The Freeman Family- Gordon, Ruby and their two sons Brian and Colin migrated from Harrogate in Yorkshire to Australia in November 1951. After a stay in Bathurst Migrant Hostel and Finsbury Hostel they eventually settled in Adelaide South Australia. Both boys attended Adelaide University and went on to Post Graduate studies. Colin spent six years in Papua New Guinea as Librarian of the New Guinea Collection in the newly formed University of Papua New Guinea and has written three books on New Guinea topics. He subsequently had a three year Diplomatic posting in the Embassy of Australia Washington DC. In recent years he has been a Senior Lecturer in the University of New South Wales and the Australian National University. He has also been a Consultant with a United Nations Agency in Thailand and Nepal.

Leaving of Southampton November 1951

The wind was blustery on the foredeck and the weather cloudy as our ship left the Solent and entered the English Channel proper. There were a few ships visible around us and one could see the dark mass of the land to our starboard gradually passing in the distance. We were leaving the shores of England, our homeland, perhaps forever. We were a family of "Ten Pound Migrants". Mother, Father and two boys. Myself, just turned fourteen and my brother Brian eight years, our final destination was Australia. In previous considerations of the huge area of the continent our parents had shown a preference for Queensland thus it was possible we would finish up somewhere in that region.

In later years I could reflect upon this adventure and recall that our total possessions at that time were the clothes we stood up in, several tea chests and a large wooden box all marked "Not wanted on the Voyage", two suitcases of clothes and odds and ends and however much was left of the eight hundred and fifty pounds our parents had obtained for the sale of our house in Harrogate in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

One wonders what drove my parents to undertake such a massive disruption to their normal lives. We were not wealthy but by the standards of the times we were comfortable. My father aged Forty-five was a Master Painter and Decorator and a Foreman at the company for which he worked. My mother thirty-seven had a variety of jobs from truck driving during the war to Cake decorating more recently. They owned their own house albeit a Terrace house in the lower end of town. They could afford holidays every year to some seaside destination.

Perhaps the situation in the world was a trigger. The Korean War had been in progress for some seven months and now involved the United Nations. Early in the year the Chinese had launched a heavy assault across the Manchurian border. This event lead to General Macarthur threatening to invade China. French forces were in continuous combat with Viet Minh guerrillas around Hanoi. King Farouk of Egypt had told the UK to get out of the Suez Canal.

Nydd Vale Terrace (Thirty five years later)

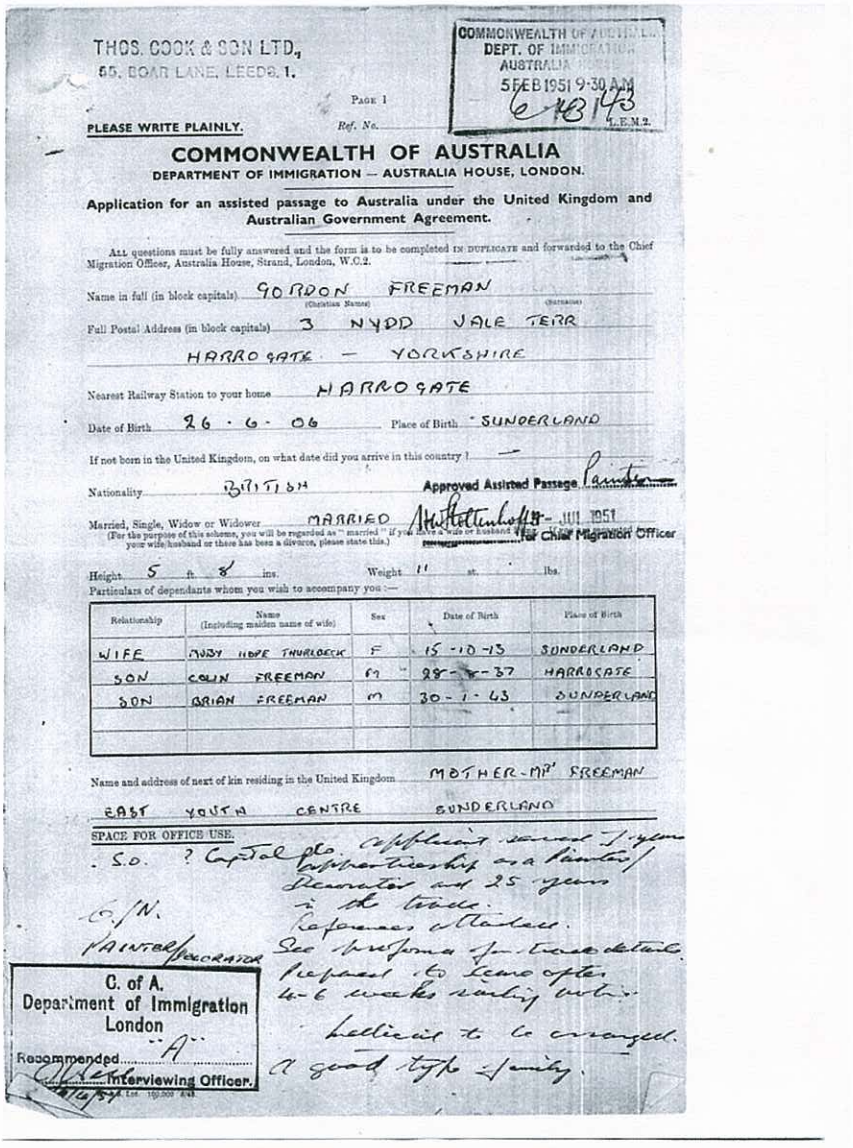
After topping the eleven plus exams in the County of Yorkshire I had won a scholarship to the local Harrogate Grammar School. At the time of departure I was studying *inter alia* French and Latin and was then in third year gaining good marks and being groomed for University entrance, hopefully to either Oxford or Cambridge. I was a member of the school Rugby Union team and we spent many happy times in matches with other Grammar schools in the region.

Whatever the factor may have been my parents were determined to leave England. They had applied successively to The New Zealand, South African, Canadian and Australian governments for documents and one recalls the volumes of literature extolling the virtues of these countries that lay on the couch and table in our "Best Room".

The Emigrants (Harrogate Newspaper photo October 1951)

My understanding is that the Australians were first with the invitation for us to come and join them. This committed us to that path. A few days later we received an invitation from the Canadian Government, which could have taken us to Hamilton Ontario. Several weeks after that New Zealand

also replied. The die was cast however and Australia it was to be. I recall my own preference was not to go at all, but if we had to then New Zealand was the place. I was a devout Rugby Union Player and the thought of perhaps becoming an "All Black" was tantalizing.



THOS. COOK & SON LTD.,
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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPT. OF IMMIGRATION
AUSTRALIA
5 FEB 1951 9·30 A.M.
6 48143
L.E.M.2.

PAGE 1

PLEASE WRITE PLAINLY. Ref. No.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION — AUSTRALIA HOUSE, LONDON.

Application for an assisted passage to Australia under the United Kingdom and Australian Government Agreement.

ALL questions must be fully answered and the form is to be completed IN DUPLICATE and forwarded to the Chief Migration Officer, Australia House, Strand, London, W.C.2.

Name in full (in block capitals) GORDON (Christian Names) FREEMAN (Surname)

Full Postal Address (in block capitals) 3 NYDD VALE TERR
HARROGATE — YORKSHIRE

Nearest Railway Station to your home HARROGATE

Date of Birth 26 · 6 · 06 Place of Birth SUNDERLAND

If not born in the United Kingdom, on what date did you arrive in this country? —

Nationality BRITISH Approved Assisted Passage Painter

Married, Single, Widow or Widower MARRIED (For the purpose of this scheme, you will be regarded as "married" if you have a wife or husband your wife, husband or there has been a divorce, please state this.) JUL 1951 For Chief Migration Officer

Height 5 ft. 8 ins. Weight 11 st. lbs.

Particulars of dependants whom you wish to accompany you:—

Relationship	Name (Including maiden name of wife)	Sex	Date of Birth	Place of Birth
WIFE	JUDY HOPE THURLBECK	F	15-10-13	SUNDERLAND
SON	COLIN FREEMAN	M	28-[illegible]-37	HARROGATE
SON	BRIAN FREEMAN	M	30-1-43	SUNDERLAND

Name and address of next of kin residing in the United Kingdom MOTHER-Mrs FREEMAN
EAST YOUTH CENTRE SUNDERLAND

SPACE FOR OFFICE USE.

S.O. ? Capital plo. Applicant served 7 years apprenticeship as a plaster/decorator and 25 years in the trade. References obtained. See proforma for trade details. Passage to Leave after 4-6 weeks waiting list. Medical to be arranged. A good type of family.

C.N.

PAINTER/DECORATOR

C. of A.
Department of Immigration
London
Recommended
Interviewing Officer.

An invitation is one thing but final clearance is another. We were required to attend Interviews and have complete medical checks including Chest X-rays. Most of this was conducted in Liverpool, which of course required us to travel from Harrogate by train an adventure in itself. Eventually our

documentation was in order and clearance to go to Australia was granted. We now awaited information on a possible sailing date.

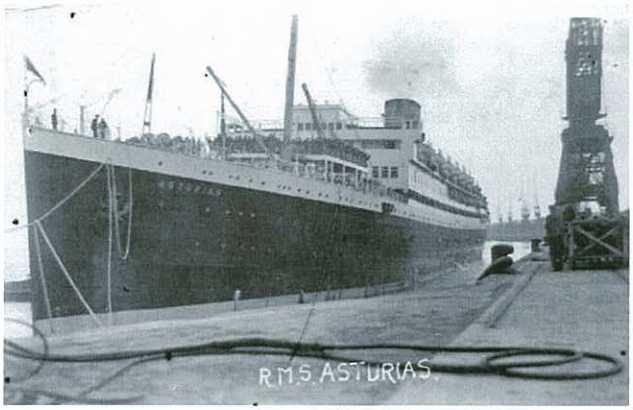
My parents had successfully sold the house and had been fortunate in being allowed to stay on the premises until such time as we left for Australia.

The anticipated packet arrived from Australia House by mail in early October 1951. It contained Rail Tickets, brochures, clearance documents and the name of our transport and sailing date from Southampton. We were off!!!

The Freeman ship was the RMS Asturias, a 22,448-ton Passenger Liner built in Belfast by Harland and Wolff in 1925. This was the same shipyard that built the Titanic some twenty odd years before. Asturias was intended as a Luxury Liner for the South American trade. For the next thirteen years she carried about 1300 passengers on each voyage until war broke out. During the Second World War she was converted into an armed merchant cruiser and saw service in the South Atlantic. In 1943 she was torpedoed and was subsequently towed into Freetown harbour where she remained until the end of the war before being refitted as a Troop and Immigrant transport.

After our voyage she took troops to Korea and brought back wounded POW's. Later in 1956 she carried troops to Egypt and was finally broken up in 1957. Her last claim to fame is as the set piece in the movie "A Night to Remember" where she represents the Titanic during the scene showing the lowering of the lifeboats.

Southampton -Asturias readies for sail



I cannot now recall the final farewells in the early weeks of November 1951 at School and with my friends as they have vanished in time. I do recall sitting in First class on the train courtesy of the Australian Government. It would seem we travelled to London and then caught the boat train at Waterloo station my only memories here are of sitting at a dining table on the train with my mother thinking it was all very posh and of a huge green train engine with large blinkers on the front.

This was still the time when one could experience:-

"The hiss of steam, the clank of coupling, the rattle of girders, the vast tenders heaped with glistening Welsh coal, and the smell, on every station, of coal."[1]

1 Wilson A.N After the Victorians 2005 p. 500

Wilson again p 501 "(We) experienced the movement and smell, the gushes of steam, though all the consequences of engineering skill, (they) had an almost organic quality which made the steam trains part of nature."

When we embarked on the ship in late November my parents were surprised to find that all male and female passengers were to be segregated with females in the port side cabins and males on the starboard. Very Posh

indeed! My brother and I were too young to appreciate any problems with such an arrangement and were anxious to explore the vessel. Our cabin was somewhere down in the depths of the ship.

Our shopping experiences on board were fascinating. I recall the round tins of barley sugars made by a company who were appointed as Purveyors to His Majesty the King. There were tins of Player's and Woodbine Cigarettes, boxes of Turkish Delight, blocks of Pear's soap, tins of Horlick's packets of Twinings tea and a huge miscellany of products Britain still supplied to expatriates in the remnants of Empire. The prize purchase made by my parents was a new folding camera that actually had a bellows. I believe it was an Ilford that took a 120-size roll of film.

When you are on a ship there is only so much time one can spend looking at the sea and other pursuits are required. I passed most of my time playing Monopoly with a group of acquaintances I had made in the first few hours on the ship. Indeed we became a regular cohort and did things together on a regular basis. Our parents saw little of us only at mealtimes and lights out. Policing on board was in the hands of a Master-at –arms, a tall man with reddish hair. I do not recall that we had any run-ins with this gentleman but we were very wary of him. Whenever we were near signs that said "Out of Bounds to Passengers" or the equivalent he always seemed to appear.

After passing the Rock of Gibraltar as we entered the Mediterranean we headed for the island of Malta and arrived around midday in pleasant sunny weather. Asturias anchored in the Grand Harbour at Valetta and we were informed that we could go ashore for a few hours whilst the ships crew were busy with a new group of Maltese migrants who were joining us for the balance of the voyage. I subsequently learned that many Maltese had

migrated to Australia over the years and there were large numbers living in Melbourne. My impressions of Valetta were of crowded extremely narrow streets and food shops. Brown buildings that looked incredibly old and underfoot flagstones worn by the passage of millions of feet. In the Harbour were anchored a number of Royal Navy vessels manned by white clad sailors.

Our destination after Malta was Egypt and the Suez Canal which at that time was a very unsettled area.

In later reading I learned that in October 1951 about one month before our departure the Egyptian government abrogated the 1936 Agreement with Britain and had decided to nationalize the Suez Canal. The British government had a significant investment in the area and refused to accept the Egyptian ultimatum. Just after our departure from Southampton units of the British Army had been flown to Egypt and taken over the Canal Zone. This led to immediate rioting and hostilities, which were in fact going on during our passage through the canal.

Many British citizens were evacuated from Ismailia and a number of atrocities committed by Muslim Fedayeen. Over the next few years the situation was known as the Suez Crisis, one which eventually culminated in all out war in 1956. Indeed our ship would return at that time with troops of the Third Division of the British army. Had the Australian Government decided to become involved I could have been back also as I was in the Army National Service at the time. The situation was quiet during our passage through the canal and the only sign of hostilities, other than the mobile troops we saw from time to time was a mooning by a lone fellaheen on the side of the canal.

There is not much to see as you traverse the Canal. The greatest excitement is the fact of being there. The seemingly endless sand and occasional clumps of trees through which the waterway passes is quite monotonous.

As I recall it was nearing dusk when we cleared the canal and entered the Gulf of Suez. Thus it was during the night that we traversed the comparatively narrow Gulf and early the next morning we were in the Red Sea. Any views one has of the shores of the Red Sea are of sharp forbidding mountainous skylines utterly desolate. It must be amongst the worst places in the world.

We arrived at Aden late Sunday night or early Monday, and here we were permitted to go ashore. The prime tourist place at that time was Steamer Point and I have vivid memories of dirty streets, dirty people and goats. Altogether this was a disgusting place and I could not believe that people could live in such squalor. I could recall some of the poorer parts of Sunderland in the UK but this was worse by several degrees

Others had similar opinions for instance:

" Hazy pictures clung to my mind of rubbish-strewn roads, goats jostling for space with Arabs in tatty, faded gowns, disabled beggars – and healthy

ones too. Haggling shopkeepers wearing false smiles. Not forgetting an awesome sight – black-robed lepers shaking hand bells to warn off the fit. http://www.leshooper.co.uk/aden.htm "

Against a backdrop of dry barren hills large hawks or kites circled above looking presumably for any available food. We walked the dirty streets and visited the shops close to the waters edge. My parents were befriended by RAF personnel who invited us back to their Club where we enjoyed ice-cold lemonade in large glasses whilst we sat by the swimming pool. A young man who was incredibly black in white steward's uniform brought the drinks to us. This was the very first time I had met someone from Africa and I was intrigued. Little did I know at that time that such people would be an everyday sight on Australian streets several decades later.

There was not much to do in Aden and it was extremely hot by our standards although it was their winter. The only significant activity was shopping and my mother bought a decorated porcelain tea set; parts of which we have to this day.

One outstanding event for me in this place had been to see the sharks circling the ship. The waters of the harbour were comparatively clear and it was quite a shock to see numbers of this large predator in their natural habitat.

Our voyage, which had taken us into the Indian Ocean, had now placed us in a new world so utterly different from the cold regimented towns of Northern England. During the warm days the sea was populated with dolphins and whales, the former taking the benefit of our bow waves. Flying fish scattered in front of the vessel in endless numbers. One morning

it seemed the entire ocean was populated with dolphins broaching the waters as far as the eye could see.

At night it was warm and one could see the phosphorescent trail we left across the dark sea under the brilliant starlight that opened up the heavens.

Fancy Dress (Myself as Pirate) My brother next to me

Ceylon or Sri Lanka as it is now known was yet another unforgettable experience. Once clear of the ship on several hours' shore leave we were on the streets of Colombo harbour, which is about as far as we went. The pavements were stained red with betel juice, it was hot and sticky and beggars and storekeepers either asking for money or pushing their wares constantly pestered us. My brother recalls a brawl in one shop with him being trapped in the back. The pestering was never-ending and so irritating that my parents decided to beat a retreat back to the ship after only a few hours in this pearl of the Orient. Now back on the ship and left to my own devices I decided to do some diving and so commenced diving into the harbour along with the Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) divers made famous by Jack London. I note that stuntmen for the movie " A Night to Remember"

which used the Asturias as a stand-in for the Titanic were paid one pound a foot for jumping into the water some eighty feet below and I dived for free!

The longest Ocean leg lay before us, the voyage from Colombo to Perth, and I can recall a gathering excitement as we neared Australia. Our first memorable event took place just after we left Colombo and it was a time of great festivity including fancy dress. This was the crossing of the line when King Neptune congratulated us for entering the Southern Hemisphere. Each day the hospitality crew published a newsletter, which itemized our speed and progress. Our ship was capable of a top speed of eighteen knots but she averaged about fifteen knots and the distance on the map became shorter and shorter as the days passed. It was warm and we could envisage the thought of a Bush Christmas as it was now well into December.

We spent Christmas Eve at sea off the coast of Western Australia and I do not recall that Father Christmas visited me personally although he was available to the ships company as a whole. We were so close that we could smell the Eucalypt in the air and this was my first impression of our new homeland even though I had not yet seen it.

Christmas Day 1951 had dawned when we entered Fremantle Harbour and the Tugs nudged us up against the Wharf. Even in the early morning it was quite hot and the place seemed to be deserted. The land is quite flat and featureless here and the harbour is behind low breakwaters that separate it from the Indian Ocean. Hardly one of the great ports of the world but functional nevertheless.

We went ashore later in the morning after being told the ship would sail that evening. The streets were wide and the architecture was totally

different to anything I had seen. Verandas over the footpath and strange tin walled houses. Odd shaped buildings and numerous hotels, shops with window displays totally different to what we had been used

. Fremantle Hotel

We made our way to a seaside area known as City Beach by bus through pleasant suburbs, once we had left the Port area behind and there saw the Australian Surf for the first time. The sun was terribly hot and I was later to rue my time in the surf with bad sunburn. But there in the moment was my first milkshake – banana malted and the gorging of a McRobertson's Chocolate Bar. I may have had a meat pie! Such were my first experiences in Australia.

City Beach at a later time

The Sydney Morning Herald reported on the 29th December that the Asturias ex Southampton would be docking at 6.00 am at Wooloomolloo wharf 18 on Sunday 30th December 1951. We came in through the Sydney Heads as day was breaking and I did not wake until we were docked. The first thing I noticed just across from our anchorage was a swimming pool enclosed with netting. Within an hour or so I was there and spent a number of hours playing and basking in the pleasant warm water.

Meanwhile my parents were undertaking the required paperwork to establish our presence in this new land and when I returned to the ship I found we were scheduled to leave the Sydney Railway Station in the early afternoon of Monday 31st December 1951 with our destination as Bathurst Railway Station.

New Years Eve and we were on the train. It was a warm balmy night as the train wound its way through the Blue Mountains. We were not exactly in First class carriages as the seats were made of hard wooden slats and there was a general dilapidated air about the rolling stock. My brother recalls "the black steam train struggling up through the Blue Mountains- so slow that a few jumped off and walked or jogged alongside. Also peering out the window to repeatedly have black soot painfully lodged in the eye. The sunset was glorious and we saw why they were called the Blue Mountains- a soft purple haze from the eucalyptus oils released from the endless forest. Flashes of crimson from scarlet rosellas - stick in my memory.

We must have arrived at Bathurst station around eight in the evening on a hot night and then into buses for the trip out to the Migrant Reception Centre.

By all adult accounts this Reception Centre was a terrible place to deposit arrivals in a new land. It was a converted army camp situated some six miles outside the town of Bathurst and had been home to a number of Australian Divisions before their departure for overseas. Bathurst in turn was situated in rolling country on the far side of the Blue Mountains five or six hours from Sydney. Although there were no locked gates we were effectively isolated from the rest of Australia. My parents had no car and there were only infrequent country bus trips into the town.

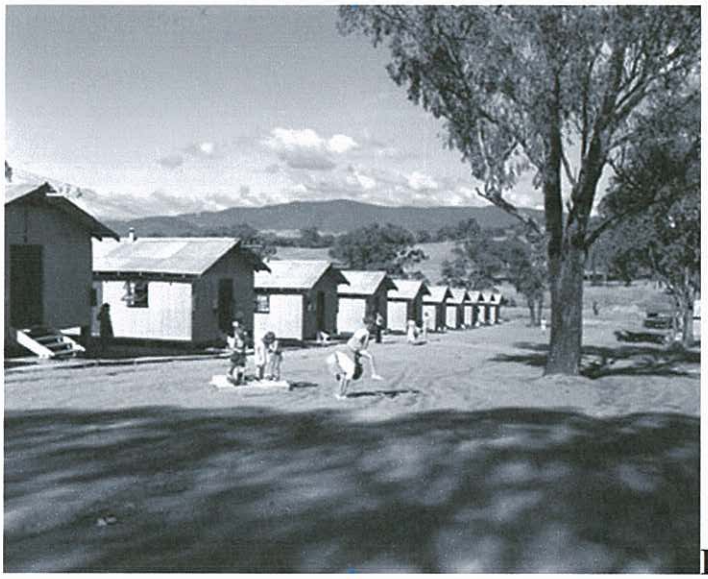
A description of the area by the Bathurst Council has survived:

"a fenced area of 3 1/2 square miles consisting of 11 self contained residential units (blocks) capable of accommodating a total of just over 6,000 persons in reasonable comfort.

Each of the 11 blocks identified alphabetically from A to L, is equipped with a sufficient number of hutments and barracks, the majority of which is subdivided into two room quarters, a large number of toilets, shower recesses, washing and laundry facilities, kitchens and dining halls and boiler houses supplying hot and cold water.

The area is well reticulated with water, and contains, apart from the 11 residential units already mentioned, a fully equipped picture theatre with a voluminous stage and ample additional rooms and storage space capable of seating an audience of 1,800 persons; a separate transport department consisting of two large vehicle halls and additional roofed space fully wired for power and light; another unit that served for five years as a full time hospital capable of housing up to 150 patients and personnel at a

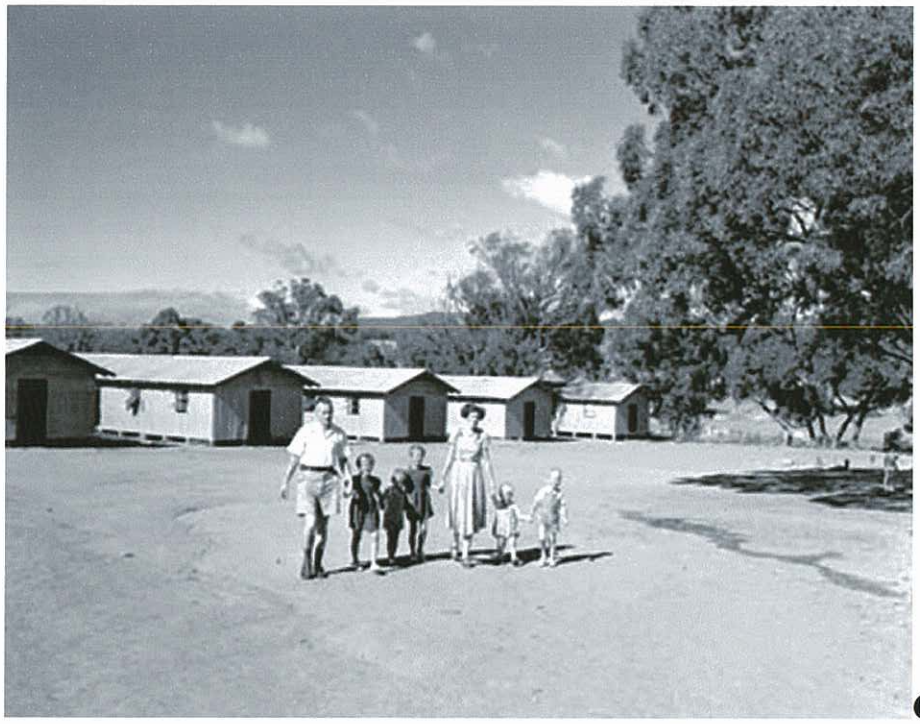
time; a first class post office fully equipped with telegraph and telephone facilities and numerous other structures."



Residential huts at Bathurst

I recall corrugated iron shower, toilet and laundry blocks built upon concrete slabs and rows of tin roofed huts erected upon stilts. There were a number of large communal dining halls and canteens. In retrospect with a view through 2008 eyes and with consideration for that which is offered Illegal Migrants today it was a pretty amateurish welcome to the thousands of Immigrants that came to this country at that time.

At the time of our arrival the camp contained a large number of Dutch migrants and we quickly made friends with a group of youngsters who showed us around the environs of the camp.



Country villas

It was apparent our parents did not like this place and wanted out as soon as possible and more of that in a moment.

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Meanwhile I was in a wondrous place. Cockatoos and Magpies, Ravens and Kookaburras, snakes and lizards and eucalypt trees that lost their bark, which littered the ground around their base. It was hot and the sun blistered our tender English skin but it was so exciting. One day we wandered across the hills and came across a small creek lined with gums and with a pebbly bed. There, wonder of wonders, was a gold prospector an old grey haired man with bowyangs on his trousers. He was quite friendly and showed we naïve young boys how to pan for gold in the creek bed and it is a technique I have never forgotten. That was the same day we encountered our first snake slithering away across the short grass to vanish between the rocks. Everything seemed to take on a new dimension. The ants were huge as were the flies. Back in the hostel the spiders were the largest we had ever seen and caused hysterics amongst some of the mothers. Blue-tongued

lizards lay out glistening in the sun causing even more hysterics amongst the mothers hanging washing on the lines. Again my brother recalls Possums in the outdoor toilets sitting in the rafters and peering down with bright eyes and we should not forget the red back spiders in the toilets.

There was no Latin or French here, not even school. It appeared that I would never have to go to school again. No more thoughts of University in this new life in a different land.

Site of the Hostel 55 years later

All too soon this idyll came to an end and we were informed we were destined for Adelaide. Apparently migrants at that time had to go wherever the government told them to go and in our case it was not to be sunny Queensland, but Adelaide. My friends were told they were going to some strange place called Bonegilla and so we would part.

The journey across southern Australia is unique in that I cannot recall a single moment although it would have taken two days and a night to accomplish. All memories of that trip are gone.

In Adelaide our final destination was Finsbury Migrant Hostel a large complex in the northern suburbs of the city. Perhaps the first impressions of this place can be gained through adult eyes.
(Nash 1953 http://member.melbpc.org.au/~nashr/)

"Arriving in Adelaide early on Saturday morning, 23rd. October, -cold, tired and hungry, also dirty with the grime of travelling, we had to hang around the station for a considerable time until buses arrived to convey us to the hostel at Pennington (called Finsbury Hostel). It was at this point that the Immigration Officer technically washed his hands of another load of migrants and returned to his lair. We all felt suddenly deserted, and the combined plight of thirty or so drew us all together in fellowship, though none of us were on really intimate terms with our neighbours. It should go on record that many people with whom we came in contact since leaving home, were kindness itself, the ship's purser, the welfare officer, the lounge stewards, the bank representative who boarded at Fremantle-all had a smile and a friendly word which was appreciated, believe me!

The last short journey to the hostel was through the city and along the outer suburbs to the industrial area of Pennington, where we finally arrived outside the office of the largest hostel in Australia. (Bonegilla is larger, but is just a dispersal centre) Here, then, we were to live until such time as we could, by the Grace of God, get a home for our families in the great

outside. This great enclosure may have been at one time an Army Camp, for there are five sections, each an entire unit with it's own Canteen, office, Recreation Hall, toilet blocks, etc. Long rows of low-built huts, small Nissens, tin wails, tin roof. Tar-macadam floor. The entire area just a vast covering of brown clay. very little grass. no trees. No water-gullies, no paths.

The arrival at Finsbury, 23 October 1954

The ceremony of signing your family in....signing for the key of your hut....signing for the goods and chattels which would be loaned to you whilst living at the hostel.....A woman comes to conduct you to your rooms, opens the door after a tussle with keys that don't seem to fit.....She sees you looking around inside and says "You'll get used to it". She goes. You catch your wife's eye. She looks away. Silence."

Hostel Accommodation

By this time in our own case I was a dab hand at adjusting to new circumstances and soon found some new friends to talk with. The nearest shops were in a suburb called Alberton and here there was a picture theatre that could take care of our Saturdays. It was only a short walk from the hostel to the theatre and we used to cover this many times.

The nearest major urban area was in Port Adelaide and here were most of the amenities such as department stores, more picture theatres and a swimming point in the old Canals behind the railway station. There was a Scout hall in the area but after attending one evening I found I had outgrown such boyish pursuits as there were more interesting things to do.

More interesting things to do!

The Hostel was adjacent to a large Factory complex and on the other side of this was the suburb of Woodville. Here there was a High School and in mid February I was told that I would be attending this in a few weeks. So school began again but it was a far cry from Harrogate Grammar School. No French or Latin and of course a totally different Geography. Students came from many different countries including young Germans in Lederhosen.

Once again my parents had decided that this was not a good place to be and my Mother had contacted the Padre Strange organisation in Adelaide a Christian aid group, which led to a radio interview. Within a couple of days an invitation had come offering employment to both my Father and my Mother in a small country town called Laura some one hundred and forty miles north of Adelaide. My Mother was to be a Housekeeper for a Millers family and my Father was to initially refurbish a country church and then take up odd jobs in the local Flour Mill.

Once more I was to move and this time I was most unwilling. We had come to the ends of the earth and now I had to take a step further!!!