

COCKBURN

THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY

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CHAPTER 8

JANDAKOT, THE PROVING GROUND, 1890-1910

Gold-rushes to Western Australia: Special Agricultural Areas surveyed: The Jandakot Agricultural Area: Free Homestead Farms at Jandakot: Market gardeners from Brighton, Victoria: Chinese market gardeners at Bibra Lake: Dairying at Bibra Lake: Plank roads: Agitation for an Armadale—Fremantle railway link.

The two decades spanning the years from 1890 to 1910 marked a period of rapid growth and change in Western Australia. From 1885 to 1893 a series of gold-rushes to Hall's Creek, Roebourne, Peak Hill, Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie had doubled the Colony's population then doubled it again. In 1890 Western Australia had rejected its colonial status for responsible government and, with Sir John Forrest as Premier of its first parliament, new vigour and optimism marked its administration. Forrest was determined to hold the newcomers in Western Australia and set about using the revenue from the goldfields to develop the almost empty 64 million acres of the South-West Region.

The task of surveying new land and providing suitable farming blocks for the thousands of newcomers to Western Australia was stretching the resources of the Lands and Surveys Department to the limit and Government and private surveyors were falling far behind the demands of settlers who were selecting land faster than it could be surveyed. To allow surveyors to get ahead of selection in certain accessible and readily saleable areas the Lands and Surveys Department declared Agricultural Areas along the main railway lines and near large towns. These Agricultural Areas were withdrawn from public selection until survey and subdivision had been completed and were then advertised for selection.

This expedient proved to be popular with settlers and the new Agricultural Areas were filled soon after they were opened for selection. North of Perth Moora and Mullewa came into existence, along the Eastern Railway Meckering, Tammin and Doodlakine sprang up and along the Great Southern and South West Railways Beverley, Narrogin, Katanning, Harvey, Boyanup and Preston found places on the map. In these early Agricultural Areas everything was tried out, wheat at Bunbury, fruit at Katanning and dairying at Narrogin as the new settlers tested their land and began to form thriving communities.¹

In the Cockburn District, an Agricultural Area was declared at Jandakot and thrown open for selection on January 1st, 1890. The Jandakot Agricultural Area took up all land in the Cockburn District not already held under Crown Grant, about three-quarters of the District's total area. On the west, its boundary met the pastoral runs of the Pearse brothers, the old pensioner guard blocks and the large holdings in central Spearwood, roughly following the line of Stock Road. Jandakot Agricultural Area lots threaded their way between earlier Crown

Grants from Thomsons Lake to North Lake until they met on the north the original grants extending south from the Swan River. To the south Thomas Watson's original grant at Wattleup and Thomas Peel's 250,000 acre grant provided the Agricultural Area's boundary. To the east the Jandakot Agricultural Area extended beyond the Town of Cockburn's present boundary to meet the large original grants on the Canning River. The Jandakot Agricultural Area included 530 lots of up to 160 acres, of which 140 lots fell within the current boundaries of the Town of Cockburn.

The Jandakot Agricultural Area lay about 8 miles from Fremantle and apart from the fertile, peaty soil around its lakes and swamps consisted entirely of heavily leached grey sands which carried a low open forest of Banksia, Prickly Bark and occasional Jarrah trees. For the new settlers who came to the Area Jandakot was to be their proving ground. Its proximity to Fremantle made the land easy to get on to and just as easy to get off again when the going got hard. Successful cultivation of the land demanded farming skills far greater than in the wheat belt, and in the absence of a railway the dragging of produce through its thick sands in a heavy dray was a soul-destroying task. Of the hundreds of newcomers who came to the Jandakot Agricultural Area those who survived its rigours, who proved themselves on the Jandakot sands, stayed to establish Jandakot as a rich market gardening area which fed the shooting population of Fremantle and Perth.

From 1890 to 1892, the first two years of selection in the Jandakot Agricultural Area, selectors took up lots under conditional purchase leases to the west and east of the chain of lakes which extends from North Lake to Banganup Lake. In their choice, the selectors followed the original settlers of Jandakot and quickly occupied the lots around the lakes which contained good swamp land and were closest to the existing roads. The first selectors of J.A.A. lots were original settlers who bought land adjoining their grants or who converted their grants to J.A.A. lots. Joseph Meller bought an adjoining lot to his property at North Lake and at Redgum, west of Miguel Road, John, William and Henry Dixon converted their 320 acres to conditional purchase leases. Between Bibra Lake and Thomsons Lake Harold Warthwyke, John Ramsay and Walter Lawrence acquired J.A.A. lots near their properties and west of Thomsons Lake Edward Lewington converted his two grants to conditional purchase leases.

Where the Jandakot Agricultural Area extended into the old pastoral leases in Spearwood, Munster and Wattleup the remaining pastoralists bought up lots to extend their runs. William and George Pearse bought seven J.A.A. lots, totalling 740 acres, adjoining their land in Henderson and a Victorian pastoral company, J.E. McDonald and G. McA. Scales bought up 5 lots, totalling 560 acres, adjoining the Pearse brothers. Some of the early selectors took up J.A.A. lots as adjuncts to their metropolitan business interests or as an investment. To the west of Kogalup Lake Joseph and Levi Baker bought a 180 acre lot as a paddock for fattening the stock which went to their Fremantle butchering business and Arthur Davies, a Fremantle Undertaker, bought three lots west of the lakes. In Jandakot, south of Forrest Road, Robert Wolfe bought four lots totalling 520 acres. Wolfe, a retired Lieutenant-Colonel from Surrey, had bought the City Hotel in Perth and used his Jandakot land to provide food for the hotel's table. Wolfe's property at Jandakot included a large piggery which had sties, bacon sheds and out-buildings covering about 20 acres.

During these first two years of selection about eighteen J.A.A. Lots were taken up by new settlers in the District completing the occupation of most of the best land. Among these settlers were Frederick Simpson and Kenneth McKenzie at Bibra Lake; James Mather, John Wearne, Frederick Wedge, Herbert Locke and John Tapper at Jandakot; Michael Gilbride, Augustus Falke, John McMurray Lyon and G.W. Stubbs at Success; Frederick Kraemer at Atwell, Jeremiah O'Farrell at Banjup and John Oaten at Wattleup.

The first concern of the new settlers at Jandakot was to have usable roads linking their farms to Perth and Fremantle and to provide for their needs a new Roads Board District was gazetted in November 1891. The new Jandakot Roads Board District was excised from the huge Fremantle Roads Board District taking away about two-thirds of its total area and leaving as the Fremantle District's new eastern boundary a line extending from Meller Road to Frankland Avenue. A Roads Board of seven members was elected early in 1892 and under the Chairmanship of William Nicholson the Board set about carving roads into the District. The first road built by the Jandakot Roads Board was Nicholson Road which provided a link between the centre of the District and the Albany Highway at Cannington. Other roads gradually followed until each of the J.A.A. Lots fronted onto one of the roads that formed a grid over the whole Jandakot Agricultural Area.

By 1893 the tremendous influx of people into Western Australia was reaching its peak and Sir John Forrest introduced a further measure to hold this population once the goldfields had declined. The Homestead's Act of 1893 provided for a free Homestead Farm of 160 acres for any male over the age of 18 years, not already in possession of land in Western Australia. The selector had to pay a fee £1, reside on the farm for 5 years and carry out certain improvements in that time. It was expected that selectors would later add blocks to their holding on conditional purchase terms. In the Cockburn District, the remaining Lots in the Jandakot Agricultural Area were thrown open to selection as free Homestead Blocks and were quickly taken up. All of the new Homestead Blocks were east of the J.A.A. Lots already occupied, further away still from markets and existing roads and situated on the poorest of the Jandakot sands. Notes from a surveyor's fieldbook give a contemporary account of the country which the new settlers took up:

'Lot 18: 131 acres. Banksia oak, occasional Jarrah timber, poor sand soil. 34 open swamp, large Titree and blackboys.

Lot 53. 133 acres. Paperbark and Banksia, poor sand plain. Lot 194. 224 acres. Poor sand ridges, Banksias, blackboy and occasional jarrah.

Lot 204. 105 acres. Blackboy and large Titree, fair swamp land. Banksia and occasional jarrah.'³

The turn—over of leases on the Homestead Blocks was very rapid and only a few original lease-holders held their block for long enough and made the improvements necessary to gain the freehold of the block. Of fifty Homestead Blocks selected between 1893 and 1898 in the Jandakot Agricultural Area 2 changed hands nine times, 6 changed hands six to eight times, 12 changed hands four to five times and 30 changed hands two or three times.⁴ The bulk of the applicants for free Homestead Blocks were tradesmen and labourers returning from the goldfields to scan the morning paper in Perth hotels and lodging houses for another opportunity at making their fortune in the Golden West. For some, like Henry Branch, the acquisition of a Homestead Block was insurance to take out before setting off for the goldfields, something to fall back on.

After this flow and ebb of settlers to the Homestead Blocks at Jandakot there remained, like rocks in the sand, those settlers who had the skills and tenacity to wrest a living from the Jandakot sands. Thirteen Homestead Blocks had been taken up at Jandakot, on the site of the present Airport and of these selectors John Coffey and Otto Haring remained. At Banjup seventeen Homestead Blocks were selected and Robert Keene, John Irvine, Frederick Ribe, George Morgan and George Bosworth remained as settlers. At Success Henry Aubin and Carl Gustafson joined the settlers and of the twelve blocks selected in Atwell those of Smith Turner and John Bosworth were retained and improved.

During the years from 1893 to 1898 when the Homestead Blocks were attracting settlers to Jandakot the number of permanent settlers was increased by selectors who took up land under conditional purchase terms. William Pearce and Arthur Bray selected J.A.A. Lots north of Hope Road, Daniel McCarthy, John Calder, Henry Scott and Joseph Treeby selected Lots at Jandakot, and Ernest Atwell and John Mather selected Lots near the new Jandakot Townsite on Forrest Road.

At Jandakot, as in other Agricultural Areas, the early settlers tried a variety of crops on their new blocks. During winter, the high ground on the blocks was planted with wheat or oats and during summer, as the swamps receded, the low ground was planted with maize or with vegetable gardens. Clearing was not difficult and as the low forest was cleared the settlers carted dray-loads of timber into Fremantle for use as firewood by households, bakeries and charcoal burners. Water was to be the continuing problem for the Jandakot settlers both in its lack and in its presence. Well-digging in the deep Jandakot sand was a difficult and dangerous job which took a great deal of time and effort and many early settlers took their household water by wading into the black swamp water and filling a bucket from the pockets of "white water" which bubbled up from springs in the swamp-bed. On many blocks large areas of swamp took up a good part of the land and settlers put themselves to the back-breaking job of digging deep drains to run the water off.

On Forrest Road Joseph Treeby and his wife, Emma, and his eight children, newly arrived from South Australia, took up a J.A.A. block in the late 1890s. Joseph Treeby had growing sons to help him and soon cleared enough of the block to start a vegetable garden there. In one corner of the block a large area of swamp was taking up much of the land and Treeby decided to drain it into another swamp about a mile to the west of his block. Leaving his family to work the garden Treeby began digging a 10 feet-deep trench which inched its way along the mile course he had surveyed. As he dug Treeby made a step at the 5 feet level then worked on down to the level that would take the water away. At the bottom of the trench he would then throw the sand up onto the step, climb up on to the heap he had made and throw the sand the rest of the way to the surface. The drain never worked. All of the levels had been taken by eye and they must have been wrong. Joseph Treeby climbed wearily back into the trench to try again but was struck down by a heart attack and died at the age of 52 years.

The Treeby family stayed on at Jandakot, working the market garden seven days a week. The three girls worked alongside their brothers in the garden, made their own clothes and helped with the weekly baking of bread. Three days a week the younger children would go to school, two days at Jandakot and the third at Bibra Lake. Mrs Fredericks served as the one teacher for both schools which were held in the Halls at both places. To get to the Jandakot school the Treeby children would walk the four miles from their home but the eight miles to the Bibra Lake school would often be covered by hooking a ride on top of a dray loaded with wood. The older Treeby boys stayed home to work the garden and put up post and rail fences from the timber they cut off the block. In the early years neighbours were few and the family's only regular contact with others came twice a week when Afghan camel drivers whipped and cursed their teams along Forrest Rd pulling wagons of timber from Armadale to Fremantle.⁵

By 1899 almost all of the Jandakot Agricultural Area Lots had been taken up but room was made for new settlers as selectors transferred or abandoned their leases. Between 1899 and 1903 new settlers continued to come to Jandakot and during this period most stayed to develop their blocks and add their names to the growing list of Jandakot settlers.⁶ During this later period of settlement Jandakot gained a number of settlers who brought with them that commodity most urgently needed in the Area: experience in the intensive cultivation of sandy soils. These seasoned, practical farmers had come from the chief market gardening areas of

Victoria, and in particular from the coastal town of Brighton, in the wake of Victoria's declining goldfields and falling prices of vegetables and dairying products.

The market gardening district of Brighton on the shores of Port Phillip Bay had been developed in the 1850s to provide vegetables, meat, milk and animal fodder for the diggings and for the booming City of Melbourne. The soils of the Brighton area were thick, grey wind—drifted sands which in hollows had become enriched by decaying vegetable matter and which carried an open forest of gum, she-oak and titree. The market gardeners of Brighton found that these Sandringham Sands responded to intensive cultivation and heavy applications of stable manures averaging 10 tons per acre and the size of an economic unit of cultivated land shrank from 60 acres to 5 acres and even an acre or two could be farmed with success. This type of intensive cultivation relied on high prices for its success and in the Melbourne of 1853 cauliflowers were 2 shillings each, eggs 5 shillings a dozen, milk 2 shillings a quart and oaten hay £160 a ton.⁷

During the 1890s falling prices and the rising cost of land forced many gardeners out of the Brighton District and, as other Victorians followed the gold-strikes to Western Australia, they followed the soaring prices of market stuff to new gardening areas near Perth. At Jandakot, the Brighton gardeners found cheap land and soils almost identical to those they had left which responded quickly to their experienced hands. In a few short years the Jandakot area was providing about 80% of the vegetables sold in the Fremantle Market and a large proportion of those sold in the Kalgoorlie Market,⁸ providing Western Australia with one of its richest market gardening areas.

As the Jandakot Area boomed new roads and closer settlement laid the basis of the Cockburn District's first large community. The Fremantle District Roads Board now had a manageable area to service and the composition of the Board ensured that roads would lead to the newly developing areas. The period when the Board was dominated by Fremantle merchants had come to an end in the early 1890s and by 1900 the Chairman, Robert Holmes, had large grazing properties around Thomsons Lake, Walter Powell represented the South Coogee settlers, James Hammond, George Willis and J.A. Hicks represented the Jandakot settlers and Arthur Davies and Henry Dixon looked after the interests of the settlers at Bibra Lake.

During the year 1900 the works' programme of the Fremantle District Roads Board reflected the new prosperity of the Cockburn District and the happy state of the Government Treasury. To a greatly increased annual grant to the Fremantle District Roads Board were added two special grants of £ 1,000 for the completion of Canning Road and Forrest Road. Russell Road and Warthwyke (now North Lake) Roads were completed, Hamilton and Beenyup Roads were commenced and the whole of Rockingham (now Cockburn) Road was reconstructed in conjunction with the new Rockingham District Roads Board.⁹ The function of these new roads was to link the Jandakot gardening area and the smaller gardening area at South Coogee to the Fremantle Markets.

Jandakot retained its rural nature as its population increased and each settler lived on the block that he farmed, making frequent trips to the Fremantle Markets and finding in Fremantle all he wanted in the way of shops and a place to have a pot or two after the day's business was completed. A townsite was proclaimed at Bibra Lake in 1897 near the junction of Hope and Baker Roads. It was named Marmion and then Walliabup and streets were laid out and named after the original petitioners.¹⁰ No lots were sold, however, and the Walliabup Townsite now lies squarely in the path of the Roe Freeway. At Jandakot, a townsite was proclaimed south of Forrest Road in 1909 and Buckley, Maclagan, McKinnon, Spencer, Sullivan and Tichborne Streets were laid out and named after Jandakot settlers.

Once again, only a few lots were sold and the Jandakot settlers indicated that if they wanted a town, Fremantle would do.

On the north of Forrest Road, opposite the vacant Jandakot Townsite, James Hicks had bought and subdivided J.A.A, Lot 154 which he named the Bodella Estate and this area became the de facto townsite of the Jandakot Area. On the 2 and 4 acre lots William Cook, Henry Maxwell, Andrew Buss, Joseph George, Alex Green and Max Dreier had established market gardens by 1902 and George Robinson and George Harber had begun a large flower nursery. Among the market gardens a baker set up business as well as running a garden and in the years that shortly followed railway crews built homes and supplemented their wages from the gardens that surrounded them. Obviously, there was little to attract a family to a small town lot when their neighbours were leading a semi-rural life.

By 1903 the Jandakot Area was reaching its peak and new settlers competed for the leases of transferred or abandoned holdings. Newspapers described the prospects of the 'Area in glowing terms and on August 1st, 1903 the Morning Herald, a Perth newspaper, devoted a four-page illustrated supplement to boosting the Jandakot Area. The reporter had obviously spent the best part of a week in the area, taking a photographer with him, and has left a detailed account of the Jandakot Area:

'I returned from a trip through the Jandakot district most impressed with its settlers, its soils and its possibilities for close settlement . . . the swamps, as may be imagined, contain a rich deep alluvial black soil, while the intermediate ground which obtains between the pure sandy soil and the swamps contains an element of fertility which makes it extremely valuable. It seems almost like romancing to say that between Fremantle and Armadale there stretches an agricultural area of 37,000 acres of land which is competent to support nearly 1,000 families in comfort.

There are 202 distinct owners of whom over 100 personally reside on their holdings and make their living by what they can win from them. I came across several cases of men who are raising from [the] low-lying lands more than £200 worth of vegetables per acre, per annum . . . The soils which seem to give by far the best results are those which can be worked both summer and winter, soils which fringe the edges of the swamps proper, but which are not subject to flooding. From these I had abundant demonstrations that the skilled gardener can win immense returns of garden stuff from intense culture. Such lands cannot be surpassed.' 11

John Charles Anderson was one of the experienced gardeners who came to the Jandakot Area and quickly made his selection pay. Anderson came to Western Australia in 1898 from the Brighton District in Victoria where he had spent many years as a market gardener. On his block on Forrest Road Anderson lived on his own in a tent for several weeks assessing the land and clearing a site for a home. His sons then joined him and the family cleared about an acre of land at a time. As each acre was cleared the timber cut from it was carted into Fremantle and sold as firewood, providing enough money to buy a dray load of stable manure which was back-loaded to the block to fertilize the newly cleared land. This being done the new land was sown with potatoes and the Andersons moved on to clear the next acre of land. When the potato crop on each section was half grown the same piece of ground was planted with tomatoes with the result that when the last of the potatoes had been dug a half-grown crop of tomatoes was making good progress.

During his first year on the Jandakot block John Anderson cleared 2 acres of land from which he took 9 tons of potatoes and 6 tons of tomatoes bringing him in £240 for the year off 2 acres of ground. He had started the venture with a capital of £50, of which [30 went in the purchase of a horse and dray, and his experience and skills had enabled him to establish a

prosperous garden very quickly.¹² The Brighton market gardeners were familiar with the soils at Jandakot and were ready to advise new gardeners on the many points in market gardening: the use of the right seeds, the proper time to plant, the best fertilizers, the best rotation of crops and the arranging of their maturity so that the work of the garden should be even and continuous.

Other gardeners were doing equally as well as John Anderson and under their experienced hands the Jandakot sands produced prolifically. Thomas Briggs had 30 acres of low-lying swamp land producing summer crops of cauliflower and was taking off [1,700 worth of produce in a year. Robert Semple, on a poorer block that had been previously abandoned twice, was producing potato and cereal crops so well that he had taken on men on wages and A. Carlson was profitably employing eight men on the 15 acres he had in cultivation. George Willis had erected a comfortable home on Forrest Road and had installed a steam pump which enabled summer cultivation to be carried out on the higher parts of his land as well as on the swamp fringes. Samuel Murphy was carrying out gardening, fruit growing and poultry raising on 4 acres of cultivated land and was waiting on better roads before extending his garden. Jeremiah O'Farrell had cleared 213 acres out of his 409 acre holding and was confident enough in the area to send back to Ireland for his relatives to join him. From his land he was taking [16 an acre from the barley which he grew and sold as greenstuff in Fremantle. When the barley crop was off he found that the green stubble made an admirable manure for the potato crop which followed.

The Victorian gardeners had brought to Jandakot, along with their gardening skills, a lively prejudice against the Chinese market gardeners they had encountered in Victoria, and at a public meeting had declared their intention of keeping the Jandakot Area free of Chinese gardeners. This sentiment, which was general in Western Australia at the time, was given effect in immigration restrictions and land laws which prohibited Chinese from owning land in Western Australia. The Morning Herald's reporter noted with approval the resolve of the Jandakot settlers:

'I was particularly delighted with Jandakot because it lends strong support to the policy of a white Australia. Chinamen are not wanted at Jandakot, and except in the case of one Mongolian the whole of the population is white . . . I could not help mentally contrasting the position of affairs at one home where I was entertained with that which would have been experienced at a Chinese institution. The settler I refer to had a fine home and some sturdy boys and girls. A piano and a violin told of rational recreation. The appointments of the home indicated a high grade of civilization, while a new little buggy and other outside equipment spoke for the material comfort of the inmates and of their social intercourse with their other white neighbours. As most people know the kind of hovel that the ordinary China- man calls his home, there is no need for me to say anything about this side of the picture.'¹³

The non-Victorian settlers, however, were not as enthusiastic in keeping 'John Chinaman' moving and at Bibra Lake a small colony of Chinese gardeners took root on land leased from its owners. In 1897 John Cook leased his 35 acre block to Ah Gong on very reasonable terms. The terms of the lease asked for a peppercorn rental for the first 16 years, £10 a year for the next 10 years and £20 a year for the 10 years following that. Immigration restrictions prevented Ah Gong from seeing out this generous lease and he returned to China in 1901 after ensuring a transfer of the lease to his successors. In October 1901 Ming Wah, Ah F00 and Wing Shing took over John Cook's lease and continued to work the productive garden. On an adjoining block Lee Sun worked a garden alongside that of Arthur Bray and William Pearce and north of Joseph Meller's block Hi Lory leased 21 acres from George Dixon. One of the largest Chinese gardens at Bibra Lake was run by Quong Fad, a group of about thirty Chinese gardeners. This group spread some confusion amongst the authorities who dealt

with them. The Quong Fad who delivered vegetables to the Fremantle Markets was not the same Quong Fad who applied for a cart licence to the Roads Board, nor was he the same Quong Fad who bought chaff from Greenslade's produce store.

The Victorian market gardeners, who had seen vegetable and produce prices soar then crash in the Brighton District, did not expect the high prices they gained from the Fremantle Markets to continue indefinitely, and several of them saw dairying as the long term industry for the Jandakot Area. Western Australia was importing almost all of its dairy products from Victoria and South Australia and opportunities were wide open for local producers. The Jandakot swamps yielded abundant crops of lucerne and maize which provided green fodder and for some settlers it was just a matter of time before a local butter factory would be built. The pioneer dairy farmers at Jandakot were the Currie brothers who settled on 40 acres of Von Bibra's original grant on Bibra Lake at the turn of the century. Von Bibra's grant had passed through several hands before it was bought by Mary Ann Tapper for £365 in 1895. On this fertile piece of land Mrs Tapper and her son, Daniel, had built two houses and cleared about 20 acres on which a market garden and orchard were planted. Mrs Tapper sold part of the block to Duncan Currie and his brother who had recently arrived from Victoria. The Currie brothers were experienced dairymen and at their Victoria Dairy they ran 104 cows of which the 67 cows in milk yielded 10 quarts per head daily. From the fertile lake-fringes they cut barley and oaten hay in the winter and in summer they depended upon prolific crops of maize which grew to a height of 8 feet. The Currie brothers considered the Jandakot District superior to Gippsland for producing milk and were enthusiastic about the future of the Area.

A constant problem for the Jandakot settlers was that of hauling their produce to market in heavy drays through the Jandakot sands. Some farmers were faced with three-quarters of a mile of sand between their garden and the road and it could take three horses an hour to pull a ton of produce through the stretch of sand. Once on the road one horse could comfortably pull the same load. In the western parts of the Cockburn District roads were made from limestone metal which was quarried as close to the road-building site as possible. East of the chain of lakes in Jandakot there was no limestone and the cost of carting it to the area was prohibitive. The practical alternative was a plank road which formed a bridge across the sand. In the centre of the chain-wide road reserve a bed was prepared and, at 6 feet intervals, sleepers were laid. The sleepers were 9 feet long, 9 inches wide and 3 inches deep. To each end of the sleepers three planks, 9 inches wide and 3 inches deep, were spiked to make a platform for the wheels of a dray, and between the planks limestone rubble was compacted to give the horses a firm footing. The cost of the plank roads was £1,050 a mile of which nearly £600 was absorbed by the cost of cartage of material. The plank roads served the Jandakot settlers very well. They wore better than limestone roads, which were quickly cut up by dray wheels, and could be constructed more quickly. They were not without disadvantages, however, being strictly one-way and as two drays approached each other they would have to swing their left wheel into the sand leaving one wheel only on the planks. This manoeuvre could cause one wheel to go down in soft sand or to become jammed between planks that had worked loose and a ton of produce could be spilled from an overturned dray onto the road side.

By the turn of the century it had become clear to the Jandakot settlers that, in order to fully develop their holdings, the district would have to be serviced by a railway. The South Western line had linked Bunbury to Perth in 1893 and the settlers urged the Government to build a link from this line direct to Fremantle. On this issue the Fremantle and the Jandakot District Roads Boards were at loggerheads. The Fremantle District Roads Board, led by Robert Holmes, urged a Mundijong-Fremantle link which would take the railway west of the lakes through Henderson, Munster and Spearwood servicing the Fremantle District from north to south. The Jandakot District Roads Board, led by James Albert Hicks, urged an

Armadale-Fremantle link which would thread diagonally across the Jandakot District and Hicks was confident that the Government would not by-pass the closely settled Jandakot District in favour of 'absentee owners of large unimproved estates.'¹⁴ J.A. Hicks was descended from the Leeder family who had arrived on the Rockingham in 1830 and had a prosperous Land Agent's business based on his Bodella Estate at Jandakot. Hicks was always ready to acknowledge that a Jandakot route for the railway would not hurt his own pocket but worked with energy and conviction for the interests of the whole Jandakot community and served it well on this and other issues.

In March 1902 the Jandakot Agricultural Society held its annual show. The show a gala event and demonstrated the strength of the Jandakot community and the optimism with which the settlers looked to their future. The Jandakot settlers showed on this occasion that they had a good understanding of practical politics and made the show the centrepiece of their campaign for an Armadale-Fremantle railway link. A contemporary newspaper account shows how they went about it:

'Forrest Road presented a remarkably animated appearance last Wednesday. "It was more like a race meeting than an agricultural show", a lady remarked on her return to Fremantle after a drive behind one of the fastest horses in the district. There were stylish dog carts, sulkies, Abbott's buggies and Victorias as well as spring carts, omnibuses and even the humble dray. The fine trotters of Martin Murphy, George Beard, Robert Holmes, Tommy Newman and other lovers of a good horse all extended themselves, and cut out the pace in a most exhilarating fashion. The road was very dusty and showed unmistakably how dry the season had been.

There was a great roll up of members of Parliament and Walter Kingsmill, Minister for Railways and Acting Premier had a busy time of it. While the horses were going over the hurdles he was replying to a deputation about the Railway to Armadale but he contrived to keep an eye on the jumps all the time he was speaking. C.H. Rason, Minister for Works, had been driven around a portion of the district prior to the show by Bob Holmes, Chairman of Fremantle Roads Board and Dr Adam Jameson, Minister for Lands, cheered the hearts of settlers by telling them that the present Government intended to take up their interests.'¹⁵

The guest list included other Cabinet members, members of the Upper House, the Leader of the Opposition, the Head of the Land's Department, the Manager of the Land Bank, the Resident Magistrate and George Throssell, the previous Premier who had made a few as-yet-unfulfilled promises to the settlers. The Agricultural Committee had invited everyone who mattered in the Government and set about giving them a great day out before pressing the District's needs upon them. Mr Higham, M.L.A., president of the Agricultural Society welcomed the acting Premier and other Ministers and briefly reminded Mr Kingsmill of a promise made by the former Premier to enlarge the hall and improve the grounds. The Armadale to Fremantle Railway Committee had a calico banner setting forth the claims of the district and members of Parliament introduced deputations, presented petitions and read a large number of supporting telegrams on behalf of the settlers. A previous Premier, Mr George Throssell urged the settlers to 'agitate! agitate! agitate!' The Umpire advised, in an editorial aside, to take the Hon. George Throssell's advice to agitate but not to give that gentleman the box seat at any deputation. '5

The campaign for a Jandakot railway route was successful and by 1905 the line from Fremantle to Jandakot was started, to be completed in 1906 and extended to Armadale in 1908. An immediate benefit of the line was that large quantities of animal manure from the South Western agricultural districts were brought cheaply to the Jandakot District to maintain its intensive cultivation. Roads in the District were converted from plank and sleeper to

limestone construction as metal was brought in from Coogee and Spearwood by rail and all settlers benefited from the quick and cheap link with Fremantle.

The discovery of gold in Western Australia, the rapid growth of Perth and Fremantle and the introduction of intensive cultivation in the Jandakot Agricultural Area had caused a remarkable population boom in the eastern part of the Cockburn District, a boom which was not to be equalled in the District until modern times.

NOTES

1 Sheila Rowley, *Land Settlement in Western Australia*, pp.9-10.

2 The original members of the Jandakot Roads Board, elected in 1892, were William Nicholson (Chairman), James Newton, R.H. Chase, W. Woodhead, John Campbell, George Imlah and William Clements.

3 Surveyor's Fieldbook. Jandakot District 1911. Battye Library.

4 Jandakot Agricultural Area Location Book and Lease Book held at Deeds Branch, Lands and Surveys Department, Perth.

5 Information from Mrs Olive Hammond, daughter of Joseph Treeby, 1 Adrian St, Palmyra.

6 Among the settlers who came to Jandakot at the turn of the century were: George Power, Thomas Power, John C. Anderson, William Shepherd, Robert Johnson, William Owgan, A. Carlson, Louisa Wakely, Thomas McGellin, Thomas Buckingham, Frederick Jones, Robert Semple, George Willis, Ludwig Anderson, Theresa Tichborne, J. Taylor, E.H. Tomkinson, A. Von Carlhausen, John Diederich, George Touchell, Herbert Wright, George Kemp, William Maclagan, Charles Harrison, George Davis and James Gordon.

7 For a vivid picture of market gardening in Victoria during the gold-rushes of the 1850s see Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton*, (Melbourne University Press, 1962)

8 Minutes of Appeal Court, F.D.R.B., April 18th, 1944. Evidence given by Rocke, Sworn Valuer and Land Agent.

9 Minutes of the F.D.R.B., March 7th, 1900.

10 The original petitioners for a townsite at Walliabup, after whom the streets were named, were Clamp, Robertson, Martin, Bucknell, Needwell and Gilchrist.

11 Morning Herald, August 1st, 1903. Illustrated Supplement, p.1.

12 Ibid, p.3.

13 Ibid, p.1.

14 Ibid, p.3.

15 The Umpire, March 1st, 1902. p.3.

16 Ibid.