

Three Doomed Communes: A Roma Romance?

Introduction

In the 1890s, 13 socialist communes were established in Queensland, all with some government support. One lasted 16 years; the others only about two years. Some succeeded in various ways, but this paper looks at the most dismal failures, the three communes established near Roma: 'Excel Pioneer', 'Nil Desperandum' and 'Obertown Model'. In doing so, it expands the study of 19th century Queensland communes and explores a largely overlooked period of Roma's development.

Background

Attempts were made to establish utopian communal settlements soon after white settlement of Australia, but the first successful group was Herrnhut, near Hamilton, Victoria, between 1853 and 1889.¹ The first communal group in Queensland was Alice River, established near Barcaldine in 1891 by 72 rural labourers disaffected through the Shearers' Strike.²

Because of the severe depression of the early 1890s, Queensland's Premier, Samuel Griffith, became interested in rural communal groups as a means to alleviate urban unemployment while establishing productive agricultural communities. Writers such as journalist, William Lane, and Legislative Council member, James Drake, had been promoting communal ideas in papers such as *Boomerang* and *Worker*. In 1892, Griffith dispatched Peter McLean, Undersecretary for Agriculture, to New Zealand to study their Village Settlements, after which a lengthy enquiry, chaired by James Drake, was held in Brisbane to explore this radical form of social experimentation. Because Alice River commune was doing well, Premier Griffith and many parliamentarians and advisors such as Professor Edward Shelton, Queensland's first Agricultural Extension Officer, visited that commune. They were impressed – and hoped that such a back-to-the-land project could be expanded across the state.³

One could also argue that perhaps Liberals such as Griffith and Drake thought that communal settlements would be a safe concession to the Labor Party, stem the tide of labour unrest, comply with late 19th century ideals seeing 'yeoman' farmers as better than unemployed urban poor – and basically help stabilise society and political order.

Griffith and Drake's work led to the passage of *The Co-operative Communities Land Settlement Act of 1893*. Under this Act, groups of at least 30 men, natural born or naturalised British subjects who had been resident in Queensland for at least a year, could form a commune. The group would be granted leasehold land plus £20 per member in financial assistance with the expectation of repayment in due course. All property and income would belong to the collective which would be responsible for all expenses.⁴

Twelve groups formed and sought suitable land. Mizpah, Monmouth and Industrial established near Chinchilla, Bon Accord, Byrnestown and Resolute near Gayndah, Woolloongabba Exemplars and Protestant Unity south of Gympie, Reliance near Springsure, and Obertown Model, Nil Desperandum and Excel Model near Roma. This paper examines the last three groups.

Experience of Other Communal Groups

Alice River thrived for over a decade, developing a dairy farm, using steam-pumped irrigation to grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables, selling produce within western Queensland towns and exporting to Rockhampton. The group slowly declined in membership until selling out in 1907.⁵

Near Gayndah, Bon Accord, Resolute and Byrnestown members had their own schools and church, built modest homes, cleared land and developed an agricultural base which, when the communes closed in 1896, became the basis for prosperous farming communities. Today, maps show Byrnestown village, Bon Accord bridge and Resolute farm.⁶

Near Chinchilla, Mizpah, Monmouth and Industrial, being on the railway line, showed great promise. They cleared land and grew a wide range of crops, built homes and a school and, after the communes were closed, many members took up land as individual farmers. As with the groups near Gayndah, many descendants remain in the area today and these communal names survive.⁷

Protestant Unity, south of Gympie, developed a successful farming economy and, after the commune was closed, most ex-communards remained on their land and formed, among other things, what is now the 'trendy' town of Pomona.⁸

The other communes fared less well. Woolloongabba Exemplars, on Lake Weyba, faced problems from the start and when it closed few members remained in the area. Reliance, near Springsure, also left little behind after it closed. Both were on poor land and were riddled with dissent.⁹

Roma's Nil Desperandum, Excel Pioneer and Obertown Model

Representatives of seven groups travelled by train to Roma on 21 November 1893, and were shown over the available sites by Land Commissioner, Lewis Jackson, and surveyor, John Steele, who also helped them assess the soil and water, and advised on agricultural potential. The monthly rainfall for the previous five years had averaged a generous 70mm, so the green grass and flowing creeks looked promising.¹⁰ Excel Pioneer, Nil Desperandum and Obertown Model accepted the land on offer, as did Barlowtown, which disbanded before gazettal.¹¹ The other three groups, Byrnestown, Reliance and Resolute, rejected this land due to its distance from Roma and the railway.¹²

On 20 December 1893, the Queensland Governor formally proclaimed Nil Desperandum commune with 35 members, and awarded the group 2266 hectares of land on the south side of Yalebone Creek about 40 kilometres south of Roma. On 11 January 1894 the Excel Pioneer and Obertown Model communes were proclaimed, each with 45 members and each being granted 2914 hectares on the north side of Yalebone Creek, adjoining Nil Desperandum. All this land had been *Mandandanji* country then part of Trinidad Run before being resumed for agricultural purposes.¹³

Nil Desperandum's members¹⁴ included farmers, farm labourers, blacksmiths, carpenters, fruit-growers, gardeners, stockmen and dairymen who came from the Woolloongabba (South Brisbane) and Redlands areas. Their rules included features such as 'equal co-operation of all its members for mutual help and profit' and 'each will have equal rights and responsibilities, and will similarly share all labour, the nature of which is to be decided upon by the group'. Each year the group would elect a five-member board of management to organise labour, supplies and housing, and manage income and expenses. Each member would have a small house-site. If a member could not meet medical expenses, the community would assist. Members could, with the group's permission, work outside the commune but surplus income must go into communal funds. The commune would operate a general store/depot,

and ‘strong drink [would be] rigorously excluded’.¹⁵ Their leader was George Strickland, a 25-year-old Canadian migrant who had worked as a clerk.

Obertown Model’s members mainly came from Brisbane’s Coorparoo district and were said to include ‘general and agricultural labourers, some being Germans’.¹⁶ Families were large, up to 10 in size.¹⁷ A reporter incorrectly described their colourful founder, Joseph Oberthur, as ‘having much experience and thoroughly competent for the work he has undertaken’.¹⁸ Oberthur was then aged 60 and had been a plumber, publican, armed bank-robber and prisoner – but never a farmer. He had also been described as ‘the most polished scoundrel’.¹⁹ This group would ‘build houses on a uniform plan, any necessary additions being made by the individuals after working hours’. During the day all would work together for the common good, but after hours each man would be free to work the 2 hectares made available for his own use.²⁰ All land, improvements, livestock and outside earnings would be the property of the group, with ‘no member to have any individual interest’. They guaranteed ‘freedom of each member in all matters of religion and politics’ and allowed alcohol consumption, but not its sale or drunkenness. Any member ‘whose presence is calculated to interfere with the morality, peace, and order of the settlement, or to bring it or its members into disrepute’, could be expelled.²¹

Excel Pioneers drew its members mainly from Brisbane’s Coorparoo / Greenslopes areas. With a mean age of 36, almost all were married and had trades such as blacksmith, engineer, carpenter, wheelwright, butcher, boot-maker, plumber, tinsmith, painter, baker, brick-layer, farmer, dairyman, bushman, fencer, pit sawyer, engine-driver, and agricultural labourer.²² Under the leadership of George Legg, a 36-year-old carpenter, they agreed to cultivate their land as a group, with each man working nine hours a day, and with all income going into their “General Fund” from which all expenses would be drawn. Each man would be allowed a small area for a family garden, with houses to be built by the group. They also established a medical fund. Like Obertown Model they allowed liquor, ruling that ‘any person can keep in his own house just what he likes for his own consumption or gratuitous distribution among his friends’, but ‘any man selling it will be expelled’.²³

Nil Desperandum was the first group to occupy their communal land. Around half its members left Brisbane with furniture, livestock and equipment on 29 December 1893 and travelled by train to Roma, where women and children remained while the men

moved onto their land and erected tents and humpies.²⁴ Most remaining Nil Desperandum members, as well as the first Obertown Model and Excel Pioneer members, another 210 souls in all, arrived in Roma by overnight train on 17 January 1894. Their arrival created a serious housing problem needing several buildings for emergency accommodation. Over the next few weeks most other members arrived with their families, moved on-site, and communal life began.²⁵

First reports were positive with a local reporter observing that these communards, were gradually settling in, but

... working under the disadvantages which are only natural to pioneering, and so far as can be gathered are meeting inconveniences with a cheerful front. Each group is endeavouring to get in a crop of potatoes, and to complete the needful provisions for shelter. The camps have been fixed along the frontages to Yalebone creek, which is running, and contains permanent water enough to float a ship. The whole area of the land granted the groups is grassed knee deep, and as green as a wheat field. The pioneers admit that for water, soil, and timber, the position could not be improved.²⁶

But all was not rosy. Personal tragedy struck Nil Desperandum with the death of 14-month-old Alice Jolly on 2 February, and Obertown Model with the death of five-year-old Henrietta Tosi on 14 March.²⁷ More destructive was the surfacing of dissent that was to plague all three groups. Nil Desperandum members expelled Atticus Tooth in February, and Barham Dyne complained their Secretary, George Strickland, was swindling both the government and fellow communards by submitting false invoices.²⁸ George Legg, the Excel Pioneer Secretary, drew criticism for his non-appearance on the land until two months after the others - 'Great pressure and several envoys were employed to induce him to remove his seat of government from Roma to the Yalebone'.²⁹ By early April, Obertown Model's leader, Joseph Oberthur, was accused of fraud and of trying to sack their management committee. He left under a cloud in mid-June with William Savage taking over as secretary.³⁰

On 19 March the *Brisbane Courier* published an insightful article about communal settlement, asserting that three factors would determine success: 'accessibility of site, productiveness of soil and devotedness of settlers'. With respect to the Roma groups the soil was said to be good and well-watered, but that difficulty of access was a serious drawback. However while this land was well-watered in 1893 and early 1894

when most of Queensland was having one of its wettest periods, that was soon to change.³¹

On 31 March an Obertown Model comunard wrote to friends in Brisbane saying they were camped along the creek in tents and humpies with some members having houses. They were establishing gardens but had little or no seed. They had fenced 60 hectares and cleared a paddock that they were ploughing as weather and their six horses allowed. But 'our money is all out, therefore we cannot get any more goods or horses, and all the provisions will last only about three weeks more, and unless there is more at once, I do not know what will become of the great number of families here'. With support they 'would have a great chance of success, as we have a good season—splendid rains, good land, fine water, and plenty of timber'. Transport was a serious problem in wet weather.

It has taken 10 heavy team horses to take one loaded dray to our settlement. We hired a team of 14 horses and one large waggon to take two loads from Roma. The team got bogged four miles from camp, and could not leave for a week. The team was to take two loads, but the carrier would not come out with the other. We sent our dray with two horses to Roma for a load. It rained in the meantime. They never came out for 10 days.³²

On 20 April Anders Nielsen, of Nil Desperandum, wrote to friends in Brisbane stating that they had purchased six horses, two ploughs, two drays, 140 sheep, harness and agricultural implements. They had cleared five hectares with three being fenced, ploughed and sown; and had erected five cottages, 'good substantial buildings' and numerous humpies. Each member had a vegetable garden. The climate was 'delightful', and all members were healthy and optimistic—even though they had already expended most of their government grant.³³

Two weeks later, Nil Desperandum's John Brown complained of transport problems, with Roma being so distant and the tracks so poor. He wished they had left the women and children in Brisbane so that the men could concentrate on farming rather than having to build houses. He described their 10m by 4m store, blacksmithy, butchery and cattle-yards, and their five completed houses, each 7m by 3.5m, of dressed cypress pine with shingled roofs, plus other 'well-built, durable structures'. They were, however, suffering from sandy blight, dysentery and Barcoo rot 'and other trifles'. He praised members as being 'good as ever trod in shoe leather, who are

hopeful and determined to make this place their home and the settlement generally a success. In fact who have come here to stay.'³⁴

Pleas for more funds resulted in the Government granting another £200 to each commune, to be used only for rations.³⁵ This money briefly improved matters but by August 1894, with average monthly rainfall tumbling from 70mm to 7mm, all three were in trouble again. Obertown Model expelled five members and Secretary, William Savage, complained that members working off site refused to hand over their wages, and that founder, Joseph Oberthur, had 'deceived and mislead the group ... with contempt'. A petition from 22 members demanded investigation of Oberthur's theft.³⁶ In spite of this, Savage brazenly claimed they had 24 houses each worth £25, roads worth £70, stockyards worth £60, a store worth £30, fencing worth £212, garden improvements worth £75 and a blacksmith shop worth £10, total improvements of £1082 10s.³⁷

Excel Pioneer's Secretary, George Legg, complained on 28 August that they could not rid themselves of 'loafers', because they had insufficient members present to form the two-thirds majority needed for an expulsion. These idlers, whom he called 'sundowners' were 'accustomed to do very little between meals'. A week later he complained of one member's idleness after which that person attacked Legg's hard work on behalf of the commune. 'I think it is something abominable what a secretary has to put up with, especially from egotistical ignoramuses' he wrote.³⁸

George Strickland, of Nil Desperandum, appealed for extra government funds, the previous £200 having already been expended as economically as possible, and they were now 'almost destitute of clothing'. He pleaded for power to rid the commune of 'idlers' because once 'rid of these encumbrances the group would acquire fresh vitality'. This would give them 'every prospect of ultimate success', since although they had produced little, their 'crops are looking remarkably well, and the season so far has been all in our favour'.³⁹

Land Commissioner, Lewis Jackson, visited all three communes at this time and observed 'a good deal of discontent'. He said their claims of moving towards self-sufficiency were 'very shadowy', and opined that the withdrawal of government support would leave them 'helpless and destitute'. Excel Pioneer communards 'only look upon their residence there as temporary, and to live as best they can, assisted by

the Government, until times improve, and the place will be abandoned, as there was nothing I could see or hear that would favour the hope of their being self-supporting.' Jackson thought only Obertown Model showed any hint they might survive.⁴⁰

For Nil Desperandum, the latter part of 1894 brought more tragedy in the form of three deaths in one family. Emily Hackles' death three weeks after giving birth was soon followed by that of her baby, William. Within days news broke of the accidental drowning on 4 December of her husband, William.⁴¹ This left Emily's young brothers, group members Ernest and Frederick Holloway, to arrange for the care of the couple's two surviving children. News also reached the Obertown group of the death in Roma of 17-month-old Bertha Lederhose, whose family had withdrawn two months earlier.⁴²

In mid-January 1895 a parliamentary delegation visited all three communes. They found that Excel Pioneer, although they had received over £900, had little to show for it, not even houses. Obertown Model, which had received over £1000, was 'perhaps in a more hopeless condition'. Members said 'their land was no good, and that they had not the remotest chance of doing anything with it. Their crops had all been failures, and their labour had practically nothing to show but their houses, clearing, and fences'. One woman despaired 'we have plenty of nothing but children.'⁴³ Nil Desperandum had a crop of tobacco on good land, but the climate was too dry. At Excel Pioneer the 'system of co-operation' was blamed for their problems. The parliamentarians concluded that 'perfect equality and community in all things have evidently not turned out so blissful a state of affairs as in the first blush of their enthusiasm the settlers expected.' They found that 'each group is a little country in itself, and its social life evidently possesses all the jealousies and meannesses [sic], and no doubt the virtues and kindnesses, of life everywhere else'. 'Men of talk' take power while the 'honestly industrious' do the work.⁴⁴

One reporter observed that while it was obvious they badly needed rain, even more important was better land closer to the railway line, since 'poor land, located at a distance from the railway, and consequently from any market, foredoomed the venture to failure'.⁴⁵

Not all its members agreed with Secretary Legg's opinion that co-operation at Excel Pioneer was a failure. Many blamed Legg's incompetence and financial

mismanagement. In February his unauthorised purchase of seed potatoes was the last straw. Edward Hannan was elected to replace Legg who refused to relinquish the position and not until July 1895 did Hannan finally prevail.⁴⁶

In March 1895, Obertown Model harvested its long-awaited maize crop which only yielded two bags, a result one newspaper observed could 'only be explained by bad soil, bad climate, bad farming, or a combination of the three'.⁴⁷

Matters further deteriorated in April with members of Nil Desperandum and Excel Pioneers suing each other for various things such as dog poisoning, and threats of arson and violence.⁴⁸ At Nil Desperandum Mary Gilbert died on 21 June, so her husband, Frederick, returned to Woolloongabba with their five children, one of whom, aged seven months, died soon after.⁴⁹ At Obertown Model, the death on 15 June of a two-week-old baby, Frank Newman, was yet another blow.⁵⁰

On 23 June, with average monthly rainfalls of only 22mm, Land Commissioner, Lewis Jackson, again visited all three communes. He found 16 members and their families remaining at Excel Pioneer where houses were 'well ordered, clean and tidy', and members appeared to have 'robust health'. They had built nine more houses but had made no agricultural progress because their soil and climate were unsuitable. He found 'co-operation was an unknown quantity in the group'. At Nil Desperandum, the 22 members and their families present told him that 'co-operation was a dismal failure'. All their crops and gardens had failed and they were totally dependent on rations. At Obertown Model, there were 14 members and families, with nothing growing and solely dependent on Government rations. Members said that co-operation was a failure and the Government should shift them to some other place before they starved. Jackson advised the Government, that 'the sooner the groups were disbanded the better'.⁵¹

Unfortunately, things deteriorated further. On 18 August, Donald Cameron, of Nil Desperandum, complained that they would 'never be self-supporting ... not from want of sufficient support from the Government, but from the amount of ill-feeling, jealousy, and covetousness that exists among the members. There are some genuine fellows as ever lived, and some of the most useless members of society that ever breathed. I am sorry to say that the useless element predominates.'⁵² At Obertown Model, members who had been working away, leaving their families to be supported

by the group, refused to contribute their income.⁵³ At Excel Pioneer, Charles Warner wrote that 'none of the members are working, and have not done so since last Christmas. I am just sick of remaining idle any longer. A very unfeeling way exists in the group. If I remain here much longer I will be driven into a conviction or a lunatic asylum'.⁵⁴

On 26 November 1895 all three communes were abandoned. Of the 12 families still at Nil Desperandum, 11 left with nine returning to Brisbane, one to Stanthorpe and one to Bundaberg; from Obertown Model, all 11 families left with 10 going to Brisbane and one staying in Roma; from Excel Pioneers, of the 13 families, eight left for Brisbane, all travelling at government expense.⁵⁵ This dramatic communal experiment was over in less than two years.

Post Communal Outcome

Under *The Co-operative Communities Land Settlement Act 1893 Amendment Act 1895* these leases were extinguished, the communes dissolved and debts forgiven. Each member could claim up to 64 hectares of ex-communal land as an individual selector.⁵⁶ No member of Nil Desperandum or Obertown Model took up this offer although a few remained in the district, including some who had withdrawn months earlier. Obertown's Joseph Bootle and John Thwaite remained in Roma for life while Patrick Cusack and Frederick Lederhose stayed for several years as did William Mercer of Nil Desperandum.

Five Excel Pioneer members each selected 64 hectares. Of these, David Robertson, John Hanify and George Legg forfeited the land a few years later while Joshua Gorton and Manuel Baldo persisted and acquired freehold.⁵⁷ In 1911, Yalebone Provisional School was established, attended by Baldo's and other children, until closing in 1925.⁵⁸

Robertson left Roma around 1902 and Hanify around 1907. Manuel and Sarah Baldo lived out their lives at Yalebone as did Joshua Gorton's wife, Susannah. In 1914 Joshua moved to Brisbane's bayside to farm before returning to Roma around 1925.

Today this former commune land along Yalebone Creek is mainly used for rough grazing. There is very little to show that these utopian dreamers, perhaps with romantic notions of communal life, ever tried to establish agricultural settlements

here, little to show for all their work, little evidence of their births and deaths – it is almost as if these 400 people had never existed.

Of the three founding leaders, Nil Desperandum's George and Marie Strickland returned to Brisbane where George worked as a clerk, became a Justice of the Peace and an active member of the Order of Oddfellows. George died in 1934 and his wife in 1948. Excel Pioneer's George and Mary Legg stayed on the land briefly, then moved to Roma for the rest of their lives where George worked as a carpenter and their sons ran businesses, and where descendants remain. Mary died in 1924 and George in 1940. Obertown Model's Joseph and Amelia Oberthur remained in Roma with Joseph running a plumbing business and standing for election before moving to South Brisbane about 1902 where he established another plumbing business. Joseph died in 1909 and Amelia in 1924.

Reasons for Failure

The concept of success and failure of communal groups is hotly debated within scholarly circles, but there is no doubt, by any interpretation, that Nil Desperandum, Excel Pioneer and Obertown Model were dismal failures. While all 13 Queensland communes established in the 1890s ceased to exist, why did these three fail so badly?

On their return to Brisbane, a Nil Desperandum member blamed climate, distance from market, and lack of systematic, workable rules. He felt that a government appointed overseer was needed, and financial certainty could have allowed better use of capital in purchasing plant and livestock. When pressed about their group's failure, an Obertown Model man cited the soil, which was only about 8cm deep before reaching clay, then rock.⁵⁹

Undoubtedly all these things contributed. The communards arrived too late to clear land and plant anything for the well-watered 1893-4 summer, and by mid-1894 the soaking rain that had turned roads into bogs and severely hindered their movements, ceased. Not a drop of rain fell during February, March, June and August of 1895 and a drought set in that lasted until 1903.⁶⁰ Distance from markets would have been a problem had they produce to sell, which they did not, but their isolation created a huge problem which saw their horses used more for transport than agriculture, and may have contributed to the death of a child who died of her burns en-route for

medical attention in Roma.

The communards cleared and cultivated land and planted crops, but lacked adequate knowledge of farming, especially dry-land farming, to succeed. While several men in each group claimed to be farmers when they joined, and most others claimed some level of farm or stock experience, it would seem that much of this experience was misrepresented. Worse, there is little evidence to suggest that those with agricultural skills (or skills in any other area for that matter) were encouraged to provide leadership in those areas. They acquired cows, sheep and horses, but had inadequate grass for the cows and sheep to thrive, inadequate grain for the horses.

Visiting the land along Yalebone Creek today, one cannot help but wonder about the logic of anyone ever trying to farm this area – even with adequate capital and modern technology. But before the communards arrived this land received 70mm average monthly rain, quite sufficient for agriculture, and when the site was inspected, Yalebone Creek full of fresh water, and appeared to be ideal for agriculture.⁶¹

The communards seem to have thought that unless they accepted this land they would receive none, but that was clearly incorrect. In 1893 most had been destitute in Brisbane and the sooner they accepted the offer of communal land the sooner they would be eligible for government rations and other support. They were perhaps reassured that with three communes so close together they would have mutual support and sooner have a school, better roads, etc.

Many members appear to have joined these rural communes not because they wanted to be in a commune, nor even on the land, but simply because they were desperate and this was the least dire of their limited options. Communal living is challenging even when people are committed to the ideals, share key values, and consensually agree on governance.⁶² None of these factors applied to these communards.

Woolloongabba Exemplars was at least led by the committed and charismatic communard, George Chale Watson, who developed elaborate guidelines to communal living. Mizpah, Protestant Unity, Monmouth and Byrnestown had strong religious connections that helped people pull together – but these advantages were still insufficient.

The Roma groups had none of these advantages. Many of the communards had never met before finding themselves living and working together and sharing resources. All

three groups were riddled with internal strife, arguing over leadership and resources, and with allegations of corruption, and the ‘rascality of some of the members’.⁶³ Their leaders lacked the qualities needed to enforce rules, settle differences, and inspire members to work together. The pettiness of some quarrels defies belief. At Obertown the large men complained the small men could not do as much work as them and refused to work more than the smaller men.⁶⁴ At length it was said of every commune that ‘The drones would not work; the workers soon tired of toiling for their lazy co-partners, whom they could not get rid of.’⁶⁵ Queensland poet, George Essex Evans, wrote the poem, ‘Our Co-operative Group’ to lampoon these would-be communards.⁶⁶

Even with the best of well-watered land close to a town and railway it would be hard to imagine Excel Pioneers, Nil Desperandum or Obertown Model succeeding as a communal, or any other form of settlement.

Conclusion

Peter McLean, Undersecretary for Agriculture, in sheer frustration condemned the ‘utter futility’ of trying to make a communal settlement work where ‘the spirit of co-operation, so essential to the success of such schemes’ was ‘conspicuous by its absence’.⁶⁷ The direct cost to the Queensland Government, at a time of serious fiscal crisis, was about £3715 (*about* \$1,000,000 in 2016 terms) for these three communes.⁶⁸ There would have been at least that much also outlaid in indirect costs such as staff wages, travel, etc. The personal cost to those involved in these failed communes was much higher in terms of deaths, suffering, frustration and knowing that they had devoted two years of their lives to an utterly futile project. A generation later, these lessons were ignored when the Soldier Settlement Scheme was rolled out.

¹ W Metcalf and E Huf, *Herrnhut: Australia’s first utopian commune*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

² W Metcalf, ‘Alice River: Queensland’s first commune’, *Queensland History Journal [QHJ]*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2014, pp. 357-74.

³ *Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings [QV&P]* ‘Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on Assisted Land Settlement’ vol. 4, 1892, pp. 77-204; *Brisbane Courier [BC]*, 19 September 1891, p. 6, and 18 February 1892, p. 5.

⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette [QGG]* vol. 60, no. 16, 14 October 1893, pp. 511-22 and 587-90. This process has been described in more detail in *QHJ*, vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 322-3, and vol. 22, no. 11, pp. 841-2.

⁵ Metcalf, ‘Alice River: Queensland’s first commune’.

-
- ⁶ B Metcalf, *The Gayndah communes*, Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1998.
- ⁷ V Dawson, *Chinchilla's Communal Settlers*, Windaroo: Veronica Dawson, 2014.
- ⁸ W Metcalf, R Kerr and I Christie, 'Protestant Unity Commune and the establishment of Pomona', *QHI*, vol. 22, no. 11, 2015, pp. 841-58.
- ⁹ W Metcalf, R Kerr and I Christie, 'Woolloongabba Exemplars Commune', *QHI*, vol. 21, no. 5, 2011, pp. 321-38.
- ¹⁰ *Western Star* [WS], 7 May 1948, p. 5.
- ¹¹ *BC*, 30 November 1893, p. 6.
- ¹² *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser* [QT], 2 Dec 1893, p. 5.
- ¹³ *QGG*, vol. 60, no. 112, 30 December 1893, p. 1183, and vol. 61, no. 12, 16 January 1894 pp. 17 & 114.
- ¹⁴ Nil Desperandum members were: George Strickland, Henry Walter Helyar, Anders Nielsen, Barham William Dyne, Atticus Tooth, Frederick Waite, James Francis Marshall, George Middleton, John Brown, William Mercer, Joseph Edmund Hall, Samuel Rawson, William Duncan, Richard Peter White, John William Oddie, William Henry Hackles, Frederick Gilbert, William Henry Genn, Henry Arkinstall, John Dickson, Arthur Edward Gray, Christopher Yates, Harrison Westropp Cameron, Thomas Jolly, Cornelius Donovan, James Edward Harris, John Ashby, Charles Frederick Levitt, Arthur Taylor, Ernest Holloway, Frederick Holloway, Frederick William Lionel Spencer, John McDougall, Edwin James Collins and George Lomas. (*QGG*, vol. 60, no. 112, p. 1183)
- ¹⁵ *BC*, 9 November 1893, p. 5.
- ¹⁶ Obertown Model members were: Joseph Francis Oberthur, William Paget, Henry Green, William Alexander, Patrick Coghlan, William Pollock Savage, Hans Rohde, Giacomo Tosi, William J Lynn, Thomas Lester, Frederick Soady, William Montgomery, Charles Riddick, Charles Patrick Coghlan, John Ewing, Frank Weller, John Thwaite, John Henry Coghlan, Frederick Voltz, Daniel Fitzgerald, Patrick Cusack, Henry John Wells, Joseph Fitzgerald, Hermann Reidel, Paul Brückner, Frederick Lederhose, Joseph Bootle, William Rohde, John Fitzgerald, William Gallagher, Salotti Gaetane, Thomas Bentley, Samuel Derges, Charles Henry Weight, William J Hickey, Ernest Wilton James, Edward Gallagher, John Tapper, David Robertson, William Stephens, Charles H. Newman, Thomas Darcy, George Griffith, Thomas Tapper and James Tapper. (*QGG*, vol. 61, no. 12, 16 Jan 1894, p. 114)
- ¹⁷ *BC*, 21 January 1895, p. 5.
- ¹⁸ *BC*, 8 November 1893, p. 6.
- ¹⁹ Oberthur led a gang of 'bushrangers' who robbed the Joint Stock Bank, Tenterfield, on 11 July 1866. They were armed and Oberthur fired at an employee, the bullet passing 'through his whiskers'. They were arrested and Oberthur was sentenced to three years in Berrima Gaol. (*Armidale Express* 14 July 1866, p. 3; *Maitland Mercury* 11 August 1866, p. 2)
- ²⁰ *BC*, 8 November 1893, p. 6.
- ²¹ *Telegraph* [Tel], 11 January 1894, p. 2.
- ²² Excel Pioneer members were: George Legg, William Foster Miles, John Henry Clothier, Edward Hannan, Joseph Andrew Kirshaw, John William Godwin, Richard Sumner Nightingale, John Missenden, Henry Mehrens, George Wright, George Clark, William Slater, Thomas Godwin, Daniel Dartnell, Henry Hawkins, Adam Johnston, Joshua Joseph Gorton, Joseph Bartley, James Toner, James Young, Daniel Lowe, Walter John Clark, William Sheldrick, William Poole, Albert Eaton, John Hanify, William Lowes, Thomas Lowes, James Cadenhead, David Robertson, Manuel Baldo, Albert Bess, John Gilmore, John Cooper, Robert Griffin, Patrick Kelly, Benjamin Dunwell, George Hill, William Wright, Carl Berndt, Robert Wallace, George Frederick Adams, John Bailey, George Gardner, John Seaman. (*QGG* vol. 61, no. 12, Tuesday 16 January 1894, p. 17)
- ²³ *BC*, 9 November 1893, pp. 5-6; *Tel* 22 January 1894, p. 2; *WS*, 20 January 1894, p. 2.
- ²⁴ *BC*, 30 December 1893, p. 4, and 5 January 1894, pp. 4-5.
- ²⁵ *WS*, 20 January 1894, p. 2
- ²⁶ *WS*, 3 February 1894, p. 2.
- ²⁷ *WS*, 17 March 1894, p. 2; Queensland Death Certificates C2686 and C2697, 1894 (in which Tosi was misspelt as Tozer).
- ²⁸ *QVP* 1893 vol. 3, p. 429.
- ²⁹ *BC*, 13 February 1895, p. 7.
- ³⁰ *QV&P*, vol. 3, 1895, p. 429.
- ³¹ *BC*, 19 March 1894, p. 4; *WS*, 7 May 1948, p. 5.
- ³² *Week* [Wk], 13 April 1894, pp. 10-11
- ³³ *BC*, 25 April 1894, pp. 4-5.
- ³⁴ *The Worker* [Wr], 26 May 1894, p. 1.

-
- ³⁵ *Tel*, 6 June 1894, p. 4.
- ³⁶ *QV&P*, vol. 3, 1895, p. 430; *WS*, 7 May 1948, p. 5.
- ³⁷ *Tel*, 22 August 1894, p. 7.
- ³⁸ *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 430.
- ³⁹ *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 429.
- ⁴⁰ *Old Parliamentary Debates*, 17 October 1894, p. 937.
- ⁴¹ *Queensland Index to Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces [QBDM]*, Birth Reg No. C7623; Death Reg Nos. C2752, C2756, C2760 (in which Hackles was misspelt as Eccles); *BC*, 10 December, p. 5.
- ⁴² *QBDM* Death Reg No. C2759
- ⁴³ *Darling Downs Gazette [DDG]*, 23 January 1895, p. 5.
- ⁴⁴ *BC*, 19 January 1895, p. 5.
- ⁴⁵ *Queenslander*, 2 February 1895, p. 213.
- ⁴⁶ *BC*, 13 February 1895, p. 7; QSA, Lands Dept, Registers of inwards correspondence, Item ID 979324, Letter nos 2773, 3797, 5194, 7384-5, 9302, 10325, 11918, 13696 of 1895.
- ⁴⁷ *Warwick Argus [WA]*, 5 March 1895, p. 2.
- ⁴⁸ *WS*, 6 April 1895, p. 2, and 27 April 1895, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ *QBDM* Death Reg Nos. C2515, B28154; Birth Reg No. C7944.
- ⁵⁰ *QBDM* Birth Reg No. C7981; Death Reg No. C2512.
- ⁵¹ *WS*, 7 May 1948, p. 5 and 10 July 1895, p. 2.
- ⁵² *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 429.
- ⁵³ *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 430.
- ⁵⁴ *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 431.
- ⁵⁵ *Tel*, 28 November 1895, p. 5.
- ⁵⁶ *QGG*, vol. 64, no. 156, 24 December 1895, pp. 1337-9.
- ⁵⁷ QSA, Lands Dept, Register – selections, Item ID 23373.
- ⁵⁸ QSA, Education and Training Dept, Register – admissions, state school, Item ID 646655.
- ⁵⁹ *BC*, 28 November 1895 p. 5.
- ⁶⁰ *WS*, 7 May 1948, p. 5.
- ⁶¹ *WS*, 3 February 1894, p. 2 and 7 May 1948, p. 5.
- ⁶² B Metcalf, *From utopian dreaming to communal reality: Co-operative lifestyles in Australia*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995.
- ⁶³ *QV&P*, 1895, vol. 3, p. 431.
- ⁶⁴ *DDG*, 23 January 1895, p. 5.
- ⁶⁵ *WA*, 3 December 1895, p. 2.
- ⁶⁶ *Bulletin*, 11 January 1896, p. 18.
- ⁶⁷ *Wk*, 9 August 1895, p. 11.
- ⁶⁸ Queensland Dept of Agriculture Annual Report, 1895-6, in *QV&P*, 1896, vol. 4, pp. 452-3.
- As a comparison, in 1894 primary school teachers began on £72 pa with senior teachers earning £256 pa (mean of £138pa), Premier McIlwraith earned £1000 pa, Undersecretary of Agriculture, McLean, earned £500 pa, and ‘normal’ Brisbane houses ranged from £200 to £500.