

## Early settlement and employment in the Colony of Victoria

### 3.1 General introduction

Although the long and difficult voyage to Australia for the Moidart Highlanders was over, for some individuals, their part in this story was to end relatively quickly after their arrival with death following the rigours of the voyage.<sup>1</sup> For other Household members and succeeding generations, the life journeys continued over many years. The focus of this chapter is the arrival and continuation of their journeys in Australia.

The chapter begins by outlining the importance and role played by the discovery of gold in establishing the social and economic contexts awaiting the arrival of the Moidart immigrants in 1852. The Moidart immigrants brought with them badly needed agricultural skills, experience and knowledge associated with the sheep industry at a time when the goldfields had enticed many of the labourers away from their employment on the land. Their arrival

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<sup>1</sup> Five members of Moidart Households died during the voyage of the 'Allison': 2.5; 3.6; 3.8; 8.6; and 8.7 whilst two members died in quarantine following its arrival. They were: Household members; 9.8 and 10.2. See 'Allison', nominal passenger and disposal lists VPRS 7666 Inward Passenger Lists-British ports PROV, North Melbourne Book 9, pp. 10-19. and Quarantine Station Cemetery 1852, Friends of the Quarantine Museum, Nepean Historical Society Inc., 10 November, 2002.

as a communal group of immigrants did not necessarily mean that they would remain together in Victoria. Many of the married couples for example, arrived with young children to support and needed to move away from the other Households in order to obtain regular wages and rations rather than opting for the vulnerability and insecurity of the goldfields.

The chapter explores the arrival of each of the three ships in turn. Although there were similarities between the experiences on board the 'Marco Polo', 'Araminta' and 'Allison' there were also significant differences in the on-arrival experiences due to the port of arrival, time of arrival during the year, the effects of infectious diseases on board and quarantine requirements, local employment opportunities and the length of time spent in the Immigration Depots. Their initial employment experiences in and around Geelong are investigated as are the expectations of the HIES in relation to the employment of their funded immigrants. The work of the HIES Agents in Victoria to recover debts owed to the Society will be analysed alongside the attitudes and motivations of other Highlanders and government officials in pursuing this goal.

The search for employment created different stresses and outcomes according to age, gender, port of arrival and the location of employment. Each of these had the potential to change the composition of the Household. Several young women separated from their Household in order to take up a position in

domestic service. Other Households elected to remain together on arrival and to seek employment as a Household unit. Many Households opted for the security of regular wages and promised rations in exchange for their labour whilst others left the emigration depots leaving no trace of their eventual destinations.

### **3.2 Victoria in 1852**

The economic, social and political aspects of colonial life largely created by gold provided the emigrants with both opportunities and challenges with the goldfields proving to be an attraction for many single male immigrants including some from Moidart Households.

Although they had left Moidart their pastoral and agricultural skills were in great demand enabling many to quickly find new employment opportunities as demonstrated in the extract from a letter written home by a Highlander:

Since the Highland proprietors have turned the country into sheep-walks, and will not let the people cultivate it then it is their duty to assist them to remove to a country where they will be comfortable.

*Labour! Labour! Labour!* Is the constant cry here, therefore, we could

take all the population of Scotland, Highland and Lowland, and still have too few.<sup>2</sup>

For some the high rates of wages received opened up additional opportunities. Writing to his mother Alexander Macpherson pointed out the differences in the amounts of money earned in Victoria compared with his earnings in Scotland:

...I have two hundred pounds in the bank, besides one hundred and fifty pounds more spent in travelling and provisions while there, and various other items. Now, all that I have earned by my own single labour in less than six months work, and not work harder than I often did in Scotland for one shilling and six pence per day.<sup>3</sup>

Evicting landlords such as Alexander Macdonald of the Lochshiel Estate held no further sway over his Households. Victoria offered new economic freedom and hope: “We are not ground down with poor rates, neither tolls or taxes worth mentioning. Ejecting lairds are not here; every farmer is his own landlord and Factor.”<sup>4</sup> Victoria in 1852 was very different from the Scotland they had left.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from a Highlander in Australia to a friend back in the Highlands describing the opportunities for success for Highlanders, firstly in agricultural work in the Colony but failing that, on the goldfields. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 27 January 1853, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Letter written by Alexander Macpherson to his mother at Tongue and dated 1 August 1853 and published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 17 November 1853, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Letter written by Mr A Walker to his father at Fyrish in the Highlands, dated 25 December 1852 describing the availability of abundant work on the land at high wages, the success

The Victorian diggings also provided an opportunity for Highlanders to meet again and to renew old acquaintances. Letters from Highlanders provide valuable insights into the ways in which the settlements on the goldfields contained and supported small groups of people from the same location in Scotland thereby assisting them to maintain kinship and communal relationships with each other. Gold brought people from the same district together in a way that working on isolated stations and properties could not. A miner from Ballarat wrote to his parents at Lochaber in the Highlands in 1852 stating:

I have seen all the Muirlaggan lads now at the diggings. Donald Mackillop, Duncan Mackillop, Donald Grant and Angus Rankin, are about three miles from here. They have done pretty well at the diggings; I saw them this morning.<sup>5</sup>

Contact with people from the same community and language background also provided opportunities to use and maintain the home language. Communities of Gaelic-speaking people were present on the goldfields and the weekly

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of the Scots in the colony and the composition of the population on the diggings. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 26 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Letter written by a Highlander mining at Ballarat to his parents at Lochaber, dated 7 November 1852 and published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 5 May 1853, p. 4. It is also interesting to note that the signatures of Donald and Duncan Mackillop and Angus Rankin all appear next to each other on the petition of 9 August 1853 to bring Fr. Ranald Rankin to Victoria.

Sunday service was one opportunity to use Gaelic, which helped to ensure that a communal sense of Highland identity and culture was maintained thousands of miles away:

There are hundreds of Highlanders here, and almost the whole of them doing well. I myself have got acquainted with very many from both Ross and Sutherlandshire. We have as large a Gaelic congregation as you have in Rosskeen.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time the cosmopolitan nature of the population on the goldfields also required the use of a common language helping to undermine any efforts to maintain immigrant national languages. Immigrant national languages and dialects began to be relegated to specific domains and for specific purposes thus reducing their overall dominance. English became the lingua franca of the goldfields thereby isolating the use of Gaelic and assisting in its gradual demise.

Gold brought people to inland locations such as Ballarat, creating the need for services and industry and people found employment utilising the skills they had brought with them. The Moidart people also benefited from this skilled labour shortage. A Gaelic school was opened by the Free Church in 1854 with

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<sup>6</sup> Letter written by James Munro to his father Finlay Munro, Invergordon, Ross-Shire, 3 December 1853 and published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 2 March 1854, p. 6. 165

John McIver as teacher. McIver was a former teacher in Glenuig, Moidart and arrived with his Household on the 'Allison'. He also worked as a Lay Missionary in Ballarat for three and a half years before the appointment of a minister of the Free Church in the district.<sup>7</sup> By 1857 the community had increased to the extent that there were 71 students on average attending the Gaelic school each day and so it was thought necessary to build a second school to meet the growing needs of families.

The Surgeon Superintendent from the 'Araminta', John Alfred Carr, also found his way to Ballarat where he worked at a hospital on the goldfields amongst the miners and was present at the Eureka Rebellion in 1854.<sup>8</sup> Political unrest was also appearing on the goldfields as people arrived from a range of different political environments and experiences. A letter from a Ross-shire emigrant who had been in the colony for about two years included a description of his disappointment after ten months on the goldfields with little success.<sup>9</sup> He wrote in his letter that:

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<sup>7</sup> J. McIver, Letter to the Denominational Schools Board, Melbourne, VPRS 4826 Vol 2, Received letter Register for the Denominational Schools Board, other denominations June 1857 – December 1859, Ref. 1857/1736 PROV, North Melbourne. See also Household four in Appendix A.

<sup>8</sup> A. Stoller and R. Emmerson, 'Dr John Alfred Carr - a psycho-historical study.' in *The Medical Journal of Australia* 27 January 1973, SLV, 1973. pp.188-193. In this article Carr's involvement as a doctor in the events that led to the Eureka Stockade in Ballarat are outlined.

<sup>9</sup> Letter commenting on the desire of the people in Ballarat and Bendigo to obtain land for themselves and the problems associated with opening up the land to grow food to support themselves. The author also refers to the interference of the 'Home government' in stopping people from obtaining land and he questions to what extent the British Government

There is plenty of room in this country for all England and Scotland if they would only allow us to possess it free. The Home Govt interferes, but what does it know about our requirements? The people are getting restive on this point, and just now there is a great commotion amongst them at Ballarat and Bendigo. They want the land to raise food for themselves and others, but they cannot get it until the land-jobber and money-grubber come first, and they seldom do their part under 15 per cent profit.<sup>10</sup>

However it is his references to the agitation amongst the miners and their desire for land of their own at this time which are of importance to this study. The clamour for land had begun and the impediments to obtaining land by those desiring to try their hand at farming were now beginning to be recognised.

### **3.3 The arrival of the three emigrant ships**

The arrival of each ship was significant in its own particular way. The ‘Marco Polo’, became famous for its record breaking voyage in terms of time, the ‘Araminta’ for its high mortality rate and generally filthy condition on arrival and the ‘Allison’ because of the presence of infectious disease on board and its

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understands the needs of the people and society in Australia. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 15 February 1855. p. 5.



quarantining at Point Nepean. A range of schemes and funding sources enabled large numbers to emigrate from Britain to Australia. Emigrants had been either financially assisted by the Colonial government or through one of the many official immigration schemes operating at the time. These included benevolent societies or organisations which were established for this purpose (organisations such as the HIES and Caroline Chisholm's society 'The Family Colonization Loan Society') or had paid their own way as unassisted immigrants.<sup>11</sup>

The numbers of immigrants arriving were rapidly increasing month by month:

Nearly 14,000 people arrived in Victoria by sea during 1851 and an average of more than 5,000 during each of the first five months of 1852. Nearly 13,000 landed in September alone, and more than 16,000 in October.<sup>12</sup>

As shown in these statistics the numbers of people who arrived in the month of October 1852 (including those on the 'Araminta') outweighed the total intake of emigrants in the previous year and swamped the pre-gold population. Before examining each ship, however, it is important to obtain a clearer profile of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the major philanthropic organisations and shelter schemes operating in the colony in 1852 see chapter five in K. Pescod, *A place to lay my head*, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, *Clyde Company Papers*, Introductory Notes, p. 195.

overall patterns of immigration to Victoria in 1852. This can be found in a report prepared by the Victorian Government's Immigration Agent, Edward Grimes. Colonial Immigration Agents such as Grimes were located at the major port of each colony.

Grimes prepared this annual report using the statistical data gathered during 1852. Data was collected on a range of issues and concerned both arriving immigrants and departing emigrants. However, before examining the content of his report it is necessary to consider the nature of the role of the Immigration Agent and the opportunity that the role afforded the holder to data and information. Access to this information could have placed the Agent in a position where he may have been able to offer advice or put forward persuasive argument to the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony regarding the entry of appropriate and inappropriate immigrants.

According to Haines the Agents:

...mustered the immigrants on arrival and received all of the passenger-related ships' papers for processing and distribution to the various authorities. These officers also supervised payment of gratuities to matrons, school masters, and other emigrant supernumeraries who, on the Surgeon Superintendent's recommendation, received a small payment for services rendered on board. Each Immigration Agent

recorded complaints and compliments about the ship's crew and enquired about the performance of the Surgeon Superintendent and Matron.<sup>13</sup>

The Agent was privy to statistical data concerning aspects of immigration such as numbers of assisted and unassisted immigrants arriving (and departing) and where they landed, their age, gender and family composition, their work skills, wages received and terms of employment, their religious persuasion, education levels and English language skills. In addition, the requirement to prepare and present an annual report to the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony provided the Agent with a vehicle through which he could choose to express his personal opinion on matters of concern. He could also use this medium to suggest a course of action to address certain situations. As will be shown later in this chapter Grimes did in fact use the 1852 report to express his views about the HIES immigrants in relation to various attributes concerning attitudes to work and previous employment experience. It was certainly a position of power and much influence within government circles of the day.

Grimes began his report by commenting on the discovery of gold as the major reason for a dramatic increase in both assisted and unassisted immigration to the Colony during this year. Reports published in newspapers in Britain such as

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<sup>13</sup> Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, p. 61.

the *Liverpool Mercury* ensured a steady stream of both assisted and unassisted immigrants to Victoria:

Men that were never worth five pounds in their lives are now possessed of fortunes, and the yoke is burdensome, and they scatter the money like chaff. The whole country for hundreds of miles is one immense goldfield.<sup>14</sup>

Many Highlanders found themselves dreaming of making a fortune in a short time on the goldfields and then returning home to Scotland as wealthy men:

I shall start next week for Bendigo diggings, with some shipmates. I intend giving them a good trial, say five or six months, and if lucky I shall come back with one thousand pounds; this is no romance.<sup>15</sup>

Others saw success on the goldfields as a means of providing the funds to purchase land of their own, something they could never consider back home. Some, like James Murray were able to send money obtained from the goldfields home on a regular basis to support relatives and family.<sup>16</sup> Gold fever

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<sup>14</sup> Author unknown, *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 February 1852, page unknown and reprinted in D. Hollert, *Fast passage to Australia*, Fairplay Publishers Ltd., London, 1986. p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Letter written by a recently arrived Highlander and published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 31 March 1853, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> James Murray married Catherine McDonald (Household 21). See reference to two sums of ten pounds sent by James via the Clyde Company to his mother in Helmsdale in 1851 171

imbued many with an unrealistic sense of optimism but also with a determination to make a fortune. Many letters from those on the goldfields were later published in Highland newspapers, and despite heavy editing and translation into English from Gaelic, became important ‘pull’ factors by encouraging others to consider the merits of emigration and finding gold. A letter written to a friend in the Highlands is filled with this kind of optimistic thinking; “I will assist you to go to the diggings, where, I doubt not, you will soon make as much as will enable you to buy or rent a farm of your own.”<sup>17</sup>

The Returns for Unassisted Immigration show that 79,187 unassisted immigrants arrived in the Colony in 1852. In addition to this intake a further 42 ships carrying 15,477 assisted immigrants “cast anchor in our waters in 1852”.<sup>18</sup> This included 5,007 adult males, 5,345 adult females and 5,125 children. Melbourne received 7,877 people, Geelong 5,258 and Portland 2,342.<sup>19</sup> Amongst the cohort of children Grimes calculated that the average number of children under 14 years of age in assisted families was 1.6 and estimated that the average cost of conveyance of each assisted statute adult in 1852 was £14.17.04.<sup>20</sup> Of these 15,477 people 5,349 were from England, 3,001

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and 1852 in Brown, *Clyde Company Papers*, p. 321.  
<sup>17</sup> Letter from a Highlander to a friend back in the Highlands describing the opportunities for success for Highlanders in agricultural work in the Colony or on the goldfields. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 27 January 1853, p. 3.  
<sup>18</sup> E. Grimes, *Annual Report upon Immigration for the year 1852*, VPRS 1189/10 Immigration Agents Files, Unit 14, File 1853/A577900, PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.  
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

from Ireland and 7,127 from Scotland. People were arriving from other parts of the world as well as from Britain:

Here you will find men of all colours, grades, and religions from all professions, trades, and callings, none too proud to dig. Gold has set the world agog; but how could it be otherwise, when you find such accounts as the following in our newspapers ('blowing', as the colonists call it):- 'Come all ye whom poverty bows down with iron hand – come and be rich.'<sup>21</sup>

Amongst these assisted immigrants were 3,665 agricultural labourers, 421 shepherds, and 2,297 female and 65 male domestic servants. The high number of immigrants from Scotland and from agricultural related employment confirms the dependence on emigration by Scotland as a major means of reducing its rural population. He notes that the proportion of Roman Catholics and Presbyterians who could both read and write was far lower than the proportion belonging to the Church of England. The proportion of statute adults who could neither read nor write out of the total number of adult immigrants was 11.3 per cent.

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<sup>21</sup> A. Walker, Letter written to his father at Fyrish in the Highlands, dated 25 December 1852 describing the availability of abundant work on the land at high wages, the success of the Scots in the colony and the composition of the population on the diggings. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 26 May 1853, p. 4.

His report also refers to 31,038 people leaving the Colony in 1852 either to return to other Australian colonies after trying their luck for a season on the Victorian gold fields or to emigrate to other countries where gold had also been recently discovered. However, numbers of immigrants arriving far outweighed the numbers of emigrants leaving.

In reading the annual report for 1852, it would appear that Grimes was an economic pragmatist who held clear views on who was and was not needed in the Colony. Grimes believed that unless an immigrant was employable and willing to work in the agricultural industry or in domestic service, he or she would be of little use to the Colony. A report published in *The Inverness Courier* in 1852 described the labour situation in Victoria in the following way:

A commissariat officer, just arrived from Victoria, saw in several districts of that colony, sheep and cattle turned into the corn fields to eat down the crops, it being impossible to obtain labourers to reap them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See the report titled 'The West Highlands' published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 3 June 1852, p. 3.

Grimes was convinced, however, that many of the immigrants were not prepared for what awaited them on the goldfields nor did they appreciate the huge task of finding suitable employment if the search for gold proved to be unsuccessful. He clearly saw society in terms of its class structure and he held concerns for those members of the ruling, educated class and the fate that might befall them once they realised how difficult the work would be. He could see that the work available was not suited to people of this standing and would only bring them unhappiness and displeasure. In his opinion the hardships that might fall on the ruling classes were likely to cause great misery, assuming that hardship never afflicted the working classes in this way:

...it is much to be regretted that a large proportion of the population, so introduced, is of a class utterly unfitted for the hard labour of gold digging, and who have entirely overrated the capabilities of the Colony for finding remunerative employment to persons of the educated classes, while the hardships which the crowded state of the City entails upon many of them will, I fear, be productive of much misery.<sup>23</sup>

By omission he did not appear to be concerned about people belonging to the working classes and what lay in store for them. Their reality seemed of little concern to him. After all, hard, manual, labouring jobs such as road building

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<sup>23</sup> E. Grimes, *Annual Report upon Immigration for the year 1852*, VPRS 1189/10, Unit 14, File 1853/A577900, PROV, North Melbourne, 9 June 1853.



and work in the pastoral industry, were all they knew and all that this class of people could aspire to in Victoria.

Workers were needed in all areas owing to a severe lack of infrastructure in the colony. In a letter written to his father back in the Highlands, a son wrote with great optimism about these opportunities in Australia and how working industriously would provide independence and freedom from obligation to others:

It is not the man of capital that is wanted in this country; it is the industrious, sober labouring man, and skilled mechanic. Let his calling be what it may, he will find on his landing on these shores that there is a demand for his labour at highly remunerative rates; and if steady, he will soon find himself in good circumstances – he will find himself not struggling with poverty, but able to enjoy the luxuries of life along with his toil, and shortly be so independent as to be master of his own time and under no obligation to any party.<sup>24</sup>

As will be shown later in the chapter even those passengers who arrived on ships carrying infectious diseases and who were placed in quarantine were offered work as they waited to be pronounced clear of infection. Male

passengers from the 'Allison' were offered work building permanent buildings at the Quarantine station but were not paid for this work.<sup>25</sup> They went to extraordinary lengths to locate the appropriate government agency that had withheld payment. This was another example of Highlander solidarity and of determination not to be taken advantage of in the new colony.

Grimes was of the view that the economic success of the Colony lay in promoting pastoral production rather than through gold and argued that increased numbers of immigrants be sent to those ports closer to where agricultural workers were much sought after. Entry via these ports would force people to accept employment in the agricultural districts as they were too far from the goldfields to make this journey without earning additional money:

...I should be inclined to recommend that a larger number should be sent to Portland during the summer months than is at present the case, there is great demand for labour both there and at Port Fairy, and the distance from the goldfields compels the Immigrants to filtrate as it were through a large extent of country.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Letter written by Mr A Walker to his father at Fyrish in the Highlands, dated 25 December 1852 and published in *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 26 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> See letter written by Dr Hunt of the Quarantine Station to the Colonial Secretary and dated 11 January 1853 where he requests that the passengers from the 'Allison' be employed at four shillings a day to construct permanent buildings at the Station. VPRS 1189, Unit 131, 53/439 PROV, North Melbourne.

<sup>26</sup> Grimes, *Annual Report upon Immigration for the year 1852*, page number unrecorded. 177

Edward Grimes refers to the various ports of embarkation and to the advantages to be gained by different groups of immigrants at each. He advised that married couples and single men were best sent to Geelong, Portland and Port Fairy. These were the locations where there was a high demand for workers for the pastoral industry and, because of the great distance from the goldfields, most had to find employment for a while to raise sufficient funds to enable them to travel to the fields. This would also serve as a deterrent for men to leave employment on the land to search for gold. This appears to have been the case for those immigrants arriving on the 'Araminta'. Melbourne, on the other hand, was the best port of embarkation for single women as there was a great need for domestic servants but a shortage of suitable women or women who were willing to voluntarily enter into service. This study will demonstrate that this was the case for many of the single females arriving on the 'Marco Polo' in Melbourne.

It was Grimes' view that couples with young families were the ideal immigrants because he felt that the responsibility of providing for their family would prevent the men from going to the goldfields and would force them to find employment in the pastoral industry at least for a short while. Couples with young families were well represented amongst the Moidart passengers on all three ships.

As shown in the table on page 138 in chapter two each vessel carried a

significant number of passengers from Moidart. The presence of so many children sailing under the age of 13 is congruent with the objective of the Australian government to give preference to family groups. The marginal increase in the numbers of single men and women between the sailing of the 'Marco Polo' and the other two ships also supports the desire of the Australian government to give preference to families with single men and particularly women of marriageable age. The arrival of each ship in 1852 at the ports of Melbourne and Geelong and on different dates during the year meant that initial employment opportunities varied accordingly.

### **3.4 The arrival of the 'Marco Polo' and the initial employment experiences of its passengers**

The 'Marco Polo' left Liverpool on 4 July 1852 and arrived in Hobson's Bay, Victoria on 20 September 1852. She was owned by the Black Ball line and, according to James Baines, a co-owner of the ship, the 'Marco Polo' was "the largest vessel, and carrying the greatest number of passengers ever chartered by Government or despatched to Australia with passengers."<sup>27</sup> The eight Moidart Households among the 930 government-sponsored passengers were remarkable in that all the members of Households remained together following their arrival. Two other Catholic Households from Inverness also travelled on the 'Marco Polo' but, as they were unidentifiable as Moidart residents in the

1851 census, they have not been included in this study. The group of eight included two widows and their children. Four Households left to find their own employment in Melbourne. They may have had relatives already established in the Colony. The composition of the passengers on board from Scotland warrants attention. Of the three ships the ‘Marco Polo’ carried Scots from the most varied parts of Scotland. There were residents of Scottish towns and cities such as Edinburgh, Linlithgow, Stirling, Dunbarton and Aberdeen as well as residents from ten Scottish counties scattered across both the Highlands and Lowlands. Passengers also came from eleven Irish counties and ten English counties. All the single women on board were listed as ‘domestic servants’ in terms of occupation whilst the single men were all listed as either ‘agricultural labourers’ or ‘shepherds’. The average age of the Moidart single women was 19 whilst for the men it was 24.5 years.

**Table 3.2: First employment terms for the Moidart Households who arrived on the ‘Marco Polo’ in 1852.**

<b>Household number in Appendix A</b>	<b>Name of Household</b>	<b>Employment location on arrival</b>	<b>Wages offered</b>	<b>With or without rations</b>	<b>Number of terms in contract</b>
23	Flora McMaster and family	On own account to Melbourne			
32	Ranald and Ann McInnes	Melbourne	Sixty pounds	with	Six months

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<sup>27</sup> D. Hollert, *Fast passage to Australia*, Fairplay Publishers Ltd., London, 1986. p. 18. 180

33	Donald and Catherine McDonald	Melbourne	Seventy pounds	with	Six months
35	John and Ann McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			
37	John and Margaret McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			
38	John and Marcella McDonald	Bullock Creek	One hundred and fifty pounds	with	Six months
39	Peter and Ann McNiel	Gunbower	Sixty pounds	with	Six months
40	Sarah McPherson and family	On own account to Melbourne			

**Source:** Disposal list of the 'Marco Polo'<sup>28</sup>

It is notable that a very large number of the total number of passengers left to find their own employment in Melbourne. This may have been due to the desire to move to the goldfields as quickly as possible. The above table is representative of this situation. Many accepted employment in Melbourne despite their agricultural experience and backgrounds perhaps choosing to settle for the security of wages gained through the bountiful employment opportunities in a burgeoning urban community.

The experiences of single women travelling on the 'Marco Polo' are similar in terms of those who accompanied them to Australia. The gender imbalance in

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<sup>28</sup> 'Marco Polo', nominal passenger and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward passenger lists- 181

the Colony continued to manifest itself in the official immigration statistics. According to the statistics for Unassisted Immigration in 1852, 62,906 men had arrived in the Colony compared with only 9,072 women. Although critical of certain aspects related to single female immigration, Grimes was also concerned about this imbalance. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary Grimes tried to address this issue by proposing that regulations prohibiting the immigration of single women be changed so that single women wishing to emigrate without parents or another adult relative would be accepted as an immigrant. In his view "...every possible obstacle to promoting Female immigration should be, as far as possible, removed."<sup>29</sup>

Single women were prevented from emigrating unless accompanied by parents or other relatives. This requirement meant that many women who wanted to emigrate were unable to for a range of reasons. In some cases it was because parents were unwilling to emigrate or were already in Australia. In other cases the single women were orphans.

The table on pages 184-5 provides a statistical portrayal of the single women immigrants arriving from Inverness-shire on board the 'Marco Polo'. Moidart was only one district in the County to provide emigrants on this voyage.

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British ports, PROV, North Melbourne. Book 8, pp. 166-190.  
<sup>29</sup> E. Grimes, Letter to the Colonial Secretary, VPRS 1189/P/0000, Inward Registered Correspondence (Colonial Secretary's Office) 1851-1863, Unit 113, File 53/B1909, PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.

Unfortunately it is not possible to determine the district of origin of the remaining ten emigrants however, the fact that they were all Presbyterian indicates that they were possibly from a Protestant district such as Ardnamurchan, Argyll or Suinart. Twelve of the 14 Moidart females were unable to read or write and none of the 14 was employed on arrival. Fifty-five single females or 48 per cent of the cohort found employment on arrival. All the Moidart women and nine of the remaining Inverness females identified their occupation as 'domestic servant'.<sup>30</sup> As many of the other single females on board who also identified in this way and were employed as domestic servants, it is unusual that not one was able to find employment in domestic service. The 1851 census records that all of the single females of Moidart Households on board the 'Marco Polo' were at home on the night of the census but does not record their occupations in the Household. Most would have worked outdoors on their family croft. It is therefore reasonable to assume that by identifying as domestic servants these women were attempting to find employment within the most available field of employment for single females in the Colony.

Their inability or unwillingness to be engaged as servants might be explained by the following: a lack of experience and skills as indoor servants, their inability to speak, read or write in English or a desire to remain with the



Household and to take their chance in obtaining employment with other Household members on a pastoral station.

**Table 3.3: Composition of single females on board the emigrant ship ‘Marco Polo’ in 1852.**

<b>Category of single women by age, English literacy skills, religion, Scottish occupation and employment in Australia.</b>	<b>Total number in category</b>	<b>Total number from Inverness-shire in category.</b>	<b>Total number from Moidart Households in category.</b>
1. Total number of single women aged 14 years +	114	24 or 21% of total	14 or 12% of total
2. Total who could read and write	58	4	0
3. Total who could read only	31	6	2
4. Total who could write only	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded
5. Total who could neither read or write	25	15	12
6. Religion : Church of England	14	0	0
7. Religion : Presbyterian	57	10	0
8. Religion : Roman Catholic	38	14	14
9. Religion : Wesleyan	0	0	0
10. Religion : other	5	0	0
11. Average age	20.7	17.7	19
12. Age range	14-40	14-24	14-24
13. Occupation in Scotland : Farm servant	6	1	0

14. Occupation in Scotland : never in service	11	0	0
15. Occupation in Scotland : domestic service	93	23	14
16. Occupation in Scotland : dairy maid	2	0	0
17. Occupation in Scotland : shop woman	1	0	0
18. Number and percentage employed on arrival in Australia.	55 (48%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)
19. Number and percentage employed on arrival in Australia at city addresses	34 (61%)		
20. Number and percentage employed on arrival in Australia at suburban addresses	17 (25%)		
21. Number and percentage employed on arrival in Australia at country addresses	4 (7%)		

**Source:** Passenger and disposal list for the 'Marco Polo'.<sup>31</sup>

As to be expected, the majority of the total number of single female passengers on board found employment in homes or boarding houses in the city centre or suburbs. Of the 55 women 61 per cent found employment in the centre of Melbourne, 25 per cent in the suburbs with only seven per cent or four women in total accepting employment in country locations. This employment rate of

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<sup>31</sup> 'Marco Polo', nominal passenger and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward passenger lists- British ports, PROV, North Melbourne. Book 8, pp. 166-190.

93 per cent points to the advantages of arriving in Melbourne rather than Geelong for unskilled women hoping for employment in domestic service.

Barry Higman points out that domestic servants constituted a large proportion of female British immigrants arriving in Australia at this time:

Throughout the 1850s Australia took a large proportion of the total British emigration of domestic servants (and agricultural labourers)...The decade saw the largest inflow of assisted immigrants and domestic servants.<sup>32</sup>

Forty per cent of the free and assisted migrants to South Australia at this time were domestic servants as were more than a quarter of assisted migrants to New South Wales. Seventy per cent of all domestic servants were Irish women.<sup>33</sup>

For those single women who emigrated with family members from Moidart, employment as domestic servants in Australia must have been a cultural shock. Not only were they required to separate from their families in order to take up employment, the nature of their work meant that the skills acquired by working

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<sup>32</sup> B. Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2002 p. 87. For Jan Gothard's understandings on the relationship between single female immigration and domestic service in Colonial Australia see J. Gothard, *Blue China*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Higman, *Domestic service in Australia*, p. 87.

as dairy maids and through outdoor agricultural work on the crofts were of little to no use. A whole new set of skills was required owing to the nature of indoor work including the acquisition of English.

These women were also arriving and seeking employment at a time when there were many complaints and negativity shown towards many domestic servants. Higman points out that this was largely a class driven discourse matched only by similar complaints levied at assisted immigration generally and stretching from the 1830s to the 1960s.<sup>34</sup> The complaints and criticisms related to issues such as too few numbers, unsatisfactory quality and too many leaving their posts early to take up other employment or to marry. This may have been the situation for women involved in this research as the major occupation of the Moidart women at the time of their marriage was that of 'domestic servant'. Many domestic servants worked in boarding houses set up to accommodate those on their way to the gold fields. For others it provided an opportunity to marry. A letter written by a woman to a friend in Inverness in 1852 illustrates the effects and opportunities provided by gold for some:

In shop windows everywhere to be seen gold and nuggets. As for females, their frail heads are about turned. No such things as servants; they are *helps* now. In the hotel with my decent Highland nurse, I was attended by two saucy housemaids in stiff petticoats. A lady has told

me that a servant of hers was sweeping the steps of the door one morning, when a man passed who said ‘My girl, if you marry me, I shall give you 500 pounds.’ He assured her he had it in his pocket. She then proposed he should accompany her to her father, to settle the matter. Off they went, and in three days were married; the 500 pounds paid, and she and her husband off to Port Phillip for more. So who can expect servants?<sup>35</sup>

The letter serves as a reminder of the expectations that women of class held towards single women of working class backgrounds in the colony. The letter conveys both her anxiety and observations about the changing nature of colonial society. Life as she knew it was turned upside down by gold: “Nothing now but princes on foot and beggars on horseback.”<sup>36</sup>

The issue of the selection and previous employment experiences of single women was of significant concern to Grimes as he made many references to the subject throughout his annual report. In Returns XXI and XXII he refers in particular to the 183 women who arrived on four ships during 1852 organised by the Fund for Promoting Female Emigration and, as mentioned earlier, was highly critical of the ways in which the immigrants were selected:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> Author unknown. Letter dated 13 September 1852 and written to a friend describing some of the ways in which gold had impacted on the lives of single females in Port Phillip. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 22 March 1853, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

...while one cannot but appreciate the kind and benevolent intention of the ladies and others of whom the Society is composed, it is impossible not to regret that they are so frequently subjected to imposition as, it is too evident has been the case...I regret to say that in every one of the ships I have inspected, there have been three or four girls, and in some instances many more, who have been drawn from the very dregs of society, and whose conduct has been quite sufficient to corrupt all the others. How these persons could possibly have obtained the certificates which I am informed, each candidate for Emigration is required to produce, is to me a mystery.<sup>37</sup>

His cynical reference to the backgrounds of the women and to the selection process reveals both his classist attitudes and his distrust in the ability of this scheme to select those women of good moral standing required by the Colony. He also questioned the relevance of the occupations of those selected to the needs of the Colony:

...the usual classes of girls selected by the Committee are not well suited to the wants of the Colony; there is no great demand for Nursery Governesses, Companions to Ladies, Artificial Flower makers etc. and

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<sup>37</sup> Grimes, *Annual Report upon Immigration for the year 1852*, page number unrecorded. 189

the consequent disappointment at being compelled to enter Domestic Service may have been one of the causes which prompted so many of these girls to follow the course they have pursued.<sup>38</sup>

Again he reinforces his view that certain groups of immigrants were going to be severely disappointed in terms of what employment the colony was able to provide, especially those from educated ruling class backgrounds. His particular view of society emerges once more when he concludes that the worst possible fate awaiting these immigrants was to be forced to work as a domestic servant.

An analysis of the employment pattern of the single men who arrived on the 'Marco Polo', for example, reveals a different pattern. In this case the squatters largely overlooked single males as potential employees in favour of married couples largely without family. There were 106 single males listed on the nominal passenger list but only 38 were employed according to the disposal list. The overall data indicates that single males who were Scottish, Presbyterian, aged between 14 and 30 and were able to both read and write in English, were the most successful in securing employment.

**Table 3.4: Single males on the 'Marco Polo' and employed on arrival by national origin and reading and writing in English.**

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Age	Total from Scotland	Total from England and Wales	Total from Ireland	Combined total	Able to both read and write in English	Total employed
14 – 20 years	44	5	13	62	47	17
21 – 30 years	33	2	6	41	32	19
31 – 40 years	2	0	1	3	3	2

**Source:** Nominal passenger and disposal list for the ‘Marco Polo’.<sup>39</sup>

Although their occupations were listed mainly as agricultural labourers and shepherds most of those employed were hired by residents living close to Melbourne.

This overall situation however, was not replicated in the disposal and employment patterns amongst the passengers who travelled on the ‘Araminta’.

### **3.5 The arrival of the ‘Araminta’ and the initial employment experiences of its passengers**

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Marco Polo’, nominal passenger and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward passenger lists- British ports, PROV, North Melbourne. Book 8, pp. 166-190.



The 'Araminta' left Liverpool on the 20 June 1852, its Master being Thomas Feran. There were 20 Roman Catholic Households in total including 17 from Moidart in Inverness-shire. Eight births were recorded, however 27 deaths occurred during the voyage largely from measles and diarrhoea. One man was lost overboard. The journey took 103 days and evidence suggests that it was a horrifying experience for all on board.

Following its arrival on 2 October 1852 in the port of Geelong, the ship ran aground off Point Richards and both passengers and crew worked together for a day to lighten the load in order to assist the tide to lift the ship off the sand bar. It finally arrived at Point Henry on 4 October 1852. The report prepared by the Immigration Board of Geelong following their inspection of the ship on 6 October 1852 contained a number of criticisms.<sup>40</sup> These related to the state of the ship after four months at sea including the state of its deckings, toilet facilities and other fittings, the quality of the food, water and other provisions. Not one barrel of flour was found to be suitable for consumption and several barrels of biscuits were mouldy. The requisite number of livestock had not been placed on board at the beginning of the journey.

References were also made about the way in which the Surgeon Superintendent

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<sup>40</sup> See the report prepared by the three members of the Immigration Board of Geelong; Charles Strutt, A. H. Baylie and Charles Friend who inspected the 'Araminta' on 6 October 1852 and published in W. B. Clarke, *'Araminta' Emigrant Ship 1852*, pp. 20-22.

Doctor Alfred Carr had conducted himself during the passage. It would seem that the Doctor's severe temper was of such concern to the Board that the report included the following reference to Doctor Carr:

...the Board feels unable to recommend that Dr Carr be again trusted with the charge of an immigrant vessel, unless as in this present instance the great majority of immigrants happen to be unacquainted with the English language.<sup>41</sup>

This statement indicates that the Board was more relieved that the Gaelic speaking passengers were unable to understand and take offence at the comments and actions of Carr and thereby possibly avoiding complaints from the passengers. The comment disappointingly suggests that the Board would also have no hesitation in exposing future immigrants to Carr's attitudes and behaviours provided they were from non-English speaking backgrounds. This further highlights the difficulties and barriers encountered by immigrants on board ship as a result of their economic and social class.

There were also references to the state of the health of the immigrants on

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<sup>41</sup> Clarke *'Araminta' Emigrant Ship 1852* p. 22.

arrival and the general report contained the following comments about some passengers: “The Board cannot speak favourably of the cleanliness of some of the immigrants...as on inspection some of the immigrants were found to be swarming with lice.”<sup>42</sup> However, given that the ship departed before the passengers were properly outfitted for the voyage, which meant that people did not have changes of clothes or sufficient articles of clothing, it is little wonder that many passengers were found to be infested at the end of the voyage. In a letter written by Mr A. Baylie, The Assistant Agent following inspection of the ‘Araminta’, the following statement is recorded: “...(a more dirty vessel than the ‘Araminta’ I have never inspected).”<sup>43</sup>

Apart from health concerns the report also contained a further reference to problems with communication on board.<sup>44</sup> This would seem to indicate that the majority of passengers were Gaelic speaking with little or no understanding of spoken English. There was criticism of the Matron, Helen Elliot, a single female passenger and a dressmaker from Roxburgh who “owing to her ignorance of Gaelic proved of but small use.”<sup>45</sup> The Immigration Agent, Edward Grimes also recognised the impact of an inappropriate appointment on the passengers and expressed concerns about the methods used to appoint

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> See The Report of the Immigration Board Geelong on the ship ‘Araminta’ reproduced in Clarke, pp 20-22.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Matrons on government emigrant ships in England prior to departure. In a letter written to the Colonial Secretary in 1852 Grimes expressed his wish to see the appointment process discontinued. He was of the view that the appointment should be made by the Surgeon Superintendent of each ship who supervised the work of the Matron rather than by a Committee of Ladies:

I find that the Matrons of no less than nine Immigrant ships (as per margin) have been either dismissed during the voyage, or have been reported as incompetent for the discharge of their duties, and in almost every instance as I am informed by my predecessor these appointments are made by the Ladies' Committee.<sup>46</sup>

From the content of the report (and criticism of those without Gaelic) it is obvious that little provision or planning had occurred prior to the voyage in relation to the degree of interpreting that would be required. As a result it became necessary to employ three interpreters, one male and two female (the youngest female aged 14) during the voyage. Two of the three interpreters were paid £2 for their duties. Other passengers were also employed in a range

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<sup>46</sup> E. Grimes, Letter to the Colonial Secretary re The Immigration Agent offering certain suggestions respecting the appointment of Matrons on board Immigrant ships in England. One of the nine ships named in the margin of the letter was the 'Marco Polo'. PROV, VPRS 1189/P/0000, Inward Registered Correspondence [Colonial Secretary's Office] 1851-1863, Unit 113, File 52/9330, PROV, North Melbourne, 1852.

of duties including School master, School master's assistant, Schoolmistress, Matron, Hospital Assistant and Cook. Ewen McDonald (Appendix A, Household 20) was the only member of a Moidart family recorded as being employed and as a Constable was also paid £2.<sup>47</sup> However, this payment was only received after the Surgeon had convinced the members of the Board that the constables had performed their duties to the best of their abilities but not as effectively as he had wished. Mr Strutt had therefore suggested that the monies be withheld from the constables. Whilst this would be a saving to the colonial government it removed a source of remuneration from a person at a time when all possible monies were required.

It seemed that there was significant tension between the Surgeon and the passengers on arrival at Geelong as the passengers “gradually lost all respect for my authority and eventually gave me great trouble in enforcing the regulations before they finally quitted the ship.”<sup>48</sup> This view was later challenged by the presentation of signed addresses prepared by the passengers to Carr, Captain Feran and members of the crew. Thanks were expressed to Feran “for the kindness and good attention shown to us during the passage”, to Mr Carr “for his zeal and activity amongst the passengers” and to other officers on board “for good attention”. A public notice of thanks and gratitude from the

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<sup>47</sup> For an outline of the duties performed by a constable during the voyage see Haines, *Life and death in the age of sail*, p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Clarke, ‘*Araminta*’ *Emigrant Ship 1852*, Enclosure two, page number not

passengers to several key personnel on board and listing the names of those who had signed was also published in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 12 October 1852.<sup>49</sup> Why the passengers felt it necessary to thank both men publicly is not clear. It may have been due to a sense of loyalty to the surgeon whilst the ongoing difficulties between Carr and the Board continued with many of the passengers still on board. Without Carr's medical skills it is possible that the loss of life may have been even higher and that the passengers were aware of lives saved rather than lives lost. It is important to note, however, that research undertaken by Alan Stoller and Roma Emmerson on the life and medical history of Alfred Carr following his arrival in Victoria led them to the conclusion that:

Dr. Carr would undoubtedly be classified as a paranoid schizophrenic in present-day terminology. It is of interest to note that he could, if kept off his delusions and not placed under stress, present a picture of sanity to the inexperienced observer and, perhaps even to his medical advisers who discharged him as being "cured" on several occasions.<sup>50</sup>

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recorded.  
<sup>49</sup> See the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, Number 1907, published on Tuesday 12 October, 1852. No page recorded.  
<sup>50</sup> A. Stoller and R. Emmerson, 'Dr John Alfred Carr - a psycho-historical study' *The Medical Journal of Australia* SLV, 1973. p. 193.

These conclusions present a frightening image of the behaviour and potential danger he posed to those on board ship. An entry in the records of the Ararat Asylum where Carr died in 1894 states:

Transferred from Yarra Bend 1.4.87 where he was admitted 28.5.66, formerly occupied as a surgeon, suffering from chronic delusional insanity, he is described as dangerous and destructive, and full of delusional ideas as to identity, power and position.<sup>51</sup>

The physical voyage was therefore not the only part of the journey filled with potential danger. Danger was also present in the surgeon set in charge of the wellbeing of both passengers and crew. The impact of his behaviour on the welfare and health of his patients will never be known, however, his behaviour was of obvious concern to the Board of Inspectors resulting in their punitive action. At long last the Certificate of Arrival was signed by Edward Grimes, the Immigration Agent, in Melbourne on 2 November 1852.<sup>52</sup>

The 'Araminta' was the first of two HIES chartered ships involved with this

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> E. Grimes, *Certificate of Arrival of the ship 'Araminta'*, VPRS 1189/P/0000, Immigration Agent Files, Unit 112, Document 52/7708, PROV North Melbourne, 1852.

immigration to arrive in Victoria. The passengers on board this ship and other ships carrying Highlanders to Victoria quickly became the subject of many disparaging remarks and views held by Grimes. Grimes held particular views about Highlanders in general and coupled with the fact that he now also had to deal with the newly organised HIES, his association with the immigrants and the Society did very little to change his attitudes. He became very critical of both the organisers and the immigrants assisted by the HIES scheme. His criticism of Trevelyan and the other gentlemen involved related to the fact that:

In the first place the greater portion of these people arrived in the Colony before the receipt of any advices concerning them, and they were scattered over the length and breadth of the land before the engagements they had respectively entered into to repay a certain portion of their passage money, were received by me.<sup>53</sup>

In relation to the immigrants themselves, Grimes reported that:

In the second place, most of these people are in a most deplorable state of ignorance and quite unacquainted with the English language and all

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<sup>53</sup> E. Grimes, *Annual Report upon Immigration for the year 1852*, VPRS 1189/10, Unit 14, 199



those who were questioned by me through an interpreter, not one appeared to be in any degree aware that he had entered into an engagement to pay anything at all. However desirable the System may be as a means of charitable relief, I scarcely look upon this class of immigrants as one that should be brought out at the expense of the Colony: very few of them are acquainted with agricultural or pastoral employment and from their indolent habits, I do not think they are likely to prove a very great acquisition to our labour market.<sup>54</sup>

Although there is no evidence to show that these views had any detrimental effects on the arrival and settlement of the Households, they nevertheless represent an unpleasant ideological environment into which immigrants were expected to settle. As the recipients of HIES assistance they had already experienced deprivation at the hands of the Society's agents in Liverpool. They had also suffered as a result of the actions of landowners and were the subject of similar views held by both Grimes and Trevelyan. It would seem that his views including information about their 'indolent habits' were formed from interviews undertaken with the assistance of an interpreter. Apparently Grimes was not aware of their pastoral experience in Scotland and may not have fully understood how the Society was to be financially supported.

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File 1853/A577900, PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.  
<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Although the views held by Grimes may have also been representative of those held by other Government officials there were countering views held by Scottish emigrants themselves and these positive views were included in their letters to family and friends at home. Letters written by emigrants stated that the Highlanders in particular and Scots generally were held in high regard in the colony because they persevered in difficult situations and were trusted. Many went on to succeed and to become both comfortable and financially independent and were much sought after to fill employment positions:

I could fill sheets of paper with accounts of the success of many of your countrymen in Port Phillip, who arrived in the colony penniless. Highlanders here stand high, and are the most respected of our colonists, they are sought after with avidity to fill places of trust, and well they deserve the name they have. Indeed, Scotchmen in general have so conducted themselves that the very name is respected.<sup>55</sup>

A similar reference in another letter supports this view: “The Scots are a people who get on well here. Naturally quiet and persevering, they soon get into

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<sup>55</sup> Author unknown. Letter from a Highlander in Australia to a friend back in the Highlands describing the opportunities for success for Highlanders, firstly in agricultural work in the Colony but failing that, on the goldfields. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 27 January 1853. p. 3.

comfortable circumstances, and often independence follows.”<sup>56</sup> This view would seem to indicate that the Moidart Households would not only be well accepted, they would have few difficulties in finding work in the pastoral industry.

The arrival and early employment experiences of the immigrants on board the vessel 'Araminta' were very different from those on the 'Marco Polo'. In a *Supplement to the Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* published on 8 October 1852 wages paid in the pastoral industry in the Geelong area were listed as follows:

1. married couples as house servants for country hotels – 70 - 80 pounds per annum with rations;
2. married couples as house servants for home stations – 60 - 65 pounds per annum;
3. married couples for out stations – 50 - 55 pounds per annum with rations;
4. married couples for out stations taking two flocks of sheep – 60 - 65 pounds per annum with rations;
5. shepherds – 38 - 40 pounds;
6. shearers - 35 shillings per hundred sheep;
7. sheep - washers-25 - 30 shillings;

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<sup>56</sup> Letter written by Mr A Walker to his father at Fyrish in the Highlands, dated 25 December 1852. It describes the availability of abundant work on the land at high wages, the success of the Scots in the colony and the composition of the population on the diggings. *The Inverness Courier*, Inverness, 26 May 1853. p. 4.

8. hut-keepers - 30 - 35 pounds per annum; and
9. farm servants - 50 - 55 pounds per annum.<sup>57</sup>

On 6 October 1852, a notice was placed in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* by Charles Strutt, the Assistant Immigration Agent, notifying prospective employers that the families and single men on board would be 'open for engagement' on the sixth and that steamers would take interested employers to the ship. Single women could be engaged at the Depot on the following day. Alfred Carr noted in his report, however, that some passengers were reluctant to take up offers of employment as they felt that the wages offered by the prospective employers were not sufficient.

An article published in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* implied that these immigrants were badly advised when it came to negotiating a reasonable wage. They knew, however, that labour was scarce owing to the gold rushes, and that this was a bargaining tool that they could use to their advantage:

The emigrants from the Isle of Skye, on board the 'Araminta' know how well to place a high estimate upon the value of their services, for not content with the high rates of wages now current in the colony they

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<sup>57</sup> 'Geelong Labour Market' Supplement to the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, Geelong 8 October 1852.

are looking for an enormous advance upon these rates. The consequence is that many persons who went on board in the hope of obtaining servants, were obliged to return without them, the Immigrants' demands being such as to stop negotiations at the outset. It is evident that they are victims of mischievous advisers.<sup>58</sup>

This report indicates that the immigrants were well informed about employment conditions possibly as a result of contact with local residents or information received from members of the crew who went ashore. Clearly these immigrants were aware of prevailing economic conditions and had a sense of their own value and worth to the Colony and they were prepared to journey to wherever they could find the highest wages. The squatters, however, were desperate to employ people who would be willing to work and stay on the land and they had a very pragmatic view of the economic value of immigrants such as these. The landowners were looking for a cheap source of labour and one that would remain in their employment as reliable employees. They did not want employees who viewed their employment as a means to the eventual acquisition of land of their own. The squatters may have reasoned that newly arrived immigrants from the remote and isolated Highlands and Islands of Scotland would be ignorant of the needs of the Colony and therefore would accept any employment along with the accompanying conditions and wages.

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<sup>58</sup> *The Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 11 October 1852, Vol. IX, page unrecorded.

The immigrants' lack of proficiency in English would possibly put these people at even greater disadvantage. Unable to read newspapers to obtain the latest information about wages and conditions of employment and with difficulties in communicating with others in English, the squatters may have thought that they had an ignorant but ready and accepting group of employees but this was not so as seen in the following example.

In a letter to William Lewis, the manager of the Terrinallum station (owned by the Clyde Company), A. C. Cameron wrote:

I have managed to make arrangements with my Highlanders at high wages, but for two months only; they are hard bargain makers but faithful servants.<sup>59</sup>

He was referring to two Moidart Households in particular. According to the Disposal list of the 'Araminta', Roderick McDonald had accepted prior employment with Mr Luck at Mount Moriac at £60 per annum for six months with rations. Obviously Roderick felt that he could find better wages for himself and his son Duncan with the Clyde Company at Terrinallum station. Angus McNeil (Household 26) also obtained his first employment contract with the Clyde Company. He was engaged by Donald Matheson at £50 for twelve months and sent to Terrinallum. According to Brown, Angus and Mary

McNeil and Roderick McDonald and son Duncan were all hired on October 7 1852 for two months at £85 per annum, and after a year at £70. On 7 December 1852, both Households were re-engaged at £95 for three months.<sup>60</sup>

This example seems to indicate their new found confidence having left behind their former society with all its restrictions, poverty and lack of opportunity. Their arrival in Victoria offered a new beginning filled with new expectations, one of which was to own land of their own.

By October 1853 the goldfields were becoming less attractive and people began to leave in search of other forms of employment. Letters home now began to be filled with warnings about being too eager to leave Scotland and emigrating to Port Phillip:

I must, however, warn my fellow countrymen against being too rash in coming here. There will soon be a tremendous change in this country. The labour market is now well supplied, and hundreds of unsuccessful gold diggers are returning to Melbourne, and eagerly engaging themselves to employers. Wages have not as yet declined, but a change is expected in the present high rates, and that ere long. Common

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<sup>59</sup> Brown, *Clyde Company Papers*, p. 518.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

labourers will find ample employment and remunerative wages for many years to come.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the insecurity and hard work the goldfields continued to be an attractive destination for at least one Moidart Household leaving Terrinallum. In a letter from Terrinallum Station in 1854 and two years after the initial employment of Angus McNeill and Roderick McDonald, the manager A. C. Cameron wrote:

My Highlanders are leaving, the one for Town owing to the Health of the Mother, the other for the diggings. No wages at present would induce them to stay, though I think their wages would bear an advance yet.<sup>62</sup>

By 1856 information provided in marriage and other registers shows that Catherine Kennedy (Household 25) and her brother Angus McNeil were settled in Clunes (a goldmining town near Ballarat) when Catherine's eldest daughter Mary married John McDonald, a miner from Arisaig, Scotland. By 1880 John was a farmer renting 69 acres of land and paying rates on a home in Clunes. Perhaps he had found sufficient gold or other forms of employment to establish

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<sup>61</sup> Author unknown. Letter describing the social, moral and economic effects of gold on the colony and warning other Scots not to hastily leave Scotland as employment opportunities might change because of the high numbers of unsuccessful gold diggers returning to the city looking for work. *Inverness Advertiser*, Inverness, 11 October 1853, p. 6.



a secure life for himself and his family. Households took up short-term employment on the land for a while and then, with sufficient funds in hand, made their way later to the goldfields. Single men from Moidart were also drawn to the diggings after their arrival. Brothers, John and Charles McDonald from Moidart, were both recorded as ‘gold digger’ when they married in 1855 and 1854 respectively.

The initial offers of employment to the ‘Araminta’ passengers, including the conditions related to wages, with or without rations and the terms of contract and particularly for married couples can be seen in the following table.

**Table 3.5: First employment terms for Moidart Households who arrived on the ‘Araminta’ in 1852.**

<b>Household number in Appendix A</b>	<b>Name of Household</b>	<b>Recorded employment location on arrival.</b>	<b>Wages offered</b>	<b>Rations offered</b>	<b>Number of terms in contract</b>
12.	John and Catherine McPherson	Mt Moriac	60 pounds	with	6.
13.	Alexander and Mary McDonald	Ballarat	60 pounds	with	12
14.	Angus and Ann McDonald	On own account to Geelong			
15.	Angus and Mary McDonald	Colac			
16.	John and	—	—	—	—

<sup>62</sup> Brown, *Clyde Company Papers*, p. 31.

	Mary McDonald				
17.	Archibald and Catherine McDonald	Colac	60 pounds	With	6
18.	Mary McDonald and children	–	–	–	–
20.	Michael and Mary McVarish	On own account	–	–	–
21.	Mary McDonald and children	Daughter Catherine, Corio Street Geelong	25 pounds	with	3.
22.	Roderick McDonald and children	Terrinallum	85 pounds	with	2
24.	Andrew Grant and children	Moorabool River	200 pounds	with	3
25.	Catherine Kennedy and children	Barrabool, Ryrie Street and Fyansford	60 pounds	with	3
26.	Angus and Mary McNeil	Clyde Company, Leigh	50 pounds	with	12
28.	Margaret and Marjory Corbet	Both South Geelong	25 pounds	with	3.
29	Donald and Ann McDonald	Elephant Bridge with Donald's father	–	–	–
31.	Donald and Catherine McDonald	Geelong	70 pounds	with	3

**Source:** Disposal List of the ship 'Araminta'.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> 'Araminta', nominal and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward Passenger Lists-British ports 1852-1923, Book 6, pp. 35-47 PROV, North Melbourne.

In his Annual Report upon Immigration in 1852 Edward Grimes notes that the Port of Geelong received a greater proportion of immigrants than did Melbourne and Portland. Referring to the fact that 16 vessels landed passengers at Geelong in 1852 compared with 18 at Melbourne, Grimes acknowledges that:

By this it would appear that Geelong has received a larger proportion of imported labour than her size and population entitle her, but, being the centre of a large Agricultural and Pastoral District, and, as will be seen in Return No. 10, that in the average rate of wages received, and the length of engagements into which the Immigrants have entered, Geelong will bear a favourable comparison with the other Ports of the Colony.<sup>64</sup>

Further on, in Return No. X of his report he states:

...the average rate of wages for Families, Single Men and Single Women ruled higher there than in either Melbourne or Portland, while the number of persons who refused to take service at Geelong and Portland will bear a favourable comparison with those who persued

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

[sic] a similar line of conduct in Melbourne; a fact to be attributed, I presume, to the greater proximity of the latter city to the Gold Fields.<sup>65</sup>

The correspondence of one prominent Western District landowner suggests that changes to agreed wages were determined case by case. Writing to his brother George Cumming, (a squatter with a Run at Stoney Point, Elephant Bridge) in March 1853 Cumming describes the difficulties associated with the hiring of suitable men for the property. By 1853 many of the new immigrants were single females again providing evidence of the success of the government policy to attract single women in particular, to the Colony:

Now when I came down and up to within a month ago any number of hands could be hired at the Depot. But they are not sending them so fast now and, it is mostly single women that are sent...After a good deal of trouble Father and Mother hired this family which I think will suit you very well although young men would have been preferable. I send you the Agreement. They were the only family in the ship worth having, the rest all had large families of small children.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Letter to George Cumming from his brother, *Cumming Family 100 Letters and notes from three generations of Cummings 1850 – 1891*, File GRS100/1, Geelong Heritage Centre, Geelong, 1853.

Clearly this squatter was hoping to employ single men because of the costs involved in providing a family with sufficient rations and accommodation as well as wages. This fact was also referred to in an earlier letter dated 28 January 1853. In this letter Cumming refers to a request by a Mr Cole, an employee of twelve months, to have his wages increased. This request was rejected as the family was large (four members) and required a large amount of rations in addition to the wages. However, it was stated in the letter that if the employee remained in employment with the Cumming family he would continue to receive £100 a year in wages. This was made up of £60 for himself and his wife and £20 a year for each of the boys as this was the wage that he was engaged for and was the current wage at the time.<sup>67</sup> In the same letter reference is made to the fact that there were “plenty of families to be engaged now”. Fluctuations in available labour occurred on a regular basis. This issue was also raised in earlier correspondence from another Western District property. Writing from the Golfhill Station at River Leigh in 1851, William Lewis, the manager, noted optimistically that there would not be a shortage of labourers in that year to harvest the crops because of gold:

The gold diggings at Mt Alexander are sti[ll] causing much excitement throughout the Country, but I believe the scarcity of water is beginning to be felt by the diggers. Many of the farmers are returning to the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

harvest, so there is no great likelihood of the crops being allowed to go to waste – a prospect which several held out for a time...The Ballarat field is almost deserted.<sup>68</sup>

In August 1852 Lewis noted in his correspondence that “Labour continues exceedingly scarce throughout the country.”<sup>69</sup> It also appeared that the numbers of immigrants arriving in the colony each day ensured a steady supply of sufficient labourers and agents working in Britain on behalf of some squatters in Victoria were no longer required to sign up emigrants to work in Australia:

The lately arrived Emigrants have certainly been of much service to us, but after the single men are despatched I beg that you will not send out any more people unless we request you to do so. If the numbers arrive which are expected here in the course of a few months there will be no necessity for hiring servants for us in Scotland.<sup>70</sup>

This situation assisted the successful employment of many of the Moidart people when they arrived later in October and in February 1853.

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<sup>68</sup> Brown, *Clyde Company Papers*, p. 170.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

The research shows that single women (between the ages of 16 and 30) generally from Moidart Households were all accompanied by a parent or parents, and/or by older brothers or married sisters or other relatives. The following table includes examples of single women between the ages of 16 and 30 who travelled on the 'Araminta' and how they were accompanied to Australia.

**Table 3.6: Sample of single females and adult Household members who accompanied them on the 'Araminta' in 1852.**

Name of woman	Accompanied by father only, mother only or both parent/s	Accompanied by male sibling/s (either married or unmarried)	Accompanied by married sibling/s
1. Margaret Grant aged 20	Father only		
2. Flora Kennedy aged 19	Mother only		
3. Margaret McDonald aged 17	Both		
4. Ann, Margaret and Catherine McDonald	Both		
5. Janet McDonald aged 34	Mother only		
6. Margaret and Marcella Corbet, aged 23 and 21			Sister, Catherine Corbet married to Archibald McDonald.

**Source:** Nominal passenger list of the 'Araminta'. Not all single females from Moidart Households are included in this table.

The disposal list of the 'Araminta' reveals that all of the 24 single females

from Moidart Households, for example, found initial employment in Geelong or journeyed further with their families. A total of 48 single women aged 14 years or more found employment leaving only eleven single females in the same age cohort who were either not employed or stayed within the Household with parents. When compared with the statistics for the other single female passengers from the 'Araminta' it would appear that the Moidart single females were no more disadvantaged in securing employment because of their inadequate English literacy, age, religion or previous occupation in Scotland.

Residents in the Geelong region and urban areas seemed very keen to employ these single women as domestic servants. Catherine McDonald (Household 15) was employed by Mrs Carmichael of South Geelong who, on the day of the arrival of the 'Araminta', advertised vacancies for customers at her boarding house in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*.<sup>71</sup>

There were marked differences in the proportion of females to males living in Geelong and Melbourne, the two ports of entry for the Moidart Households, at this time. In his book *Madness rules the hour* Ian Wynd notes that the Victorian census of 1851 and 1861 show that in the case of Geelong the proportion of females to males was always higher than in Victoria as a whole. In 1851 the ratio of females to males for Victoria as a whole was

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<sup>71</sup> Advertisement for vacancies at a boarding house *The Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* Volume XL, 4 October 1852 Geelong, no page number recorded.



approximately two to three but in Geelong it was five to six. By 1854 following the goldrushes the Victorian ratio had increased to one to two whilst in Geelong it was nine to eleven. By 1857 it was almost one to one in Geelong and by 1861 Geelong had an excess of females over males.<sup>72</sup> Wynd argues that the difference between the wider figures for Victoria and those for Geelong in particular may possibly be explained by the fact that Geelong was a more stable environment which “encouraged families to settle there, and that there was sufficient employment to keep them there.”<sup>73</sup> This view is confirmed by examining the place of residence for single females marrying at St Mary’s Catholic Church in Geelong where the majority lived either in or close to Geelong and will be discussed in chapter five.

It would seem that in the case of these single females the inability to read and write in English was no barrier to employment. Of the 24 single Moidart women, 20 were recorded on the passenger list as unable to read or write in English. Of the remaining four, two could read only and two were recorded as being able to both read and write. Twelve women were employed in Households in Geelong or in the Geelong district whilst three individual women were employed at Colac (along with other members of her Household), Ryansford and [...] Creek. Amongst these women the average wage received was £23 per annum with rations and an agreed initial period of employment of

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<sup>72</sup> I. Wynd, *Madness rules the hour; the effects of the goldrushes on Geelong*, Self published, Geelong, 1967. pp. 7-8.

three months. The oldest woman was aged 24 and the youngest of those employed was aged 14. Age did not seem to be a criterion which determined the rates for wages and neither was experience. A 15-year-old female received £25 per annum whilst a 21-year-old received only twelve pounds per annum. Perhaps levels of wages were determined by the bargaining power of individuals. Most women seemed to be employed in homes and guest houses in Geelong which were established to provide accommodation for men arriving to walk to the gold fields.<sup>74</sup>

It was single females who were often forced to separate from the Household in order to accept work. Margaret and Marcella Corbet arrived with their married sister but were forced to accept work at different addresses in Geelong whilst their married sister travelled to Colac with her husband's Household to take up employment. Other Households remained intact. Margaret, Mary and Catherine Grant stayed with their father. Single females in seven out of eight Households with employment age daughters aged 14 and above were separated from other members of the Household. As it was a common practice in the Highlands for Household members to work in neighbouring Households and on crofts for part of the year, and in some cases to journey to cities like Glasgow, the separation may not have been so dire and unexpected. It is interesting to note that of the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>74</sup> 'Araminta', nominal and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward Passenger Lists-British ports 1852-1923, Book 6, pp. 35-47 PROV, North Melbourne.

two Households headed by single males (both widowers) all children remained within the Household rather than seeking employment.

The situation for single males is not as straightforward to interpret. A total of 47 single males aged 14 years or more disembarked in Geelong. Of these 41 were travelling with members of a Household. Fourteen of the men were from Moidart Households. The disposal list shows that 21 of the total number accepted employment whilst 26 were not employed at this time and left either with parents or journeyed on separately on their own account. Of those who were not employed, twelve were from Moidart Households which left only two of the Moidart men accepting employment. Eight of the single Moidart males chose to remain within a single parent Household. The single parent Moidart Households numbered five in total and included two male and three female heads of Households. This decision was possibly made in order to support the parent and to help the parent to provide for other members. It may also point to the economic dependence of the parent on a male child in these Households. Single males earned higher wages as pastoral workers than single females earned as domestic servants. Households could not have been maintained by the wage of a domestic servant. Secondly, the average age of the single parent heads was 50 years. Gaining employment at that age and as a single person would not have been easy and the presence of young single males as additional employees would have made the Household unit more employable. The sense of loyalty felt by single males to the Household would also mean that the

people involved were less likely to move apart and seek employment separately or to travel to the goldfields. Therefore, the commitment to ongoing employment with the same employer was easier to make and employers felt greater security with their employment. The same situation is not evident in the case of single females. In three out of the five Households four single females left the parent and siblings to accept work largely in Geelong. It is not clear, however, whether or not this separation caused the Household to remain in close proximity to Geelong to be with the daughter.

Finally, an analysis of the Household groups shows that there were 71 Households in total on the 'Araminta', excluding single males travelling alone. According to the disposal list 47 Households received contracts with employers before leaving the emigration depot. The remaining Households either left of their own accord or had no information recorded against their names on the disposal list. Care needs to be taken, however, in assuming that all Households went to work for the employers listed on the disposal list. In the case of Roderick McDonald (Household 22), he is recorded as accepting employment at Mount Moriac. As shown earlier he did not take up this position and later negotiated a wage, rations and a three-month employment period for both himself and his son, with the Clyde Company at Terrinallum. Other Households may have also been engaged shortly after this list was prepared. The eventual destinations and experiences of the 'Araminta' passengers in acquiring land will be examined in chapter four.

### **3.6 The arrival of the ‘Allison’ and the initial employment experiences of its passengers**

The emigrant ship ‘Allison’ arrived in Port Phillip on 20 December 1852 following a voyage lasting 98 days. The ‘Allison’ left Liverpool on 13 September 1852 for Melbourne, the master being Andrew Young Marshall. There were 307 ‘souls’ on board when she left Liverpool. These consisted of 193 adults (married couples, single men and women, and widows and widowers) and 114 children, five of whom were classed as infants. During the voyage two adults and twelve children under the age of 14 died, a very low mortality rate compared to other voyages. There were twelve Moidart Households on board. These Households are important to this study as they were the only Moidart Households in the three groups of emigrants whose names were officially recorded as receiving assistance from the HIES. On its arrival in Melbourne the ‘Allison’ and her passengers were inspected by the pilot and the Surgeon Superintendent, Charles Stilwell, reported that the ship was free of infection. However, by 27 December 1852, the Assistant Colonial Surgeon at Williamstown found two passengers infected with typhus and four

with typhoid fever and so the ship was placed in quarantine arriving at the Quarantine Station on the 2 January 1853.<sup>75</sup>

One of the perils associated with ship-board travel was the high incidence of mortality due to outbreaks of contagious illnesses. A range of contagious illnesses such as measles, typhus and diarrhoea caused by contaminated food, swept through each of the three ships during their voyages. The 14 deaths on board the 'Allison' during the voyage were caused largely by dysentery and its effects and a further seven deaths mostly from typhus occurred amongst the passengers between 1 and 8 January 1853 whilst the 'Allison' was in quarantine.<sup>76</sup> The placement of a vessel in quarantine meant that the passengers were not free to move into Melbourne or elsewhere to find work immediately. They were required to remain at the Quarantine Station until the Health Officer was satisfied that the risk of infecting others was no longer likely. This situation would usually place emigrants at a disadvantage as they would be prevented from seeking employment. However, in the case of the 'Allison' passengers, their time spent in quarantine afforded them the opportunity to gain their first paid employment due to circumstances operating at the time. Accommodation at the Quarantine Station in January 1853 consisted only of

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<sup>75</sup> T. Hunt, Letter to the Colonial Secretary re the quarantine of the 'Allison', VPRS 1189, Inward Registered Correspondence, Colonial Secretary's Office, 1851-1863, Unit 131, 53/880, PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.

<sup>76</sup> J. H. Welch, *Hell to health: The history of quarantine at Port Phillip Heads 1852-1966*, p. 20 and P. J. McDonald, Highland and Island Emigration Society, HIES, "The Allison". List of deaths on board the "Allison" and in Quarantine at [Http://www.angelfire.com/ns/bkeddy/HIES/all3.html](http://www.angelfire.com/ns/bkeddy/HIES/all3.html) (accessed 12 November 2002). 221

tents which were constantly blown over and saturated in wet weather. Dr Thomas Hunt, the Health Officer at the Station, wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting that quarantined passengers be permitted to work and to be hired at four shillings per day. And so while the 'Allison' was in quarantine,<sup>77</sup> Doctor Hunt organised for several of the male passengers to work on the station cutting wood and building fences and gateways as well as building more permanent stone buildings. Seven Moidart men participated in this work. This fact was restated in a letter written by John McIver, the teacher from Glenuig, Moidart, and a passenger on the 'Allison'.<sup>78</sup> As requested by Dr Hunt, the men were promised payment of four shillings a day for this work which they would receive from a government office in Melbourne once they were able to leave quarantine.<sup>79</sup> However, after finally leaving the Station in early February 1853 they spent six days of fruitless searching in Melbourne for the money owed to them but were unable to secure their wages as the account had not been forwarded to Melbourne. Further in his letter to the Colonial Secretary on behalf of the people involved, McIver requested that this matter be further investigated and suggested that this request could be verified by contacting the Religious Instructor who had accompanied the passengers during the voyage.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Quarantine Station was known as the 'Sanatory Station' and was located at 'Ticonderoga Bay'. Later its name was changed to 'Quarantine Station'. It was sited at Point Nepean, Portsea and was officially closed as a quarantine station in 1980.

<sup>78</sup> See Household four, Appendix A.

<sup>79</sup> J. McIver, Letter to the Colonial Secretary, 16 February 1853. VPRS 1189, Inward Registered Correspondence [Colonial Secretary's Office] 1851 – 1863, B53/1773, PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.

<sup>80</sup> J. McIver, Letter to the Colonial Secretary, 16 February 1863, VPRS 1189, Inward Registered Correspondence [Colonial Secretary's Office] 1851 - 1863. B53/1773

This letter was signed by twelve men, all of whom had wages due to them according to the number of days that they had worked.<sup>81</sup> Dr Hunt, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, however, strongly objected to John McIver being paid as “the man John McIver was hired like the rest, but did nothing. I therefore object to include his name in the abstracts. The others wrought very indifferently, the time against their respective names.”<sup>82</sup> Leaving the station to try to obtain their wages demonstrates the resolve of the twelve men involved and provides a further indication of the strong sense of community that continued to exist and bind these people together in Australia.

By April 1853 many of the passengers from the ‘Allison’ had left the Station to take up work in the neighbourhood much to the displeasure of Dr Hunt who conveyed this in correspondence to the Colonial Secretary stating that this had occurred in “direct defiance of my orders.”<sup>83</sup> The Moidart Households who travelled on the ‘Allison’ left the Station and dispersed in different ways and directions. This dispersal can be seen in the following table.

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PROV, North Melbourne, 1853..

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. The names of the Moidart men who were employed were: John McIver, Charles Macdonald, Donald McDonald, Alex. McDonald, John Cameron, Alex. McDonald and John McDonald. All except John McIver and Alex McDonald signed their names using a cross indicating “his mark”.

<sup>82</sup> T. Hunt, Letter to the Colonial Secretary, VPRS 1189/P, Inward Registered Correspondence Colonial Secretary's Office 1851 - 1863, Unit 131, 53/a5553 (53/3725), PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.

<sup>83</sup> T. Hunt, Letter to the Colonial Secretary re passengers from the 'Allison' and 'Priscilla' leaving the Quarantine Station to find employment in the neighbourhood without his permission, VPRS 1189/P, Inward Registered Correspondence Colonial Secretary's Office 1851 - 1863, Unit 131, 53/a5553 (53/3725), PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.



**Table 3.7: First employment terms for the Moidart Households who arrived on the ‘Allison’ in 1852.**

<b>Household number in Appendix A</b>	<b>Name of Household</b>	<b>Employment location on arrival</b>	<b>Wages offered</b>	<b>Rations offered</b>	<b>Number of terms in contract</b>
1	John and Sarah McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			
2	Norman and Jane McDonald	Ballandra	100 pounds	With	3 months
3	John and Mary Cameron	Stonepoint	60 pounds	With	12 months
4	John McIver	Ballarat 1854			
5	Angus and Mary McDonald	Goulburn River	100 pounds	With	12 months
6	Donald and Ann McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			
7	Alexander and Flora McDonald	On gov't roads	Ten shillings per day	Without	
8	Alexander and Mary McDonald	On gov't roads	Ten shillings per day	Without	
9	Alexander and Mary McDonald	Goulburn River	120 pounds	With	12 months

10	John and Flora McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			
11.	Mary McDonald and family	Not recorded			
19	Allan McDonald	On own account to Melbourne			

**Source:** Nominal passenger and disposal list for the 'Allison'<sup>84</sup>

Two families travelled to the Goulburn River to take up twelve month contracts working on the land (Households 5 and 9 Appendix A). John Cameron went to work for Alex Cameron at Stoneypoint with a twelve-month contract (Household 3 Appendix A), and two McDonald families obtained work on the government roads at ten shillings a day without rations (Households 7 and 8 Appendix A). John McIver (Household 4 Appendix A) travelled to Ballarat and remained in the district until approximately 1861. Norman McDonald (Household 2 Appendix A) went to work on the land at Ballandra. The destinations of the various single members of the family of the widow Mary McDonald (Household 11 Appendix A) are not recorded.

There were 13 single women aged between 14 and 29 recorded as members of

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<sup>84</sup> 'Allison', nominal passenger and disposal lists, VPRS 7666 Inward passenger lists -British ports, PROV, North Melbourne. Book 9, pp. 10-19.

Moidart Households. Of these only three women were recorded as being able to read or write or both. The two who were recorded as being able to both read and write were the only two women employed out of the total group. This indicates that literacy was favoured by employers and a lack of literacy skills in English proved to be a barrier to gaining employment. Both were employed as domestic servants with one going to Richmond and the other to Bacchus Marsh. Their wages were £20 and £26 respectively and both were employed for three months with rations. It is highly probable that many of the other single women accompanied their parents and other siblings. There were two widows present in the Households. One accompanied her son and his family and they left on their own accord for Melbourne. There are no details available for the other.

A similar fate also awaited the single men from these Households. There were 13 single men aged between 14 and 54 from five separate Households. All except two were recorded as unable to read and write. All, save Charles McDonald aged 54 and from Household two, accompanied their parents and siblings. Charles left on his own account to try his luck in Melbourne.

Clearly then, the research strongly suggests that, in the case of this particular group of Moidart Households, the strong kinship ties meant that the members stayed together and chose to seek employment as a family unit. However, as demonstrated in the case of the two single women employed, it may have also

been the widespread illiteracy rate in English present amongst the single males that prevented them from obtaining work. Perhaps employers were seeking the most educated for positions from amongst the thousands of young people available for engagement. At the time when the 'Allison' passengers were finally freed from quarantine (early 1853), employers may have been able to 'take their pick' from amongst eligible employees and reject those who were not either literate in English or proficient speakers of English. It is also interesting to note the large number of Households (four out of twelve) who sought their own employment in Melbourne. This may have been the result of the quarantine experience in making them anxious to find employment quickly in Melbourne or to seek employment in rural areas. Those who had been quarantined may have been disadvantaged when it came to employment.

The wages paid to the 'Allison' families who took up positions on the land varied. They ranged from £60 per annum with rations for a Household with two adults and four children from seven years to an infant to £120 per annum with rations for a Household with two adults and five children aged from thirteen years to five years. Families employed along the Goulburn River were the highest paid families, perhaps because of the distance from Melbourne and the need to attract workers who would bypass the goldfields of Mt Alexander and Bendigo. Many of the 'Allison' passengers took up land in the Geelong district and their experiences will be further examined in the next chapter.

### **3.7 Trevelyan, the HIES and Australia**

Following the arrival of HIES ships like the ‘Allison’, pressure was brought to bear by the Society on those who had received a loan prior to emigration and who had not repaid the loan. It appears however, that the perceptions of the work of the Society in assisting Highlanders emigrate to Australia was different in Australia from those held in Britain. In the period between 26 January 1852 and 14 April 1853, 17 HIES - chartered ships transported 2,605 passengers to Victoria, South Australia, Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales. Not all the colonies, however, appeared to support the efforts of the HIES or to welcome the Highlanders as potential settlers. Firstly, the colonial government of New South Wales was considering the adoption of its own self supporting emigration scheme in order to attract much needed labour to the pastoral industry. The scheme was designed to operate in a similar way to the HIES scheme and involved prospective emigrants in prepaying a sum of money determined by their eligibility and a promise to pay the balance on arrival. The government was hoping that the goldrushes occurring in the colony might also induce immigrants. Secondly, the preferred participants in such a scheme were not those targetted by the HIES. Indeed, the squatters and pastoralists of New South Wales seemed to question the suitability of “Scottish Celts” as desirable immigrants for the Colony.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Charles Nicholson Sydney to Trevelyan. Ref. GD371/233/4 NAS, Edinburgh, 1853. This letter contains references made by the Governor General to

Apart from setting in place mechanisms to pursue the loan defaulters it is difficult to identify the extent to which the Society considered the on-arrival needs of the emigrants apart from assisting families with their first contract of employment. Writing to Sir John McNeill in 1852, Trevelyan makes reference to a suggestion made by General Erskine, an Assistant Commissary who had recently returned from Port Phillip. Erskine suggested that the “leading Scotch Gentlemen at Melbourne, several of whom speak Gaelic”, should be asked to form a committee to assist the emigrants on their arrival.<sup>86</sup> Trevelyan seemed to support this suggestion but made it clear that this committee was not to interfere with the work of collecting repayments from the emigrants. The collection of the repayment was of paramount importance to the ongoing work of the Society. The Society, however, assisted so many people to emigrate that it became difficult to locate many of these families and so in order to retrieve this money the Society appointed agents in each Colony.

Messrs Dickson and Gilchrist in Melbourne were appointed as agents for the Colony of Port Phillip. Their responsibilities and instructions as agents were set out in correspondence titled “Instructions to the Agents in Australia of the Highland and Island Emigration Society” and dated London, 15 April 1853.<sup>87</sup>

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emigrants arriving on board the ‘Ontario’ as “...slothful, dirty and discontented”.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from C. Trevelyan to S. J. McNeill, HIES Uncatalogued Letterbooks Book, HD4/ 1-4, West Register House, NAS, Edinburgh, 1852.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Instructions to the agents in Australia of the Highland and Island Emigration Society’, 229

The agents were requested to ensure that the families were looked after in terms of their initial employment. They were asked to contract the families with employers of good character and to try to ensure that the wages and conditions of employment were reasonable. Agents had the power to instigate legal proceedings if the repayment was not forthcoming. Once they received the payment or an instalment, the agent deducted five per cent for their own commission and to reimburse any outstanding legal or other costs. The rest of the repayment was forwarded to London. Copies of all Promissory Notes were sent to the agent who was required to record both the location and employment circumstances of each family when located and to forward this information to London. This aspect may have been self-serving on the part of the Society as it was in its interest to ensure that this happened in order for families to repay the loan.<sup>88</sup>

Tracing families following their arrival in order to secure their repayment to the HIES proved to be problematic for several reasons. Although the people had arrived during the gold rush in Victoria, the Society hoped that the vast need for shepherds, shearers, wool sorters and other pastoral workers, along with the hard work involved in digging for gold, would prevent the men with families from leaving for the gold fields. It was easier to locate a Household where the head of the family had remained with the other members and not left

in search for gold. Steady employment with regular wages as farm labourers meant that there was a greater chance of repayment compared with those who chose the unpredictable financial rewards associated with gold. Therefore it was hoped that the strong family and kinship bonds would be maintained in Australia and would ensure that family members would remain together. This view was again reiterated in the report published by the HIES following its first year of operation:

Love of home and family ties operate as a drawback to the allurements of the diggings...The Highland families have, with rare exceptions, settled on the sheep farms, to which all their previous habits inclined them.<sup>89</sup>

Unfortunately, similar efforts were not put in place to ensure that the proprietors back in Scotland met their obligations in relation to paying the one third payment towards the emigrants' costs. In a letter to Sir John McNeill in 1853 Trevelyan listed those proprietors who had not met their obligations and the list included the following proprietors of Moidart Estates. The list of names included W. Robertson Esq. (Kinlochmoidart Estate) who owed £110.8.1, Dr Martin (Moidart Estate) £74.6.5 and Alexander Macdonald Esq. (Lochshiel

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<sup>88</sup> See Balfour for an explanation of the purpose and role of Promissory Notes and of the Australian experience in re-claiming loans made to HIES emigrants, pp. 507-512.

<sup>89</sup> Report of the Highland Emigration Society from its formation in April 1852 until



Estate) who owed £31.11.1 ½.<sup>90</sup> Although the success and viability of the Scheme also relied on the funds promised by the proprietors it would appear that Trevelyan, however, was not as committed to following up promises of outstanding funds from the estate owners as he was to pursuing the former tenant farmers in Australia.

By examining the disposal list of the 'Allison' it can be seen that of the twelve families assisted by the HIES, six left for Melbourne, three were employed on a twelve month contract by landowners and one was employed for a period of three months. Two other heads were employed to work on the government roads on a daily rate of ten shillings.<sup>91</sup> It is not clear whether or not the HIES agents were informed about these employment contracts or knew of the employment destination of the immigrants. Haines points out that:

Poor communication between the Society and the colony meant, however, that it was often unclear to Immigration Agents which

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April 1853 London, 1853. p.14.

<sup>90</sup> Letter from C. Trevelyan to S. J. McNeill, HIES Uncatalogued Letterbooks Book 3, Highland Destitution, HD4/1-4, West Register House, NAS, Edinburgh, 1853. Page unknown.

<sup>91</sup> Passenger and disposal list for the ship 'Allison', PROV, North Melbourne, VPRS 7310, Assisted Immigrants Book 9, 1852. pp. 10-17.

immigrants were HIES-sponsored, and they often dispersed before arrangements for future repayment could be made.<sup>92</sup>

From these accounts it is possible that some Moidart Households may have 'disappeared' without the knowledge of the Agents as only three of the twelve Households were recorded as accepting employment in a known location for a period greater than three months.

In 1855 the difficulties associated with obtaining the repayments were discussed at a meeting held at the Gaelic church in Geelong.<sup>93</sup> At this meeting it was claimed that out of approximately £8,000 expended by the Society only £1,500 had been repaid by assisted immigrants. Speaking about this state of affairs Lachlan McKinnon informed the meeting:

...that a great many of these persons had repudiated the obligation altogether, and had resorted to the most mean and contemptible shifts to evade the payment of their debts to the society.<sup>94</sup>

McKinnon was speaking as the chairman of a group of Highland men who had formed a Committee in Melbourne in an attempt to reclaim monies owed to the

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<sup>92</sup> Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, p. 237.

<sup>93</sup> Author Unknown 'Highlanders and Islanders of Scotland' *The Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, Saturday, July 21 1855. page number not recorded.

Society. The Committee was composed of men who appeared to belong to a social class outside that of the majority of Highlanders and was based on the fact that they spoke Gaelic. One such member, Mr Lachlan McKinnon who was the Chair of the Melbourne Committee, was unable to address the meeting in Geelong in Gaelic as, "...although he could understand the language conversationally, it was so long since he left home that he could not deliver an address in it."<sup>95</sup> This suggests that in his case McKinnon had assimilated into the mainstream English-speaking culture which, in turn, may have impacted on his views about Highlanders from a more inferior social standing. Those present at this meeting expressed their anger towards the defaulters by passing a lengthy resolution which stated in part:

...conduct of such individuals of our countrymen in this colony as refused to fulfil their obligations to that society in repaying advances made to them as individuals and families, by which they were enabled to emigrate to this country.<sup>96</sup>

The meeting strongly condemned those who had brought dishonour and shame

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> 'Highlanders and Islanders of Scotland', published in *The Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, Number 2769, Saturday July 21, 1855. Microfilm A10, 1.5.1855 – 30.4.1856, Geelong Heritage Centre, Geelong, 1855. p.2.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

on their homeland by refusing to acknowledge and pay their debts. It also expressed its concern that this situation had been taken up by the English press with *The Times* reporting that "...the character of the Highland population for high honesty was gone, and quoted the position of the Highlanders in Australia as proof of the assertion."<sup>97</sup>

The meeting was important in that at no point were the economic circumstances and abilities of the Households to repay the loan raised by those present. Its total focus was on how to save the image and character of the Scottish community in Victoria. It also appears from a further statement by McKinnon that none of the Households involved was present at the meeting. Those who were present were exhorted to "...use their influence with such of the defaulters as might come within their observation, as it was only in this way they could advance the objects of the meeting that night."<sup>98</sup> There was also an attempt to embarrass the defaulters into paying by claiming that "...those who were repudiating their just debts to this benevolent society, were doing a great injury to the suffering poor at home."<sup>99</sup>

On 2 August 1852, Trevelyan wrote to Thomas Dickson and John Gilchrist reminding them that the viability of the Society was dependent on their ability to retrieve the monies owed:

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

...it must never be lost sight of that the continued power of our Society to benefit the Colony and the distressed [sic] population of the North West of Scotland will depend upon the punctual realization and remittance of the sums which we have advanced to the Emigrants and for which the respective Heads of Families have given their Promissory Notes.<sup>100</sup>

The letter followed on to state that "... the return of the manner in which the Emigrants are provided for will be published in this country for the information of their friends."<sup>101</sup>

Trevelyan was keen to promote the positive outcomes and benefits of the scheme to both the emigrants and to the colony. By the end of 1852 economic improvements in the Highlands slowed the rate of emigration and Trevelyan was finding it difficult to fill his ships. In an attempt to increase numbers he decided to publish a collection of letters written by the emigrants detailing the positive outcomes which emigration had brought to their lives. By collecting and publishing these letters, Trevelyan hoped that others in Scotland might be

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from C. E. Trevelyan to Thomas Dickson and John Oswald Gilchrist, VPRS 1189/P0, Unit 112 File 52/8076, PROV, North Melbourne, 1852.

persuaded to emigrate thus further promoting the scheme through a chain migration process and ensuring its viability, as well as possibly promoting his own role within the Society. In a letter to Thomas Fraser, Trevelyan stated:

I have already commenced the preparation of a printed collection of Letters from Highland Emigrants to Australia, and I shall be obliged to you for any which you think ought to be added to the series.<sup>102</sup>

Trevelyan was reliant on the HIES agents in Victoria for copies of letters. He wanted to publish these letters for a range of reasons and he was very careful to select only those which would further his purposes. Letters that slighted the Society, made reference to the adverse effects of the voyage or mentioned any negative experiences on arrival in Australia were not selected. Selected letters needed to be suitable for his purposes:

The letters that have been received from the Emigrants by the 'Georgiana' from Skye are on the whole highly satisfactory - So far as we can judge from these communications they appear with few exceptions to have accepted service from the settlers at rates of wages

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from C. Trevelyan to T. Fraser, HIES Uncatalogued Letterbooks, Book 3, HD4/1-4, West Register House, NAS, Edinburgh, 1853.

exceeding what we have anticipated and such as can leave no doubt of their ability to fulfil their obligations to us.<sup>103</sup>

Trevelyan was particularly interested in those letters which contained references to the high rate of wages received by emigrants as this would serve as an inducement to prospective emigrants. High wages would also ensure that emigrants were able to repay the loan relatively quickly.

In June 1853 Grimes prepared a statement which recorded information about the initial periods of engagement and average wages obtained by immigrants arriving on five HIES chartered ships in 1852.<sup>104</sup> The five ships involved were the 'Araminta', 'Georgiana', 'Flora', 'Miltiades' and 'Chance'. The first three ships arrived at Geelong whilst the remaining two arrived at Melbourne. All five ships arrived over a period of 42 days between 1 October and 11 November 1852. His statistics are recorded in relation to three separate groups

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<sup>103</sup> Letter from C. Trevelyan To Dickson and Gilchrist, HIES Uncatalogued Letterbooks, Book 3, Highland Destitution, HD4/1-4, West Register House, NAS, Edinburgh, 1853. Page unknown.

<sup>104</sup> Statement prepared by E. Grimes showing the periods of Engagement and the average Wages obtained by Immigrants introduced in ships partly occupied by Emigrants under the auspices of the Highland and Island Emigration Society during the period from the 1st October to the 11th November 1852. It is important to note that the statistics for the 'Araminta' recorded by Grimes in this document do not equate with my calculations. This discrepancy between both sets has occurred through a different interpretation of the term 'single'. Only males and females recorded as 'unmarried' and listed separately from their family, have been counted by Grimes. VPRS 01189/PO, Unit 114, File (number not recorded), PROV, North Melbourne, 1853.

of immigrants; families, single males and single females on board each ship. Grimes has not identified whether or not his figures only relate to HIES sponsored passengers or to all passengers on board in each case.

For each group he recorded how many immigrants were not hired and those who hired but did not provide officials with details and the period of engagement (three months or less, six months or less and more than six months). He also recorded the average wages with rations for each group. An examination of these statistics show that wages obtained by families were highest for those arriving on the 'Araminta' (£85), for single men (£77) for those on the 'Georgiana' and £25 for single women who arrived on the 'Flora'. All three ships arrived at Geelong confirming the view that employment for males in particular, in the pastoral industry in the Western District, was to be lucrative for those arriving at the port closest to the location of employment. The reason for such high wages for males on the 'Araminta' may have been due to changing demands based on seasonal work. Shearers were needed in the district particularly around October and November when the 'Araminta' arrived. According to Grimes only 14 single men from the three Geelong ships failed to engage on arrival. Lowest wages for families were paid to those who arrived on the 'Chance' at Melbourne (£60) whilst for single men the lowest wage was £23 for those immigrants on the 'Araminta'.

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Geelong also contained many boarding houses for accommodating men on their way to the Ballarat goldfields. These were a source of employment for many of the single females. The wages for single women did not vary a great deal between the highest and lowest average wage with the lowest wage being twenty-one pounds and five shillings for those women on the 'Georgiana'. Arrival in either Geelong or Melbourne made little difference to the wage amount but it appears that single women were paid a slightly higher wage as domestic servants in Melbourne and were therefore economically better off by arriving at the larger city. Engagement figures for single women overall, however, tell a different story. The majority of single women on the 'Araminta' were engaged and only twelve single women who arrived on the other two Geelong ships failed to be employed. In contrast a total of 51 single women who arrived on the two Melbourne ships failed or refused to become employed despite the slightly higher wages offered.

Despite the high wages offered to families in Geelong 28 families on the 'Araminta' did not accept employment however, 40 did with most contracted for six months or less in terms of the period of engagement. A combined total of 99 families and 92 single males from the two vessels arriving in Melbourne were unable or refused employment on arrival at Melbourne. It is possible that many of the single men travelled from Melbourne to the goldfields whilst some of the families may have obtained employment outside Melbourne in the

pastoral industry at a later stage.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The on-arrival experiences of the passengers on board the three ships in 1852 were subject to the effects of a range of 'local pull' factors operating in Victoria at this time. In 1852 the Colony of Victoria received large numbers of assisted, and a growing number of unassisted immigrants keen to try their luck on the goldfields. Mining was proving to be a great distraction to men previously content to work for regular wages and conditions in the pastoral industry and landowners and squatters were experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining reliable workers.

Although workers were sorely needed in this industry, the range of conditions and wages on offer to single men and male heads of Households varied greatly between the Port of Melbourne and the Port of Geelong. The three ships arrived within a short space of each other, however, fluctuations between the wages and terms of employment on offer to passengers on the three ships, were already evident. At times those Households willing to travel inland and prepared to by-pass the goldfields could look forward to an offer of high wages, with rates often over £100 per year. This appeared to counter the view that single men were the most sought after group as they had no dependents

to house, clothe and feed and were therefore cheaper to hire. But single men were highly unreliable and, without the need to provide for dependents, were able to move freely in search of higher wages or to spend their money earned on the land to search for gold. At other times, however, it was the single men who were in highest demand with evidence of wages on offer outstripping those offered to families. Despite this the nature of the tasks and the seasonal working requirements involved in working with sheep both in the Highlands and in Victoria must have provided the males with a sense of continuity, ability and confidence in their work. This, however, was not always the case for single females.

Evidence gathered from the disposal lists of the three ships strongly suggests that single females appeared to be the most vulnerable group in terms of employment. Evidence shows that in many cases, they were forced to separate from the Household within days after their arrival in a foreign country in order to accept employment as domestic servants. In some cases sisters were required to accept employment in separate homes. Wages on offer were not high but appeared to remain consistent for domestic servants. The evidence in terms of the cultural adjustment required of single females in working as domestic servants is not available but it can be assumed that for those women who were used to the outdoor work associated with cattle and cultivation in crofting communities this change must have been challenging. The voyage would have done little to prepare these women for the adjustment needed to

move from outdoor work to indoor employment. The opportunity to learn new household skills and to apply these in middle class surrounds (compared with the interior, furnishings and layout of a blackhouse on Skye for example) must have filled these women with great anxiety. Separated from those they loved and from all they knew there would be very little in terms of previous experience, language and social graces to bring to their new roles.

Little is known about those Households who either chose not to have their employment conditions recorded or who left the emigration depots or quarantine station of their own accord. It is highly likely that these Households had relatives already in the Colony or elsewhere in Australia and left to reunite with family and friends.

As shown in this chapter several initiatives were put in place by the HIES to recover loans made to immigrants although it is not clear if any Moidart Households were pursued over outstanding debts. The work of the HIES agents in pursuing those who had signed Promissory Notes in Scotland was reinforced by the application of moral pressure extruding from meetings presided over by clergy and others from social classes different to those of the immigrants. The perceived unwillingness of some to repay the loans was viewed as casting a slur on the good name and reputation of the wider Scottish and Highlander community in Victoria. This was particularly so following the reporting of the situation in newspapers in Britain.

The following chapter will demonstrate that settling in the Colony was to prove difficult for many and their lives were characterised by levels of high mobility as they moved across the Colony in search of work or fortune. Others experienced success through their work and amassed sufficient income to select small parcels of land which they held individually or communally as a Household. The importance of land with its social, psychological, cultural and economic dimensions is the focus of chapter four.