwritten from here before this. On organizational questions, there is no doubt that we will have support for centralization in Canberra, this is accepted everywhere as the obvious course. The University people felt that the proposed Advisory Committee of one of their members from each State, and acting in an advisory role would be adequate machinery for identifying them with the project. It would be helpful to devise a manual or procedure and policy for the Working Parties.

I gathered some opinions from people like Dr. Serle, Professors McManners and Stretton, Dr. Pike and Dr. Crowley on general questions of editorship. The proposal for separate editorship of each volume was a popular one among them. Finally the question of paying contributors seems to be clearly settled. There is certainly no question of it among academics, and in each Working Party the view was held that contributors would be found outside the range of freelance journalists and writers who would expect remuneration. Members of historical associations are most willing to give their help and their time and the Serle suggestion of using competent schoolmasters has much to recommend it.

National Register Work

Part of my time in each of the capitals was spent in investigating Library resources and in gathering opinions from the Librarians and the Archivists, as well as from the Australian historians, on how we could most effectively build up our Register material, and become in time the centre of biographical information. There was general support for this plan and concurrence that the A.N.U. was the legitimate place for developing such a centre.

Some idea of our present achievement was revealed in the Register Short List which has been distributed among the Libraries and History departments. There was comment and criticism on the selection reflected in the Register, and on the choice of sources, but there was also the view that we had progressed a long way in a useful direction. This criticism was helpful as it brought with it recommendations from each State of printed biographical sources which we should consider incorporating in the Register. It also exposed the immediate deficiencies that might be remedied, the most singular being the comparative neglect in our records of Western Australian, and to a lesser extent, of Tasmanian personalities.

The discussions convinced me of one thing: that to make the Register effective and representative, it would be necessary to ensure that material will flow in systematically from the States, both from the Libraries and Universities.

From the Library point of view I have gone some way to organize this. In Tasmania, the States Archives conduct research, often of a prolonged and serious kind, for enquiries. Much of this is biographical and I have worked through their files making lists of those from which useful material for the Register could be drawn. At some time, it would seem desirable to employ a researcher for a couple of weeks going through these files from my instructions to extract the material, I am sure the University could suggest someone. The Librarian and Archivist have promised henceforth to send me an extra copy of each piece of biographical research that is done. This will greatly strengthen our Tasmanian entries, particularly on the early period.

In Perth I collected material from their research files myself, and Miss Lukis the Archivist, is prepared to send copies of additions they make. The Archivist in Melbourne recommends a similar approach to the Trustees of the Public Library, and I think the process might be profitably applied to the S.A. Archives, the Mitchell and the Oxley Library.

From the point of view of general Library resources, I have been able to acquire a first hand picture of the biographical indexes of each Library and they vary considerably. At this stage it is quite beyond the range of possibility to consider incorporating this mass of material into the National Register, but with a knowledge of their range and contents, it will be possible to act as an informed channel of reference to them. These are, after all, the working tools of the individual State libraries and for the present we will benefit from the research they are carrying out through them.

The process of systemization can be extended to the Universities. Opinion in the History Departments points to the fact that they feel some responsibility in making a specific contribution to the Register work, and Melbourne and Hobart have offered to put a Research Assistant on the work of going through their theses abstracting biographical information. It is suggested that we invite each University to do this. Dr. Serle was also of the opinion that the Working Parties might be asked to draw up lists of names for the Register in addition to the Dictionary. This seems a heavy demand but in the normal way names discarded from preliminary Dictionary lists will be picked up for the Register.

The most important contribution the Universities could make, this is again Dr. Serle's suggestion, would be the collection of basic material for political monographs, on the lines of Martin and Wardle. Dr. Serle feels that the Melbourne History Department could organize such a one, with the help of Allan Martin and the research assistant Professor La Nauze has offered.

This is a most constructive offer and sustains our plan to produce these specialized monographs at regular intervals. My present intention is to make the first step towards remedying the Western Australian gap in our biographical work by organizing material for a monograph on members of the W.A. Legislative Assembly and Council 1870–1930. G. Bolton already has the basic framework for this and has offered to fill it out. I also discussed the idea in Perth with Dr. Crowley and Miss Lukis and they will give us local help in checking and adding to the material.

It is also my plan to arrange that material will flow in from the Historical Associations.

Source: Box 69, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

Profile

Ann Moyal (b. 1926)

A graduate of the University of Sydney (BA Hons, 1947), Ann Hurley (later Cousins and Mozley) worked in Britain for nine years, four of them as Lord Beaverbrook's research assistant. She has written about that period of her life in *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* (1995). In November 1958, on Mozley's return to Australia, Sir Keith Hancock employed her as a research assistant responsible for the 'organization of the Register of Australian Biography and preliminary work towards a Dictionary of Australian Biography'. In October 1959 she became a research fellow and assistant editor of the *ADB*. She has recounted her experiences as the *ADB*'s first, and only, employee for nearly four years, in Chapter 2.

In 1962 Mozley took up a position at the Basser Library, Australian Academy of Science, where she began work on establishing a historical archive of Australian scientists. In 1963 she married the mathematician Joe Moyal. She worked in publishing in Chicago, returning to Australia to teaching positions at the NSW Institute of Technology (1972–76) and at Griffith University, where she was director of the Science Policy Research Centre (1977–79). Over the years she has published widely on the social history of nineteenth and twentieth-century Australian science. In 1995 she founded the Independent Scholars Association of Australia. Appointed AM in 1993, she was awarded an honorary D.Litt by the ANU in 1995 and by the University of Sydney in 2007.

Source: Ann Moyal, *Breakfast with Beaverbrook. Memoirs of an Independent Woman* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995).

Ann Moyal, 2009

Photographer: Peter Fitzgerald, *ADB* archives

Profile

Keith Hancock (1898–1988)

Although the *ADB* was a minor episode in Sir Keith Hancock's illustrious career, he looms large in its history. As director of the Research School of Social Sciences (1957–61) and head of the history department (1957–65) at the ANU, Hancock in the late 1950s advocated the establishment of the *ADB*, believing the dictionary to be an important means of promoting both Australian history and the university whose charter was to encourage and provide facilities for research of national importance.

Hancock, a graduate of the University of Melbourne (BA Hons, 1920), won a Rhodes Scholarship that he took up at Balliol College, Oxford (BA, 1923; MA, 1930). Professor of history at the universities of Adelaide (1926–34), Birmingham (1934–44) and Oxford (1944–49), and founding director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London (1949–56), before his return to Australia, he was the author of 20 books, including a two-volume biography of the South African statesman Jan Smuts (1962–68). Jim Davidson in his biography of Hancock noted that his 'once immense reputation is now hard for Australians to grasp: most of it was earned outside Australia, and the Commonwealth context which gave it coherence has virtually collapsed'.

In Britain Hancock had been involved in large collaborative projects, mainly as the supervisor for 12 years of 27 of the 28-volume civil series of the official history of Britain in World War II. He was also associated with the British *Dictionary of National Biography*. Once at the ANU, he called a meeting of Australian historians and raised the idea of a national biographical dictionary. Support for the proposal was forthcoming and in 1959 Hancock formed a provisional Editorial Board that met in his office. Appointed chairman, he provided seed funding for the project from his departmental budget and personally visited archivists to win their support. For Hancock, consultative relationships, genuine partnerships and collaboration were essential to the success of the project. He retired from the Editorial Board in November 1965.

Source: Jim Davidson, *A Three-Cornered Life: The Historian W. K. Hancock* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010).

Keith Hancock, 1965

ANU Archives, ANUA225-511

Profile

Malcolm Ellis (1890–1969)

Malcolm Ellis is one of the most vilified characters in the *ADB* story, accused of almost wrecking the project in its infancy; however, he also deserves a place as one of the founders of the great enterprise alongside Sir Keith Hancock, Ann Mozley (Moyal) and Laurie Fitzhardinge. A Queenslander by birth, Ellis began his working life as a cadet reporter on the Brisbane *Daily Mail*. In 1933, he joined the staff of the *Bulletin*, where he remained until his retirement in 1965. Passionate about early Australian colonial history and biography—he published biographies of Lachlan Macquarie (1942), Francis Greenway (1949) and John Macarthur (1955)—Ellis was one of the few non-academics invited to the conference convened by Hancock in Canberra in October 1957 at which the concept of a dictionary of Australian biography was discussed. He showed intense interest in the project and, in 1959, was appointed to the provisional Editorial Board. Ellis was the sole non-academic on the board. In August that year he submitted a detailed organisational plan, which, with some amendments by Hancock, forms the basis of the *ADB*'s organisation to this day. Ellis's drive and commitment saw him writing the draft constitution and pressuring Hancock and the Editorial Board to begin the search for a publisher. In October 1959, Ellis and Manning Clark were appointed joint editors of Volumes 1 and 2. Hancock later wrote that 'Ellis then was our devoted comrade. His ardour sustained our faith ... he helped us, more than anybody else did, to get the Dictionary off the ground'.

Hancock made that file note in December 1961, in the midst of a dispute between Ellis and the NSW Working Party over the selection of authors and the length of articles. This was just one of several disputes that took on seismic proportions and included the way in which Melbourne University Press was appointed publisher instead of Angus & Robertson, Ellis's preferred option. The rows were exacerbated by Ellis's vituperative personality and his outspoken anticommunism, which, at one point, led to a confrontation with Manning Clark. Finally, Ellis resigned from all his *ADB* positions. His dissatisfaction was well documented in his July 1963 *Bulletin* article, 'Why I Have Resigned'.

While the Ellis controversy continues to loom large in the *ADB*'s early history, the danger is that the positive aspects of the story are forgotten. Despite his prickly temperament, Ellis made significant contributions both to the establishment of the *ADB* and to early colonial Australian history and biography.

Sources: B. H. Fletcher, 'Ellis, Malcolm Henry (1890–1969)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 14 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), pp. 95–7; W. K. Hancock's files, 'Correspondence with Ellis, 1958–1963', box 70, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

Malcolm Ellis, 1950s

ADB archives

Oskar Spate (1911–2000), Professor of Geography, ANU, and *ADB* author, wrote this poem in 1963 following the publication of Malcolm Ellis's article 'Why I Have Resigned' in the *Bulletin*. The poem was privately circulated.

The Wild Colonial Bore

by O. K. H. Spate

'Tis of a Wild Colonial Bore, Malcolm Ellis is his name.
And he has a Bigge monopoly, and one in Macquarie's fame;
His native heath was Botany Bay, he messed with the Rum Corps,
And dearly did he love them both, the Wild Colonial Bore.

He is the boldest bushranger that never ranged the bush,
In Sydney Town he's captain of a literary push,
He fills the Forum many a time with most uncivil war,
A terror to Australia is the Wild Colonial Bore.

He is a stout Exclusivist, as everybody may see,
And no man but an Ellis fan need write our history;
Emancipists and Hawkesbury men are rudely shown the door,
He has Squatter's Rights to our convict past, has the Wild Colonial Bore.

There's none like Malcolm Ellis to write biography,
To review with old-world courtesy, and shun all pedantry;
He tried his hand with Greenway and got in on the ground floor,
But the Hospital rum went to the head of the Wild Colonial Bore.

He bailed up Justice Evatt, Mike Roe, and Manning Clark,
He hinted that the ANU gave doctorates in the dark,
He slaughtered reputations and all dons he did deplore
And they none of them got quarter from the Wild Colonial Bore.

And when he isn't flaying Profs, he's ferretting out the Reds,
He finds them Up the Garden Path and under all the beds,
Their corpses lie about his track, his rushes drip with gore,
A Prof or a Red, 'tis all the same to the Wild Colonial Bore,

'Tis in the Sydney *Bulletin* he pursues his wild career
With letters and columns every week of colonial small beer,
And each new *Bulletin* we read, we've read it all before—
He's flaming repetitious, is the Wild Colonial Bore.

But cheer up all, my hearties, all things must have an end;
'Tis like that Malcolm's meanderings will take him round the bend;
He's bound to be Transported, of that you may be sure,
To a warmer place than Botany Bay, this Wild Colonial Bore.

Profiles

Geoffrey Sawer (1910–1996) and Ross Hohnen (1917–2003)

From the outset, the ANU supported Sir Keith Hancock's initiative to launch a dictionary of biography and provided significant recurrent funding. After forming a provisional Editorial Board in 1959, Hancock sought university approval for its permanent establishment. The vice-chancellor, Leslie Melville, endorsed the proposal, subject to the addition of two ANU staff members, the chairman of the publication committee, Professor Geoffrey Sawer, and the university registrar, Ross Hohnen, to the Editorial Board.

A graduate of the University of Melbourne (LLB, 1933) in 1934, Sawer was admitted as a solicitor and in 1938 as a barrister. He was the foundation professor of law at ANU (1950–74) and dean of the Research School of Social Sciences (1951–56). In 1955, when Hancock was director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, Sawer, who was on sabbatical at the London School of Economics and Political Science, participated in Hancock's seminars. They became good friends. A couple of years later Sawer was involved in the selection and appointment of Hancock as professor of history at the ANU.

Sawer served on the *ADB's* Editorial Board and its National Committee for more than two decades, until 1984. He played a vital role, giving advice on legal matters, particularly regarding copyright, drafting the *ADB's* constitution, and drawing up the contract with Melbourne University Press. At times he was acting chairman of the Editorial Board. He chaired the committee searching for Douglas Pike's successor as general editor and negotiated directly with Monash University in 1975 to enable Geoffrey Serle's appointment as joint general editor.

Reminiscing in 1987 about the *ADB*, Laurie Fitzhardinge noted that a critical factor in Hancock's success in obtaining money from the ANU was the 'enthusiastic support' provided by Ross Hohnen, the university registrar (1949–75). Hohnen, an active member of the Editorial Board until 1975, advocated both the payment of an establishment grant for the dictionary and the appointment, in 1962, of the first general editor, with the status and title of professor. He also provided practical assistance in seeking endowments and donations. With his support, the *ADB's* staff increased from one in 1960 to more than four by 1964 and seven by 1969. He also encouraged Douglas Pike to take up an ANU travel grant in 1969 to visit dictionary projects in the United States, Canada and France.

Sources: Laurie Fitzhardinge to Professor Hancock (3 February 1960), Q31, ADAB, ANUA. Biographical cuttings on Ross A. Hohnen, NLA. Geoffrey Sawer interviewed by Mel Pratt, five sessions (November 1971 – May 1972), NLA.

Geoffrey Sawyer, 1953

ANU archives, ANUA225-1102

Ross Hohnen, 1974

ANU archives, ANUA225-564

Profile

Norman Cowper (1896–1987)

An eminent commercial lawyer, company director and businessman, Norman Cowper was an experienced committee man. As a member (1955–74) of the ANU Council, he was a supporter of the *ADB*. He was responsible for securing the *ADB*'s first endowment: an 'anonymous benefactor' (later revealed as the Bushell Trust), who the Editorial Board acknowledged was gained only 'through the auspices of Mr Norman Cowper', gifted £1500 per annum for a period of three years in 1960. This was a vital gift to the fledging project. As chairman (1960–70) of the board of Angus & Robertson, Cowper became involved in settling the dispute between the *ADB* Editorial Board and Malcolm Ellis. Largely because of his ability to resolve conflicts, he was recruited to the Editorial Board and to the National Committee in 1961. Not only did he help the academics to work out their policy differences, but he also brought a great deal of financial expertise to the management of the *ADB*. He contributed articles on George Allen and his son Sir George Wigram Allen (the founders of the law firm, Allen, Allen and Hemsley, of which Cowper was a senior partner from 1951 to 1975) and on Georgiana and her son George Gordon McCrae, who were relations of his wife. After vice-chancellor Anthony Low made comments about the 'advancing years' of many associated with the *ADB*, Cowper resigned from the Editorial Board in November 1979. He was himself the subject of an entry in the *ADB*.

Source: Martha Rutledge, 'Cowper, Sir Norman Lethbridge (1896–1987)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 17 (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 258–60.

Norman Cowper, 1977

Photographer: Anton Cermak, by courtesy of Fairfax Media

Profile

Gwyn James (1900–1978)

Over the past 50 years, *ADB* staff have worked with six directors of Melbourne University Press: Gwyn James (1943–62); Peter Ryan (1962–88); Brian Wilder (1989); John Iremonger (1990–93); Brian Wilder (1993–96); John Meckan (1997–2002); and from 2003, Louise Adler. Gwyn James was pivotal in that he committed the MUP to publishing the *ADB* and was responsible for the high-quality design of its volumes.

James, an Englishman by birth, and Keith Hancock first met at the University of Birmingham. James was a student (MA, 1937) working on the British Admiralty in the seventeenth-century; Hancock was a professor of history (1934–44). In 1938 James moved to Australia and two years later took up a lectureship at the University of Melbourne and became foundation editor (1940–46) of *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*. He was also well known to Laurie Fitzhardinge, who had helped to establish *Historical Studies*.

Director of MUP from 1943, James learnt about the dictionary project in a rather circuitous way—during a discussion in Canada with those working on the new Canadian dictionary project. When he returned to Australia in November 1959, he approached the *ADB* Editorial Board with a proposal that MUP publish the dictionary. At that stage the board was on the verge of signing with Angus & Roberston but was swayed by James’s academic background and his enthusiasm for the project. Such were James’s academic credentials that the *ADB* Editorial Board considered him as a possible general editor of the dictionary before appointing Douglas Pike in 1962.

His publishing credentials were also impeccable. As Peter Ryan, James’s successor at MUP, described it: ‘Gwyn James, besides his scholarship, had deep feeling for typography, quality book production, and the sacred (yes, sacred) role of rigorous editorial integrity’. James pursued publishing perfection and was innocent of the costs it imposed on MUP, such as when he chose the dictionary’s nine-point Juliana typeface:

It was perfect for such a work of reference: cram as you would the narrow columns with text, the pages were never a pain in the eye, never hard to read. Juliana was unknown then in Australia, and James could import it only in ‘English depth’, where the type surface of the characters stand high and clear above the body. The result was that MUP’s linos were

incompatible with the linotype equipment of the whole of the rest of the Australian printing industry—a considerable technical and financial sacrifice by the Press in the service of perfection for the *Dictionary*. Then there was the paper—no reach-me-down rubbish from some paper merchant's shelf for the *ADB*.

James cajoled a local manufacturer

of fine papers to agree to make a special quality for the *ADB*; A cream 'laid' writing paper in an unconventional sheet size, to accommodate the grandeur of the *Dictionary's* 'full royal' dimensions ... As the papers makers could only occasionally interrupt the ordinary run of their production for the special *ADB* make, MUP itself had to warehouse very considerable reserves of it, at great expense.

As well as being its publisher, James wrote four entries for the *ADB*.

Gwyn James, n.d.

Photographer: Squire Photographics, University of Melbourne Archives

Sources: Peter Ryan, 'The ADB', *Quadrant* (June 2000), pp. 87–8. 'Chronology of Publishing Arrangements', Ann Mozley to Keith Hancock (22 June 1960), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA.

Profile

Alan George Lewers ('Agl', pronounced 'aggle') Shaw (1916–2012)

Keith Hancock originally wanted A. G. L. Shaw, senior lecturer in history at the University of Sydney, as one of several editors of the first two volumes of the *ADB*. His candidature, however, was caught up in the 'Ellis dispute'. Ellis was critical of what he described as the domination by John Ward and Shaw of the *ADB*'s NSW Working Party. Ellis wanted the working party to have wider representation: 'New South Wales University, the Historical and Pioneers Societies, the Genealogical Society, the Public Librarian and Government Archivist, with representative attendant sub-committees from the law, medicine and architecture. And it needs some young men'. Ellis and the working party also disagreed about the lists of subjects and authors. When the working party proposed that Shaw write the entry on Lachlan Macquarie, Ellis responded by saying that he wanted to write that one, and suggested Shaw for Thomas Makdougall Brisbane. At its meeting of 6 February 1962, the *ADB* Editorial Board, advised of Douglas Pike's acceptance of the position of general editor, resolved to appoint Shaw joint editor of Volume 1 following the resignation of Malcolm Ellis. It was held that special knowledge of the colonial period was essential and that Shaw had that expertise. As section editor for Volumes 1 and 2, he was de facto in charge of 'period one'. He reported to National Committee members on progress until Pike took over.

Born in Melbourne, Shaw was educated at Melbourne Grammar School, the University of Melbourne (BA Hons, 1938), where he studied history and political science, and Christ Church, Oxford (MA, 1940). Back in Australia, he worked first in the Commonwealth Public Service, before taking up a lectureship at the University of Melbourne. He was associate editor (1949–51) of *Historical Studies* and a member of its editorial board. In 1950, he was awarded a Nuffield dominion travelling scholarship and spent a year in England undertaking research into Australia's convict period. In 1952 he was appointed senior lecturer in history at the University of Sydney. During the 1950s and 1960s he published widely on the early history of Australia.

A stalwart of the *ADB*, Shaw was a member of the National Committee and of the Editorial Board (1960–99); he contributed 10 articles. He also produced biographies of Ralph Darling (1971) and George Arthur (1980). For 10 years from 1994, he was associate editor (Australia) of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He was awarded an *ADB* Medal in 2002.

A. G. L. Shaw, about 1964

Monash University Archives, 42

Sources: The 'Ellis Dispute' files (1959–63), box 68, Q31, ADBA, ANUA. Peter Yule and Will Kimpton, 'Alan George Lewers Shaw', *Age* [Melbourne], 15 May 2012. A. Atkinson, 'Shaw, A. G. L', in G. Davison, J. Hirst and S. Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, rev. edn (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 588.