

**Unions and anti-Chinese agitation on
the Victorian goldfields:**

The Clunes riot of 1873

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Author's note:

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Corrections and minor modifications have been made to the text and footnotes in this version. This paper is circulated to generate discussion and criticism, before any possible future publication.

This paper is almost entirely based on 'Reconsidering "White Australia": Class and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot', my 1997 honours thesis submitted to the La Trobe University History Department. Those wanting to read the entire thesis can find it (unfortunately, without footnotes or bibliography) on the net:

www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions

Alternatively, contact me and I can get you a photocopy of the whole thing. Feedback, further information and criticism are most welcome!

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Abbreviations: **ADB**: Australian Dictionary of Biography; **AMA**: Amalgamated Miners' Association; **AWU**: Australian Workers Union; **MLA**: Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly (lower house); **PRO**: Victorian Public Records Office; **PP**: Papers Presented to Parliament by Command. **SLV**: State Library of Victoria

The excitement and cheering were great, men, women, and children joining in the resistance. Near by was a heap of road metal, and arming herself with a few stones a sturdy North of Ireland woman, without shoes or stockings, mounted the barricade as the coaches drew up. As she did so she called out to the other women, saying:

“Come on, you Cousin Jinnies; bring me the stones and I will fire them.”

The sergeant in charge of the police presented his carbine at the woman, and ordered her to desist. Her answer was to bare her breast and say to him:

“Shoot away, and be dammed to ye; better be shot than starved to death.”

With the words she threw a stone, cutting the cheek of the officer. After that stones flew rapidly; the horses began to plunge, and the Chinese to yell... In less time than it takes to tell it, the horses were turned and driven off whence they had come, the Chinese invasion was repulsed, and no Chinaman has ever gained a footing in Clunes even unto this day... Clunes residents were and still are proud of their fight against capitalistic greed and Chinese.¹

On 9 December 1873, somewhere between a thousand and two thousand men, women and children rioted in Clunes, a small gold mining town around 30 kilometres north of Ballarat. They beat back a convoy of coaches carrying Chinese miners, being escorted by police to break a long and bitter strike in one of the company-owned gold mines of Clunes.

Barely six months after the riot, the first Victorian gold miners union, the Amalgamated Miners' Association, held its founding conference in Bendigo. Delegates from Clunes moved to ban union members from working in mines that employed Chinese labor. Although the motion was watered down, its adoption meant that the AMA became the first union in Australia to attempt to bar Chinese workers from membership. The new union, and the people of Clunes, had just written themselves into the histories of 'White Australia'.²

¹ William Guthrie Spence, *Australia Awakens*, Sydney, The Worker Trustees, 1909, pp. 49-50. 'Cousin Jenny' was a popular term for Cornish women, 'Cousin Jack' for Cornish men.

² The best easily available secondary account of the Clunes riot and its aftermath is by Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1979, pp. 75-78. Those interested in studying the subject in greater depth are referred to Jerome Small, 'Reconsidering "White Australia": Class, and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot', unpublished honours thesis, La Trobe University History Department, 1997. The thesis is available on the net (without bibliography or footnotes) at www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions. The page references in this paper are to the printed version of the thesis, available from the author.

The account of the riot quoted above, written many years later by union leader and Labor politician WG Spence,³ will strike a familiar chord with anyone who has studied the origins of the 'White Australia' policy. The picture that Spence paints, of a desperate but ultimately successful working class struggle against "capitalistic greed and Chinese", fits neatly with the view most historians have taken on the subject since then.

To reduce a lot of painstaking historical work to a couple of lines: Many historians argue that it was hostility to Chinese people from the mass of the population, dramatically shown in events such as the Clunes riot, that spurred colonial elites and governments into action against the Chinese. Thus the anti-Chinese restrictions of 1881 and 1888, and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, can very largely be credited to ordinary people of European stock and especially to working class people, their prejudices and their actions.⁴

Of course, this isn't the only part of the world where this sort of history is written. The United States, like Australia, boasts a long history of racist immigration laws. And a vigorous historical debate has raged for some time in the US about the role of the working class in pressing for these and other racist measures.⁵ Such a debate is long overdue in Australia. A number of works have challenged the 'bottom up' explanation for anti-Chinese racism in this country, yet the common sense among historians seems to remain: that the pressure to ban coloured immigrants came from the working class first and foremost.⁶

³ Spence was one of Australia's first full-time union officials, with the AMA from 1878. He went on to help found the shearers' union, which under Spence's leadership became the Australian Workers Union. Both of these unions had Chinese exclusion clauses in their rules. Spence was not actually present at the Clunes riot, probably living at the time in nearby Creswick. See ADB and Carol Lansbury, 'William Guthrie Spence', *Labour History*, no. 13, November 1967, pp. 1-10. For the Australian Shearers' Union rules see Noel Ebbels (ed.), *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907*, Cheshire-Landsdowne, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 110-117, esp. p. 114 for the Chinese exclusion clause.

⁴ For a fuller discussion of histories of 'White Australia', see my thesis esp. pp. 15-27, 34-37.

⁵ Most recently Andrew Gyory has argued impressively that the vast mass of the American working class living outside California played next to no role in pushing for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998. In a lengthy, hostile polemic against Gyory, Stanford M. Lyman points to an extensive literature on the subject: 'The "Chinese Question" and American Labor Historians', *New Politics*, vol. 7, no. 4 (new series), no. 28, Winter 2000, available at <http://www.wilpaterson.edu/~newpol/issue28/cont28.htm>

⁶ The following works offer a challenge in one form or another to any simple picture of reluctant governments being pushed into action by a racist multitude: Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1982; Richard Hall, *Black Armband Days*, Milsons Point, Random House, 1998; Julia Martinez, 'Questioning "White Australia": Unionism and "Coloured" Labour, 1911-1937', *Labour History*, no. 76, May 1999, pp. 1-19; Cathie May, 'The Chinese in Cairns and Atherton; contrasting studies in race relations, 1876-1920', and Sue Walden, 'The tin fields of North-East Tasmania – a regional variation', both in Paul Macgregor, (ed.), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific*, Melbourne, Museum of Chinese Australian History, 1995; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, and Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 3rd edn. 1993. Geoffrey Serle's chapter on Chinese in Victoria in the 1850s is an often-neglected source, in his *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1963. One of the few Australian historians to offer a consistent theoretical challenge to the 'bottom up' view of racism is Verity Burgmann. See her 'Revolutionaries and Racists: Australian

This paper represents a work in progress towards challenging this ‘common sense’. In particular, it’s the result of testing a classical Marxist analysis of racism against the historical record of the Victorian gold fields. Marxists stress the active role of a society’s ruling class, or elite, in shaping that society’s ruling ideas – racism included. Marxists seek to explain the hold of racism by looking, firstly, at what interest members of different social classes have in propagating these ideas; and secondly by looking at the factors in people’s social world that explain why racist ideas can ‘make sense’ to large numbers of people.⁷

The implications of this approach should become clear through the course of this paper. Behind the appearance of the Clunes riot (and its aftermath) as simply another chapter in working class resistance to ‘capitalistic greed and Chinese’, there a number of forces at work. Who shaped the social and political landscape in which the Clunes riot occurred? Who was leading the anti-Chinese push at this time? Who joined it, and why?

In order to answer these questions, a little background is needed.

The Clunes strike

In 1873, Clunes was a gold mining town of around three thousand people. Unlike nearby Ballarat and Creswick, both based on alluvial gold mining, most of the gold at Clunes had to be smashed out of quartz rock.⁸ Chinese miners were almost entirely excluded from quartz mining in nineteenth century Victoria. So while WG Spence’s claim that ‘no Chinaman has ever gained a footing in Clunes’ was more a boast than a fact, it shouldn’t surprise us to learn that Clunes had no Chinese camp. In contrast both Creswick and Ballarat, like many other goldfields towns, had large Chinese villages at this time.⁹

Socialism and the problem of Racism, 1887-1917’, unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1980; also her ‘Capital and Labour: Responses to Immigration in the Nineteenth Century’, Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus, (eds.), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Working Class in Australia*, Neutral Bay, Hale & Iremonger, 1978, pp. 20-34; also Burgmann’s ‘Who Our Enemies Are: Andrew Markus and the Baloney View of Australian Racism’, *Labour History*, no. 49, 1985, pp. 97-101. Working from the same tradition is Phil Griffiths, ‘Australian Perceptions of Japan: The History of a Racist Phobia’, *Socialist Review* [Melbourne], no. 3, December 1990, pp. 5-72.

⁷ A good starting point for those interested in Marxist approaches to racism is Alex Callinicos, *Race and Class*, London, Bookmarks, 1998.

⁸ Briefly: ‘Alluvial’ gold is dug out of the gravel or clay found in ancient buried rivers. ‘Quartz’ gold is found in seams running through volcanic quartz rock. While most gold fields in Victoria started with mining alluvial gold (and some gold fields, such as Beechworth, Creswick and Ballarat), continued to prosper on alluvial, many gold fields – such as Bendigo and Clunes – worked much of the alluvial gold out early on and, by the 1870s, were predominantly quartz fields.

⁹ According to the 1870 post office directory, there were seven quartz and only two alluvial mines in Clunes. In December 1873, in the whole of Victoria there were only 115 Chinese miners working quartz, compared to 16,658 European quartz miners. For alluvial gold, the figures are 13,413 Chinese and 20, 409 Europeans, according to the Mining Surveyors and Registrar Reports, quarter ending 31 Dec 1873, to be found in PP session 1874 vol 2. I argue that existing explanations of why Chinese miners stayed off quartz in nineteenth century Victoria are inadequate in my honours thesis, pp. 53-64. There is clear evidence that Spence’s claim is wrong. The accounts of various timber carters, recorded in the Union Bank ledger (held in the Clunes Museum), show they employed some Chinese workers. One of Lena Wattleworth’s earliest memories of Clunes is of Chinese market gardeners, in her

Since the late 1850s, Clunes had been a centre of company mining. In 1858, men employed by the giant Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Mining Company had fought pitched battles, often deep underground, with parties of miners who refused to accept the right of 'monopolists' to exploit their massive claim. The Port Phillip Company's London-based shareholders had invested substantial capital in this, the first large company mine in Victoria. And their manager, Rivett Henry Bland, was not going to see this investment threatened: Government troopers were eventually needed to render Clunes safe for big capital.¹⁰

A series of company mines, some of the most profitable in Victoria, followed in the wake of the Port Phillip Company. Mr Bland, now a member of the exclusive Collins Street Melbourne Club, took up residence overlooking Clunes and invested in other mines.¹¹ As Clunes grew into the 1870s, tree planting, an impressive town hall (opened in May 1873 by Governor Bowen), and a mechanic's institute (endowed by Mr Bland), all spoke of civic harmony and pride. In 1873, however, the mine owners of Clunes faced a fresh challenge to their authority, and their profits, from a new source: their own workers.

This challenge was as novel for most of the workers of Clunes as it was for their employers. From the 1860s, as cheap tin from the Dutch East Indies flooded the world market, a great Cornish diaspora had left for the hard rock mining towns of America and Australia.¹² They left behind towns that had been mining since Roman times, seemingly without a single recorded industrial dispute.¹³ And in particular, for some reason, they left for Clunes, creating one of the most Cornish enclaves in Victoria.¹⁴

Childhood Memories of Clunes, 1910-1918, Clunes Museum, 3rd edn, 1999, p. 3. However, the Chinese were only a small presence in the town. The 1871 Census recorded 103 Chinese in the Borough of Clunes, 1.7% of the population of 6,000. 'Census of Victoria, 1871' in PP session 1872, vol. 2, p. 20. On the Goldfields as a whole, some 7% of the population was of Chinese origin or descent: Cronin, p. 140. From the Clunes rate books (in the possession of the Clunes Museum), the majority of Chinese in the area were market gardeners, with very few living in the actual township of Clunes. Living arrangements were reflected in death: there is only one Chinese headstone out the back of the Clunes cemetery, dating from 1873.

¹⁰ There is a good account of these riots in Geoffrey Blainey, The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, first published 1963, third edition 1978; see also Serle, pp. 216-229.

¹¹ On Bland see ADB and Paul de Serville, Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-1880, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1991. Though Bland's bank account (details of which are preserved in the Union Bank ledger held at the Clunes museum) mostly dealt in cash, he made payments to both the South Clunes and Lothair mines – presumably calls on shares – in 1873. He also wrote cheques to HN Loughnan, the chairman of Lothair, and to the Melbourne lawyer Edward Klingender, also a shareholder in Lothair. Bland is listed as a director of the Lothair Company in the Clunes Gazette of 28 Dec 1871. The list of the original shareholders in the Lothair mine (including Bland, Loughnan and Klingender) can be found in the Victorian Government Gazette of 1870, p. 1071.

¹² Dicker's Mining Record and Guide to the Gold Mines of Australia, 8 Jan 1867, p. 18. Jim Faull, The Cornish in Australia, Melbourne, Educa Press, 1983, puts the year of peak copper production in Cornwall at 1856, with a rapid decline thereafter.

¹³ For an excellent short summary of the literature on Cornish miners and unionism, see Mel Davies, 'Cornish Miners and Class Relations in Early Colonial South Australia: The Burra Burra Strikes of 1848-49', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 26, no. 105, October 1995, esp. p. 570 n10

¹⁴ In the 1871 Census some 41% of the people of Clunes claimed to be Methodists, the religion of the vast mass of Cornish people at this time. The average for the goldfields was 21%, for the colony as a whole 13%.

Even those in Clunes who weren't new chums would, most likely, have had no experience of industrial action before 1873. Though strikes had been reported on other goldfields in recent years, goldfields unionism was still very much in its infancy.¹⁵

In September 1873 the directors of the Lothair mine, on the southern outskirts of Clunes, presented new contracts to their workers. To try and increase the return to shareholders (one of whom, naturally, was Mr Bland), management at Lothair told the miners that they were now expected to work a shift on Saturday afternoon up to 11pm, which had previously been free from work.¹⁶

The 110 miners at Lothair struck work rather than accept these terms. For at least some involved with the strike, it was seen as literally a matter of life and death. 'An Old Miner' wrote to the Ballarat Courier early in the strike. After working in the 'foul air' of the Clunes mines, he wrote, he was 'laid aside, and many are in their graves...' The Lothair mine

...has only one shaft, no means of ventilation, and in case of water breaking in as it did a short time ago they have no means of escape, excepting that solitary shaft... allow me to urge my brother miners not to allow anything to induce them to resume work till some means are set on foot for the preservation of their lives.¹⁷

Another letter, early in the strike, was signed by 'A miner's wife – one of the union'. She wrote that she could name a dozen miners who had been laid in their graves by the particularly foul air of the Clunes mines. With only one exception, all these men had left wives and young families, now totally unprovided for. She reserved special venom for the mining company directors:

Directors, not satisfied with the old process of slowly poisoning our husbands, seem determined of making it both wholesale and rapid [by forcing them to work the extra Saturday shift]. They want to fatten on the

¹⁵ The earliest recorded strike of Victorian gold miners seems to have been at Daylesford in January 1865, where miners marched in from Blanket Flat (Eganstown) – headed by the ubiquitous brass band – on strike against a cut in wages. SLV Merrifield collection, card catalogue, MS 13045, La Trobe Library manuscripts collection. Merrifield cites the *Age*, 14 Jan 1865. The Clunes strike seems to be part of something of a revival in unionism on the goldfields from 1872, with strikes and unions reported in Bendigo, Stawell, and Ballarat during the spring of 1873. Cf 'Victorian Miners Associations' in the *Recorder* (Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History), vol 1 no. 3, pp. 3-5.

¹⁶ The most complete secondary account of the strike and its causes is F.C. Weickhardt, 'Clunes. The Chinese Riot. 9 December 1873: The Story of the Chinese Dispute, Compiled from Newspaper Reports of the Period', unpublished manuscript presented to Talbot and Clunes Shire Council, 1973 (copy in possession of the Clunes Museum). In the newspapers of the day, the best summary of the strike's causes is in the *Age*, 12 and 13 Jan 1874. For Bland's interest in the Lothair mine see note 10 above.

¹⁷ *An Old Miner*, *Ballarat Courier*, 25 Sept 1873, p. 4a. Water breaking in to the mine is also mentioned in the 'Lothair Director's Report' to their shareholders' meeting, *Age*, 9 Jan 1874, p. 3e. On the foul air of the Clunes mines, and its importance in sparking the strike, see also *Ballarat Courier*, 9 Sept 1873 (L); *J.D.* in the *Ballarat Courier*, 28 Oct 1873; *Alex Chalmers* in the *Age*, 13 Dec 1873, p. 5h; Weickhardt, 'Chinese Riot', p. 2.

life blood of innocent orphans – children as dear to us, their parents... as those of the upper ten.¹⁸

The striking miners formed a Miners' Association and approached the town Mayor, William Blanchard, to be its president. Blanchard – a Cornishman and a former miner, who now ran a fruit shop in Clunes – agreed to take the post. In one of the many twists to this story, it turns out that the new president of the union was actually an aspiring mining capitalist himself. Not only that: at the very time of the strike at the Lothair mine, Mayor Blanchard was busy setting up a joint venture with Mr Bland, manager of the giant Port Phillip works and a significant shareholder in the Lothair mine. Union leader and mine owner were involved in launching a major new mine together, in Ballarat East.¹⁹

The possible significance of this collaboration between union leader and mining boss becomes clear below. In the short term, however, it didn't seem to affect the role of the union or the determination of its members. As spring dragged into summer, the Clunes Miners' Association sent delegates to other goldfields, held meetings and marches, and effectively sustained the morale and the finances of 110 striking miners and their families.

The directors of the Lothair mine became increasingly impatient with the resilience of the Clunes miners: in late November, they made the decision to employ Chinese miners in an attempt to break the strike.²⁰ The police planned to move the strike-breakers into Clunes when the townsfolk were in their beds, about 3am on the morning of 9 December. Due to a tip-off, however, word of their plans reached Clunes early on the evening of December 8.²¹

The town went into uproar. As the bellman spread the word, miners from all the large mines stopped work and marched around the town, headed by the Clunes Brass Band and armed with pick-handles and similar weapons. Meetings were held on the street, the fire bell in the town hall was rung, and around a thousand men, women and boys marched by night to the Lothair claim, pushing over a shed erected to house the Chinese miners.

The coaches finally approached around 7am. A barricade was thrown up across the road, and a crowd of at least a thousand – two thousand according to the police – made up of men, women and children, pelted the coaches, the police and the Chinese with stones, brickbats, and other missiles. Despite two attempts to force a passage

¹⁸ *A Miner's Wife, One of the Union*, *Ballarat Courier*, 20 Sept 1873, p. 3a-b.

¹⁹ RH Bland, William Blanchard and WC Smith are listed as provisional directors in the 'Prospectus for North Don and Danish United Gold Mining Co.', *Ballarat Courier*, 24 September 1873, p. 4c. For Bland's interest in Lothair see note 10 above. Also Defunct Mining Company Records, PRO VPRS 567/P unit 51, North Don and Danish United Mining Co.; and unit 509, envelope 5345, Lothair Gold Mining Company.

²⁰ See the report to Lothair shareholders, printed in the *Age*, 9 Jan 1874, p. 3e. The increasingly desperate straits of the Lothair company can be followed in the Union Bank ledger, copy in possession of the Clunes Museum, which records that the Lothair overdraft went from £2850 in April 1873 to £4700 in September 1873, and then mushroomed to over £7000 in December 1873.

²¹ Supt Hill to Chief Commissioner Standish, 9 Dec 1873, part of PRO VPRS 3991/P, unit 716, file D73/16598.

through the crowd, the police were violently beaten back and the whole convoy was driven off. 'Women', according to the main police report, 'were the most prominent rioters, assailing with stones all opposed to them.'²²

Later in the day, after a little more marching around the town, about a thousand people met and passed a number of resolutions. This was the first opportunity for the people of Clunes to fix a meaning on their action. Did they see their riot as simply beating back strikebreakers of whatever race, and thus stopping company directors from 'fattening on the lifeblood of orphans', or did they see the morning's events as WG Spence did later, as part of an ongoing battle against the Chinese? Did they reserve their vitriol for the company directors, who had tried to use some of the most marginalised people on the goldfields to smash a strike, or did they target the Chinese themselves? From the none-too-detailed press report that we have of this meeting, it seems clear that the townspeople of Clunes opted without dissent for the latter line of thinking.²³

After being assured by one speaker that the Chinese were 'a moral blight and a pestilence, worse than all the plagues of Egypt', the assembled miners and their supporters voted to express their

utter abhorrence at the conduct of those persons, with whom the heavy responsibility rests, in having attempted to subject our prosperous and hitherto irreproachable town to the moral pollution and attendant horrors of a Chinese encampment.²⁴

An important question arises here: how did the people of Clunes know of the 'moral pollution' and other 'horrors' that attended a Chinese camp? For almost all of them, it seems certain that this 'knowledge' would not have been gained from any first hand experience of Chinese people.

Leaders and followers

The diary of Richard Pope, a Cornish miner and Methodist lay preacher who worked in many company-owned quartz mines at Bendigo, might serve as a guide to the sort of contact that many white miners in Victoria may have had with their Chinese fellow-

²² Supt Hill to Chief Commissioner Standish, 10 Dec 1873, *ibid.* Detailed accounts of the riot were featured prominently in every Victorian newspaper, with the most detailed appearing in the Ballarat Star, 10 Dec 1873, pp. 2g-3a; Ballarat Courier, 10 Dec 1873, p. 2f; Clunes Guardian, 11 Dec 1873 (reprinted Clunes Guardian & Gazette, 15 Dec 1905, copy in the Clunes Museum). All the accounts attest to the leading role of women in the riot.

²³ It may be tempting to believe that the prominent involvement of women, supposed guardians of the moral order in these times, showed that the riot was entirely motivated by fears of the 'morally polluting' Chinese, and wouldn't have happened had the intended strikebreakers been European. However, a very similar pattern of women's involvement is seen in the miners' strikes and mass pickets of the 1880s and after in Broken Hill, where Chinese labour was not at issue. See Sandra Bloodworth, 'Rebel Women: Women and Class in Broken Hill 1889-1917', honours thesis submitted to La Trobe University History Department, 1996. This thesis is also available on the net, on the 'Marxist Interventions' page: www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions.

²⁴ Creswick Advertiser, 12 Dec 1873, p. 2f. (extr. Clunes Guardian: this version of the meeting is more detailed than the reprint from the Guardian cited in note 21 above).

miners. Richard Pope made a point of recording the nationality of his workmates, and especially of his current underground mining 'mate'. Thus his mate in January 1871 was 'a young Irish man Pat Nolan by name', while his boss 'is a Norwegian and a surly old daf'. At one point he records that his new mining mate is 'Tom Lawley from Worcestershire', at another he writes that 'I got a German mate for the time'. An 'old American mate' got Pope one job, while on another he worked briefly with 'Peter Smith a Spaniard'. When it was found in late December 1875 that 'my mate the Welshman has not yet finished his Christmas', Pope's new working mate was 'a St Austell [Cornish] man named Harry Blight'.²⁵

Given the marginal role that Chinese miners were consigned to in Victorian gold mining at this time, it's no surprise that Richard Pope's 'mate' was never a Chinaman: the same would apply to the quartz miners of Clunes.²⁶ Thus one vital way in which many miners could have seen Chinese people as equals, as co-workers and thus as collaborators was closed off.

Neither did Pope and his family ever live in amongst Chinese people.²⁷ In this also, they would have been quite typical of the miners of Clunes. As noted earlier, there was no Chinese camp in Clunes. Many of the Cornish people of the town would have been part of the migration of the late 1850s and 1860s, and would never have lived alongside Chinese miners. Officially sanctioned segregation between Chinese camps and the rest of the population had been the norm on the Victorian goldfields since the mid-1850s, a practice which helped to cement perceptions of the Chinese as aliens and outcasts.²⁸

If not from any first hand experience of living or working with Chinese people, then, how did the people of Clunes arrive at the conclusion that Chinese were a source of 'moral pollution'?

A survey of the 'ruling ideas' of Victoria at this time could start at the very top of the social structure. In the same month that the townspeople of Clunes rioted, Victoria's Governor George Bowen gave a speech to the assembled public (i.e., private) school students of Melbourne. He urged the colony's elite-in-training:

²⁵ Richard Pope, Diary, 11 Jan & 14 Jan 1871; 11 Dec 1876; 10 April 1872; 6 Nov 1875; 18 July 1877; 28 Dec 1875, La Trobe Manuscript Collection, State Library of Victoria, MS 11918, Box 2470/2, 3, 4.

²⁶ The Rev William Young's report on the Chinese of Victoria in 1868 shows that no Chinese worked for European mining companies on the Bendigo field. In PP, session 1868, vol. 3, pp. 1271-1300 (paper no. 56). On the Chinese and quartz see my thesis, pp. 53-64.

²⁷ The closest Richard Pope came was a three month stint at Gordon, where he was within earshot of the Chinese camp on festival nights. Richard Pope, Diary, Nov 1869 to Jan 1870. In Bendigo, Pope lived in the Cornish enclave of St Just's Point, which like the rest of the town was separated from the main Chinese camps by 'a comparatively unpopulated zone', at least into the early twentieth century. The quote is from Dr Norris, Chairman of the Board of Health, speaking in 1905 and quoted in Yolande Collins, 'Chinese communal arrangements in Bendigo and health officer surveillance, 1870s - 1905', in Macgregor (see note 6), p. 404.

²⁸ See Cronin pp. 46, 80ff; Blainey, p. 88; Weston Bate, Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, p. 150; Andrew Markus, Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1994, p. 64.

Never forget that you are not only Victorians, but Australians; not only Australians, but Britons – sons and heirs of the British Empire – members of that Imperial race which has overspread the world from one end of it to the other, and brings with it everywhere the blessings of its well-ordered freedom, its glorious memories of the past, and its still more glorious hopes for the future. We belong to that Imperial race which has conquered those vast Indian realms which of old baffled the armies of Alexander, and which is now, by the still nobler arts of peace, fast subduing our own Australia.²⁹

One could conclude from such a speech that ‘our own Australia’ belonged exclusively to the ‘Imperial race’, with others to be tolerated only on sufferance or not at all. If any of the people of Clunes had actually heard this speech, they could have seen it as endorsement from the highest levels for their racist stand against the Chinese.³⁰

Closer to the townspeople of Clunes, one vital source of information on the alleged ‘moral pollution’ associated with Chinese camps is the press of the day. In one of many similar articles, in June 1870 the Ballarat Courier described the Chinese village in Golden Point, in the heart of Ballarat East, as

a plague spot, dreaded by all in the vicinity who have not succumbed to its contaminating influence... the vices of the Chinese are many, and have exerted an extremely demoralising effect on the surrounding district.³¹

Around the same time, the Ballarat Star condemned

the regular business in the debauchery of children... carried on in the Chinese Camp here. Opium appears to be the means used to render the children passive victims of the brutal passions of their seducers.³²

It must be said that the historical record shows these allegations to be completely baseless. A detailed study of Chinese criminal records in Victoria covering this period has uncovered no cases of Chinese men being convicted of ‘seducing’ children. Extensive studies of police records in Victoria and Western Australia have shown an extraordinarily low rate of Chinese men being brought up on charges of assaulting

²⁹ Sir George Ferguson Bowen, (ed. Stanley Lane-Poole), Thirty Years of Colonial Government, London, Longmans, Green and co., 1889, vol. 2, p. 17.

³⁰ I have no evidence that the Clunes rioters were influenced in any direct way by Sir George’s sentiments: rather the point is that these sort of views were common coin at the highest levels of colonial society at this time. William Blanchard had however met Sir George on at least one occasion, when the Governor officially opened the magnificent new Town Hall at Clunes in May 1873. F.C. Weickhardt, ‘Clunes Borough Council 1860 to 1965’, unpublished manuscript, photocopy in Ballarat Library Australiana section, pp. 5-6.

³¹ Ballarat Courier, 28 June 1870. This press campaign – and the protests in the Chinese community against it – is documented by Bate, pp. 156-157; I also discuss these events in my thesis, pp. 28-34.

³² Ballarat Star, 30 June 1870, p. 2c (L).

women, or of rape.³³ Nevertheless, this sort of allegation was the basis for a vicious press campaign against the Chinese.

There is no doubt that this media campaign was deliberately fed by the Ballarat police force, with the apparent endorsement of their political masters. Sergeant Larner gave reporters tours of the Ballarat East Chinese camp, after showing them a lurid report he had prepared in 1868 at the instigation of the Government: 'On the Chinese camps in the Ballarat District and the expediency of breaking them up'.³⁴ As the reporter from the Ballarat Star noted, after reading Sergeant Larner's report 'one does not start for the camp with favourable impressions'.³⁵

So when the townspeople of Clunes voted to fix a racist meaning on their riotous activities in December 1873, they were agreeing with a long line of powerful figures who had declared on numerous occasions that the Chinese were indeed a source of 'moral pollution', who should be kept out of any respectable community. Any history of the Clunes riot should give due credit to these authorities for their role in the creation of 'White Australia' politics.

Not least among these authorities were the people actually putting the motion to the townspeople of Clunes. At the crucial meeting on 9 December, where the cause of the miners and their supporters became definitively one of 'morally polluting' Chinese rather than of capitalists 'fattening on the lifeblood of innocent orphans', none of the people who had the greatest say in setting the agenda were actually miners themselves.

The chart below shows the four people who are recorded as speaking at the meeting in Clunes on the day of the riot.³⁶

Speaker	role	views on Chinese	occupation
William Blanchard	chief speaker	Denounced 'the attempt made to introduce a wholesale system of Chinese labour'	Mayor, shopkeeper, mining capitalist, miners' union

³³ Gary Presland, 'Chinese, crime & police in 19th century Victoria', in Macgregor, esp. p. 381. 'There were no rape charges brought against Chinese immigrants' in late nineteenth century Perth, states Jan Ryan, 'Its a crime! Chinese immigrants and the law in Western Australia', in Macgregor, p. 350.

³⁴ Part of bundle 'Reports re Chinese Camps', marked MB5, in PRO VPRS 937, unit 105, envelope 3. My thanks to Jan Penny and the other staff of Sovereign Hill, where I first sighted a typed copy of this document. The political agenda of the Government at this time in wishing to break up Chinese camps close to European dwellings would repay further investigation, though it generally fitted with long standing policy in Victoria.

³⁵ Ballarat Star, 28 June 1870. This was not the first time the Star had sighted Larner's report: see the Star, 12 Dec 1869, p. 4b. Visiting English writer Anthony Trollope penned a vicious description of the Ballarat East Chinese village after one such police-sponsored tour. First published in 1873, it can be found in Nancy Keesing, (ed.), History of the Australian Gold Rushes by Those Who were There, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1971, pp. 289-291. These sorts of stories were a staple of the Ballarat press at this time. As close to the riot as 13 Oct 1873, the Ballarat Courier alleged (seemingly with no supporting evidence) that 'several girls of tender years' were 'visiting the huts of the Chinese lepers for immoral purposes' (p. 2d). On 16 Oct 1873 the Courier's leader thundered: 'There is far too much intercourse going on between European trollops and the Chinese.' (p. 2d).

³⁶ From the Clunes Guardian, 11 Dec 1873, quoted in the Creswick Advertiser, 12 Dec 1873, p. 2f.

			president
John Rofe	moved motion	Chinese 'a moral blight and a pestilence, worse than all the plagues of Egypt'	Municipal rates collector
H. Rowe	seconded motion	(not quoted)	Carpenter?
Mr Phillips	spoke	Opposed Chinese 'on moral and social grounds'	Member of the Legislative Assembly

A number of events in the aftermath of the Clunes show a similar pattern: at this time, a leading role in pushing anti-Chinese racism on Victoria's infant gold miners' unions was played by what historian CN Connolly once described as the 'middling classes'.³⁷ In a story repeated more than once in colonial Australia, various 'little men' and newcomers in colonial politics found they had to mobilise support from lower in the social scale in order to advance their own interests. And the 'Chinese problem' proved a convenient issue for this purpose.

In the wake of the Clunes riot, events at Haddon, just west of Ballarat, hit the news. In 1873 the Reform Gold Mining Company had leased one of its shafts, quite a poor one, to a party of Chinese miners. When the claim proved to be richer than the company had thought, movements were set in train to get the Chinese out of the mine.

In March 1874 the Ballarat Courier reported a meeting of about sixty members of the Haddon Miners' Association, at which the usual remarks on Chinese morality were made, and which demanded that the Reform company terminate its arrangement with the Chinese miners.³⁸ According to the police informer at this meeting, the prominent speakers, as at Clunes, were not miners themselves. One was Elijah H. Binder, the teacher at the Haddon State School; and the other was Charles Thorne, President of the Miners' Association, who was the Deputy Registrar of Haddon.³⁹

This example of the small town middle class helping workers to organise does not seem to have been a purely selfless one. Both Binder and Thorne were in fact shareholders in the Reform mine.⁴⁰ Both would stand to benefit if some pretext could

³⁷ C.N. Connolly, 'The Middling-Class Victory in New South Wales, 1853-62: A Critique of the Bourgeois-Pastoralist Dichotomy', Historical Studies, vo. 19, no. 76, April 1981, pp. 369-387. Connolly notes that anti-Chinese agitation played a role in the rise of the 'little men' in NSW at this time: *ibid.*, pp. 374, 376

³⁸ Ballarat Courier, 17 March 1874, p. 2d.

³⁹ Sergeant Wigmore to Supt Hill, 13 March 1874, in bundle of letters marked 'Ballarat: Haddon disturbances re employment of Chinese miners', in PRO VPRS 937, box 24, envelope 2.

⁴⁰ Binder and Thorne were two of 99 minor shareholders that owned the Reform Company when it was launched: the initial list of shareholders can be found in the Victoria Government Gazette, 1867, p. 1342.. Unfortunately, tracking ownership of shares is next to impossible, but the usual pattern was that ownership concentrated significantly over the years as original shareholders failed to meet 'calls' on their shares.

be found to break the tribute agreement with the Chinese – under which the company got only 15% of the gold from an increasingly rich claim – and get a new party in.⁴¹

So rather than this incident showing that the Chinese issue served as a ‘convenient weapon for union organisers in the task of uniting miners’, as one historian has written, the Haddon events look rather more like the small town middle class advancing its own interests by mobilising European miners against Chinese.⁴²

A similar case can be made for Major WC Smith, a prominent liberal politician and a major capitalist in his own right, who sits at the top of this social layer.⁴³ Just a month after the Clunes riot, Major Smith addressed a meeting at Ballarat, called to form a miners’ association in that city. He argued that any miners’ association should ‘embrace not only every working miner, but every speculative miner in the colony (Cheers)’.⁴⁴

Major Smith being a ‘speculative miner’, it’s not surprising that – when he discussed the tasks of the new body – the Major overlooked issues such as foul air, wages, and hours of work, which could lead to serious conflict between employer and employee. Instead, issues that could unite mining workers and their speculative bosses, such as opposition to Chinese labour, were Smith’s top priority.⁴⁵

Smith was in fact the *only* figure at this meeting – barely a month after the Clunes riot – to be recorded attacking the Chinese. He explained that he ‘had no objection to Chinese exercising their proper function – namely, that of gold-field scavengers... [But] the Chinese had taken the outposts... [and unless stopped] would gradually oust the Europeans altogether.’⁴⁶

It is arguable that ‘speculative miners’ such as Smith had something of a vested interest in trying to push the emerging unions off issues that would eat into profits, and onto issues where boss and worker could appear on the same side.

Saying that a key role was played by various middle class and capitalist figures in this agitation is not to say that all of the ‘middling classes’ saw things in this way. Or, for that matter, that they were alone in their views. On some occasions a rather mixed

⁴¹ The terms of the tribute agreement can be found in the quarterly directors’ report, quoted in the Ballarat Courier, 29 Sept 1873, p. 3c.

⁴² The quote is from Andrew Markus, Fear and Hatred, p. 74.

⁴³ On Smith see ADB. Smith went on to be part of the Berry Ministry that governed Victoria from 1878 to 1881. In what seems like a strange coincidence, the Major was one of the provisional directors for the shareholders in the joint venture being launched by Bland and Blanchard at the time of the strike. See Ballarat Courier, 24 Sept 1873, p. 4c.

⁴⁴ As reported in the Argus, 12 Jan 1874, p. 5e.

⁴⁵ Smith saw the Miners Association as a political, rather than industrial, organisation. Arbitration, opposition to the Victorian upper house, and mining on private property were the other issues that Smith believed the AMA ought to address. Argus, 12 Jan 1874, p. 5e. Blanchard (not surprising given his own position as a budding ‘speculative miner’) voices similar views at this meeting.

⁴⁶ Quoted in the Argus, 12 Jan 1874, p. 5f.

pattern emerges, as at a large meeting organised by the Bendigo Miners' Association a few days after the riot.⁴⁷

Public Meeting at Bendigo, 13 Dec 1873

Robert Clark	Refers to the 'well-known fact that Chinamen as a class were objectionable to a large portion of the population', citing the <u>Age</u> 's argument against 'an inferior and barely tolerated race' working the mines.	Miners' Assoc'n President, mining warden, journalist.
Mr Hattam	Chinese 'a pest, sons of rapine, murder, and plunder. (Loud applause.) The press of the colony teemed with the vices of this class of men...'	Miner
William Blanchard	'What would become of the miners of the colony if Chinese labor was allowed to be introduced in the mines?'	Clunes Mayor, shopkeeper, Clunes MA Pres.
John Gray	Objects to police escorting 'a number of barbarians to rob British people'.	Miner or mine manager
Robert Johnson	Chinese 'did nothing for the colony... as soon as they got money enough, [the Chinese] left it, leaving nothing behind, not even their dead bones.'	
Mr Blackham	Attacked only the police, not the Chinese: 'If ever the majesty of the law is disgraced and degraded, it has been at Clunes.'	printer
Matthew Barker	'Is a Chinaman not a man and a brother?'	Legal manager for a mine.

At this meeting at least one of the most vicious anti-Chinese speeches was given by a miner, Mr Hattam. And the only opposition to the anti-Chinese tide came from Matthew Barker, who almost certainly wasn't a working miner, and who copped insult and a beating for his trouble.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Quotes from the Bendigo Advertiser, 15 Dec 1873, pp. 2f - 3a. For Robert Clark see Kevin Peoples, 'Unpublished 4th year thesis on the Bendigo Miners Association, 1872-1888', Melbourne University History Department, 1975. John Gray appears to be a prominent if eccentric Methodist preacher, and a friend of Richard Pope – see my thesis, p. 50 n20. Matthew Barker was the manager and local secretary of Johnson's Reef Gold Mine, which employed around twenty people, in 1862. Dicker's, 24 March 1862, p. 8. Other information on occupations from the 1870 and 1875 Post office Directories.

⁴⁸ This type of resistance to the anti-Chinese push, though weak, might repay further study. There seems to have been a layer of former radicals who rose up the ranks of colonial society, and still continued to proclaim the Chinese as 'men and brothers'. This layer included MLA and Bendigo Advertiser proprietor Angus Mackay, his collaborator and fellow MLA Robert Burrowes, and Matthew Barker. When Mackay put his liberal sentiments on the Chinese to a mass meeting of diggers at Bendigo in

This does not, however, change the fact that various ‘middling class’ figures played a key role in pushing anti-Chinese racism onto the agenda at this time.⁴⁹ This layer of capitalists and small-town middle class figures had an interest in emphasising issues of race in order to paper over issues of class. And those who acted on this interest – from Blanchard to Binder to Major Smith and their collaborators – should be given due credit for their role in pushing ‘White Australia’ politics onto the newly forming unions.

Another question immediately arises here. If workers weren’t usually the ones leading the anti-Chinese push at this time, why were they prepared to follow those who were? In my thesis, I argue that the social world of the goldfields in this period had already been profoundly shaped by racism. As Verity Burgmann has argued, the ‘brazen rhetoric of racism strikes a chord in working class experience, because racism has already moulded that experience... This reality, created by racist practice, then appears as “proof” of racist ideology.’⁵⁰

The official segregation of the gold fields, the long history of giving inferior wages to an allegedly inferior race, and the exclusion of Chinese from quartz mining, all taught working class whites to view the Chinese as alien and inferior. When those higher up the social scale promoted a more active racist stand, working class people on many gold fields communities found little in their experience which pushed them in the opposite direction.

Alternatives

There was at least one place on the goldfields, however, where the segregation first attempted in the 1850s had almost completely broken down. In Ballarat East, a large number of Chinese at the Golden Point camp and around Main Road, lived in the midst of a poor European community. In the 1850s the authorities had, according to their usual practice, put the main Chinese camp a way outside the neat grid laid out for Ballarat. To the consternation of town planners (and, as we have seen, the police and the press), the town of Ballarat East grew up around this large camp.⁵¹

The alluvial mines in Ballarat also employed Chinese workers in this period – unlike on quartz fields such as Bendigo where in 1868, not one out of some 3500 Chinese residents were employed on a European mining claim.⁵² Dicker’s Mining Record, an

1854, his comments clearly struck a chord (see Serle, p. 323). When Matthew Barker tried to do essentially the same thing in 1873, he was shouted over and beaten up.

⁴⁹ Exactly how much of a role could be further clarified by investigating the delegates at the founding conference of the AMA, listed in both the Bendigo Advertiser and the Bendigo Independent, 25 June 1874. The origins of the delegates are pretty dispersed, and the Post Office Directories don’t list many delegates (including Robert Clark, who was chairing – neither do they list figures such as Binder and Thorne at Haddon, so we can’t assume all the delegates were miners).

⁵⁰ Burgmann, ‘Revolutionaries and Racists’, pp. 9-10. See my thesis, pp. 46-73.

⁵¹ Cf Weston Bate. The most extensive work on the Ballarat camp is by Barbara Aileen Cooper, ‘The Chinese in Ballarat: A Research Report and Display Proposal’, unpublished MA thesis, Monash University, 1992. See also her article ‘The Chinese in Ballarat’, in Macgregor (ed.), pp. 168-176.

⁵² Rev Young’s 1868 report: see note 25. Of the 800 Chinese in Ballarat East, some 170 were employed on European claims. See my thesis, pp. 67-69. The situation at Bendigo is probably more complex than the records indicate: there are photos displayed in the Golden Dragon Museum in

invaluable source of detail on Victorian gold mines of the period, also shows that the segregation prevailing at Bendigo was not total at Ballarat: many of Ballarat's large alluvial mines employed both Chinese and European workers for surface work.

An illustration in Dicker's from 1867 shows exactly this. While Chinese and European workers are engaged in distinct work (the Europeans in the puddling machine, the Chinese carting the waste from the machine), they are working alongside each other, in a process that would require at least some interaction – day after working day, year after year.⁵³

There is evidence that the relative lack of segregation in work and living arrangements in Ballarat laid the ground for some first, tenuous stirrings of solidarity between European and Chinese workers. In late October 1873, a notice appeared in the Ballarat Courier concerning the ongoing strike at the Lothair mine:

Yesterday two representatives from the Clunes Miners' Association visited Ballarat with a view of persuading the Chinese not to engage themselves to the company, a rumor having got abroad that Chinese labor was to be employed in the mine.⁵⁴

Despite a vicious state-sponsored media crusade against the supposed 'brutal passions' and 'moral degradation' of the Ballarat Chinese, the Clunes miners' first approach was to reach out to them as potential allies in their struggle.

Not only that. It seems certain that the Chinese miners at Ballarat heeded the call of their fellow miners in Clunes. According to those who organised the strikebreaking force – the police and the Lothair company – the Chinese were brought to Clunes not from Ballarat but from Creswick, a town with a much more conventional, segregated layout than Ballarat East.⁵⁵

And even here, it seems that the miners' union had friends. According to the police reports, the reason that the miners and their allies in Clunes were forewarned, and thus able to strike the other miners in town, and to spend a night parading, meeting, and working each other up into a riotous frenzy, was because of a tip-off. Specifically, Superintendent Hill fingers the "the treachery of the Chinese" as the source of the

Bendigo which show apparently Chinese faces among the European workforce of various mines. Either universal exclusion broke down later in the century or (as is so often the case), formal records have failed to capture the complexity of working class people's lives. More research is needed here.

⁵³ Dicker's Mining Record, Nov 1861 to May 1862 and Jan 1867 to March 1868. Picture from 20 Dec 1867. My thanks to Paul Macgregor of the Museum of Chinese Australian History for first telling me of this valuable journal, and for showing me this picture. 'Puddling' was the process whereby the gravel and gold dug out of the mine was washed out of the clay.

⁵⁴ Ballarat Courier, 25 October 1873, p. 2d. I was first alerted to this notice by reading FC Weickhardt, 'Chinese Riot' (see note 15 above)

⁵⁵ There was a falling out over who would pay the bill for the failed operation, documented in a bundle of correspondence marked 'Ballarat – Lothair Co won't pay McPhee conveyance of police as promised', in PRO VPRS 937, unit 24, envelope 3. According to this file, McPhee (the local Cobb and Co. operator) was contracted to transport a hundred Chinese from Creswick, but ended up transporting only fifty. For a more detailed assessment of the conflicting primary and secondary accounts of where the Chinese came from, see my thesis pp. 70-72, esp. n108.

leak.⁵⁶ Somehow some Chinese person had managed to get word, perhaps via the Chinese camp in Ballarat, that the intended strikebreakers were being mustered at Creswick before being shipped to Clunes.

Conclusion

To the extent that living and working segregation had broken down on parts of the Victorian gold fields, there was a clear basis for solidarity between Chinese and non-Chinese miners. This potential for solidarity was made real, if only fleetingly and partially, by the Clunes miners and their allies in the Ballarat and Creswick Chinese camps.

The tragedy is that the links – on the job and in the community – between Chinese and European workers were too tenuous to withstand the racist agenda being pushed at this time. Furthermore there was, at this time, no political current in the working class that could carry any weight against the tide of racism.⁵⁷

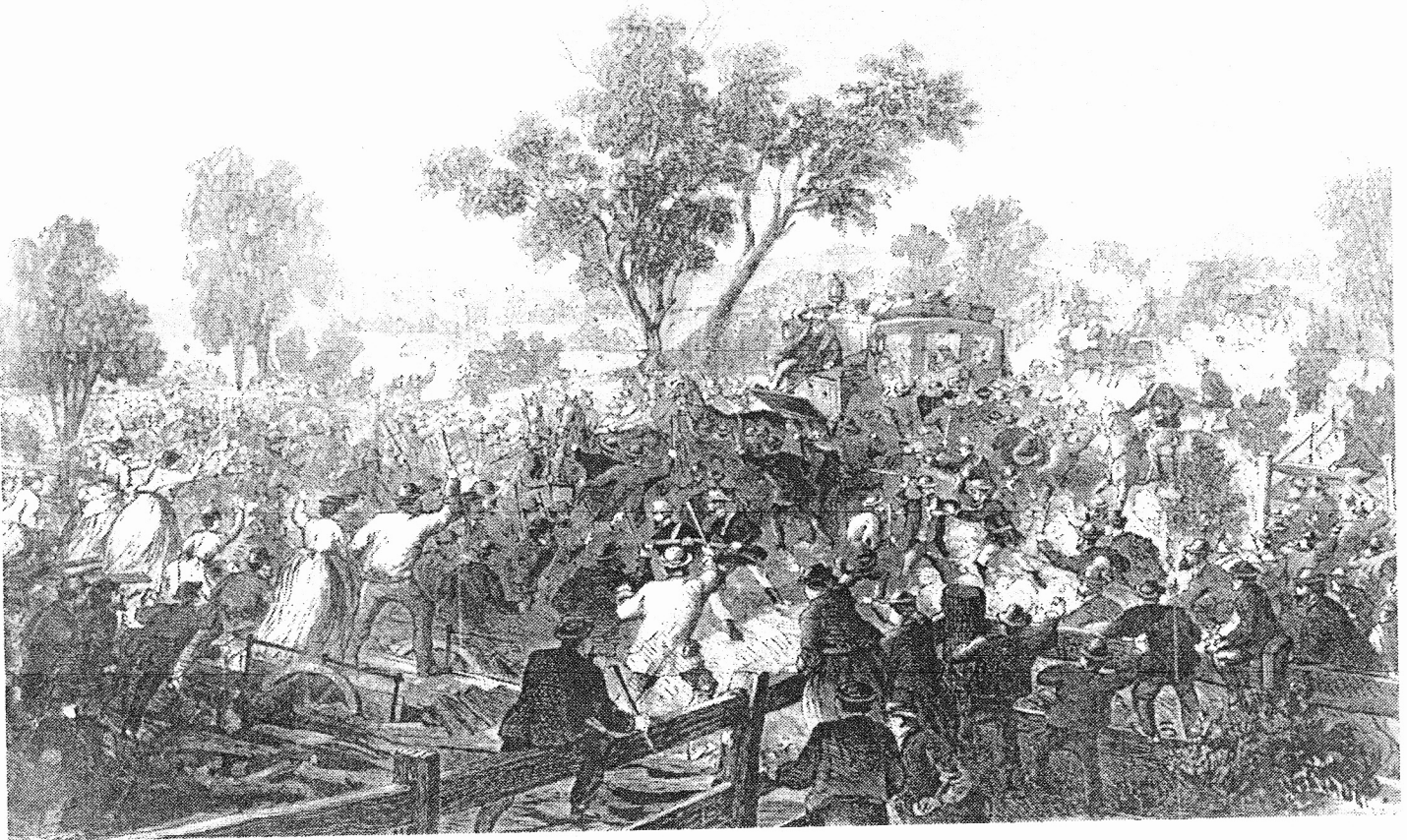
However, to say that working class people were the leading force of this phase of the development of ‘White Australia’ politics is, I would argue, untenable. The Government, the police, the press, colonial politicians and capitalists, and members of the small-town middle class all worked to foster division between European and Chinese on the goldfields. They shaped a social landscape where the potential and the reality of solidarity between European miners and Chinese – seen at Ballarat – was turned into its opposite.

The history of the origins of the ‘White Australia’ policy is long overdue for a rewrite. And I believe that a detailed analysis of local goldfields communities, their social and physical geography, and a close attention to class and to context, can cast a whole new light on the origins of so-called ‘white Australia’.

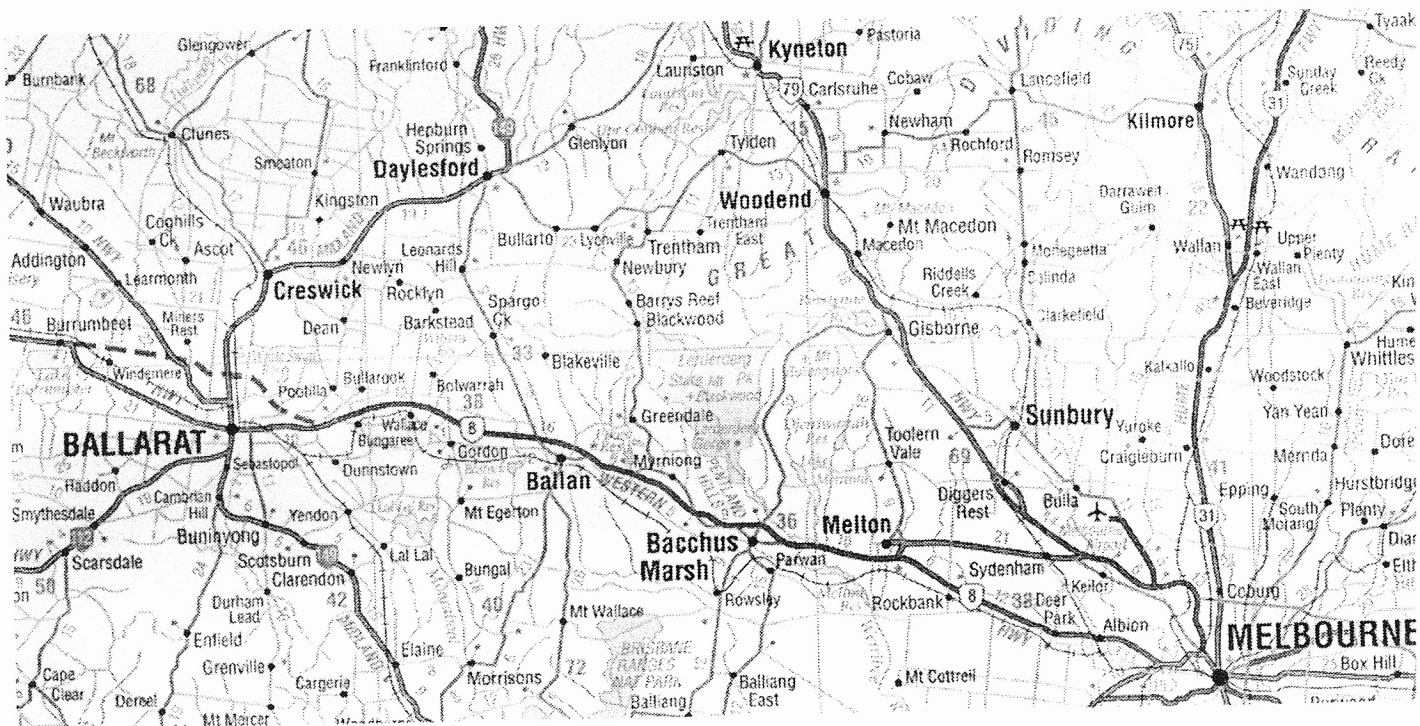
⁵⁶ PRO Supt Hill to CC Standish, 9 Dec 1873, part of VPRS 3991/P, unit 716, file D73/16598.

Blanchard also told the Bendigo meeting on 13 December that ‘It was stated by a Chinese interpreter that eighty Chinese had been engaged...’ Bendigo Advertiser, 15 Dec 1873.

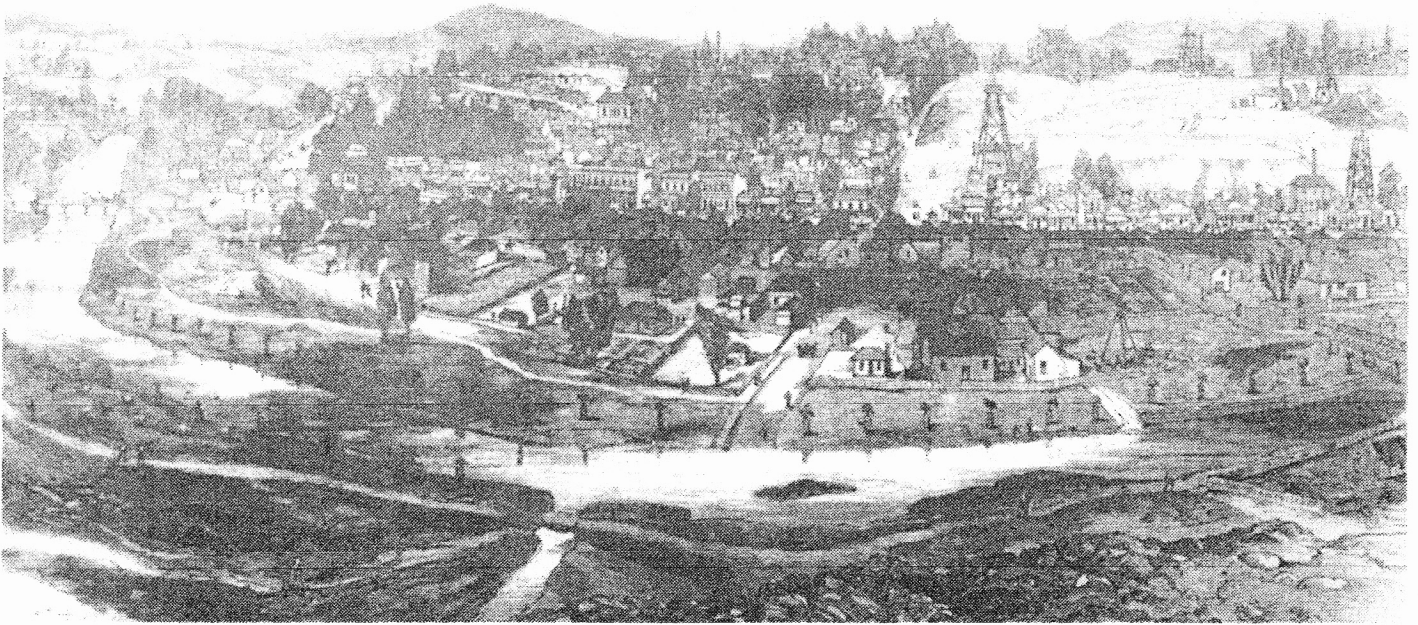
⁵⁷ Indeed, Verity Burgmann argues that this remained the case until the Industrial Workers of the World made the first serious attempt to win the Australian working class from racism, some four decades after the Clunes riot. See her book on the IWW: Revolutionary Industrial unionism, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 79-91.



'Disturbances at Clunes – Miners Resisting the Introduction of Chinese Labor'.
Illustrated Australian News, 31 Dec 1873



The mining town of Clunes is located about 30km north of Ballarat, and 15km north of Creswick



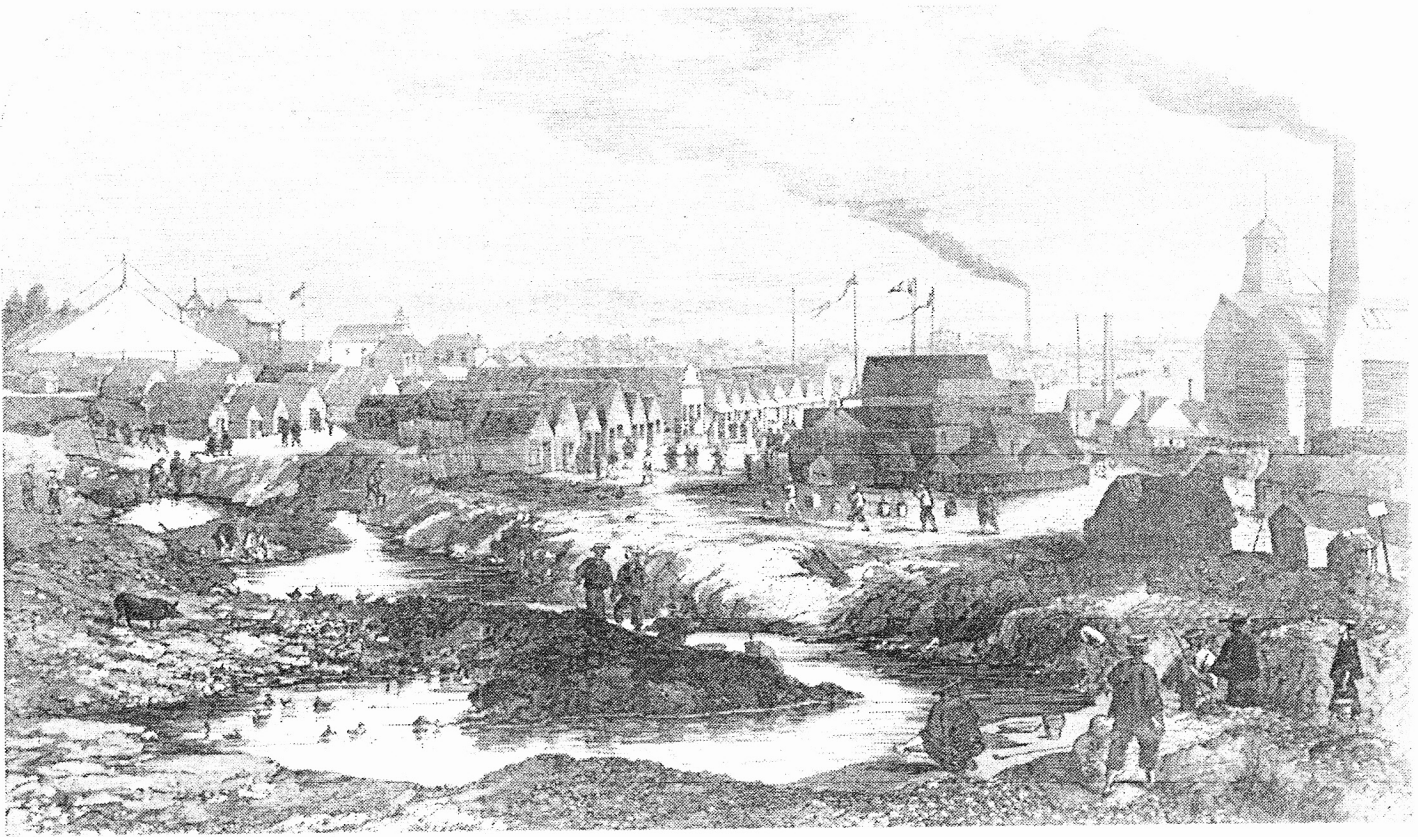
Township of Clunes from 'The Rocks', 1880s. Tree planting had softened the landscape since 1873, but the town would otherwise have looked very similar. The home of Rivett Henry Bland, the most prominent capitalist in Clunes, is behind trees on top of the hill on the extreme right of the picture.

Source: 'Historic Clunes: Five views from the past', published by the Shire of Talbot and Clunes, from originals in the Shire collection, 1989 (available at the Clunes Museum).

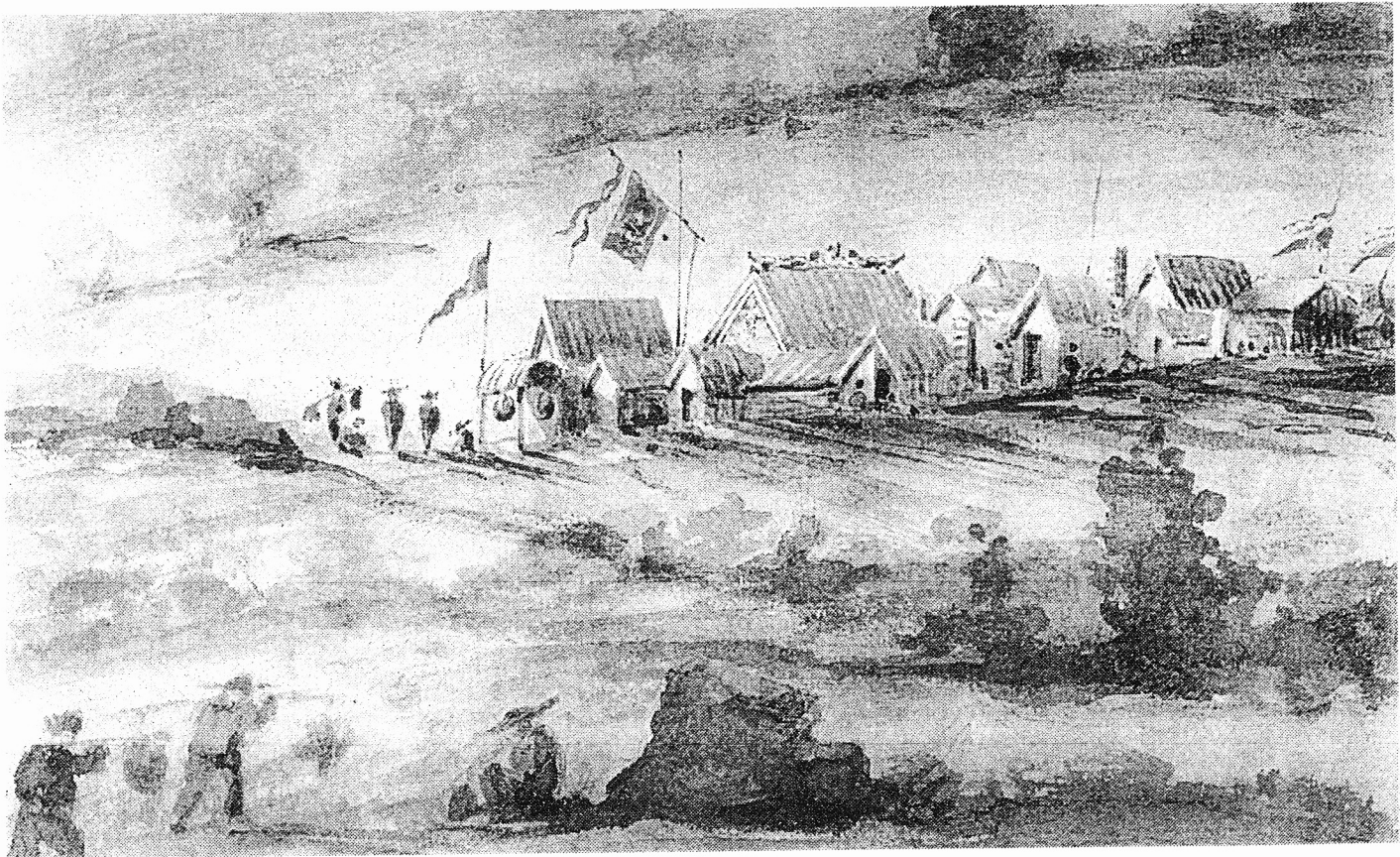


The Clunes Town Hall and Court House, an impressive monument to civic pride and progress, completed in May 1873. The chief office holder in this building, Clunes Mayor William Blanchard, played an important part in the Lothair strike and its racist aftermath.

Source: 'Historic Clunes: Five views from the past', published by the Shire of Talbot and Clunes, from originals in the Shire collection, 1989 (available at the Clunes Museum).



The Chinese village at Golden Point, Ballarat East. Note that the skyline of Ballarat is clearly visible in the background. Unusually for a Chinese camp in Victoria at this time, the village at Golden Point was surrounded by, and on Main Street merged with, a wider gold fields community. Illustrated Australian News, 11 July 1868.



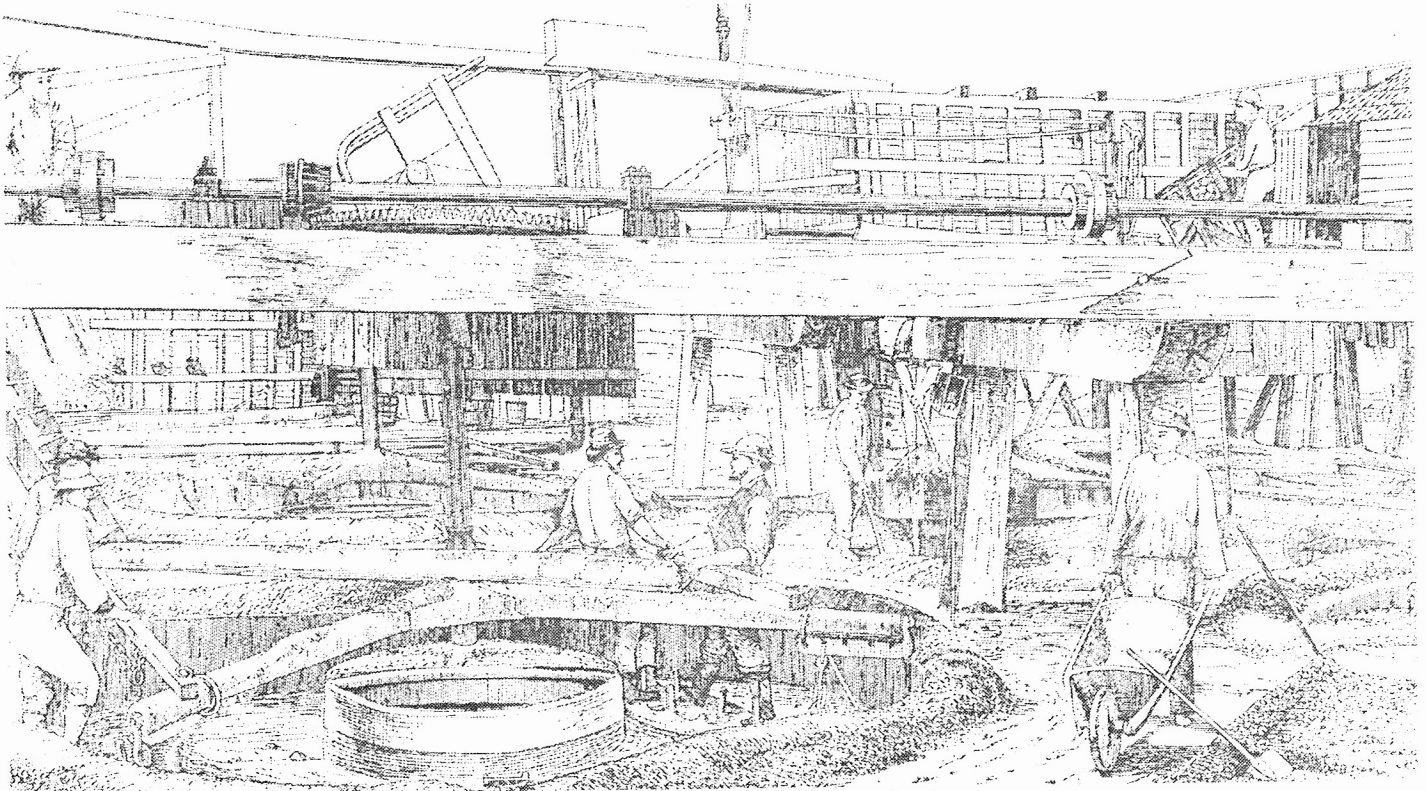
Chinese Camp, Creswick (1855) by Horace Burkitt. From the 1850s, the Creswick Chinese camp was located outside the main township of Creswick. Burkitt's painting captures this isolation.

Source: Reproduced by the National Australia Bank in 1988 from the watercolour held at the Creswick Historical Museum. My thanks to the staff of the Creswick Museum, especially Heather Lay, for first showing me this picture and for finding a reproduction for me.



'The Slave Trade in Victoria. A right proper field for the champions of morality. Christian mothers selling their daughters to the Chinese'. Part of a racist media campaign against the Ballarat Chinese community in 1870.

From the Melbourne magazine Touchstone, 9 July 1870.



'Raking up puddling machine (Ballarat Freehold Mine) preparatory to sluicing off'. The notes for this illustration explain that the man with the wheelbarrow, another with the shovel, and a third standing by the sluice box [partially obscured?] are Chinese. Ballarat differed from fields such as Bendigo and Clunes, in having Chinese working alongside European on surface works at large alluvial mines.

From Dicker's Mining Record, 20 Dec 1867. My thanks to Paul Macgregor of the Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, for first showing me this picture.