

FARMING IN TASMANIA. 1840 - 1914

B.V. EASTEAL, B.A., B.A. HONS. (TAS.)

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

University of Tasmania

Hobart

July 1971.

Summary

Tasmania's easily cleared land was limited, and after the mid-1830's, when such land could no longer be had to support soaring sheep numbers and to replace land exhausted by continual cropping, pasture damage became widespread and wheatgrowing viable only on larger holdings where pasture could be "rotated" with cropped land. Settlers and capital thereafter by-passed Tasmania for the developing colonies, and large numbers of able bodied men were drawn away.

Purely pastoral districts stagnated, as did most districts in the south, as the south's long cropped wheatlands were limited and broken, and only a limited respite was gained by the shift to the larger unit. In the north natural conditions favoured the combination of wheat and wool on the larger scale and mechanized farming, and districts within paying distance from Launceston emerged as the colony's leading cash cropping districts. At the same time the cattle runs in the outlying districts were broken up into mixed farms, many of which were tenanted. By 1880, however, yields in the north were declining. Fallowing and the use of guano were now possible, but were expensive in relation to the market price. Exports of wheat ceased, some farmers abandoned cropping, and many tenant farmers were forced to shift westward into the pioneer districts. The north, like the south, was unable to retain its population once further expansions was impossible

and yields declined.

From the late 1830's an increasing number of settlers, mainly those with little or no capital, preferred carving a farm out of the bush to emigration or working for a wage. The North West Coast and, to a lesser degree, the Huon were chosen because of soil, rainfall and water access. High prices for timber enabled settlers to survive until the goldrushes stimulated mainland markets, bringing about the transition from subsistence to commercial farming along the Coast. After the late 1870's mining operations in Tasmania increased local demands for food, fodder and livestock, and led to the development of commercial farming in the inland north east.

By 1914 expansion of farming had virtually ceased in these districts also, as the economics of distance limited the amount of land which could be farmed profitably.

← Low prices and declining yields forced greater intensification, but problems were offset by the development of dairying after 1892, which made possible a greater diversification of crops and better rotation. It also provided farmers with regular cash payments and lessened dependence on the returns from any one crop.

Orcharding developed relatively independently of other branches of agriculture. Its rapid growth was a response to the emergence of mainland markets for apples after the gold rushes and the opening up of European markets once steamships with refrigerated holds were used on the London run. Within forty years of the

planting of the first commercial orchards (in the late 1860's) orcharding became the best organized branch of agriculture, and orchards flourished along the Derwent and in the south east, and plantings had been made in the Mersey and Tamar valleys on the North West Coast.

Freight and other costs were high, and compelled orchardists to adopt every means at their disposal to lower costs and improve yields and prices, but being the sole agricultural product with expanding overseas markets it attracted to it enterprising leadership, capital, and governmental support.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
 <u>Section A: Farming in Tasmania before 1850</u>	
1. Tasmania: Landform, Rainfall and Soil Type	3
11 Settlement and Land Legislation before 1850	10
111 The Development of the Pastoral Industry before 1850	<u>23</u>
1V Rural Labour	43
V Agriculture	53
i Wheatgrowing and the Agricultural System	53
ii The Distribution of Wheatgrowing: Farm Type	61
iii Other Crops, Farming Products and By Products	<u>74</u>
V1 Markets for Agricultural Produce	79
 <u>Section B: Farming in Tasmania 1850 - 1870</u>	
1 The Pastoral Industry 1850 - 1870	90
11 The Agricultural Market and Production Response	108
111 Fruitgrowing	117
1V Settlement in Forested Regions: The North West, North East and South East	124
i Settlement Prior to 1850	124
ii Settlement 1850 - 1870	129
V Agricultural Technique	136
V1 Population, Population Movement and Labour Shortage.	152
 <u>Section C: Farming in Tasmania 1870 - 1914</u>	
1 The Fruit Industry 1870 - 1914	161
i The Market for Apples	161
ii The Manufacture and Export of Jams, Pulp and Dried Apples	167
iii The Expansion of Fruitgrowing	171

(The Fruit Industry 1870 - 1914 cont.)		<u>Page</u>
iv	Orchard Management.	177
II	Stock Raising and Woolgrowing on Mixed Farms and Pastoral Estates, 1870 - 1890	184
III	Mixed Farming 1870 - 1890: Rural Population, Crops and Farming Technique	203
i	Population Movement and Farm Labour	203
ii	Crops and Agricultural Technique	210
IV	Dairying and the Establishment of Butter Factories	<u>224</u>
V	Livestock and Pastures 1890 - 1914	235
VI	Mixed Farming 1890 - 1914: Rural Population, Crops and Farming Technique	257
	Conclusion	281
	Bibliography	<u>298</u>